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Cover art and design entitled *Eclecta Moon Rise*
by Ryan Freeman.

for David Martinson

poet, teacher, friend, mentor....

Writing Mentor

He stands with his steel hair
Middle parted and full.
The white hairs on his head
Are the medals won in the battle
Of writing poetry true and real.
Interspersed with darkened fine lines
Of waiting metaphors and similes
Not yet born images on a page.

On a grassy diamond spread on NDSU,
To students young and old, impromptu,
He talks about writing poems and prose.
Surrounded by eager ears searching, each
Word like pigeons eating bread crumbs,
Reading the lines on his brow and cheeks
Of a thousand poems across his face.

Peter Hatori

NORTHERN ECLECTA

Volume 4 — 2010

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to the readers....

Volume four! *Northern Eclecta* has come a long way in four years. This year's staff and I have been excited to help this still-newborn journal grow. We spent this semester learning from our predecessors, experimenting, changing, and moving forward. In an attempt to incorporate the idea of growth, our design used the ever-present moth (though it is actually a butterfly in this issue) transforming from a cocoon to a beautiful creature. Both the cover design and the section title pages use this concept.

We made a few major changes this year. One of those changes was opening up submissions to North Dakota State University graduate students and including grades 7 and 8 with our high school submissions section, The Next Generation. This decision was made not only to encourage more submissions but also submissions that represent a greater variety of genres and subject matter.

Another rule that we bent is the number of submissions we published from each author. Many submitters and readers are probably wondering about this. We decided that the Quick Takes and The Next Generation sections are specialty categories, and thus we allowed authors who submitted to those categories to be published twice. Whether or not this is the start of a tradition will be a decision made by next year's staff.

Overall, working with *Northern Eclecta* is an experience for everyone involved, including staff and submitters. This journal will continue to grow and change with the help of everyone at North Dakota State University. With this volume being a landmark in that growth, just like every other volume, we hope you enjoy reading volume four just as much as we enjoyed putting it together.

Chelsea Fetch
Editor-in-Chief





FICTION

from the fiction editor....

This volume saw more fiction submissions than any previous year, and it is a great pleasure to see how creative and passionate so many people are towards writing. However, the number of submissions made the decisions of acceptance or rejection agonizingly difficult. All submitters should be proud of their efforts, and I hope they will join us in appreciating the six that were chosen.

“Seraphim” is our first story. It comes from the science fiction genre, and just like the best sci-fi, it draws real-world parallels. In an ever-growing world, where do we draw the line between reasonable measures for survival and unethical treatment towards those limited resources? Read “Seraphim” and enjoy the imaginative way it makes you think about society at large.

“Why the Angels Cry” is a flash-fiction piece. This unique genre condenses a story’s worth of emotions and ideas into fewer words than a short story, but more than a typical poem. Experience the impact that just a few words can make.

“Dead Receiver” is a unique story with two very engaging main characters. Their relationship offers a humorous contrast, and the plot is as wonderfully bizarre as it is compelling.

“It’s Time to Go Home, Mr. Baylerson” involves two men sitting and drinking in a bar. While many people in Fargo can probably relate to that in some way, what is most memorable about this story is how genuinely the emotions are depicted. Internal struggle, bitterness, and sedation amid dim hope is a dance that this story displays with commanding skill.

“Sunflowers” is a beautiful story with a local setting. The excellent prose will remind you of living in the Midwest, and the faithful dialogue will remind you that this region is as authentic a place as any.

Next is “Pigeons,” which deals with such themes as redemption, acceptance, and compassion. The subtle and controlled prose packs quite an emotional punch. This is a sincere story centered on a realistically portrayed young woman.

Please enjoy the stories we have chosen and the richness of ideas that are within each one.

Dominic J. Manthey

CARISSA N. WOLF

Seraphim

Numbers flashed red on screen, hard blinking digits. Rin's fingers flew over the keys, a blur of flesh above the glowing panel. The seraph's respiration was too fast, heart rate too elevated. She brought up the gas monitor: nitrogen levels too high. A quick adjustment, a little more oxygen, and the seraph's stats fell back to normal.

Breath left her lungs, sweet relief. "There, you're alright now."

She looked up into the soft glow of the tank. The gentle light entranced her, embracing her like a friend. She stepped away from the computer terminal and placed her hand on the lightly textured surface of the glass. Fifteen feet above her the glass tank yawned, gently protruding from steel walls like a globe held in a plate of steel. The platform stretched across the bottom of the tank, the comp terminal placed neatly at the apex of the curve. Such a massive structure, all to contain and maintain a single being. Under her fingers, she felt energy shift and stir.

Through the gaseous haze within the tank, the seraph moved. Massive wings unfolded, stretched out until the feather-tips spanned the diameter of the tank. Long limbs slid apart to reveal the humanoid figure of the seraph. Oil-gold eyes pierced the fog, shining in the ivory face. Gossamer hair floated about, a fine spider-silk cloud. Rin was reminded of tales she'd heard as a child, of magical angels protecting humankind. Ironic how that had come true. Two generations earlier, the Earth had been scorched, the surface of the planet burnt to dust and nearly all life destroyed. Few in her generation knew how; most of their grandparents were killed in the explosion, and their parents were unwilling to speak. But the how wasn't as important anymore, all that mattered now was humanity's survival—by draining these ethereal beings.

The wings moved, pushing the seraph closer. Arachnoid hands reached out, touching the inside of the globe, resting over Rin's hands. A strange sensation flooded her fingers, cold warmth mixed with electricity. The touch of one who bled energy, who generated it just by living. Her grandparents were part

of a team trying to create a new energy source. They had manipulated and forged human DNA with that of eels and other lost species, trying to create a race that literally bled electricity. When the Earth was scorched, the emitted radiation mutated their work beyond recognition, and these angelic creatures were born. Almost like guardians sent from heaven.

“Hello Tessa,” she whispered. Rin leaned close to the glass, and the seraph did the same. She smiled, the emotion mirrored on the other’s face. Most seraphs ignored humans, focusing inwards, meditating as they sated the greed for energy, but this one, Tessa—she showed curiosity.

“How are you this morning?”

The angelic smile widened, rippling the skin on the seraph’s cheeks. Her mouth opened and closed, music pouring out. Female seraphs couldn’t speak, their vocal chords didn’t function that way—but they could sing. Beautiful, unearthly songs as entrancing as their mythical namesakes.

Footsteps echoed behind her. “Doc Rin!”

A male voice, a flap of wings, and suddenly Tessa disappeared back into the clouds. Odd. Tessa had never been particularly fond of men, but she’d never fled like that before. As Rin turned around, a burly figure approached—Kine, the head engineer. She took her hands from the tank. Her fingers still tingled from the seraph’s touch, pinpricks, as if her hands had fallen asleep.

Kine nodded towards the tank. “How’s Tessa?”

“Nitro levels were too high. Tell your workers to stop pumping them. We get better results by maintaining homeostasis.”

“But we don’t—”

“I don’t care about your quotas.” She shot a glare over her glasses. “Tell the town to cut down on power usage. The seraphs won’t last forever. Especially if we bleed them like this.”

“Yes ma’am.”

“Now, what is it?”

“The manager wants to see you.”

“Again?”

He shrugged. “He just told me to find you.”

“Run concentration tests on Maynara. I want the results when I get back.”

“Yes’m.”

She headed to the door, heels clicking sharply on the tile. The manager always wanted to see her. What would it be this time? Updating the official

files to include the seraphs' names? Giving them 'personalities' in her dictations? She huffed. That fascist. Since the Earth was scorched, humans had been forced to retreat underground, where they had to manufacture everything. They needed equipment to extract water, to refertilize the dead soil for crops, to generate light, to do everything. Equipment needed energy, and the seraphs provided that energy. But humans had no right to abuse them, enslave them. Why couldn't he see that?

She opened the door to her office. Her chair turned slowly around, the manager's lithe body filling its seat. His electric blue eyes glared from a pale face, white-blond hair slicked back like he'd just showered. His elbows rested on the plush arms, fingers laced under his chin. He was always in control, even in someone else's chair.

"Welcome, doctor."

She didn't bother with pleasantries. "Stop telling the workers to pump nitro into the tanks."

"We need more energy."

"Forcing the seraphs to generate more than their limit is not the answer."

"The hydro-generators are running low. You want us to go without water? Our crops to dry up? Do you want us to die?"

She didn't justify that with an answer.

He rose and walked around the desk, hands clasped behind his back.

"Your sentimentalism is touching, but misplaced. They are here for us."

Again, this speech. This pompousness.

"We created them, we can use them. Simple enough. Your job is to make sure everything runs smoothly."

"I'm trying to do that, sir."

"You're a scientist. Science means no emotion. Doesn't it, doctor?" he whispered, nearly hissing.

"They are a separate species, fully sentient."

"I don't care," he snarled, blue eyes flashing. Strangely bright, she noticed, almost electrically. "You're in an energy plant. Your job is to produce energy. Pump nitrogen in the tanks, accelerate their processes, make them work, I don't care. We created them, we use them, we can kill them. Understand?"

Her jaw clenched.

He took her silence and left. "Bleeding heart." A sneer curled her lip. Angel pimp.

Rin returned to the Nest Room. The enormous tanks lined the walls, twelve on each side, stretching far in front of her like gigantic portholes into other worlds. Gentle humming filled the room; the generators were fully active and all seraphs awake. Kine stood before tank 24, Maynara's, slate comp in hand. Rin called out as she approached, "How is she?"

"Fine now. Another glitch with the gases."

"Again?" She looked at the comp over his shoulder. "What were the levels?"

"78 nitrogen, 10 oxy. I've managed to stabilize her."

"Strange. Tessa's levels were 20 oxy earlier."

"It seems as though Maynara here shunted 5 oxy to Tessa. Is Tessa coming down with something?"

She studied the comp, her brow furrowing. "Maybe. I'll watch this through the night."

"Isn't that the third night this week? In a row?"

She raised a brow to him.

"That's none of my business." He smiled as he handed her the slate comp. "Your results. Try not to work too hard, doc." He disappeared among the tanks, his boots a fading echo. When she heard the main door close, a sigh escaped her. She'd have to call her sister and cancel supper again.

Rin sat curled in her chair, listening to the dying rumble of the plant as daytime systems shut down. Like the plant itself was falling into a peaceful sleep; like what any sane person would be doing, she almost hear her sister saying.

The intercom buzzed. "Doctor," a mechanized voice rasped. "Graveyard shift starting."

"Confirmed, but I'm staying."

"Certain, ma'am?"

"Affirmative."

"I'll notify the crew then."

Her eyes fell back to the book in her lap. Elegant script sprawled across the page, the prettiness belying the trauma recorded within. Again; it would happen again.

Aversion of males. Increased oxy consumption. Maynara and Tessa were linked by the same generator and life-support systems. If Tessa needed more

oxy than her tank could provide, then Maynara would step in, filling the gap until Tessa could stabilize. But 5 oxy was a large gap to fill, one that strained both of them. She'd only seen symptoms like this twice before.

The first was ten years prior, during her residency. A seraph's vitals had fluctuated for a week, drastically enough that Rin had slept at the plant, the alarm on her comp set to alert her of problems. One night, a seraph's vitals went off the chart and Rin ran to the tank, found the seraph doubled over in pain, stomach swollen and bloated. By the time the night crew had arrived, an infant's whimpers filled the room. The old manager had approached, footsteps shaking the metal platform beneath her. His gruff face was cold and dark, the bone structure lit eerily by the tank. Before she could react, two workers had activated the electrogates, reached into the tank, and plucked the angel girl from her mother.

The seraphs had screamed, the mother had wailed in violation. Rin tried to stop them, but the girl was gone, snatched away and shoved into a tank to mature. To grow into a living generator. A slave for life.

This was wrong, she knew it, but she had to accept it. That was how things were for the females, for her. At least as a scientist, she could make things easier for the seraphs, play mediator between the species.

Hopefully Tessa's child was female. At least females had a chance. Please, she prayed, please don't let it be male.

Four years ago, just after the present manager took his position, another seraph had become pregnant, and Rin was blessed enough to watch the birth. She remembered the look on Kine's face as he stood beside her, his speech stolen by the sight, the white glow of the tank blanching him skeleton-white. Then the manager had skulked in, his features twisted into a scowl. He yanked the electrogates from a worker's hand, planted the three black spheres on the glass, and activated them. Rin had begged him to let her handle it, but as soon as the hole opened in the tank, the manager reached in, grabbed the infant by a leg, and hauled it out. He held the boy upside down, letting it dangle like a rag doll. *Why did it have to be a male*, he said, almost musing. Rin pleaded to take the child, to take him to the capital, but the manager glared. *To the capital? I'll show you what they do in the capital*. He laid the babe on the platform, letting it wail and kick at his feet as he slid an electrogate into a latex glove. The child's screams turned to shrieks. She tried to stop him, but Kine held her back, one thick arm around her waist. The manager knelt over the child, watched

it squirm, electrogate heavy in his hand. *Sir, please*, she said. *It's just a child.*
Other workers spoke out, *Sir, why are you—*

His hand slammed down, and the shrieks ended with a metallic thud.
That is how they deal with males in the capital. Slowly he rose to his feet, his face blank, eyes dark and emotionless. The electrogate slid out of the glove, both fell to the floor, and he walked off while the seraphs screamed.

No one spoke to the manager for a month after that. No one even saw him outside of his office. The few other sympathizers Rin had found in the plant hushed up, shocked back into silence.

But that night gave her more cause to fight against his cruelty. The memory haunted her, the sight of infant blood crawling away from the crushed body on the platform lingered in dreams. Twice she'd seen the birth of a seraph, and twice she'd screamed, sobbed in the darkness, unable to sleep for weeks afterward. Infant cries echoed in her ears again, the lament of angels pounding in her head. They did feel, they did mourn for their lost kin. And it made her want to rip her heart out.

Midnight entered in silent ticks of her digital clock. For two hours she'd sat in her office, staring at old files on her comp, trying to understand Tessa's sudden pregnancy. Seraphs could reproduce, yes, but only by insemination specialists in the region capitals. Someone here must have the knowledge to fertilize her, but who? Did the manager bring someone in without her knowledge? None of the employees had that type of schooling, and she could find no records of an outsider entering the plant—even if the data had been forged. And how did they get sperm from a male? Seraph sperm only remained virile for a day or two, even frozen, and this plant was over a week's travel to the nearest capital. So that meant a male had to be here. But the males were specially housed in the capitals, rarely allowed outside their prisons, much less the city.

Of the species, females were the ones most prized. They produced the energy, birthed the young, and were the easiest to maintain. Males, however, were energy-sterile, their purposes limited to procreation. But their temperaments were the biggest problem. Male seraphs were either entirely passive or hyper-aggressive. The few passive ones were retained in the capitals, kept like dogs in a kennel. But the aggressives were highly territorial and violent, and they had killed fifteen people in the last fifteen years, so most aggressives were

identified and killed before they could talk.

However...males didn't need specially regulated atmospheres to survive, didn't have wings like the females, and could speak like humans. She'd heard rumors in her childhood of seraphs secretly living with humans, and research hinted at the possibility. From what she found, the only external difference between male seraphs and male humans lay in the eyes, but she could find no definitive description. If one was working here in the plant, how would she know?

A small siren went off, a sharp arrow to the ears that jerked her mind out of the files. She shoved her glasses up the bridge of her nose, focusing blurred eyes on another monitor—to the seraphs' vitals. Two numbers flashed red: 17 and 24. Maynara's oxy levels were low again, but Tessa's were high. Far too high.

Rin jumped up, cramming her feet into shoes as she tied up her hair. She had to hurry. She had to get there first, before the crew. Halfway out the door, she remembered to grab a med kit. Flying down the hallways, sliding around corners into dark shortcuts, she avoided the crew's usual routes. Only emergency lights lined the halls, blue runways streaking along the ceiling. Shadows drifted across the floors, swirling in pools under her feet.

In silence she slipped into the Nest Room, only the soft purring of the night generators greeted her, and the soft thrum of the seraphs' songs. The song she'd heard twice before. All the tanks were dim, save one—Tessa's. Every other seraph was tightly cocooned in the upper regions of her tank, but Tessa hung low, wings spread and quivering. A shudder wracked her slender form, shaking the veins and tubes from her back to the tope of the tank, where they connected to her life-support system. She moaned, a deep alto against her sisters' song.

Tessa's stomach was swollen, her arms loosely embracing it, unwilling to give it up but unable to summon the strength to hold it. Rin checked her vitals on the comp. The seraph's strength was fading, and soon the child would have to come.

Tessa moaned again, a searing edge in her voice. The wings trembled harder. She tried to curl up, to protect her treasure. She knew what would happen. Knew that her infant would be enslaved for life, just like her. The wings shuddered again, pulling together, hiding.

Then Tessa shrieked.

Body arching in pain, wings thrown wide, her scream tore through the room like a siren. Rin clasped her ears, glanced at the door. No way could the crew ignore that. Silver tears lined the seraph's oil-gold eyes as she kept screaming. She didn't want the child to come, didn't want her infant to face this world of hatred against her race. Rin felt it, knew it.

The shriek escalated. Rin cowered down more, eyes slammed shut, ears ringing with the seraph's pain. Suddenly it choked off, replaced with another sound. A liquid falling, the dull echo of something dropping, sliding in water. Rin peeled her eyes open, and stared into the tank.

Tessa's body hung slack, limbs shaking with every raspy breath, skin glistening with sweat. Whimpering arose, spurtles of breath drifted from the bottom of the tank. Rin's eyes dropped from the seraph, and her spine ran cold.

An infant squirmed in a puddle of crimson, his cries dulled by the glass. A male.

The memory flooded back: the manager, the clubbed execution, red staining the platform, angels' shrieks tearing through her mind. Not again, never again. She couldn't take it. But what could she do? She couldn't take the child, hide him, raise him. She was a scientist, not a mother. And a mother was what this child needed. She'd have to leave everything—her life's work, her family's work—all for a single child's life.

Rin glanced around, looking at all the seraphs in their tanks, listing their names in her head. If she took him, she'd have to leave these seraphs, the ones she worked so hard to protect. In this entire plant, she and Kine were the remaining few who dared stand against the manager, and she was the only one with enough authority who could protest loud enough to make a difference.

Her eyes fell back to the bottom of the tank. The babe still cried and squirmed.

But she couldn't just stand by. She knew what would happen in a few minutes. The crew would come, the manager would scowl at the child, and the past would be repeated. Again an innocent would die, again the angels would scream. She closed her eyes against it, trying to shut it out. No, not again. Not to this child.

She placed her hands on the glass. "Shh, little one. It'll be alright." Maybe she couldn't take the child, but her sister would. "I promise you."

From her lab coat she pulled a set of electrogates, shoved them on the glass and clicked them into place. The portal opened, and the infant stopped

crying to stare at her. She smiled, and a broad grin spread across the chubby face. Yes, her sister would take him, would be able to raise him in peace while Rin tended to his mother and aunts. She reached in, gently drew him out. Cradling him to her, she wiped him with a towel, clearing the postbirth slime from his round face. He pursed his lips in protest, fists punching at the offending terry cloth. When she wrapped him up, he stopped fighting to look at her, studying her face with wide eyes.

Blue eyes. Sharp, luminescent, glowing.

"We created them, we use them, we can kill them. Understand?"

Just like the manager.

Overhead, a klaxon wailed. Someone had triggered the alarm. Less than three minutes, if she was lucky. She looked at the child again. Those eyes, that white-blond fuzz slicked against his scalp. His son, his own son. Nestling the child against her, she disengaged the electrogates and stashed everything in the hidden compartment under the platform. A musical croon called down to her. Tessa was gazing at her, gossamer hair hanging limp and wet, an exhausted smile on the porcelain lips.

Rin held the child up, letting him look at his mother. The seraph's hand reached out, stroking the glass. His chubby hand waved at her, a gentle burble rising from the fresh-born throat.

She placed her hand on the glass. "It's alright, Tessa." The seraph looked to her, a note of question rising in the musical voice. Rin nodded. "I'll see to him."

Another ethereal smile and Tessa pulled away, cocooning herself in her massive wings. The cameras were off at night, and the service tunnels weren't twenty feet away. She'd make up some story in the morning about her absence; she could always fashion a good alibi. In her arms, the child slept, cherubic and innocent, an angel babe in swaddling clothes. Her sister would love him, would be able to teach him how to live in this world. Only with her would he stand a chance of surviving.

Rin kissed his forehead. A quiet farewell to the angels, and she was gone.

BRITNEY LIETHA

Why the Angels Cry

It should have been raining. The skies should have opened up out of sympathy, or at least out of pity, and poured out their insides to the Earth.

It was a Sunday. I hate Sundays, especially today for the lack of rain. I wasn't asking for much. I would've been satisfied with a light sprinkle. It's not like the sky was short on clouds; the sky was nothing but. I felt they were laughing at me. I could feel the water welling at the rims of my eyes, but I'd never let it fall. If the Angels didn't cry, why should I?

No one was there. My dad sat to my left, comforting his sobbing wife. To my right sat Jason, the most real person there, even though he was as stiff and unmoving as ice. No, it was just me and the black, glossy box.

It was silent. Everyone was waiting. I was waiting for the sky to break open and lend some moisture on this chilled morning in November. Jason broke free of his icy state just long enough to give me a nudge. Everyone else was waiting for me to speak. I stood, but couldn't feel my legs, so I floated to stand next to the black box whose glossy surface reflected the rainless sky. I swallowed the anger.

I tried to take a breath, but it stuck in my throat. I exhaled slowly.

"I'd like to introduce you to my mom." My throat clenched as I rested a hand on the black box. "She's a sweet, caring person who can do anything she sets her mind to. She likes to make scrambled eggs for supper and watch Jim Carrey when there's more important things to be done." I saw people smile. I was bringing them to life. I was making them real.

"I'd like to introduce you to my mom. She's in here." I patted the black box. "Her heart's in here. It may not look like it, but it is." Jason was crying.

"I'd like to introduce you to my mom. She's in here." I took my hand away from the box and the rest it on my chest. My other hand clenched the fabric of my black skirt. My hands loosened and descended to rest at my sides. I returned to my seat. No one clapped, it didn't feel right.

"Good job," Jason congratulated me, tears in his eyes. He really loved her.

“Still not enough to make the angels cry,” I grumbled under my breath. Jason looked confused, and then smiled.

“Why would your mother cry for herself?” he whispered to me.

The preacher stood before everyone and began to talk about her being welcomed into a better place. *Where would be a better place than with her daughter?* The sky rumbled. The preacher paused before continuing his speech about how we shouldn’t cry for her but for the people who have lost her. *I’ve lost her. No one could lose her more than I have!* My throat felt so dry. I could never hold anything back from my mom. Not even now. So I let the waters break free of my eyes.

The wind picked up. I could have sworn I heard my mom whisper, “This is why the Angels cry, my Love, this is why.” Just then I felt water drop on my head. The sky rumbled, opened up and the rain came down. While everyone ran for shelter I stood and let the downpour soak me through.

“I love you, Mom.” I spoke through my tears to the crying Angels.

SPENCER PTACEK

Dead Receiver

Carla Witten was, as she had just realized, currently commuting with the most insufferable person she had ever met. Jeremy Unferth, Carla's younger and more garrulous coworker, had recently devised a brilliant scheme in which he and Carla would ride to work together in order to combat lofty fuel prices (carpooling to Jeremy, chauffeuring to Carla). This revelation had come during the previous week, after Carla, in idle and non consensual conversation with Jeremy, had accidentally let slip her address and Jeremy, coming to a conclusion that Carla had tried for quite some time to keep him from, realized that they lived merely a block apart. She had to admit, though, that she was lucky that her mistake had only cost her a twenty-minute drive each day, rather than the unannounced, unwelcome visits that had played a major role in her nightmares of the past week. She had, in fact, learned that she had an uncanny ability to respond to his rambling with the exact gesture or remark needed to appear interested. Jeremy's delivery and tone of voice was unique in that for her it provided an ambiance that lent fluidity to her thoughts that silence alone could not quite achieve. His recent outburst, however, effectively brought her current train of thought to a jarring halt, though not quite jarring enough to cover the low thud that is heard when solid metal hits soft tissue.

"Jesus, Carla," he said again, louder this time and a little shaky. "You hit that fucking guy."

"What?" Carla croaked, dazed and a little perturbed.

"Stop the car!" Jeremy shouted, this time getting a response from Carla who quickly stomped on the brakes.

"What the hell are you talking about?" Carla snapped. "There isn't a fucking soul out here." The street stretched out before and behind them, silent except for the whispering sway of the leaves in the breeze.

"That old black guy just walked out of his house and into the street. You fucking hit him..." Jeremy trailed off as he got out of the car and started towards the back.

Carla pulled the car over to the side of the street and parked. As she got out she tried to remember the last person that they had seen on the drive. She couldn't think of more than a handful of people, and those had all been right by Jeremy's apartment. An old black guy? There was no way she could have missed seeing someone if they were right in front of her.

"He's still alive," Jeremy called. "Carla, get back here quick."

Carla's head whipped over in the direction of Jeremy's voice. There she saw Jeremy stooped over a figure lying in the fetal position. Near where Jeremy's right knee rested was a chocolate-colored head, lightly dusted with white and grey hair, now marred on the right side by a large gash that was slowly feeding a small pool of blood on the pavement.

"Oh my God," whispered Carla as she awkwardly ran towards Jeremy. A professional woman's work attire, she realized, no matter how far humans progress as a species, would never be suitable for running.

"Shit, Carla, shit," cried Jeremy, his eyes frantic. "This guy's going, Carla, he's going."

As soon as Carla came around to Jeremy's side, she saw the man's face. A thick white beard covered the lower half of his face, coming down to a point about six inches below his chin. A large wide nose appeared to be holding the beard onto his face, although now red drained from it staining the once snowy beard. His right eye was already swollen shut and the purple stain of a massive bruise was spreading over it from the deep cut she had seen before. His left eye, however, seemed to be aimlessly rolling around until it fixed itself on her and he tried to open his mouth to speak.

"I'm calling 911," stammered Carla, "or the police or someone. Jesus, why didn't you say anything? Why didn't I even see him?"

"No," rasped a deep voice. "No police, please." She stopped talking and looked down, realizing that it was the man who had spoken. He was still looking directly at her, but having opened his mouth, a small stream of blood was dripping out of the corner.

"Holy shit!" Jeremy breathed. "This is James Hedgewood." Jeremy was holding open the man's wallet, staring wide-eyed at a small card he had just pulled out.

"Who?" asked Carla, her mouth feeling as stiff and unwieldy as her brain. "Should I know what you're talking about?"

Jeremy looked up at Carla, his expression so exasperated and out of place

it looked like a mask. “James Hedgewood? Wide Receiver for the ’63 Falcons? It’s gotta be him. I mean, he has a beard now and he’s older, but he looks almost the same as he did forty-five years ago. Plus, it says right here, ‘Height: 6’4” and that’s how—”

“What the hell, Jeremy,” Carla said, cutting him off. “This isn’t Meet-The-Team. He’s dying. I’m calling the cops.”

“I was just talking about him the other day. Did you forget already..?”

“No police,” he rasped again, straining. “My house, please.” A large, shaky hand rose up and pointed to a house just off the street. “Take me...the door, quick.”

Jeremy grabbed onto the man’s hands then looked at Carla. “Well...you heard him.”

“Heard him what? Heard him say ‘I’ve just been hit by a car, drag me over to my house’? Oh my God. I just hit him...that’s it, if he doesn’t want police, I’m calling an ambulance.” Carla reached into her coat pocket to take out her cell phone. As she flipped it open to dial, she heard a door opening.

“Bring him up here,” said a small black woman who had just stepped out onto the porch of the nearest house. “Just carry him up here, he’ll be fine. But be careful.”

Carla, stunned, felt herself comply. Bending down she picked up the man’s feet and with Jeremy they lifted him off the pavement. He gasped, quite loudly, nearly causing Carla to drop him. She held on, however, getting him about halfway to the door before the sense of how heavy he really was pushed its way through her shock.

“I don’t think I can carry him that far,” Carla grunted to Jeremy.

“C’mon, Carla,” Jeremy hissed, glaring at her. “Twenty more feet.” She tried her best to lock her arms and back into a carrying position, a small groan escaping her lips, somehow getting him through the door that the women held open and finally, her face contorted with strain, setting him down. Bent over and panting, she heard a faint whisper and saw his lips moving. Putting her ear down closer, she heard “...phone, answer the phone.”

“His cell phone, where’s his cell phone?” Carla said to Jeremy, the woman, or anyone in particular. “He needs to answer his phone.”

“He doesn’t have a cell phone, nor does he need one anymore,” the woman said softly. “He’s gone.”

Carla’s eyes jerked up to the man’s face. The jaw had grown slack and the

wandering left eye was still and lidded. The body was totally motionless.

“Oh Jesus. Oh God,” Carla started. “I’m so sorry. I didn’t even see him. I don’t know what I was—”

“Shh, it’s okay,” the woman soothed. “I knew this was coming just as well as he did.”

“Wait, w-what?” stuttered Jeremy. “He knew this was coming? What do you mean?” Carla kept silent. With nothing to say and nowhere to look she felt like a statue.

“We already knew about you,” the woman said, facing Jeremy. “We’ve been expecting you for a few weeks, Mr. Witten. He told us it would—”

“My name’s Unferth, not Witten,” Jeremy quickly interjected, trying to disassociate himself as much as possible. “You must be thinking of someone else.”

The woman’s eyebrows scrunched together. Hesitantly she said, “You mean you’re not Carl Witten?”

“Nope. Jeremy Unferth. You’ve probably never seen me before, but I’m a huge fan of James’...wait a minute, did you say Carl Witten?”

“It’s Carla Witten,” said Carla, speaking to the woman for the first time. “I’m Carla Witten.”

“Aah...” smiled the woman. “And here we’d been expecting a man.”

“Well...sorry to disappoint you,” sighed Carla. The part of her brain that she relied upon when responding to the unexpected was, at this point, exhausted.

“It’s no disappointment, we just—well, I should explain....”

“Oh, please do,” said Jeremy, almost eagerly. Even now, Carla thought, he still manages to annoy the hell out of me.

“You see,” began the woman, “about forty years ago, shortly after we got married, James and I met a man named Rich Toppen. The circumstances in which we met were by no means common, but in your case Carla, certainly not unique. James had just bought a brand new Buick, the first new car he or I had ever rode in, let alone owned. We were going for a drive when somebody just stepped out in front of the car. I screamed and James slammed on the brakes, but we hit him just the same. We got out and ran over to him as quickly as we could but he was dead when we got there. Then, all of a sudden, this young man is kneeling down beside us, and telling us to help him carry the body. We were both upset and didn’t know what to do, so we just did as we were told. We

took the body up into a house just off the street that the young man let us into. There we learned the name of man we had hit, Archer Toppen, and the name of this young man, his son, Richard Toppen. Richard explained that he and his father had known we were coming and that they were part of a society that believed in what he called ‘postmortem truth’: This is where a soul, after its body has died, will reveal to somebody the truth about life. You see, as a soul and a body, a person is split in two, half spiritual and half physical, and can only know half of the truth. After the body dies, though, the spirit takes over and the person, now whole, can understand the whole truth. The only problem is, a person who is just a spirit can’t use the truth to be happy or healthy or wise, because a person who is a spirit can’t be happy or healthy or wise—they can just be. When a person is whole, they can’t feel split like happy or sad or smart or stupid. So when a person can’t use that truth, they give it to someone who can, like James. Or you, Carla. Or you, Mr. Unferth.”

Silence. Not dead silence, just tired silence. To Carla, everything felt dry, her face, her mouth, her soul, and it had all been getting drier the whole time Mrs. Hedgewood had been talking. She didn’t know if the lady was bullshitting her or not and, if she was, why anybody would do something like that on a day like this. She felt like crying, but she couldn’t. Maybe, she thought to herself, I’ll just excuse myself and go throw up for about an hour.

“Ho...lee...shit,” said Jeremy, chuckling nervously. “Mrs. Hedgewood, I think that you’re really upset right now and you should probably sit down. Would you like some water?”

“You don’t believe me?” asked Mrs. Hedgewood. “Carla, you must believe me,” she said, a tiny note of irritation ringing in her voice.

“I...don’t know,” whimpered Carla noncommittally, totally at a loss. Now she just wanted to go to sleep. For a few days.

“Well, I have everything ready for you, and what’s going to happen is going to happen, so I guess it doesn’t really matter if you believe me or not.”

“What do you have ready for us?” asked Jeremy, looking around the room, “and where is it?”

“Not for you, son, but for Carla,” said Mrs. Hedgewood, eyeing Jeremy. “But I suppose an extra pair of hands couldn’t hurt, especially since you’re involved already.” She turned away from Jeremy and began rummaging through a small basket on the table. Jeremy tapped his foot to get Carla’s attention and, after winking at her, gave her a discreet thumbs-up.

“Jackass,” Carla mouthed, glaring at him. Jeremy frowned, puzzled.

“Here it is,” declared Mrs. Hedgewood, producing a small scrap of paper. “You just need to get James to this address where Rich will be waiting for him,” she said, handing it to Carla.

“Oh God,” muttered Carla. “This better be a fucking funeral home.”

“I’m not exactly sure where it is, but I don’t think it’s too far from here, about a half hour’s drive.”

“Wait a minute,” said Jeremy. “Rich? Like Richard, the guy from the story? Why are we looking for him?”

“Oh, I almost forgot,” laughed Mrs. Hedgewood anxiously. “He’s James’ receiver. He’ll take the body from you so that the spirit can respond.”

“What exactly is the ‘truth’ that the spirit is supposed to give us?” asked Carla, her daze wearing off. Anything to get this over with, she thought, just humor her.

“That I can’t tell you. James was the one who got it, not me, so maybe he could have told you, but all I can say is that you’ll know when it happens.”

“I guess I won’t worry about it then,” mumbled Carla, through teeth clamped down in a rigidly unfriendly and involuntary smile.

“Do you need any help getting James out to the car?” implored Mrs. Hedgewood sweetly.

“Wha...?”

“Nope,” interrupted Jeremy. “We’ve got it, right Carla? Just grab his feet...and (oomph)...let’s go,” grunted Jeremy as he and the body pushed Carla out the door and towards her vehicle.

“Now just...open the back and...there.” Jeremy dropped the body, slammed the door shut, and hurried into the passenger seat. Carla walked slowly around to the driver’s side and opened the door.

“What the hell was that, Jeremy?”

“What?”

“You shoved me out the door and basically tossed that guy in the backseat. Is my surprise out of line?”

“I had to get out of there, Carla. That place was giving me the creeps.” At this, Carla lost it. In situations such as these, one has two alternatives for physical reaction: deep, arrhythmic sobbing or wild, gasping laughter. The operators of Carla’s Emotional Response Center, who had been, until now, standing around open mouthed, chose the latter.

“Oh my God!” cackled Carla, her head thrown back against the headrest. “The creeps? Who are you, R.L. Stine?” She leaned her head against the steering wheel, her stomach heaving as she dealt with uncontrollable spasms of laughter. After these had subsided to a manageable level, she started the car, began to pull forward and, wiping tears from her eyes said, “This stopped being the creeps when I hit that guy, Jeremy; this is absolute fucking lunacy.”

Carla drove on quietly for the next twenty-five minutes, with the exception of an occasional chuckle. Eventually Jeremy cleared his throat. “I didn’t mean to act like a jackass back there, I was just trying to cheer you up,” he said.

“It’s fine Jeremy, I know you weren’t,” said Carla, shaking her head. “It’s just that when a shit-hammer of that magnitude falls on you, a wink and a thumbs-up can really only make it worse.”

“Oh...well, sorry anyway.”

“Hey, don’t worry about it. And I’m sorry about the R.L. Stine remark. No one deserves that.”

“It’s fine. Actually I didn’t understand what you said before but now I get it. Touché.”

“Yeah, well, I guess this is the place,” Carla sighed as she pulled the vehicle off the road and into the parking lot of a large industrial building. A small door near the corner of the building’s main façade seemed to have been put in as an afterthought and above the door was a large, lit-up sign that read “STEELE & CO.” in large, flickering letters. Mud, rocks, and pooled, brackish water had been meticulously set into the surrounding cracked concrete by landscapers unknown.

“Do you think there’s some machine in there for getting rid of the body?”

“At this point Jeremy, I’m expecting there to be. More likely, of course, is that the Mr. Toppen will be waiting for us in there at a table set for three, at which we will take part in the ritualistic consumption of our friend James.”

“Oh God,” blanched Jeremy, looking sickly at Carla. “Do you think so? Maybe we should just throw it out by the door and leave.”

Carla rolled her eyes as she opened the door and got out, noticing immediately an older man walking briskly towards her from the building. She hesitated, watching him.

“Quickly now, quickly,” he said, coming up to the vehicle. “It would be less than ideal for someone to see us at this stage.” He jogged around to the back of Carla’s car where Jeremy had already opened the door to pull James

out.

“Ah, hello, James,” said the man as he reached down to grab a hold of James’ shoulders. “You, get the door,” he said, nodding to Carla. She hurriedly tried to get in front of them to open the door without losing her balance or wrecking her shoes. Goddamn heels, she thought, considering just taking them off and going without, but held from doing so by the sight of what she would be stepping on. Closing the door behind them, she followed Jeremy and the man whom she assumed to be Richard Toppen into the building. The place was dark and oily looking, sparsely lit with long halogen lighting units and filled with all sorts of machines smudged by years of hard use. The place was obviously closed and with no sign of intelligent life, it was uncomfortably quiet. Their footsteps resounded in the still air as Richard, walking backwards and holding James’ by the armpits, led them towards a large, car-sized steel box with a plastic cover.

“Get the lid,” said Richard, nodding at Carla and then at the steel box. “Just throw it open.” Carla reached up and flung off the lid with all her strength. It flew open and banged against the steel back, echoing painfully and, for a few moments, disrupting the building’s stoic countenance. “On the count of three, we heave,” said Richard. “Ready?”

“What do you....?”

“One, two, three, HEAVE!” Richard grunted, startling Jeremy into a heaving motion. The body sailed limply up over the edge and into the container. “Wow, one try, that’s a first,” marveled Richard. “Surprising considering James’ size. That was quite the heave, Mr. Witten.”

“Um...”

“I’m Carla Witten,” said Carla, interceding. “And yes, I’m a woman.”

“Oh,” a confused look sailed briefly across Richard’s face. “Well, no matter. Goodbye.”

“Wait, where are you going?” cried Jeremy. “You’re just going to leave him here? And us?”

“Yes,” frowned Richard. “Why not?”

Jeremy looked first at Carla, then at Richard, then back to Carla. “I don’t know about this. Carla, what do you think?” Carla said nothing. “This seems pretty fucking shady, Rich, or Mr. Toppen, or whatever.”

“There’s nothing ‘shady’ about it, young man, this is simply how it is,” declared Richard, and, making a motion to cease conversation, promptly turned

and walked away.

“Should we follow him?” asked Jeremy dazedly. He looked intently at Carla. “Well?”

“Ah, fuck,” mumbled Carla and shrugged her shoulders. She had realized the truth that she was supposed to get, and it was not a happy one. The truth was that crazy people got even crazier when death was involved. That crazy people could very seriously ruin her day, if not the rest of her life, by convincing her to do things that she knew were crazy. That there was a good chance that if this body were found, it could be traced to her and the law, a factor that crazy people are often eagerly dismissive of, would come and put the icing on the cake by throwing her in jail. That she would....

Riiiiinnngg....Riiiiinnngg....

“Shit,” hissed Jeremy. “Carla did you hear that? Somebody is in here! We’ve gotta get the fuck out, right now. I don’t want to go to jail, you don’t want to go to jail, and I’m sure James doesn’t want to get dragged back out of his little box to some forensics lab.”

“Jeremy, who care....” and suddenly, in one of Carla’s mind’s extremely rare non sequiturs, she thought back to the Hedgewood house and James’ last whisper. “Answer the phone,” whispered Carla as she began walking towards the sound of the telephone. The walk quickly turned into a jog, and then a run, no longer so awkward as both heels snapped off like leg braces.

“Carla, where are you going,” cried Jeremy, running after her. Then suddenly, there she was. And there it was, just stuck into the wall like just another machine, a red light next to the cradle blinking evenly, normally, mocking the coltish pounding of her heart. Jeremy arrived behind her and stood hunched over, panting.

“Are you gonna answer it or what?” breathed Jeremy. She walked toward the telephone, awkwardly now, heelless. The dryness and excruciating clarity were gone; everything now felt flooded and distorted, her lungs, her mouth, her eyes, but mostly the air around her. With an effort she no longer felt capable of, she reached for the phone and lifted it from the set. Do I want to do this? thought Carla. I could just drop it right now, leave, and forget about it. But she couldn’t forget about it, no matter how hard she tried, not now, not ever. Exploding, imploding, she held the receiver to her ear.

“Hello,” she croaked. Silence. Dead silence. “Shit,” she sighed, the tension broken. “The line’s dead.”

SHANE HARMS

It's Time to Go Home, Mr. Baylerson

*I started out on burgundy but soon hit the harder stuff,
Everybody said they'd stand behind me when the game got rough
But the joke was on me, there was no one even there to bluff,
I'm going back to New York City, I do believe I've had enough.*
—Bob Dylan, “Highway 61”

“I never enjoyed the city—all those lights blaring out to the universe like giant SOS signs made of white rocks on a deserted island. The values and motivations of the people occupying our modern metropolises projecting on to the big screen of history our future generations will read. If there is a God, I think she’s watching with a big bag of popcorn waiting to see what us gifted animals will do as our water runs out under our feet, while we maintain our concerned, grazing stare on the next American Idol. But I don’t believe in God anyway. More of a void I speculate, if anything. You ever read much on Buddhism? Hell of a religion—letting everything pass away. Letting all that need for things to stick around pass. Even letting go of the ‘yourself.’ What that means I don’t know for sure—one of those things I can’t quite wrap my brain around. They say you just watch the void and things just come to you like a dream and after that you’re less blind....Oh I don’t know! But it seems a hell of a way to think. Those people really backed life into a corner, huh? I tell you what, after going to school and reading about some ‘a them things it changes a man. I suppose that’s how I managed breaking from my roots back East. It was easy I guess. I just tagged my folks with the ideals that have led to mass murder, genocide, and general disconcertion for millions of people for the past 2,000 years and poof—I’m in Grand Marais, Minnesota. You know, McKinney, you know what the square root of it all is, don’t you? Don’t you?”

Henry Baylerson glanced around the empty tavern, eyeing the noontime server just arriving to prep for the lunch shift. She was tall and slender, with

a long scar on her cheek where a knife once was. She glanced at him, letting her freckled face curl a bit at him out of habit. He grinned back but glanced sharply up to the TV above the bar spouting a pithy and loud news channel. A man at the end of the bar got up and quietly left. As he walked out, the dim light from outside pierced the darkness of the tavern. Henry began again.

“Yeah I know. It’s far from any mass population epicenter, but still, even here, I get fed up. Every season these tourists come from the asshole of the world—St. Paul—and then from Duluth and from Canada and who knows where else these pigs come from—bunch of hypocrite hype-sucking ignorants if you tell me—wanting to snap a few pictures and take a few stones from the beach of Lake Superior after they leave their bottles and—and—and picnic stuffs and wrappers and tennis shoes and fire pits and pink fishing yarn and hooks. Why? Because there’s nothing stopping ‘em from doing it, from raping every thing they want to rape because that’s just the way they are—blame evolution I guess—hungry mutilating rapists! It’s ingrained in ‘em, like fornication, like blood, like breathing.”

Henry sighed and for the first time he heard music in the bar. Dylan’s “Drifter’s Escape” was screeching from the jukebox. Henry took a long drink from his Pabst Blue Ribbon pint and looked two stools down to Jason McKinney for a response, any twinge of agreement. He found it in McKinney’s eyes darting back to his from the other side of the tavern.

“Ahh...Yeah... ah huh—You’re right...” Jason paused and coughed against his red flannel sleeve and dragged his nose up his shoulder before turning back to Henry. After adjusting his tattered blue Lake Superior Divers cap, he concurred, “...sucking up all they can while they can get it. They don’t stop with water—having those romantic smokeless driftwood fires. They take pictures too.”

Even sitting down, Jason McKinney towered over Henry. His broad shoulders were planks of ironwood. His back was wide and stone-hard from working the iron range as a youth. The jobs were gone now, but the labor had left its mark on him. Even his eyes were cold gray stones that mined you.

Henry grinned slightly. Puzzled, he let his stare last longer than a few seconds on McKinney’s face before he rotated the stool to the window facing the swallowing gray expanse of Lake Superior. It had started raining and water streaked down the glass windows, beading in places. Outside, soot clouds crowded the sky like a throng of men off fresh from a mine in a D.H. Law-

rence novel. Across the street the waves were crashing against the large brown and red rock riprap that shined iridescent in the light of a large Budweiser sign above the bar door. Some distance down shore, on the small pier that gimped out from the strand, a collection of fishermen in rain gear were conversing, tying things, and dangling poles. Some sat focused as monks, waiting for the tension in the line to pull and the journey to begin. Scott watched them intently. A phrase concerning diseased trout from a Hemmingway story quoted in his mind. His chapped lips parted with a grin revealing yellowed teeth that were speckled with brown granules that made a trail to the Copenhagen mound hibernating in the den of his cheek.

Henry looked to his glass and drank the rest of it off. Then with a seething whistle, he signaled to the bartender for another, letting his head rock and a scowl hover. The bartender nodded and started for the tap. Henry's canvas face was like dozens of tectonic plates, contiguous, furrowed, and rising in places that were swathing slack plateaus littered with gray and brown overgrowth: birch and bramble bush.

The barman brought the beer, letting it thud on the bar with a splash. Henry directed his head and watched the barman quickly tally the beer count in the computer.

"Stingy prick, isn't he?" slobbered in Henry's mouth as he rotated the stool toward the bar.

McKinney had found a Duluth newspaper and was perusing the employment section with a pen. The town had slowed down for the season. People were starting to bring in outside merchandise for the season. Some shut their doors completely for the winter. Many of them, like McKinney, looked to Duluth for possible streams of capital, but the list of jobs in the paper was short and had been for a long time. Welders, framers, CDL certified drivers: any one of these would do for McKinney, but nothing beyond marketing, customer service, and jobs requiring a college degree were listed in the paper. Watching McKinney earnestly examine the paper, Henry felt a twinge of pity for the man. Being twice his age, Henry had known McKinney's mother, Vivian. She had passed from breast cancer a year prior. Henry had loved her. McKinney had not known about the affair.

"Hey, McKinney, I ever tell you about these EDCs?"

"No, Henry, you didn't," McKinney said harshly.

"Yeah there's these EDCs or ah, ah... end-a-crine dis-rupt-ing com-

pounds found in fresh water lakes, streams, and drinking water... and drinking water, McKinney.”

“Yeah so.” McKinney’s face looked stiff. He rubbed his eyes.

“They say that these deals are linked to reproduction—you know, having babies. They also cause breast and prostate cancer, and problems for all kinds of people. I can’t help but think that these EDCs had something to... ah...to do ... with....”

“What’s that?” asked McKinney sharply.

“Nothing....You remember those mutant frogs seen all over the state, yeah, well, they said that amphibians are like sponges, so whatever’s in the water affects them more, like a fetus or something, so when there’s chemicals in the water they grow funny. McKinney, you won’t believe what caused these things. Shit, I can’t believe it. It’s the medicines and pesticides. And no wonder either, you know the last time I went to the doctor she tried to put me on something for mood. Do you know what Zoloft is? They call ’em these selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors. I don’t know how they work exactly but they affect you in the head. Make you feel and think differently. Now, I don’t know about you, but if anything’s gonna make me feel differently it’s gonna be good ole ale—beer. Man’s been drinking it for centuries. Anyway, this gal doctor tries to push these pills on me and I told her straight up ‘No. No way.’ Anyway, McKinney, the stuff that’s in all these pills the doctors are pushing is showing up in the water and we’re drinking it up. McKinney, do you have a girlfriend?”

McKinney’s eyes were locked on the paper. “Yeah,” he said flatly.

“Well, I bet she’s on birth control. Every gal today is, and you know what McKinney, all that estr-o-gen that’s pulsing through their bodies preventing them from carrying a child is being pissed out into our drinking water, affecting everyone. You just can’t escape it, McKinney. We need water to live. Humans are seventy percent water, we need to drink the dirty water for life. So, shit, we’re all on board this sinking ship—a regular Edmund Fitz Gerald. I don’t think we have a chance. I won’t even start on pesticides. Do you know what’s in the stuff these farmers are using....”

It went on like this for most of the night. The men remained at the bar: one talking, one trying not to listen. When people came in they sat at the table close to the window. They saw Henry at the bar waving his arms around. They heard his tone and his voice escalating. They heard him deciding things. The bartender saw it too.

“Yeah, McKinney, I can tell you stories that are older than the hill. I once told your mother this one story about....”

“What does my mother have to do with anything, Henry? You didn’t know her, Henry. Don’t mention her, Henry!” McKinney’s eyes were shards of a broken Pabst bottle. His voice metallic.

Henry winced, but leaned toward McKinney.

“Nothing—nothing, McKinney. Just this one time, I was out fishing the Baptism. After that one time fishing, that one time fishing, McKinney, I never was the same. I was hiking up to the falls and there in the clearing ahead of me, near the falls, I saw a black dog looking back, deep and dark at me. I could see ‘em clearly because his black coat shown out against the bright colors of spring. The river was heavy there, ya see, and I knew it would be too deep and I didn’t want to cross. I moved ahead slowly, but stopped as the dog looked hard in me, shining black in the sun, alone. We just stared at each other.”

Henry stopped and looked around the bar before starting again. He leaned a little harder toward McKinney.

“Two strangers came down the trail from around a bend. They startled the dog and me. They were decked out in the Cabela’s special. These guys spared no expense, like they just decided out of the blue to start fly-fishing and bought every little thing some specialist salesman put in front of them. The snags had on new waders, Filson hats matching with flies stuck in ‘em. Can you believe that flies stuck in them like they were special trophy flies that really hauled in the big ones? They had special guide series vests, shiny new rods, you know, the works. Anyway, the clones were talking about steelhead and how some guy at a fly shop told them the steelies would be in the river. They called him a liar. I know Larry, at ah...ah...I forget the name of his shop, but he’s not a liar. He knows and cares about these rivers. Anyway, I saw them before they saw me and you know what happened, McKinney? Something in me happened, something in me like a panic—I don’t know why but I ran off the trail like I was scared or something. I ran a little ways, and found a big tree to hide behind. They walked by and didn’t notice me. After they passed, I went back to the trail to see if the dog was still there, but it was gone. And McKinney... McKinney...McKinney!”

McKinney was circling something in the newspaper. He was in a serious state with his tongue out and eyes monitoring the circle as he drew it, already calculating how much and how long it would take to pay off this month’s ex-

penses working as a receptionist at David's Hair and Beauty. McKinney slowly glanced over at Henry.

He blankly articulated, "Yeah, so the dog saw those two posers and ran, right?"

Henry looked back at him. His face had fallen to his boots.

"I suppose, McKinney. I suppose. If you even care, McKinney. Huh, McKinney? I'm trying to tell you, McKinney, something important. I'm trying to tell you something that you might find out if you're smart enough. I'm trying to save you the trouble!"

McKinney yawned. After drinking off his whiskey-water, he blankly said, "Alright, Mr. Baylerson, finish your story."

Henry, in a determined and violent way, finished the half pint in front of him and slammed it on the bar, looking back at McKinney.

"I wanted to tell you after the dog had gone, it was then—after that black dog was gone, McKinney—it was then I felt alone. I felt like I was abandoned, like I wanted to say goodbye to that dog forever...f-forever or something."

"Gee," McKinney guffawed. "That's quite the story, Henry. You should write that one down. Send it to the newspaper, or maybe, hell, get 'er published in a book. The colleges would love that one."

"Wouldn't they? I knew that one would turn you over. I always thought I should be a writer. All the things I've seen, women I've been with, countries I've been in, all that could be written down and I'd be set. Do you know what I'm taking about? Shit, I could live out in the woods some place and never have to watch these tourists every season.... Never have to drive by a Walmart and watch them parricides flowing in like they were tapeworms living off the dirty teat. You know what, McKinney, let them live off it until the pocket books shrink and big Mamma decides infanticide is more efficient. McKinney, can you picture it? I could sleep without hearing the semi-trucks screaming by on the highway. That would be nice, wouldn't it, McKinney?"

"Yeah, I suppose it would be, Hank—ah...I mean, Henry. Why don't you do it—you know, get the hell out of town." McKinney grinned at the bartender.

The bartender who had been listening to the two men from down the bar moved closer to the scene. He was young, but he had been working the bar long enough to sense abuse.

Henry lifted his glass to the bartender and the bartender shook his head.

This scene had been replayed so many times that the barman didn't even feel bad about it. And Henry, knowing the barman had a hard club and a strong right arm, accepted this.

"Well, here you go, sonny." Henry extended his arm holding a blue bank card. The barman slid the card and gave Henry a piece of paper and a pen. Without looking, Henry signed without tipping.

"Well, McKinney, I guess Big Jimmy here says I've had enough. So! I'll see you down trail."

Henry got up and walked past McKinney.

"So soon, Mr. Baylerson? Darn. It's too bad that with age and wisdom and plenty of stories to tell, a man like you wouldn't stick around all night hooting and howling like he has something important to say and educating us ignorants. Good riddance, Henry." McKinney snickered then ejaculated, "Hope you drown." McKinney winked at the bartender and plugged his nose and puffed his cheeks.

Henry stopped at the red-lit doorway and stared back at McKinney. He waited for McKinney to turn his stool toward him, and when he did he said, "Another good story is how your mother and I came to be drunk and watched a beautiful sunrise from my bed."

After the bartender revived Henry, the bar was empty. The TV and music were off and the stools were placed upside down on the bar. A chemical smell permeated the bar, and the floors were wet and clean. The bar was dark except for a few beer signs that illuminated the place. A Pabst sign was clear and bright above the two men.

The barman spoke softly, "Mr. Baylerson—Henry, you have to go home now."

Henry opened his eyes slowly and realized he was face down in a booth. His cheek was sticking against the vinyl seat. He tasted the earthiness of blood, and there was pain in his side.

The barman got close to his ear and pushed his side. He harshly whispered, "It's time to go home, Mr. Baylerson."

Henry slowly sat up and rubbed his face. There was wetness and pain around his eye. The bright neon Jacob Leinenkugels clock told him it was 3:17 a.m. and that he had a headache. He sighed and tasted stagnant booze. He knew it had happened again.

“No—no, no. I’ll go. I’ll go on my own—I’ll go.”

Slowly, Henry slid out from the booth. The barman gently lifted his arm and showed him to the door. Outside, the waves of the lake were calmly washing the shore, and the sound of trickling water was everywhere.

“Be safe then,” the barman went and shut the door hard.

Henry started for home. The old guilt he knew too well had started. Even the sounds of his drunken steps were becoming intolerable. A crescent moon was high and gaudy in the sky, looking artificial like a neon fishing lure. Henry noticed the old pier ahead of him. It pointed east. He limped onto the sodden wood deck and walked to the end, leaning against the rail. The water was calm. The rain had stopped, but the air was wet. Even with the light of moon, there was no way to determine where the water ended and the sky began. He looked a long time at the darkness. For a moment he thought he could see the early morning light rising out from the void, but realized there was no light coming. He turned for home, but as he did his boot bumped a transparent wrapper near the edge of the dock. He heard it crinkle. A fisherman must have dropped it. Henry looked at the wrapper. There were strands of pink yarn in the plastic foil. He looked hard and heard the cars and big trucks booming on Highway 61 behind him. They were all behind him.

KARL LARSON

Sunflowers

A white '86 Ford F-150 rattled past the defunct West Fargo Union Stockyards on County 17. From inside the cab, the asphalt flowed underneath the gaping holes in the rusted floorboards. The sun, low in the summer sky to the west, found its home in the place between the roof and the visor where the glare was impossible to avoid. Herb Carneal's voice crackled out from the AM radio as the first pitch of the Twins game was thrown. The man threw the steering wheel, patched with electrical tape, to the left and directed the truck towards the sun, flipping the visor forward with his free hand. He glanced in the visor's mirror, revealing two tired blue eyes and sun-beaten cheeks. His weathered blue jeans were streaked with remnants of the morning's engine grease.

Sunflowers swallowed up the road on both sides for the next several miles. As he eased in the clutch and shifted to the highest gear, he remembered the day he had acquired the truck. That morning he had ended up buying it from a farmer for a hundred bucks, and subsequently had to help drag it out of the farmer's shelterbelt, where it had been laying dormant for years.

The road ahead and the way home, with a familiarity akin to cottonwood seeds blowing like snow, stopped the driver for a moment.

"Not yet," he whispered. He pulled off onto a gravel road that headed north and rolled down the windows with the hand cranks, awkwardly stretching to reach the passenger side window. The slight evening breeze wrestled the hot air out of the cab. A cloud of dust ripped into the air behind the truck, marking the departure from the paved county road. It hadn't rained in weeks.

A postcard lay on the dashboard and slid from side to side with the steering wheel on every turn onto a new gravel road. For the better part of an hour, each road proved more lowly maintained than the previous.

The dirt road was a dead end into a fallow field. Burnweed adorned the edge of the road. He realized he didn't actually know if anyone else called it burnweed, but his mother had done so when he was a kid, and it stuck with

him. The Ford made it halfway into a U-turn before halting. The empty gas gauge stared back at him.

He cursed and removed the key from the ignition. The gas gauge liked to linger around an eighth of a tank for a considerable time before suddenly dropping to the orange warning below the “E.” He normally was able to adjust for it in his head, but the altered course had distracted him. He cursed again.

“Good one, Grady,” he muttered and swung open the door. The dryness of the air welcomed him outside, and he could sense the sun drilling its eyes into the back of his neck. He turned and faced the sun, swiping at it and raising his voice.

“Yeah, I know. I don’t need you to remind me. Give it a rest.”

Grady’s face was obscured by a faded Twins cap with the TC logo. It was once blue, but several years of the sun and gravel roads had reduced its hue to something like minimum-maintenance camouflage. He reached into the truck bed for a steel gas can blazed with red and yellow diagonal stripes. He lifted the can out of the bed, finding it to be light. No gas. Grady turned an eye to the sun momentarily and then back to the bed to survey the rest of its contents: a tow rope with fraying edges and large metal hooks, a couple of fifty-pound sandbags, a pair of jumper cables, a set of winter chains, and a spare radial tire.

“Well, at least I’m ready for winter.”

He tossed the can back into the bed and sat back in the cab with the door hanging open. He flipped over the postcard, the death certificate for a previous life, and studied the postmark: Scottsbluff, Nebraska. On the front was a picture of Sentinel Rock. He examined the leaning scrawl on the back for what he figured was a few hundred times before setting it down.

“So that’s where you are now, Evelyn.”

He received a postcard once or twice a year from her. The last one was postmarked in Portage, Indiana, and the one before from Provo, Utah. Grady kept them stacked in the glove box, bound by a rubber band. He wasn’t sure what do with them.

Grady stared ahead into the fallow field and watched a lone cottonwood in the middle of the section surrounded by overturned Red River Valley soil unrelentingly grayed by the sun. He imagined the size of its roots, looked towards the sun and remarked, “Yeah, I’d say so.”

“Who are ya talkin’ to?”

Startled, Grady looked to his left and saw an older man wearing a cowboy hat and blue jeans, pummeling a wad of tobacco into submission. Grady blinked.

“Well, I suppose that isn’t any of my business really. What are you doin’ out here? If you wanna admire my fields, I’d say you’d enjoy the one with sunflowers a bit more than this one with nothin’.”

Grady began to speak, but the stranger continued.

“Ya got North Dakota plates, so yer not another tourist from Winnipeg that lost their way. That happens every once in a while, and I gotta give ‘em directions to West Acres so they can shop at Bed, Bath, and Baby GAP, or whatever it’s called. That mall used to be in the middle of nowhere, a big old wheat field fifteen miles outta town. But ya probably know that. Ya don’t look like a Canadian.”

The stranger paused to adjust the wad in his mouth, allowing Grady to interject. Grady’s eyes caught the cattails flailing in the ditch in response to the desperate hum of a lone cricket. Reverberating power lines, like tiny wooden crosses against the all-encompassing prairie sky, stretched across the sectioned valley terrain.

“I ran out of gas.”

“You don’t say? You picked a nice place far away from everything. Kinda like the dog I used to have. His name was Griff, named after Fred McGriff, ya know, Crime Dog? Played for the Braves? I was visiting my cousin in Atlanta, and a bunch of pups were born one night when we were watching the World Series back in ‘95 and Bob Costas was talkin’ about this McGriff guy. Well, he was a pretty strong kid, hit a long home run and I told my cousin, ‘Do you mind if I take one of these pups and name it Griff?’ Anyways, last summer old Griff ran outta gas and went way out into the shelterbelt to die—found him a few days later and buried him right out underneath that cottonwood you were just talkin’ to. Hardest damn thing I’ve ever done. My wife died some twenty years ago and that was damn hard too, but they didn’t let me bury her myself out in the middle of a sunflower field, and I swear to Christ I would have if I had to drive out to Williston to get her and bring her back in the bed of my truck. People spend enough time cooped up in neat little rows while they’re alive.”

The stranger spit out the wad of tobacco, careful to divert his aim from his brown leather cowboy boots. He reached for a bag of sunflower seeds in his

back pocket and transferred seamlessly into a handful of seeds.

“Tryin’ to quit, ya know. Anyways, the name’s Boyd.”

Boyd offered a vigorous handshake, accepted by Grady with slight hesitation after shifting in his seat.

“Grady.”

“Well, Grady, I got a gas can in the back of my truck a couple hundred yards back. I saw ya out here, and I figured I’d walk up and take a look, didn’t want to startle ya in case you were one of those creeps who come out on these roads to cook up some meth, like I had to deal with once last summer. Just kindly take their ingredients and give them a firm kick in the ass, ya know? Does the trick and they leave in an awful hurry. Gas or diesel?”

“Gas would be great, Boyd. Let me walk with you, and I can carry the gas back here.”

Grady loosened his six o’clock grip on the steering wheel and took a final glance at the postcard from Scottsbluff, soaked with stubborn dead memories of Evelyn. He let it drop to the floor where it passed through a hole in the floorboards and into the tire ruts underneath to become part of the Red River Valley earth, from which new living and vibrant things would soon grow.

CATLIN FOX

Pidgeons

Sam had met Ralph buying ice cream at a vendor in the city's only park when she was sixteen and he was thirty-six. A few months later she heard he had been convicted of rape and was serving six years in the state pen. But he had been sweet, buying her ice cream and hot dogs in the park, listening to her high school problems, and helping her with math when her own father was too preoccupied with work and Bud Light to notice her. And Ralph's faded brown eyes and soft voice always had a soothing reply to the most trivial of problems. Every now and then Sam wondered what had happened, how her gentle Ralph had ended up behind bars.

But now, six years and most of a college degree later, Sam sat staring at the six pigeons cackling to each other on the telephone wire across the street. Ralph would be getting out soon; her father had forwarded Ralph's letter to her college address last month. She still wasn't sure if she wanted to see him again.

The coffee shop by campus was silent; most of the students had retreated to sunnier locales for the mid-term break. Sam fiddled with yesterday's newspaper, tracing the ring someone's cup had left over the Sunday *Peanuts* spread. Her head jerked up each time the door jangled; Ralph was almost late. She had been nursing a cold cup of coffee for nearly an hour, letting her nerves get the better of her while she waited. The bells on the door clattered.

He hadn't changed much: light blue polo shirt, thin frame, brown hair thinning a little, and face pale under the cheap fluorescent lights. He smiled a little when he saw her, moving to the vacant chair across the low table from her rigid seat.

"I'm sorry I left, Sam." His voice was still smooth as honey, flowing over her and calming her fears. A barista came over; he waved her away. "Sorry, did you want a refill?" He pointed to Sam's stale mug. She shook her head. He sat. "I thought about you. I didn't write." He shrugged, the movement jerky under the

blue shirt. "I didn't know what you might have heard, if you would have even cared about me. So I only wrote the once." Sam stared into her coffee, out the window, wouldn't meet his eyes. "College, huh? I guess you passed math then. What's your major?"

"Mathematics," Sam whispered, breaking the silence around his even voice, still not looking at him, out the window, anywhere else but him.

"Oh. Must have had a good tutor or something after I left. Congrats." His hands twisted around each other, tugged wrinkles from his khakis.

"Ralph," she began, watching a four-door park across the street, "why are you here?"

He was quiet for a few minutes, watching the driver exit the parked car, pulling a baby from the back seat. A pigeon sat on the roof of the car. "Well, Sammy, I guess...." She stared right at him, her brown eyes piercing his, waiting smile-less for six years of explanation. "I hoped things might go back to how they were. I just want to be there for you. You're something special, Sammy."

"Whatever, Ralph." She dropped a dollar tip by her sludge-filled mug and stood, zipping up her jacket. "Maybe I'll see you around." The bells on the door tinkled as she left. Ralph turned his head to the back counter to avoid watching her leave.

It was just a short column in the middle of the news section: "Convict Murdered after Release." Sam wouldn't even have seen it if her roommate hadn't pointed it out as unusual news. It was brief:

Jonathan Sims, 33, was arrested today for the murder of Ralph Murray, 42. Murray was found dead in his apartment on Saturday. One of Murray's neighbors had taken Sims' license plate number for parking in her spot, and turned it over to police early Saturday morning. Sims was living with his long-time girlfriend Jenny Walker, 20, only three blocks away. Seven years ago Walker accused Murray of rape, and Murray had just been released after six years imprisonment for the crime. Investigators believe that Walker accused Murray under pressure from Sims, and that the recent murder was Sims' attempt to cover up his involvement in the crime six years ago, believing that Murray might now find the means to prove his innocence. If convicted, Sims faces up to twenty years in the state penitentiary.

Sam heard that Jenny Walker had cried in court.

Sam sat stiffly in the straight-backed chair in the lawyer's office after Ralph's short funeral. The older couple across the table must be his parents; Sam didn't want to interrupt their grieving to ask. Her own eyes were surprisingly dry, eliciting dirty looks from the lawyer's assistant. There were no windows to stare out of; she carefully examined a poorly framed nature scene on the wall instead. A puffy old man with a manila envelope harrumphed through the door, seating himself heavily at one end of the table.

"Let's begin," he said, pulling a sheaf of paper from the envelope. "The last will and testament of Ralph Warren Murray, dated February 13 of this year." The woman loudly sobbed a fresh bout of tears, her husband clapping her back as if to soothe her. "To my parents," the rough lawyer continued, "I leave the contents of my place of dwelling, as well as the deed and properties of 112 Carson St, where they currently reside." Mr. Murray startled at this; only recently had the bank informed him that his mortgage payments were no longer necessary, that his debt had been settled by an anonymous third party.

The lawyer passed a second paper, the deed, over to the Murrays, coughing a little as he read, "To charities here listed, I leave four grants of \$10,000 each, to do with as they see fit." A man who had been silent in the corner, presumably the lawyer's aid, came forward and received four signed checks to be delivered to the charities later. "And to Samantha Jane Watkins..." Sam looked up, Mrs. Murray glared at her, "I leave the bulk of my estate, which at the time of this signing is valued at \$634,219.45. The liquidation of my assets shall be handled by this firm; all proceeds placed in a fund for Miss Watkins' use, as she sees fit." The lawyer harrumphed once more, silencing the protest Mrs. Murray had been about to make.

"He did some investing, while he was... away," the lawyer said, watching Sam's face. Her mouth had fallen open at the dollar amount, eyes fixated on the blank table rather than the far wall for the first time during the reading. The assistant who took the charity checks ushered the Murrays out, leaving Sam alone with the lawyer.

"He also left you this." A business class envelope was placed between her hands. "Came in the day before *it* happened asking to add it to our documents." He paused. "Come see me when you're done reading it; we'll start making the arrangements to transfer the funds."

Sam's watch ticked in the stillness as she turned the letter over and over in her hands. Slowly she removed the papers from the white envelope, smoothing out the creases on the table. His handwriting hadn't changed since he helped her with her homework years ago.

Samantha, dear Samantha,

I'm so sorry I left. I didn't want to; I promise you that. If you are reading this, you already know I didn't do what they said I did; she was just a girl that lived in my building. I guess they thought I wouldn't fight the accusations. I didn't want to hurt you with my alibi, so they were right. I just didn't want to get you in trouble, you were so young. But I'm sorry I didn't fight harder, for you.

Remember to smile once in a while, dear Sammy, you were always so serious. You have the most wonderful future ahead of you... When you graduate, look up Joe Barr in New York City (Joe C. Barr, second one in the phone book) and tell him I sent you. He'll set you up with a great job, whatever you want.

If you haven't guessed by now, I loved you, as a daughter, maybe as more than a daughter. I never did quite figure that one out, as much time as I had to think. I had hoped you would take me back with open arms, and I could shower you with the fruits of six years of lucky stock market guesses. Your cold rejection in the coffee shop was disheartening, but I will keep trying until I die. At least let me replace the father who doesn't care for you....

I suppose, if you are reading this, I have failed. We are not blissfully happy together or I would have removed this letter from Mr. Connelly's keeping. I had so hoped....

There is a program in the city that helps tutor high school students in math. Its full designation is Standardized Applied Mathematics, but I thought the acronym appropriate—S.A.M. It's already in place in four schools, with the funding for six more and thirty years duration. Perhaps you could take my place as one of the tutors? If that's too much to ask, then don't. I just thought you might enjoy it.

Dearest Samantha, I am sorry I could not stay with you. If I could do things differently....No. Everything I've done since the day I met you has been for you, to protect you, to help you.

Please think of me.

Ralph

The last page was smudged with tears. New drops fell, adding to the running ink. Sam rested her head on the edge of the table, great heaving sobs tearing out of her in whooping gasps. Connelly's aide came in, placed a box of tissues beside her, and exited. Sam didn't even notice. A wall had broken inside of her, raw emotion six years due pouring out in fresh tears and wails. The letter was soaked. Her shaking fingers brushed through ink puddles as she sat up, wiping her reddened face with the tissues. Still sobbing quietly, she used the reflection off the lacquered table to straighten her hair and collar. Another tissue served to dry off the moist pages of the letter. Sam slipped them into her small purse when she stood, patting wrinkles from the black skirt her roommate had loaned her. A final snuffle, and Sam threw the crumpled tissues in the garbage as she exited the room.

The period bell rang and high schoolers flooded the halls. Sam maneuvered through the press, carefully dodging elbows and swinging locker doors. The main office was clearly marked, and the harried secretary circled the math department on a visitor map. "Room 314, and if you see that dang bird that's flying around, tell the janitor. It's been disrupting classes all day." Sam was shoved out the door back into the teeming mass of bodies.

The third floor was quieter, most of the students having made it down to the cafeteria or their next class by the time Sam reached the room. A tall young teacher was the only one inside, steadily removing equations from three walls of whiteboards.

"You're Samantha." His voice was soft, almost familiar. "My uncle showed us pictures." He held out his hand. "Cale Murray, pleased to meet you." Sam looked into his faded brown eyes, and smiled.



POETRY

from the poetry editor....

When reviewing submission for this year's volume of *Northern Eclecta* the poetry editors were a bit worried at first, due to a lack of submissions. Luckily for us, Spring Break brought a flood we Fargonians were actually happy to see, a flood of poems. However, we can only publish so many poems per volume. This year's journal has some of the best we've seen to date, and while I can't introduce them all, I'd like to mention a few.

"Paws" is a poem that has packs more emotions into a single page than I thought was possible. If you've ever loved and lost a pet, this piece is guaranteed to tug at your heartstrings. One of the favorites of the poetry editors, this poem made several grown men tear up, so bring your Kleenex.

"Lake Dreams" vividly paints a single person's memories of a day spent with his family like a portrait. The descriptive writing almost makes you feel like you're remembering this day yourself instead of reading about someone else's experiences.

"Time on Fire" is an interesting piece based on the odd people that our society deems worthy of remembering, even long after they have left this world. Full of fresh language and open to personal interpretation, this is one you will read again and again.

These are only a few of the wonderful works we included in this year's volume of *Northern Eclecta*. On behalf of all of the poetry editors, I hope you enjoy the following selections as much as we have.

Carl Malheim

MEGAN L. EVEN

The Sign of the Cross

I'll cross the stars,
Cross my heart,
Knot my tongue,
And fall apart.
Fall in love,
And fall in line,
A curving circle,
Repeated time.
The Father, Son,
And Holy Spirit,
I close my eyes,
But I can hear it.
Ringing bells,
Ticking clocks,
Ticking bombs,
Diamond rocks.
Eyes so blue,
A matching face,
A golden band,
Clean white lace.
Dizzy circles,
Golden words,
Ringing bells,
Little birds.
Whispered secrets,
Silent thoughts,
Tangled truth,
Lucky knots.

Knotted tongues,
Speaking true,
Something borrowed,
Something blue.
Spinning hands,
Twist the face,
Fall in love,
Fall from grace.
Fall in line,
Fall apart,
I cross my fingers,
Cross my heart.

R. J. PETERSON

Sunflower, Wilt

Wilt flower, wilt?
The air between us thick
With pollen, choking odes for you
Wilt flower, wilt?

Wilt flower, wilt?
A seed in salted earth
Black soil, choking wretched roots
Wilt flower, wilt?

Wilt flower, wilt?
The stalk may never end
Though living, still is just a weed
Wilt flower, wilt?

Wilt flower, wilt?
As if to mock the sun
The bulb it bursts, yellow light
Wilt flower, wilt?

Wilt, flower, wilt
Morning dew is scarce
Virgin seeds fall to the ground
Wilt, flower, wilt

Wilt, flower, wilt
Fragile limbs succumb
To bite of insect, rat and crow
Wilt, flower, wilt

Wilt, flower, wilt
The infant star shines bright
Petals burn, leaves to ash
Wilt, flower, wilt

Wilt, flower, wilt
Summer comes to end
Hope will blossom ne'er again
Wilt, flower, wilt

AMBER L. FETCH

Our Fort

The wind whips through the air
But the trees keep us protected.
Birds sing joyfully from the
Lush branches overhead. It's
Hot this summer, but the shade
And breeze keep us cool. A small
Alcove, dirty and wonderful,
Smelling of earthworms and
A fresh rainfall, promises unseen
Treasures in our secret place.
A discarded blue backpack,
Its owner a mystery, rests
Enticingly within the recess.
But time will not allow us
To explore its contents; not yet.
Inconceivably dry dirt slips
Through our fingers as we bury
The backpack within the niche.
Another day, on another adventure,
We shall dig up our treasure and
Discover what loot can be found.
But for today, as a shrill call
Echoes around our secret place,
We know we must return home.
Our parents are growing worried.

NEIL SCHLOESSER

Playing video games I feel like an old fool

Playing video games I feel like an old fool
I can't put my hands around all the buttons
I can't get my brain to work
To learn
I never thought I'd have trouble learning
But I do
I'm still young
You'd think I'd be able to hit some buttons and make imaginary creatures move
Exactly, you'd think
The only thing I seem to do well is nothing
All day I do nothing
And I do it extraordinarily well
I can see too
But seeing is believing
I believe I can see
I believe I see?
I believe?
Ugh, let's play a different game

DAVIN WAIT

Heroes, Soothsayers, Truth, and Truthsayers

The prophets of yesterday wavered meekly into their good nights.
Joining; defiling their youth; swinging the hammers of unreason.

Lennon bought his furs and Dylan sold his sales,
breaking bank in black and white.
And who became the man?
Who? Who?
Who? Who?
But, rebellion sells and Gandhi could never sing.
At least Tuff Gong prowled.

My voices of enlightenment...
dragged me
through dark border towns
where men cried lynched and
women trembled silently
bleeding from gifts
that burnt them cursed.

They brought me to windows
where I watched kids smile at soup
and heard thankyou's for things
greedy no successful deserving no ghoulish pigs
would not feed the dogs.
And the dogs, they're pushed, not push,
into furnaces reeking of mangled arms
that don't dance with daughters;

and mouths and hands that rot but not
teach sons the hazy truths in life.

I watched from the safety of a shadow
as the bastards whispered proverbs
and so eloquently chanted
as worse bastards laid waste.
And as I searched for Virgil they hid with me,
trembled, closed eyes.
And while they cowered beside me,
the knife was lifted by a more pragmatic man.

As he spilled the victim,
my voices whispered, "no."
Some whimpered,
some held chins like granite,
some shook.

And as that man spilled the victim,
I saw the truth:
The rites of man so often infringe
on the supposed rights of man.

And as I stood buried,
I heard the truth:
We need some heroes to inspire some heroes.

DAVID VANE

Lake Dreams

Dreaming and drifting,
Thickening thought,
Weaving and winding,
Round twisted sheets.

Cloudy and warm,
On windy beach,
A boy's laughter carried
By lake weed scents.

Dripping wet,
Her cascade breasts
And idle stare,
Past uneven locks
Framing her face.

Baiting the tide
Are tattling echoes,
Against wavering friends
With circling spine.

Grassy dunes wave
In kaleidoscope night,
Marking her shadow
Through fisheye lens,
A handful of quartz
Skipping the wake.

Bonfire party blaze,
Silky orange flame,
Bare far-gone love notes
Written in sand
By beach tar toes.

DOMINIC J. MANTHEY

Time on Fire

William Blake and Jesus,
smiling, fighting in an elevator
going up to the top of Seers Tower.
There Socrates sits, contemplating
the aggravating complacency of mankind.

While Walt Whitman roughly adjusts
to four-wheel drive,
while Thoreau sits in the bed, dejected,
keeping watch in the ether
for Emerson's eye to emerge.

Percy Shelley throws pebbles at the window of Emily Dickinson,
who sits alone and alive in the closet of her hive.
And the silenced women—
how they should shame us—
but they guard the gates and wait.

And if all and all is true,
and Nietzsche reproves his resplendent madness,
then this fire will burn with dauntless, cascading gladness.
And do not forget this!
Yet Carl Jung still gawks at the moon.

And the greatest witticisms unspoken
float in the open
and smack the nervous youth,
and frighten and excite with their uncouth truths.

Let this genius, like Pandora's box,
once opened, shatter every door and lock.

CAITLIN DEAL

Paws

New maroon collar
Metal tags clanging like tiny cymbals
He runs to meet me at the door

His soft puppy fur and honey breath greet me
Tiny razors nibble my hands and up my arm
Clumsy paws circle me in a ring of playful barks, friendly growls
“I want to play” his soft eyes tell me

So we wrestle in the backyard
Play fetch
Tug of war with a bone – then with my socks
And the always exciting game of follow the trail of garbage
From the upstairs bathroom

Faded maroon collar
Worn and frayed
Metal tags slowly clinking
He hobbles to meet me at the door

His graying hair and stiff joints greet me
He grins and softly licks my hand
Weary paws lay down as I hang up my coat
“I’m tired” his soft eyes tell me

So I help him onto the couch and we watch TV
I rub him behind the ears
He sighs and lays his head on my lap
Together we dream

Faded maroon collar
Filled with memories
Is laying on my nightstand
Beside where he used to sleep

The symphony has left my house
The chimes no longer ring
But every time I step inside
I hear paws coming to greet me

BRIANNE ANDERSON

Grandpa

When the world turns dark
And all I feel is pain
My heart is ripped
It's all covered in chains
I can't see before me
Only behind
And this is what changed my mind
I couldn't give up
I could never let go
I was always gonna be there
And never lose hope
I tried so hard
To not say goodbye
But all that I could do is cry inside
You were my hero
My dearest friend
I was standin' by your side
Until the end
But this isn't forever
It's just done for now
He took you away
I keep askin' how
You were my angel
You were part of my soul
And sooner than later
I'll pay my toll
Together again
We'll be hand in hand
A friend forever
A wonderful man

JORDAN G. WILLI

Betrayal of an Angel

My heart was yours to have,
Yours to hold,
Yours to do with as you saw fit.
Never in a million years did I think that you,
The innocent angel, could commit such a horrible crime,
As to betray my trust, to lie to me, to stab me in the back with a poisoned dagger.
You reached your delicately strong hand into my chest
Ripped my heart out and ate it while my eyes still had life left to see.

It started like any other teenage romance,
Boy likes girl, girl likes boy,
I knew going in that you were already being stretched in too many directions
For even an angel to manage.
We spent less and less time together and every time I saw you,
It felt like you were pulling away,
Severing the already fragile rope that connected our two hearts.
In the end you told me that your hectic life could not handle me or any other guy.

I should have seen right away the tiny horns
That were beginning to emerge from beneath your
Beautiful golden hair, but my heart,
So blinded by love as it was,
Could not, would not, see the betrayal,
Not in the angel I would have died for.

Never before, in my short life, have I felt so betrayed
As I was the moment that you admitted your feelings for the devil,
The same devil I told you existed but you denied was real,
The one that you said was not who I knew he was.

How can an angel be so blind?
I thought only humans could be fooled by the devil's glamour.

Did you secretly love him when we were together?
What is it that attracts so many pure and virtuous angels to the devil?
Is it his ugly face, so ridden with scars,
One for each lie he has told since the beginning of time?
Or how arrogant he is, thinking he can rule the world?
How can you not see that he will be your downfall,
The catalyst that will lead to loss of your wings?

Now I must decide what to do with the dagger
That protrudes from the small of my back.
Should I use it to bring down the angel that betrayed me?
To kill the devil that forever stands in the way of my love?
Am I so far gone that all hope of finding love is shattered?
Or is it better for the world to be without the man
Who an innocent angel cannot love?

No matter what life throws at you
Your will to live should always outweigh the will to die
Even if your heart has been broken into too many pieces to count.
So live on, my blind heart,
For one day you will see again,
See the light that is *love*.

JONI WIEBESICK

Mirrors Never Lie

I'm paralyzed by this fear I feel because sometimes the only monster
is in the mirror

Oh mirror mirror on the wall, who is the most hideous of them all?

What is this creature that I see?

How could *that* possibly be me?

I see in this monster's eyes, something even a mother would despise,
for corruption has misshapen its face,
with cruel dead eyes that stare into space

How could this misshapen thing
Steal my voice and take my place?

Mirror mirror on the wall, surely this is the best lie of all
For you must think I'm a perfect fool, for falling for something oh so cruel

Mirror mirror take away that face, so that my own may take its place
Where is the smile my mother used to love
Where are my eyes that seemed to shine with light from above

Take this creature who has cruelty lined in its flesh
Back to the darkness of my chest
Let my beautiful eyes of blue outshine the cold dead eyes so cruel
Let my fair unwrinkled skin out shine the monster that lies within

Oh mirror mirror on the wall, show me the beauty of a doll
Fake and plastic but beautiful, the face the world adores so

JESSICA MAMMENZA

Disney under the microscope

it was just another one of those
guy gets the girl, girl gets the castle tales:
he wooed her, she kissed him, and
POOF!
out jumped Granny with a magic wand
and the obligatory white horse.
trumpets blared while woodland creatures
(or dwarves. or mice, depending on your version)
danced jubilantly, the thoughtful sun
setting radiantly behind them.

end of story.

back cover.

UPC barcode.

[it would have been better as a DVD]

Imagine:
behind the scenes footage of Ariel's first attempt to walk
or Belle's transition from zookeeper to housewife.
two well-placed plugs for Sleeping Beauty's anti-age cream,
a sensationalized synopsis
of Cinderella's recent Prozac addiction,
(naturally attributed to her rough childhood years).

even ol' Walt could have gotten in on the fun,
decisively detailing what constitutes "happily ever after"-

[that man really needed a thesaurus]

PETER HATORI

Night Combat

Upon the Tasmanian green sheets
Crumpled and damp from my sweat,
That covered my weary poor bed.
I'd wrestled with the moisture saturated air
On that boiling, North Dakota, July night.
Hoping to win a fitful night's sleep
And clearly leading the contest
When a new combatant came into the fray.
At first the high drone of the fly's wings
Were only annoying, a mezzo soprano
Harmony to the slow tenor rhythm of
The ceiling fan, but with each new chorus
The wings grew louder and closer to
My ears, my tired, tired ears.

I countered this attack with a space age
Foam memory pillow over my head.
Technology would thwart the blitz
Of this insignificant insect assailant.
But the precision of my defense to a
Primitive foe was simply a response
To its insidious feint of humming wings.
Once the surreptitious reverberation of
The opaque fragile pinions seemed vanquished,
By the sophisticated science of my pillow,
Then real assault began on my prone body.

Like a meteor crashing on the moon
You landed on my exposed right arm.
The weight of your body, .035 grams,
Stomped the slumber I desired from
My mind and the new combat ensued.
I fumbled for the light switch, to
Bring your annoying presence in
View. My electric fly swatter was
Ready, the bright lemon yellow racquet
With dark deadly electric wires strung
Ready to impose the ultimate sentence
Upon you, for the crime of being alive.
To cease intermittent menace caused by
Your life and desires and kept my
Dreams in a world of deliberate limbo.

I missed you in flight, the arc of
My racquet made a racket against
The once light lamp on my dresser.
In darkness I cursed your laughter
As you frolicked in a span of
Uninterrupted aerial summersaults
Unseen in my now darkened den
Of sleeplessness and purple anger.

Stumbling, shuffling, striving to find
A space on the floor to set my feet
Free of shoes, books and clothes resting,
On the thin tan piles of cheap tan carpet,
Blanketing the floor, resting for the
Awakening of a new restless tomorrow.

DENNIS OWEN FROHLICH

Morbidity

The man was a sinner,
exiled to an island
by the mistakes he made.

He couldn't control himself,
turning to the
only option left.

He grabbed a machete and
hacked his hand off.
The pain faded after two weeks
 but his repentance
 wasn't finished yet.
He picked up the machete
again and wondered,
"How can I remove my other hand?"

Only then did he realize he'd
gone as far as he could.



ART &
PHOTOGRAPHY

from the art and photography editors....

As co-editors of the photography and art submissions, we have been privileged to receive such interesting photographs and art pieces. Of the pieces that have been submitted, we have chosen the ones that stood out above the rest to be published. Along with these pieces, we have published photographs and art pieces on the web that use color to accentuate the artist's ideas. These can be found at www.NorthernE.com.

Looking through these pieces, note the different elements along with the different stories told by each picture. We hope you join us as we embark on this journey through the eyes of a few different artists. Thank you for your submissions and support, and we hope you enjoy these pieces.

As a note, there is one artist who has both a photography and art piece published. Though normally Northern Eclecta only published one piece per author, we feel that art and photography are two different mediums and both the photograph and artwork is an excellent expression of each medium.

Jenni Berg and Josie Breen

DAMIR CAVKUSIC

Timeless Gauges



AMBER SUNDERMAN

Holding On



SARAH ISHAUG

Noir Ame (Black Soul)



JANELL GIETZEN

Protest of Hell's Uprising



MARISSA KIBBY NELSON

Looking Up



EUNSU LEE

Change Your View



MICHAEL GJORVEN

Farm Life: Young Dwarfing Old



ANDREW JACOT

Untitled



BOBBIE GUTZMER

Nirvana



AMBER SUNDERMAN

Fascinated





NONFICTION

from the nonfiction editor....

In nonfiction this year we decided to publish stories that focus on personal experiences; the types of experiences vary greatly but they all represent important influences in the authors' lives.

"Unplanned Parenthood" by Leah Elliott Hauge is a telling of the experience one woman had when she discovered that she was pregnant. She illustrates the tumultuous storm of feelings that she, like so many other women, experienced during the time of uncertainty that led to the birth of her son.

"Sunflowers" by Fangliang Shi is a reflection upon fondly held memories in which the author describes the time that she spent at her grandparents' house tending to the yard. Through her reflection, she conveys to us the revelations that nature provided her.

"Numele meu e Joshua" by Joshua Eddy is the account of an adopted boy trying to fill in the gap of knowledge about his origins. The story expresses one of the questions that most adopted children face: "who am I?"

"4 Men and a Tomato" by Jeremy Allen Miller is a humorous example of what infatuation is like and how it can arise on any occasion. The uncertainty of the experience is emphasized by the boundless number of new experiences that the author has on his trip.

"The Need to Run" by Dain Sullivan shares the comfort and reassurance that one man gained from his participation in the Fargo Marathon. The story displays the sense of strength that stable ground under one's feet can give in an uncertain world.

The authors share these stories in the hopes that you can gain as much from their experiences as they have.

Brian Knutson

LEAH ELLIOTT HAUGE

Unplanned Parenthood

I cried when I found out I was pregnant, and not because I was happy. I had finally figured out what I wanted to do with my life and had just started my second year of work toward a vocal performance degree and a career as an opera singer. I tried to brush off my late period as stress from starting a new school year, but when I awoke at 2 a.m., four days after I should have been bleeding, I couldn't wait any longer to confirm what I already dreaded to be true. I could almost hear a gavel falling as I worked up the nerve to look down at the bathroom counter. Two unmistakable pink lines spelled out my sentence and prickled every hair on my body. My dream of singing at the Met was all over before it had even begun.

I slipped back into bed next to my husband Ray and my sobs soon woke him. "I wanted to finish school," I cried into his shoulder.

"It's okay, it's okay. You'll finish," he told me. How could he be so sure?

I forced a smile at each wish of congratulations, pretending that we had planned this and I was happy. I had internalized the unspoken message that in this day and age, women who got pregnant by accident were irresponsible, and furthermore, stupid. I didn't want anyone thinking I was stupid.

Until I experienced an unplanned pregnancy myself, I had shared the views of my staunchly pro-life parents. But now I understood the terror and the feeling of entrapment, the nausea that had nothing to do with morning sickness, and the despair of watching my own life being consumed by the one growing inside me. I would be lying to say that ending the pregnancy never crossed my mind.

I sought solace in pregnancy books from the library. One book declared that most women are "ecstatically happy" when they learn that they are pregnant. I returned that book and looked for the books for women who are "scared shitless" to learn they are pregnant, but I couldn't find any.

Over the next several months, I did experience fleeting moments of feeling happy and excited about the baby. Once we found out we were having a boy,

it was fun to shop for baby clothes and get the room ready, but I spent most of those nine months gestating worries along with the baby.

I had been around babies quite a bit and was pretty sure I knew what I was doing when it came to a baby, but I felt completely unprepared to parent a toddler, a child, an adolescent. I was a moody, self-centered, short-tempered twenty-three-year-old. Could I possibly be a good mother? My mind flashed back to a morning before I knew I was pregnant when I had breakfasted on microwave popcorn and a coke. Had I screwed up my kid already with my cavalier disregard for nutrition? Neither Ray nor I had finished school yet. Would we be okay financially? What was to become of my own dreams and goals?

Spring semester ended the middle of May. I had nothing left to do now except wait for my due date on the first of June. Once it passed, there was only so much cleaning I could pretend our two-bedroom townhouse needed.

At ten days past my due date, I'd had enough and had my midwife break my water to start labor. Twelve hours later, I was absolutely miserable and felt like I wasn't making any progress. An epidural brought sweet relief, but it was short-lived. Within a few minutes of placing it, everyone was looking at the fetal monitor and frowning. The hazy warmth in my legs seemed to be spreading to my brain. They helped me flip onto my left side, then onto my right, took my pulse. More frowning.

My midwife turned to me, "Leah, we're going to have to do a c-section."

She kept talking after this but her voice was very far away and I couldn't hear her. How could this be happening to me? I had read a zillion-and-a-half books on childbirth and had tried to do everything right. I couldn't even give birth properly. I had failed at my first task as a mother. The staff shoved a string of consent forms into my hands and I signed them, my signature becoming more and more chicken-scratchy with each one. My teeth chattered and my body shook uncontrollably, though I wasn't cold. Ceiling lights strobed across my vision as they wheeled me into the operating room.

Once inside, I lost my status as a person and became just another fixture in the operating room. I heard them listening to the radio and going through the checklist of instruments, boring and routine for them. Three times I asked, "Can my husband come in yet?" but no one acknowledged me. In an overhead light, I saw the reflection of my belly being washed in yellow iodine. I told

them that I could see what was going on and that I didn't want to. "Oh, you won't," they dismissed me. There I was on that cold table, arms stretched out and strapped down like a crucifix, mostly naked and completely alone.

Finally, they let Ray come in. He held my hand and I tried to focus all my attention on him and not on what was happening just inches below. Soon we heard a good, hearty cry. An eternity later they brought over this bundled creature for the obligatory show-the-mother. An intense fascination overtook me. *It's a baby! Is that really mine?* I stretched my hand toward him, but they whisked him away before I reached him.

Staying in the hospital was like living in a B science fiction movie. I never saw any windows. I completely lost track of the time of day or night, or what part of the building I was in. All the food had the same aftertaste. Between an arm cuff that automatically took my blood pressure every half hour, an IV drip that click-clicked, click-clicked like the hideous beating of the tell-tale heart, and some clamp on my finger that beeped angrily any time it slipped off, I felt like a cyborg.

Once the epidural wore off and I could get out of bed, I was literally falling asleep standing up and the hospital staff destroyed any hope of resting. "No, I don't want any pictures!" I finally screamed at a girl who came in selling newborn photos just as I was about to drift off.

Nurses and techs barged in and out of my room without knocking and everyone seemed to have an opinion about everything I should be doing differently. Apparently, I was doing the swaddling, the diapering, and the feeding all wrong. During one breast-feeding session—which I thought was going fine—the nurse shook her head and said, "I guess you just don't have enough milk for him."

In between all of this, I was trying to care for a baby that I still wasn't entirely sure I wanted and that I couldn't quite comprehend was actually mine. I had heard so many women describe instantly falling in love with their child from the moment of birth. Where was that flood of emotion? I thought the baby was very cute and sweet. It made me smile to see that he had Ray's ridiculously long eyelashes, but my feelings for him wouldn't run any deeper than warm curiosity. *What's wrong with me?* I thought. *I don't even love my baby.*

The last evening of our hospital stay, Ray and I shut everyone else out of the room. We sat together on the bed and gazed at the baby as he slept. Suddenly, the corners of his mouth twitched into two brief smiles. My lungs surrendered their breath at the sight. I had seen babies smile countless times before, but these smiles were somehow the most extraordinary I had ever witnessed because suddenly they belonged to the most important child in the world, *my* child. It wasn't a flood, but at that moment, a little trickle in my heart began to melt away the shock and despair of the last few days and replace it with love for this perfect baby.

I tucked him into the plastic bassinet and leaned over to kiss him. "Goodnight, Frederic. I love you." I hadn't planned on saying those words. They fell spontaneously from my mouth and I was surprised and relieved to realize that I meant them. It wasn't yet the fierce, unbreakable mother-love I had heard about, but I loved this baby nonetheless.

Once we brought him home, I basked in Frederic's smiles and coos and indulged in succulent baby kisses to my heart's content. These sweets moments trickled into my heart and joined to form a river of love for my son. It didn't happen all at once, but it engulfed me as fully as any flash flood ever could. I still didn't have all the answers about the future, but nothing else in my life came close to being as gratifying, or as humbling, as holding and caring for my little baby. I was ecstatically happy that I'd been stupid enough to get pregnant.

A few weeks later, I laid Frederic down for a nap and tears filled my eyes as I looked down at him. "What is it?" Ray asked.

"I just love this little boy," I said.

Ray smiled. "Kind of takes you by surprise, doesn't it?"

FANGLIANG SHI

Sunflowers

It was a hot, beautiful afternoon. I was enjoying the cool weather in the backyard of my grandparents' place and doing math. They live in a beautiful suburb west of Beijing, China. Summer is like a pretty girl, with a light and dark green dress. I sat in the shade of huge cottonwood trees extending around my head; the trees looked very enchanting, dotted with golden blossoms. They were like green umbrellas. I felt a light breeze through holes in the canopy. "Fangliang!" my grandma was calling me from the deck. "I got you some watermelon." After I finished eating, she asked me, "Do you want to take care of my yard?" I knew that was going to be so much fun and answered her yes without thinking.

That place was the first that I ever cared for. I planted sunflowers with my grandma. Under my care all of the plants grew really well for the eight summers that I spent at my grandparents' place. Time flew. Last summer, it was five years since then, and all the plants were flourishing as before. I saw there were golden faces smiling at me. I knew they were the sunflowers my grandma planted every year. "I'm back," I said to my yard. I could hear all the plants respond to me by waving their leaves. They were always kind to me, just like an old friend.

The yard was my little wonderland. I spent almost every hot summer day in the little yard. In the pure morning, early sunlight pointed to the tree top, warm wind flowed beside my feet and made me yearn for the smell of summer. It was the kind of smell that I can never ever forget. It was the mixture of fresh dew and wild vanilla. In our yard, we had three huge cottonwood trees that covered the whole sky, and two pomegranate trees which had their fruits growing for the whole season. There were also several grape vines, vegetable vines, and a variety of flowers, from sweet marjoram, tulip and lavender to simply sage, dandelion and grass.

I always did some reading in the yard. Sometimes the sun was hot, but the trees kept me from the sunshine. I read everything from Anderson's fairy

tales to Shelley's poems, from arithmetic to calculus. Cicadas were competing to see who had the loudest voice this season, and I could feel there were some grasshoppers jumping over my feet. I enjoyed every moment that I spent with the plants and little animals everywhere. Butterflies were puffing around while little bees were busy playing with flowers. "Why does the season change and how can the sun and moon move around us day by day?" I asked myself. "It's the power of the nature." The wind went through the yard as if it were responding to me.

In cool summer nights, my grandpa and I usually dug holes to look for some cicada that might come out of the soil for molting. We put them on a screen and watched them fighting for a brand new life. The next morning, when the sun came out, I always went and checked on the little insects, then let them go.

On rainy days, digging angleworms in wet fragrant fields provided more than fun, it also provided the bait for going fishing in the pond next to my grandparents' house. The mud never bothered me, and I was surrounded by fresh raindrops. Sometimes I would stay on the deck and watch the raindrops fall like a curtain that hung off the roof. Everything outside was peaceful. The trees and plants were enjoying harmony in the rain.

Soon after the rain, yellow smiling faces filled the yard. I laid down on the grassland; the bright blue sky was washed with thick marshmallow clouds floating but in different shapes. With a little bit of imagination, they could be fluffy rabbits or adorable pure white petals.

Sunflowers have been my favorite flower since then. It was the sweetest memory of my grandparents and me together. Though my grandparents are becoming older and older, their faces are always smiling, and it was them who gave me an innocent, wonderful childhood.

No flower can lift spirits quite like sunflowers can, bright and cheery, bold yet comfortable. They are a warm and caring gift, just like the love that I get from my grandparents. They are getting older and older as I'm amazingly mature now. But I'll never forget the smiling face from the sunflowers in the backyard. Blossoming in the sun; blowing in the wind.

JOSHUA EDDY

Numele meu e Joshua

Like any other time when Mr. Jacobson gave an announcement, he practically ate the microphone and all we heard out of the speakers was a jumbled mess of sounds from the back of his throat. The only reason we knew what he had said was because of Mrs. Becker, the secretary, who retold everyone to head down to the gym for the lyceum. A phrase always comes to mind when thinking about Mrs. Becker, “She repaired what our principal fixed,” letting him think he was in charge but picking up the pieces and not saying a word. We hadn’t heard much information on what was going to happen. I thought it’d be a normal New Salem High lyceum—a speaker or two talking about their past with a certain issue facing teens like drugs, violence, or sex, how they overcame it, what we can do to prevent it from happening in our lives and finally ending with questions from the students that were most of the time pointless and irrelevant to the main message they were trying to purvey.

There’s this one lyceum we had every single year on methamphetamines. Two cops, in uniform with their guns showing, would come in and give us the exact same speech about what they are and how they harm us. “Meth can be made with household products like Lysol and laundry detergent,” one cop would say. The only change in the program from year to year would be a different drug bust they’d done since the last year. Even those were usually the same, “Well, we were tipped off from a grocery store of a certain list of flagged items. The person used a credit card, so we were able to track them down. They happened to live in an abandoned farm house, where their meth lab was too. We went in and caught them using it, and they were arrested.” That’s the basic routine they gave us for their drug busts, maybe one would try and run, but not get very far. The last part of the lyceum was questions. Now maybe the very first year they came to the school, the kids might have had questions dealing with their topic, but ever since then, they haven’t. “Have you shot your gun?” “Ever killed someone?” and my favorite “Have you ever tried the meth

you find?” were common questions each year, mostly by the new seventh and eighth graders.

Mat, Bryce, and I walked down the high school halls, crowded with other kids as eager as we were to hear another lyceum. We sat in roughly the same spot we usually do in the gym. At the time, Mat and Bryce were still shorter than me. Mat’s acne hadn’t quit yet and neither did the growing of his bleached hair down his face. An outdoorsman, he wore a “stylish” Al Boreland t-shirt from *Home Improvement* (if there is such a thing—a better word would be to call it “contemporary”). Bryce, a dairy farmer, was something quite different. Not just from Mat, but from everyone. His receding hair line at such an early age must have given him the thought that he was wise beyond his years. Thinking himself to be pretty good stuff, but never admitting it if brought up in conversation. Both my good friends, nevertheless. We sat down and agreed that this was going to be one lame lyceum.

“Why do they put us through this crap?” I asked. Bryce quickly followed with his thoughts, “I think it’s to give the teachers a break from us, and oh, of course, to torture us. That has seemed to be the main goal of high school so far, right?” Mat, who just listened and looked down at the gym trying to see what was going on, suddenly asked, “Hey Josh what is your dad doing here?”

I looked down and saw him down with a group of people. I was completely clueless to why he was there. “Psh, I don’t know.” My dad’s been the pastor at Peace Church in New Salem, North Dakota, for eight-and-a-half years now, and has brought a few groups to the town of nearly a thousand people, for fundraisers and worship events. For example, he’s brought some country-singers for fundraisers, and a whole family of seven who all played instruments and gospel music. As we all sat there in the gym, my father told us of another Christian worship group that was here to sing and give testimony to the student body. “The Peace Church has brought in a singing group from Europe, specifically from Eastern Europe, like Romania and Hungary,” he said. “They travel the world to spread the Good News in a few different languages. Called A New Song, Peace Church found them through an American agency that brings overseas groups to America to spread their music and experience. They will also be playing again tonight at the Peace Church at 8:00 p.m.”

The names of the musicians have slipped my mind since then, but the group of about a dozen played various instruments ranging from guitar to the pan-flute. Their clothes were those of Eastern Europe, both men and women

wore deep colors like red and orange. The women wore dresses with exotic patterns and the men wore vests and slacks. They played their set list of songs, mostly just folk music. The religious aspect of their group would be more emphasized later that day at the church rather than at the school.

I was born in Romania and spent the first thirteen months of my life in a hospital bed up for adoption alongside thousands of other abandoned babies, until my parents adopted me and brought me to America. I've always felt a little left out. Not with friends, quite the contrary, I've always had a good amount of close friends. I felt left out of being around people that looked like me, and were from the same place I was. The vast majority of my friends have been white. I do have a couple friends who are from Romania, but they were adopted as well by white families. So it was a nice change to see people from my homeland, who knew what it was like to live there, and had the experience and culture from Eastern Europe. There's a certain kind of mutual respect that comes between people of the same race.

Looking back, I think what I did when I was able to talk with them at church before the concert was pretty juvenile. I was in the eighth grade at the time and I was pretty sure that everything was easy and carefree. My mother and I went over to the church a couple hours before the concert was to start. She thought that I should spend some time talking with them. This would become one of the rare occasions that I actually agreed with her. I walked downstairs, apprehensive of what I should and shouldn't say. I've never been an extroverted person to begin with and to walk into a room of strangers who probably thought I was some weird kid who didn't know what the heck he was doing, was absolutely terrifying. They would have been right too. The hallway to the youth group room they were in was dark, and it's been my experience that no matter how many times you've been alone in a dark church; it will always scare the crap out of you. Which is weird because you'd think a church would be the safest place to be alone. Be that as it may, I wasn't about to let my fears get a tighter grip on my throat when I was already worried about going in there, so I quickly flipped all the light switches I could find. It lit up the place as if the Second Coming was happening right then and there.

Suddenly, death's grip wasn't quite as tight. Then I remembered that piece of paper in my coat pocket. That stupid picture my mom made me bring along, one of the numerous examples of times when I did disagree with her. She

thought it would be a good idea to bring a picture of my birth parents to show them. I thought it was stupid. There are millions of people in Romania—what was her point in having me carry that picture? Then I started thinking about it. She got into my head, and I began to imagine myself walking in there, being greeted with open arms as I said, “Here’s a picture of my parents.” They would respond, “Oh, hey, we know them, want to talk to them?” Of course I would respond with a smile and jot down the number with a pen and paper that I just happened to have in my pocket. Yeah, right! I’d have more chance of the Second Coming with the light switches before that little fantasy would hash out.

The youth group room had twenty some bean bag chairs to relax in, all of which were either colors of the rainbow or different sports balls, like basketball or baseball. It was a long room with plain white walls. The group members were all sitting in them talking or playing with some kind of instrument. There was plenty of room to sprawl out and chill. I walked in as nonchalant as I attempted to appear. I found that my underarms were quite moist and were releasing a loathsome odor. Hopefully my deodorant would cover most of it up; no one wants to introduce themselves to people who are turned away by your stinky pits. Apparently my dad must have told them of my coming because one of them greeted me with a thick accent of “Hello, are you Joshua?” I said yes, and told them my brief past with Romania. The ones that were actually paying attention retold their names, and where they were from. The others were still practicing, but in my mind they were talking about me.

Only one or two were actually from Bucharest, and I asked them what it was like today as opposed to when I was there. One of them told me about the Communist rule Romania had been under and the Revolution that was taking place during my birth, a fact I already knew, but you, the reader, most likely did not. Yes, Romania had been a Communist country ruled by a man named Nicolae Ceaușescu. They also told me that Romania was still a poor country, but doing much better and continuing to do so. They said it’s mostly family-owned businesses. That was pretty much it. I didn’t know what else to ask, and they didn’t know what else to tell. I do remember a bit of an awkward silence, except for two of them whispering in Romanian. I tried to pick out sounds that I thought were words like English too but couldn’t. So I thought of this as an opportunity to bring out that pointless piece of paper whose only purpose was carrying on the conversation, no matter how dumb it would turn out to be.

“I have a picture of my parents in Romania with me,” I squeaked up unsure as to how they would respond.

“Oh, may we see?” one of them responded. So I took it out of the plastic baggy my mom put it in, because it was one of the few pictures we had of them and she didn’t want it to get ruined. I just assumed that if she didn’t want it ruined, not to bring it to them, but she didn’t take that answer. I handed it to them and a few hunched over to get a look at it. Their responses were all basically the same. Nothing. I didn’t really know where to go from there, and neither did they. It was again just a dead end of an awkward silence. “We have to go upstairs and start setting up now,” one of them spoke up. “Would you like to come with us?” they asked me. I said, “sure.” As I put the picture back in the bag, two reactions came over me. One was annoyance: I wanted to chuckle at my mom and tell her I was right, that nothing happened with the picture. The other was humiliation: I felt like such an idiot for even bringing that up; honestly, I felt that the whole situation was pointless—I should have stayed home until ten minutes before the concert started and left right afterwards. Both emotions would later become expected when dealing with my mother, but that’s another saga of memoirs.

So a few of us headed upstairs to the sanctuary where their main equipment was. I was most interested in the pan-flute. I’d seen people play drums and guitar before, but this instrument was new. One of the guys saw this, and told me some backstory on the pan-flute. It’s usually made out of some kind of animal horn. I even got to try it out. There were fewer people in the sanctuary than in the youth group room and this seemed to calm my nerves. He introduced himself as Marin and continued to show me other instruments and talk to me about them.

The last thing he showed me was the sound board. This was an intimidating piece of equipment. It seemed to have a thousand little knobs that controlled the whole performance. All of them were color coordinated and I thought that if I accidentally touched something the whole show would be ruined, but he actually let me touch them. I was able to do sound checks on a couple of the microphones, and he showed me a few different sound alterations he could do for the instruments, like tremolo and reverbing the sounds.

Marin was from Bucharest, and we seemed to hit it off. He told me of how he became a Christian and a part of the musical group called A New Song. I thought it was a neat story. I’ve always like hearing people’s

testimonies. He told me that when he was about fifteen years old he got into some trouble and had to do community service. While he was there, people would sing while doing their work. He asked them one day what they were singing about and they said they were singing to Jesus. One of the singers told him about Jesus and the next day at community service he gave his life to Christ. He told me that most boys in Romania got in trouble with the law, but don't find a way out. They just keep falling victim to the system. I really thought about this, and was thankful that I was adopted and taken out of that equation.

By now, everyone was upstairs in their performance attire. Some of the outfits were a little different than the ones they had worn at school, but they had the same concept and design. I assumed they didn't want to wear the same hot and sweaty clothes as before. My own perspiration had subsided as I was able to sit beside the head sound guy and watch him do his thing while they performed. It was even a better show than before because of their incorporation of folk and worship songs. It was pleasing to my ears to hear the language that I was deprived of, even though I still had no idea what they were saying. The only phrase I remember learning that night was, "*Salut, numele meu e Joshua*" which means "Hello, my name is Joshua." The concert ended and most everyone who attended found themselves downstairs for the two things that held a congregation together the most: food and fellowship.

Before I retired home for the night, I thanked Marin for showing me everything and we exchanged email addresses even though we never talked again after that night. I bought one of their folk CDs and was thankful for what I learned about the culture, even though it might not have been much information. It was dark out and I just had half a block to walk to get home, but in that half block of sidewalk, I thought about my identity. Prior to that day, if someone was to ask me my racial identity, I would have responded simply, "Well, I was adopted in Romania, and have moved a few times with my parents." I don't really know if that's a "correct" answer, but that would have been my answer. Now if someone were to ask me that, I would respond, "Well, I was born in Romania. So I thank my parents and God for adopting me, saving me, and bringing me to America." I feel I took a lot with me through the interactions I had with all the members of the singing group from Romania.

JEREMY ALLEN MILLER

4 Men and a Tomato

I couldn't stop singing. Now, I'm not usually the one to sing in public, but on this special occasion, you couldn't make me stop. Well, most people couldn't. "Jeremy, shut up!" yelled my brother. Brady is the middle child—you know, the troublemaker, the black sheep, the one who gets along with the younger brother so terribly well. I am the younger brother and I could tell he was as annoyed with me as I am with that head-aching tone my alarm clock spits out every morning.

"Sorry Brady, but I'm just so excited!"

"So was I," he replied, "till I found out you were comin' along." And with that Brady was back to sleep and I was done singing, at least for the moment. To think that in only hours my family and I would be on a cruise ship off the coast of Alabama. The Alabama part doesn't really jingle my bells too much. As matter of fact, the only reason I've ever heard of anyone going to Alabama was either to escape their dentist or marry their cousin. I was anticipating the biggest boat I would ever step foot on, the Carnival Cruiser.

As we arrived at our destination, we fought to get out of the car. Joseph, the oldest and by far the biggest of us brothers, won by trampling over Brady and me as if we were mice caught in a stampede of antelope. To add insult to injury, Brady was on crutches and, for that reason only, I allowed him to struggle his way out next. I had to grin, however, because watching him attempt to get out of the car himself was like watching a midget reach for peanut butter from the top shelf of a cupboard.

There it was. I had never seen such an extravagant sight in my entire life. Walking onto the ship, I felt like it was April of 1912 again and I was boarding the Titanic.

My family and I began the search for our room. "Here they are," were the words out of my dad's mouth as he handed Joe a room key.

"They?" I blurted out. "We get our own room?" The day just kept getting better.

After unpacking what seemed to be a U-Haul truck into our room, we went back outside to the deck of the cruise ship. I was on cloud nine as I watched us venture out to sea, away from land and direction and into ocean paradise. There was never a sense of knowing where you were, nor did there need to be. We were on vacation.

The next thing on my mind was food. With a simple glance at Joe, I could tell he knew what I was thinking. Soon after, but never soon enough, we found snack haven. I looked at one of the Carnival employees. Nothing could have made me happier than the words he said, “It’s all free boys. Enjoy!” My eyes grew bigger than a ripe grapefruit. I jolted to the ice cream machine like a firecracker was up you know where. My nostrils were already at work sniffing the scent of fresh pizza. At that moment, I knew where I would be spending most of the trip.

After my brothers and I finished pigging out, we waddled back to our cabin (that’s what we learned to call our room) where we were told supper would be in an hour. I wasn’t sure if I should throw up then or wait till after the seven-course meal. My dad informed us we would be eating at a five-star restaurant. We showed up at what looked to be Hollywood. Every man in a suit and tie, every woman in a dress—and then there was us: rural hick Minnesotans in shorts and t-shirts. We stuck out like Barack Obama at a Klu Klux Klan meeting. My mother was most embarrassed. If she had been any redder, the cooks would have thrown her into the kitchen to be cut up like the rest of the tomatoes. Of course, I can’t say that my brothers, dad, and I looked much different after being burnt from the ten minutes we’d spent in the sun. It was our own fault, though; every Minnesotan knows they can’t stay in the sun over five minutes without proper protection.

We were then escorted to our table where we sat every night of the trip. The dinnerware sparkled like they do in a Mr. Clean commercial, but what caught my eye even more was how many spots were set at our table, four extra. “I hope we don’t have some weirdoes sit by us,” I remarked as a stern glance was given to me by my parents. I avoided eye contact because it would have been like someone looking into the eyes of Medusa—I would have turned into stone.

To my surprise, however, our guests could be described as quite the opposite. Well-dressed and glitzy looking, Papa Gritz introduced the family. “Hello, I’m Scott. This is my wife Rachel, daughter Samantha and her friend

Jackie.” They told us they were from Georgia as if we needed to be told. Their accents were as noticeable as is a gay guy’s sexuality when playing Twister. My other observation was that Georgian women were hot. I felt that Samantha and I had a special connection because she looked at me once, and I could not once stop looking at her. She probably wasn’t interested, but a wise man once told me, “If you’re not stalking, you’re not trying,” so I never lost hope.

After the five- to seven-course meal (depending on if you count water and leaves as courses), we enjoyed a night of comedic and financial entertainment. The old fogies and Joe tested their luck at the casino while Brady and I laughed until our cheeks hurt at various comedy shows. We weren’t alone, however. Brady was easily able to find girl after girl who felt sorry for him since he was on crutches. “I wish I was on crutches,” I joked to Brady (months later that wish was granted and then I severely regretting ever saying it). Brady just smiled and added, “Who says I need the crutches?” We were getting along for once and that was as fun as the trip in itself.

The next day we accomplished as much as you get done on your day off from work—nothing at all. We lay around on beach chairs getting up only to jump in the pool to cool ourselves from the blazing hot sun. When I had built up enough energy to bring ice cream outside, it melted away faster than every American’s retirement fund. We spent the entire day soaking up the sun until the time came to join our Georgian friends at the supper table.

On this particular night, we had the option of eating lobster or prime rib steak. I was influenced by Joe to take the lobster, and had my dad been as easily convinced, a near nightmare could have been prevented. “I can’t breathe,” is all my father could say while we panicked to get some assistance. My dad was choking so he and my mother were brought to the cruise doctor who, to put it nicely, was a few fries short of a happy meal. His ingenious idea was not to do anything until we arrived at Cozumel in the morning. Meanwhile, my brothers and I, scared and speechless, were still sitting at the supper table with the Georgians who, just minutes earlier, had witnessed a man trying to hack up his meal. As you can imagine, it was as awkward for us as it is for African Americans to watch white people dance. Fortunately, my dad got the steak out of his windpipe and we were able to enjoy the rest of the night.

The next morning we arrived in the beautiful harbor of Cozumel. My dad, Joe, and I went snorkeling while my mom stayed back with Brady. Brady couldn’t go snorkeling because of his broken ankle, so my mom thought she’d

cheer him up with a three hour shopping extravaganza. What's a better thing to do with a kid on crutches than to walk miles through crowded streets and stores looking for that perfect jewelry item for his mother? It made me chuckle anyway.

The driver of our boat, Adolf, who also took us snorkeling, dropped us off on a Mexican beach for an hour of "chillaxing." The beach had the softest sand my toes have ever stepped foot on and the water was an amazing clear blue like you see in the movies. After loitering in the sea for an hour, our boat was called and we had to go back. It was said that some people never heard the call and were left at the beach. I remember thinking I wouldn't mind getting stuck there.

After Adolf took us back to Cozumel, my mother and Brady met up with us. Brady didn't look as happy as the rest of us so I thought I'd cheer him up by telling him how awesome snorkeling was. That didn't help. We walked around Cozumel because we weren't interested in taking the bike taxi which looked like a child's breath could tip it over. My mom bargained for some jewelry. For some reason, the price drops in half if you tell them you can't afford it. They must have a good welfare program. We ended the night early as we were pretty exhausted from actually moving for the first time in about three days.

Waking up the next morning, we sadly realized it was our last day on the ship. We spent another day baking in the sun and ended the night again with, yes, the Georgians. It was sort of like the Last Supper. By now we were good friends yet we knew we'd never see each other again. Even so, I had figured out their seating pattern at the table from previous nights and was ready to make my move at striking gold with the Georgian daughter. According to my calculations, I had sat in the perfect spot and she would be sitting exactly to my right...my good side. The only thing I didn't take into effect was the slim possibility that she didn't even like me and would decide to actually sit as far away as possible from me.

Well, this did happen...so much for statistics. That was alright, however, because I had a terrific time during my cruise and learned what all people do on a boat: that there is plenty more fish in the sea.

DAIN SULLIVAN

The Need to Run

Maybe it's the swift breeze that hits my face, or the rush of fresh air flowing in and out of my lungs that puts me at peace when I run. Then again, perhaps it's the realization that every momentary encounter my shoes have with the pavement is free of homework, responsibilities, shaky relationships, or whatever else may be weighing on my mind at the time. All my fears of occasional criticism and misfortune are temporarily replaced with a brightening hope that lies patiently on the road ahead.

What a shame it is that running, such a beautiful remedy to many of life's various difficulties, often remains vacant by those who wish to escape the exasperating materiality of this world. As I see it, if I'm looking for such a retreat, a good run is a perfect opportunity because it offers me the chance to be in sync with nothing more than my innermost thoughts and desires. I am constantly surrounded by an atmosphere of countless perspectives and concerns, so it would make sense to believe that my soul could be nourished by such an activity.

I will never forget the feeling of running in the 2009 Fargo Marathon. Prior to the event, I was incredibly nervous and fairly unaware of the extreme challenges that I would have to face. To be quite honest, there were times when I asked myself why I was even considering running a marathon. I had never done anything like it before. Plus, no one had *asked* me to do it. Eventually, I convinced myself that I needed the challenge.

When the day of the marathon finally came, there was no denying that I felt caught up in the moment. However, as soon as I heard the pistol shot and bolted away from the starting line, I knew that the experience was more than just a challenge. There was much more meaning to it. I immediately felt empowered! People along the sidelines cheered for me and gave me the mental strength I needed to continue on. What a great feeling!

Although I didn't finish the race, I ran twenty miles. I have to say that it was one of the most amazing experiences of my life.

Now, I think I could venture to conclude that a majority of the population would view running as nothing more than a mere source of physical health and fitness. Although much of this statement is very true, I believe that there is more to gain from the experience. Running keeps me in shape and it can even be a great socializing apparatus for me and my friends.

However, I ultimately believe that it offers me a benefit that surpasses anything in the realm of physical health. Mentally, a run can be extremely soothing. The real world can be quite cynical, but the path on which I run is altruistic. The path won't abandon me. It will never tell me that I'm not good enough or strong enough. Instead, I can rest assured that the path will be there, waiting for me when tomorrow comes.



QUICK TAKES

from the quick takes editors....

As we began to start on our fourth volume of *Northern Eclecta*, the staff as a whole was asked to brainstorm ideas for the new section we introduce every year. With both familiar and new ideas floating around, at some point in time we decided that we should combine all of these groups into one section. Shortly after, our instructor, Eunice Johnston, proposed to us a name: Quick Takes. It seemed to fit perfectly.

Our original call for submissions included everything from acrostic poems to flash fiction. We wanted to keep the submissions short in length—something that anyone, even those who don't consider themselves as writers, could have fun putting together.

We were pleased with the number of submissions received, as well as the different genres represented. When sifting through the pile, we always kept in mind that we wanted a balanced and varied selection of works including a couple short stories, a six-word short story, a few poems, including an acrostic poem, and a specialty piece that uses various writing techniques. We believe the following works fit just right.

We want to thank everyone who submitted to this new section, and hope that you, the reader, enjoys it enough for it to return again in the volumes to come.

Evan Kjos and Joshua Eddy

MAIA RANDKLEV

Attitude

In the face of a day
My courage fails.
I hide my face
And fear avails.
Oh the thought of never.

In the face of a day
My heartbeat pounds.
Excitement mounts
And love abounds.
Oh the thought of forever.

ROSE NICHOLS

A Red Door

Our cabin had a red screen door with a spring connecting it to the frame: in effect, creating a spring-loaded bang when we'd run out the door. The spring had worn a groove into the red paint, so you could see the bare wood in a long arrow to the edge. The groove attested to its long use and the fact that it has been tossed open with carefree disregard of both the spring and the resulting slap against the jamb.

Summer fun involved many trips each day through the banging door. Followed by many shouts of "Don't slam the door!" by our parents. These foolishly futile shouts only marred our cheerful dispositions momentarily.

It is not a part of a child's world to calmly and methodically close a door behind them. Milk cartons, sock drawers, marker lids, shoe laces and zippers have a natural state of openness to a child: closing them just means expending time later having to open them again. Better to have things open and available.

There is no logical reason to hold the screen door back from its natural reaction to being flung open. It flies shut all by itself, what a super invention! What a great way to join Mother Nature in more adventures of the frivolous kind. A leap from the doorframe and you're on your way.

I want to have a house with a red screen door.

JONI WIEBESICK

What I Feel for You

In your eyes I can see the universe
Lifting me closer to the stars
Over and over I fall for you
Vibrant feelings I cannot hide
Everything I never knew I needed
You who are my greatest inspiration
Overtures of adoration
Under an endless sky

JOSH HALEY

Six Words to Describe Myself

I wish I had seven words.

SAMANTHA WICKRAMASINGHE

The Rise

I fell.
Darling,
Your warm breaths,
Secure hands are not
here with me.
In this ancient house
I fell.
I laid Indolent
In an hallucination
A dream that I dreamt
I fell, old I felt.
In front of me
Was a novel
That I could never read
A Cello that I never played
A life,
That was spent
In a night's dream
Looking for my darling
If my darling knows
That I'm breathing
Lungs full of tobacco
and I'm heavily thumping
My breaths
On a
mossed, old, wooden floor
She would ignore me.

So I woke up
Like a new born baby
With an
unshaved beard
eyes filled with
Unshed tears.
To play the cello
To read the novel
NO!
Not too old,
Not too late.
Dragging the
weakened legs
I walked
I fell again
I rose.
I learned
after
A thousand
Years of hiding
Inside the womb of sloth,
The sun
The sea
The wind
All waited
Outside
The house
And
My darling
Smiled.

LINDA E. VASQUES

Surrender

To bestow Love is simplicity
But to withstand whereas Love is life,
Such is surrender.

Such surrender contains power
And to those who fight will be locked within,
For Love is uncontrollable, living and undeniably passionate
And thus withstands those who forsake it.

Mistakably be and forever endure
For you cannot shield from love, just solely surrender.

SPENCER PTACEK

Abstracting

Setting: A dirty alley behind an Italian restaurant; two men are at a standstill:

DETECTIVE: Tell me where you hid the body Jacob or I'll blow your fucking brains out.

JACOB: What the hell are...

Setting: A small, cluttered bedroom; a man is in bed:

JACOB: ...you even talking about?

ROOM: ...

JACOB: That was the....

Setting: At a two-seat table in an Italian restaurant; two men are conversing:

JACOB: ...weirdest dream I've ever had.

ANTHONY: Yeah. I've had a few dreams like that.

JACOB: I've had them too but this one was....

Setting: In a large white van outside an Italian restaurant; a group of men are gathered around surveillance equipment:

SPEAKERS: "...almost prophetic or something."

DETECTIVE: There it is gentleman. We got him. Now we've just got to....

Setting: At a two-seat table in an Italian restaurant; two men are conversing:

ANDREW: "...kill him." Then they go out and corner him behind the restaurant and shoot him. What do you think?

JAMESON: That's your story? What is it called, *Dream Police*? Ha ha, that has got to be the....

Setting: A large living room, two men are sitting on couches conversing:

MARCUS: ...corniest fucking thing I've ever heard.

JAMESON: I know that's what I said.

MARCUS: Do you really think he's...

Setting: A small office; two men are sitting in chairs conversing:

MARCUS: "...going to publish this?" And then Jameson said, "Yeah, he says he's going to."

POLICE CHIEF: Dammit, I should have known. Do you know where he's going to be this afternoon?

MARCUS: Some Italian restaurant, I think it's called....

Setting: Inside a police car; two men are sitting in the front conversing:

POLICE CHIEF: ...The Garden of Olives.

DETECTIVE: Ha. Sounds classy. I'll go down there myself.

POLICE CHIEF: Don't go alone; bring Murphy....

Setting: A living room; a man and a woman are sitting on couches watching television:

TV: "...and Eden." "Will do, Chief. Now dr—"

ABE: Huh? Hey, I was watching that.

SARAH: No you were not, you were sleeping. It's time....

Setting: A small bedroom; a man is in bed and woman is standing in the doorway:

SARAH: ...to get up.

JACOB: Oh my god...

SARAH: What?

JACOB: (stunned silence) ...that was the all-time weirdest dream I've ever had.

SARAH: Hmm...

JACOB: Wait a minute is this....

Setting: At a two-seat table in an Italian restaurant; two men are conversing:

ANDREW: "...still a dream?" And then Sarah says, "No," and shoots him.

ALLAN: That's it? Kind of an abrupt ending don't you think?

ANDREW: Well....

ALLAN: And is 'Andrew' supposed to be you? It still needs work. For example, you used the dream and storytelling switches more than once. I'm

just not sure how you'll...

Setting: A darkened living room; one man is asleep on a couch while the other watches television:

TV: "...make it work." Pssht

JORDAN: What is—did you shut it off?

JOHN: Yeah. It was over.

JORDAN: What happened?

JOHN: I don't know really. It was like a big chain of events, like...a story within a story within a story, etc.

JORDAN: Like *The NeverEnding Story*?

JOHN: Yeah. Or *The NeverEnding Story II*.

JORDAN: Where did it stop?

JOHN: What?

JORDAN: The story. Where did it stop?

JOHN: I don't know. At the end of the movie the guy wakes up and gets shot, I think.

JORDAN:

JOHN:

JORDAN: Have you ever heard of that one Tom Stoppard play?

JOHN: Nope.



THE NEXT GENERATION

from the next generation editor....

For the 2010 issue of *Northern Eclecta*, our Literary Publications class decided to give more high school students the opportunity to have their creative work seen for publication. Each year we hope to expand our reach to enable more students from the area to have the opportunity to showcase their work in the section we now call “The Next Generation.”

The high school submissions editors were glad to see the varied response that we received for this edition. The call for submissions from high school students had been expanded last year to include both Cass County and Moorhead high schools. We also expanded our reach to include many rural high schools and were excited by the increased response. As you will see, this issue reflects not only the varied writing styles of our area students, but the varied geographical regions as well.

We hope that you enjoy the work of our area high school students.

Nicole Desjarlais

KATE THORESON

The Thorn Mimosa

In the domain of the sun that seemed to put forth effortless heat, Bart drove the Jeep over the roads of a desert. Western Australia was desolate as far as he knew, and Bart didn't know what he was doing, or where he was going. Scattered grasses covered the sides of the road that Bart drove down. Bart loved the idea of being a poor wayfaring stranger, going through the desert as if there would be no tomorrow. After all, he could never tell what would come next when he traveled like this. The bright noon sun painted the blue sky in buttery yellows and virginal whites. The tedious road painted the desert brown, and what little foliage there was stroked it with tough greens and blushing pinks. He didn't watch where he was going as he barreled down the road, because he only watched the plants.

He drove until he saw a little town with a littler service station. After stopping there for gasoline and sunflower seeds, he said a "G'day, mate!" to the attendant, walked to his car, got in, slammed the door, started it, and drove away as the creaking door shut behind him. Bart turned the steering wheel, and allowed the horsepower to take him where he needed to go. He didn't use cruise control, but he knew that it wasn't a good idea on bad roads. Bart wasn't careless, but he did get lost in his own thoughts. He watched the foliage in the windless air and thought about the things that made him tick. After all, he had no idea what made him keep going through this desert and the next one. He took a salty seed out of the burlap sack, put it in his mouth, and started to suck on it.

Bart didn't even know what he was trying to escape. The steering wheel turned to maneuver across a barren wasteland for the sake of adventure under his control, but what was this adventure for? He didn't work a job unlike that of anyone else you'd find in middle management. His job was likeable, so that wasn't the problem. He didn't have a family or a girlfriend to tie him down, so he wasn't escaping his relationships. His friends weren't awful people to be around, so he wasn't trying to leave them behind. He just needed to make

room for his toes that seemed to be burning through his leather sandals at an alarming rate. Inadvertently, he wondered about the vicious cycle that life seemed to put most people in. The beautiful mind that occupied Bart was not in Australia, or even on Earth. His psyche was somewhere in the cosmos towering over something in his universe, but it wasn't his head. He thought of the beyond and all of his minor predicaments. He knew that most people thought the same things, but he wasn't the same person as any of them.

Bart was a mildly carefree man of twenty-seven. He had tawny brown hair, soft brown eyes, and very square features. The serious demeanor that seemed to go along with his presence made up for the fact that he wasn't particularly tall. He was currently wearing a grey wife beater, beat up jeans, large sunglasses, and old brown cowboy boots. From the way that he drove down the road in the Jeep, one could get the idea that he was careless, but he was actually quite meticulous about his plans for himself and others in most situations. Despite the fact that he had been engaged at a time, Bart remained a bachelor. The relationship had ended amicably about five years before. He hadn't really considered getting married since then. His life wasn't bad, so he remained contented without romantic intercourse and continued to drive along. Bart's life consisted of working, interacting with friends whom never really got close to him, and doing random things like this. When the seed had lost its salty touch, he opened the window of the vehicle and spit it out. He popped another into his mouth as he drove. He might have taken Joe on this trip, but he was probably at a party. He also could have taken John or Casey, but they were both working overtime. Ken and Paul both had quality time to spend with their families. Even Algie was busy. This road trip was destined to be a lonely one. Therefore, he drove. Nothing really mattered except staying on course.

As the sun's continuous conflagration reached his time zone in his hemisphere, Bart began to wish that he had put on sunscreen. He wasn't a man who burned easily, but the sun was a scorching griddle in the desert, just waiting to cook him up. The car didn't provide him much for protection from the sun, so he averted his covered eyes and continued to drive down the rocky road. He got bored with the lack of music, turned on his car stereo, and turned it up when his Sublime album began to play. He loved unabashedly lazy stoner music. Ambitious stoner music with high and mighty concepts dizzied him, and Pink Floyd bored him. Sublime and The Doors kept him contented. The

flowers bloomed less as he continued to drive.

He was committed to the road, but his mind was a whore. His mind was not tied to anything except being wholly unrelated to anything his body may have been doing or going through. He was thinking. *What goes on in the desert all of the time, except that the sun burns everything? Why is it so ungodly hot out? Granted, maybe Paul's wife is hotter than that. She and Paul are probably playing the Game of Life, watching grass grow, or watching rocks erode. Who cares, anyway? Why am I thinking about that? Well, there's nothing to look at here except really pretty flowers. Ah, look at those pink flowers! They are really beautiful, so why is the surrounding environment so rugged and... well, ugly? The world is pretty ugly, I guess, but we all love it and ourselves anyway. I love myself for distracting myself from the road that I don't seem to be following very carefully....* He kept his vehicle on the road by a narrow margin.

The vehicle did not contain much other than a tattered suitcase, a bottle of water that Bart had already emptied, and a copy of *Fahrenheit 451*. Someone at work had told him to read it, and arguing was no use. It lay in the back seat, waiting for him to pick it up. Books were very distracting for Bart, since he read a lot. He mostly read books to pass time, although due to his voracious reading, he was not illiterate by any means. Bart thought that the sun might burn the paper of the book, but he was wrong about that. The sun did not have that kind of power. If it did, it would have been entirely possible for Bart's upholstered seats to catch fire.

Bart thought about keeping his car on the road for a moment, and then he thought about something else. This happened every time. He didn't know where he was going, and he didn't know what he was doing. His foot pressed the accelerator, the car started going slightly faster, and in accordance with the tempo of his driving, the music got a little louder. The engine roared underneath the hood. The rubber wheels turned faster and lost some tread each time. The exacted control that he had over his vehicle was slightly diminished, and he felt like Zeus. He trusted his vehicle to love him as he had loved it, and himself.

However, he should have felt like Icarus. As the flowers started to turn into trees, Bart noticed that the trees got larger and more uncomfortable as he thought about other things. *It is getting less hot out. It must be the late afternoon. Oh, indeed. It is five-thirty. Normally, I would be driving home. Very fast. Much faster than this.* His foot subconsciously reached the accelerator again.

I cannot imagine what it would be like to be stuck at home all of the time. What a dreary existence, to be stuck in one place your whole life! It seems as though some people are, though. I like spontaneous journeys. I wonder if there is someone out there who enjoys them quite like I do... there must be! Oh yes indeed. I love this world; it's such a wonderful place. Does anybody simply trek across it, without an obligation? I hope so. I should like to meet them, one day, in this particular time and space. Why should anyone want a new time and space? This one suits us all perfectly fine...

Suddenly, the vehicle came to a screeching halt, without Bart's right foot on the brake pedal. *Acacia nilotica*. This invasive species, the thorn mimosa, had gotten in Bart's way, or so it seemed. Bart had gone completely off the road and crashed into this tree. The monster was 65 feet tall and it had a thick crown. Black branches seemed to smother his car, in his perspective. The vegetation had spines as well, which gently brushed against the brown paint. Two beige airbags popped out of the steering wheel and the dashboard a moment too soon, and the airbags likely injured him more than the crash. He had totaled the vehicle.

His Jeep was his vessel into a new world, and it was gone. Indeed, he had lost the blood that carried his boat through a vein. He completely denied it, but forced to accept it, he slammed his head against the steering wheel.

Bart looked up at the tree, and it seemed to him that it was the one who said "no." The tree had refused him at about six in the afternoon, and Bart's reverse psychology worked for the minute and a half that he spent realizing that the tree was not, in fact, in the middle of the road. He had gone off the road. In this moment that Bart had spent in a hopeless situation, he did the only thing that there was to do—he took his things and went.

As Bart walked onto the road with his tattered suitcase in his left hand, which hung loyally at his side, he held *Fahrenheit 451* close to his eyes with his right hand. The book was interesting, but it did him no good. He liked the ideas contained in the book, but Bart confused himself as to the purpose of the book, as do most people who read it. Bart thought that the book was about censorship, but as he walked down the road, he realized more and more that the book was not a criticism of censorship; it was merely the author's serenade to books. It only became about censorship when everybody said it was about censorship, because censorship is a more interesting topic than a bookworm. Nevertheless, Bart was thinking too hard. He needed to breathe. Thinking

took him off the road, or so he thought.

He walked to the side of the road, sat on the shoulder, and opened the suitcase. After he had pressed the contents into the bag more tightly, he placed the book inside. He got up and started to walk again. The three hours in which he walked down the road went by slowly and quickly at the same time. He needed to breathe, and he did, but he also needed to drink. The car crash had easily accomplished his objective of adventuring.

When he reached the nearest town at about nine in the evening, the lights said “yes.” Beckoning him to rest and leisure, they blinked in yellows, pinks, and greens. Reds joined them when he walked a little deeper into the town. These lights were greeters, but they were not openings, so he walked. Beautiful women flanked the sidewalks, and he saw them. They could have been passageways, but they seemed like work he didn’t need, so he went farther. Vendors sold their wares in an open-air market, and shouted about fresh fish and beautiful clothing. He had had enough air for one day.

The sidewalk ended, and there was a door. This door had a glass window and a brass handle. He placed his hand on the handle, opened the door, and walked through it. He didn’t know anything about living, but he knew a lot about entering and leaving.

ANASTASIA DE CELLE

The Ice

Put my foot in
Grab the laces and pull
Make sure it's not too loose
Make sure it's not too tight
Now wind them around the metal hooks
Make sure to get every hook
Now tie them tight
In a double knot
Now do the same with the other boot
Put the guards on each skate
To protect the blade
Walk out of the locker room
And up to the ice
Take both guards off
To prevent slipping or falling on the ice
Put the guards on the boards
Now take a deep breath
Breathe in the icy air
Put one foot on the ice
Then the other
Step forward and...
Glide
Feel the ice beneath the blade
The small bumps and ridges
Push again
Dig the blade into the ice
With more force
Push again
Feel the blade let go of the ice

And feel the other glide across the ice
Breathe in another deep breath of icy air
Smile and say, "This is where I belong,
On the ice."

LINNEA ROSE NELSON

For Lefty

I am drifting, muse-less, into
A park that I cannot label
Because it is someone else's poetry.

This, running casually alongside,
Is the boulevard that bore a few dozen
Willing versions of myself to a park
Where consent carried verse in another
Direction; far enough away for no
Future good dreams about Thursday,
Nor parades by starlight
Into newspaper piles, to grace their bothered wits;
Far enough away to hear no reprise.

I make my way
Deeper in, drifting, muse-less...

Removing the glasses
Indignantly from my eyes, I read
"Poetry Here" in cream italics over an
Entryway. There is none—
Only poets insincerely attempting to break
A world they adore....

And as I anticipate when the next breakthrough
Will occur
(One is slightly overdue and severely under-sought),
I recollect a time when there was

So much real poetry here to keep
A heart intact
That you and I were happy...
That you and I were very unhappy.

We are lingering, wholly independent of
A muse. You regard me with
Mournfully accepting, half-closed
Eyes, and I reciprocate where I can:
Thankful that you ever chose
This park,
Even if you took all the poetry at your exit.

SHELBY M. STERN

He

My heart races when I hear his ring tone.

I smile at every cute mistake he makes, and laugh at the ones he gets
embarrassed over.

I can't help but smile, after every compliment he gives me.

My stomach drops when he holds me in his arms—

My knees shake when he kisses me.

I get the butterflies every time he softly whispers, "You're beautiful"
into my ear.

My knees get weak when he says, "Just one more kiss."

I'm speechless when he says, "I love you."

Now only if "he" were real...

JAMIE HOHNADDEL

Echoes and Silence



SAMUEL BREEN

Lightening on the Lake



SHAYLEE THOMAS

Broken Rays



JAMIE HOHNADDEL

Crumbling Images



SHELBY M. STERN

And I Always Will Be

We were parked at the airport.
My dad walked me through the doors,
As I watch a tear roll down his cheek.
That's the first time I've ever seen him cry.
I know a part of him is proud of me for taking this step—
But the other part just wants me to stay home.
I give him a kiss on the cheek—
He hugs me so tight, almost as if his life would end if he let go.
My throat gets tight and my make-up starts to smear as I try
to hold back my tears.
I notice my dad could barely talk—
But under his breath he softly said, "I know you've grown up,
but you're still my little girl."
I looked at him and said, "And I always will be" as I hugged him tighter.
A deep voice called my last name as I gave him one last hug.
My name was called again.
I stood at attention—
Saluted the officer as he handed me my uniform
and I boarded the plane going—
Somewhere warm, somewhere different, somewhere life changing.
Basic Training.
I was excited to go,
But scared to change.
I knew it was for the better.
My dad tried to talk me out of it—
But he knew I was too headstrong to give in.
My goal was to make something out of my life,
And I knew this was the way.
I sat next to a man on the plane.

He looked at me as he put his bag above his seat and said,
“So you’re a daddy’s girl, huh?”
I responded proudly, “And I always will be.”
Twelve weeks later,
There stood my dad—
At the end of the driveway with a tear in his eye—
Waiting for me.
He looked at me and said, “You’ve changed.”
He looked down at his feet and shyly asked, “Are you still my little girl?”
I hugged him and said with a smile, “And I always will be.”
~What comes between a father and daughter’s relationship never lasts forever! ~

KATE THORESON

Ode to Solace in Shade

In summer, I walked to a certain tree
And said, "I'm distraught, because I believe
That I am at a crossroads just for me,
And I am far too easy to deceive."

My dress blew in the wind as I sat down
Under the shade and breathed enough to say,
"Oh tree, you're wiser, and you cannot frown
Upon the things I might tell you today."

I sat under the tree and then released
My mind into the roots and in the bark.
My fingers felt their worries had decreased
As they bounced and my soul felt much less dark.

In autumn, sullen leaves have lost their glow.
They've cleaned their houses just for winter's snow.



CONTRIBUTORS

BRIANNE ANDERSON, *Grandpa*, 56.

I am a freshman this year in Weible Hall at NDSU; currently undecided with my major. I'm originally from West Fargo, ND. This piece is dedicated to my incredible grandfather, Grandpa John Strand (1919-2009).

KELLY BLACK, *Strawberry Fields Forever*, web.

I will be a junior starting the summer of this year, and I plan on majoring in accounting. I'm originally from San Diego, CA, but grew up in Detroit Lakes, MN. I took "Strawberry Fields Forever" while on vacation throughout England and Ireland with my family. We took a day trip to Liverpool to take the Beatles tour around town, and this was the only picture that I took while on that tour.

SAMUEL BREEN, *Lightning on the Lake*, 122; *Campfire*, web.

I am currently a sophomore at Shanley High School in Fargo. For "Lightning on the Lake," my brother and I were going on and off taking pictures at our resort and I got a good picture. For "Campfire," I started a normal campfire and just decided to snap a few shots of the fire.

DAMIR CAVKUSIC, *Timeless Gauges*, 67; *Sunrise on 1901*, web.

I am a sophomore majoring in mechanical engineering and minoring in economics. I snapped "Timeless Gauges" at a car show here in downtown Fargo. The subject is a late 1950s Mercedes-Benz 190 SL. Back in those days, automotive designers were at one with the cars they were creating, thus the shapes and lines have tended to age timelessly. I tried to capture that simple elegance in the gauges this Mercedes has. It was a crisp and cold January morning when I took "Sunrise on 1901" as the sun was rising on its journey across the heavens. The light really brought out the crimson reads and details of the building against the deep blue sky, stopping me in my tracks. Minard Hall meets another day.

CATLIN DEAL, *Paws*, 54.

I am in my second year at NDSU and I am majoring in behavioral statistics. I am from Fargo and wrote my poem, "Paws," in memory of my golden retriever, Casey. Casey died in March and is loved and missed very much!

ANASTASIA DE CELLE, *The Ice*, 116.

I am in the ninth grade at Northern Cass School in Hunter, ND, and I live in Reiles Acres, just north of Fargo. I am a figure skater with the Red River Valley Figure Skating Club. This poem represents how it feels to be with my friend, the ice.

JOSHUA EDDY, *Numele meu e Joshua*, 85.

I am majoring in English Education at NDSU. I'm finishing my sophomore year in college, and plan to further my education at BSC and DSU with a minor in computer information systems. I graduated high school in New Salem, ND, and plan to reside in Bismarck, ND, after the semester.

MEGAN L. EVEN, *The Sign of the Cross*, 43.

I am from Aberdeen, SD. It is my second year at NDSU and I am a double major in English and anthropology. Originally, "The Sign of the Cross" was a part of a letter I was writing, but then it turned into a separate poem.

AMBER L. FETCH, *Our Fort*, 46.

I am an English major from Mandan, ND, in my junior year at NDSU. "Our Fort" was inspired by a childhood memory of a wooded area in my hometown containing a small alcove. This poem is based on actual events from my childhood.

CAITLIN FOX, *Pigeons*, 35.

I have finally submitted something to *Northern Eclecta* that is actually indicative of my normal writing style—no poetry or westerns this time, just real people with real lives. I am a graduate of the English program at NDSU, and will start graduate school across the river at MSUM in the fall to get a Master of Fine Arts in Creative Writing. As such, this is my last time participating in *Northern Eclecta* in any way, shape, or form, and will dearly miss it. I wish future contributors and editors the best of luck!

DENNIS OWEN FROHLICH, *Morbidity*, 64.

I am from Devils Lake, ND, and am currently a master's student in the Department of Communication. The poem refers to nobody in particular, but generally to people who try to repent of their sins through disciplining themselves. Humans alone cannot fully repent of their sins without the assistance of another.

JANELL GIETZEN. *Protest of Hell's Uprising*, 70.

I am a junior from Glen Ullin, ND, majoring in veterinary technology at NDSU. This picture came about while I was walking along the Red River. I wanted to capture this disaster because it had affected an entire community and many homes and lives were at risk. I had never been a part of anything like this before, so I was inspired to do my part.

MICHAEL "KIT" GJORVEN, *Young Dwarfing Old*, 73.

I am an English undergraduate at NDSU, and will be graduating this year. Photography is a hobby of mine, as well as creative writing and computers. I was born in Williston, ND, and growing grain has been a steady, if faint, presence in my childhood.

BOBBIE GUTZMER, *Nirvana*, 75.

I am from Hankinson, ND, where I attended Hankinson High School. I graduated in 2007 and attended Ridgewater College where I received an A.A.S. Degree and Diploma in Photography last May. I am currently a junior majoring in arts at NDSU. I have been aspiring to be a photographer for many years. This photo was taken on a vacation to New York.

JOSH HALEY, *6 Words to Describe Myself*, 102.

I'm from St. Paul, MN. I am a freshman at NDSU majoring in psychology. I wrote this six-word short story about myself because it was an extra credit assignment in one of my classes. Now, I have all the room to describe myself but I have nothing to write!

SHANE HARMS, *It's Time to Go Home, Mr. Baylerson*, 23.

I was born in Palmer, AK, but grew up in Detroit Lake, MN. I am a senior, majoring in both English and psychology. When I'm not writing, I spend my time outdoors, experimenting with zymurgy, and cooking.

PETER HATORI, *Night Combat*, 62.

I am a senior majoring in English and anthropology. I wrote this poem after spending three hours trying to get rid of a pesky fly.

LEAH ELLIOTT HAUGE, *Unplanned Parenthood*, 79.

I am a senior majoring in music. My writing has appeared in *The Forum* of Fargo-Moorhead, the 2008 issue of *Northern Eclecta*, and *Chicken Soup for the Soul: Teens Talk High School*. I live with my family in Fargo and blog at whereofalltheearth.blogspot.com. Of my piece "Unplanned Parenthood," the surprise announced by those two pink lines turns six this year and has a little brother, both of whom continue to challenge and inspire me.

JAMIE HOHNADEL, *Crumbling Images*, 124; *Echoes and Silence*, 121.

I am a senior at Kindred High School. I am an art enthusiast and a self-taught photographer, and I can't wait to make a career out of my passions. That is why I will be attending MSUM this fall for Graphic Design.

SARAH ISHAUG, *Noir Ame (Black Soul)*, 69.

I am a sophomore here at NDSU and I am an art major. I am from Moorhead, MN, where I grew up with my parents Bill and Ann Ishaug. I have always had an eye for art, primarily for photography. I have been taking pictures since my sophomore year in high school when I first took my sister's senior pictures (the model in the picture). After that my sister and I wrote a book for which I took the pictures. Since then I have been focusing on school and my photography on the side. "Noir Ame (Black Soul)" was taken in an old, run-down school house, outside of the small town of Barnesville, MN, about a mile away from my family farm. I focus on dark art and dark images, where I can capture some of the most expressful emotions that appeal to the eye, especially in black and white. For example, the emptiness in her eyes portrays the darkness of someone wanting something so bad, yet in a peaceful and calming essence.

ANDREW JACOT, *Untitled*, 74.

I am an Oakdale, MN, native in pursuit of a Master of Architecture degree, but have a passion for architectural photography. During my term abroad, I captured this photograph during a less-than-legitimate tour of the town hall currently under restoration in Jaipur, India. More of my work is available at www.cargocollective.com/andrewjacot.

KARL LARSON, *Sunflowers*, 31.

I am a junior in public history at NDSU from Gardner, ND. "Sunflowers" is a story about getting lost.

EUNSU LEE, *Change Your View*, 72; and *Anchor in Port*, web.

I was born in Dunnae, South Korea, and moved to Fargo in 2004. I earned a master's degree in Industrial Engineering and joined the Transportation and Logistics program for a Ph.D. degree at NDSU. My idea is that people attempt to see the world broader and in detail through myopic views. I was trying to remind us to look at the beautiful world with tolerance and various views. It was taken on a hill in Duluth, MN.

BRITNEY LIETHA, *Why the Angels Cry*, 12.

I am a freshman here at NDSU and am currently in the architecture program. Originally I am from Becker, MN, which has at least four different churches. This is odd when the population sits at about 2,000 people. However, this makes it not so odd for me to be writing about angels.

JESSICA MAMMENGGA, *Disney under the microscope*, 61.

I graduated in December 2009 with a Bachelor of Science degree in English and a psychology minor. I'm originally from Horace, ND, and currently live in Fargo, ND, and work at the corporate office of MAC'S Inc. as the Promotion/Merchandise Coordinator. I wrote this poem back in 2005 for a creative writing class taken at MSUM through the tri-college program; this was my first real attempt at manipulating the physical layout of the words in my poetry beyond simple line breaks, and I have maintained traces of this style ever since. Since graduation, I have enjoyed having extra time to indulge in reading for pleasure and honing my cooking skills.

DOMINIC J. MANTHEY, *Time on Fire*, 52.

I am a fourth-semester English/philosophy major who has lived in Fargo all of my life. The idea for this poem came as a result of my thinking about all the strange people that we have chosen to remember throughout history.

JEREMY ALLEN MILLER, *4 Men and a Tomato*, 91.

I am an NDSU freshman, majoring in business marketing, and my hometown is in Canby, MN. My inspiration came from the tremendous love for my family, the comedy sitcom we live in, and the crazy personalities that make it up.

LINNEA ROSE NELSON, *For Lefty*, 118.

I'm a senior at Mayville-Portland CG High School. I have been writing poetry since the age of eight, and will be attending NDSU this coming fall. My poem "For Lefty" is dedicated to a dear friend.

MARISSA KIBBY NELSON, *Looking Up*, 71; *A Writer's Paradise*, web.

I am from a cattle ranch near Watford City, ND. I am currently a sophomore in natural resources management at NDSU. I took the photo "Looking Up" while I was traveling in Europe with my brother right after graduating from high school, where I toured Ireland, Scotland, Wales, England, and France for a month.

ROSE NICHOLS, *A Red Door*, 100.

I am a first-year graduate student in the College of Business; I also work full-time at NDSU. My family grew up in a poor rural "town," Wabek, ND, population: 9 (our family). My grandfather had built a cabin at Lake Metigoshe before I was born—how incredibly lucky we were! I treasure innumerable happy memories from the lake.

R. J. PETERSON, *Sunflower, Wilt*, 45.

I am a senior studying English at NDSU. I'm a struggling musician and began writing poetry for songs. My favorite poet is John Keats and my favorite sport is frisbee. Originally from Glyndon, MN, I am currently in an acoustic trio called Jenkin.

SPENCER PTACEK, *Abstracting*, 106; *A Dead Receiver*, 14.

I am a junior majoring in English at NDSU. In writing “Abstracting,” I was interested by the ascending, stair-like effect of the ‘story within a story’ technique. However, I wanted to create an elevator rather than a staircase.

MAIA RANDKLEV, *Attitude*, 99.

I am a sophomore from Grand Forks majoring in English and Spanish.

NEIL SCHLOESSER, *Playing video games*, 47.

I have a BA in philosophy from MSUM and a minor in women’s studies. I was born and raised in Fargo, ND, and I am currently a second-year graduate student in communications.

FANGLIANG SHI, *Sunflowers*, 83.

I’m Fangliang. I’m a sophomore majoring in food science. I’m from Beijing, China. I wrote this article to remind me of my childhood and my hometown. Distance doesn’t matter if emotion and feeling still remain.

SHELBY M. STERN, *He*, 120; *And I Always Will Be*, 125.

I am a junior at Enderlin Public School. I have lived in the Enderlin area most of my life. I wrote the poem “He” because I think it’s exactly what many teenage girls look for in their “fantasy” boyfriend, but then they come to realize that no one’s perfect. I also wrote the poem “And I Always Will Be” because I’m a daddy’s girl and I know it’s going to be hard for him to let me go, so I wrote the poem for my dad to let him know that I will always be his little girl at heart.

DAIN SULLIVAN, *The Need to Run*, 95.

I’m currently a junior majoring in journalism at NDSU. I grew up in Oakes, ND, but my family moved to Perham, MN, when I was a freshman in college. When I’m done with school, I hope to live and work around the beautiful lakes of Minnesota. I absolutely love writing, and am looking forward to another amazing year at NDSU!

AMBER SUNDERMAN, *Fascinated*, 76; *Holding On*, 68; *No One's Watching*, web.
I am a freshman majoring in landscape architecture. My hometown is Long Prairie, MN. The media I used for "Fascinated" was charcoal and an 8"x11" piece of sketchbook paper.

SHAYLEE THOMAS, *Broken Rays*, 123; *Solitude Summer*, web.
I am a freshman at Ulen-Hitterdal High School. I enjoy playing volleyball, track and field, taking pictures, and being with my friends and family. These pictures were inspired by nature. I think we all sometimes neglect the fact that there are so many beautiful sights to be seen in this world and all we have to do is look around.

KATE THORESON, *The Thorn Mimosa*, 111; *Ode to the Solace in Shade*, 127.
I'm a senior at Mayville-Portland CG. I live on a farm outside Buxton, ND, and I've been writing since I was in second grade. The story I published was created as a retort to certain philosophical ideas. My poem was written while I was in the shower. Please enjoy them both.

DAVID VANE, *Lake Dreams*, 50.
I am a senior who is getting an English minor with an emphasis on writing studies. I am originally from Laq Qui Parle, MN. "Lake Dreams" was inspired by a dream I had after spending a day fishing with my family on vacation near Red Lodge, MT.

LINDA E. VASQUEZ, *Surrender*, 105.
I will be a sophomore after this spring. My major is English and I plan to minor in art. I am originally from CA and moved to ND back in September. I was inspired to write this after reading a love story on how love can be so strong against any adversities.

DAVIN WAIT, *Heroes, Soothsayers, Truth, and Truthsayers*, 48.
I am graduating this semester with a degree in reading, writing, and remembering, but my degree says English and history. I grew up in New York Mills, MN. I'm real cool but, contrary to popular practice, I did not leave school; I'm heading back to NDSU for graduate studies in English. I think Gandhi is the man.

SAMANTHA WICKRAMASINGHE, *The Rise*, 103.

I have laid embracing indolence in countless times. Each time there was a moment that woke me up. This poem endures the pain of separation and it carries a glimpse of a romantic loss. Overall, it sees life in a perspective that emphasizes the of value of present moment.

JORDAN G. WILLI, *Betrayal of an Angel*, 57.

I am a sophomore now and I will be a junior next year. I am majoring in journalism and broadcast journalism with a minor in web design. This poem is about how I felt betrayed by an ex-girl friend in high school. Writing the poem was my way of getting over her and expressing my pain.

JONI WIEBESICK, *Mirrors Never Lie*, 59; *What I Feel For You*, 101.

I am a sophomore majoring in psychology, born in South Korea but raised in Fargo. "Mirrors Never Lie" is a piece about human nature, how we all hide things about ourselves and how little things to huge secrets can change how people view us.

CARISSA N. WOLF, *Seraphim*, 3.

I am currently completing my master's thesis in English, and count Neil Gaiman, Karin Lowachee and Arthur Conan Doyle among my inspirations. I often have multiple realities running through my head, and have to write them down to keep them straight. So far, that seems to be working.

Northern *Eclecta* is a literary journal produced by students in the English 213, 313, and 413: Literary Publications classes, and Volume 4 was created during Spring Semester 2010. Students were responsible for the call for submissions along with the promotional materials associated with that effort. They selected the content to be published and edited those works, decided on the design and layout for this volume, and created the cover and other visual elements that have been included. These classes will be offered again during Spring Semester 2011, and students who are interested in editing, document design, desktop publishing, graphics, and public relations are encouraged to enroll.

The goal of this publication is to provide all students at NDSU as well as students in area secondary school students with the opportunity to have their creative written and visual works published. Financial support to help cover the cost of printing Volume 4 was provided by the following:

- English Club
- Department of English
- College of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences

This volume of *Northern Eclecta* is dedicated to David Martinson. David was a gifted poet who believed that others, especially students, should express themselves in creative forms. This belief made him a wonderful creative writing teacher and mentor to young (and some not so young) writers. David also believed that writers should publish their works, that they should share what they have created in a carefully edited, carefully designed format. When *Northern Eclecta* started in 2007, David enthusiastically encouraged his students to submit their works, and he continued to do so.

David was always anxious to see what the new issue would look like and whose work would be included. When he recognized his former students, he was pleased. This year, as the current issue was being finished, we learned of David's death on May 9. We are saddened that we cannot share this volume with him, but we hope that his belief in the value of creative expression will be carried on through it.