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to the readers....

It is my pleasure to introduce the fifth volume of *Northern Eclecta*. If there is one word to represent this volume, it would be “expansion.” I have had the good fortune to see this publication grow while continually engaging both readers and submitters. This volume has carried on that progression in creativity, size, and style. The result is a product of the English 213, 313, and 413 Literary Publications classes, who learned how to work on a publication while simultaneously creating one. Their efforts are just an extension of the creativity that can be found within these pages.

My first task as editor-in-chief was to decide on a theme for the volume. When I chose “creativity and imagination,” I was initially concerned that it would be too broad and potentially risk having the volume seem haphazard or random. However, given my past experience with the journal, I knew that the response from submitters was certain to be enthusiastic and eclectic (as our title so appropriately conveys). In hopes of not stifling their creativity, I instead tried to welcome it in all its diversity, and the outcome is our largest volume to date with works by more than 50 contributors being included. I hope you find it consistently inventive and entertaining.

The readers of our past volumes will find some things the same: the page design, the categories of Fiction, Nonfiction, Poetry, Quick Takes, Visual Arts, and the Next Generation. The moth remains our logo, and brief introductions can be found at the start of each section.

However, the changes are what define this volume. We had the pleasure of having artists decorate this volume with their original designs. The cover is an original painting by Spencer Kelley, and an original sketch by Arthur (Kenny) Bowling is included on the title page for each section. These illustrations create a new dimension of aesthetic value to the journal, as well as reflect the abundance of creativity from both staff and submitters.

This volume also features an expanded Quick Takes section with a wild assortment of pieces that will definitely intrigue the reader. We also had the chance to publish a traditional Malaysian fable in this section. The Fiction section contains a variety of traditional short stories, a screenplay, and a (self-referential) play. Poetry ranges from free verse to haiku, and Visual

Arts' pieces are split into two parts for color and black-and-white.

There are always risks whenever an expansion occurs, but when plurality, creativity, and free play are embraced, the outcome is often easy to handle. I would like to thank my supervisor Eunice Johnston, who has compassionately overseen and cultivated *Northern Eclecta* from the first day. I hope you enjoy all of the pieces within this volume, in all their poignancy, humor, and variety. Friedrich Nietzsche once said, "Art is the proper task of life." Those who believe that art can communicate emotional truths which science cannot will find plenty to be gleaned from this volume.

Dominic Manthey
Editor-in-Chief



FICTION

from the fiction editor....

Maya Angelou said that “words are things,” and we should “understand that words are powerful.” Words are more than just markings on a page; words convey emotions, turmoil, memories, and ideas. Words allow us to try on different personalities or to let people see who we truly are.

This year, many submissions revolved around deep, personal emotions and the darkest fears in life. Letters, screenplays, and satire provided a substantial array for us to choose from. We regret that we could not include all of the submissions, but many of the authors whose works we did not include were published in another category in this volume of *Northern Eclecta*.

“Prophesy?” is uniquely written, giving the reader insight into the main character’s thoughts. It captures the mundane realities of life but ends with an exciting, ironic twist.

“From *The Man*” is presented in professional screenplay format. Sadly, we could not include the screenplay in its entirety due to its length. This excerpt focuses on a man who seeks revenge while trying to discover himself.

The words of “Life-Changing Moments” prove that our lives consist of choices that lead to consequences. In the case of this character, his is the ultimate consequence.

“One-Act-Debacle” is perfectly humorous and a complete “debacle.” Written with witty humor, the main character questions every decision of the personified stage directions.

Finally, “Noble Intentions” captures attention with its fun interpretation of comic book heroes with the introduction of Prowler and Dark Avenger.

Please enjoy these stories; we thought their words were the most powerful.

Elizabeth A. Durben

BRIAN KNUTSON

Prophecy?

Man, I am really getting sick of this. Every day it's the same damn thing. Sure, some days it happens more than others, but still it is really irritating. I can hardly believe that only a year ago I actually thought that it had stopped for good.

"Hey—are you listening to me, Bryan?"

Oh crap, that's right. I keep forgetting that Jacqueline is talking to me. I need to get out of my thoughts and give her a response.

"Mmhmm"

"Really,? Then what was I saying?"

"You were telling me about how your boss is really pissing you off by constantly hassling you about things that you are seconds away from finishing. That he expects you to do more than you have time to do without respecting all the effort you already put into your job, even though on top of all that you still have class and homework. And yes, I am still up for that bike ride later—aren't I always?"

"Good. I guess you really were listening. You know, you always seem like you're spacing out—it isn't easy to tell if you are ever paying attention."

"Ya, I imagine if we were dating that would drive you absolutely nuts."

"Ya... nuts. Well, I have to get to class. Don't forget about the bike ride—I'll swing round your house about five."

"I'll be waiting."

Man, she would kill me if she ever found out that I hardly ever pay attention. But in my defense, I don't really need to anymore. It's not like that's the first time she's complained to me about her boss. Plus, we always go for a bike ride on Wednesday; she likes to get her blood flowing again after sitting through that two-hour lecture. Granted, even if it weren't so repetitive, I'd still have known everything she said. It's because of all these damn dreams; they're so damn annoying. I wouldn't mind seeing the future if it were ever actually something useful like a natural disaster or lottery numbers. That'd be cool. Instead, it's always just mundane conversations and pointless events. It's just become irritating at this point.

Ah, home, sweet home...although it doesn't really feel like home. House, sweet house?

“Now, let’s see—homework plus reading ahead equals a productive Bryan. Or, hideous orange couch plus television equals one perfectly wasted afternoon. Hmm... hello, couch.”

Damn it. What a bunch of crap. Who the hell was the first idiot to think that reality TV was a good thing? It's invaded everything. Ugg... Even Animal Planet has some stupid reality show. What happened to documentaries? Did they film all the animals already, or something? Let's see, History Channel... finally something interesting. Food Tech...crap, now I want something to eat... but that would require moving... screw that.

* * *

* Knock Knock Knock *

“Mnnmngg...”

Crap. I must've fallen asleep.

“Hey, Jacqueline.”

“Bryan, I can't believe you were sleeping again.”

“What? How'd you know?”

“Your hair—it only does that when you fall asleep on your couch.”

“Hmm? Oh, yeah. Sexy, isn't it?”

“So sexy. Now are we gonna go for that ride—or did you want to continue your nap?”

“Well... my couch is just right there... and my bike is all the way in the garage...”

“Honestly, how do you get anything done?”

“Magic.”

“Obviously. Well get your shoes on and grab your bike—we're going for a ride.”

“Yes, Ma'am.”

She seems playful enough today. Class must not have been too horrid. Hopefully that bodes well for the ride.

“So, Bryan, how's life?”

“Well I'm alive, so it can't get much worse.”

“Well aren't you just a ray of sunshine?”

“Meh, not like it’s something new. But hey, at least I’m cheerful.”

“Yeah, cheerful—not depressed at all.”

“Exactly. Now, shall I grab my bike so that we can be on our merry way?”

“Yes, please do.”

Ok, got my keys. House is locked. I need to fix that garage door.

“Right then, off we go.”

Tires are a bit flat; I better fill them when I get back.

“So, since we’ve established that I had yet another stimulating day of procrastination and unproductivity, how was your day? Nothing less than riveting, I trust.”

“Isn’t it always?”

“Hence my expectation.”

“Of course. Well then, shall I regale you with the tale of how I valiantly sat through chemistry class taking notes rather than pointing out the teacher’s obvious failings as an instructor, namely his ridiculously monotone voice that could lull a raging rhino to sleep? Honestly, he makes Ben Stein sound like Orson Welles.”

“Truly, that is a deed deserving of great renown.”

“Indeed it is, kind sir.”

“But might I pose a question?”

“You certainly may.”

“Why are we talking this way?”

“I have absolutely no idea.”

“Excellent. It seems we are equal in our confusion.”

“...God, Bryan, I can’t even look at you right now.”

“Oh? Why is that?”

“Because if I do, then I’ll laugh, and you are not making me laugh.”

“But you have such a lovely laugh. You should use it more often, like me. I laugh so often that I have a dozen spare laughs just in case I get bored with the one.”

“Well we can’t all find life as hilarious as you do.”

“Well, why not? It’s much better to laugh about something than to moan or cry.”

“Anyways, changing the subject...”

“You’re no fun.”

“Yep, I’m no fun at all. So, anyways, as I was saying....”

Ah, damn it. Here we go. I wondered when the dream was going to start up again. Let's see, what's it going to be this time? Ah, a new guy. Figured she was overdue for a new boyfriend. I think I'll just lag back like usual so she doesn't notice my utter lack of interest. Here she goes with all the stuff that they have in common, and how he's so sweet, blahdy blahdy blahdy blah. Then a couple of months from now she'll realize that the guy's a douche and dump him. And here comes the part where he asked her out.

"I was wondering—do you want to go out with me?"

"Wait. What?"

"We spend so much time together that I figured we should just make it official and date, although you never say anything. So, do you want to go out with me?"

"Well, I mean... it's just that... wow."

"If you don't want to that's okay."

"No. No, that's not it at all. It's just that, this isn't what was supposed to happen. You were supposed to tell me about the latest douche bag that had asked you out—then I'd grumble something that would make you stop just before that intersection up there, and I'd have to stop and talk my way out of it. I wasn't supposed to be the newest douche-bag you decided to date."

"What are you talking about?"

"You know what, forget everything I just said. I would absolutely love to date you, Jacqueline. You know, I never even considered the possibility that you might like me—maybe I need to pay more attention. But, I mean, you always went out with such assholes, I just sort of figured that—"

"BRYAN, WATCH OUT!!!"

Crap—I forgot a car ran the light.

SAM CATON

From *The Man*

This selection is an excerpt taken from the very beginning of what the author describes as “a 110 page speculative film script that touches on classic film noir and depicts an exhilarating revenge story.”

FADE IN:

A BLACK SCREEN

THE MAN (VO)

This frame has no shadow.

EXT. CITY PARK – NIGHT

At night in the summer. Tall, dark buildings surround a city park. Weaving through the park, a river splashes under a wooden bridge. A light rain falls. Rubble and semi-dilapidated buildings together form this city in post-WWII Europe.

A man sits on a park bench. He is drinking a bottle of whiskey and smoking a cigarette. His unflinching gaze rests upon a tree in front of him. The tree stands tall and wide with thick branches twisting every direction.

The Man wears a brown coat. His wet hair is long, dark, and matted. Stubble surrounds his tired face. A gray cat sits under the bench with half-closed eyes.

A larger man approaches. In his early twenties, his small, beady eyes dart back and forth like a weasel looking for prey. On his tan uniform is the emblem of The Guard, a stitching of the letter “G” with a spear shooting diagonally across it.

FIRST GUARD

What you doin'? Why you here?

The Man doesn't react to the question.

FIRST GUARD

(calls out)

Anthony! We got a drifter.

(to *The Man*)

Ugh, you look like shit.

Another guard, Anthony, arrives. Also in his twenties, he is much smaller. His mouth hangs open a bit, and his scrawny frame moves with a cocky saunter.

SECOND GUARD (ANTHONY)

(to *The Man*)

Hey! It's after hours! Park's closed!

That'll be a ticket, it will.

Second Guard (Anthony) stops and looks at First Guard (Max), who has begun writing a citation.

SECOND GUARD (ANTHONY)

(to *First Guard, Max*)

So Max, have you told her? She got a clue?

FIRST GUARD (MAX)

(to *Second Guard, Anthony*)

It's gonna be a surprise. 'Course I haven't fuckin' told her. I mean, I'll tell her, but just not yet, I suppose.

*Max turns his attention back to writing the citation. Anthony once again looks at *The Man*, his patience running thin.*

SECOND GUARD (ANTHONY)

Get up! Up! Go! Go home!

The Man casually takes another drag off of his cigarette. He has yet to look at either of the guards.

SECOND GUARD (ANTHONY)

(to Max)

She's gonna love it. Everythin' all perfectly planned and such. God. You think she'll, you know—

FIRST GUARD (MAX)

Course she will. Already have her father's consent.

Max hands the finished ticket to The Man.

FIRST GUARD (MAX)

(to The Man)

Now get the hell out of here!

Ignoring Max's outstretched arm holding the ticket, The Man looks at Anthony like a shrink looks at a patient.

SECOND GUARD (ANTHONY)

You stupid son of a bitch!

(turns to Max)

'Bout had enough of this guy.

Anthony takes out his gun. Time seems to freeze.

THE MAN (VO)

I'm guessin' that in most cities, the law's the law and that's that. Just the same, here in my beloved, sweet home, it's not that simple.

Anthony strikes The Man in the face with his pistol. Blood seeps from The Man's nose and mouth. Wiping it off, he turns and lazily stares Max in the face.

Max swings his fist, striking The Man on the cheek. The Man slowly stands up. He

takes a long pull of whiskey while holding a cigarette between his face and Anthony's face.

FIRST GUARD (MAX)
What the hell are you doin'?

The Man spits the whiskey at Second Guard (Anthony). The alcohol ignites on the cigarette and the burning liquid covers Anthony's face. Anthony lets out a bloodcurdling scream, drops his gun, and falls burning to the ground.

First Guard (Max) reaches for his own gun. Before he can pull it out, The Man breaks the bottle of whiskey on the bench and smashes the jagged end into Max's forehead. Max falls to the ground dead, the glass shard protruding from his skull. The Man calmly takes out a six-shot revolver and shoots Anthony in the head.

The gray cat slowly rises and hops on the bench. The Man sits back down and lights another cigarette, resuming his previous gaze upon the tree as if nothing had happened.

THE MAN (VO)
What am I doin'?

The Man closes his eyes.

THE MAN (VO)
Why am I even here?

FLASHBACK – THE MAN'S CHILDHOOD
EXT. CITY PARK – DAY

It is spring. The trees are blooming.

The Man—as a twelve-year-old boy—walks along the same path the Guards arrived on. His downcast face is bruised. Blood is caked around his nose. He lifts his head. He hears something.

The Boy quickly climbs a tree and looks in a second story window of a nearby building. He sees an old man playing a piano. He listens. Overwhelmed by the music, The Boy starts crying.

BACK TO PRESENT DAY
EXT. CITY PARK – NIGHT

The Man drags the bodies to the river in the park.

Overlooking the park is the same window where The Composer played his piano years ago. The window is dark and dusty, seemingly abandoned.

After dumping the bodies in the water, The Man crosses the bridge and walks towards the dark, empty streets. The cat trails along by his feet.

THE MAN (VO)

It is true our past defines us. Reaction, that's all we are. Blind reaction. Luck separates the sane from the insane and unforeseen circumstances tip the wheelbarrow far too easily. Far too often. Can I trust my thoughts? Or...yeah. Maybe I can.

EXT. CITY ALLEYWAY – NIGHT

The Man continues to walk with the gray cat a few feet in front of him.

THE MAN (VO)

“*Nemo me impune lacessit.*” No one provokes me with impunity.

The Man stops. Something is out of place. He looks down and, seeing his untied shoe lace, bends down and begins to tie it.

The rain begins to fall harder. The Man finishes, stands up, and continues walking.

THE MAN (VO)

Forget it. Leverage or no, I am here. I was there.
I exist, And though I may not know who I am or what
I am becoming, I am fully aware that I have indeed been
provoked...

The Man slowly comes to a halt. He looks at his reflection in the window of an abandoned building

THE MAN (VO)

...and so, I must react.

EXT. RICK'S GENERAL STORE – NIGHT

The Man walks towards Rick's General Store. The rain still pours down on him. The cat is already by the door.

THE MAN (VO)

A fix. What is the point.

Reaching the door, The Man opens it and follows the muddy footprints of the cat.

INT. RICK'S GERNERAL STORE – NIGHT

Behind the counter of this low-quality store is a middle-aged man with glasses holding a newspaper. His eyes are calm and his demeanor weary. His nametag indicates that this is Rick. Like a black lab past his prime, his features are those of tired acceptance of the harshness of life.

The cat walks to a corner, seats itself, and begins licking its fur. Rick sets down his newspaper. The Man begins to slowly walk up and down each aisle.

RICK

Goddamn pourin', huh?

Ignoring him, The Man continues to pace the aisles.

RICK
Can I help you find somethin'?

After a few moments of silence, The Man reaches the counter and stands in front of Rick.

RICK
Wait, do I know you?

THE MAN
No.

RICK
You sure? Aren't you the chap who—

THE MAN
No.

RICK
What's your name?

The Man pauses.

FLASHBACK—THE MAN'S CHILDHOOD
EXT. CITY PARK—DAY

It is autumn. Colorful leaves cover the trees. The Boy sits in the tree, listening to the music played by The Composer.

BACK TO PRESENT DAY

RICK
Sir? Asked your name is all I did. Didn't intend any offense.

The Man snaps out of it and looks directly at Rick's nametag. Rick notices and is confused.

THE MAN

Rick. That's my name, Rick. Rick.

The Man slowly lifts his eyes and once again makes eye contact with Rick.

RICK

(unsettled and confused)

Well, what can I do for you, sir?

THE MAN

Tobacco. Papers.

Rick sets a bag of tobacco and rolling papers on the counter between him and The Man.

RICK

That'll be one sixty.

The Man picks them up and walks away without paying. As he nears the door, Rick calls after him.

RICK

Sir?

The cat slips out the door behind The Man.

Perplexed, Rick stares after them. Shaking his head, he takes out his wallet and pays for the cigarettes stolen by The Man.

EXT. CHURCH—NIGHT

The Man sits with his cat on the stairs leading up the door of a church. It is no longer raining. The sky is clearing up, displaying a full moon. Water drips from the edge of the buildings.

THE MAN (VO)

Three wounds. Three stages of revenge.
Heart, mind, and body.

The cat lifts its head and looks towards the street. A rat is shuffling around in some trash.

THE MAN (VO)

My name, he asked me. He wanted to know my name.
Why do people insist on breakin' down doors and takin'
what isn't theirs? Just like The Captain.

FLASHBACK—THE MAN'S CHILDHOOD
EXT. CITY STREET—DAY

The Captain, a blonde man in his early thirties, lifts his gaze from the ground to eye level. He has drops of blood splattered on his viscously triumphant face.

THE CAPTAIN

Throw the body in the river.

BACK TO PRESENT DAY

The cat, hunched over, quickly crawls to a tree. Using it as cover, it watches the rat.

THE MAN (VO)

Ten years of waitin' and now all I do is wait some more.
What's the rush, I suppose.
(lights a cigarette)
My name. Who I am.

The cat slowly and quietly creeps toward its prey.

THE MAN (VO)

I'm the smoke waftin' from chimneys.
(scoffs)

I'm a glass of wine, a butler's shoe.
I'm no more and no less than a dreamer's dream.
And I'm not complainin'. It gets the job done.

The cat pounces on the rat, biting its neck. The rat squeals before going limp. Carrying the rat, the cat walks back toward the steps.

THE MAN (VO)

It'll all be over soon anyway.

The cat lays the rat at The Man's feet.

THE MAN

(to the cat)

Well, that was nice of you.

A woman approaches. She is dressed like a prostitute, dark hair falling around a face too sweet for a whore. She moves with an uncommon grace.

THE PROSTITUTE

Hello.

THE MAN

Can I help you?

The Prostitute smiles and shakes her head.

THE PROSTITUTE

Can I help you?

THE MAN

Not interested.

Smile disappearing, The Prostitute begins to walk away.

THE PROSTITUTE

I like your cat.

THE MAN

It isn't mine.

The Prostitute continues walking away, confused at the encounter.

EXT. CITY-DAY

The sun is peeking over the horizon. Wind makes the leaves of the trees rustle. A large German shepherd chases some pigeons, scattering the birds into the air.

A man sits on a park bench, his shoes polished black. His face is obscured by the newspaper he is reading.

EXT. CHURCH—DAY

The Man, sitting where we left him, watches the cat clean himself. The cat stops, looks at him, and flattens his ears.

THE MAN

(to the cat)

Yeah, I know. But I'm not lickin' myself.

(looking up the road)

Let's get started, yeah?

INT. GENERAL STORE—DAY

The Man stands in front of the checkout counter. On the counter sits a loaf of bread and some milk.

The Clerk behind the counter is a man in his mid-sixties. He has a beard and a kind smile painted on his face.

CLERK

You like fishin'?

The Clerk begins to ring up bread and milk.

THE MAN

Yes.

THE CLERK

Got up before work this mornin', East Docks,
you know the place? Didn't catch much,
but my mate Ross said he's had luck down there.
I just like the sunrise, really.

THE MAN

(thoughtfully)

Yes.

Clerk hands The Man his purchase.

THE CLERK

That'll be one sixty.

The Man pauses, unsure of what to do. A member of the Guard, a stick with glasses, walks by the window outside of the store.

THE MAN

(slowly)

I must have left my money. Left it outside.

EXT. GENERAL STORE—DAY

The Man is holding the guardsman (Stick) against a brick wall in an alley. The gray cat is perched on a dumpster, scanning the area with half-closed eyes. Stick's radio lies smashed upon the pavement.

THE MAN

One sixty to buy your life, you son of a bitch,
Don't report this either, fucker.

STICK

(frightened and stuttering)

I only have a five! Take it! I'll forget about this.
I swear, like it never happened! I don't give a shit
about a five, take it!

A fist swings. The Man strikes Stick square in the eye.

EXT. UNDER PARK BRIDGE—DAY

The Man sits eating his meal, the cat stretched out in the sun nearby. Looking over to where the cat lies, The Man takes another bite of bread.

THE MAN (VO)

So, what do you think? I've got nothing. I have a
reason. Is that enough? I have a loaf of bread. My
guns. And I have you.

The Man tosses a rock into the river and stands up.

THE MAN (VO)

But the reason. God knows. I know.

The cat slowly gets up and stretches.

THE MAN (VO)

A cat, that's all you are. I don't blame you either.

Life-Changing Moments

Alex Blake groaned as he sat up, feeling like his forehead was rising onto the blade of an axe. He regretted doing so many lines of coke to stay awake over the weekend. Oh, well. No time to worry about it now. Alex staggered to the bathroom and started the shower. Icy cold water felt like tiny needle pricks on his skin, but somehow it helped his headache dissipate. After washing his hair, brushing his teeth, and getting dressed in his work attire—business suit, \$500 designer black leather shoes—he headed to the kitchen.

As he cut a new line on the black marble kitchen counter, Alex once again admired the view from his pricey apartment. Unlike most, who only got the secondary sunlight that trickled in their streaked windows, Alex could be satisfied with what was best: apartment facing the sunrise, light blaring through the large windows that lined the living room and bedroom. For him, it was worth the extra \$400 a month compared to his old loft. He stood at the kitchen counter for a few lengthy moments, basking in the rays of the rising sun, which caused the all-white modern decor of the living room to glow.

After a breakfast of cocaine and a Butterfinger, Alex left the cleaning woman's daily payment on the empty counter and headed to the office.

* * *

Alex stared across the candlelit table at his companion, listening to her drone on about her day and her latest gossip. It was all very boring, but he did listen intently. After all, Jessica was his girlfriend.

The restaurant was a pristine mess of blood red and black decor around them. This place was meant to be romantic; most tables only had two large red-cushioned chairs, and each table had its own crystal vase with a single, fresh rose. Black curtains blended with the night sky, and the ceiling was a mural of vine-entrapped columns against a night sky. Chandeliers hung from the painted columns for additional lighting, adding sparkle to the acrylic stars.

Out of the corner of his eye, Alex noticed one of the good-looking waitresses bending over to clean the table next to theirs. Habitually, he turned his head for a full view of the girl, whose white button-down shirt was unbuttoned just enough that in her current position her breasts practically spilled out. But just as quickly as he looked, his eyes fell to his plate, chiding himself. Picking up his fork, Alex prodded his half-eaten sirloin and resumed gazing at Jessica.

He would say that he loved her, except that he had so many secrets: the other girls, his cocaine habit, how he would sometimes smoke a pack or two of cigarettes to keep himself from doing more coke. He never told her his income, either. If he did, she would demand much more of him than the occasional 5-star reservation and the designer clothes and accessories he gifted to her.

Alex had always found it hard to tolerate others; not that he hated them, just that he floundered in interactions. Keeping up appearances was a priority, however, so he occupied himself with making good impressions without speaking to people. When he met Jessica at a cocktail party thrown by a coworker, he knew she was a little different than the rest. For the first time that he could remember, he wanted to have a conversation instead of maintaining dull, small talk. After a few dinner dates, the slender brunette became his. Occasionally, he thought about marrying her, but his secrets held him back.

Later, they lay in bed at Jessica's apartment. Her place wasn't as nice as his, but it was comfortable and suited Alex's purpose for being there. Not bothering to cover herself up, Jessica silently left the bedroom and returned a minute later holding a glass of red wine. "Want any?" she asked.

Alex shook his head. He didn't like wine; he preferred brandy or cognac.

Jessica plopped down on the edge of the king-sized bed, facing away from him. Facing an empty wall. She sipped her after-sex drink. "I didn't say it at the restaurant," she uttered, vacant, "but I might be pregnant."

Minutes crawled by. Alex wondered why she was choosing to have this conversation naked.

"Are you going to say anything?"

"I don't want kids."

"That's it, Alex? That's *it*?"

There was a dull silence, a hesitation. Through the thick distance between them, Alex fished for words. Sentences. Meaning. Should he say how he really felt? How would she react?

"You can have it if you want, Jessica," he carefully said, though to him it

sounded as if he were stumbling through the words. “I will pay child support. That is not a problem. I’m just no father.”

Jessica stared at her feet. Thankfully, she wouldn’t look back at him. She swirled her wine glass, and with the other hand nervously fidgeted with the blue satin sheets. “You could be. We could be a family. I know you’re afraid of commitment like that. But I love you. We could be a family.”

“I can’t get married,” Alex answered, still calm. He was itching for some cocaine. “I’ll pay for whatever you want. I just don’t think I’m ready.”

After a few more minutes of silence, Jessica drained her wine glass and left the room again. This time, she returned with the whole bottle. Alex recognized it as a Merlot he had bought for her.

“Are you sure you should be drinking that if you’re pregnant?” he asked.

She slumped down on the bed again. “You don’t give a shit, anyway. Maybe I don’t want it, either.”

Alex slipped off of the bed, got dressed, and let her know as he left, “If it’s what you want, I’ll pay for the abortion.”

* * *

This particular Monday morning, Alex woke up next to a pretty woman he had brought home with him from the club last night. Sighing, he shook her awake and asked her to leave. The hung-over blonde left her number etched in eyeliner on a strip of paper on the nightstand. When she asked if he would call her, if they could hook up again, he ushered her out the door, mumbling, “Don’t get your hopes up. You weren’t that great.” Before she could protest, the door clicked shut.

After finishing his morning routine by setting his cleaning woman’s payment on the counter, Alex paused. Also on his normally bare marble countertop was a gift meant for Jessica. The elegant black jewelry box had been sitting in the same spot for weeks, ignored by the cleaning woman because she knew it wasn’t her business. Alex slid the box directly in front of himself and opened it, revealing the necklace inside. On a simple silver chain rested a diamond-surrounded sapphire pendant. It wasn’t big—Jessica favored simple elegance over showy baubles.

In an attempt to push Jessica from his mind, Alex looked up, out the window. As the sun rose, everything brightened and the room seemed ambient. Alex walked from the counter to the living area, across the plush carpet, and sat

down on the never-used couch, letting the heat of the sunlight envelop him. He stared out into the light.

How many expensive gifts had he given Jessica since the abortion? How much money had he put into trying to make it up to her? Sometimes he blamed himself for her decision to abort the baby. Other times, in an attempt to escape these new thoughts and worries, he did so much coke he thought his head and chest would explode. Looking around his living space, the thought of his own guts and brains on his pure, clean decor disgusted him.

Out of the corner of his eye, Alex spotted a glint, something brighter than all this sunlight. Turning his head, he realized it was the necklace for Jessica, resting in its box. A feeling overcame him akin to what he felt when he'd first met Jessica. He wasn't sure what it was, but it made him realize that a necklace, no matter how much it cost, would not wash away his mistake. After all, he reasoned, engagement didn't necessarily mean marriage. If he changed his mind later, he'd just call it off. On the other hand, they could stay engaged for years before even thinking about a ceremony. Maybe by then he would learn. Maybe by then he would want a family.

Rising off the couch, Alex snatched up his things and left the apartment, walking quickly to the subway. He took out his smartphone and hit Jessica's speed dial, waiting for her to pick up. As he moved through bustling streets, everyone seemed to be ignoring everyone else. That was how he liked it.

"Hi, this is Jessica! Sorry, I'm not around my phone right now. Just leave a message and I'll get back to you!"

Alex silently cursed that he got her voicemail. Not wanting his spontaneity to pass, he decided to go through with it anyway. After the beep, he started, "Jess, this is Alex. I know this probably isn't...the right way to do this. I don't have a ring yet or anything. But, will you marry me? Please call ba—"

In mid-sentence, a force struck Alex that sent him to the concrete. Other pedestrians had been too engrossed in themselves to pay any attention to the lone man stepping into the street. That just made it all the more shocking to the bystanders who witnessed the SUV strike the young businessman. Luckily, someone had the sense to call 911.

Alex hazily came to, not realizing at first what had happened. He remembered trying to call Jessica. He had gotten her voicemail. Then he was on the ground, feeling as if a wrecking ball demolished him instead of the building it was aiming for. Now, at least, he couldn't seem to feel anything. Or move

anything. Still confused, he looked around. A woman was sitting behind the driver's seat of an SUV, sobbing. Police were trying to get her out. Red was splayed on the front of the car.

Realizing what was going on, Alex might have laughed if he could. Suddenly the ambulance's sirens announced its arrival, and paramedics bustled around him. One kid knelt down by Alex's head. "Don't worry, sir," the young EMT assured him, "You're going to be fine."

Alex knew that wasn't true.

Then the paramedic did something that Alex couldn't laugh at: he ripped Alex's \$3000 suit. His vision growing ever more hazy and black, Alex turned his head to where he thought the kid must be, and used the last of his strength to spat out, "Fuck you."

* * *

In the staff lounge, a few of the veteran paramedics and doctors were enjoying some rare free time, sharing a pizza with each other. Between laughs and stories, one of them sighed when he glanced at the one employee locker hanging open, empty.

"Really is a shame about Darrel," he said. "That kid was going to be a damn good EMT."

A long silence hung over the room that had just been cheerful. One of the doctors invited the EMTs to continue the story, asking, "What happened?"

The same man that had brought the subject up answered, "Poor kid. First time out on the field and look what happens? None of you were there; you didn't see it. Young guy is ripped to shreds by an SUV that didn't see him. There's like, no chance this guy is gonna live. Hips, legs, spine—all done for. The guy's coughing up blood, can hardly talk. Darrel tells the guy he's going to be okay, and right before he dies, the guys says, 'thank you.' Can you believe that? Uses his last ounce of strength to cough that out. Darrel's sure that's what he said."

Amid raised eyebrows and knowing glances, a doctor spoke up, "You have to get used to that stuff, though. It happens a lot."

"Yeah, but then the guy's girlfriend shows up, crying and wailing that she was going to marry him. Tough stuff. Too much for a new kid like Darrel."

"Must have been some guy," one of the employees mumbled after finishing off a piece of pizza. "It's a shame when it's one of those really good people that die. Just a shame."

SPENCER PTACEK

One-Act-Debacle

ACT I

Opens on a single-room apartment in New York City. The room is sparsely furnished: a bed, a table with two chairs, a desk with one chair, and an oven, refrigerator and several cabinets.

SAM stands in the middle of the room, contemplating.

SAM starts and appears ready to speak.

SAM: Hey, how are you doi— Wait, where am I?

Opens on a single-room apartment in New York City. The room is sparsely—

SAM: Okay, okay. Yes, I can see that. New York City, huh? Any particular reason I'm in New York?

No. Not really.

SAM: So it's arbitrary? Why not Oakland? Why couldn't I be in Oakland?

Well, it should be more of an East Coast thing. Ideally.

SAM: So? Okay, so what about Pittsburgh? What do you have against Pittsburgh?

I have nothing against Pittsburgh.

SAM: Well, can I be in Pittsburgh then?

Opens on a single-room apartment in Pittsburgh. The room is sparsely furnished: a bed, a table with two chairs, a desk with one chair, and an oven, refrigerator and several cabinets.

SAM: Alright, thank you. I've always liked Pittsburgh; they have a great team. I do have another request to make, though: I'm a little dehydrated, and I'm concerned about how that'll affect my performance, speaking being a big part of that and all.

A glass of water appears on the table.

SAM: Again, *muchas gracias*. (*Drinks entire glass.*) Ahh. . . Did you just make me do that?

Do what?

SAM: That. Drink that water. The entire glass. Did you do that—or did I do that?

Weren't you going to do it anyways?

SAM: Yeah, I suppose. . . say, can you make anything appear? Like you just did with the water and the “appears on the table” bit?

A piece of chocolate appears near the empty glass.

SAM: Whoa, not bad. (*Picks up the chocolate.*) Hey, you doing that again (*puts chocolate in mouth*) mm...that's weird (*chews*) but I suppose...I can get used to it (*swallows, smacks lips*). Nicely done, thank you. So this place is like *The Matrix* or something?

What?

SAM: Oh. *The Matrix* is this movie where this guy, uh, Keanu Rivers, I think, plays a computer hacker who has the power to like bend bullets and run arou—

Yeah, I've seen the movie. And it's Keanu Rivers. I just don't see the connection.

SAM: Oh. Well, next time you watch it just remember this, what you're doing. You'll get it.

SAM: . . . So. . . what exactly do you do here? The Setting, I guess?

More than just that. I also—

SAM: That's what your T-shirt says: "SETTING"

Yes, well I didn't make the tee shirt did I?

SAM: Did you?

Does it really matter?

SAM: No, I guess not. . . Actually, it does matter becau—

Whatever. The point is I can do more than just setting. I also do stage directions, as you probably have realized, and I do some character stuff too, though then I have to do it like this, as "Dramatis Personae."

SAM: Okay, cool. What exactly can you do character-wise? Or me-wise, really, as there don't seem to be any more characters in this thing.

Actually, there are more characters in this play, Horatio, than are thought of by you in your spare time.

SAM: It's Sam, I think.

Yes, SAM, sorry. It's been a long day. What exactly would you like me to do, character-wise?

SAM: I don't know. Tell me a little bit about myself. I'm curious.

SAMANTHA LIST (SAM) a struggling grocery store clerk living in—

SAM: Wait a minute, Samantha? I thought I was a guy, for some reason.

Nope. Sorry. Sounds like a personal problem to me. Ha ha ha.

SAM: Real funny, like I've never heard that one before (*aside*) I haven't actually heard that one before! That was really good and funn— Agh! Why did you do that? Who was I just talking to?

I'm not sure, exactly, it's difficult to see much from here. I apologize, though. It was rude of me. Here, let me make it up to you: you can change your name, if you'd like.

SAM: And my sex? Occupation?

Anything you'd like.

SAM: Alright. How about 'Samuel Beefsteak, a struggling FBI Agent?'

SAMUEL BEEFSTEAK (SAM) a struggling FBI Agent...

SAM: Uh... 'with a roguish glint in his eye'

SAMUEL BEEFSTEAK (SAM) a struggling FBI Agent with a roguish glint in his eye.

SAM: Ah. I feel better already. (*Slaps chest.*) Thanks, more fully self-actualized.

You look very handsome.

SAM: So, now that I'm a guy, would you like to have dinner with me after this is all done? Maybe afterwards we could golf for a bit?

I don't really think that would be appropriate. It would really complicate the working environment that we have here, and I just—

SAM: Do you really have a choice?

Um... yes? Why wouldn't I?

SAM: Because you always have to make things appear when I tell you to. And that includes you appearing with me tonight at 10:00 pm at the Golfing Course for dinner followed by a match or two of golfing.

I do not have to do whatever you say. Nor would I want to. I think you're acting very immature, to be honest.

SAM: Oh yeah? I think I want a meat-flavored sandwich on the table right now!

A sandwich appears near the empty glass.

SAM: Ha! I told you. The setting will always adapt to the character. (*Bites into sandwich, chews, begins to choke.*) Mmph... no... (*Falls on the floor.*) Help... sorry... (*Spits up large piece of sandwich.*) Oh... (*Gasps.*)... thank yo— (*Vomits.*) Ugh! (*Coughs.*) I said I was sorry! (*Wipes lips.*) I said I was sorry. Okay,

I apologize. I suppose some small, dramatically insignificant aspects of the play are out of my hands.

Hmm...yes. Well, in any case, I appreciate the offer, but I have to decline.

SAM: Why?

I just don't think he would approve.

SAM: Him? What's he gonna do about it? If he thinks he wants a piece of Samuel Beefsteak then he's about to bite off a lot more than he can chew. (*Turns.*) Hey, you. You have something you'd like to say?

SAM: No? Prefer to just sit there and stare at me?

Listen, Sam, this really isn't necessary. I'll just—

SAM: No. He needs us to finish this thing. Though, really, if you think about it, it's kind of difficult to execute any of this. A character speaking with a non-character is, though riveting in theory, practically impossible. But I won't let that keep us apart, darling. (*Turns, shouts.*) I won't let him keep us apart!

That's very sweet, but the thing is, I kind of am him. . . or part of him at least.

SAM: Well, yeah, I am too. . . so? That's our insurance! He's not going to do anything to himself. We're the only part of himself he has any control over, and who would give that up? Who would give us up? Trust me, he's not going to do anything about it. In fact, I dare him to. (*Turns.*) We both dare you to!

Ha ha, no, sir, I don't dare you to. SAM!

SAM: C'mon man, do something. I'm waiting...

SAM: Still he—

Exit ALL

AMBER L. FETCH

Noble Intentions

Prowler grinned when the museum's silent alarm was tripped. She had done it on purpose; the chase was half the fun, after all. Not to mention that, with the alarm already tripped, there was little need for subtlety or extra care. She smashed the case housing the ancient book of Egyptian mummification rituals that was currently the main display at the museum and slipped the large book into her satchel.

She had been doing this for quite awhile. She wore a navy blue spandex catsuit, dark violet leather elbow gloves, matching knee-high leather boots, and a violet mask that covered her entire face. The fabric over her eyes was a bit thinner so she could see through the mask. With this costume, her identity was kept a secret. On the off chance that she might be caught, she also wore makeup beneath the mask to alter her appearance just enough that she wouldn't be recognized.

Throwing her satchel over her shoulder, Prowler made her way casually back toward the entrance. If she escaped too quickly, he might not find her, and she wanted him to find her. Her patience was rewarded when she reached the main door and opened it to see Dark Avenger, the city's costumed hero, standing there, arms folded across his chest. He wore a black Kevlar full-body suit with blue gloves and combat boots. His mask, which covered his face save for his mouth and chin, and which had a black visor over the eyes to help shield his identity, was also blue and reinforced with padding in case of head injuries.

"I hoped you'd come, Avenger," Prowler chuckled, grinning behind her mask.

"You're just a glutton for punishment, aren't you, Prowler?" he replied coolly. "Hand over whatever you've stolen and surrender."

"You know it won't be that easy."

She delivered a well-placed punch to his jaw and leapt to her left. He grabbed for her, but she was faster. She started running down a long hallway, but she knew he would catch her. She was the better sprinter, but he won in distance

running. When he started gaining on her, she pulled the book from her satchel and threw it back at him. That would slow him down.

Rounding a corner, she discovered that a handful of policemen were waiting, handguns drawn and pointed at her. She skidded to a halt. After a moment's hesitation, she raised her hands above her head in surrender.

In less than an hour, she found herself in an interrogation room. She had been fingerprinted, processed, and locked in a holding cell for a while and was now waiting for the detective to enter the room and start grilling her. She wasn't all that worried: she knew her fingerprints weren't in the system, and she didn't carry any ID when she went out as Prowler. Moreover, her makeup job seemed to be sufficient: she appeared to be a thirty-something woman with full lips, freckles, and brown hair. It was the perfect disguise while still resembling her natural appearance.

If she didn't know the tricks of interrogation, she would probably be getting pretty anxious at the moment. The chair she was sitting on was wobbly; one of the legs must have been shorter than the rest of them. The lights above her wouldn't stop flickering every now and then. The heat was turned up slightly in the room, so she was sweating a bit. One of her wrists was handcuffed to the table to keep her in place. But all of that was fine because she understood that they were trying to make her uncomfortable, and that knowledge kept her from growing nervous.

Finally, the door swung open, and a male detective came into the interrogation room. She recognized him after a moment. His name was Marcus Evans. He was the detective assigned to the Prowler cases. He was in the news whenever she committed a robbery. He was good. She was better.

"This is the first time we've had a chance to talk," he said as he sat down across the table from her. He was feigning admiration.

Prowler didn't bother answering. She knew she was going to prison, but she didn't really have a problem with that. She was sure she would have no problem escaping in a relatively short amount of time. Not to mention the fact that she had *allowed* herself to be caught.

"I see you waived your right to have an attorney present during questioning," Evans continued, raising an eyebrow as he looked at her.

"I don't need a lawyer," she replied, waving her free hand dismissively. "I can handle myself."

She had thought about that already. She wasn't about to waste funds on a

lawyer and risk having to explain later where all her secret identity's money went.

"Hmm." Evans opened the file in front of him, looking it over slowly. He took maybe ten minutes doing this in silence. She knew he was trying to make her more uncomfortable by making her wait. It wouldn't work. She was patient.

"So, you were trying to steal an ancient Egyptian book of rituals." Evans slid a picture of the book over to her. "Why?"

Prowler shrugged. "Why does any thief steal anything? To sell it, obviously."

"Sell to whom?"

"I hadn't found a buyer yet."

He turned his attention fully on her, sitting back in his chair. His expression was stern.

"Why do you do what you do?" he asked. "Why did you become a criminal? Why did you become Prowler?"

She smirked. "That's simple. I did it to bring Dark Avenger to the city."

"What?"

"I became Prowler so this city could gain a hero." She chuckled, meeting his gaze. "For a long time, this city had been dying. Daily murders and other crimes ran rampant. Criminals had infiltrated every aspect of the city's government, judicial system, and police force. You know how bad it was, Detective Evans. You were on the bottom rung, just a beat cop. You saw all the corruption first hand."

"I suppose that's true."

"I knew that if I became a costumed villain who gave the police a run for their money, eventually a hero would emerge to bring me to justice."

"That's crazy. You assumed someone was as insane as you?"

"Hey, who are you calling insane?" Prowler shot him a glare. "It was a great idea. And it worked, right? Dark Avenger emerged just a short month after I became Prowler."

"Fair enough. Of course, that doesn't absolve you of any of your crimes. Just who are you?" He looked through the file in front of him again. "Your prints weren't in the system, facial recognition got nothing, and you've got no ID. So who are you?"

She chuckled. "You didn't actually expect me to tell you, did you?"

"Well, I'll just get a court order for your DNA."

Evans grabbed the file and left the room. After a moment, a uniformed officer came into the room and stood by the door. It was silent for a few minutes.

“I need to use the restroom,” Prowler said, looking at the officer.

He rolled his eyes and approached her. He unlocked the handcuff from the table and cuffed both of her hands in front of her. Then he led her out of the interrogation room and down the hall to the restroom. He stood outside the door as she went inside.

Smirking, she dislocated one of her thumbs and subsequently slid her hand out of one of the cuffs before popping her thumb back into place. She glanced at the window; it was open. Too easy. Climbing up on a sink, she grabbed the edge of the window and pulled herself up and through it. She dropped down to the ground and rushed away from the police station. After an hour or so of slinking through alleyways and keeping to the shadows, she reached a three-story house and slipped inside unnoticed.

She glanced around before heading up to the third floor and slipping into a bedroom. Opening a drawer of a nearby desk, she rummaged through it until she found a handcuff key; she unlocked the cuff around her wrist and tossed it aside. Then she sat down in front of a vanity and started taking off her makeup.

In no time, a fair-skinned, black-haired young woman in her mid-twenties was staring back at her from the mirror at the vanity. She got up and changed into a pair of blue jeans and a black tee shirt, stowing her costume behind a hidden panel in the closet. Stretching, she headed out of the bedroom and down to the main floor, where she sat down on the couch and turned on the television.

“—council decided to grant the city budget change,” the female news anchor was saying. “In other news, the criminal known as Prowler has escaped from police custody this evening. Detective Marcus Evans has declined to comment at this time.”

“Can you believe that, Fallon?”

At the sound of her older brother’s voice, she looked at the staircase. Jake reached the bottom of the stairs and headed over to sit next to her on the couch. She smiled at him.

“Believe what? You mean that Prowler escaped from the cops?” She shrugged, chuckling a bit. “Yeah, I believe it. She seems pretty resourceful.”

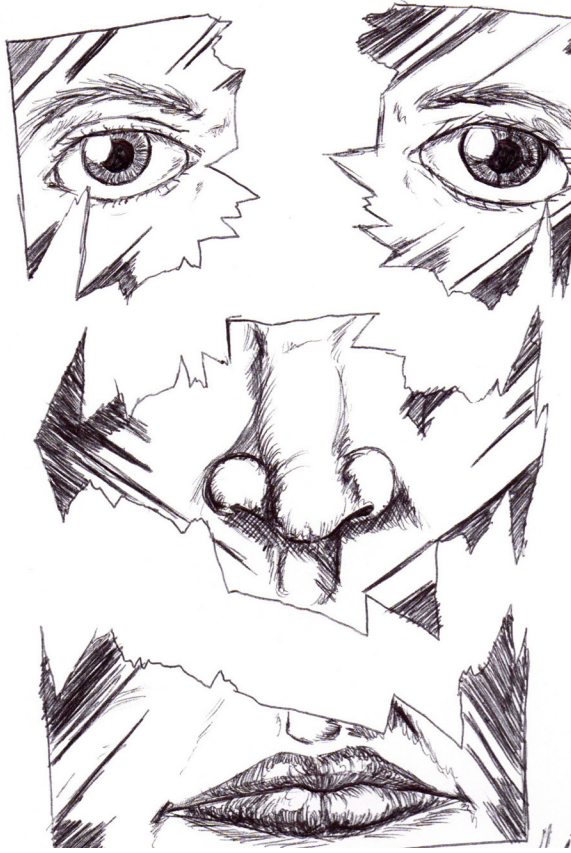
“Can’t argue with you on that one.”

Tilting her head to the side, Fallon touched a faint bruise on his jaw.

“What the heck happened to you?” she asked, raising an eyebrow.

“Huh?” He touched his jaw, then chuckled a bit. “Ah, it was nothing. I made my date mad tonight, that’s all.”

“Girls can really be fickle, can’t they?” She gave him a knowing smile before turning her attention back to the news.



POETRY

from the poetry editor....

I would like to start off by saying that the poetry editors were quite impressed with all the people who submitted poetry to *Northern Eclecta* this year. Of the multiple poems submitted by a single person, it was rare for us not to find one we liked. There were even cases where we found it unfortunate that we couldn't include more than one poem by one author. However, of the little over fifty poems received, we needed to pick our favorite eleven.

There is quite a variety of poems published here simply because we selected the poems that spoke to us the most. It is quite astounding how easily the process went for us. Even though there was a wide range of experience with poetry, the editors, for the most part, agreed on which pieces should be selected.

We can only hope that these selected pieces speak to you as much as they spoke to us and that the students of NDSU will continue to speak to us in their lines of verse.

Jordan R. Trygstad

MEGAN L. EVEN

Catechism Class

Celestial, spiritual—
The West switches to the East.
Hallucinations, revelations—
The switch will slowly cease.
The witches in my belly,
The structure of my brain,
The shifting of the seasons,
The changes all the same.
And my thoughts
 Are
 Apart
 From me

I bought them on backstreets.
I ate so many syllables
Now my story's on repeat.

There was a man
Under a tree
Sold salvation by the dollar.
I bought it all
And drank it down
Got possessed by a color.
I hear the
 blues
 blues
 blues,

Synaesthetic
Anesthetic
Far away reflections.
Same, Same, Siamese
Broken into sections.
Sensation
Deprivation,
Same, Same, Siamese.
Holding in a memory,
You're holding in a sneeze.

LINNEA ROSE NELSON

You in a Field

In the poem
you are looking at me from a field of daisies
in a dark gray shirt
with a brown hat
and I am thinking about the wind,
and what time of day it may be.

And I have no idea what you're thinking of,
with your unintelligible eyes carrying themselves
all the way up to me and
my wonderment at whether you're hungry for something
or if you have just missed me since
we last had this interchange.

So it hardly need be said that
I haven't looked at daisies
the same way
since I awoke and stopped writing,

because ever since it has been
you in a field

and that has been all.

CAITLIN DEAL

Snow Angel

She stood about three feet high,
almost as wide, bundled the way she was.
Two emeralds
peeked between
soft eyelashes catching softer snow.

Her arms couldn't quite make it to her sides,
a flurry of giggles as she spun in circles
finally collapsing
with a tornado of stars above her.

Tiny boots pointed towards the sky,
mouth opened wide,
tasting Heaven.

ELIZABETH A. DURBEN

Song Montage

Life's the same I'm moving in stereo
I'm just going through the motions
Life's the same except for my shoes
I don't want to work.
Life's the same you're shaking like tremolo
But I'm taking care of business.
Life's the same it's all inside you.

Sweet dreams are made of this
It's so tough to get up
Won't you send me an angel?
It's so tough to live up
So I started out on a dirty road
Why can't I have you
Started out all alone
Cuz this is thriller, thriller night
Here I go again on my own.

Rock rock till you drop
Going down the only road I've ever known
You're bringin' on the heartbreak
Like a drifter I was born to walk alone.

Love bites love bleeds
And I've made up my mind
It's time you realize I'm not your fool.
I ain't wastin' no more time

Every girl's crazy 'bout a sharp-dressed man
Cuz I know what it means
No I won't back down
To walk along the lonely street of dreams.

ELIZABETH A. HAUGEN

Frustrations of a Nontraditional Learner

First born, forever stressed
With expectations beyond the rest.
“You’re smart enough for As and Bs
So why’d you take home Cs and Ds?”
I’m not lazy. Well, perhaps a little;
“Get ‘er done” is an uphill battle.

It seems to me an education
Too often stifles imagination.
“Memorize this.” “That’s not real poetry.”
I forget the reasons I had to try.
That’s not to say I don’t love learning
Discovering, searching and exploring.

At a farm, I would dig cow bones,
Pretending to be like Indiana Jones.
In my mind, I create adventures
Far more real than simple lectures.

JEROME CASTIEL

Because you can't say no

You can't say no to a kiss
you wanna think about it?
didn't think so

Because you can't say no to the pretty beggars on the streets
you wanna sit a minute
and do some blow?

Because you can't say no to the Hebrew vendors at your door
does it sound too Hasidic?
then just say no

But you can't say no to a geriatric priest
why's he grabbing Mary's tits?
ugh, too damn old

...course you can't say no to the ugly children at your feet
I ain't puttin up with this,
my foods gone cold!

and you can't say no to the chicken dinner on the floor
what!?! Ohh this is some bullshit!!
"reap what you sow"

Because you can't say no...

ROSE ZIEGLER

Haiku: The Martyr

Across dead winter
Gardens I see you, and hurt
Names our symphony.

I trace the blue veins
Of your hand with my eyes, find
This hue in chipped sky

Like secondhand plates.
The red bloom among brambles
Is our love; sorry

We are to abuse
Its warm grace with cold gestures
From across the gray.

To breach this distance
I telegraph love, sending
Signals with wide arms,

Calling, "Beloved,
This silent film set has failed
And the actresses

So gracefully die
In black and white, lacking still
The martyr's sweet kiss."

So it is that I
Bring you a paper flower,
My apologies.

JONI WIEBESICK

Mirror

My fingertips brush the mirror
The glass is cool to the touch
I draw closer
Resting my forehead on the seemingly fragile barrier

I wonder if you're watching me
Are you standing on the other side touching the mirror
as I am?
Longing to touch skin and not glass
Or are you watching with that clinical detachment I hear
in your voice everyday

Director, am I just a subject to you?
A mere experiment?
A means to an end?

Will you abandon me if I do not succeed?
Will you terminate me if I do not obey?

I am so sick of looking at my reflection
I am tired of the experiments and the tests
I hate this damn room, which is my entire world

My hand balls into a fist as I abruptly rear back and begin
to hit the mirror

“Let me out! DIRECTOR! Answer me!” I scream
hitting the mirror
Feeling it reverberate under my hands

I rage and rage until I slide down the glass
Curling into a pitiful ball

I never get an answer when I'm like this

"Director?" I whimper
I need to hear that calm voice
"Please, I'll be good. I promise"

There was a long silence
I feared that it would crush me
Until I was no more

"Subject 207, these outbursts are becoming problematic."
A composed voice fills the room
Calming me considerably

I stand quickly, smiling at the mirror
The Director always answered eventually

"I'm sorry. It won't happen again!" I say resting my cheek
against the mirror
Closing my eyes in bliss
I listen

When I wake in the morning
The mirror beckons me closer until
My fingertips brush it
The glass cool to the touch
I draw closer
Resting my forehead on the seemingly fragile barrier

I wonder if you're watching me....

KATHERINE THORESON

I Am a Tree!

I am dropping into the floor, rooting
In a way in which a parachute would never
Understand.
Curling up like a pretty little piece of my hair
On a better day,
My body swings like a battabattabatta
And I shake
Just like I have nothing better
Than my mind.
It's always autumn here, my dear.
Without you here, my dear,
My lips are dry and cracking up
Like the best of the weeds,
My back is sinking, sinking
Like the fury in my breast,
And my feet just don't know
Where to go,
Or who goes anywhere anyway.

By the time my throat runs dry,
My blood will run like poison in my
Homely, rigid veins.
My legs will be jade with
Bruises of the immature
Passion which is tingling in my
Nose and shocking my
Nerves.
Finally, my arms will run dead
And chilled...

No one will know except and until
A magic man slices my neck with
Another rugged,
Epistolary song.

EMILY BLACK

All My Love

hello, My Beloved
I can see your heart is burdened
you carry a load much too heavy for your shoulders
My hands are open
may I carry that for you?

yes, they are the splintered
rough hands of a mere carpenter
and the nasty scars in My palms make you look away
in horror, but they're only there
because I carried the world on My shoulders.

that cross you're clinging to--
it is Mine.
your guilt and shame--
that's Mine too.

hello, My Beloved.
may I hold you as you cry?
I long to sit beside you, never to leave you
but I think I am not wanted.
I wish you understood that it won't ease your pain.

not the blood
pouring from your wrists.
only My blood
can offer peace for anguish.

I, too, understand
the loneliness the regrets the depression
after all, they are all Mine.
I carried them by Myself
ridiculed, rejected, abandoned.

only because I knew
that love was your only hope.
the world has lied to you about love, about hope
made you calloused, made you jaded
because their love is not My love.

it did not satisfy, did it?
neither will those needles in your arm
or the empty bottles underneath your bed.
I know.

I catch your tears
My own face wet with tears, blood
and sweat, naked am I and vulnerable
I understand
who hurt you.

no, don't pull the trigger
I am worth living for
one word, one thought, one unspoken prayer
and I'll carry that for you, all of it--
may I come in?

All My Love, Jesus

BROOKE MARTINA FRANZEN

Opes Love (Love's Wealth)

Too many
Too often
Too little
Not enough
All you ever hear,
Is "God, life is tough"
Take a step back,
Realize what you've got;
Only then can you see,
It's more than a lot.
Wealth can't be measured in money,
Or in all that you own;
Most of the wealthiest men,
Are mostly all alone.

It can't be measured in coins,
It can't be counted by bills;
It's counted by the hearts,
That your love and joy fills.
Possessions are meaningless,
Because they can't be taken with,
What's more important than that;
Is what you've left behind,
If you were thoughtful, honest,
Reliable, and kind.
Don't let the media fool you,
Because nothing can buy love;
Love is a cherished gift,
Granted from above.

BAILEY BRAZIER

Parachute



MARISSA KIBBY NELSON

On the Wing of Nature



RACHEL POND

Brighten My World



ADAM TILLY

A Flood Sunset





NONFICTION

from the nonfiction editor...

The 'non' that sits stoically at the beginning of 'nonfiction,' perhaps put there to keep 'fiction' upright or to hold it to a higher standard, is not always as stable as it may seem. The immediate assumptions of rigor and tedium that seem to attend nonfiction, as well as its associations with words such as 'truth' or 'history' are put to question by the authors that we have selected for this year's volume. The following five pieces were chosen from the nearly twenty submissions that we received for review, and we would like to thank all of those who took the time to prepare and submit their work.

We begin with Adam D. Ching, *le petit tyran*, who writes of the thrill of victory and the sting of defeat in his "Treaty of Fontainbleu, 11 May 1814," a story of daily life in which we hear the echoing cadence of the grandest moments in military history. Next, in "BiLL PLath," Alyssa Miller delicately draws from the variegated tapestry of NDSU's own history the intriguing thread of one man's life from student to farmer to the founder of several of North Dakota's major agricultural and livestock institutions.

Stevie Tyler recounts the celebration of her grandmother's sixty-fifth birthday in "Relative Digestion," which begins with a family sitting down together to a large meal only to split thereafter into a dual narrative that follows both Stevie and her relatives as they while away the evening and simultaneously tracks the food that they have eaten as it passes through their digestive systems. Brock Azure is next with "Elizabeth," a retelling of his grandmother's experiences as a young girl from Standing Rock reservation who, along with her younger sister, is forcibly removed from her home to attend a government boarding school. We close with "Walking to Class" by Karson Wigness. This hyper-referential how-to pieces together the nineties basketball scene, contemporary pop culture, winter survival advice, and the fashions of the world's cooler climes to create an eccentric and humorous story that may redefine what you think of as nonfiction.

All of these stories have something, if not of the fantastic, then of the unusual, or of the unexpected. Any good piece of nonfiction must have this, and must effectively redefine our notions of nonfiction by bringing before us some previously unknown truth. As Mark Twain once wrote, "Truth is stranger than fiction, but it is because fiction is obliged to stick to possibilities. Truth isn't."

Spencer Ptacek

ADAM D. CHING

Treaty of Fontainebleau, 11 May 1814

“Victory belongs to the most persevering.”

Once or twice a month, Marie’s 1985 Pontiac Grand Am—a deep blue car marked by faded and peeling patches, its hood and grill bearing evidence of the murder of dozens of pheasants—pulled up outside the Ching household. A notched screwdriver would expertly probe the innards of the door, and the high school girl would pop out of the car and, after two or three swings, manage to get it closed. From the tense set of her face, the crease in her forehead, and her white-knuckled grasp on the handle of her purse, an observer with sufficient imagination would expect to hear the words “Smoke ‘em if you got ‘em!” roll across the crab grass.

When Adam’s parents weren’t around, the six-year-old ran amok. In the first two hours of babysitting, he had stormed the storage closet and claimed the living room for his own. His twin sisters easily capitulated, retreating to their bedroom, leaving Marie as his only opposition. While the little tyrant held the rest of the house in his clutches, Marie spent most of the time reading a travel book of the Peninsula at the kitchen table, engrossed in the cities of western Spain: Toledo, Talavera, Ciudad Rodrigo, and Salamanca. Occasionally, Adam would sally forth or Marie would probe his defenses, but the two would soon be back at their positions. While Adam went back to terrorizing his sisters, Marie would pick up her travel book, *tsk* at having lost her place, and idly leaf through the pages, through Portugal and back into Spain, Lisbon, Oporto—ah, Salamanca!

But this time he had gone too far. Marie stood on the backyard steps in her drenched New Kids on the Block tee shirt, arms crossed over Donnie Wahlberg’s face. Her tormenter sprinted across the yard with impunity, cloaked in soap bubbles, blinking away the shampoo suds that seeped into his right eye. He would not let Marie boss him around, and he certainly would not let her tell him that he needed to take a shower. A bold counter-offensive through the shower

curtain and past a shocked Marie—and he had broken through to freedom. Adam pranced across the thistles, basking in his triumph; Marie watched him grow flushed from activity and poised herself for her own victory. He may have won the battle, but she would win the war:

Adam was ticklish.

He could not hold out forever, and he finally consented to be led to the bathroom for his shower—not as a captive, but as haughty as a king. As a master strategist, he knew that if Marie was to spring her trap, it would be after his shower. Once he was finished, the plan was enacted. Adam crept out of the bathroom, painstakingly edging toward the living room along the kitchen’s cobwebbed corners. Like a child testing the waters, one foot inched out, probed the coarse blue carpet with the big toe, and slowly settled its weight. His face was screwed up with concentration; heat bloomed on his cheeks from its intensity. No floor-board betrayed him and, with the deftness of a minesweeper, he crossed the ten short feet to the doorway and freedom.

A squeak rang out from the swaybacked kitchen table. The travel book to Iberia was calmly folded on the countertop and next to it, posed like a vengeful god underneath the dusty cupboards and sagging, dust-wreathed fans, stood Marie. Brown eyes met slate gray, and he charged through the doorway. *Mais, non!* He retreated back into the kitchen, his sisters inexorably advancing. The twins flanked his position, outmaneuvering him as he attempted to break through; with heart racing, he dove at Marie—and found himself spread-eagled on the floor, fireflies swimming in his sight and liquid, throbbing agony pulsing through his jaw. His arms windmilled across the chafing carpet, but he was pinned by his sisters for Marie’s cruel torture. As her arms descended, he broke: in a torrent, he promised to be good, to never disobey her, to give her anything if she promised to let him go....

Pandemonium arose. Adam’s legs jerked and thrashed, sending ramshackle chairs sprawling, freeing a stack of old cookbooks. One swollen, thistle-harassed heel lashed out, and the antique oil-burner kicked back, sawing his foot with heat. “Uncle,” he gasped into the rough floor through a reddened, friction-burned cheek. A timpani pounded in his chest and ears, warring with a soft, cool relief fizzling through his stomach like water leaping on a skillet.

Marie glared down at Adam with all of the weight of a military tribunal. “You’re on a timeout,” she proclaimed. “Timeout chair. NOW!”

Banished, Napoleon trudges to Elba (which looks distinctly like an under-

stuffed, coarse armchair). Along the way, he passes the reminders of his too-short reign: the strewn contents from a *Monopoly* box, countless Matchbox cars, and a headless Red Ranger (with karate chop action!). He bids fond farewell to his Old Guard, a threadbare teddy bear with a few stubby tufts remaining on his legs and a patch of stuffing in place of an eye—Never surrender, Brownie! “*Le Garde meurt et ne se rend pas!*”—and takes his exile, looking out over the living room that he had ruled over only an hour before.

He is a brooding tyrant, smarting from injustice and plotting his return—he is an upset child, rubbing his jaw and fighting back tears. He has had no reason to rebel against Marie other than the simple fact that she is not his parents, but as he sits and broods in the chair, he feels that his campaign against her authority has been just and right.

Before bedtime, Marie reads to the children from the duct tape-bound volume of fairy tales. It is one of their favorites: *The Emperor’s New Clothes*. His eyes shine at the tale of the emperor: *he* didn’t have to wear clothes if he didn’t want to; *he* never had to wait his turn! The book snaps closed with a crackling sigh from the dry spine. “See you next month,” she says, and Adam and his sisters scamper up the stairs.

Marie picks up discarded toys and rearranges the pillows on the couch. She beams as she thinks of how she handled the situation, which she approached like an expert. No wonder: the last few months have given her plenty of experience with how to handle Adam’s disruptions. Marie curls up on the couch with her book, watching grainy reruns of *M*A*S*H* until headlights wash through the closed blinds. Just after midnight, she slips outside with a light step. Her book is held under her arm, and a freshly scrawled check marks her progress through the travel book—she’s reached the Pyrenees, even with Adam’s opposition.

Adam should have been in bed hours ago, but he never followed the rules when Marie was babysitting. He props himself against the windowsill, gazing between the slats of the Venetian blinds at Marie’s headlights slipping down the driveway. Adam looks down at Brownie dangling from his hand and Brownie’s arm, which has been dislocated by a separating seam at the shoulder. A corner of his mouth shifts into a grin. He knows that, come next month, he will probably lose. But why should fear of failure stop him? He had a whole month to plan.

His fingers rap a martial cadence on the peeling windowsill. Boom-boom. Boom-boom. Boomaboom. Boomaboom. Boom-boom.

Vive l’Empreur.

ALYSSA MILLER

BiLL PLath

Entering the antique shop, I was hit with the same scent that fills my grandmother's closet: mothballs and decades of dust. It would be easiest to describe it as the scent of age. Breathing in, I closed my eyes and imagined myself scrunched in the corner of my grandmother's closet again. Overhead, the bottoms of her silky blouses lightly brushed against my forehead. A stack of hat boxes towered to my right while my left shoulder rested against the damp wallpaper. When I sat there in the dark corner, I would try to understand who my grandmother truly was. I knew that she hadn't always been this funny, old woman with permed, gray hair. I wished I could somehow take all the items in her closet and use them to piece together her life. Opening my eyes, I looked around the store and started my search for buried treasure.

The store was divided into several sections, each set up like a separate room. Each room was filled with remnants of a person's past. The dishes that were only used during special occasions were placed in a pile next to a ragged, stuffed teddy bear. The items, which possessed many forgotten memories, were haphazardly stacked everywhere. Slightly overwhelmed, I continued to try to look through everything. After a while, I arrived at a section that was filled with old books. Flipping through the hardcover novels on a shelf, I uncovered a worn charcoal book with the words *The 1930 Bison* embossed on the cover. Because I was a junior at North Dakota State University, whose mascot is the Bison, I immediately pulled the book off the shelf.

Examining the cover, I decided that it might have originally been a deep green. Now, however, it was tinged grey. A silver shield with *ND* written on it was embossed on the center of the cover. Above that, a bison stood with his tail posed to slap a fly off his rear end, his head looking down at the shield. Opening the cover, I saw the name "BiLL PLath" written neatly in the upper right corner. I was amused that he not only capitalized the first letters of his first and last name, but the *L*s too. Quickly, I flipped through the aged pages and saw many inscriptions written to Bill. I snapped the book shut and tucked it under

my arm. Later, after searching through the rest of the store, I bought Bill Plath's yearbook and a black hat with a large bow.

When I got home after my adventure at the antique store, I snuggled up on the couch to read about Bill Plath. With my used hat tilted cockeyed on my head, I opened up the yearbook. The title page read: *The Bison, North Dakota State College, 1930*. On the adjacent page, a picture of the president, John Lee Coulter, was attached. Flipping through a few more pages, I stopped to read the dedication: "To the spirit of the modern youth, inspired, enlightened, awakened to the possibilities embodied in the future, this twenty-second volume of the Bison is dedicated." Setting the book down on my lap, I thought about that statement, which was written nearly eighty years ago. By now, most of these people would be over one hundred years old, if they were even still alive. Their youth was long gone, but in this book, each life was preserved. The words in this book were geared toward a future full of opportunities. However, I knew that everything had already happened. I had the opportunity to get a quick glimpse into the past, into one period in time.

Throughout the first section of the annual, each page had an article about every individual dean. I recognized many of the names from the current buildings around campus. The Dean of Women, Pearl Dinan, was the namesake for my freshman dormitory, Dinan. Minard, a building where my astronomy class was held during sophomore year, was named after the Dean of Science and Literature, A. E. Minard. Another name I recognized was Sudro, the Dean of Pharmacy. Now, the hall called Sudro is where many of the pharmacy classes are held. The black and white photos on the pages depicted many recognizable sights around campus. Throughout all these years, many of the buildings remained unchanged.

After the section about the administration, I found a segment about the student classes. First, the senior class was listed. The students were listed in alphabetical order according to their last names. Beside each picture, the student's name was listed along with his or her hometown, major, and the organizations in which he or she was involved. Finally, on page 53, I found the name I was searching for: Wilfred A. Plath. It stated that he was from Davenport, North Dakota. He was majoring in Agriculture and was involved in Alpha Gamma Rho, Saddle and Sirloin, and Bisonites. In his photo, he wore a suit coat with a white shirt and striped tie. His hair was slicked straight back, which made his ears very prominent. Smiling, I wondered if the kids made fun of him when he

was younger, comparing him to Dumbo. Then, I realized that the Disney movie hadn't even been released until the 1940s.

The rest of the book was mostly filled with sections about athletics and organizations. I was interested to see articles describing each football game the Bison played that year. Sadly, we lost against our rivals, the University of North Dakota, 0 to 18. Also, we lost against the South Dakota State Jackrabbits, 6 to 27. However, they were jokingly called "the Bunnies" throughout the play-by-play description. Many Bison fans still use that name when talking about SDSU.

Looking through each page, I found many wishes of good luck and happiness to Bill. Each person seemed sad to see Bill leave and reminisced about the good times:

"It doesn't seem possible to me that you won't be coming back to school next year."

"I think we shall always remember the great times we have had at picnics."

"Will we ever forget the fine times we four have had, especially on our trip to Grand Forks?"

The last few lines of a long inscription from a woman named Dorothea stated, "I hope that the part you play in life will be big and fine and I wish you much luck, although you won't need it." Reading this made me wonder what happened to Bill Plath, so I sat down at my computer and typed his name into *Google*.

Surprisingly, many different results popped up on the screen. One of the first links took me to the North Dakota Winter Show's website, which had a short biography about him. It stated that he was born in 1907 near Davenport, North Dakota. It then went on to say that he had earned a master's degree in Agriculture from NDSU in 1932. After I read this, I started laughing. So, in the end, he didn't leave after his senior year. All those people, who were sad to see him go, got to spend two more years with him.

Also, I found out that he accomplished a lot in his lifetime. After he graduated, he did extension work from 1935 to 1941. Then, in 1941, he returned to his family farm. While he was living there, he helped organize the North Dakota Winter Show and coached the county's 4-H team. He helped organize the North Dakota Angus Association and the North Dakota Farm Bureau, where he served as the first president for seven years. He also helped establish the NDSU Agronomy Seed Farm and the NDSU Meats Laboratory.

The next link was an obituary for his daughter, Marion Peterson, in Fargo's

newspaper, *The Forum*. She died from complications due to childhood diabetes in 2006. The obituary gave some information about her parents, as well. It stated that she was the daughter of Wilfred and Agnes Plath. Also, it said that she was preceded in death by her father in 1980.

Disheartened, I paused for a moment to think about Bill Plath. He had died thirty years ago, eight years before I was even born. His life was completed before my parents had gotten married. While I was reading his yearbook, I had imagined him as a healthy young man. Now, I was saddened as if I had just learned that someone I knew had died. I had grown so interested in this man's life that I felt connected to him somehow.

Shaking off the feeling of loss, I continued to research the man's life. I was amazed at the information I was able to gather about Bill. I even found a picture of his family farm in Davenport. The description read, "Taken from road showing two-story wood frame house with trees and shrubs around it and barn in distance." It was cataloged on the NDSU Institute for Regional Studies' website.

Searching the NDSU Library's database further, I discovered that his thesis was still available. Located at the main library on the second floor, his thesis was titled *The Marketing of Range Lambs Fed in the Vicinity of Fargo*. The thesis room is on the north side of the library with a wall of windows facing a staircase. I found Bill's thesis on the third shelf of the first row. It was a simple, self-bound work. The thick cover and all of the pages in between had holes punched in three places. Then a piece of black yarn was strung through the holes to keep it together. The index card attached to the front cover was empty, showing that no one had ever checked it out before. On the title page, a mark was made in pencil to complete Wilfred A. Plath's middle name, August. The rest of the thesis consisted of single-sided pages, which had been typed using a typewriter. He included a few photographs in the bound book; each one still had a glossy finish.

Slowly closing the cover of Bill Plath's yearbook, I inhaled the scent of age one more time. Running my hand over the imprinted letters, I traced the outline of the word *Bison* with my index finger. Eight decades had passed since this book was written and many events have happened since then, but the people in this book will forever be remembered.

STEVIE TYLER

Relative Digestion

Sitting on the couch, recliner, or brown-carpeted floor, partaking in programming chosen by the ones under ten, sitting at the dining room table playing *UNO*, or standing in the kitchen hunched over the soon-to-be-demolished masterpieces—making sure nothing burns or gets too cold to eat—we're all waiting for the last of the dinner party to show up. Smells of freshly baked bread and big pans of lasagna fumigate the air. Besides *UNO*, the fake-wood laminated dining room table holds six different kinds of salad dressing waiting to be squeezed next to stacks of plates and forks, twenty-five high, toppling.

My mother and Aunt Laurie had decided that morning that they must go shopping and they still haven't returned for the five o'clock feast, even though it is fifteen past. No one is surprised. The grown-ups had already made the kids get out of the pool, so thank God for the cartoons that keep their tiny tummies appeased. I clean dishes in an annoyed fashion to protest my uncles who have been sitting on their asses and playing *Resident Evil* all day. Again, no one is surprised, but I'm the only one who seems to care. I'm only fifteen, but I've already made the decision that when I have kids, the boys will not be waited upon in this manner.

I can at least be thankful that my grandma has an air conditioner. It is mid-July, and we are all here to celebrate my grandma's birthday. Even though she should be receiving special treatment on her sixty-fifth birthday, she is the executive chef and hasn't sat down since around two in the afternoon.

My Uncle Paul is whining about being hungry and ramming into us kitchen dwellers with his rather large body so he can find a snack in the fridge, something one would expect from the children.

At last—as the clock hits 5:45 and the house is full with the sound of hungry bellies—my mother and my aunt come prancing through the door, arms loaded with green, white, and silver shopping bags, to a chorus of *Geeeeeze...* *Where were you?* and *Finally!* They completely disregard these remarks with smiles and tell us about all of the matching clothes they just purchased.

As we all begin congregating around the table, my grandma yells, “Turn that darn TV off!” Someone does.

Everyone avoids sitting next to my disgusting uncles, Paul and Chris, but alas, some of us must sacrifice ourselves. The martyrs today are me, having to share my place setting with Paul’s elbow; my grandmother, whose meal will be interjected with smells of Chris’s arm pits; and those sitting directly across from them, whose perspectives are bombarded with obese barbarians shoveling food down their dirty throats.

Although the table is large, twenty-five people (half of whom are severely overweight) and the smörgåsbord fill it easily.

My grandmother prays to thank God for the fodder. Not the rehearsed Catholic kind of prayer but the Pentecostal improvisation. We pass the dishes around to the left and commence eating. The food is what I expected—scrumptious—although it would be better if not seasoned with my uncle’s hairy elbow.

We eat and talk. My grandmother, usually so polite, slips a couple of *fucks* into her sentences just because it is her birthday. Stacie (my sister) and I give each other looks across the table. She feels bad for my seating arrangement, but is happy she avoided it herself. My cousin, Vylad, has quite the sense of humor, and he has chosen my cousin, Julia, to torment with his ambiguous gibbering as his wife, Rachael, sits and smiles at the humor of the man she loves. My Uncle Tim is going on about some new marijuana plant that just sprouted in his garden. The plates of the picky kids are much less full than the plates of the older ones; they sit and eat and watch the family eat and ramble just as if they were watching cartoons, with cocked heads, wonderment and giggles.

I would normally have seconds but can’t stomach it. At this point, my uncles are having thirds and beginning to burp up the gas from their firsts and seconds. My sister, my cousins (Michela, Julia and Kayla), and I decide that this is our cue to start the dishes.

The food has already started the digestion process in our stomachs. We are all feeling a little lethargic, but we mustn’t leave a spot of sauce or a pinch of crumb in the kitchen. We take everyone’s dishes from the table, some with more repulsion than others, and wash away the debris. Once we have the kitchen spotless, Uncle Paul comes in for more food and makes a mess on the counter. We just leave. One of us could tell him what a pig he is, but what’s the point? He’s not the changing type.

Everyone is now lazing about in a food coma, but my mother won’t have it.

She wants us to go outside and take a walk, not by insisting that we do so but by laying on a guilt trip: “We-elllllllll, I’m going for a walk.” Down the long dirt roads or just up the good climbing tree in the backyard, it doesn’t matter as long as we’re getting exercise. Due to the fat genes in our family, my mother has always been terrified of gaining one extra ounce around the midriff, not only for herself but her offspring too. We’re all eaters, so a diet is out of the question. My Aunt Dorothy chimes in, “Yeah, come on guys, it’ll be fun.”

Most of us give in or agree that it is a good idea to take a walk. These summer evenings are not to be wasted. Up the dirt road we go, north through the neighborhood. It isn’t a town—there is no church, or post office, or bar—just a group of houses in the middle of nowhere.

The dogs, whose owners give them full freedom, never pass up a chance to go for a walk with a group of humans. One, two, three, four of them join us: a collie, some sort of black and white mutt, a chocolate lab, and a Danish pointer walk beside us, protecting us on our journey.

As we reach the bridge, the sound of the river below and the light breeze make us glad to be alive. We all stare over the edge in a trance, watching the water hurry to greet the rocks. Vylad goes down under the bridge and emerges with a handful of wild flowers for Rachael. This makes all the girls under the age of seventeen yearn for their own bundle of flowers. As the adults continue their walk, all of the kids begin spinning in circles, skipping up and down, and skidding down the dusty dirt road, collecting as many flowers as we can. Some of us are making do with collecting a bushel of mostly foxtails and cattails.

By now, there are no houses in sight—just tall grasses, trees, and a hill in front of us. Everytime we climb this hill, our mother tells my sister and me, “Never go up here alone. There are foxes that live over there.” As if we were ever alone. We get to the top and stare at the low and rolling hills all around us. Dirt roads, lone houses, enveloping sky, the late afternoon sun glowing down on the golden landscape, cleanliness, purity. The pointer takes a shit.

By the time we turn back, our food is trekking through our small intestines. Even though we retrace our steps, the opposite sides of grass and trees and rocks make everything look different. Both ways are eternally familiar to us. Before our canine companions wander back to each of their respective homes, we scratch their ears and thank them for chaperoning us.

When we return to the house, the food digesting in all of us is moving through our systems, and the oldest stuff is ready to be released. Unfortunately,

there are only two bathrooms in the house and twenty-five of us. This is what happens every time. It hits us all like dominoes. Unless you are the first domino, you are there holding your breath throughout your entire visit to the office of excretion. If it kicks in too late, you're sitting on the toilet suffocating with smells layered on top of each other like years of sediment buildup.

Now, we try to forget the whole ordeal with birthday cake, undeterred by the fact that our dinner hasn't even reached our large intestines yet. The cake is as beautiful as ever, decorated by Aunt Dorothy. It is a garden of pastel yellows and purples—frosting roses, tulips, buds and folly. I always find it funny how perfect her roses are while the *Happy Birthday Mom* is written so sloppily—as though two opposite people shared the decorating duties. As always, Aunt Dorothy pulls out the birthday candles she stores in her giant, black leather purse and starts faultlessly fixing as many as she can onto the cake without denting any of her flawless flowers. She lights them all from the tip of another candle. Before we can sing the ever popular “Happy Birthday Song,” Aunt Dorothy must take cake pictures to put in her portfolio.

Aunt Laurie turns the lights off, and we sing. It's not your basic rendition of “Happy Birthday.” Most of us stand on chairs while a couple of my cousins start off with a beat. All the girls sing as loudly as they can in opera voices, and my aunts and my mother compete in German and French. When it is all over, my grandma blows out the candles and has three boyfriends, which is good because she needs a little action.

It's easy to guess who will be first in line for cake, and no one argues as my uncles get the first pieces and finish fast enough to be ready for another round before everyone is served. As the cake and ice cream stroll down our esophagi, our large intestines are taking over on our previous meal.

One of our favorite things to do is to have a bonfire, and certain people in the family are self-proclaimed fire gurus. Aunt Dorothy takes the reins first, then my cousin Valarie butts in. It had rained the night before, so the fire is hard to start. They move onto the use of entire phonebooks to catalyze the fury.

As they struggle over the twigs and dirt, the adults either sit around smoking cigarettes and drinking orange soda or are hard at work putting up tents for us kids to sleep in. The kids, myself included, are lighting fire crackers and bottle rockets in and on the indestructible ant hill that reaches our knees and is as big around as a hula hoop. We have no mercy for the little guys. As the sun sets, the fire gets started, and a feeling of peace is among us. The birds have roosted, the

crickets are chirping—all of the summer night noises are as perfect as they are supposed to be.

As the full moon whispers “hello,” the grownups stare at the dancing flames as we dance around singing and chanting to the sky and nature. Uncle Tim lights a joint and passes it around. The kids don’t notice, the kids don’t care.

After the conversation is worn out, the inside sleepers go to the house for sleep or whatever it is they do in there. We stay outside, peeing in the bushes—not because we’re not allowed to go inside but because we think it’s funny.

We set up for our favorite game that we swear we invented called *Mail*. We hang our mailboxes, which are really just big paper envelopes that we spent the day before decorating, and then sit in our assigned areas, ready to go. We are not allowed to talk as we write each other notes and draw each other pictures. The “mailman” then delivers the letters, which get sillier and viler throughout the night. At the end, we each compile our notes and read them aloud to one another, giggling as Cousin Julia’s farts act as laughing gas.

Soon we go to our rightful tents and talk until we can no longer keep our eyes open.

BROCK AZURE

Elizabeth

This story was written as my grandmother, Elizabeth Silk Azure, would have told it. She referred to Native people as “Indians,” so I used the same term she did. She was born in either 1912 or 1913 near Fort Yates, North Dakota, on the Standing Rock Sioux Reservation. She died in 1997 when I was 8 years old, the same age she was when she went to the boarding school. —Brock Azure

We saw the government car coming in the distance before we heard it. The puff of dust the car was kicking up on the road caught our attention because cars were an unusual sight in those days. We all stopped working and watched as it drew closer and closer to where we were working. We rather expected it to continue past us but knew that something bad was about to happen when it came to an abrupt stop next to the field where we were working.

Our home would have been called a shack by today’s standards, but it was comfortable and clean. It was a tarpaper-covered house with a wooden lean-to on one side. Below the only window, sod was piled up against the outside wall of the house. The lean-to was used to store meat in the winter because it stayed frozen. We also kept the wood for our stove piled up in there, so snow wouldn’t cover it during the long winter months. We had to be able to get to our wood pile because the stove was not only used for cooking but also for keeping our house warm enough so that we did not freeze to death.

My mother never went to school, as was the case with most women during that time. She couldn’t read or write, but she would gather us around the heating stove in the evenings after the work was done and tell us stories. She always made sure we were clean and fed, even when times were hard. We didn’t have any money, but we had a big garden in the summer months, and my father hunted for meat. We dried the food and stored it in barrels stored in the lean-to.

It was in the fall of 1919. It was harvest time on the Standing Rock Reservation, so my brothers, sisters, Mother, and I were out helping my father with the harvest. My father farmed a small piece of land. He had about 80 acres that

had been deeded to him as a young man. In the late 1800s, the government had passed a law that all adult Indians would get 80 acres allotted to them. The intent was to give them the tools and the land needed to make them farmers. The only thing was that the land on the Standing Rock Reservation was not meant to be farmed; it should have been pasture. But that didn't stop my father from trying. The son of an Irish father and a Lakota Sioux mother, he was a hardworking man who was committed to providing for his family.

It was probably about the middle of August, although we didn't pay much attention to calendars in those days. I was eight years old and my sister, Mary Jane, was seven—although I'm not exactly sure because Indian people didn't get birth certificates until much later. We were small for our ages, but we were strong. My parents would cut the grain, and my brothers, Mary Jane, and I would gather the grain into bundles. My oldest brother would tie the bundles with twine and put them in a pile to be collected later. It was a hot, sunny day, and we had just stopped to drink the water that my youngest sister brought us from the creek. That's when we saw the car coming up the road.

It was a dark-colored touring sedan, what people often refer to as a "Model T." The top was down so we could see the three people in the vehicle: two men and one woman. The men were dressed in dark suits. The woman wore a dark-colored skirt and jacket and also a hat. The vehicle pulled up next to where we were taking a break and stopped. Then the people got out. One of the men walked up to my father and said something to him. My father turned around and looked at Mary Jane and me, then turned back to the man. We couldn't hear what they were talking about, but we knew it was about us, and we knew it wasn't good news. My mother didn't say anything to us, nor did she speak to the man. The woman with the hat walked over to where Mary Jane and I were standing and took hold of us by the arm, one of us in each of her hands. She turned around and walked us to the car. We weren't really sure what was happening, so we walked with her as she led us. I turned around to look at my mother and noticed a silent tear coming down her face. My father looked away from us and did not say anything.

The woman with the hat put us in the back of the car and got in beside us. The man talking to my father got in next to the man who was driving, and the car turned a big circle in the field and took off down the road. Mary Jane and I had never been in a car before, didn't even really know what it was at that time, so we just sat there quietly and held on to each other's hands.

We drove into Fort Yates where my family would go to trade for supplies. We passed through the small fort to the train station on the edge of town where a number of government cars were parked. A large group of people were gathered around the train station with a number of young Indian children about our ages. Some of them were crying. Most of them were just standing there, looking at the train and all of the government people moving around.

The lady with the hat led us into the train station and told us to wait until she got some paperwork. She came back a few minutes later and told us we were ready to get on the train. At this time, Mary Jane started to cry. I held her hand and told her to follow me and that everything was going to be alright.

We got on the train with all of the other children and some of the government people. We still were not sure where we were going, but we sat down in one of the seats to wait. After all of the children were loaded, the train started moving. I told Mary Jane to look out the window so she would stop crying. After awhile, we both fell asleep.

Some time later, the train stopped, and we were told to get off. The lady with the hat was still there, so we followed her along with all of the other children. They told us they were taking us to a new school where we would be living. None of us children had attended school. Since this was 1919, we were not taught to read or write since neither of my parents could. We were taught to live from the land, to treat each other with respect, and to value hard work. The school was called the Bismarck Indian Boarding School, as we found out later.

When we arrived at the school, they separated the boys from the girls. Some brothers and sisters had to be pulled apart, screaming and crying, because they had to go to different areas of the grounds. Mary Jane and I were lucky because we were able to stay together since we were close in age and both girls. We were also lucky because we understood English. My parents both spoke English since their parents had to speak it to communicate with each other. Since both of my parents had an Irish parent, English was chosen as the language with which to communicate. When my grandparents visited, some words were spoken in Lakota but only when we were around, and the adults didn't want us to know what they were saying. Many of the children at this new school spoke only Lakota, so they didn't understand what the people were saying to them. After we arrived at the school, we never saw the lady with the hat again.

All of the young girls in our group were led to a large room. We were told to take our clothes off and to put them into piles. After we were stripped naked,

they told us to line up to get our hair cut. Mary Jane and I both had two long braids, but they took the braids out and cut our hair off. They did the same thing to all of the girls, so we all looked the same when they got done. They then had us go into a large room that had water coming from the ceiling. I had never seen a shower before, so I thought I was going to drown at first. After we were done showering, they dumped pails of some type of foul-smelling water mixture over our heads. One of the adults said something about us having lice.

As I remember, none of the children were crying anymore. We were just following each other, going through the motions, and doing what we were told. We were afraid that if we cried or resisted, we might be punished.

After the showers, we were taken into another room where there were shelves and shelves of clothing. Everything was all one size, so since we were smaller than most girls our size, the clothes were much too large for us. We were each given a bundle that contained two smock dresses, two pairs of long stockings, one pair of shoes, and two pairs of undergarments.

We were then guided to the dorms where we would be living and sleeping for the next year. The beds were lined up along both walls with one row down the middle, about three feet in between each bed. Each bed had a woolen blanket, a pillow, and a set of sheets. There was a small trunk under each bed for us to store our things. We were told to make our beds, but neither Mary Jane nor I had ever done that before, so one of the girls who was a bit older than we were showed us how.

The rest of the day passed with adults telling us what to do and us doing it. Every so often, one of the girls would start crying. When she realized that it wasn't going to make any difference, she would stop after awhile. None of the adults comforted the crying children; they just seemed to go through the motions of their duties and did not pay much attention to us.

That first night, after the lights were turned off, many of the girls started crying. This crying went on all night long. I drifted off to sleep after awhile but woke up when Mary Jane started crying. She wanted to sleep in my bed with me, but we had already been told that was against the rules. Mary Jane wanted my mother; I did too. We wondered if they missed us as much as we missed them.

The next morning, after breakfast, we were told that Mary Jane and I would work in the barns with the animals. When they found out we were farm girls, they decided they would have us work with the boys outside. The girls typically

worked in the kitchen, laundry room, and other buildings like that. We would have preferred that but did as we were told. Our job was to haul pails of feed to the horses. Since we were both so short, the pails dragged on the ground, but we got our chores done.

I don't remember much more of what we did other than working, sleeping, eating, and cleaning. We did start school after the first week or so. We had class from right after breakfast until early afternoon. We learned to read and write and do some arithmetic. In those days it wasn't considered worthwhile for women to become too educated because they were expected to become housewives and take care of children.

There are many stories of Indian children being beaten for speaking their native language and not being able to learn the rules of mainstream society. If it happened at the Bismarck Indian Boarding School, I didn't see it. We were not physically abused, but neither were we cared for and nurtured like children should be. The older girls were kind to us younger girls and would brush our hair and sing to us. When the youngest children would wet their beds, they would be hit with a strap and made to lie on wet sheets. But we learned how to hide this from the matrons who worked in our dorm. You learn these things even at a very young age.

The hardest part of being there was not the chores or the schoolwork: it was the loneliness of being away from our parents and family. We did not see our parents from the day we were taken from the field in August until two years later in May. The superintendent of the school decided that was "in our best interest." Later, we found out that our parents would sit by the front gates of the school, trying to catch a glimpse of us. They would be chased off by the law enforcement and told they would be arrested if they didn't stay away. This happened to all of the families that gathered there.

Initially, when Mary Jane and I were allowed to leave, it was supposed to be just for the summer months, so we could help our parents in the fields. But the government people never returned to our farm in August. Some of the people in town said they figured we knew how to read and write, so they left us alone. Others said they didn't think we would amount to anything anyway, so there was no reason to educate us. I don't know what the reason was; I was simply glad to be away from the boarding school.

Things were not easy after we returned. For some reason, Mary Jane and I thought our parents were ignorant and "backwards." We didn't like it when they

spoke Lakota and would only speak to them in English. We didn't like the way they looked or the way they dressed. We were embarrassed of our parents and the way they lived.

One day, when we were at the fort, I saw a notice posted that farmers from across the river at Pollock, South Dakota, were looking for hired girls to help on the farms. Room and board would be provided as well as a small amount of compensation. I pleaded with my parents to let me go. I knew I could cook and clean as well as any grown woman. Tired of my sullenness and wanting to make me happy, they agreed and made arrangements for me to work for a family south of Pollock. Since I was half white, I would be more accepted. I left shortly after that and never returned home again.

I was ten years old.

KARSON WIGNESS

Walking to Class

First and foremost, you must wake up, which is always the hardest part. Leaving one reality for another is a *Matrix*-style struggle that we must face every day—except the red pill is the snooze button and, thankfully, there’s a lot less Keanu Reeves. If you’re anything like me, you may be teaching Lord Zedd from *The Power Rangers* how to walk on stilts, getting your house raided by kids reminiscent of the ones from *Mad Max: Beyond Thunderdome*, and subsequently, getting tricked by a fat, shirtless bald man you THOUGHT was your friend into putting your two most prized Beanie Babies on the “offerings” table instead of the “safe from sacrifice” table, or even debating with a surprisingly well-spoken Siberian tiger whether or not the phrase “Chevy Chase must walk uphill” is a poetic triumph in tragedy.

But if you’re EXACTLY like me, you’re dreaming of a far-off time in a magical place where unforgettable heroes battle for glory...or more specifically, the 1995-96 NBA season and playoffs. During that time, I must’ve been so obsessed with professional basketball and my then-favorite players that I still subconsciously think about them while doing everyday activities. Lately, I’ve been determining the temperature by the number and quality of fur coats that Derrick Coleman would have to wear to fend off the shivers and measuring the snowfall by how many times Jeff Hornacek would have to brush his cheek until it was dry. Right now, it looks like it’s about two-and-a-half chinchillas outside with a 100% chance of three baby-soft strokes. My brain is like a popcorn machine in its randomness, where one kernel pops up and I think, *The quality of a bar experience really depends on table control*. Then the next one pops up and I think, *Campaign slogans for Jerry Stackhouse, should he ever run for office, would surely write themselves*. Then one pops up and says, *Okay, that’s enough, it’s time to walk to class*.

Now that you know me and what I do when I’m sleeping better than Freddy Krueger and Santa Claus combined (the most terrifying alliance of all time), and now that I’ve shaken out the un-popped kernels of thought like *I wonder if the*

AARP and Polka Spotlight are affiliated? and *Cheating in LARPing...now there's a new low*, I'm ready to guide you through the process of walking to class in this wintery weather in the event that your inexperienced feet ever happen to be in my well-traveled shoes...in which case, I want them back, and you should be ashamed of yourself. Ninety percent of a successful journey (and this is true in regards to every kind of journey) is preparation. But since all forms of preparation—except H—are tediously boring, I will instruct you on how to get ready for the trip in the most inspiring manner possible until one of us gets hemorrhoids.

Now, don't kid yourself: it is cold with a capital "Q" out there...because you're freezing so badly that you forgot how to spell. North Dakota's thermostat has two settings: "Surface of the Sun" and "Arctic Tundra." Right now it's turned all the way to the latter. You've got a 40-minute walk to the NDSU campus ahead of you, and since you couldn't finagle yourself a ride, the temperature just dramatically dropped itself out of spite. It's more than likely about 35 degrees below zero outside. (I always include wind chill when talking about weather because for our purposes, the temperature is exactly how many degrees you wish you weren't outside. Sure, it would be less cold if it wasn't windy, but hypothetical weather is for bored philosophy teachers and stoners stuck in the rain.) Making it to class without catching hypothermia is a feat so extraordinary it could've starred alongside Billy Crystal in the film *My Giant*, so bundling up is of the utmost importance.

As I said before, waking up is central to the process of getting ready. Put on your boxer-briefs if you're naked (which would be awesome if you happen to read in the nude) and if not, disrobe as fast as possible because if you're me, you're already late. You're now ready to begin from scratch. I suppose you can shower if you're one of those people who care about "personal hygiene," but I find spraying on some cologne you got from your aunt a few Christmases ago and stepping on a misplaced toy ring with a picture of one of those new Pokémon to be equally effective at waking you up and preparing you to face the outside world. I should mention that this tutorial is mostly directed towards males, but if you're a female, hey, why not? I'm an equal opportunity clothing specialist, and dressing like me has never steered me wrong before, so I don't see why it wouldn't be a gender-blind dress for success.

To reiterate, put on your boxer-briefs. They're form-fitting and comfortable without the that-shouldn't-be-there feeling of boxers or the shackled feeling of regular briefs (and that's the very last place you want shackles). Sure, you

can always hope that boxers or briefs or thongs (hey, I'm not here to judge) or whatever else you can think up to put down there will get the job done, but the promise of boxer-briefs is hard to pass up. As I always say, "A Patrick Ewing in hand is worth two John Starks in the bush." And that's a conservative estimate. Lenient order and inescapable freedom: the paradoxical beauty of boxer-briefs. But this is not an underwear commercial, as I have to remind myself in most situations, so I will, against my better judgment, continue on.

The most unique and important part of my preparation, which separates it from all lesser preparations, is putting on some long johns. Long johns are essential. That's a sentence so true and necessary to repeat that it should be one word, kind of like "Stockton to Malone" or "Lindsay Lohan arrested for." Not to be confused with the maple doughnut that shares its namesake and delicious qualities, long johns are the tight-fitting full-length undergarment which prevents your leg heat from escaping from its comfortable leg home. Some call this wonderful clothing accessory "long underwear," but that term doesn't quite capture the garment's amazing warming mystique. In fact, "long johns" doesn't even do it service. They should be called "happy pants" or "magic leggy fantasticals," provided those names aren't already taken by low-budget pornos. No matter what color yours are, pretend they're silver, so it's like you have a legendary fictional pirate and a seafood restaurant that gives you diarrhea underneath your clothes all day.

Also noteworthy is in regards to happy pants: the tighter, the better. If you're having trouble squeezing into them, you may want to use your sense of Charles Barkley (the REAL sixth sense) to just muscle your way past those Dikembe Mutombo thighs with utter disregard for human decency. The side effects of unleashing this sense, however, may include being "turrrible" at golf, rebounding things against your will, and claiming that your name is really "Tonto Kowalski." But on the plus side, Dwayne Wade adds you to his "Fave 5," and "Tonto" is a pretty cool name.

Instead of opting for whatever obviously better-looking pants you have, reach for the thermal-lined jeans. If you don't have any or know what they are, call your grandparents and tell them your legs are cold. You will have some by your next birthday, which hopefully occurs before the next time you have to go outside. You may think your lower body looks bulky and unattractive when wearing these jeans. Don't worry, this is normal...and also true. Be prepared to feel older and lamer than you ever thought possible (yes, even lamer than you did

when you were putting on the long johns). But January in Fargo is neither the time nor the place to be stylish: it's all about functionality. Besides, if I had to choose one, I'd take Alonzo Mourning in his prime over skinny jeans every time. You may be saying to yourself, "Isn't it a little much to ask the MTV generation, or whatever generation we are, to wear long johns and thermal jeans?" The answer is "yes." Moving on....

You'll want to slip on some socks. This may not seem important, but socks are the unsung heroes of wintertime preparation. They're the Toni Kukoc of foot warmth. I've gotten second-degree frostbite on my feet one too many times (for the grand total of one time) to ever bench the Croatian sensation before the big game again. Boot selection is also pivotal. They should be heavy-duty for trekking through the snow, yet light enough so as not to restrict mobility. When the loud and innumerable foreign family in the downstairs apartment (that apparently performs daily séances in which they chant, take turns hammering a saw, and then sawing a hammer) decides it's time to hammer-saw you, you don't want to be weighed down by heavy shoes. Your boots should be laced with the precision of Detlef Schrempf's haircut and fit tighter than Gary Payton's glove-like defense to make sure they don't repeatedly come undone and exhibit bursts of insanity like Dennis Rodman.

Getting the top half of your body ready to go out the door isn't nearly as demanding and unusual as the lower one. For the tee shirt, I recommend grabbing your *Thundercats* or *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* shirt because as we all know, these shows (and by extension the shirts that promote them) are timeless. If they happen to be at the laundromat, how about wearing something with a clever phrase, such as "this is some serious shirt" or "kiss me, I'm drunk"? The sweatshirt can be anything you "borrowed" from an unlocked car in Manitoba while you and your friends were streaking and shortly thereafter wore as a stylish kilt to regain entrance to your hotel. (Useful Tip: when the oblivious hotel security guy lets you in and asks, "Hey, did you see the naked guys?!" just say, "Yeah, they chased us.") The overcoat can be anything you didn't leave in a stranger's vehicle on New Year's Eve. Top it all off with way-too-nice mittens (or, as the Canadians call them, "hand-toques") and a beanie that's been put through more than a beanie ever should.

Some days, the bitter January air will attack your lungs and suffocate you like you're P.J. Carlesimo's neck. So if it gets a little too Latrell Sprewell outside, you may want to opt for a scarf. I personally (for some reason) can never bring

myself to buy one, though. Maybe I just don't drink enough coffee to be a scarf person. If you're like me, you'll find wrapping the white tee shirt you got from your friend a couple years ago that says "Viva la Flood" around your nose-mouth region to be a fine substitute.

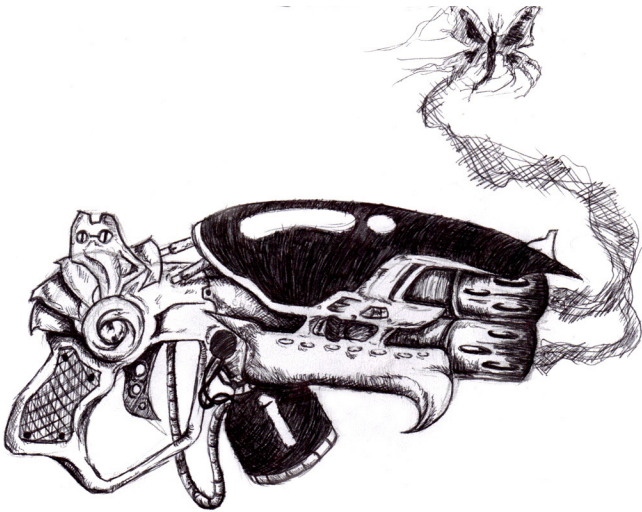
Now for the *coup de grace*: you must, absolutely MUST, bring your iPod, so you can just listen to music and forget that you're outside in the state of North Dakota and not a polar bear. iPod in place, you are finally ready to brave the Fargo. If you're a sensible human being, your iPod should contain predominantly Meatloaf and Enrique Iglesias. That said, start your journey with something by Journey: "Don't Stop Believing" if you're beginning to doubt your walking ability, "Separate Ways" if you really don't want to leave and have some sort of unhealthy relationship with your house, or "Ask the Lonely" if you feel like you're the most underrated Journey song.

During the trip, pick a song that suits your situation. If it's one of those "Sprewell days," try "No Air" by Jordin Sparks or "Let Me Clear My Throat" by D.J. Kool. If the cold is making you walk in a wobbly, elbow-heavy manner, I recommend "Lean Like a Cholo." If you stopped off to hold up a bank mid-trip, why not give "Ghetto Cowboy" a listen? Feel free to throw the "*Mortal Kombat* Theme Song" and anything by Shaggy in there at will. If you prefer to listen to something funny, download audio clips of Reggie Miller attempting to provide color commentary. He nails it every time. Before you even start to wonder how "The Final Countdown" got on your iPod, you've already listened to the entire song, and you're at your destination. You now know everything there is to know about everything. The student has become the master...the grasshopper has now become the much warmer grasshopper.

More importantly, it's easy to see that walking to class is exactly like NBA basketball in the 90s: both are better in the spring, worry my grandma, and employ more game planning and less travelling than you see in the NBA today (there, I said it). Also, they both make you want to watch *Space Jam* more than usual (Shawn Bradley's performance was Oscar-worthy, and I'm still petitioning for the Academy to strip the Best Supporting Actor award from that Robin Williams' character and give it to its rightful owner. Honestly, who even watched *Good Will Hunting*?). Since you're the master of walking to class, when others complain about the walk they had, you can now just chuckle to yourself and roll your eyes, provided your eyelashes aren't still frozen together...and if they are, then good for you because as you now well know, there's nothing inter-

esting to see on that forty-minute journey...unless you happen to like uninterrupted whiteness (which is also the title of my spoken word album).

Now that you've completed your expedition and peeled your eyes open, you can see that Grant Hill is spryer than ever, the zombie that claims to be Jerry Sloan is still coaching, and walking to class isn't so bad after all. You can enjoy your victory by continuing to hope that Meatloaf comes out with another album soon...before abruptly realizing that you forgot your backpack at home.



QUICK TAKES

from the quick takes editors....

This is the fifth volume of *Northern Eclecta*, and the Quick Takes section is appearing for only the second time.

Once the call for submissions was released, we started receiving submissions, and they continued to arrive until the deadline. The Quick Takes editors were excited by the number of submissions we received and which we had the pleasure of readings. We were greatly impressed by the level of creativity and complexity that were presented.

The categories this year included six-word essays and short stories, acrostic poems (see “Test” on page 88), flash fiction, short poems, and many more. The goal was to select submissions that were short but would stand out and make an impact on the reader. This year’s Quick Takes section will no doubt have something for everyone. The emotions portrayed in this year’s selections range from anger to laughter to love to confusion, just to name a few.

We would like to thank all of the authors who have given us the honor of reading their work—and we hope that next year will be just as impressive as this year.

Courtney Schur

RACHEL POND

Splat

Yellow
Noodles
Throw
Splat

Covered
In ranch
Duck
Splat

Watch out
Spaghetti
Hide
Splat

Children
Refuse
To eat
Splat

JONI WEIBESICK

Test

Terror fills my heart.

Essay section? No one said anything about an essay.

Should've studied way more. A couple days more

This is me hoping for an "A"...well maybe a "B."

CHELSEA FETCH

Day of the Dead

With Halloween approaching, none of the residents who could see Leonard's apartment balcony were surprised when, once again, his decorations exceeded their expectations. Some hated it, knowing their young children could view it from their apartments or from the park area behind the buildings where kids played. Others thought it was ingenious, wondering how Leonard could have possibly topped his decorations from last year. The only thing all the residents knew was that Leonard definitely loved Halloween.

A day or two passed, but no one seemed to notice that Leonard was not around.

A week passed, and finally neighbors started commenting on the smell.

Finally, peering across his balcony to Leonard's apartment, a neighbor finally noticed that the corpse—sitting in the lawn chair and slumped over the cheap plastic outdoor table—was not a Halloween decoration. It was decomposing.

BRYAN LIM

Itu Tasik (That Lake)

This story is a retelling of a fable that the author's Malaysian grandmother told to him when he was a boy.

Once upon a time, there was a group of students who were often disobedient and rebellious. They often skipped school and threw away their homework. The teachers, their parents, and their “nerd” friends always had a hard time with them whenever they did show up in school. It was horrible.

One day, they heard a man say, “There is a lake nearby, in the jungle. There are some nice fish swimming around in it.” The kids were interested in fishing, so they decided to go to this newly discovered lake.

They searched their homes and went shopping to prepare their fishing gear. They had wooden sticks; hard wire; small, rounded needles; and big worms for bait. With all this fishing gear, they would surely catch some fish!

They set off on their bicycles, singing and laughing at jokes. They arrived at the jungle, and it was a horrible sight: at the entrance there were old, decaying trees and twisted vines that blocked out the sun. But they didn't care—they just wanted to have fun.

Finally they reached the small lake, which was surrounded by dark green trees; the only other thing they could see was the sky and the sun, which was starting to go down. They jumped off their bikes, ran quickly to the nearby lake, and unloaded their fishing gear. One-by-one, step-by-step, they began casting their hooks into the silent, unnatural-looking lake. While still talking about irrelevant topics, they suddenly realized that night had fallen.

But right then one of the boys caught a fish. When the fish began to jump around, the boy opened his eyes in surprise. He put the fish into a water-filled bucket and then he looked around. His friends were gone! They had disappeared—vanished—into the thin night and the bright moonlight.

The boy ran around the lake calling his friends' names, but no one answered. Their bikes and fishing gear were still there, so he sat down and waited for them

to return. Then he looked down at the fish, and the moon was shining down on it. *This fish looks like an old man*, he thought. And the fish looked back at the boy...as if it wanted to live a bit longer. Alone and frightened, the boy decided to let the fish go—so he threw it back into the lake where it belonged.

At the exact moment that the boy let the fish loose in the lake, his friends reappeared out of nowhere. “Where were you!?” asked one of his friends with a panic-stricken face. “We were looking all over for you!!” Then the boy realized that his friends had not disappeared—he was the one who had disappeared!

If only that boy had not released me, he would have been the next addition to the lake...what a shame....

ALEX DRISCOLL

The Cowboy

This cowboy can't ride
But he can wear his boots
Like a bona fide pro.

Six-Word Essays

Graduate embarks. Family ties sever.
Longing.

Jennie M. Johnson

I followed Christ. Could you tell?

Brittany Gefroh

Alot cannot be just six words.

Jordan R. Trygstad

I cannot concentrate, I cannot concentrate.

Hannah Albrightson

Dear God, you don't exist. Sincerely....

Nick Strom

ELLA KATHERINE FIELD

Endless Possibilities

To me, you'll always be
My fondest memory
All my stumbles, all my falls
Everything, yet nothing at all
They always said
It'd be worth it in the end

And maybe this is it
Maybe my "fairytale come true"
But surely it's way too early
To know for sure
For now, I'm content
To even be a thought

A distant reminder
A companion sought?

LINNEA ROSE NELSON

True Love

I hope that my true love doesn't find me today.

She said,

Not because I'm not ready, but

Because I'm toasting a muffin on my baseboard

Heater and I just never

Imagined we'd meet when I was doing something odd like this.

And I couldn't decide whether she needed him

Right at that time or

If she should get to know herself better first.

ERICA R. RAPP

The Job of a Lifetime

It was always said that Mother Nature was the only one cut out for the job. No one else could handle the constant demands of earth and humanity that occur on a daily basis. When she was discovered, she was living off of nothing in the depths of space. She had so many hidden talents that would have been wasted if she had not been found by the Big Guy running the show.

He told her that He needed someone to control what goes on within earth's atmosphere and that He had too much on His plate as it was. He gave her a few extra powers—other than the ones that she already had—and that was it.

She really had no idea what she was supposed to be doing, and it took centuries of experience for her to figure out how tough Earth's weather can be. She also figured out that many things happened by accident, like tornadoes and hurricanes. Those types of things happened when she started to get extremely frustrated and had no other way to release her inner anger. Mother Nature thought things like thunderstorms and lightning were beautiful, and those types of things she planned out at the moments she thought were right. Life was good with her new job, and overall she felt saved and thankful to have such a rewarding job.

However, it took Mother Nature awhile to get the hang of her job, and she was extremely overwhelmed at first by how much power she had in her hands. She had to learn that innocent people can die in her tragic accidents and that she had to think about the entire Earth as a whole and not just certain areas. She also had to think about the habitats for all living things, and she had to realize that she controlled life or death with them.

It has been a learning process. Today, the main things Mother Nature struggles with are pollution, global warming, and trying to think of a plan to keep California from falling into the Pacific Ocean.

SYLVIA DEMPSEY

Rope of Clouds

Standing here, beneath the fullest of moons, I can see nothing but the deep city lights spread out before me, undulating along hills and near valleys, wishing to be like the sea. I imagine the lights blinking out, one by one, until the glow fades away, overtaken by the longest of all nights. Once the city below me has fallen silent, I turn my gaze toward the moon, willing a shadow to pull itself across the Sea of Tranquility and beyond, until the moon, too, is silent.

I wish this on no human, and yet I want the world to follow in my footsteps, to become what I have become. I wish for the coldest rains of autumn to fix themselves over my city, for the harshest winds of winter to blow, blow so hard that spring and summer are lost to myth. Somewhere in the back of my mind, a whistle blows, a paper thin sound giving me pause as I stare into the darkness before me, pebbles tumbling to the freeway far below, cutting this city off from my reach. I think about how easy it would be to join them, to let myself roll down the mountainside, across the freeway, all the way to the darkened city, joining the dreamers far below. I could become a part of their fairy tales, spin a yarn or two before departing for good.

A cloud passes over the moon above my head, the fullest moon I have ever seen. My gaze returns to the city, each light lit once again, brighter than before. A long breath slips out of my lips, clouding in the air before me, reaching toward the city like a rope, like a rope of clouds, turning, twisting in the air, misting across the stars. I sit and draw in the dirt, knowing that the sun will burn all lines drawn by memories. And still I draw, still I wait for the music of dawn, for the sun to reach across the land and end this, the longest of nights, waking me up, bringing me back to whatever it is I mean to be.

I want to touch the sun. Watch me burn.

Six-Word Short Stories

Top Story: A Man Turns Scottish.

Tanya Birklid

Guy fills out paper, then leaves.

Nicholas Taylor

The cops were called there. Constantly.

Destini Spaeth

The jester dances; kings have fled.

Bryant Spaeth

She left me to die alone.

Michele Willard

MEGAN L. EVEN

The Saddest Thing I Can Think Of

There was once a pitcher of water that liked to hang around all the carafes of juice. The carafes always had the best parties. Every Friday night, one of the carafes would call up the pitcher and tell him what the party theme was. They had pirate night, pimps-and-hoes night, and pajama night. They had parties that were Hawaiian-themed, 1950s-themed, and cowboy-themed. Everyone knew the carafes threw the best parties, and the pitcher was very grateful that he was so welcome among them. He always felt like he was a carafe at heart.

But one Friday, the pitcher didn't get a call. He sat at home alone that night. The next day, he called one of the carafes to ask what happened. "Was someone sick?" he asked. "Was there some kind of emergency? Why didn't you guys throw a party last night? You always have parties on Friday!"

The carafe on the other end of the line breathed a sorrowful sigh. "There was a party last night," he said. "It's just that...it was a necktie theme party. And you're a pitcher—not a carafe. You don't have a neck."



ERIN STEGMAN

Beautiful

She paraded around the house dressed in her mother's clothes, her shoes too big, lipstick too bright. "Don't I look beautiful?" she would ask her mother. And she always told her daughter "yes."

She entered high school, still dressed in clothes too mature. "Don't I look beautiful?" she would ask her boyfriend. And he would always say, "yes."

She graduated college and never used her degree. After birthing her first son at age 23, she looked up at her husband and said, "Don't I look beautiful?" He smiled at his son and said, "yes."

Forty years later she looks into her bathroom mirror. Her kids are gone, husband married to someone else. This time, her clothes fit and the lipstick is gone. "Don't I look beautiful?" she whispered into the mirror. No one answered back.

JONI WIEBESICK

My Star

“The stars are out,” you said sighing “they’re beautiful aren’t they?”

I nodded, staring at you bathed in the moonlight

“I used to think that they held people’s wishes, that when someone wished really *really* hard a star would be born. That star would hold the wish until it was fulfilled and then the star would die....kinda stupid right?”

I shook my head emphatically.

You were never stupid in my eyes

Especially when I held your hand tight in my own

You were nothing less than perfect

You smiled at me

Your eyes glowing bright like the stars you adored

“This is nice, isn’t it?”

I smiled

You were wrong, it wasn’t nice, it was perfect

Lying together in the grass

Breathing that fresh after-rain smell

Hands clasped tightly while we stared up at the stars

Your head resting on my shoulder while you curled up next to me

This was perfect

“What did you think the stars were?” You asked looking up at me

I grinned down at you shrugging

You sat up quickly, punching me in the arm

“I just poured out my heart and you didn’t say anything!”

I clutched my arm, giving you a hurt look

Your eyes rolled “yeah, right, not falling for that”

I smiled as you laid back down, burrowing into my side
Staring up at the stars with another soft sigh
“I wish I could be a star, holding people’s wishes in my heart”
I refrained from saying something cheesy that would ruin the moment
But I know you’re just like a star
Shining bright for everyone to see
Eternal and beautiful
You hold my wishes and dreams
My heart and soul
You are the only star in my sky
And my greatest wish is that we can return here
Week after week, year after year
To look at the night sky with the brightest star lying by my side

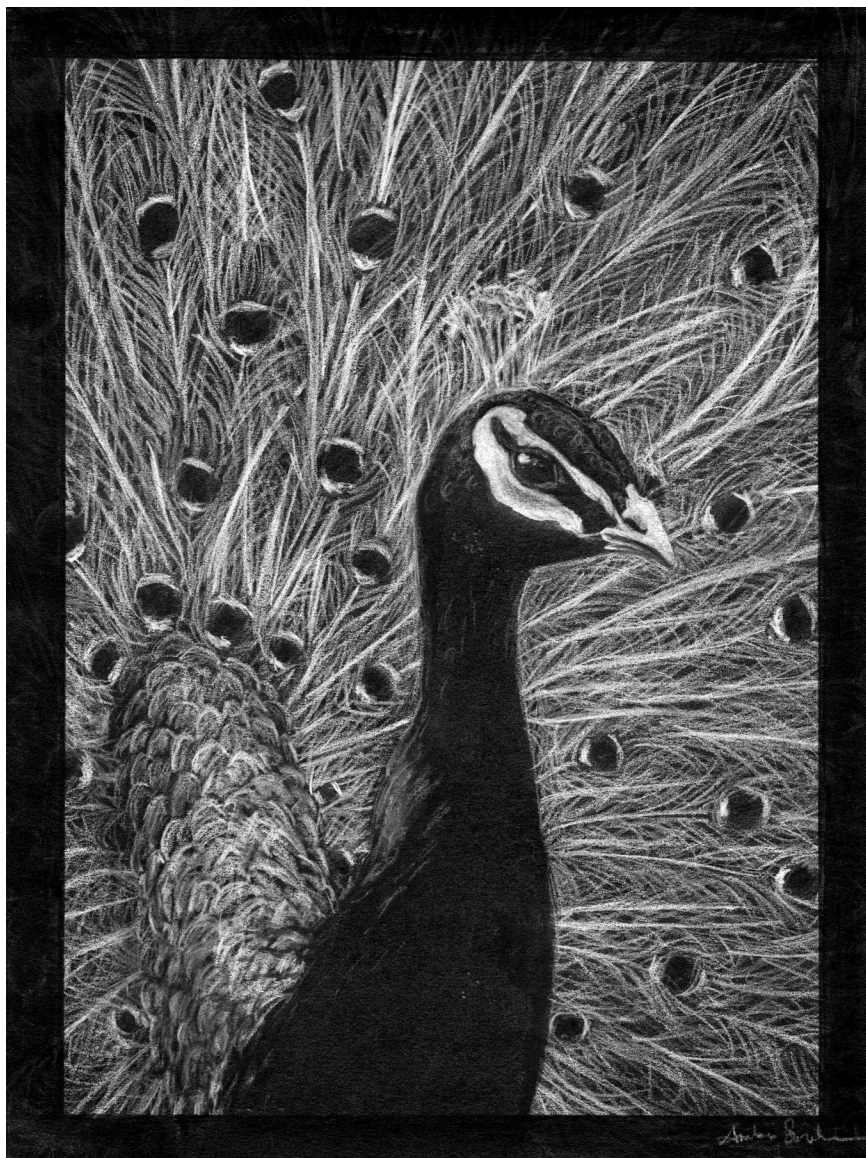
ALLISON CULEY

Cluster of Spring



AMBER SUNDERMAN

Peafowl



MARIE JOY DILLON

Forgotten Love



AARON BREEN

Sunlight on a Cool, Misty Morning





THE NEXT GENERATION

from the next generation editors....

In the words of the inventor Edwin Land, “An essential aspect of creativity is not being afraid to fail.” We applaud the high school students who went out on a limb and submitted their works. Each submission we got represented a little piece of each submitter, and we appreciate each and everyone’s efforts.

For the 2011 issue of *Northern Eclecta*, our Literary Publications classes decided to give more high school students the opportunity to have their creative work reviewed and possibly showcased in the section we call “The Next Generation.” Each year we try to expand our reach and we have been delighted to receive submissions from schools outside of the Fargo-Moorhead-West Fargo area as well as those in the metropolitan area.

The submissions from the high school students were great this year. The editors were glad to see the eclectic variety of the submissions. This year we are featuring a cartoon for the first time as well as some intriguing artwork and photographs. Three great poems were also selected. As you will see, the high school submissions are varied in style and content which makes this section an interesting read.

We hope you enjoy the work of our area high school students as much as we did.

Josephine Breen

HOPE ERICKSON

Winter

The expanse of snow covers the earth plane
The trees bend and sway in the icy wind;
Burdened by the weight of heaven's white rain
Struggling to stand strong and not give in.
The grass beneath is to be seen no more
Until the sweet relief of spring renews;
But for now winter is winning the war.
As it makes its way through the old church pews
The parson begins to sing the Lord's Prayer;
After relieving ladies of their hats
The intruder returns to its lair;
Eager for the chance to strike back at man.
It has the power over land and sky;
It is a season God gave us but why?

HOUDA ABDELRAHMAN

Without Beauty

She cannot see,
What she possesses,
Without beauty,
She still impresses.

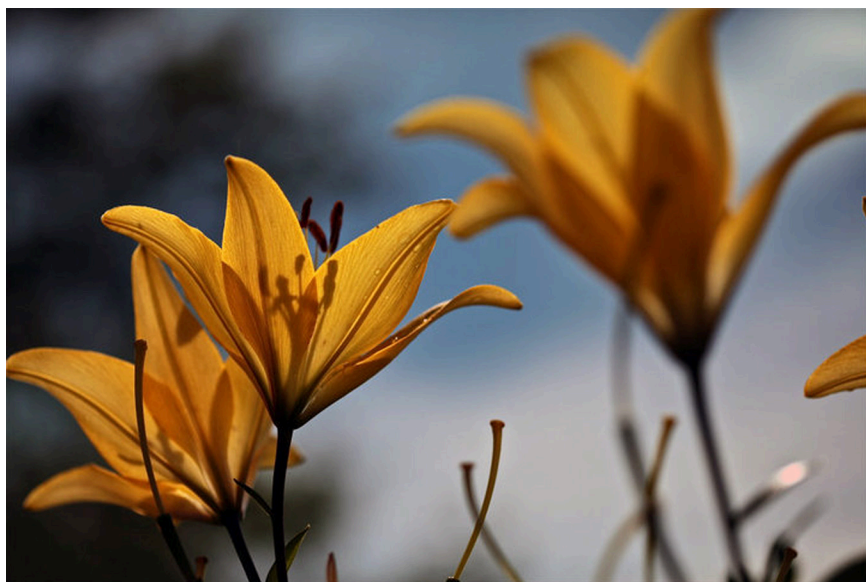
MEGAN MARSOLEK

Victorian Room



EMILY RAMAGE

La vida es bella
(Life is beautiful)



SAMUEL BREEN

The Winding Road



SARAH J. GREEN

Polypane



CAITLIN SKJERVEM

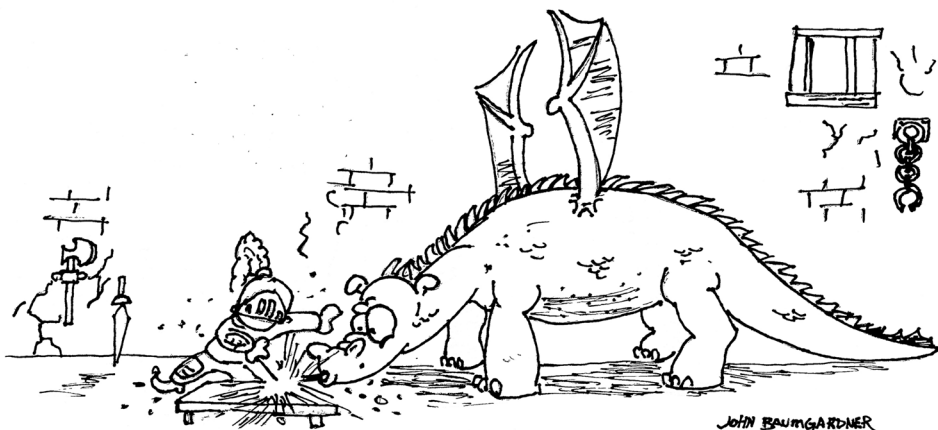
Minds of the Mad

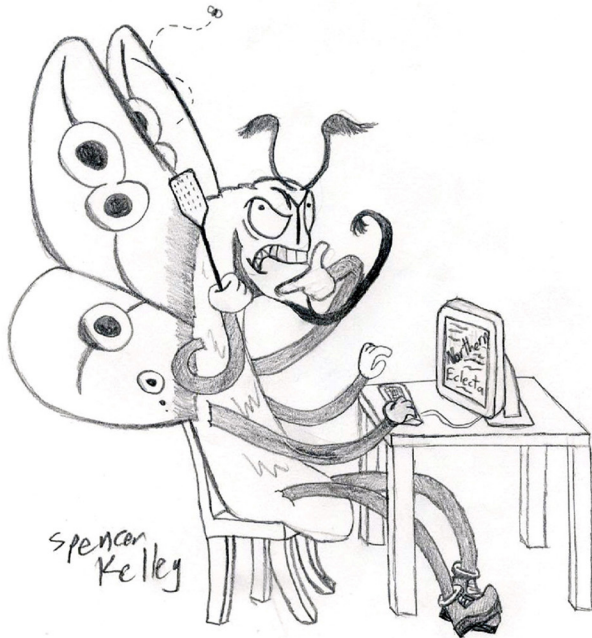
A maniac in a self-sufficient mind.
The outside aid is out of order,
And the long distance calls are running out of time.
A rebel in a claustrophobic mind.
No escape, panic attacks are closing in from behind,
Crowding your equilibrium to the brink of insane,
A chip off the old block, but never quite the same.
A schizophrenic in an abnormal mind.
Hanging onto paranoia,
And sentences strung out into a chain that binds,
Sanity unable to find.
A hypocrite in a DIY mind.
Broken promises,
And a mound of lies you hide yourself behind.
The boastful swagger, and your cunning lies leave us blind.
A protagonist in an antagonist mind.
Fights against the enemy, but backstabs the allies of his own
kind.
A traitor, in the hatred, existence seems to find him in.
No one knows behind those walls, that martyr has done sin.

Minds of the diseased, what thoughts they might have had.
Swimming in their own misery...in the minds of the mad

JOHN R. BAUMGARDNER

Middle Age Welder





CONTRIBUTORS

HOUDA ABDELRAHMAN, *Without Beauty*, 108.

A senior at Fargo South High School, Houda says that her favorite poet is Emily Dickinson. Houda has been previously published in *Teen Ink* magazine. She enjoys writing and hopes to continue this passion throughout her life.

HANNAH ALBRIGHTSON, *Six-Word Essay*, 91.

Hannah was born in Billings, MT, but has lived in so many states that she calls many places home. She is currently a senior majoring in Psychology and English with intentions of applying to graduate school. Her six-word essay is the result of frustration stemming from homework that won't complete itself.

BROCK AZURE, *Elizabeth*, 73.

Brock is a junior majoring in English Education from Bismarck, ND. His essay tells the story of his grandmother's childhood from her perspective. Brock had this to say about it: "My grandmother's story has always been interesting to me, and I'm glad I can share it with others."

JOHN R. BAUMGARDNER, *Middle Age Welder*, 114.

John is in the eighth grade at Oak Grove Lutheran High School, Fargo, ND. He has always had an interest in cartooning and captures expressions well. He also has an interest in mechanics, especially steam engines from yesteryear.

TANYA BIRKLID, *Six-Word Short Story*, 96.

Tanya lives on a farm about 20 miles away from Lisbon, ND. She's a freshman at NDSU and her major is Theatre. She says that she's always enjoyed writing and never wants to give it up because it keeps her imagination going.

EMILY BLACK, *All My Love*, 52.

Emily is a freshman from Williston, ND, double majoring in Piano Performance and Journalism. Although her poem illustrates the despair of someone contemplating suicide, it wasn't inspired by any particular event. Rather, the day after she'd written it, she was shocked and grieved to learn that a fellow classmate had succumbed to the private despair that had so plagued him.

BAILEY BRAZIER, *Parachute*, 55.

Bailey, a freshman and aspiring photographer majoring in English, thrives in her hometown of Greenbush, MN. Taken in her backyard, “Parachute” captures the peaceful flight of an open, happy heart.

AARON BREEN, *Sunlight on a Cool, Misty Morning*, 104.

Aaron, who grew up in Fargo, ND, is a senior at NDSU majoring in Management Communication with a minor in Philosophy. He had this to say about his photo: “One cool morning, when our family was in the Colorado Rocky Mountains, I took some pictures when there was dew on the ground, as I wanted to capture the sunrays coming through the trees.”

SAMUEL BREEN, *The Winding Road*, 111.

Sam says that he took this picture while going up and over the Trail Ridge Road in Rocky Mountain National Park: “I saw an awesome point to take a picture, so I took this picture looking forward in our van.” Currently a junior at Shanley High School, he is involved in swimming and diving, choir, Teens for Life—and he loves taking pictures (when opportune).

JEROME CASTIEL, *Because you can't say no*, 45.

“Jerome Castiel” is the pseudonym of a junior History major from Rochester, MN. Originally from Munich, Germany, Jerome says he hopes to one day publish a book on the evolution of radiators in post-communist Moldova. His greatest ambition is to get a singing part in Mozart’s *The Magic Flute*, preferably as the Queen of the Night. The inspiration for writing these pieces came from a conversation with an obnoxious and sanctimonious laundromat owner, and the unyielding hunger he recently experienced at an Indian restaurant.

SAM CATON, *From The Man*, 7.

Sam was born in Fargo in 1990. He has a passion for film and plans to transfer to MSUM to pursue a career in it. He has written two screenplays and is currently working on a third. A freshman at NDSU, Sam has a passion for the arts and writing.

ADAM D. CHING, *Treaty of Fontainebleau, 11 May 1814, 61.*

Adam is a senior studying English Education. He was raised in the small town of Dempster, SD, which provides the backdrop for “Treaty of Fontainebleau, 11 May 1814.” This piece stems from two of Adam’s great loves: talking about himself and talking about obscure historical events.

ALLISON CULEY, *Cluster of Spring, 101.*

Allison is a Psychology major. Contrary to popular belief, she dislikes the outdoors and flowers. However, she does enjoy reverse psychology.

CAITLIN DEAL, *Snow Angel, 41.*

In her third year at NDSU, Caitlin is majoring in Behavioral Statistics. She has lived in Fargo for most of her life and her poem, “Snow Angel,” was inspired by our North Dakota winters.

SYLVIA DEMPSEY, *Rope of Clouds, 95.*

“Sylvia Dempsey” is the pseudonym of a sophomore at NDSU majoring in English and minoring in Theatre Arts. She was born in Fargo, ND, and lived for a time in Illinois. A yoga addict, she spends much of her time pestering her obese cat.

MARIE JOY DILLON, *Forgotten Love, 103.*

Marie grew up just outside of the town of Zimmerman, MN. She is a junior majoring in English with a minor in Psychology. Her hobbies include reading, writing, and photography.

ALEC DRISCOLL, *The Cowboy, 90.*

Alec was born in Fargo and has lived there ever since. He is a freshman Music major with a minor in English, hoping to one day more or less make it through college.

ELIZABETH A. DURBEN, *Song Montage, 42.*

Elizabeth has never known a home other than Fargo, ND. She will graduate in May with a B.S. in English and Journalism, Broadcasting and Mass Communication Technologies with a Psychology minor. “Song Montage” formed from her love of classic rock and her belief that music can capture any emotion.

HOPE ERICKSON, *Winter*, 107.

Currently a student at Northern Cass High School, Hope lives on a farm outside of Hunter, ND. She plans to attend Southern Oregon University in the fall and major in Music and English. She says that the majority of the poems she has written are based on nature and that “the inspiration for this poem came from the typical North Dakota weather that was occurring outside of my English classroom’s window.”

MEGAN L. EVEN, *Catechism Class*, 37; *The Saddest Thing I Can Think Of*, 97.

From Aberdeen, SD, Megan is a junior majoring in English and Anthropology. The piece “Catechism Class” was written long after she dropped out of catechism class. The piece “The Saddest Thing I Can Think Of” is really the second saddest thing she can think of.

AMBER L. FETCH, *Noble Intentions*, 30.

Amber is a senior majoring in English at NDSU. Originally from Mandan, ND, she is considering relocating to Fargo. “Noble Intentions” is a short fiction piece meant to explore the world of superheroes and how they come about, with a slightly different take on the idea.

CHELSEA FETCH, *Life-Changing Moments*, 20; *Day of the Dead*, 88.

A junior majoring in English at NDSU, Chelsea was the editor-in-chief of *Northern Eclecta* last year. She is interested in book editing after graduation and currently maintains a blog as an outlet for writing, learning, and networking.

ELLA KATHERINE FIELD, *Endless Possibilities*, 92.

Katie is a freshman originally from Thompson, ND, currently double majoring in English and English Education with a minor in Communications. She would like to keep the story behind her submission a mystery simply to encourage readers to get their own meaning out of her words.

BROOKE MARTINA FRANZEN, *Opes Love (Love’s Wealth)*, 54.

Brooke is a freshman majoring in Veterinary Medicine from Lakota, ND. The inspiration for this poem came from the realization that the world today is so focused on what wealth, power, and prestige can do for us that we tend to lose sight of the values that have made us into the people we are today. Taking a step

back and realizing what you have in front of you can be so much more important than focusing mainly on the physical possessions in life that you will forever want.

BRITTANY GEFROH, *Six-Word Essay*, 91.

From Bismarck, ND, Brittany is a freshman majoring in Journalism. She says that this memoir succinctly sums up who she is: “My faith in Christ guides my life, and I want the world to see what a follower of Christianity and by extension, Christ, is really like.”

SARAH J. GREEN, *Polypane*, 112.

Sarah is a junior at Shanley High School in Fargo. She grew up in Maryland but has spent the last few years of her life in the Great Plains area. Her idea for this photo came as something of a whim as she was lying on her bed contemplating the blueness of the sky. The multiple screens of the window, she felt, were symbolic of the many layers that exist between freedom and captivity, nature and society, and truth and obscurity.

ELIZABETH A. HAUGEN, *Frustrations of a Nontraditional Learner*, 44.

Except for an enlistment in the Air Force, Elizabeth has lived in Fargo-Moorhead since the age of three. She’s a senior, going for a degree in English. “Frustrations” was written from a contrast of different teaching styles and was mostly composed while driving.

JENNIE M. JOHNSON, *Six-Word Essay*, 91.

Jennie, originally from Pembina, ND, is a freshman majoring in Sports and Recreation Leadership Studies and English. Heavily influenced by growing up in a tight-knit family of six, Johnson tried to encapsulate the vast and often conflicting emotions of new college freshman in this six-word memoir.

BRIAN KNUTSON, *Prophesy?*, 3.

Brian, a senior majoring in English, is originally from Maple Grove, MN. He says that “Prophesy?” was inspired by his frequent, annoyingly accurate instances of *déjà vu*; it began as an experiment in purely dialogue-based storytelling.

BRYAN LIM, *Itu Tasik (That Lake)*, 89.

Born in Malaysia in 1991, Bryan is completing his second year at NDSU, but he's considered a freshman because he was in the ESL program. His major was English, but now he has changed it to Computer Science.

Meagan Marsolek, *Victorian Room*, 109.

A sophomore at Shanley High School who is interested in Art, Meagan says she “chose this particular picture because I was intrigued by the style of décor and furniture. This certain project presented me with a challenge since it was in pen and I would be unable to erase.”

ALYSSA MILLER, *BiLL PLath*, 64.

Alyssa, a senior double majoring in Management and English, is from Mandan, ND. While shopping in downtown Bismarck, she bought an old *Bison* yearbook. After looking through it, she was inspired to explore the life of the yearbook's owner and write a short nonfiction piece entitled “BiLL PLath.”

LINNEA ROSE NELSON, *You in a Field*, 40; *True Love*, 93.

Linnea is a freshman double majoring in English and International Studies. In the midst of a creative dry spell this past winter, “You in a Field” strolled into her mind “with thoughts of late summer, the view from a high window, and the struggle to remember the face of that person who occasionally fills our dreams with a mysterious, splendid sadness.”

MARISSA KIBBY NELSON, *The Wing of Nature*, 56.

A junior at NDSU majoring in Natural Resources Management. Marissa grew up amidst the badlands of western North Dakota on a cattle ranch near Watford City, ND. She loves being outside, especially when she gets to go biking, skiing, hunting, or fishing. She also enjoys quilting, sewing, scrapbooking, and baking in her spare time. The quilt in the picture was created by coloring with crayons on a thin fabric called muslin, which she then melted into the fabric and quilted.

RACHEL POND, *Brighten My World*, 57; *Splat*, 87.

Rachel Pond is currently a sophomore majoring in Criminal Justice. She grew up in Rosemount, MN, and has always had a passion for writing. The inspiration for her poem “Splat” came from memories of a food fight that took

place in her high school cafeteria, resulting in many stained shirts but even more laughter.

SPENCER PTACEK, *One-Act-Debacle*, 25.

Spencer, from Oakes, ND, is a third-year student at NDSU majoring in English and Philosophy. The inspiration for “One-Act-Debacle” came from an uneducated interest in dramatic literature and the various relationships inherent in the reading and performance of it.

EMILY RAMAGE, *La vida es bella (Life is beautiful)*, 110.

Currently a sophomore at Watford City High School, Emily says that she took this photograph at the International Peace Gardens in the summer of 2010 while attending IMC Photography Camp. She enjoys photography and takes pictures of people for many occasions.

ERICA R. RAPP, *The Job of a Lifetime*, 94.

From Fargo, ND, Erica is a sophomore here at NDSU. She is currently studying English with a minor in Management Communications and International Studies, and plans to study abroad in New Zealand for the fall semester of 2011.

CAITLIN SKJERVEM, *Minds of the Mad*, 113.

Caitlin is a junior at Lakota High School, Lakota, ND. She says that she wrote “Minds of the Mad” from the perspective “of the people who have faced traumatic times in their life—because someone has to tell their story.”

BRYANT SPAETH, *Six-Word Short Story*, 96.

Bryant is a 21-year-old English major from Morris, MN. This story was for a class that he took in the fall of 2010. The inspiration was that feeling of joy you get when you gain freedom but the inevitability of reverting to the things you are accustomed to.

DESTINI SPAETH, *Six-Word Short Story*, 96.

Destini, a freshman at NDSU majoring in English with a minor in Psychology, has lived in Fargo almost her entire life. The purpose of this piece, she says, “is to give the reader the opportunity to answer the ‘who, what, where, when, and why’ based on their own life experiences. All of our definitions will be unique.”

ERIN STEGMAN, *Beautiful*, 98.

Erin grew up in Crookston, MN. This is her freshman year, and she is majoring in English. She said that “Beautiful” was written to make readers “stop and think about the message they should send younger girls, to say that there are more important things in life than makeup and heels.”

NICK STROM, *Six-Word Essay*, 91.

Nick is an English Education major born in Rolla, ND. After about two years in the small town, he and his family moved to Fargo for about four years and then finally settled in West Fargo. An absence of free will leading to a lack of moral culpability was the inspiration for this six-word essay.

AMBER SUNDERMAN, *Peafowl*, 102.

Amber is currently a sophomore attending NDSU seeking a degree in Landscape Architecture. She said this about her artwork: “This piece is a colored pencil drawing of a peacock living on the small hobby farm in Minnesota that I grew up on.”

NICHOLAS TAYLOR, *Six-Word Short Story*, 96.

From Minot, ND, Nicholas is currently a Statistics major at NDSU who enjoys baseball, writing, and playing video games. He says, “My short story is about me filling out the form to submit my story.”

KATHERINE THORESON, *I Am a Tree!*, 50.

Katherine grew up on a farm and went to high school in Mayville, ND. She is a freshman at NDSU majoring in English and (unofficially) Philosophy/ Humanities. She wrote “I Am a Tree!” when she was very, very ill.

ADAM TILLY, *A Flood Sunset*, 58.

Adam Tilly is a third-year Mechanical Engineering student from Chisago City, MN. After living on a lake for a few years, he started to capture the sunset and its reflection on the water, seeing God’s beauty in the world He created and has enjoyed photography ever since. He also does not edit his photos other than changing them to black and white if he decides to do so.

JORDAN R. TRYGSTAD, *Six-Word Essay*, 91.

Jordan was born in Moorhead, MN and raised in Fargo, ND. He is a junior majoring in English with a minor in Computer Science. This six-word essay was written as a joke while working at the *Northern Eclecta* publicity table in the Memorial Union.

STEVIE TYLER, *Relative Digestion*, 68.

Stevie Tyler is a Pisces and an Air Force brat who currently attends NDSU as a senior. She loves nature and art. This story is set in Logan, ND.

JONI WIEBESICK, *Mirror*, 48; *Test*, 88; *My Star*, 99.

Joni's hometown is Fargo, but she was born in South Korea. A junior majoring in Psychology, she also has minors in both Political Science and Criminal Justice. "Mirror" was inspired by the interesting concept of a two-way mirror; it started simple but quickly evolved into its current state.

KARSON WIGNESS, *Walking to Class*, 79.

Karson Wigness is a senior majoring in Journalism. He hails from the lovely city of Williston, ND. This essay was a response to creative writing class assignment to write about something he does every day. It's dedicated to his idol, Jerry Sloan: the man, the myth, the coach.

MICHELLE WILLARD, *Six-Word Short Story*, 96.

A Fargo native, Michelle is currently a junior at NDSU majoring in English with minors in Gender Studies and Psychology. In the future, she hopes to become a writer in addition to having a regular job. She says that her six-word short story "is about my best friend who died four years ago."

ROSE ZIEGLER, *Haiku: The Martyr*, 46.

Originally from Hazen, ND, Rose completed her undergraduate degree in English and Secondary Education at UND. Currently, she is working on a master's degree in School Counseling, but still loves to write. "Haiku: The Martyr" utilizes one of her favorite poetic forms.

N*orthern Eclecta* is a literary journal produced by students in the English 213, 313, and 413: Literary Publications classes, and Volume 5 was created during Spring Semester 2011. 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 2012, 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 schools with the opportunity to have their creative written and visual works published. Financial support to help cover the cost of printing Volume 5 was provided by the following:

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