

# NORTHERN ECLECTA

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# NORTHERN ECLECTA

Volume 6 — 2012

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# to the readers....

CAN YOU BELIEVE that this is the sixth year of publication of *Northern Eclecta*? The thought baffles me. This literary journal has grown from its maiden voyage of a small publication of roughly 25 contributors into a good-sized journal with far-reaching branches. This year we've seen a 70% increase in submissions, which in itself is an amazing feat. I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who submitted work this year and in previous years, and to encourage writers and poets to continue to submit to future volumes.

My semester as editor-in-chief began with deciding on a theme of "inspiration" in order to help bring the publication together. Due to the huge number of excellent submissions this year, it was difficult to determine what to accept; by following the aforementioned theme, I was able to make my final decisions based on which pieces inspired me the most. In the end, we've come up with a vast and eclectic collection of pieces in this year's volume that demonstrate why the title of our journal is so fitting.

We have made quite a few strides this year in expanding *Northern Eclecta*, and not just in relation to the size of the journal itself. This year's volume includes quite a few sketches by our art department that were created when they felt inspired by one of the pieces we decided to accept. We've expanded the Next Generation section to include submissions from more high schools and middle schools around North Dakota and surrounding states, offering a wider reach for our journal. One of the first things we did this semester was look up pictures of *Bucculatrix eclecta*, the moth which shares part of our name, in order to incorporate the true eclecta moth into the journal. The cover displays said moth, and included in the pages of the journal is a picture of a wire sculpture of the moth created by Lawrence Vanderbush and photographed by Jordan Stiefel of our art department (see page 62).

Another expansion of our journal was embodied in the "*Northern Eclecta* Coffee House and Showcase" that took place at Jitter's near campus at the end of April. This event included readings by authors and poets included in both Volume 5 and Volume 6 of *NE*. This was the first ever coffee house



put on by *NE*, and in our opinion it was a huge success. I think I speak for all of this year's staff that attended the event when I say that it was fun and interesting to put faces to the names of the authors and poets whose work we'd been reading all semester. Getting the staff and submitters of *NE* together for an event such as this was what I hope to be the start to a new tradition for the journal. We form an eclectic and welcoming community that, if this tradition continues, can form a support group for writers of all kinds.

Jack London once said, "You can't wait for inspiration. You have to go after it with a club." I feel that this year's staff has done just that in relation to the steps we've taken to expand *NE* and create a wider audience for the journal both at North Dakota State University and around the state. Although this introduction has by no means done justice to the contributions of every staff member involved, I hope it gives you, the reader, some indication of how much we've put into this volume. It is my sincere wish that you enjoy this and future volumes of *Northern Eclecta*.

Amber L. Fetch  
Editor-in-Chief

## fiction...

- "Pindergrast" by E. Richard Schab, p. 3
- "Cool FM" by Dominic J. Manthey, p. 21
- "Rewind Park" by Houda Abdelrahman, p. 43
- "Tremundous Bell" by Spencer Ptacek, p. 63

THE FICTION SUBMISSIONS to the sixth volume display a collective level of inspiration unrivaled in any preceding edition of *Northern Eclecta*. With a record number of submissions, the fiction editors had the uncertain duty of elevating some selections to publication while leaving numerous other creative and powerful stories behind. We are extremely happy with the four stories published here, but we are even happier with the enthusiasm for fiction revealed by every submitter.

The four short stories published here involve protagonists who encounter the unfamiliar either in themselves or in their surroundings. A common

theme may be one's willingness to adapt to changing circumstances lest the circumstances overcome them.

We begin with "Pindergrast," a short story about an elderly man who is forced to confront mortality and the choices he made in his life. Elwood relives a life of love and loss as he visits the doctor following disconcerting symptoms.

Next, we tune in to "Cool F.M." where the unremarkable cab driver F.G. Ronaldo finds himself in a most remarkable situation. Ronaldo takes a fare that leads him down a surreal path that somehow curves within the bounds of possibility.

Third is "Rewind Park," a story of an older woman who refuses to accept a distressful change in her life. We suffer along with Caroline as a typical Wednesday trip to the park goes amiss.

Finally, "Tremendous Bell," a story about a boy of fourteen whose life isn't so tremendous until a chance encounter with an old man. The omniscient narration allows us to see Trem change as he takes a more active role in the events that seemingly happen by chance.

Please enjoy these stories and the other works in this sixth volume of *Northern Eclecta*. It has been a pleasure working on this publication and would not be possible without the wonderful contributions of every submitter!

Jeffrey Opgrand  
Fiction Editor

## nonfiction....

- "I Found Out Who My Father Was" by Kaylee Jangula, p. 15
- "The Problem with Redheads" by Andrew Young, p. 39
- "Greenie" by Tessa Torgeson, p. 53
- "College Forensics in America and China" by Dandan Chen, p. 79
- "Taken" by Kelly Anne Fratzel, p. 87

THE PUBLICATION TEAM for this year's edition for the *Northern Eclecta* chose a theme from which to take a cue. "To inspire" has many different definitions, from influencing to filling with a specific feeling or

thought. The selections for the nonfiction section were chosen based on this concept of wanting to inspire the readers not only to think about what they have read but also to inspire them to be better people with insight into the lives of others.

The nonfiction editors had a very tough time choosing the final selections for publication because of the many truly well written pieces that were submitted for consideration. The pieces that were chosen together tell a story not only of personal development but also of cultural and social reflections. Each piece individually is powerful in itself but when taken in with the other pieces the effort of each author is magnified. From the personal turmoils of “Greenie,” “Taken,” and “I Found Out Who My Father Was” to the social commentary of “The Problem with Redheads” to a look at the cultural differences of “College Forensics in America and China,” these stories of creative nonfiction are meant to inspire you, the reader, to think about not only yourself, your family, or your friends but also of the strangers you pass on the street, the articles you read in magazines and newspapers, and the shows you watch on television. The stories of overcoming personal demons and the reality check offered by the authors for this year’s *Northern Eclecta* nonfiction leaves a very a simple question: what inspires you to be you?

Melissa Brown  
Nonfiction Editor

## poetry....

- “Kicking” by Rachel Grider, p. 13
- “Rectangles” by Michael Rauser, p. 14
- “Winter, Sushi, This” by Linnea Rose Nelson, p. 31
- “A Mother’s Funeral” by Tatjana Schell, p. 36
- “On Seeing Headlights in the Corner of My Eye” by Katherine Thoreson, p. 49
- “A Puppet” by Caitlin Deal, p. 51
- “A Moment of Imperfection” by Samantha Wickramasinghe, p. 75
- “Lost in Reality, Found in Dreams” by Joni Wiebesick, p. 77
- “The Narrow Path” by Cade Krueger, p. 85

- “Untitled” by Sylvia Dempsey, p. 86
- “I’d Rather” by Joseph Vaske, p. 93

IN THE THREE YEARS I have worked as a poetry editor for *Northern Eclecta*, I have never seen such an extraordinary turnout—both in quality and quantity—in the poems sent in by NDSU students. It’s difficult as editors, having to choose only a small portion of the material that is submitted for publication. When combing through the poems and coming to a conclusion on what was to be published, we discovered how much more difficult the task was to be than we had expected, due to the broad audience that each poem appealed to.

In the end, we decided on a batch of poems that we are really proud to host in this year’s edition of *Northern Eclecta*. Each poem will stir up different emotions, from the joy of feeling as if you’ve just drank the liquid luck potion of *Harry Potter* in “A Moment of Imperfection” to the bond shared by two siblings while dining on Japanese cuisine in “Winter, Sushi, This.”

The poetry editors are honored to present these phenomenal poems to you, the reader, and we hope all NDSU students are inspired to submit and contribute to next year’s edition as well.

Evan Kjos  
Poetry Editor

## quick takes....

- “The Memory” by Nayeon Kim, p. 19
- “Welcome to College: Six-Word Essays” by Grace Peterson, Mohamed Abdirahman, Brie Michaelson, Nicholas LeDoux, and Paige Douglas, p. 20
- “Slice of Life: Six-Word Essays” by Corrie Dunshee, Celena Todoro, Rachel Grider, Anushi Weerasinghe, p. 38
- “Libraries” by Stephane Anderson, p. 41
- “Zombicorn: A Six-Word Short Story” by Elli Leach, p. 42
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- “Delicious Indolence” by Peter Koepp, p. 57
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- “New Beginnings: Six-Word Essays” by Janae Valvoda, Rachel Grider, Donald Hanninen, Emily J. Vieweg, Delaney Freer, p. 90
- “The Chair” by Michael Rauser, p. 91
- “Mr. Bones, Mr. Blue” by Megan Even, p. 92
- “Lost: A Six-Word Short Story” by Shahana Norton, p. 94

LET ME START OFF by truly thanking all of my fellow Quick Takes editors. You guys may not have always felt like you were doing much, but I greatly appreciated all of your hard work and involvement. Secondly, I would like to thank everybody who submitted submissions to the Quick Takes section for a record breaking year. Once again, I am delighted to be part of the process of publishing my fellow students’ work and hope that everyone will continue to submit such quality pieces in the future.

To be honest, though, I was surprised to find I was put in charge of the Quick Takes this year. Having been in charge of Poetry for last year’s volume, I had assumed I would be put in the same position this year. I am glad I wasn’t because it allowed me experience an even more creatively diverse collection of works.

While other introductions in this volume may talk about our theme of inspiration this year, I have to be truthful and admit that was not part of our process among the Quick Takes editors. We handled such a large number of pieces from six-word stories to flash fiction that we truly understood the eclectic nature of this section. But sadly, we couldn’t keep everything, and our group sorted through to find what we felt spoke to us. While all of these selections may be short, I hope that they stick with you in the future.

Jordan R. Trygstad  
Quick Takes Editor

## visual arts....

- “Wind” by Amber Sunderman, p. 19
- “Fargo Frost” by Delaney Freer, p. 33
- “Nonperishable Choices by Chamanthi Weeratunga, p. 34
- “Feathers of Life” by Danielle Anders, p. 35
- “A Mother’s Funeral” by Tatjana Schell, p. 36
- “North Dakota Skyline” by Melissa Kibby (Nelson) Moxness, p. 59
- “Peacocking” by Melissa Eslinger, p. 60
- “Summer Serenity” by Abby Hammes, p. 61

AS SOMEONE WHO IS NEW to *Northern Eclecta*, I am pleasantly surprised to find that a small publication like *NE* is so multifaceted. I am also thrilled at the many authors who are artists as well. Although I am new to the *NE* staff this year, I am happy to hear that this year has been one of our biggest years. This feat is amazing and we could not have done it without you, the contributors. We hope that this year’s picks for the Visual Arts section reflect the eclectic nature of *NE*. Thank you for the submissions and we hope to see this amount of outstanding support in years to come. *NE* isn’t possible without you.

Jacinta Thieschafer  
Visual Arts Editor

NDSU





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E. RICHARD SCHWAB

# Pindergrast

BORN SIX YEARS after the end of the Great War, Elwood Pindergrast was approaching ninety when he began to notice a slight trembling in his right hand. He chalked it up to old age and tried his best to ignore it. As an author renowned for his beautifully hand-written manuscripts, though, this was easier said than done.

Over the next few months, the shaking grew in intensity, forcing Elwood to set aside his trademark antique fountain pen in favor of the Underwood Model 5 he had received on his seventieth birthday. His publishers shrugged at “his latest eccentricity,” and continued eagerly awaiting his highly-anticipated next novel.

A month passed and the trembling in his hand subsided, but Elwood stuck with the old typewriter. It was another two weeks before he acknowledged that he could no longer strike the keys hard enough to make them work. At this time, he admitted two things: that he’d felt “a little dizzy the last few days” and that he was having trouble walking because his heels had gone numb. It is here that we will begin to take a more active role in the narrative of Mr. Elwood Pindergrast.

“You better not bring the kids by today,” he said, cradling the telephone receiver with both hands. In the last few months, it had been getting increasingly difficult to do anything one-handed.

“No, it’s nothing,” he continued. “I’ve just been a little dizzy the last few days is all.” He paused, listening; then he laughed. “It’s probably just the flu.”

He paused again.

“I don’t need to see a doctor. I’m just gonna write a bit and go to bed early. I know. I know. Yeah. Okay. I will.” Leaning heavily on his cane, he placed the receiver on the cradle. He sighed and, with trembling hands, lifted it back to his ear and dialed.

“Hi. It’s me. Listen, I... I think I need to see a doctor.” There was a long silence. “No. You better come get me.” He hung up the phone and bowed his head. He was sitting in the dark. “Damn it.”



Spencer Kelley / NE staff

*He met Margery when he was seven years old. It had been two years since the Crash and while, sure, things got a little tight there for a while, his father's business had allowed them to keep the family estate and half of the household staff. It was his mother's idea to ask the Hughes family to come and live with them. Ever the bleeding heart was Mrs. Pindergrast. But, Mr. Pindergrast agreed and the next day, little Elwood had a roommate. There was an instant adoration. She was two years older but it didn't matter; they were inseparable. Their parents were pleased.*

*Seven years passed. During this time, Mr. Hughes—insistent on earning his family's room and board—joined the household staff as Mr. Pindergrast's chauffeur; propriety dictated that Margery—blossoming into womanhood and now the ward of Mr. Pindergrast—be moved to the opposite end of the house; and Mrs. Hughes—for reasons unknown—threw herself from the third-story balcony. Mr. Hughes wore mourning for a month; Elwood secretly thought it was lucky that, as chauffeur, he already owned a black suit. The night of the funeral, after sneaking into her room to comfort her, he and Margery made love for the first time.*

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When his car pulled up to the clinic, a nurse with an unremarkable face was waiting at the entrance with a wheelchair. The driver helped get him out of the car and into the nurse's care before pulling away in search of a suitable parking spot. She rolled him into an empty room, handed him a paper robe, and, after being convinced that he was "actually feeling much better" and could undress himself, left him alone to wait for the doctor.

He took a deep breath, slowly letting it out as he looked around the small room. Various medical certificates hung on the opposite wall. In the corner there was a sink and, next to that, a box for used gloves and needles. On his right was an examination table that wasn't quite covered by a fresh paper sheet. To his left stood a small shelf on which all of last year's best magazines were stacked. He smiled.

*He was sixteen. It had been two years since that first night with Margery and two months since he had asked her to marry him. The news had come as sort of a surprise to his parents and Mr. Hughes but, after all, "Kids these days." She accepted his proposal. Their parents were pleased.*

*He had agreed to meet her that afternoon to go over and finalize a few last-minute wedding details. She was a waitress at the corner café so they decided to meet there. As usual, he arrived early. While waiting for her shift to end, he pulled out a well-worn notebook and began to leaf through the notes he'd made on a story he was trying to develop. He was engrossed in an especially tricky bit of character development when, from beside him, someone spoke.*

*"Excuse me." It was a young man's voice. "Is there a public telephone here?"*

*Without looking up, Elwood pointed to the back corner of the café. "There's a pay phone back there."*

*"Hey, thanks a lot." The young man walked away. Elwood looked up as Margery approached the table.*

*"Hey, Ellie," she said, "I just have a few more tables. Maybe another twenty minutes?"*

*"I can wait," he said smiling. She walked away and he returned to his notebook.*

*"Hey, thanks again," the young man had returned.*

*"Not a problem." He looked up at the stranger and was shocked to find himself face-to-face with one of the most beautiful men he had ever seen. In that instant, nothing made sense. In the blink of this stranger's eyes, he experienced every cliché that he avoided so desperately in his writing. He tore his eyes away from the young man's*

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*(why was it so difficult?) and sought out an anchor—a buoy to cling to—in this unexpected maelstrom. His eyes landed on Margery. If, at that moment, she had looked up and met his eyes... who knows? But, she was busy taking an order and, with that lack of reassurance, his life irrevocably changed.*

*“I’m Elwood,” he said; maybe a little too loudly, maybe a little too quickly. “Pin... uh, Pindergrast. Elwood Pindergrast.” What was happening to him?*

*“Elwood,” the stranger said, thoughtfully. “I like that. I’m Simon. Simon Rhodes.”*

*He smiled and they shook hands. For the second time in his life, Elwood Pindergrast had fallen in love.*

“Mr. Pindergrast?”

The doctor had entered to find Elwood slowly flipping through an old magazine. Underneath his paper robe, he was still fully dressed. Elwood looked up and smiled.

“That’s me,” he said.

“Elwood Pindergrast,” the doctor said. He seemed to be preoccupied. “You, uh, you write books right?”

“Well, right or wrong, I write them either way,” Elwood said, chuckling. The doctor laughed.

“It says here on your chart that you’ve been experiencing some slight dizziness and,” he looked back at the clipboard in his hand, “and some trembling in the right hand?”

“Yes. Well, the shaking has been in both hands the last couple weeks.”

“I see. And the nurse said that the woman who dropped you off mentioned something about numbness in your heels?”

“Yeah. It’s been kind of hard for me to get around the last few days because of it.”

“Are you experiencing any pain?” This was asked with a look of mild concern from the doctor.

“No. No pain. I just can’t feel my heels so it’s hard to walk.”

The doctor chewed his bottom lip as he made notes on the chart. When he finished, he looked up. His face was a mask devoid of reassurance. “Well, Mr. Pindergrast, I’d like to run a few tests...”

“What kind of tests?”

“Just some standard stuff. EEG, CT scan... just to get a good look at the ol’

---

noggin.” The doctor smiled but Elwood noticed that the smile didn’t quite reach his eyes; he was concerned about something.

“Sure, doc. Whatever you say,” he said, trying to sound casual but unable to hide the slight quivering in his chin.

“Great,” the doctor said, standing. “I’ll just need you to get fully undressed and we can get going.” He was about to leave the room when Elwood spoke up.

“I...” the doctor turned. “I... can’t do it. I can’t undress myself.” He lowered his eyes to the floor, his chin quivering noticeably now. The doctor smiled sadly.

“It’s okay, Mr. Pindergrast. Let me help.” The doctor helped him out of the wheelchair, removed the paper robe, and began to undress him. Elwood hoped that the other man wouldn’t see the tears welling up in his eyes.

*It was December 7, 1941. Elwood sat in stunned silence while reports of the attack poured out of the radio. The president was calling for a declaration of war. The world was spinning out of control. He was nearing his eighteenth birthday, was married to a woman whom he loved deeply, had a baby daughter whom he adored, and was in love with a young man named Simon Rhodes.*

*He had spent the last year struggling to maintain a balance. He believed that he was mostly successful in keeping his two lives separate. Simon, of course, knew that Elwood was newly married and a young father but loved him in spite of everything. Margery never found out about Simon, though sometimes, when coming home late at night, the silence from the other side of the bed was deeper than any sleep could possibly bring. These were the moments when Elwood was certain that she knew.*

*He closed his eyes as he listened to the news coverage. He thought of Margery. She was travelling with her father and the baby. He wondered if she was sitting across from a radio right now, listening to the same news report and thinking of him. He hoped she was... he feared she wasn’t.*

*There was a knock at the door and Simon walked in. His face was flushed; his clothes in disarray. He sat down in the chair next to Elwood and turned the volume up. He reeked of booze. He turned his eyes on Elwood.*

*“Can you believe this?” he asked. He was drunk. “Goddamn Japs. Fucking sneak attack. Well, I’m gonna give ‘em a taste of their own medicine. I’m enlisting.”*

*With those two words, the bottom seemed to fall out of Elwood’s world. He wanted to speak; to talk some sense into Simon; to make him see reason. All he managed was a weak, “What?”*

---

*"Signing up tomorrow," Simon drawled. His eyes, though unfocused, were fierce.*

*"Simon, no."*

*"No? What the hell do you mean no?"*

*"I mean you can't. This... this isn't our fight," Elwood said. He wasn't even convincing himself.*

*"This isn't our... they made it our fight! They attacked us!" Simon was shouting now. "Now they're gonna pay."*

*He leaned over to Elwood and kissed him hard on the mouth. The bitter taste of booze assaulted Elwood's tongue. Simon broke the kiss but kept his face very close to Elwood's.*

*"Come with me," he said.*

*"What do you mean?"*

*"Come with me. Sign up with me. We'll go kill some Japs together." Elwood felt trapped, as if something terribly important was looming on the horizon and the change that came with it would forever alter the lives of him and those he held most dear; as if the entire future of his happiness rested on the next words to come out of his mouth.*

*"I... can't," Simon pulled away and stood up. "I can't do it. I don't want you to do it either." Simon stood there silently, refusing to look at Elwood. He squared his shoulders and set his jaw.*

*"Simon?"*

*"Fuck you," he said. His voice was full of hatred. "Fuck you, Elwood." With that, he turned and began to walk away. Elwood stood up and grabbed his arm.*

*"Simon, please..." but whatever he meant to say was lost when Simon turned, grabbed him by the throat, and started to squeeze. In that moment, staring into Simon's eyes so full of hate, and gasping for breath as his windpipe was slowly being crushed, Elwood was certain that he was about to die. He was never sure what, exactly, made Simon stop but he was suddenly falling to the floor. Through clouded vision he watched as Simon left, slamming the door behind him. It was the last time he ever saw him.*

"Okay, Mr. Pindergrast," the technician said from the other room. "I need you to lie perfectly still. It's going to be very loud and claustrophobic but, as best you can, stay completely still." He felt himself being pulled into the tube and suddenly all other sounds were obliterated by the surging blasts of the machine that was scanning his brain. He closed his eyes.

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*It was 1948 and the Pindergrasts were expecting another baby. Little Trixie was seven years old and couldn't be happier to finally have a little brother.*

*"Or sister," Elwood said, laughing. His little girl already looked so much like her mother, from the dark blonde hair to the pale green eyes. She even had the same freckles that only appeared in the sun.*

*"No daddy," Trixie said matter-of-factly. "I want a baby brother." Elwood smiled down at her.*

*"We'll see what we can do." He looked up and met Margery's eyes. She was radiant. The last six years had been bliss. Elwood had started writing again. There were no more late nights. No more cold silences.*

*For a couple years after the war ended, Elwood tried to find out what happened to a young soldier named Simon Rhodes. He was unsuccessful. Deep down he was still fiercely in love with Simon Rhodes and he harbored a profound sadness whenever he thinks about that night they parted ways forever. He often thought fondly of Simon finding peace in the service and, upon coming back to the States, settling down with a nice family of his own. This was the fate he chose for his long-lost love. Though he would never gain true closure, he could finally end that chapter of his life.*

He had been sitting in the doctor's office for the better part of an hour awaiting the results of his scans. Having already flipped through the entire stack of ancient magazines, he had taken to humming tunelessly to himself. He stared at the clock on the wall, each second seeming to tick by slower than the last. When that became unbearable, he turned his gaze to the door. He was contemplating the reason for putting the doorknobs so incredibly high on doctors' doors when the one he was staring at turned and the doctor entered. He looked troubled.

*He had been pacing up and down the entire length of the waiting room for more than two hours. He was humming a song that none of the other people in the room could quite pick out when a stone-faced doctor appeared in the doorway.*

*"Mr. Pindergrast?"*

*Elwood stopped dead and looked up. Something was wrong. The baby... oh God, the baby.*

*"Yes?"*

*"Please come with me."*

*The doctor led him down a brightly-lit corridor and into a small office. He closed the door, motioned for Elwood to have a seat, and sat down across from him. There*

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*was a nurse in the office with them.*

*“Mr. Pindergrast, I’m afraid I have bad news,” the doctor said.*

“Mr. Pindergrast, I’m afraid I have bad news,” the doctor said.

“Margery,” Elwood said, his voice no more than a whisper.

“I’m sorry?” The doctor hadn’t quite heard him.

*Margery Hughes-Pindergrast died on January 10, 1949, giving birth to a healthy baby boy. Trixie had gotten her wish. A brand new baby brother: Simon David Pindergrast.*

A salty tear splashed against the paper robe covering Elwood’s legs. He gently shook his head and cleared his throat.

“What is it doctor?”

“Mr. Pindergrast, you have an intracranial solid neo....”

“Layman’s terms, doc,” Elwood interrupted.

“It’s a highly malignant brain tumor.”

*It was 1975 and Elwood Pindergrast was on a national tour promoting his most recent best seller. While sitting in his hotel room one night, he received a call from his daughter telling him that, after years of trying, she was finally going to have a baby. He was going to be a grandfather. He was fifty-one years old. He thought of Margery and how proud she would be. He thought of Simon.*

“You will continue to lose all motor functionality. It’s attacking you at an alarming rate, Mr. Pindergrast,” the doctor said. His voice was full of sympathy. Elwood smiled sadly.

*It was the summer of 1982 when the body of “Simon David Pindergrast, son of best-selling author Elwood Pindergrast” was discovered in his apartment. Reports stated that he had been stabbed during an altercation within the building and had died of massive blood loss while awaiting the arrival of paramedics. For reasons unknown, Elwood decided against attending his son’s funeral. The public was disgusted, his family was grateful.*

“At this stage, I’m sorry to say that it will be fatal,” the doctor said.



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“When?” Elwood asked. He was exhausted. He was ready to go home.

“Days. Weeks. At this point, it’s impossible to say with any kind of certainty. No more than a month.”

*It was 1995. Elwood Pindergrast, the eccentric recluse/bestselling author, received a phone call while working on what he hoped would be his greatest work to date. It was Trixie. She was so excited, she was almost hysterical.*

*“I’m a grandma!” she shouted into the phone. Elwood laughed out loud. He was beaming.*

*“The hell you say,” he teased. “I didn’t even know she was pregnant.” There was a short silence on the other end.*

*“Dad, I’m sorry,” she said. “I meant to call you, I did...”*

*“It’s okay honey. People get busy. You all have lives too.”*

*“I really am sorry dad,” she said. She sounded sad, distant.*

*“Great-grandpa Elwood,” he said. “I want you all to come stay with me for a while. It’s been too long.” Trixie agreed that it had, indeed, been too long. She promised to talk to her husband, to take some time off of work, to let her daughter know that “Grandpa Elwood” wanted to spend some time with the family. He knew it wouldn’t happen, of course. It was too hard to get people to put their lives on hold for an old man who “buries himself in his books.” Still, he hung up the phone and smiled. It was the last time he heard from his daughter. The next time he saw her, she was being buried between his wife and his son. But that night, the night he found out he was a great-grandpa, he went to sleep thinking of Margery and Simon.*

“I’m very sorry, Mr. Pindergrast,” the doctor continued.

“It’s okay son,” Elwood said. “Don’t worry about me.” He was still smiling.

“Is there anyone you would like us to contact? Any immediate family?”

*In 2006, Elwood’s granddaughter left her husband. She packed up the kids (two of them now) and moved to the same town in which Elwood lived. He treasured their weekly visits and made sure that they would never want of money.*

“No thank you,” Elwood replied. “I’ve got a granddaughter in town. I can call her and make all the necessary arrangements.”

*In 2011, on the day when they usually went to visit him, Elwood called his grand-*

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*daughter. He told her that he was feeling ill and thought it might be better if she and the kids didn't stop by after all.*

When Elwood returned home that night, he called his granddaughter again.

“Hi honey. Yes, I went to the doctor. Well, I think you and the kids should come over after all.” A tear rolled down his cheek. “No, just let yourselves in. I’ll be in my study.”

Elwood James Pindergrast died three days later. He was lying in bed, attended by his granddaughter, his great-granddaughter, and his great-grandson. His final thoughts were of Margery Hughes and Simon Rhodes. He was smiling when he went to sleep.

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RACHEL GRIDER

## Kicking

We live our lives like gypsies, running wild  
North by Northwest  
Defining our existence with a series of gestures—  
Reactions. Factions. “Ultra-Actions.”  
All moving faster than we can.

Fighting. Spitting. Grinning. Waving. Running away.

Blowing it.

Hitting the pavement,  
Wasting our time; “Trainspotting at Leith Central Station.”  
Choosing the wrong words and the wrong fights.

But this is a familiar bend in the road  
And we’re as shameless, defiant, and alive as we’ve ever been.  
We stand up, grinning, wiping the blood from our noses

Kicking again.

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MICHAEL RAUSER

## Rectangles

I dream of rectangles in a circular world  
A place where flags are proudly unfurled  
If you doubt me, and I'm sure that you do,  
Just remember that everything I say is true  
I believe in rainbows with a heart of gold  
At least that's the story that I was told  
Puppies and unicorns are not the same at all  
But you can still buy them both at your local mall  
I realize that words cannot describe my feelings  
But I also know that floors are just upside-down ceilings  
I think that I would sleep better some nights  
If only I could remember to turn out the lights  
Not that I'm usually forgetful, definitely not  
Now I had something to say, but I forgot

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KAYLEE JANGULA

# I Found Out Who My Father Was

*The following story is an excerpt from the author's memoir.*

WHEN I WAS IN COLLEGE, I happened upon an internet search that unlike all my other searches came up with an address for my biological father in Bismarck, North Dakota. This discovery seemed to have come by divine providence because my cousin was getting married in Bismarck that summer and I was going to be there. I made a plan; I was going to go confront my father at his house and my at-the-time boyfriend was going to go with me for support. But like many abusive partners, he made promises he wouldn't keep. We broke up right before the wedding. I was devastated and essentially homeless. Still, I went to the wedding with my family but decided I wasn't strong enough to confront my father on my own. During my cousin's father-daughter dance, the disappointment in myself and in my search for my father hit me hard and I went out to get some air. My mother followed me out and tried to comfort me, saying, "God will bring the right person to you in time." She thought I was crying because of my break up. "It's not that," I told her through broken tears. "I was going to go see my dad. I had his address and everything and I chickened out. I can't do it alone."

My mother then did something that shocked me more than anything she had ever done before. "I haven't heard anything about him living around here. I will ask some of my friends if they know where he is. I will help you if it's what you really want."

The very next week, while walking home from my first day of the new semester, I got a call from my mom saying that she had gotten ahold of her old friend Leslie, who Facebook emailed my birth-father's mother Deb. She wanted to warn me that I might be getting an email from Deb and that she may be able to get me in touch with my dad. I was elated and nervous at the same time. I nearly raced the rest of the way home to check my computer.

When I got home I didn't have an email from Deb, so I wrote a short email

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myself. Pleased and slightly exhausted from the emotional landslide of my afternoon I decided to take a short nap. My phone then rang.

It was a number I didn't recognize and normally I don't answer strange numbers that call my phone, but my hopes were running on high and my adrenaline was rushing at 300%. "Hello?"

"Hi, this is Todd Fairbanks." He paused, and my whole world took a giant shift. I had finally heard his voice. My life long search was over. There were so many questions I wanted to ask but I was so stunned that I could hardly speak. "I'm your dad."

"I know who you are." I was trembling. I couldn't sit any longer. I began pacing the house. My chin quivered and my eyes were on the verge of tears. This was the most important moment of my life.

We both started rambling and laughing nervously. He called me "honey" and told me how he had wanted to talk to me for my whole life. I couldn't believe it. All of my wishes had come true. He told me he loved me, and I said it back. As we said good bye I called him "Dad" and he told me he couldn't believe how good it felt to hear those words. As I hung up the phone I felt that I was going to jump out of my skin, like I wanted to run a marathon or climb Mount Everest. Nothing could describe the wonder I felt in that moment.

He called me that night and we talked for hours. We talked every day for several hours a day for many days. We learned how much we had in common, and laughed at all the silly quirks we shared even though we had never met.

Soon the hard questions started to come up. My mind kept wondering about the things my mom had told me years before: "your dad's a druggie," "he didn't want you," "he told me to get an abortion when he found out I was pregnant," and "if he wanted to find us he could have, my number was in the phone book for ten years under the same name." When I confronted him with these questions he always had an explanation or a mere denial. In my adoration for my new father I believed him with no argument. The one thing he didn't deny was the fact that he used to use a lot of hard drugs. He said he even tried meth once or twice. I then started to notice a pattern of him drinking while we were on the phone and being drunk by the end of our conversations. I was concerned about this, but not enough to say anything. He told me that he still smoked pot every once in a while and that he drank beer to help him unwind after work. I figured that this was okay because I did similar things now and then for fun. It was kind of cool to be able to talk about stuff like that without being ashamed

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like I would have been if I had been talking to my mom and step dad.

Todd and I continued talking all the time, and my friends started to think that our relationship was a little odd. But they figured I was just excited about the whole thing and was just trying to make up for lost time. I got in several fights with my family during this time, blindly supporting my father and completely losing my mind when someone said something negative about him.

About a month after we started talking, Todd took a trip to North Dakota to see me. His plan was to drive up, stay in Fargo for a few nights, go hunting with his friends past Bismarck, come back to Fargo and see me on his way out back to Texas. When he opened the hotel room door to meet me, I had to hold back my gasp of shock. This man that I had always pictured as young, vibrant, and handsome was gruesome and haggard. He was short and very, very, skinny. His skin was saggy and leathery, and he looked to be 60 or 70, not 40. His crooked, brown teeth were rotting out of his mouth and seemed to be hanging on by invisible thread. He was noticeably twitching, or “tweaking” as I would best describe it, and it was then that I realized the long term effects of his drug use. Not only had his appearance been drastically altered, I began to notice the slowness of his thoughts and the anti-social nature of his actions.

Nevertheless we talked all night.

The next day I went back to hang out with Todd at the hotel and I noticed that the 12-pack he had arrived with the night before was gone and that he had already made great strides into a second. He also went rummaging in his car for his “stash” and asked me to partake. We shared a small cigarette or two, but what I had at first thought was kind of cool started to really eat at me when I told my friends what I was doing. I could hear in their voices that it wasn’t right, and my conscience, which had been silent for most of this adventure, was now piping up as well.

He left to go hunting and told me not to worry if I didn’t hear from him for the next couple days because cell phone reception was bad out in the woods. I agreed, and wished him goodbye saying “see you on Sunday.”

Sunday came and I hadn’t heard from my dad. I called him in the afternoon and in the evening to find out when he was coming back. It was Monday and I called him several times, with no response. Tuesday came and Todd’s sister-in-law posted on Facebook that Todd was back and they were having a big dinner together. I was outraged. He had gone back to Texas without saying goodbye and without answering my phone calls. I was beyond pissed.

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I decided to give him a piece of his own medicine and refused to answer his phone calls or texts for about a week. Childish, I know, but he proved to be even more childish than me. He began leaving angry voicemails and berating me via text messages, telling me that I was an ungrateful and spoiled little bitch. I was firm and told him that he screwed up and that things weren't the same for me anymore. And they weren't. I told him that if he wanted to be in my life that he would have to start acting like a parent: be more responsible, get his drinking under control, and stop doing drugs. He spat in my face saying, "I'm a forty-year-old man; I'm not changing for you!" I told him then that that was his answer. He then proceeded to let profanities surround me like a tumultuous ocean, ready to pull me under.

Those joyous days of talking on the phone just a month earlier were all but a dream to me after that.

We never spoke happily again. From thence forward whenever we spoke it was in rude, abrasive language that got us nowhere. It didn't take long for us to stop talking completely aside from an occasional apologetic text message from him, which I rejected.

I took this time to apologize to my mother. I told her that she was right about him and that I wanted nothing to do with him. I also apologized to my step-dad Trent and told him that he was my real father. That he was the one who had been there for me when I needed him. That he was the one who I loved and wanted to be part of my life. I asked him to forgive me for all the times that I had said the words, "You are not my father," and hoped that he loved me as much as I needed him to.

Though it probably would have saved me a lot of heartache, I'm glad I found my father. I'm glad that I don't have to live my life wondering anymore. I no longer feel empty or incomplete because I realize that I had a dad when I needed one and that he would be there for me like a real parent should be. I will be glad to share my first real father-daughter dance with Trent at my wedding. And I am always glad to hear my son say "Dada" when he looks at my fiancé Graham. I can see in their eyes a bond stronger than any force can break and I am thankful that my son has a dad better than I could have ever wished for. I have learned from this experience what a good parent is, and what I do not want to be as a parent. I have also learned that being a dad isn't a matter of blood, but a matter of time, caring, and love.

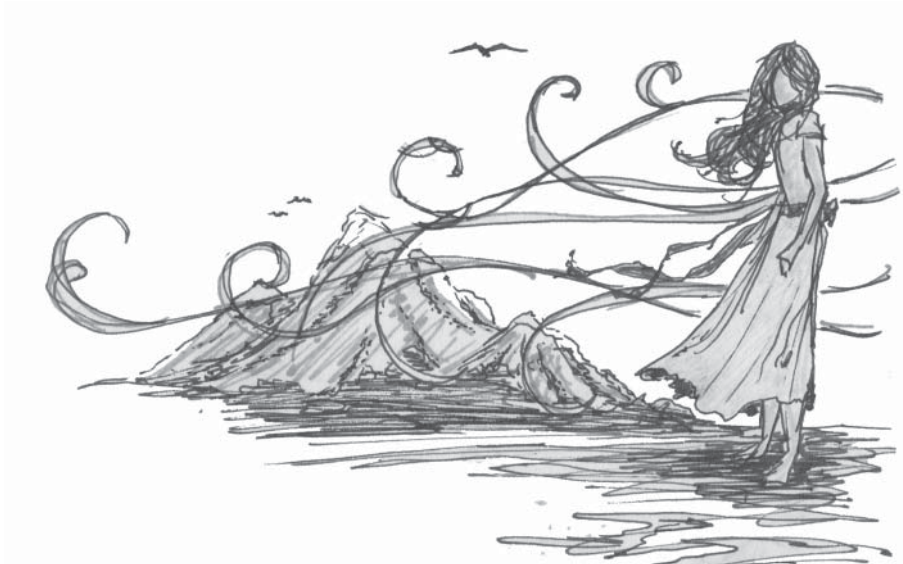


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## The Memory

After the long summer time, the wind blew from the west  
And then the rain dropped and soothed the low and dry land.  
The west wind blew and then the rain stopped  
Soon the Autumn comes.  
My dear Autumn stayed only one day with me;  
However, the fierce northern wind suddenly swept him away.  
Like the short night of Psyche and Cupid,  
And the long and lonely day of her,  
I spend the winter in boredom, depression  
The wind is blowing from the north.  
The harsh time will conquer my memory.

—NAYEON KIM



“Wind” by AMBER SUNDERMAN

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# Welcome to College:

## Six-Word Essays

College is making me too normal.

—GRACE PETERSON

I read fast, but remember nothing.

—MOHAMED ABDIRAHMAN

“Wanna go work out?”  
“Hell no.”

—BRIE MICHAELSON

One gains knowledge while losing imagination.

—NICHOLAS LEDOUX

Resolution.  
Questioning. Use reason. Conclusion. Feel better?

—PAIGE DOUGLAS

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DOMINIC J. MANTHEY

## Cool FM

“NOW DON’T TURN THAT DIAL because you know you won’t find cool like this anywhere else.”

The car speakers crackled with the buttery voice, as if the mellifluous noise brought the decibel level into some mystic level of friction—the heat of which came through in waves of muffled distortion, hitting the ears of the pilot, F. G. Ronaldo.

Ronaldo had been a taxi driver for the past three years, initiating himself into the practice as a young adult convinced it was just a temporary sanctuary before his professional life really began. As the years blinked past, Ronaldo found his age growing along with his gut, and the saturated memories of youth seemed to transform into thorny reminders of wasted dreams.

But there are enough stories about bitter occupationalists. And the hazards of their lives can be read and analyzed beyond the pages of a book. F. G. Ronaldo never felt himself succumb to the usually unsavory tides of memories and accompanying regret. In fact, one might very well imagine Ronaldo as a peculiarly content discontent. Certainly, no child from the “educated middle class”—that equally strange space which seems to be as ambiguous as its name—ever dreamed of being a taxi driver in a notoriously impolite urban area. But Ronaldo had his health, or at least three good quarters of it. And he even had a few romantic prospects, which served to keep his libido and overall energy at a good point—desirous, yet content to bask in its unfulfilled potentials.

But this story is not about Ronaldo’s endless dreams of potential, nor is it all about his libido. Rather, we find F.G. on a typical day—let’s call it a Wednesday—driving his yellow taxicab, picking up a called request. The order had come in about 72 hours prior:

“Hello, Yellow Taxi Cabs—‘If it aint fast then it aint us’—this is Ronaldo, how may I help you?”

“Yes, I’d like a ride to the hospital soon,” a mechanically rehearsed voice sound, with straining vocals that were either the result of the connection or years

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of smoking—likely both.

“Is it an emergency? Cuz you should call 911, lady.” Ronaldo still liked to call old women “lady” because it seemed to fuel his self-image as a young, prankish rascal.

“It is most certainly an emergency, but I do not need to call 911, young man,” the last part, obviously unrehearsed, exposed her character as the universally recognized “old shrew” type, or so Ronaldo figured.

Ronaldo smiled, “Feels good to be called a young man, old lady! Ha ha ha, well seeing as you don’t wanna call 911, how about you tell me where you are and I’ll come pick you up right now?”

“I live at 3209 Phosphate Avenue North,” she fell back into the warm embrace of her script.

“Lady lady lady, that’s fifteen miles outside of my district! Did you tell the secretary that address? She should have forwarded you to Rat, not me,” Ronaldo had a bit of disappointment in his voice.

“Rat? You call your friends ‘Rat’? And I requested someone from your district because that’s where the hospital is and I don’t want any mistakes on that end of the trip.”

“Ha ha, my friends call themselves ‘Rat.’ And okay, okay. It’ll cost you a bit extra, though. I’m heading over.” Ronaldo took a sharp U-turn, the cool jazz seemed to careen out of an audible register with the abrupt motion of the car, in some bizarre improvisational harmony with the blood in Ronaldo’s angled head.

“Well, I don’t need it now! I need it Wednesday at 2:00 pm!” the lady, obviously irritated from having to resolve so many deviations from her prepared request, hung up.

It was now Wednesday, 1:45 pm—Ronaldo had enough experience with older women to know they liked a gentleman to be appropriately early. What was it his mother used to say—“Early is on time, on time is late, and late is...” Something. It was certainly something undesirable. Ronaldo turned up the radio and waited for the lady to come down from her apartment complex—half-expecting to see a frail apparition of a nearly-deceased octogenarian.

“That last piece was a cool number by Wayman Tisdale called ‘Breaking the Beat to Keep My Feet.’ If you can feel that soothing breeze then you know you are listening to 99.7 FM, the home of cool, cool jazz.”

Ronaldo didn’t particularly like cool jazz. In fact, he found himself blissfully indifferent to it. The standard bass-hops that seemed to smile at the listener

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with their dumb complacency, the clean guitar that seemed to spasm in the most playful ways, all seemed to reflect an equal indifference to their viewers.

After ten minutes of eradicating even the most evasive hangnails, Ronaldo decided to call the lady from the taxicab phone. After six rings—Ronaldo didn't usually wait for the seventh—the lady croaked into the phone, sounding out of breath:

"Hello, Zebes' residence. Please help me. I've hurt myself." Oddly, this also had the ring of well-honed practice.

Nevertheless, Ronaldo was still young enough to feel a sense of heroic empathy, "Oh my god, what happened? What's your room number—I'll come get you!"

"I see you, son. I'm in the phone booth right across from your window," Ms. Z. said with an almost sardonic tone.

Ronaldo reeled his head around and jumped back in his seat with surprise. "Oh shit! What the hell are you doing, lady!? You're bleeding from the gut?" Ronaldo shoved the phone into his ear as he rolled the window down with pious urgency.

"I accidentally stabbed myself. It is an emergency. Open the car door for me."

Ronaldo, yelling into the phone and at the lady in real space, "Okay, just get the hell over here, lady. I gotta take you to the hospital!"

Ms. Z., with a certain restrained elegance, as though she were the guest of honor receiving her medal, walked over to the car and gently landed herself square on the seat, all with a grimace on her face that suggested she was holding in a hysterical laugh or cry, "Drive boy! To the hospital!"

Then she turned up the radio knob: "And don't forget we will be giving away our cool, cool prize after a few minutes if you are the tenth caller to recognize the mystery song played backwards. It's one gem we've already played today."

F.G., although definitely immersed emotionally and psychologically in the extreme situation of helping Ms. Z., found that he still had a little space available in him to entertain the fantasy of winning that "cool, cool, all-too-cool" prize.

Ms. Z., perhaps apprehending the partial loss of her audience, cooed, "Ooooooh, I'm never going to make it out of this car alive, sonny."

Ronaldo, as if on cue, snapped back to attention, "Lady, don't say that! No one wants to die in a taxicab! You'll die in the hospital with your family around!" Immediately realizing his misplaced focus, "I mean, you'll survive! You still have years and years to live! Don't worry, the human body is an amazing thing! Very

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adaptive and fixable. I saw this miniseries once about a guy who got electrocuted and all the tissue and cells and stuff slowly died and they had to gradually remove parts of this dude's face and body."

Ms. Z. looked horrified. "Oh my sweet Lord!" she said, her gloved hand perfectly snapping over her mouth in equal disgust and concern.

"Ha ha, no no no. He's still alive! That's what I'm saying! He's not dead yet, not at all. I mean, he looks disfigured and shit, but he's got a kid and wife and love and purpose. He's happy! It's really cool!"

Cool... "Now's your chance, here's that song backwards for ten seconds. Be the tenth caller and win that coolest of cool prize."

A perverted sounding montage blasted through the speakers. It sounded like a mix of sexually spastic moaning and demonic murmurings. Needless to say, Ms. Z. felt appalled and turned off the radio.

Ronaldo found himself sucked out of his dream of infinite luxury associated with that "cooler than the coolest" prize and back into the repulsive reality of Ms. Z., "Hey! I was listening to that!"

"Son, I have a self-inflicted wound, of which I am dying of. My heart is fragile enough as it is. I can't be listening to this base vulgarity of yours."

"Ms. Z., that's smooth jazz. It doesn't get any less vulgar than that!" Without realizing the sudden stop in traffic, Ms. Z. shouted and Ronaldo slammed on the breaks, causing the car to rhythmically sway left and right. Ms. Z. grabbed her ear suddenly and let out a profanity.

"Damn, you alright? Sorry about that, ha ha. That's what all that smooth stuff will do to you, I suppose." Ronaldo let out a cathartic sigh, realized no damage was done, and turned the radio up a bit. All that could be heard was a peculiar militaristic shouting that seemed muffled. Along with an intoxicated shouting of orders.

"What the hell!" F.G. changed turned the dial, each station stranger than the last:

- Change the BREAKER! You—
- Replace----Not in the anterior compart—
- REMOVE! REMOVE!.....come in/come in/come in....
- Sir----mounted----peaceful citi—

Ronaldo contracted into an incredulous grin and looked over at Ms. Z., her face in a bizarre contortion of non-verbal signs, none of which F.G. could interpret coherently. "Sorry, I'll just turn it off, ha ha."

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Suddenly a deafening ring emitted from Ms. Z's ear. The machine-like quality of it seared through Ronaldo's head, ingratiating itself like a splinter. Ronaldo felt the car dive in some direction and then as if it was suspended in the air, with everything pristinely still, even Ms. Z. seemed to be in a state of meditative reverence. That was the end of the car ride.

Ronaldo's eyes cracked open into the cool gaze of a man shrouded in white. He was lying in a bed that was positioned in a nearly ninety degree angle so that he was already square-faced with a doctor.

The doctor looked down at his clipboard, his tongue pushing on the inside of his mouth with playful indifference, "Francine Greta Ronaldo?"

Ronaldo winced, still without examining his own body, and shook his head, with a stronger than expected voice, "No."

The doctor looked reproachful, reexamining his board severely, and then settling back with his nonchalance, "Oh, Frederick George Ronaldo. You've been in a serious vehicular incident that resulted in the death of a Ms. Helen Annette Zebes. She died at the 1400 hour this afternoon of cardiac arrest and complications due to a self-inflicted stomach wound."

Ronaldo looked distraught, both for his car and for Ms. Z., unable to articulate anything. The doctor continued, "You suffered severe head trauma that resulted in a temporary cooling of your body heat and neurological activity in both your frontal lobe and the parietal anterior neuroganglia complex. Does that all make sense?"

"Fuck," Ronaldo spurted—there were enough syllables to distress him. The doctor looked up at him irritably, and then seemed to be reminded of his shared space with the boy, "Oh ha ha, you're fine. You're going to be just fine. No permanent damage. You know, the brain is a very adaptable organ, fit for nearly any situation. Your family is waiting for you outside."

Ronaldo, as if a cripple bestowed with the miraculous gift of motion, stood up, nodded dumbly at the doctor, and walked outside the room. His mother ran and embraced him, tears in her eyes, "Oh my goodness, Freddie! The doctor said the old lady died! We were so worried about you! How's your head?"

Without really thinking, Ronaldo replied, "Fine—so what the hell happened?"

His mother, looking suspiciously to her left, "Well, there's an officer here to speak with you. I suppose it's just standard-issue police protocol. I asked if it

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could wait until you were home, but apparently it's urgent. Doesn't make sense to me..."

As if on cue, the police officer stepped into the intimate embrace, nodded to Freddie's mother, and guided him into a mundane corner of the waiting room.

"Son, are you okay? You were in quite an accident the other day. Many people are critically injured. The police report is still being written up. We've had to hire extra people just to help write the damn report. There are several key issues we wish to ask you, son. Did you have any idea that there was a serious infraction of national security in your car? Does this make any sense?"

Ronaldo, as if slapped across the face, shook his head, "Officer, I have no idea what the hell—excuse my language—happened."

"Son, I don't know what the hell—excuse my language—happened either. But there was an illegal communicative device found embedded in your car, of which connected to the victim's—if you don't mind me going so far as to call her that—ear. What's this all about?"

"A what?" Ronaldo found his mind unexplainably going to the fantasy space of the Cool FM prize... *I wonder what it was...*

The officer shoved his bottom lip impetuously over his upper lip, biting the inside of his mouth. "You're obviously not understanding the gravity of the situation. You'll have to come with me and talk to Agent Johnson." Grabbing Ronaldo by the shoulder, the officer led him through a dizzying set of turns until all the surroundings were unidentifiable as even a hospital. "Wait here." Ronaldo was in an austere white room with a single light bulb and a large mirror on one wall.

Five seconds after the door closed, it opened quietly and an agile man in his sixties entered. "Friedrich Ronald? I'm Agent Cooper. Three weeks ago you were involved in a plane crash with a woman named Ms. Z. That was me undercover as an elderly woman hoping to gain intel on a yet-to-be-discovered—I'm sorry, 'yet-to-be-disclosed' covert operation."

Ronaldo took a step back. "Wait, wait, wait. I wasn't in a plane crash! I was just in a car crash!"

"Are you or are you not Friedrich Jorge Ronald?"

"No! I'm Frederick George Ronaldo!"

"Oh, I see what's happened here. Don't move and do NOT, under any circumstances, answer any questions, okay?!" Agent Cooper sped out of the room with an unusually effeminate gait. No sooner had the door closed when Agent



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Cooper walked back in, “Hello, Frederick Ronaldo, I’m Agent Kemp. There’s been a serious breach of national security that has inadvertently engaged us in an arms race with a very unforgiving Serbian paramilitary group. Are you prepared to give your consent to testify as a witness in the murder of Agent Cooper?”

“No! Look, I have no idea what the hell is going on.” Ronaldo felt like crying or laughing. “Aren’t you Agent Cooper?!”

Agent Kemp squinted, looked around, then whispered solicitously, “Psst. Hey kid, I told you not to answer any of their questions. Stop being a pussy.”

Ronaldo coiled back, pressing his brow down to simultaneously communicate anger and confusion.

Agent Kemp continued, “There’s no time. Wait right here and we’ll bring the judge.”

Ronaldo ran to the opposite wall the moment the door closed. He noticed a hatch in the corner that had been emitting a faint ring. Needless to say he was frightened, but Ronaldo felt like he’d lived this same scenario once before in a video game... Yet couldn’t quite remember how it ended.

Suddenly, a loud speaker from no conceivable place barked: “Open the hatch! Follow the cool, cool, all-too-cool trail.”

Ronaldo found himself laughing at the absurdity yet following the order. The hatch began with a ladder that Ronaldo began to lower himself down when Agent Kemp walked back in, “What the fuck are you doing?! You’re leaving? This is going to reflect terribly on me! The judge will think I’m a dunce! Must you really go?”

The question seemed to implicate the whole action: why on earth was half of Ronaldo’s torso down a hatch of which led to nowhere he could guess. With a kind of peevish smile, as if the only thing he could muster—as if the only appropriate response—Ronaldo said, “What else should I do?”

Agent Kemp, with an air of wistful respect, said, “I understand, Sir. It’s been a strange sort of honor working with you.”

Halfway down the hatch, Ronaldo heard an alarm go off overhead. There was a strange kind of churning noise coming from the bottom of Ronaldo’s bare feet. As he finally reached the end, the alarm-ring seemed to fuse into a bizarre medley of... of... cool jazz?

There was a large, dreadlocked man slapping a bass guitar under an assortment of multi-colored tiki lights, and a spandex-ed man buzzing notes out of a synthesizer. It was as if Ronaldo walked onto the set of a porno, yet, to be fair,

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one with above-average music production.

“Greetings!” blared a jovial voice, full of mirth and mystery. “Are you confused, yet? Ol’ Ronny boy? Hmmm? Quite the maze of strange happenings going on? Never thought your life would get this exciting, did you? Almost like a dream? But I assure you, it isn’t.”

Ronaldo recognized the voice as that of the cool jazz DJ, yet now in a more uninhibited state of mock-ceremoniousness, “Where the hell am I?”

The DJ, with blonde or white hair, shouted from a balcony: “You, good sir, have found yourself at the heart of the Solar Unilateral Pacific Anti-Fascist Resistance. We like to go by S.U.P.A.R.—not to be confused with S.U.B.P.A.R.” [a drum and cymbal signaled the humor of the statement]. We try to harness the intoxicating power of jazz, which seems so innocuous, and imbed a lethal set of sound emissions, which are inaudible to the human ear, yet penetrate into the subconscious and support our counter-revolutionary goals. It sounds easy, but I assure you, it’s a lot of work.”

Ronaldo was confused and simply without any way of genuinely understanding the information. None of it made sense. Life wasn’t supposed to be this ridiculous. Certainly, it was possible, but why on earth, even given a near infinite amount of time, would a permutation of happenings this strange, this unabashedly uncouth, happen? And to a young, middle-class taxicab driver named Frederick? *Surely, however this was going to end, it must be equally strange and fantastical...* Frederick thought to himself.

Ronaldo asked, with a slightly exaggerated dose of enthusiasm, “What do you want me to do?”

“Well, Ronald, we have a special task for you. You see, you are the only one who has grown immune to the sound-waves—must have been from so much listening coupled with so little mental activity going on. You somehow—miraculously, really—found that sweet spot of cognition where you are just alive enough to register the noise, yet nearly dead enough to not compartmentalize it in any meaningful way... .Apparently, that’s the only way to grown an immunity to it. You’re a national hero, old boy! I’m just not sure for which nation!” [BA-DUM-CH went the drums again.] “Ha ha ha. We have people training for years in incubators trying to get where you’ve gotten, none of which have succeeded.”

Despite the obviously backhanded compliment, Ronaldo continued to push the situation to its climax. “So, what am I supposed to do?”

“Well, this is going to sound weird,” suddenly there was a frenzy of me-

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chanical noise in the back, as if someone was banging unrelated tools together, “but you have to give your life for ‘The Cause.’ You see, by stepping into our Cool FM Jazz Distiller, you will become immaterial and able to navigate to the heart of our fascist enemies through the guidance of our noise support. It’s all very complicated and abstract, but just trust me. It will make all of this ‘everyday nonsense’ finally make sense. You’ll be part of something greater by sacrificing yourself! This is the shit dreams are made of... or something like that!” [the drums and cymbals laughed again, this time with a special kind of manic-ness].

Ronaldo, usually of a mild manner, felt a spark of courage under his belly unite. Perhaps it was the head trauma, or the intimidating agents, or perhaps the jazz itself, but he felt compelled to try, although he was naturally somewhat skeptical.

The machine was placed before him, buzzing underneath a canvas covering held up by what Ronaldo assumed were four pillars.

“Just step on in... There’s only one thing... You have to believe it will work with all your heart. I know what you’re thinking: it sounds kitsch, and I’ll be square with ya—our machines aren’t very good at picking up this kind of data, but there’s some qualitative element required. It’s the only way it’ll work.”

Ronaldo, in a burst of frenzy, as if compelled from another world—as if some alien sermon had moved his will—ran into and through the canvas, with the fervor of a devout and desperate man with too many theories and no answers in his head.

The state that overcame him defies words. One might say it is defined by its very indefinability. The remaining fragments of Ronaldo’s mind bounced off of each other. The Ultima and Omega of Cool Prizes. Ms. Z. Her strawberry-red blood. The macabre corridors. Even the wallpaper seemed to strike upon his other immaterial thoughts, as if some absolute, yet fundamentally unknowable relation defined it all. Now Ronaldo was in a suspended place where he could think about it all. Relate them all. In any assortment. Play out the infinite relations of his mind and its contents. Here, he could bask in the unmediated indifference of thought. He had finally become thought. The fibers of life, the tendrils of cognition, had become beyond-palpable. They were now his sole existence. His mother. His taxicab. All rendered meaningful and meaningless. Augmented with the hopes of anti-fascism and fascism and medicine and psychiatry and ideology and any and all mundane hopes that could impinge upon a

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man's mind. Yes, he was at last a free man.

“Now don't turn that dial because you know you won't find cool like this anywhere else.” Ronaldo laughed to himself—the water on his face was imperceptible in the darkness.

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LINNEA ROSE NELSON

## Winter, Sushi, This

North Dakota is made of sleet today.  
We are the only ones in this restaurant.

Over miso soup and yellowtail we talk  
about French films  
and outside our blurred window the earth is  
in a state of depression.  
You mention childhood as ice water  
clinks in the hands of near-by waiters—  
a reminder that much has changed  
and much, of course, is changing even as I  
unfold the napkin, the brand new silverware, and comment  
on your quietly familiar shirt.

The weather worsens, and piece  
by piece the day goes away from us like this:  
you drinking your sake and me trying the ginger,  
as I always do and always wish I hadn't.

And gradually we become aware that there are still  
many things to be done—many things to say to other people and  
things we have to learn before tomorrow that weigh much more than  
all the February snow we slid through to get here;  
and we will be driving away from this restaurant before very long  
with Patsy Cline singing “She’s Got You”  
to the vast winter sunset,

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so for now it is all right not to have had enough to time  
to say everything that would have been funny  
and even not to have been able to remember  
everything that was important.

Because you will always be my brother and  
I think there will always be more time.  
You are such a good brother.

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DELANEY FREER

# Fargo Frost



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CHAMANTHI WEERATUNGA

# Nonperishable Choices







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TATJANA SCHELL

## A Mother's Funeral



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TATJANA SCHELL

## A Nice Summer Morning

Put the white cloth up—  
The cover for innocence.  
How far did they go?  
How big was the toll?

A slender sleek wrist  
Rests on the freshly carved wood.  
Young fingers surpressed in sorrow.  
A hadkerchief. Scrambled.  
A sleek golden watch. Shining.

And is it always like this that when someone dies,  
Someone else gives life to a child?

To carry a tragedy in your eyes is lethal.  
It gets down on you. Down!  
Push down and creap!

Oh, why is it her?  
Why now? Why today?  
A nice summer morning.

The room is filled with ears  
But no one hears.  
And no-one will notice  
A grip of her slender arm  
Around her belly.  
Oh, why is it her?  
Why now? Why here?

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Slice of Life:

Six-Word Essays

Too fast. Too furious. Brick Wall.

—CORRIE DUNSHEE

Patches. She slept on my face.

—CELENA TODORO

I AM MORE THAN SIX WORDS.

—RACHEL GRIDER

Be wild while no one's watching.

—ANUSHI WEERASINGHE

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ANDREW YOUNG

## The Problem with Redheads

### A Social Satire

A GROWING THREAT IN TODAY'S SOCIETY has recently come to my attention. It is a threat that demands immediate attention in order for its problematic effects to be overcome. It is a concern and threat I believe is relevant to anyone wishing to preserve our country's moral superiority and our country's "family values." I am referring, of course, to komeruality (Greek words *komē* 'hair', *erysi-*, *erythros* 'red') and the dangers it is posing to our peaceful, morally-pure society.

Komeruals, known more commonly to the public as 'redheads' or 'gingers,' should be clear to anyone with moderate intelligence, are abominations against human nature. Komeruals and pro-komerual advocates are claiming komeruality is an inborn characteristic; that they are essentially "born this way." They are backing up their claims by citing research which states that up to 20% of the general public have either been born with red hair or have at least had the desire for a komerual experience. This, of course, is ridiculous. No one is actually born with red hair; having red hair is a choice a person makes. Redheads have just as much a choice to be red-headed as I have between choosing white or wheat bread at Subway—although, of course, I would always choose white bread since it is, without a doubt, the superior choice of the two. Just as it would be ridiculous for someone to naturally prefer wheat bread to white, it is unimaginable someone would naturally be born with red hair.

Further, scientists are maintaining, without exception or debate, that komeruality is "not a mental disorder" and is something that is a "normal human orientation." They explain that, most of all, it is not a choice. These scientists are clearly a by-product of our country's recently seen movement of radical liberalism and the media's positive portrayal of celebrity redheads such as Reba McEntire, Kathy Griffin and *Glee*'s Jayma Mays.

Komeruals and pro-komerual advocates have asked me, "Andrew—tell us how komeruals are harmful to society?" Well, is that even a question? I think the question is better stated, "How are komeruals not dangerous to society?"

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Imagine if our entire world were to become komerusal. Our world itself would be a giant sphere of sin. Further, if the rumors that komerusials are sterile is true the human race as we know it would end! I can think of nothing more harmful to society. Clearly komerusal behavior must be discouraged.

I would also like to lend my advice to anyone, specifically teens who are questioning their hair-colored orientation. Please realize you would not actually have to be komerusal if you were to experience life as a non-redheaded person. If you simply take the chance to not be red-headed, you will realize you are not red-headed.

In the end, what is important? As citizens of this nation, as students, as parents and as friends we want what is best for siblings, friends and our children. We want them to live a life in which they can be the person they were meant to be, free of the judgment of others and free from the fear inside of what would happen if their closest friends and family would not accept them for who they really are. It is important that we show others we love and appreciate them for who they are and not for who we think they should be. Unfortunately, the first step to doing this is unmasking the myth of “redheadedness” and showing the confused that we outsiders really do know what’s best for them. In the end, what else is love but telling someone exactly what they need to become in order for you to love them? Love, of course, is unconditional...assuming the one you love is not a ginger. Once this komerusiality phase has died, then, may we all love each other and live happy, morally acceptable lives and the “family values” our country is so commonly referred to as having.

As a concluding note, I wish to say I actually have no problem whatsoever with “redheads” and am proud to count a number of them among my very best of friends. I also wish to point out, to the ignorant, the highly sarcastic quality of this submission—further, for those of you who understand this article and are saying to yourselves, “It’s not the same!”; to you I respond, “But isn’t it?” I could pretty easily argue that libraries aren’t really necessary anymore, but I would never want to. I have a secret. I love libraries. I think I was the only kid in my class who still knew where my county library card was. I believe libraries are overlooked. Because there are faster, more efficient ways to find information, read books, and do everything else that can be done at a library, they are forgotten, along with so many other things. People see a library as a building full of usually boring books, and they forget everything else about them; they forget the great things about them.

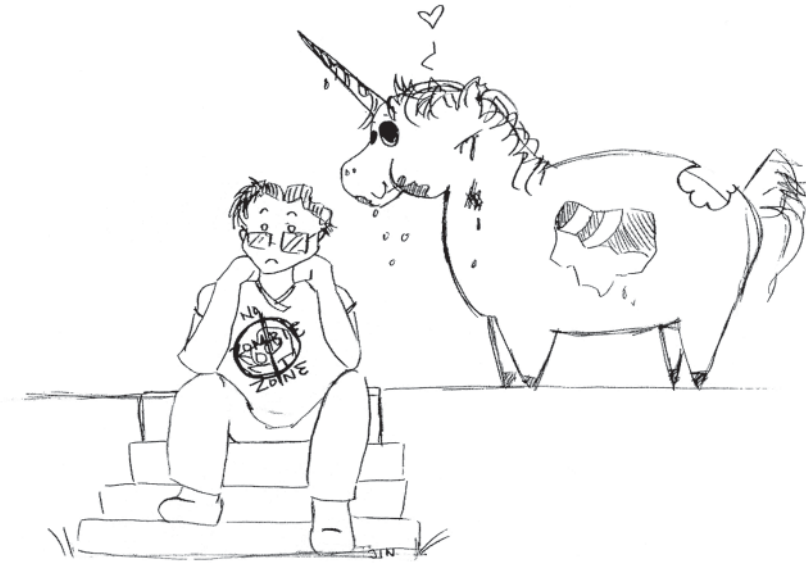
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## Libraries

MY FAVORITE TIME to go to the library is in the summer, when the weather is hot and humid and perfect for being inside for a bit. When I walk into the library, I feel the blast of cold air, and it gives me chills. As soon as the doors close all the way, you can feel the world change; cars don't exist, people wait to be angry until they can raise their voices, nothing exciting happens unless a book is out of order. Usually, though, I don't think the books get too disheveled. They stay where they belong. There is an unspoken sense of respect when people are in a library. No one wants to be the one who breaks the comfortable silence and receives a glare from any of the surrounding people. No one wants to be disturbed, and they realize that everyone there feels the same. We're there for the same reason.

When people go to libraries, they are looking for solitude. Conversations aren't often started in libraries. They're one of the only places where I feel okay not saying hello and smiling to everyone I see. No one cares if you want to sit and read or look at different books; they're there to do the same. Everyone needs silence. My brain works differently when I am at the library. It is me, the books, my thoughts, and the silence.

—STEPHANIE ANDERSON



*Jacinta Thieschafer / NE Staff*

Unicorn eating my brains—a zombicorn?

—ELLI LEACH



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HOUDA ABDELRAHMAN

## Rewind Park

ABOUT A YEAR AGO, Caroline stopped buying new things due to a sudden shock in her life. When she finally recovered, she refused to think about it and ignored reality to the point that she continues her life as if that tragedy never happened. Sometimes, she wets her eyes with tears and tries to accept the truth, but she gets such as an atrocious headache so she just ignores it. Caroline is content this way, because ignoring is easier than mourning. She takes comfort in continuing her daily agenda of housekeeping and cooking. Each time she flips the calendar to a new month, she treasures the new start.

Caroline has never had a job, although she attended college for four arduous, costly years. She pretentiously boasts about her college education and her outstanding performance as a student, proudly producing a dusty, *bona fide* diploma from her attic to prove it. She hastily explains to her daughters that, in her day, college was an institution where girls who were above housewifery went to snag a smart husband for whom they could become housewives. Caroline clarifies that a woman was expected to be educated and well-bred but the ultimate duty resided at home. The diploma is useless in practical terms but the husband is, in Caroline's eyes, definitely worth it.

Hanging high on the bedroom wall across from her bed is her husband's military photograph. Caroline tenderly dusts the shiny frame every morning, and pauses to admire it. His stern eyes aggressively hover in their sockets like a war chief mentally preparing for battle. Although Caroline has memorized every detail of his portrait, this morning she is startled to detect a begging intensity on his face. The defiant cliffs of his cheeks have settled into a sad plateau and his lips nearly pout. Fine wrinkles crunch his tall, handsome forehead. Caroline unconsciously copies the portrait's fear with equal sympathy on her own face. Her experienced-wife's instinct indicates to her that something is awry. She glances at the calendar on her night stand, and then at the ticking clock. She leaps in surprise and stares at the photograph. It is Wednesday, 11:30 am. How could have she forgotten?

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Her husband leaves work every Wednesday for his lunch break and enjoys a picnic with her at Rewind Park. They meet on a special bench hidden behind brilliant foliage, where the trickling waters of the nearby stream mute the park's everyday commotion. In winter, the stream freezes and the trees become bare skeletons on plains of pure white snow but the place remains dear and warm. Established by their personal tradition, she wears a blue velvet hat with two finches, one bright red and the other plain tan. The hat was a gift from her husband. *Two finches*, Caroline cozily thinks. *One for me, one for him*.

Realizing she should hurry, Caroline rushes toward her closet to choose an outfit. She pauses at the only window in the room to glance outside. Gloomy masses of clouds raced across the grey sky. It is late March, but not a single green bud dares to burst the winter shroud. Suddenly, a vibrant male finch flies in and lands on a tree branch only inches from the window. He puffs his scarlet breast, and proudly twitters. A female friend arrives and they both depart together. Caroline smugly imagines that her husband is waiting for her the same way.

Even after more than half a century of marriage, Caroline still spends hours in front of the mirror for him. *What to wear? What to wear?* She panics, hastily pushing decades of dresses and skirts aside in her closet. Caroline wants to wear something feminine and sweet, yet enduring. Her eyes flicker toward the left end of the closet, but she abhors from the ridiculous ruffles. *Today is no occasion for denim*, she thinks, glancing at the neat rows of pressed bottoms and tops. She bites her lip, and wonders if the fashion has changed much in the past year.

*No grey, black, or brown*, Caroline decides. She braves a bright turquoise dress with pink rhinestones running down the front. Her old lipstick tube is expired but she does not care. She swipes it across her thin, wrinkled lips, ignoring the red stains on her teeth. She softens her wrinkles with a foundation until her face is an oily mask. On her drooping ear lobes she hangs large frog emerald earrings. Her long, white hair is swept into a sagging bun and topped with a bold bow. The finch hat fits her skull perfectly. Glancing in the mirror, she feels particularly sunny and that boosts her confidence.

She crookedly draws in her eyebrows and sticks a grotesque brooch on her collar. Satisfied, she waltzes to the kitchen to prepare a picnic. Caroline packs hefty portions of cold turkey, sliced cheese, and a pasta salad. She doesn't forget to bring floss, knowing he appreciates small details. It rained the night before and puddles are everywhere, so she opts for yellow rain boots instead of heels.

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Caroline excitedly bursts from her house, inhales a large volume of the morning air, and releases it in one enormous breath. She secretly imagines herself as a brave general or explorer. Caroline treks across long sidewalks and busy streets. She climbs rocky hills and leaves her footprint in the mud. She is Caroline Bonaparte, conquering parks as if they were nations.

Rewind Park greets her like a beloved queen. When she marches by, the musicians swing their heads in her direction and enthusiastically blow into their saxophones. Their fingers press keys with mad speed. She throws money into their open hats. Pigeons flock around her for food and she tosses them seeds like a millionaire tossing gold coins. Children sprawled in sandboxes fight over a yellow pail. Parents gently push frightened toddlers on swings. Skaters whizz by and cheerfully wave. Caroline graciously returns their greetings. A noisy pooch runs loose with no owner restraining the leash. It dives for her yellow boots, ripping them in its ugly jaw. Caroline kicks the dog in its miserable face and shoots its owner, who runs closely behind and yells a stream of apologies, a nasty look. A flower girl squirms between couples and tickles their noses with pink roses. Caroline calls her over and buys two. Taking her seat, she sets the basket by her side on the bench, anxiously clutches her hands in her lap, and waits.

Caroline twists her neck left and right each time she recognizes his face bobbing up and down among the masses of men. She nervously bites her lips and sits on the very edge of the bench. *Where is he?* Her fingers impatiently drum against her cheeks and she blankly stares at the trees, half expecting him to step out from behind one of them with a blooming bouquet behind his back.

A young couple skips on the park's path. The boy's broad hand lightly holds the girl's small fingers. In their free hands, they each hold a melting ice cream cone that trickles down their skin but they don't care. They merrily bounce into the bench directly behind Caroline and musically laugh. Caroline casually leans back to hear the next installment of their story. Their relationship started about a year ago, when Caroline first noticed. They come to the park every Wednesday and sit behind Caroline's bench. Caroline admires everything about them. Their young builds, white teeth, and smooth, soft faces are so pleasing to look at.

"What a beautiful ring, Heath!" the girl happily shrieks. "I'm almost afraid to wear it to work. None of the girls there are engaged, you know, and they're all so jealous of me. I suppose they should be jealous, shouldn't they?" Her tone is proud, grazing a smug nastiness. Caroline does not like her. Each time she comes to the park she only ravenously gossips while Heath dumbly agrees to

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disgusting tidbits of rumors about people he doesn't know. He only mutters appeasing words and attempts to channel the conversation into a different direction, but she successfully steers any *tête-à-tête* into gossip. Caroline secretly thinks Heath deserves a better spouse.

"Show me your finger, Rhea," Heath says.

"Heath, that old lady sitting behind us annoys me so much!" chirps Rhea. Caroline stiffens, and resists the urge to whip her head around and smack the girl with her basket. She smirks. How rude! Caroline leans back until the rim of her finch hat grazes Heath's hair. She wants to hear what Rhea has to say about her.

"But she has never said a word to you," murmurs the amorous Heath, too occupied with his fiancée's finger to notice her rude remarks.

"She dresses up like an old clown, and pretends some man is coming to see her. She used to shoo away every one that came to sit on the bench with the excuse that her husband is coming."

"Maybe he is coming."

"Coming from where? The dead? Ha!" Rhea sarcastically yells. "He died a year ago. I read it in the paper. He was a popular chemistry teacher at my high school. She just doesn't want to face the fact that he's dead, I guess. I suppose it makes her feel good to pretend that she's going to meet him here. Well, he's not. She ought to just go home and stay there! Her family should put her in a nursing home. She's like a big kid!"

Caroline lurches forward and grips the rough wooden edge of the bench. She heavily pants and feels sweat pooling underneath her armpits. Her forehead burns with a harrowing sensation like her skull is shattered. Tears blur her vision and she sees the dead grass around her blend with the darkening sky. Caroline hears her heartbeat, and thinks it is too loud. The wind smacks her cold ears and the conversation is too harsh. Her hands fly to cover her ears but she can still hear them.

"Oh, Rhea! Stop it," Heath warmly laughs and suddenly becomes serious. He swallows and whispers, "Will you come to the park and wait for me like a lunatic when I die? Or will you find another rich man to marry?"

Rhea grows silent, almost as if she is seriously considering the possibilities. Surprised at the struggle to answer his question, Heath urges her.

"Well?" he slowly asks. Caroline pictures the fear fogging his eyes and she imagines him searching for truth on Rhea's stunned, fake face. Rhea suddenly

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hiccups.

Her glassy laugh breaks the awkward hiatus in their conversation. After a moment, Heath joins in with a nervous, deep rumble. Their laughter clashes like violins in discord. Rhea coughs.

“Oh, Heath! I’m already a lunatic! I’m crazy in love with you!” she diverts the question and giggles. Heath clears his throat and Rhea tensely laughs. Caroline hears them eagerly lick their ice cream, relieved to find something to do with their tongues other than talking.

Thunder rumbles in the distance and lightning flames in the gray sky. Slow droplets of rain break on the sidewalks. A deluge of water follows. People duck under damp newspapers and bright umbrellas as they quickly flee. Caroline rises and the young couple swerves their heads. She sharply clears her throat, ferociously eyes Rhea, and theatrically stomps away.

The rain smears her footsteps. Big puddles on the wet asphalt mirror the grey clouds. Caroline can’t tell the difference between the grey sky and the drab, gloomy earth. She feels trapped between the two. Half way home, she realizes she left the food basket and roses at the park. Exasperated, she sighs and hangs her head. Her wet clothing clings to her like humiliation. The wind slaps her face and chills her tears. She rubs her cold arms, and marches straight home. Caroline has no intention of ever returning to the park. She is Caroline Bonaparte, defeated at Waterloo.

When she arrives home, she trudges up her stairs and enters her lonely room. Caroline stands in front of her mirror and sees a depressed clown. Her make-up has vertically melted down her sagging cheeks. Her deep wrinkles dip down to her bones like ancient valleys. Caroline now notices how ridiculous the bright dress is. The entire ensemble is mismatched, exactly as the rude girl had announced! Caroline snuffles, and loudly moans. She looks like a stick of bones with the features of a woman sloppily slapped on. *And the frog earrings*, she wails! They’re *hideous!*

Suddenly, she hears a poignant, mournful shriek from outside. Concerned and curious, she rushes to the window and gasps when she sees the dead, wet finch crunched into a stiff ball on the windowsill. A tan, round bird uncontrollably bounces on the twig near her window. Caroline slowly looks up. It is the female finch from earlier this morning. She feels a thin string tie her heart to the finch. She rests her hand on her cheek, and watches the finch mourn her mate. Caroline lends the frail bird a bony hand. Terrified, the finch

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flies off, her noisy screams fading into the storm.

She unconsciously reaches for the finches on her own hat. Caroline abruptly gasps. The male finch is gone, and in its place is a smooth crater. She immediately thinks to venture out in the rain, trace her steps back to the park, and retrieve the finch, but something prevents her. Turning away from the window, an electric shiver jolts through her spine. She meets her husband's eyes in the portrait.

Caroline buries her head in her two cold, cupped hands, and erupts into tears. Her gossamer body shudders, not so much from the chilly air, but from the vast loneliness that encompasses her. She now remembers what happened about a year ago and this time, she cannot ignore it. Caroline dizzily faints on her bed and squeezes a soft pillow to her aching chest. After a few minutes, she rubs her blurry eyes dry from the stinging tears. Caroline sits up and tenderly pats the linen on her husband's empty half of the bed with her flat palm. She lets her fingers linger on the white fabric. She closes her eyes, and draws in her breath.

When she bravely glances up to whisper a prayer, Caroline clearly notices that the ceiling is a perfect creamy white, just like the sweet frosting on a wedding cake she only tasted once.

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KATHERINE THORESON

## On Seeing Headlights in the Corner of My Eye

All of my friends are deceased  
And I can't be displeased  
Because I'd feel weak  
If I took it hard  
Because I've come too far  
To make it hard  
On myself like this  
When I wake up  
Differently  
Every  
Day  
And always go to bed  
Knowing I've died  
A few times.

All of them are deceased,  
Just like me,  
And I can't be bothered  
To stop and smother  
Them when they walk  
Down the street.  
I see them in the night  
Like I see every other sight  
Because we're shedding our skins  
Again and again.

Last night, I saw a lion  
Who turned out to be a lamb.

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He's dead to me and I am to him,  
But I'm the one who walked  
Because it's too hard to talk.  
Once, I saw a shepherd  
Who turned out to be a sheepdog.  
I walked that time too,  
Because even a dog,  
Perhaps loyal and true,  
Needs to be taught to stay.

I'm walking again.  
I walk away  
From something the moon gave  
And even Thanatos is too slow for me  
Because I can't bring myself to stop  
In the middle of the road  
Even though I'm free.



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CAITLIN DEAL

## A Puppet

“I’m just a puppet,”  
She says.

As she walks  
through the garden.  
Hospital gown flowing. A sundress  
made of IVs and white walls. Dotted  
with mind-numbing paintings  
of flowers,  
and brothers fishing.

“What do you mean?”  
I ask.

A heavy-footed hunter  
trying to keep up with  
her graceful deer hooves.

“Of God,”  
She replies.  
“Or the devil,” she smirks.

And outside the ward’s doors  
I see the remnants of tattered wings,  
and a heart pierced by fire,  
and thorns.

And the souls that were  
her eyes are replaced

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by mournful howls of a dream.  
A dream stuck  
in the twisted,  
black-hole night  
of its mind.

But she skips and  
her soul is freed in other ways,  
spilling onto the weeds of the  
yard,  
dandelions sighing in delight  
of the new moon.

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TESSA TORGESON

## Greenie

THE BAROMETER OF STABILITY was shattered, chaos seeped out gradually and then bam—I was in fragments again. In fragments strewn across the floor, curled in the fetal position, on these arctic cold tiles, sobbing, screaming, banging my arms and wanting to die.

Maybe I should start at the beginning. I am a terrible, obvious liar. My nose squiggles and my legs start to fidget. I feel like I'm about to implode like a hand grenade. My cheeks are still chubby and rosy in *just* the right place with the childlike naiveté so sometimes older strangers pinch them.

So it is with truth I say I had clean and sober eighty-nine days. But I let it all slip away from me. Because of my vulnerability, my thin skin and heavy heart I felt the world's pain as my own. In a flash of a moment, in a fraction of a fraction of a second I forgot I cared about anything.

I left rehab that night in flames. My feet felt like phantom limbs. Floating on their own down seventh avenue, that pitch black street with no streetlights even to illuminate or keep the street company. I knew better than to go down that street but I went anyway toward the seedy dive bar. The seedy dive bar alcoholic's haven. People like us get looks at the bars *normies* hang out in. *Normies* are people that wait til after five to drink and enjoy *the* taste. At our joints, you feel no shame for dumping a bag of loose change on the counter with fingers crossed. You feel no shame if you just pawned your dead great-grandmother's sapphire engagement ring for booze money. You feel no shame if you tremble outside the storefront at 9:55 am eagerly anticipating its opening. Shame vanishes after the first drop.

Vanishing. Next thing I knew, I was clutching a paper bag in that dark street. I hardly remembered if I paid. I'm sure the long haired dude with a penchant for comic books who looked like Silent Bob was working. He stopped carding me long ago. I imagine my hands were shaking and he wondered why I hadn't bought my medicine lately.

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I floated on phantom limbs back to that alley. I ripped the fifth of Karkov because of the way it burned, because of how it ignited my throat like poison. I was trembling, my hands could barely hold still. I effortlessly twisted off the cap, my fingers knew what to do but my body rejected it. I vomited bile. But goddammit I wanted that blanket of intoxication to cover me. I chugged it. Then I was so consumed by crushing guilt, I swallowed a fistful of Ativans and Effexors. I took a razorblade to my wrists. My wrists became the canvas. My memory is in flashbulbs like the fluorescent lights with the whirl of the ambulance whisking me off in the night. The ambulance is the stagecoach for alcoholics. We don't lose a glass slipper. We lose our sanity.

The screeching sirens are seared into my memory so they still burn in my nightmares until I wake up in a cold sweat, the blinding bright red and blue twisting and distorting into fucked up watercolor pallet. My head spinning, brimming with chaos, I am in a stretcher again. A bright red wristband to warn others I was on a seventy-two hour hold for suicide watch.

In 403 B, I awoke to the orchestral hums of the fluorescent lights and the floor waxer. I was expecting a welcoming committee with clowns and fire-breathing dragons and balloons. But, alas, I roll over and realize by the cold sterility and lumps in the mattress that I'm lying in my hospital bed. They must have already given me Ativan because I feel like I'm tripping out of my mind. I think I see David Lee Roth over my bed shredding.

Instead I hear a soft yet confident voice and feel tightening blood pressure cuff like a noose to my arm.

"Hey, it's Sandy. I'll be your CNA tonight ok, I'm just gonna check your vitals and pump some more fluids into you."

Sandy looked to be a few years older than my mom. She had a weathered face with gentle blue eyes.

I became aware of the acute stinging of the new IV in my hand. "Your pulse is still 150, but Ativan should help with your anxiety."

I nodded. And tried to smile but then I remembered where I was (again) and could not make my muscles move as much as I wanted to.

"It'll be ok, just rest up. Is there anything I can get you?" Sandy asked me.

I wanted to ask her to get my sanity back but my mouth was frozen. I really wanted home. I wanted home and it was impossible because I belonged nowhere. I asked her if my friends brought anything and she nodded.

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Before I could ask her to get it she was gone—she knew how much I needed home in that minute. She was gone like she knew where she was going. She held out my bright blue duffel bag. I found my blankie greenie, in its shambles it was barely recognizable as a blanket. But it was my familiar. I grabbed it longingly.

“I’m sorry, but I can’t let you have that. It could be used in a way...” she trailed off. “Well in a way it shouldn’t be used here and it’s our policy.”

Salty tears rolled down my eyes in streams. I felt so alone. I brushed them away with my sheet and muttered a faint “I understand.”

She said, “But I can cut you off a corner if you want? Let me go do that for you.”

“Please? That’d be so...” I tried to let the words of gratitude come out but Sandy had already bustled down the hall. I clinged to my greenie, my piece of home.

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Melancholy:

Six-Word Short Stories

Road to nowhere; longest walk ever.

—JAZMIN AMOS

The wind coughs. My lover falls.

—DANDAN CHEN

“...til death do us part.”

“Sure.”

—TYLER RINGSTAD

Got my revenge, lost everything else.

—JONI WIEBESICK

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## Life in a Breath

My life is a burp  
in the big breath of slow time  
Breathe in. Breathe out. Done.

—HOUDA ABDELRAHMAN

## Delicious Indolence

I could make a pizza now,  
I still have one or two.  
Money's not an issue,  
It's just something I'd have to do.  
Standing up's the real battle;  
My laziness astounds.  
Or maybe it's just the weather  
That really gets me down.

—PETER KOEPP

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## Please Ignore the Next Few Lines Because, Frankly, They're Embarrassing, and Because They're Directed at You, Yes You

IT'S LIKE THIS: being by yourself isn't the problem. It's being by yourself when your brain is a workaholic. That's a big problem at least when it comes to your sanity. Normally, when something happens, people think about it, work it out, then distance themselves from it, and let things unfold. But you're different. You think about it. Then think about it some more. Then, once you're done memorizing every last detail, you think of every possible scenario, every consequence, every potential happening until you make yourself crazy.

You start thinking in song lyrics: *Don't stop believing that the answer is blowing in the wind because he ain't Romeo, and you ain't no Scarlet Letter, and living is easier with eyes closed anyway.* And it's funny because this shit actually makes sense to you.

When you realize that that doesn't help at all, you create little mantras, like you're your own cheerleader or something messed up like that. *You are not a consolation prize, you are not a consolation prize, lather, rinse, but for the love of God, please don't repeat.*

You write in a journal because you need someone to talk to, but you know that you're the only person who won't get sick of you. This is where things start to get really weird. You try to write poetry, even though we both know that you aren't a poet.

You start to realize that sometimes, time isn't the best healer, and what would really help is to have your brain sucked out your ears using a bendy straw. You chew your fingernails until they bleed, and then you keep on chewing. Movement becomes something you have to vocalize before it actually happens. You start to forget what trees look like.

—GRACE PETERSON



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MELISSA KIBBY (NELSON) MOXNESS

# North Dakota Skyline



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MELISSA ESLINGER

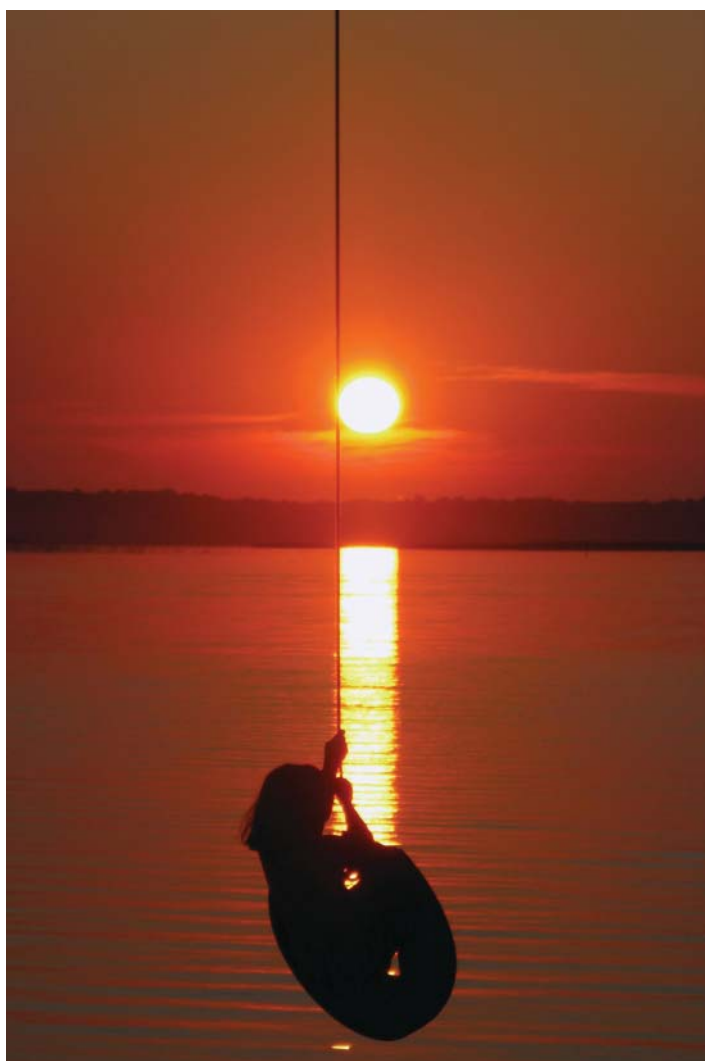
# Peacocking



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ABBY HAMMES

# Summer Serenity



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## Eclectic Moth

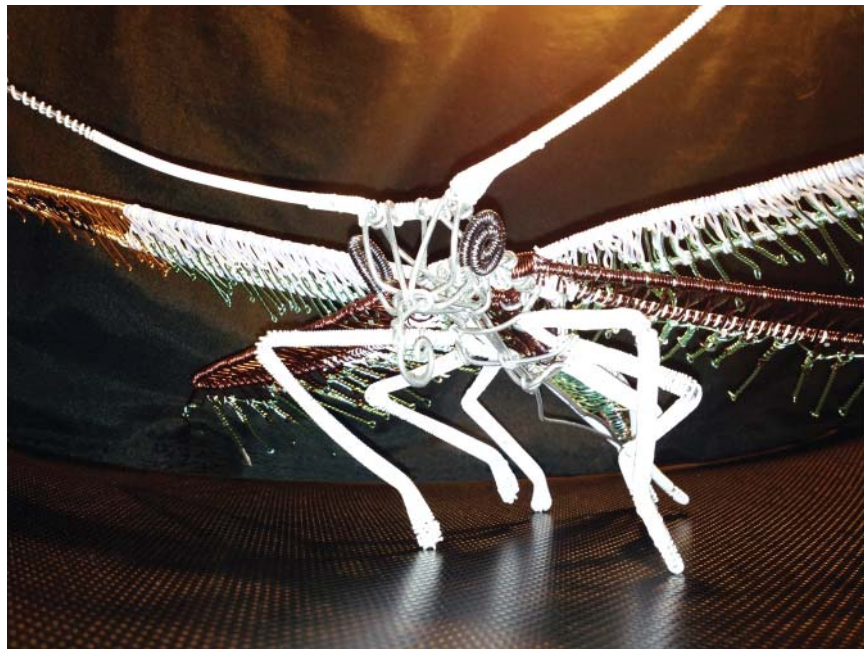


Photo by Jordan Stiefel / NE Staff

When the students who were working on the first volume of *Northern Eclecta* in the spring of 2007 decided that *Northern Eclecta* would be a good name for the journal, they searched online to see if any other publication was using that name. Although they found no other journals with that title, they discovered that there is a moth called *Bucculatrix eclecta*—and an image of a moth has been a part of all *Northern Eclecta* designs ever since. During Spring Semester 2012, Lawrence Vanderbush created this three-dimensional moth using a wirewrap technique. The Eclectic Moth was used in our promotional activities during the semester and its image is now preserved in this volume.

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SPENCER PTACEK

## Tremendous Bell

A NAME, LIKE A PROMISE, is often something to be lived up to. However, for Tremendous Bell, son of William “Bill” Bell and Janice Bell (née Swanson), it wasn’t so much a matter of living up to, but rather living with, his name. He had heard the story a million times: “We were gonna name you Aaron, you know; your father and I already agreed on it. But then the minute you were born your Grandma looked at you and said, ‘Oh my, what a tremendous Bell!’” So there he was, and there he had been for the last fourteen years of his life, the victim of a septuagenarian’s whimsy. Admittedly, his preferred sobriquet “Trem” was much less distracting, though it was usually just odd enough to prompt one or more pointed queries. All around him both kids and adults would ask, with a mixture of delicateness and genuine curiosity, “Why is your name ‘Tremendous?’” Sometimes he would tell the story, which always felt like a bit of a letdown, but more often than not he would just shrug, and say, “I don’t know... it’s just my name.”

On a day in early spring that could be described as pleasantly tepid, Trem was making his way home from school. On an impulse, he had changed courses en route and was currently detouring through the wide streets of the downtown district. Despite all of the cars lined up along the sides of the street, the sidewalks were almost completely empty; most of the other high school and college kids who filled the area on week nights were still busy with track practice or their afternoon part-time jobs. The purpose of the side trip was not entirely clear to Trem, although he knew he enjoyed the smells of the storefront produce markets that the mild weather of the past few days had brought forth like the outstretched heads of seedlings, and, for the time being, that was enough.

Distracted as he was by the sights of the city and his own rambling thoughts, he hadn’t noticed a disheveled, elderly man sitting, splay-legged and leant back on his hands, by the edge of the sidewalk. Now that he was too close to avoid the man without actually appearing to avoid the man, he tried to walk briskly past.

“Hey, can you help me with these?”

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For an instant, for a split-second, Trem very strongly considered feigning ignorance. Or deafness. Or anything, really. Anything that would allow him to travel through those few seconds of connection with the old man and on to freedom. But he couldn't hold out against his conscience as it wrestled him to the ground. He faltered, and stopped.

"What's that?"

"Can you help me with these?" the old man asked, gesturing with his right hand to a pair of bulging, brown paper grocery bags sitting beside him. "I want to get them in before they get wet."

Trem gave the man a forced smile, while hazarding a glance at the sky. It was clear. It had rained last night for a few hours, so maybe the grass was wet. But then why would he put them in the grass in the first place?

"Sure, I can help," said Trem, with an altruism that wasn't entirely simulated, "Where do they need to go?"

"Just up the street a ways."

The old man, who despite his unkempt appearance seemed rather spry, got up from his grassy seat and, after picking up what immediately appeared to be the lighter of the two bags, took off down the street. Trem approached the remaining bag cautiously, unsettled as he was by the whole ordeal. After quickly appraising his load, he bent over it and, with forehead scrunched and lips pursed, he heaved it up, quickly lacing his fingers together to support its bottom. He waddled off in pursuit of this gray-haired disruption, feeling the pull of the man's mysterious injunction.

He finally caught up to the old man at the steps of smallish, four-storey apartment building. All dirty brick and even dirtier glass, the building's façade stared indifferently down at them while the old man fumbled with a set of jingling keys. Finally selecting the right one, he unlocked the front door, and after lifting his own bag up, took the bag from Trem.

"Wait for me. I'll be right back," he said.

The man walked up into the building and vanished. Trem stood for a moment, then turned around, walked back down the stairs, and sat down on the edge of the first step. It was still a nice day out, he thought, things could be much worse; it could actually be raining. He started to whistle and hum bits and pieces of songs that had been stuck in his head the day before. He started to relax, and what little breeze there was blew across his face and arms.

"Hey kiddo," said a now familiar voice from behind him. Trem nearly

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jumped into the street. He immediately stopped humming, and tried to pretend that he had never hummed before in his life, that he was incapable of humming.

“Hi-ello,” said Trem his shock causing him to lapse into awkward formality.

“Here you go,” said the old man, extending his hand toward Trem. Something small and yellow glinted in his hand. Trem reached forward and, taking it from the man, saw that it was a small golden cylinder with the name CECILIA engraved along its side. Trem ran his thumb along a seam in the middle of the cylinder and, pulling on both ends, realized what the tube was when it came apart. It was a tube of lipstick; used by someone, though still mostly intact. Trem couldn’t help but look up in puzzlement at the old man.

“I know it’s nothing much, but it could make a nice gift. You could give it to your girlfriend...or if you don’t have a girlfriend you could give it to your mother,” the old man said earnestly. Trem doubted that either was a particularly wise idea, but he thanked the man nonetheless.

“Well thank you, I might have to do that,” Trem said smiling.

“Your very welcome. Goodbye now.” The old man waved before re-entering the building and shutting the door. Trem turned away and started to put the lipstick tube in his pocket, but then stopped and held the tube up to his eyes with both hands. While he walked, he rubbed his thumb across the name CECILIA, and felt the roughness of the engraved letters.

“Hmm...” he said, squinting as he tried to block the sun’s glare with his head. He leaned over, craning his neck to look down at his little gold trinket, as it rolled back and forth between his hands. Having looked it over, he put it into his pocket and paused to take account of his surroundings. Despite having been taken somewhat off course, he knew roughly where he was. He walked back to the nearest intersection and from there struck out at a right angle from his previous course. Crossing the street, he began looking for Thompson Park, which he knew was somewhere nearby. As he walked he began to pick up the faint rustling of trees from somewhere up ahead. What little breeze there was must have been moving the trees along the park’s perimeter. As he got closer, he could see the branches poking out from behind the buildings and hanging over the sidewalk. Finally, reaching the corner of the urban arbor, he slipped in between the trees and entered the park.

He surveyed the clean, landscaped grounds in front of him. Off in the distance, he could see the forked tree that grew near the park’s entrance. From there he knew the way to his house, having made the trip quite a few times when

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he was younger. As he neared the middle of the park, he saw a woman in a dark yellow dress sitting on a bench near one of the trees. She was reading a book, and as he got closer he could see that she was very old. She held the book very near to her face, and her head bobbed rapidly as she read. As he walked by, he glanced quickly over at her, only to make contact with her two little eyes staring at him over the top of her book.

“Excuse me,” she said in a high, airy voice “is your name William?” Trem stopped.

“No,” he replied. She closed her book and set it on her lap.

“Well I’m waiting for someone named William,” she said, half to Trem half to herself. “Are you friends with anyone by that name? Did anyone send you here?” Trem actually had two friends named William, but he wasn’t going to tell her that.

“Oh, no,” he said, with an affected, easy chuckle. He raised his hand to say goodbye when the old lady’s eyes opened wide and she pointed to his hand.

“What’s that?” she asked with unmasked curiosity. Looking down at his hand, he saw the lipstick container clutched between his thumb and forefinger. He hadn’t even realized he was holding it, let alone that he had taken it out of his pocket.

“Can I see that?” the lady asked.

“Sure,” Trem said hesitantly. She held it in her palm and squinted down at it. Suddenly, she looked up, smiling.

“Oh it’s got my name on it, ‘Cecilia.’ That’s beautiful.” She picked it up with her other hand and held it close to her face. Still smiling, she twisted it around, watching the reflections play off its surface. “Oh can I have it, please?” she asked. Trem struggled to come up with a response.

“Well...no, it’s mine...or I mean it’s a gift for someone.”

“Oh,” she said, her voice trembling, “all right.” She gave him back the lipstick, her lips quivering in a frown. Trem started to feel sorry for the old lady, and told himself that, after all, he hadn’t really wanted the lipstick in the first place.

“Oh, here. It’s not that important,” said Trem, giving the lipstick back to the old woman. She smiled and took it back, as if she had known all along that he would give it to her. “You’re welcome,” he said, “but I have to go, so goodbye.” Trem turned to walk away.

“Wait,” the old lady said. Trem turned back. “Take this,” she said while



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apparently struggling with something in her dress pocket. She pulled out a small, coil-bound notepad along with a stubby, chewed-on pencil. She flipped to an open page somewhere in the middle of the notebook, scribbled something quickly, tore the page out and handed it to Trem. “You just mention me, Cecilia, and they’ll let you in.”

Trem looked down at the paper. “7:30 pm, 1002 Macintosh Ave,” it read, “For Friday Night, from Cece.” He looked back up, and she was looking at the lipstick tube again. He started to back away. She didn’t look up or move, so he simply turned and left. What an odd trade, he thought. Trem looked back down at the piece of paper in his hand, the little scrap of this woman’s life that lived on, beyond their brief interaction. He held it delicately, in between his thumb and fingers, and felt it stir as the breeze carried he and it, together, toward a future that watched and called from a distance.

At 7:06 p.m. Tremendous Bell was walking out through the door to his house. He had told his parents that, after supper, he was going to meet some of his friends to see a movie. With the old woman’s note, a ten-dollar bill, and his bus pass in his pocket, he headed towards the bus stop. He got on the bus a few blocks from his house and rode it down to the intersection of Macintosh and 10<sup>th</sup> Street where he got off. There were people walking along the sidewalk in groups and pairs, and he considered briefly asking someone if they knew anything about the address and time mentioned in the note. However, he quickly rejected this idea when he saw that most if not all of the people he saw were older than him, though nowhere near as old as the lady he had met earlier today. These were the upperclassmen and college students who took over the town at night as well as the middle-aged crowd who had designated Friday as their night out for the week. Trem searched around for the building until finally finding the number 1002 on a pawnshop that was either seasonal or in a state of uncommonly poor condition. As he approached, he saw, standing in the shadows near the front door, an old man, a head taller than Trem and probably twice his weight. The man’s eyes were small and beady, but his lips had a babyish pout that made him seem as though he were trying to keep from laughing at something.

“I’m... a friend of Cecilia’s,” Trem said. “Here.” Trem handed the man Cecilia’s note. The man turned on a flashlight and read the note, and then he looked back at Trem.

“Follow me,” the man said, and entered the building. He lead Trem to the

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back of the shop, and then down a flight of stairs to an old, cellar-like basement. In the room there stood about fifteen men and women, all elderly in varying degrees. All of them were silent, so Trem, doing likewise, stood silently, and waited. He was puzzled, and somewhat curious about the whole thing, but no longer really frightened. After a few minutes he heard the door opening upstairs, followed by the low murmur of a man's voice. Then he heard footsteps on the landing that proceeded downstairs. First he saw two pairs of feet, then legs, then two bodies that became the man and woman he had met earlier that afternoon. The woman looked at him, smiled, and nodded. She was holding something in her hand; Trem couldn't see it, but assumed it was lipstick container.

Without really any warning, the room burst into motion. All of the previously silent and unmoving people had come alive for some reason and were shuffling around the room.

"Hi, my name is John Schreiner," one of the men said, quite loudly.

"My name is Eugene," said another man, apparently trying to match John in volume.

"My name is Wendy," said a woman to a group that she was standing with. "I work at the library in the afternoons."

Trem, uncertain about what exactly was going on, walked over to Cecilia.

"Hi, Cecilia," Trem said.

"Yes, my name is Cecilia," she replied. "How are you?"

"Good. I was wondering—"

"My name is William," said the old man next to her, whom he had helped earlier that day, as he pointed at his shirt. Above the breast pocket was stitched the name William in a looping cursive.

"Hi William," said Trem, "Remember me?" The man opened his mouth, and paused.

"No..." the man said, shaking his head. "You seem nice enough though, so no worries."

Trem studied the man to see if he was making some sort of joke. William looked away from Trem and introduced himself to Cecilia. Trem started to get an uneasy feeling, as he thought back on what had happened earlier that day. He had changed his typical after-school route for some unknown reason, though this lipstick, which Cecilia was now showing to a surprised and admiring William, seemed, in some way, to have something to do with it. These two acted as though they didn't know each other, but how could it just be coincidence? It

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couldn't be; their names matched. His matched the one she was waiting for, and hers matched the one on the lipstick tube.

Trem looked back down at the lipstick tube in Cecilia's hand and saw that she had started playing around with it while William continued to talk. But as he watched, he realized, with a slight twinge of horror, that Cecilia was not actually playing with it; her hand was hardly moving at all. The tube itself was writhing around on Cecilia's palm and fingers while Cecilia continued to talk, unawares. Trem looked up at the rest of the room. The harder he looked, the more he could see that the people weren't showing off their things, but it was rather the things themselves that were moving about while their owners held on.

"Excuse me," Trem heard, and he turned back to Cecilia and William. "Excuse me," Cecilia said again. "What is your name?"

"I'm, uh..." Trem stumbled. Always secretly in fear of this question, he replied with one of his practiced answers, "I mean, my name is Jake. Jacob Schmidt."

"Well, Jacob," said William, "I've got something for you." He walked away from them, toward a door near the back corner of the room that Trem had not noticed before. He opened the door and stepped through the doorway, flicking on a light. Trem heard a low, rumbling noise coming from the doorway, and William reemerged pulling a solid-looking wooden frame, on four little metal wheels, from which hung a large, bronze bell. All of the others started to quiet down as William wheeled the bell to the center of the room. He stopped and stood beside it, blowing some dust off the bell, and wiping at it with his sleeve.

"Well Jacob, isn't it tremendous?" William asked. The tone of his voice was uncertain, and Trem started to feel worried. He looked around the room at the others. Was this too a joke of some sort? Had something been going on this whole time? All of them were looking at him with kind smiles on their faces.

"C'mon Jake," William said, "don't you want to ring it?" A few of the others voiced their approval.

"Yeah!"

"Yeah Jake!"

Trem was growing more and more uncomfortable. "Actually, I probably have to go, I've got to go meet my parents—"

"All right then, just ring it once," said William. "It's fun." Trem walked over to the bell, rubbing his hands together nervously. He grasped the clapper that hung inside the bell. Flicking his wrist, he hit the clapper against the inside of

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the bell. All he heard was a dull, unsatisfying clunk. Some of the others chuckled.

William laughed. “You gotta try harder than that. Here you want me to do it?”

“No, I got it,” Trem said. He wasn’t worried or afraid anymore, he was just angry. Whatever these people were doing, it was, at best, some sort of trick. He didn’t know what was going on with that lipstick tube, or any of the other pieces of junk these people had brought, but he didn’t really care. He was angry that they had somehow gotten him to come here to their creepy little séance. And he was angry at his stupid name, and at the fact that, right now, he had to be ringing a stupid bell of all things. The name wasn’t his fault, the lipstick, which he hadn’t wanted in the first place, wasn’t his fault either. These were all things out of his control, caused by something just beyond his reach. But he couldn’t do anything about it, so he did the only thing he could. He grabbed the clapper again, and flung it as hard as he could at the side of the bell.

The sound waves came off the bell so hard that he could feel his head shake. His knees buckled a little, and he backed up, somewhat stunned. The bell emitted a low, clear hum that was not so much audible as tactile. He squinted, looking around at the others, and at William. They appeared to be flickering, like the visual white noise on a television screen. He looked back at Cecilia, who continued to smile at him, though she was flickering more and more. The others too, he saw, were less here than gone, being pulled apart, moment by moment, and falling into the past.

Trem could feel the vibrations in his head and in his eyes, so he squeezed them shut until the bell had quieted. He opened his eyes again and looked around. Everyone was gone, and the ground was littered with the little objects that now lay lifeless, and in some cases broken, on the floor. Trem walked over to a trophy that had fallen on its base and remained standing. He picked it up and read the dedication: “Eugene Riley. Most Creative Design. Cleveland Area Soap Box Derby.” He dropped it back on the floor. He walked around looking at the other items, reading the names printed on them. Ralph, John, Wendy, Franklin, Marian, Marilyn, Josephine, as well as others that he forgot the instant he read them. He walked over to the bell, near which William’s shirt lay crumpled on the floor. He examined the bell, looking for a name, but found nothing except the nicks and scratches written on the bell by time and a variety of misfortunes. He pushed the bell’s frame and found that it was surprisingly

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light. He moved it over to foot of the stairs and, making two stops along the way, was able to get the bell up the stairs and into the pawnshop's main floor, where he wheeled it to the door. Pushing on the door with his back, he was able to get it out and onto the sidewalk, and he started wheeling it along through the night air.

Trem didn't know what time it was, but he knew he should be getting home. Surprisingly, none of the people he passed by bothered him, or asked him about the bell that he was pulling. He knew that his parents would have some questions about it, but for the moment he wasn't worried. He kept moving until he found a side street that was mostly deserted, which he turned onto, sacrificing the more expedient route for a less populated one. As he walked, Trem turned his head and looked up at the moon, and then back down at the moon's reflection on the bell's surface. Welcoming the feeling of the nighttime breeze, he ambled on under the empty streetlights, pulling with him, as he did, his tremendous bell.



*Jacinta Thieschafer / NE Staff*

Sunshine shines brightest  
On those people who dare to  
Venture from the shade.

—BRIE MICHAELSON

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# The Hunger

PAIN, DARKNESS, the sound of someone crying my name. The voice is familiar, one I know I've heard constant times throughout my life, but I can't quite place it.

"Cary!" Her name comes to me, though I don't attempt to recall it. "Run!"

My body continues to fight the creatures around me as they bite and tear at my skin, but my mind has given up. As my fists connect with the bodies pressing in on me, cutting my skin against teeth, nails, and protruding bones, my mind retreats in on itself, to a place where it will not feel the pain as the mob continues to tear at my flesh.

Slowly my body followed it, embracing the welcome world of death.

I awake to hunger, a need to feed. I don't know how long I've been out. I know that I don't want to wake, that I don't want to feed, but I cannot remember why. I moan, and grab the arm lying across my chest. The hunger drives me, and I sink my teeth into the flesh. The meat is rotten, and I drop the arm, not even bothering to spit out the rancid mouthful of flesh.

I pull myself up, seeking fresher meat. Others like me stumble around, and I consider feeding off of them. I take a whiff of the nearest one, and reject the idea upon smelling his rotten flesh.

Something scurries up my leg, and I reach down and grab a large rat as it runs up the tatters of my pants. Without hesitation, I shove the struggling creature into my mouth. The rat's blood runs down my face as I chew and swallow. The meal fails to satisfy me, though, and I need more.

I turn at the sound of a scream. Down a dark hallway I run, accompanied by more like me in a race towards the scream and the flesh that it promises. Loud noises sound ahead. A part of my brain that still cares registers them as gunshots, but my body continues to move towards the promise of fresh meat.

I stumble into a small room. It is dimly lit, and filled with a clutter. I don't care beyond that, for I have sighted my meal. There are three of them, standing surrounded by more of those like me. The three look familiar, but I can't place them. I decide I don't care, and move forward, driven by the hunger. A sharp pain goes through my chest as a bullet grazes my lung, but the hunger pushes away the pain, and I move on.

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I leap towards the meat, and land on the nearest of them. She screams, and tries to push me off. Then she looks at my face, and she stops struggling.

“Nick,” she says.

The name sounds familiar to me, as does her voice. I hesitate for a moment, trying to place the name and the voice. My mind comes up with one word: Cary.

The word means something to me. I moan it, trying to figure out what it would mean. The meat’s face lights up in a sad smile as she begins to cry. I don’t know what she is to me, or what the name means to her or to me, but I know I don’t want to feed.

Then the hunger strikes, and I no longer hesitate.

—JOSEPH VASKE



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SAMANTHA WICKRAMASINGHE

## A Moment of Imperfection

Golden sun rays have fallen on the ground  
on a Sunday morning behold, I found  
a perfect day, a delightful feeling or  
have I drunk *Felix Felicis*, how come  
everything turns on my way?

Serendipity! I know you tricky little thing  
you made earth, fire water and wind  
conspire to design this wonderful day.  
So I breathe the fresh air and thousands  
of merry thoughts conquer my mind

Everyone I saw, bore a smile on their face  
a delightful and heavenly bliss, ran  
all over my veins as I felt strong;  
a sense of valor and dignity raced  
me like a horse in a gentle pace  
oh shame! suddenly I held my reins

Perfection I know, I'm so scared  
I feel afraid, horrified by the thought  
that this eternal bliss will leave  
me behind. All these smiles; are they  
mockeries of fate or am I a butterfly?

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stuck in a cocoon, just before  
coming out to see the world or am I  
Impresioned in the false delight of foolishness?  
The way I feel is not true but more a  
convention that we all are trapped

Away! from this bliss and "I don't deserve this"  
All the happy smiles of men and women,  
all the sun rise and the joy that pours  
out of my heart, just stop let me be real.

\* *Felix Felicis*—liquid luck in *Harry Potter*

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JONI WIEBESICK

# Lost in Reality, Found in Dreams

I was asleep for so long  
Lost in my dreams  
Then I awoke one day  
To see what I had missed

And on that fateful morning  
I realized reality had nothing on my dreams

I looked and looked for meaning  
But found nothing but broken dreams  
Broken people living in unbreakable routines  
Perhaps you think I'm foolish  
For dreaming so long  
Perhaps I am a child still  
Lost in a fairy tale

But those tales always end happy  
Unlike reality  
That's why I love dreaming  
Of places I'll never see

You can be anyone  
You can do anything  
Why limit yourself when you can dream?

I was asleep for so long  
Lost in my dreams

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Then I awoke one day  
To see what I had missed

Disappointed in reality  
I fell back into dreams

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DANDAN CHEN

## College Forensics in America and China

*Dear Amorette, thank you for your great help all these days. I have learned a lot from this whole process. Although finally I didn't manage to get qualified for the national competition this year in Texas, I feel happy to be with this adorable team and to learn so much.*

This Monday morning, the first one since the end of the competition season, I was writing a thank-you letter to the coach of my forensics team. It is hard to say good-bye, especially when it means leaving so many friends and fantastic experiences, and when you feel your journey hasn't come to a final close.

Let me explain. For the past three months, I have been competing on North Dakota State University's forensics team. Forensics teams compete in the art of public speaking and debate, and back in China it is a really popular pursuit.

Now you may scream at me: "But you are an international student from China! And you are competing against Americans at speaking in English? Are you kidding me???" But actually, in China almost every university has its own English forensic team and there are also lots of English debate and speech competitions. Some of them can be as marvelous as those in America. So giving speeches or debating in English is not new for me, and I adapted to the American forensics very well and grew rapidly.

In fact, the biggest thing I had to get over was my own prejudice. I used to hate forensics, regarding the competition as a sort of presumptuous showing off. Later I figured out that some basic forensic skills were necessary for my daily life and thereby I began to my forensic participation. Now I can acknowledge the power and the leadership from it. I used to try my best to get away from politics, while now I'm intrigued by all kinds of sociological analyses and political issues, and I'm looking forward to taking some courses in this field in the near future. I used to be shy and rigid on stage, whereas nowadays I'm at ease facing my audience and more relaxed when giving a public performance. Moreover, I've

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gained better communication skills in my daily life with friends from America and any other countries, with which I'm really proud of myself.

However, I do think there are some big differences between American and Chinese forensics, including differences in the competition itself and people's attitude towards the meaning of competitions.

### **The Competition Itself**

The most obvious difference that stunned me was the scale of the competitions. I recall that there were more than 50 students competing in a certain forensic competition at my home institution in China, all from that one campus alone. Such a huge number of people contributed to an extremely fierce competition, although it was just a competition simply for this university alone.

On the contrary, in NDSU there are only nine regular competitors, and we all had to travel from state to state to gather together with competitors from other universities to have a competition. As a matter of fact, this semester I have already traveled with my team to Iowa, Wisconsin, and South Dakota to compete as a representative of NDSU with students from South Dakota State University, Minnesota State University—Mankato, Concordia College, University of Northern Iowa, University of Wisconsin—Eau Claire, Northwestern University and so on.

In fact, I've noticed that lots of competitions in America don't have many people involved compared to what I'm used to in China. I think one piece of it might be that China has such a larger population, so there are more students to compete. And my university in China is much larger than NDSU—about 10,000 more students.

The small size of my team in America has had advantages though. At my home institution, there were so many competitors that the school couldn't offer training opportunities for each one of them. In fact, most of these simultaneously gathered-together competitors had no training experience before and most of them learned little in this competition due to the lack of individual guidance.

Our team at NDSU has two very professional and devoted coaches: Amorette Hinderaker and Nigel Haarstad, and since our team only has eight competitors, the two coaches can give each of us very detailed and proper individual instructions. I can see for sure my process, step-by-step, each step

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deeply rooted in their instructions.

### **People's Attitudes Toward the Meaning of Competitions**

Once when being interviewed by NDSU school newspaper, Amorette Hinderaker said that she thought that the individual growth brought about by participating in competitions was more important than actually winning.

Although Chinese today keep saying that process is more important than the result, there are always superfluous applauds and flowers for the winners. "The victor becomes a king and the loser a bandit" ("胜者为王败者") is an ancient Chinese proverb from the feudal age, but it still can be felt in today's Chinese society sometimes, consciously or not. Lots of Chinese competitors are still coming to compete for the honor, for the attention of the audience, or for a line on their resume.

One interesting contrast, to support this point, is that American forensics competitors get detailed professional comments and suggestions about their performance, while Chinese competitors only get a rank or a grade. In other words, after each round, the Americans can know more clearly about their weaknesses and strengths while the Chinese can only get ranked without knowing what they really need to do in the future.

Another interesting point about the competitions: in the American forensics competitions I've been to, the audience is very small and might just be the judges and the other competitors. Yet competitors just go ahead and perform, for they know they are here mainly for their own experience rather than for the audience. In the Chinese competitions, there are always lots of people who aren't competing for anything themselves watching the performance. It would be awkward for the competitors to have a performance if there were only a very few spectators.

*Amorette, again, many thanks for your devotion to this adorable team and to me, thank you for your care about me. Have a good day.*

When writing this letter, I can't help reflecting all the competitions I've been a part of. From North Dakota to Iowa, to Wisconsin, and to South Dakota, I see a little girl going all the way from being extremely disgusted about politics and speech to getting more active in political participation, cultural communication

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and emotional expression; from being totally ignorant of the mainstream of the American culture to getting more integrated in this new society; from being shy and egotistic to taking care about others.

How lucky I was to meet this forensic team, and these teammates, at this primary time of my life!



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## Dillon

They weren't always imperfect.

I can recall them being beautifully consecutive.

White, strong. You were reliable.

When did I finally notice?

The way each one had a purpose. If one was gone, everything was off.

Splendid curvatures of each individual. I can't eat without you.

If you hurt, I cannot sleep.

I take care of you because people notice.

My dear teeth, do not fail me.

—ANN WASKOSKY

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Laugh a Little:  
Six-Word Short Stories

Well this sucks (it's a vacuum).

—BRIE MICHAELSON

I am in a spooky hotel.

—TANYA BIRKLID

In Soviet Russia, booze drinks you.

—JEFFREY HOOPES

Missing fish tank; military officials alerted.

—ERICA IMSANDE

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CADE KRUEGER

## The Narrow Path

We walk along the narrow path,  
Hand in hand, step in step, we hath.  
Do not look down, to fall is death.  
Behold below; the reaper's bath.

You slip away, I lose my breath.  
I stretch to reach, don't leave me lest,  
I fall as well; embrace death's grip.  
The sound of drums, upon my breath.

The path is long, we cannot tip.  
To fall is death, on jagged lip,  
Of ancient stone, my heart will sleep.  
The drums will cease, my body rip.

Now take my hand, it's yours to keep.  
The path is long, the fall is steep.

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SYLVIA DEMPSEY

## Untitled

I've abandoned my yesterdays  
And forsaken my tomorrows,

Resigned to a world of bitter  
Secular acquisitiveness.

I, too, was once a believer.  
It was a goddamn travesty.

Holding the hands of dying men,  
I sat and watched the worlds descend;

Collapsing in a fatal breath  
And wrapped up in eloquent fog,

A scandal waiting to happen  
For a virtuous little whore.

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KELLY ANNE FRATZEL

## Taken

*Author's Note: This work was originally a letter writing exercise prompted by my counselor. Its purpose was to supplement therapy by creating a connection with my brother's children, both of whom developed terminal AMC.*

To my favorite nephew (don't tell the others I said that),

I talked to your dad today. He seemed like his typical self. I can't understand how he can make such a racket about an imaginary game. I used to have imaginary friends too. Though I run into them from time to time, we don't find much to talk about.

But I can tell your dad has been thinking about you lately. He tries to hide it though; he knows that you have inherited his ability to talk yourself into and out of anything. Did he ever tell you about the time during college when he convinced everyone in his apartment to call him Superman? It's true. Only Superman could have waited that long with six broken bones before going to the emergency room. I'll let him fill you in on the rest. I think he just really misses you. He still imagines you as a five-year-old, learning to throw the spiral for the first time. I know that he misses pulling pranks on your mom with you as partner in crime. I can see her face so clearly when the two of you decided that it would be a wonderful idea to cordon off her closet, keys, purse and car doors with police tape. You might not have been grounded, but I'm certain your dad was.

I wish we could chat more often. I know that you've probably just been taken and have a full plate on your hands. I know how tough it is to be away from everybody you love. I still have a hard time figuring out why I choose to study across the country. I have decided that after I get that degree, I am living no more than thirty minutes from where we started. I love a white winter, but snow banks don't cover the cars back home. I'm sorry that I never got to take you sledding. The hill at your grandfolks' house is a hell of a ride.

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I often wonder what you and your sister are up to. I know you two are inseparable, so give her my love as well. Send me a note anytime you like. I'm sure we'll talk again sooner than I think. I love you, doll.

—Aunt Kelly

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## Counting Sheep

NIGHT TIME is the worst time for sleep.

Any other time of day, when rest is wanted it is swiftly obtained, and easily sustained. Need to get up and be productive? Five more minutes please, ten more minutes please. Midday nap when the day has reached a lull in excitement? Eyes shut, the lights upstairs turned off, an hour or two passed by in the blink of an eye. Even when sleep is not advisable it is still a common wish for people of all ages.

As soon as the sun falls, however, the rules change. Children—even those who have been cranky and disagreeable for hours—suddenly bounce off walls and beg their mothers for five more minutes please, ten more minutes please. Teenagers, who have been trudging through the day with drooping eyes and yawning mouths, suddenly feel revitalized and alive, ready for fun, friends, or maybe even homework. Adults, too, feel the curse that rises with the moon: mothers who stay up just a bit longer to read a novel, fathers who sit in front of the television watching the ESPN recap. None are struck harder however, than the strange breed that is college students.

Eight am class tomorrow with a huge exam? Well, the correct response would be a full eight hours and a balanced breakfast. The reality would be closer to staying up until four in the morning, stopping at Perkins, and watching a season of a favorite show. Even once sleep is decided upon as a good course of action, the moment eyes are shut the mind gets whirring. Instead of dreams the day is recapped, the future planned, and once all other topics are rushed through the mind simply starts calculating exactly how much sleep would happen if it came at exactly this moment.

This is just a fact of life, however. Some may seek prescriptions, some will seek the Nyquil, and some will seek the bottle. These people may be freed, but for the most part we will all be left with these infuriating moments of up-too-late, up-to-early. At least the sheep are still there for us. *One, two, three, four...*

—BRIE MICHAELSON

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New Beginnings:  
Six-Word Essays

A word of reassurance keeps hope.

—JENAE VALVODA

Dreamer turned stark realist—turned back.

—RACHEL GRIDER

Forever ended too soon. Start again.

—DONALD HANNINEN

Tomorrow I'll admit I was wrong.

—EMILY J. VIEWEG

Turn the page. Life starts again.

—DELANEY FREER



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## The Chair

THE CHAIR'S NAME was Sir Reginald. He was a strong regal chair. He seemed almost snooty as if to say, "You may sit if you like, but you are not worthy." He was a chair that had seated kings and now his only purpose was a resting place for overweight tourists who liked to stare at shiny things. The chair had no rubies or diamonds, he was not made of gold or silver; but he still seemed more intimidating than the wonders around him. The back of the chair was long so as to intimidate the shorter people who dared to sit there. The back was directly perpendicular to the seat, in order to prevent laziness. It was because of this that many of the tourists found the chair irritating, because they were used to slouching in their chairs. You could tell just by looking at the chair that he didn't think much of recliners. He thought them to be poor white trash versions of sofas. The chair despised anything that tried to lie about its identity. He had a history of servicing royalty, and because of that he was spoiled. In other places of the world people use their chairs as weapons. Other people set their chairs on fire just because they are tired of them. Still other chairs, although saved from such fates as this, they would not be treated with an ounce of respect. They would be spilled on, jumped upon, and otherwise abused. Reginald the chair (he preferred the name throne) sat quietly in the corner, becoming more and more irritated with the tourists and the lack of respect they had for their property. They would drop their cameras, phones and wallets and not care in the least. Some of the tourists had ripped their clothes and never bothered to sew them back together again. It made the chair wonder, if he had lived in America, would they repair him if he was broken? Or would they throw him out at the even the slightest tear. Watching the tourist he couldn't help, but feel sorry for those American chairs.

—MICHAEL RAUSER

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## NO BONES, MR. BLUE

ONCE UPON A TIME, there was a girl who thought the world was full of magic.  
As it turned out, the girl was just crazy, and the world was not magical at all.  
The End.

—MEGAN L. EVEN

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JOSEPH VASKE

## I'd Rather

I'd rather be an artist than an athlete,  
An artist sees a canvas,  
Capable of becoming anything,  
An athlete sees a field.

I'd rather be a musician than a doctor,  
A musician sees inspiration,  
Ready to bloom into a masterpiece,  
A doctor sees a symptom.

I'd rather be a poor man than a millionaire,  
A poor man sees the world,  
An endless adventure,  
A millionaire sees money.



*Jacinta Thieschafer / NE Staff*

I'm lost but enjoying the scenery.

—SHAHANA NORTON

# THE NEXT GENERATION

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## to the readers...

WELCOME TO THE NEXT GENERATION section of *Northern Eclecta*! The pieces on the following pages were carefully selected by our staff as the finest examples of what young writers, artists and photographers in the area are creatively producing.

*Northern Eclecta* grows in new ways with each edition, but a highlight of this year has been processing our highest yet number of submissions. The editing team for The Next Generation was particularly encouraged to see entries come in from all over North Dakota and Minnesota, reaching far beyond the Red River Valley region. We were also delighted to see more submissions from middle school students than ever before.

My own experience with *Northern Eclecta* began when I myself was still a high school student. It was the very first literary journal to publish my work, and I vividly remember the afternoon when I received my acceptance notice—I was ecstatic. While working to prepare this year's section of The Next Generation, I was mindful of the fact that even at seventeen, I had spent years attempting to hone my skill as a writer, and that there is nothing like being recognized and accepted into a community of artists and writers who share one's passion.

Perhaps that is in large part what makes working on The Next Generation so exciting: Young as these writers are, we recognize in their pieces an undeniable spark of artistic dedication and real passion. We are sincerely honored to be among the first to formally review their work.

We hope that as you read, you will join us in our respect and appreciation for what has proven to be the true Next Generation.

Linnea Rose Nelson  
The Next Generation Editor

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CAITLIN SKJERVEM

## Rain Makes Us Famous

Can we just,  
Dance in the rain.  
With the world falling around us.  
And if it's right—  
This moment  
Would freeze the rain.  
Into the tiniest pearls.  
For now—  
We are the classic Hollywood movie.



—Spencer Kelley / NE Staff

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KASEY CHESLEY

## To See

Seeing is believing  
but it can be quite deceiving  
because people see only what they desire  
as they build their own empire  
on the wishes they so desperately need  
it comes from their own selfish greed  
they will never stop wanting more  
because everyone wants the higher score  
but riches cannot buy happiness  
I myself must confess  
I am a victim of the envy  
but only of the things people let us see  
because you never know what they are hiding behind their door  
for they are the ones needing more



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JACOB RON GREENMYER

## The Last Creation

TINKERING, RAPPING, TAPPING—quite like music—could be heard from the Creator’s shop throughout the village; the shop was perched upon a hill that oversaw all that happened in the valley below. Rumors of the tinkering spread throughout the village like wildfire. The rumors caused masses of the beautifully carved wooden persons made by the Creator to leave their homes and wander into the cobblestone streets in anticipation. But as soon as the flocks outside had been convened, they were adjourned, for the skies opened causing floods of rain to fall upon the earth, and sudden gusts of wind to drown out the music of creation. The heavens became black and night settled over the valley early.

Across all of the land, only one being stirred; a faint light poked out of the lone window in the Creator’s shop, where the Creator sat in candle light, working. Splashes of rain leaked through the cottage roof and splashed upon the old man’s workplace, though he seemed not to notice. With each sudden gust of wind the already leaning building creaked threateningly; but, although it had grown weary and achy with the olden man, the old structure found strength enough deep within its foundation to stay upright. The Creator took a deep breath, and allowed his face to curve into a weak smile as he began to see progress in his work. “You have been great to me, my home,” he spoke hoarsely, but warmly. “Your end is near, and mine as well.” He turned back to his work and said abruptly, “You will be my greatest creation yet.”

The Creator worked far into the night. When he had grown weary, he stood from his stool and stepped out into the damp night, which had calmed down from past hours. The Creator, for a long moment, stood outside his house and stared into the night sky at the moon and stars. Eventually, the old man stepped back inside his humble home, and feeling content, went to sleep.

The next morn, when the first of the wooden persons had risen from their beds, it was to the rhythmic beat of hammering and chisel work—for the Creator had already set to his task. He worked with a quiet confidence.

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Underneath the shop, in the valley below, congregations began to form in the village square, fueled by anticipation. It was there that members of the small wooden community began to speculate on what the arrival of the new creation would bring. Stray voices could be heard over the low murmur of the crowd.

“It has been said that this creation is to be our master’s last, and by far his greatest work yet.”

“I have heard tell that it is to be more valuable than the riches of all of the wealthiest kings in the world combined.”

“Oh, I bet it will be beautiful!”

“Yes, the most wonderful thing imaginable!”

One by one the intricate wooden beings shared their visions of the new creation with anyone else that would listen. Every last detail was explained with excitement, captivating their small audience. Yet it should not go with surprise that these people valued detail, for it was present throughout the entire valley. Every last part of the village was as perfect as the last, including the miniature people who were all extremely beautiful and without blemish.

The crowds waited hopefully all morn, until the large, magnificent bell that stood in the middle of the village square, began to ring. It was only then that the mobs disbanded and retreated to their homes for their noon hour meal. After the meal, the wooden people congregated once more and stood in the cobblestone streets; there they stood until the afternoon meal, and following the afternoon meal they waited outside until the day was no longer. Likewise was the routine for the village, for the next couple days. Every day, the village grew more and more excited, and though they had to wait so, the wooden people never lost trust in their creator and remained patient—for the Master’s final and greatest creation ever was worth it.

The sixth day the Creator had worked the entire night through. His mind and body ached with old age, yet his morale and his hands continued steadily on in splashes of candlelight. As the night drew on, the old man recognized that his work in his shop, and his job on the earth, was completed. He picked up the last of the wooden beings, still lifeless, and stepped out into the starlight. He looked longingly at the magnificent village below, then turned to the lifeless figure and spoke softly, “What is true beauty, my friend? Perhaps you can answer that question as easily as I can...” The old man allowed a tear to form shamelessly in the corner of his eye and roll off his face. He looked into the heavens once more and, feeling content, smiled. The Creator whispered his last breath of life into

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the last of the wooden persons. The Creator's body gently collapsed and laid on the soft grass, and almost as if it were meant to be, a sudden gust of wind shook the foundation of the old shack and caused it to fall to the earth, overtop of the Creator. The old man was finally able to rest.

Life always goes on, and life in the valley was no exception. The news of the death spread quickly, and in the night following the loss of a titan, a tribute was held for the father of the village. The ceremony was held in the light of a full moon. Every member of the beautiful wooden community held an unlit candle, and a flame was passed from one neighbor to the next until the entire valley lit up in an orange glow that danced off of the hillsides. After, the masses took part in the singing a gospel in honor of their creator. When the ceremony was over, the wooden people, who had all genuinely loved the old man, simultaneously blew out their candles in a hushed whisper and extinguished the light that had lit up the village.

In light of the events that had pursued after the passing, the grieving persons had almost completely forgotten about the last of the wooden people; in fact, they had forgotten completely until the next day. However there was no ceremony held to welcome their last in kin, he was not welcome at all—this was especially true after the community had begun to lay eyes on him. His scarred and hideous face was unlike anything that the community had ever seen, a thorn among roses, and the other villagers hurt to believe that something not of beauty could be more valuable to the Creator than them. Jealousy and doubt set over the valley like a dreary fog and the persons began to question the old man.

“Who is to say that the last of our kind is any more important than the rest of us?”

“Why is he so special?”

“The old man's mind must have been growing feeble with old age!”

“The Creator has let us down!”

Time passed in the village, but still the last creation was misunderstood. He was an outcast, a freak, and an exhibition. The last of the wooden people was now an iconic joke; he was sarcastically dubbed “The Chosen One.” He was mistreated and bullied. The small man felt no one understood; he had never wished to be different. The last of their kind had only wished to be normal. It was only when the torment grew worse, that things began to get better.

“What, Chosen One, do you think that you are better than the rest of us?”

“No, I do not think that way at all. Please, just leave me alone.”

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“Chosen One, come back here! I am not done talking to you, freak!”

The ridiculing man grabbed the Chosen One’s shirt and attempted to pull him back, but in doing so tore the cloth off his torso. Beneath the shirt, the woodman could see something written on the last of his kind’s back. *“Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that has been promised to him.”* The man saw, and he understood that what he had done was wrong. And the dreary fog of jealousy and doubt was lifted from the small wooden persons. The Last Creation was, in fact, true beauty.

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Six-Word Short Stories

Sweating.Blade.Cuts.Red.Never Again.  
(Mowing the Lawn.)

—BETHANY G. WEINAND

Two vehicles. One text. One tombstone.

—PAIGE BURLING

One life: limited time: justify it.

—ROSS HUBER

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MOLLY JOHNSON

# Hope

Dark  
cold  
wake  
breath  
mist spiraling  
numb limbs  
stumbling  
bare feet  
grimace  
cold  
pain  
despair  
sadness  
grimy face  
and hands  
enter schoolyard  
weeds  
dirt  
stop  
stare  
cold  
stranger  
shy  
yellow banana  
hand  
snatch  
google  
warmth  
smile  
tickle  
haha  
haha  
Señora  
Señora, you made  
me  
laugh



Spencer Kelley / NE Staff

*Author's note: "Hope" is about Wilfredo, a five-year-old boy who lives in Peru.*

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JENNIFER THORSON

# Abandoned

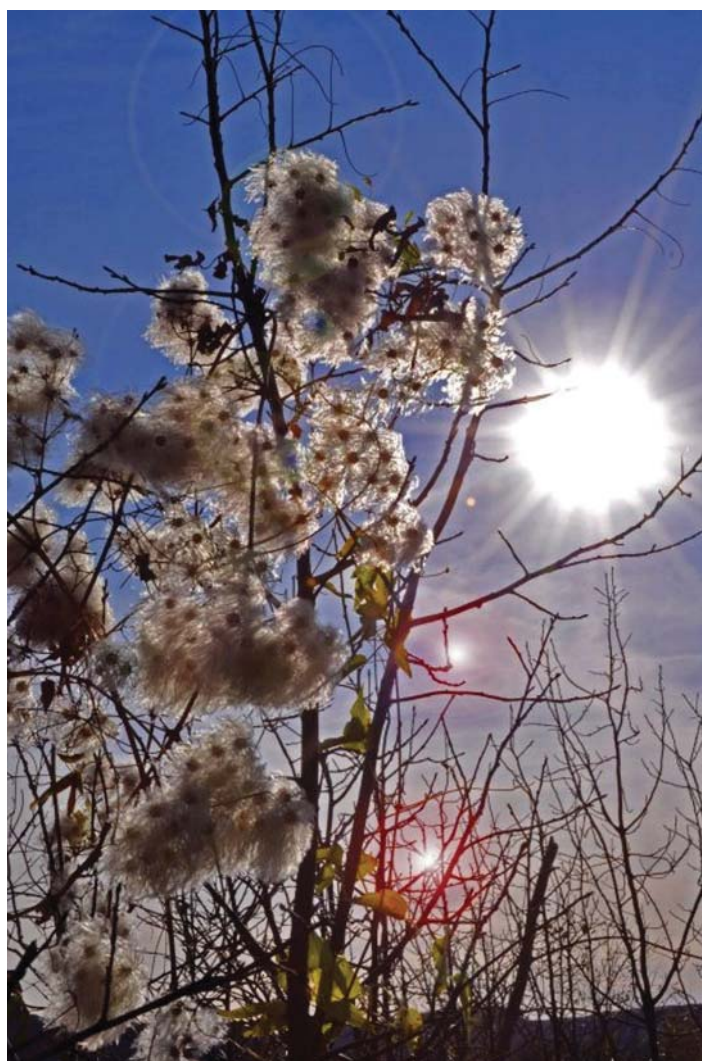




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EMILY RAMAGE

# Badlands Brush



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EVA BYERLEY

# Patience



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JESSICA EDINGER

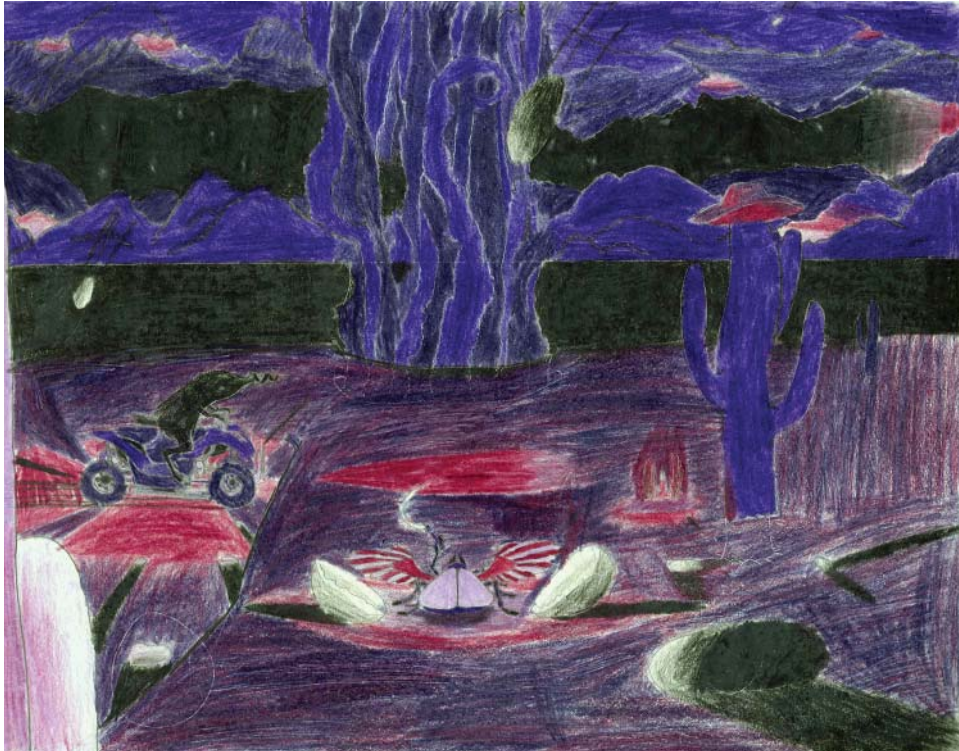
# Katy the Kitten



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KORWYNN BROWN

# (Sur)reality



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HANNAH PAPENFUSS

## If

If you made a promise,  
To what extent would you keep it?  
If that promise was broken,  
Would you realize you need it?  
If you could turn back,  
To change just one thing,  
Would it be little,  
Or frighteningly big?

If you had a dream,  
And it shattered to pieces,  
Would you have the strength,  
Or the courage to leave it?  
I wouldn't,  
I don't,  
It still haunts me today,  
I can't find faith as I'm broken this way.

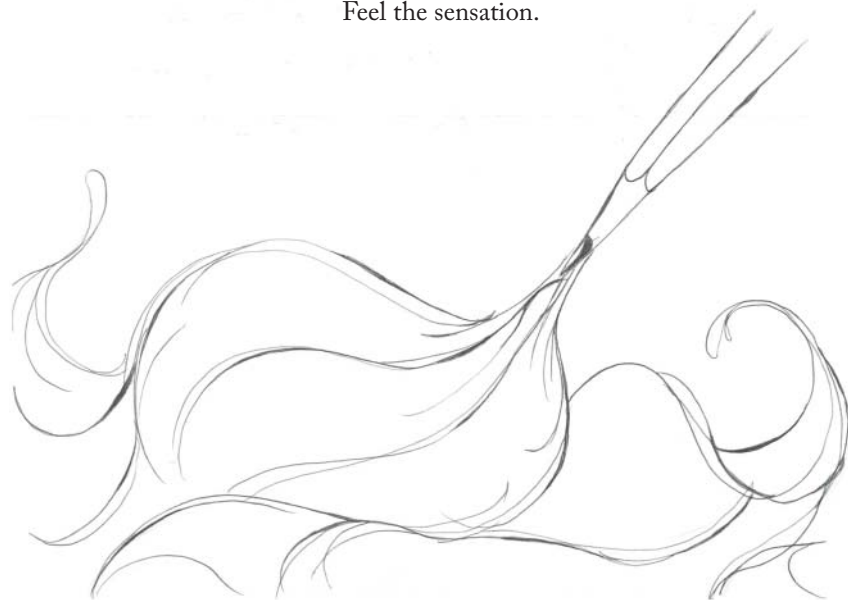
If you had a moment,  
To sit and ponder,  
What would you see,  
That you have forgotten?  
About the cruelty and truth,  
Of the world we live in,  
This I want to know.

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DESIREE BAUER

# Writing

Imagination  
flows out. rushing, escaping.  
Feel the sensation.



*Jacinta Theischafer / NE Staff*

# CONTRIBUTORS

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**HOUDA ABDELRAHMAN, *Rewind Park*, 43; *Life in a Breath*, 57.**

A freshman majoring in Zoology, Houda says, "I wrote 'Rewind Park' bit by bit over the course of a year. It began as a poem about ignoring a reality that hurts to think about but turned into a fictional story after I created Caroline's character and experimented with including more symbolism, such as the birds."

**MOHAMED ABDIRAHMAN, *Six-Word Essay*, 20.**

Mohamed is a freshman from Shoreview, MN, majoring in English. His six-word essay is about "a problem that causes everyone stress, stress, stress."

**JAZMIN AMOS, *Six-Word Short Story*, 56.**

A freshman majoring in English, Jazmin is from St. Paul, MN.

**DANIELLE ANDERSON, *Feathers of Life*, 35.**

A junior majoring in Public Relations, Danielle is originally from Cannon Falls, MN. She says that her picture is a "self-portrait" that uses words and phrases out of magazines to describe herself and that "It was made at a change in my life and the bird represents setting myself free."

**STEPHANIE ANDERSON, *Libraries*, 41.**

Stephanie is from Evansville, MN, and she is majoring in Political Science and International Studies. Regarding her essay, she wrote, "I used to go to the library in my hometown a lot, and wanted to talk about the feeling that it gave me."

**DESIREE BAUER, *Writing*, 112.**

Desiree is an eighth grader in Frazee, MN. She says she was inspired to write her poem because she has always loved writing and wants to be an author someday. "Writing" is about what goes on in her head when she writes, and she says that she hopes to explain why she loves it so much and why others should love it too.

**TANYA BIRKLID, *Six-Word Short Story*, 84.**

A sophomore with majors in Theatre and Public History, Tanya is originally from Fort Ransom, ND. She says this about her story: "I've always enjoyed watching horror films, George Romero, Vincent Price, and I've always read Stephen King my entire life, so this is where I drew my inspiration from."



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**KORWYNN BROWN, *(Sur)reality*, 110.**

Korwynn is from Fargo, ND. A high school sophomore, he is home schooled. He says that his drawing is “a combination of a lot of concepts and ideas taken out of context, made monochrome.”

**PAIGE BURLING, *Six-Word Short Story*, 103.**

A senior at Hazen High School, Paige says that she wrote her six-word short story “on the topic of texting and driving, partly because a freshman girl in my area was killed recently in an accident related to it. Teenagers don’t realize how deadly it can be.”

**Eva Byerley, *Patience*, 108.**

Eva is an eighth grader at Ellendale Public School. “My siblings and I waited patiently,” she says, “as we watched this butterfly grow from an egg into a caterpillar, into a cocoon, and then into a beautiful butterfly. I took this picture as we set our butterfly free.”

**DANDAN CHEN, *Six-Word Short Story*, 56 ; *College Forensics in America and China*, 79.**

From Hunan, China, Dandan studied at NDSU during the 2011-12 school year, majoring in English and education. In regards to her essay on college forensics, she says that she joined the NDSU Forensic Team and competed in many forensic tournaments around this country. “I have really learned a lot in this process, she says. “In particular I have gained some insights about cultural similarities and differences between forensics in China and America.” Her six-word short story came about because she was missing her boyfriend.

**KASEY CHESLEY, *To See*, 98.**

A junior at Enderlin, ND, Kasey says that she wrote this poem because “I don’t think people appreciate the things they have and how everyone is wanting more.”

**CAITLIN DEAL, *A Puppet*, 51.**

A senior at NDSU, Caitlin is majoring in Behavioral Statistics with a minor in Religious Studies. She has lived in Fargo for most of her life and her

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poem, “A Puppet” was written about the feelings of someone in a mental hospital and the person who loves her.

**SYLVIA DEMPSEY, *Untitled*, 86.**

“Sylvia Dempsey” is the pseudonym of a junior at NDSU who is majoring in English and minoring in Theatre Arts. She was born in Fargo, ND, and has spent most of her live there.

**PAIGE DOUGLAS, *Six-Word Essay*, 20.**

From Fergus Falls, MN, Paige is a sophomore majoring in English. She says that her essay “represents a formula that some people may use to make sense of the things around them that cannot be explained. However, some answers will only lead to more perplexing enigmas.”

**CORRIE DUNSHEE, *Six-Word Essay*, 38.**

A junior majoring in English and Journalism, Corrie comes from Bemidji, MN. With regard to her essay, she says, “Many times in our lives we are going at such a fast pace to get where we need to be. Some of those times it seems like such a furious whirlwind of events that do not want to stop. At some point down the road, we will hit a brick wall where we cannot move forward anymore and that dead end prevents us from getting what we ultimately wish to have in life.”

**JESSICA EDINGER, *Katy the Kitten*, 109.**

Jessica is an eighth grader at Grant County Junior High in Carson, ND. “I never really planned the photo out,” she says. “The truck in the background is my brother’s and the chair was just something we used doing fencing. The kitten Katy was just sitting on it one day, and I got multiple photos. This particular photo was the best.”

**MELISSA ESLINGER, *Peacocking*, 60.**

Melissa, originally from Wahpeton, ND, is a senior majoring in Journalism with double minors in PR/Advertising and Web Internet Design. She says, “I love peacocks and find their coloring to be absolutely beautiful. I wanted to make the colors pop by enhancing the black threshold to add contrast and posterized the color. I have an enlarged version at home printed on canvas with a black frame.

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**MEGAN L. EVEN, *Mr. Bones, Mr. Blue*, 92.**

From Aberdeen, SD, Megan graduated in December 2011 with double majors in English and Anthropology. She says, “I was originally going to call the piece ‘The Best Story I Have Ever Written.’”

**KELLY ANNE FRATZEL, *Taken*, 87.**

Kelly is a senior from Basehor, KS, majoring in Architecture. “I wrote this letter to my stillborn nephew, as an exercise prompted by a grief counselor,” she says. “I continue to write to him, as well as his sister who was stillborn a year earlier, in order to hold onto the hope and joy that they brought to us, even if they were only with us for a moment.”

**DELANEY FREER, *Fargo Frost*, 33; *Six-Word Essay*, 90.**

From Buffalo, MN, Delaney is a freshman majoring in Journalism with a minor in English. She says this about her photograph: “I was walking back from class after it had snowed when I took this picture. I thought the trees looked really pretty covered in frost.”

**JACOB RON GREENMYER, *The Last Creation*, 99.**

From Stirum, ND, Jacob is a senior at North Sargent High School in Gwinner, ND. He says that he wrote this short story for a semester English project and his English teacher, Mr. Wentworth, suggested that he try to get it published.

**RACHEL GRIDER, *Kicking*, 13; *Six-Word Essay*, 90.**

A freshman majoring in English and Anthropology, Rachel comes from Nevis, MN. She says that her poem “ended up being sort of stream-of-consciousness style—a product of the wee hours of the morning.”

**ABBY HAMMES, *Summer Serenity*, 61.**

From West Fargo, ND, Abby is a junior majoring in English and Political Science with minors in Criminal Justice and Women & Gender Studies. She says, “I think this photo simply catches the essence of summer—fun, calm, and warmth.”

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**DONALD HANNINEN, *Six-Word Essay*, 90.**

A junior majoring in Mathematics and Statistics, Donald is originally from Sebeka, MN. He wrote this about his six-word essay: “When all seems lost, fear not. / Time wounds the memories best forgot.”

**JEFFREY HOOPES, *Six-Word Short Story*, 84.**

Jeff, a junior PR/Advertising major and Communication Management minor, is from Minnetonka, MN. He got the idea for his story while promoting *Northern Eclecta* in the Memorial Union in February.

**ROSS HUBER, *Six-Word Short Story*, 103.**

Ross is a student at Hazen High School.

**ERICA IMSANDE, *Six-Word Short Story*, 84**

Erica is a senior English major from New York Mills, MN. With regard to her six-word short story, she says: “My friends and I like to make up really ‘bad’ jokes, and this six-word story stemmed from one that I thought up one day.”

**KAYLEE JANGULA, *I Found Out Who My Father Was*, 15.**

Kaylee, a senior majoring in English and minoring in Human Development and Family Science, is from Grand Forks, ND. Kaylee says that she wrote this selection specifically for a creative writing course but that it had been in the works for several years. “I really want to give hope to girls who have lived through similar situations,” she says.

**MOLLY JOHNSON, *Hope*, 104.**

Molly Johnson is a senior in high school in Hazen, ND. Her poem “Hope” is about Wilfredo, a five-year-old boy she met who lives in Peru.

**NAYEON KIM, *The Memory*, 19.**

Nayeon is an exchange student from South Korea who has been studying English at NDSU. She wrote this poem “at the end of the fall season...It is about my impression of the weather in Fargo, the long winter, and the strong wind that changed from moment to moment.”

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**PETER KOEPP, *Delicious Indolence*, 57.**

A junior majoring in English from Sartell, MN, Peter says, “This poem basically came to me as I was sitting lazily on the couch one day, most likely putting off doing some homework. I was feeling hungry and thought about making a frozen pizza but realized I might even have been too lazy to do that at the moment.”

**CADE KRUEGER, *The Narrow Path*, 85.**

Cade is a senior majoring in Construction Engineering. He says that “This poem is basically about loyalty, love, and the triumph of love over adversity. I had the image of high rocky cliffs over a dark, raging sea when I began to write it. I started writing it in 2008–2009 and have since revised it to its current form.”

**ELLI LEACH, *Zombicorn: A Six-Word Short Story*, 42.**

From Fargo, ND, Ellis is a sophomore (almost a junior) Anthropology major. Regarding her story, she says, “I was thinking about a book that alternated between zombie and unicorn stories....so my brain decided to combine them. Don’t ask me why—my mind just goes on strange tangents sometimes.”

**NICHOLAS LEDOUX, *Six-Word Essay*, 20.**

Nick is a junior from Fargo, ND, working on a double major in English and Theatre. “Throughout the years,” he says, “I have noticed that the more I learn about the world around me, the less mystery it contains—giving my imagination less to work with.”

**DOMINIC J. MANTHEY, *Cool FM*, 21.**

From Fargo, ND, Dominic is a senior with double majors in English and Philosophy. He says this about his short story: “I wanted to play around with the traditional expectations of readers. Plus, I had an ax to grind with cool jazz.”

**BRIE MICHAELSON, *Six-Word Essay*, 20; *Sunshine*, 72; *Six-Word Short Story*, 84; *Counting Sheep*, 89.**

A freshman majoring in English, Brie comes from Williston, ND. “I’m lazy and an insomniac,” she says, “and two of my pieces were nonfiction stories...so that’s my life in a nutshell.”

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**MARISSA KIBBY (NELSON) MOXNESS, *North Dakota Skyline*, 59.**

A senior at NDSU majoring in Natural Resources Management with minors in Range Science and General Agriculture, Marissa grew up near Watford City, ND. With regard to her photograph, she says, "I was driving across the state and became awestruck by the beauty as I drove through western ND. I had to pull over and capture this image in order to share it with others, since the contrast of the green grass and the beautiful sky and clouds is indescribable."

**LINNEA ROSE NELSON, *Winter, Sushi, This*, 31.**

Originally from Mayville, ND, Linnea is junior who is majoring in French and English. She says that her poem "Winter, Sushi, This" was "an attempt to immortalize two of the things that make living in a Fargo winter survivable: sushi and Andrew."

**SHAHANA NORTON, *Lost: A Six-Word Short Story*, 94.**

From Fargo, ND, Shahana is a sophomore majoring in Math/Math Education/Computer Science.

**HANNAH PAPENFUSS, *If*, 111.**

Hannah is a seventh grader in Moorhead, MN. Regarding her poem "If," Hannah wrote that it was inspired because "I have Cerebral Palsy and have been confined to a wheelchair my whole life. I often wonder how people would react to life-altering situations, so I wrote this poem to reflect my thoughts."

**GRACE PETERSON, *Six-Word Essay*, 20; *Please Ignore the Next Few Lines*, 58.**

From Mandan, ND, Grace is a freshman majoring in English.

**SPENCER PTACEK, *Tremendous Bell*, 63.**

A senior with a majors in both English and Philosophy, Spencer comes from Oakes, ND. He says that this story "was inspired in part by listening to the bells that play on NDSU's campus. I shudder to think how loud they are up close."

**EMILY RAMAGE, *Badlands Brush*, 107.**

Currently a junior at Watford City High School, Emily says she has always had a passion for photography. "While out in the badlands with my mom," she says, the sun perfectly hit this tree, creating a beautiful image."

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**MICHAEL RAUSER, *Rectangles*, 14; *The Chair*, 91.**

A freshman from Fargo, Michael is majoring in Communications. He says that “Rectangles” is actually one of his older poems and that he wrote it “during an instant message conversation on Facebook. I wrote two lines at a time and just sent them off as I thought them up.”

**TYLER RINGSTAD, *Six-Word Short Story*, 56.**

Tyler is a freshman English Education student from Maplewood, MN. When describing the process used to write his six-word short story, he states that he wanted it to have some interaction, so he worked with dialogue and eventually found something that is both familiar to the reader and not too straightforward, with dialogue and eventually found something that is both “familiar to the reader and not too straightforward.”

**TATJANA SCHELL, *A Mother’s Funeral*, 36; *A Nice Summer Morning*, 37.**

Tatjana is a Ph.D. student in the Department of English.

**E. RICHARD SCHWAB, *Pindergrast*, 3.**

E. Richard Schwab is a Music major and Psychology minor from West Fargo, ND. He says that “Pindergrast” is the story of “an elderly author who, on being diagnosed with a terminal illness, reflects on his dramatic past and the important people, frustrated expectations, failures, and disappointments therein. The story originally started out as a homework assignment, but I found out that I couldn’t put the pen down once I started telling Pindy’s story. Throughout the story, I wanted to portray the swift bluntness with which death and loss often enter our lives.”

**CAITLIN SKJERVEM, *Rain Makes Us Famous*, 97.**

Caitlin is a senior at Lakota High School, Lakota, ND. She says that her poem “Rain makes Us Famous” was inspired because “it’s a moment in life so spontaneous and perfect that it becomes...unforgettable and priceless.”

**AMBER SUNDERMAN, *Wind*, 19.**

Amber Sunderman is a third-year Landscape Architecture major and Horticulture minor from Long Prairie, MN. Amber describes “Wind” as a sketch completed at random while listening to an alumni speaker in the fall of

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2011. Amber says that she liked how it turned out and decided to submit it to *Northern Eclecta*.

**KATHERINE THORESON, *On Seeing Headlights in the Corner of My Eye*, 49.**

Katherine Thoreson, from Buxton, ND, is a sophomore majoring in English and Philosophy/Humanities. She wrote the poem about various experiences she has had while walking down the sidewalks of Fargo at night.

**JENNIFER THORSON, *Abandoned*, 106.**

Jennifer, a senior at Thompson High School, says “I have always been inspired by vintage and antique items as well as simplicity. As I visit my great-grandma’s house, I take thousands of pictures, which resulted in this!”

**CELENA TODORA, *Six-Word Essay*, 38.**

From Lino Lakes, MN, Celena is majoring in English and English Education. Celena received the inspiration to write her six-word essay from a childhood cat named Patches. Patches disappeared when Celena was in the fifth grade and was never found again.

**TESSA TORGESON, *Greenie*, 53.**

Tessa is an English major from Bismarck, ND. “Greenie” is based upon a difficult time period in her life during which she struggled with addiction and depression. After recovering and healing, she chose to write frankly about the matter in order to share her experience and belief that struggling with mental health should not have to be a taboo topic.

**JENAE VALVODA, *Six-Word Essay*, 90.**

From Pine City, MN, Jenae is a sophomore English major and Sociology minor. “At the time I wrote this six-word memoir,” she says, “it pertained to a long-distance relationship; however, I think it could relate to many things.”

**JOSEPH VASKE, *The Hunger*, 73; *Id Rather*, 93.**

Joe is a Theatre major from Parkers Prairie, MN. In “The Hunger,” Joe attempts to explore an alternate point-of-view than what is currently shown for one of the most popular fictional antagonists: the zombie. “Id Rather” was written after a friend asked Joe what his plans were for college. While most of his classmates



wanted to be doctors or athletes, his dreams were to be an artist or musician. This piece was used to explain the motivations behind his decision.

**EMILY J. VIEWEG, *Six-Word Essay*, 90.**

Emily is a Theatre major and an English—Writing Studies minor. She was born and raised near St. Louis, MO. She tries to live with no regret, only lessons learned. Her wisdom to *Northern Eclecta* readers: it turns out that sometimes the lesson learned *is* regret.

**ANN WASKOSKY, *Dillon*, 83.**

Born in Minneapolis, MN, Ann is in her second year at NDSU. “The title has nothing to do with the poem,” she says. “My teeth and I are on talking terms again; we have a love/hate relationship.”

**ANUSHI WEERASINGHE, *Six-Word Essay*, 38.**

Originally from Sri Lanka, Anushi is a junior majoring in English language and literature. She says that she wrote this six-word essay because “I’m from a country where social norms are highly valued and expected from everyone, so it is only safe to ‘Be wild while no one’s watching’.”

**CHAMANTHI WEERATUNGA, *Nonperishable Choices*, 34.**

Chamanthi is from Sri Lanka and he is working on a fine arts major here at NDSU. He says that his screen print depicts himself smoking celery. “This piece expresses that genetically modified food is just as harmful as cigarettes,” he says. “Food that has chemicals can harm you as much as smoking cigarettes does.”

**BETHANY G. WEINAND, *Six-Word Short Story*, 103.**

A senior at Hazen High School, Hazen, ND, Bethany says, “I have detested mowing the lawn ever since the first time that I did it; the lawn more shot out a rock that hit me right in the eye. Although I have found few who hate this job as much as I do, I hope all will enjoy my piece.”

**SAMANTHA WICKRAMASINGHE, *A Moment of Imperfection*, 75.**

Sam, from Colombo, Sri Lanka, is a junior majoring in journalism. “I wrote this poem,” he says, “influenced by Buddhist meditation. In Buddhist meditation it is told that there is a state of mind called *Jhana* where the meditator will feel

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extremely happy. I have heard that sometimes meditators reject this happiness because they find it to be ‘too happy’ and think ‘I don’t deserve this.’ Not only in meditations, but I have found in real life that people tend to find imperfection, even within perfection.”

**JONI WIEBESICK, *Six-Word Short Story*, 56; *Lost in Reality, Found in Dreams*, 77.**  
Joni’s hometown is Fargo, but she was born in South Korea. A senior majoring in Psychology, she also has minors in both Political Science and Criminal Justice.

**ANDREW YOUNG, *The Trouble With Redheads*, 39.**

Andrew, a senior from Napoleon, ND, majors in Broadcast Journalism and Management Communications. “I decided to write this article after many long conversations and visits with a close friend of mine,” he says. “With many recent (negative) debates and conversations on the issue of homosexuality in society, I decided to use the writing style of satire to surface real, underlying issues.”

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*Northern Eclecta* is a literary journal produced by students in the English 213, 313, and 413: Literary Publications classes, and Volume 6 was created during Spring Semester 2012. 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 2013, and students who are interested in editing, document design, desktop publishing, graphics, and public relations are encouraged to enroll.

For Volume 7, to be published in 2013, submissions will be open to all NDSU students, all NDSU alumni, and all secondary school students in the area.

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