

IN THE
WRITE
MIND

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Editors' Choice



J a m e s B l e v i n s
P o e t

For this issue, the staff of *In the Write Mind* chose to feature their favorite piece. As a group we took a vote and felt like the poem "Sad to the Branch", written by James Blevins (found on p. 33) exuded the highest craftsmanship that captured our desired sense of quality. We sat down with Blevins to ask him about his piece.

What inspired your piece?

I started writing ["Sad to the Branch"] a few years ago, actually. It was right after my creative writing class over the summer, last year, and I started to experiment with taking a little more time with poems and I used to just kinda of, as I refer to it, "vomit them out". I started to get away from that and I think it started to help me. It was one of the first poems I started to specifically work on and edit. There have been so many versions of that poem.

[It is p]robably one of the poems I've worked the longest on. I remember thinking at the time... It was kind of a downer day and I

just kind of made the connection between my glasses fogging up, it was humid, and somehow I associated sadness with moisture in the air and, you know, I thought of that with trees and I just sort of made my world... You know, you own the world that you're living in, poetically. So I just made it my sad little place where my feelings could be liquid or air. It's supposed to be more of a general sadness, not necessarily a specific kind of sadness. But that's kinda where it came from.

Having spent so much time on this poem, how does it feel to Editors Choice?

Oh it's awesome! Very rewarding... because it took me about a year and a half. I'm very

pleased because I know I worked hard on it. So if it finally reached a level where it could be appreciated by other people besides just myself, that's awesome.

How did you get into poetry and how long have you been writing poetry?

When I was younger I never would have said I liked poetry necessarily... I just liked lyrics, music. A lot of my interest in poetry stems from my interests in music so I used to write "lyrics" [Blevins makes air quotes] when I was younger...but what they were really were, were poems... they weren't good. I didn't start writing real poetry until 2008. I had just gotten out of a relationship and I needed something to express myself with. I used to write screenplays, and that really wasn't cutting it, so I just started

writing poetry. It's weird, too, because I'm so undisciplined, I used to be, as a writer. I'd never finish many screenplays but when I started writing poetry

I couldn't stop. So I wrote for a long time. I only recently started to edit all that material into something.

Is this something you want to do with your future?

In a perfect world, I would love to. I know the reality is that I'm not going to get paid to write poetry but it would be nice to have a collection. I'd like to have it published. I'd like to be known as a good poet. I don't feel like I've scratched the surface yet. I think I've still got a lot of room to grow. But ultimately I want to make a living as a writer.

Read more of James's poetry on p. 8 & 42.

"You know, you own the world you're living in, poetically."

A r m S

Elissa Kane

So many poems
Extol the virtues
Of eyes;

That sparkle with mischief,
Cut with steely gaze,
Or show the soul.

So too are smiles presented,
Whether in secrets sitting in corners
Or straightened in determination.

But never have I seen a poem
Which truly captures
The essence of arms;

Those extensions of self
Which cocoon you
In eternal warmth.



Jimi
Cassandra Brennan - Acrylic

M i s s e d C a l l

James Blevins

I missed a
call from my
heart.

I wonder
what it
wanted.



Question
Eugene Petrosky - Digital Media



Eyes Meeting

Alicia Simonetti

It was the first time they were to meet. They had spoken for months by now, had shared things with each other. They were ready. But, there is always that shadow of doubt creeping around.

Scared, she didn't think it would go well at all. Would she be the problem? Would everything be ruined because of her?

A sense of nervousness flowed through him. He liked her. He wanted them to meet, but he was shy and quiet. He wasn't sure what to say or do.

The odds seemed stacked against them.

But then he just thought of how much he wanted to meet her. He thought of how much they had talked before now. He thought of the things they had shared. He thought of how excited he was to meet her in person at last.

So he persisted, insisted that they meet. Still worried about what may happen, she reluctantly agreed.

She wanted to meet him as well. Very much so. More than anything she wanted to hear his voice, see him smile, be the reason that he smiled, feel his hand in her own, and look into his eyes. She didn't want it all to be just a screen anymore.

Change was difficult for her, terrifying even. She had never done this before. It was okay though, because he was there. He wanted to be there and was willing to go slow so she'd be comfortable. All he wanted was to be with her. No matter how long it took.

They worked well together. Frantic and worrisome, tempered by calm and patience.

The beginning was awkward, an unexpected side hug that she wasn't ready for. Yet she smiled and wrapped an arm around him anyway. Both chuckled nervously.

It was comical how awkward they both were at first. Every time they tried to look at each other they started to laugh. His eyes would be on her, yet she would be looking the other way. Her eyes would drift his way, yet his would be trained on the street.

When their timing finally matched, it was electricity. Their eyes devoured each other's features.

She didn't feel close enough. Her eyes would often drift in his direction simply to gaze at his face. She enjoyed just being in his presence.

He would look at her face with a soft smile, just staring at her for moments at a time. Every time she turned her head towards him he would laugh, embarrassed that she had caught him.

They smiled together. Eyes averted quickly followed by a short burst of laughter and a simple, "What?"

Their hearts were racing, fingers tapping, and heads spinning. Yet they were happy because they were finally together at last.

It was sweet. It was innocent. It was truly the start of something beautiful.



D r e a m G i r l

Mason Gonsisko

A man walks into the bar,
Sighs into a booth,
Orders his drink.
There she is,
Light of his life,
Girl of his dreams.
Talking with another,
A man more handsome,
A man more successful.
But he doesn't blame her.
After all, it was never
Going to last.
The flames of their love were great,
But they were too hot,
Too passionate to burn forever.
The end was mutual.
Both held regrets,
Both thought it the best.
She looks over to him,
Her lips quirk up,
A hand raised in greeting.
He smiles back,
Stands up,
Moves his feet with purpose.
Through the door he goes,
Leaving the bar and regrets behind,
Where they should be.
He wishes her good luck,
Maybe they'll meet on better terms.
Bye-bye Dream Girl.

A Splash of Color

Kailen J. Price - Digital Photography

Growing Up Pink

Skylar Astrid

You're such a beautiful baby girl. I promise I'll love you and take good care of you, Sweetheart.

Why don't you want the Barbie, Honey? You don't like it? You're a girl, girls love Barbies. This was your big sister's favorite toy- no, no, you can't go play outside with Matthew and the boys, they play really rough and you might get hurt.

How was school, Princess? Aw, Brendon was picking on you again? You know that means he likes you, right?

I'm *not* going to fight you again. You're in middle school, you have to start shaving your legs and wearing real bras. Every other girl does it.

You want to cut your hair? Why? It's so long and pretty. You would look like a boy if you cut it.

You need to stop throwing a fit about homecoming. You can wear a dress; it isn't going to kill you.

No, you aren't leaving the house until you put makeup on. A real lady takes care of herself and you look like a tired mess.

What do you mean you aren't a girl? You wear dresses and makeup, you played with Barbies when you were little, you act like a girl, how can you say you aren't? No, you aren't a boy. I would know if you were. No, this is just a phase. I raised you right, I raised you to be a woman, you can't just change that.



Aliyah
Cassandra Brennan - Digital Photography



Remake
Cassandra Brennan - Charcoal

A M O T H E R

Alicia Simonetti

When someone loses a person they really care about, nothing can be said to make them feel better. When I lost my mom, my whole world tilted on its axis and every time someone tried to relate or say they were sorry she was no longer here, I got closer and closer to having a breakdown. I never wanted any sympathy from friends or to share my sadness with my family members. I just wanted my mom back. Not being able to fix things like the characters in books could, what with a magic spell or grand quest for an enchanted goblet of life to bring her back, made it hard to deal with what happened. The melancholic state I was in could only go away when someone told me stories about her, whether sad or funny. It was the only thing that could make me smile for a long time after she passed away. Those feelings of hatred I had for the generic and sympathetic phrases people give after someone passes are universal. When a loved one is gone we want to remember what kind of person they were like, before we knew them, and things we didn't learn while they were in our lives or us in theirs. No one wants to hear, "They're in a better place now" or "They were

a wonderful person, they will be missed a lot." I hate hearing that because it makes me feel like she's being forgotten, that the memory of her is drifting away in a pool of lost souls who have been forgotten by time and those they knew. I want to remember Mom, to hear stories about her, and to know what kind of person she was. So, I asked and I remembered.

My mom had the biggest heart of anyone I knew and she cared very much about everyone in her life. She respected everyone she met because she never wanted to come across as mean or rude and she never wanted to hurt anyone on purpose. Mom always just wanted to make the lives of everyone around her easier. When my older sister got married, Mom pretty much handled the whole wedding on her own, from the decorations to making sure nothing went wrong. She did the same thing for baby showers and birthday parties, for family members and friends. Mom did everything because she liked to help people, even if she complained about it sometimes. She enjoyed it I'm sure, otherwise she wouldn't keep signing herself up for stuff like that. That's just the type of person

*"No one wants to hear,
'They're in a better
place now'."*

she was, an intuitive and helpful woman who cared a whole lot about people.

When I close my eyes and think of Mom, all I hear is her laughing or singing off-key; all I see is her bright smile; all I feel is a ghost-like remembrance of curling into her side with her arms around me. These are the most important things about her to remember because they make me smile.

Even when I remember the fights and the tense silences between us, all I have to do is think of her being happy and it makes me smile.

“Mom’s best quality was her smile. When she smiled she made everyone feel better.”

Mom was a wonderful person and although my younger self wouldn’t admit it, she was a wonderful mother. The two of us got into a lot of disagreements — I think there was a fight about pretty much everything. I would go running to Dad afterwards and she would go watch TV or make something crafty. At the end of the night though, she would always come into my room and we would work it out until I was okay with giving her a hug and saying, “I love you” before we went to sleep. That’s how we worked most of the time, I kind of hated it because I had wished we had a normal mother-daughter dynamic.

Now I just wish that I could have the arguments back.

“Mom could always brighten anyone’s day. Her warmth just made everyone feel happy and good.”

Just as Mom knew how to make me mad at her, she also knew how to turn my day around. If I was having a bad day and I just wanted to sleep it all away, Mom wouldn’t let me. Instead she would make me watch *7th Heaven* or *The Waltons* or even *Touched by an Angel* with her on TV, ask about my day, and sometimes she would get me a Frosty from Wendy’s. Mom didn’t really like bad days so she’d try to make mine better. I remember how if I got in the car upset or tired when she picked me up from school, she would try to talk to me. There would be a Frosty (she fed me way too many of those in middle school), talks of a trip to the bookstore that weekend, and lots of her singing to her Christmas CDs that she played in the car year-round. I would get so embarrassed that she’d sing those Christmas songs at the top of her lungs, dancing in her seat and making weird faces like she thought singers did up on stage.

Then she would always get upset and say “Uh!” all indignant when I turned the Christmas music off and immediately start doing the same thing with whatever was playing on the radio. It was always embarrassing but it also distracted me from whatever bad day I was having at the time. Mom was good at her job.

That is what I loved most about my mom, that she loved me enough to always try her hardest to make me happy because I don’t think she ever wanted me depressed. I asked my dad what he loved most in the world about Mom. It took him a little while to come up with an answer because it was hard for him to pick one thing after twenty-seven years together. Finally, he said that the thing he could say he loved most about Mom wasn’t anything she said or how she acted—nothing like that. There was nothing physical or material about it. The reason why was simply something that made him happy thinking about. It was something that I can agree I loved about her too.

“Because she loved me.”



(Portrait of Mom and Dad)



Hummingbird Hibiscus
Isis Marley - Acrylic

Azul Stone

Shaine McDonald - Digital Photography







fantôme
Jack Kelly - Digital Photography

A Galaxy Apart

Lacy Provencher

If we ignited, our light would burn
brighter and longer than that
of any sun.

We'd be inseparable like the stars
to the sky, not even daylight
could tear us apart.

We are meant to be together;
like the planets all aligned,
like the many galaxies in
space,

Like these things all together, that is
what we're meant to be.

But I'm afraid I'm that one dwarf
planet, that dim star.

Unnoticeable and unworthy of
recognition for what I should
be.

Afraid that you don't want to hold
onto me the way I orbit
around you.

Please ignite. Please align. Please
realize I'm here.

You could be the stars in my sky,
the sun that shines down
through the clouds.

The perfect galaxy,
if only, together.

favela [fah-ve-lah]

Josh Swander - Digital Photography





Island Fever

Elizabeth Wood

We drove boats before kindergarten,
We drank before we could drive,
We smoked cigarettes at fourteen,
And weed filled young boys' eyes.
Mommas became daddies
(Because daddies could be continents away),
Crustaceans meant paychecks,
Meaning for a year we'd be okay,
Daddy came back once a year,
And drank all night long.
Daddy was a stranger, but in the end
We always got to bond.
Momma would fight with Daddy
Saying his blood was more alcohol,
Momma didn't know that their last fight
Would be finished with his last phone call.
We gathered around that tombstone,
Heard the angels cry,
Booze couldn't save this broken heart,
And old women sang a sad lullaby.
We may have siblings that were rumored about,
But no one would ever admit it,
A cuss word was a first word,
We grew up knowing we needed grit.
Our ships haven't completely sank,
By taking the law in our own hands,
Our muscles grew because of gas tanks,
And callouses made you a man.
We chewed tobacco,
We choked on raw food,
We ate anything we could catch,
And could throw in a stew.
We were racists against colored people,
But, brother, I'm as black as you,
Our blood has only a few last names,
And family trees crossing ain't new.
Yeah, this island has its problems,
We're sick to the bone-
This disease you catch is fatal,
But we all chose this plague as our home.

Anxiety & Depression

Antonia Yerke

Everything yet nothing,
Silent screams, broken dreams,
Raging storm, deathly calm,
Crying out unheard,
Saying everything yet not a word.



Frustrations

Kailen J. Price - Digital Photography

Her Hair is Pink

Shaun Cable

Love truly is a beautiful thing, a persisting feeling that grants such bliss while under the right conditions. True, love is not always perfect, but nothing ever is. This fact does not and should not take away from this emotion we feel. This emotion I feel, for a woman in my life, one that I will never give up on. However, while your love or your neighbor's love could be considered standard, my love and my relationship could not be described with the same word. It only makes sense to start at the beginning.

My love story began at the bar, oddly enough. My week before had been completely terrible: I had just gotten fired from my job for a very petty reason, my car had broken down and needed some expensive repairs, I had gotten a new jackass neighbor, and my wonderful cat had passed away. So it seemed that the weaver of fate had decided, for just one week, to completely screw me over. Anyway, I decided to wash away my troubles with some heavy drinking, which, considering the mild depression I was feeling at the time, seemed like a perfectly rational decision.

I took my first step into the bar, and something immediately caught my eye. Long, vibrant pink hair. It belonged to a woman. She

was sitting at the other end of the bar at a table, completely alone, fiddling with her half empty glass as if she had nothing better to do. I had stopped in place to take a look at her when our eyes met. They were a beautiful shade of blue and were very powerful. There was a spark in her eyes of playful seduction, and the look she gave seemed as if she could see right through me. I wanted to move, but I didn't want to look away. It was almost like I thought that if I

did look away, she would disappear like she had never even existed. I was kicked out of my dream-like state when someone bumped into me on their way out, since I forgot I was still in

the doorway. Instead of ordering a drink like a normal person, I decided to go with my gut and have a seat at her table. I was going to say something along the lines of, "Your beauty brought me over here," but when her eyes met mine, with her chin rested on her hand and her lips curling up into a slight smile, all that came out of my mouth was gibberish.

"Well said, stranger." Her voice was soft, but there was maturity to it. I must have looked like an idiot, but despite my embarrassment I didn't run away. I was compelled to talk to this woman, like she was drawing me in.

"True, love is not always perfect, but nothing ever is."



Into the Light
Isis Marley - Oil Pastel

"Sorry, I was going to say something else, but not everything goes as planned," I finished with a chuckle, trying to lighten the mood. It seemed to work, because she responded with a smile and a sip of her near-empty drink. "You're almost out, I can go up and buy us a few drinks if you'd like."

"I would like that, thank you." I got a beer for myself and a mango margarita for her. It occurred to me that I didn't ask her what she wanted, but she liked it anyway, thanking me for a second time and drinking it.

"My name is James. Mind telling me yours?" She looked up from her drink, that seductive spark in her eyes present once again. I hate to sound like a broken record and repeat myself, but this woman was absolutely stunning. Her long, pink hair was slightly messy as it tumbled past her shoulders and down her back. Her

face was thin, with a short nose and soft looking cheeks. There was a small heart tattoo on her left cheek. She was wearing a plain black dress and matching black shoes. Her posture was nearly perfect, as if she always tried to maintain it for a good impression. I know many many beautiful women are out there, but something about her felt different, like she was otherworldly. I couldn't explain it. She hadn't responded yet, but she was looking directly into my eyes, as if she was reading me. Finally, she tilted her head slightly to the left and spoke her name.

"Celeste." I immediately responded by saying her name was beautiful. Without really thinking, I began to ask her questions, like what her favorite kind of music was, her favorite season, what kind of television shows she watched, whether or not she liked the beach. I didn't even ask if she was single,

I just wanted to know more about her. Perhaps we could become friends. The feeling I got from talking to her was therapeutic, especially after all the crap that I had been through that week.

Celeste began answering my questions calmly, not discouraged by my rapid speech or my obvious excitement. The two of us began to talk more about each other as I told her how my week had been. She appeared to be genuinely sorry for me, but I told her that talking to her was already making me feel much better. Time went by rather quickly as we continued to chat, until I finally asked if she was single.

Celeste threw me off guard when she began laughing, and I had no idea why. I didn't say something funny, and it didn't seem like she was laughing at me. After a moment, she started to calm down, a bright smile spread on her face.

"Tell you what, James. I'll challenge you to a simple game. Do you accept?" I was confused by her proposal, but I accepted her challenge nonetheless. She pulled out a brand new,

unopened deck of cards. She proceeded to open it, and pulled out all the face cards, leaving in just the numbers.

"I'm going to pull out one card from this deck. You

have three ways you can guess the card. If you can call out the color correctly we can keep talking, and possibly develop a bond. Maybe we can even meet again if you interest me. You can call out the suit, and I'll give you my phone number, so you can call me whenever you want. Or, finally, if you can call out the specific number then you'll get my phone number, my attention, and you can spend the night with me."

"What happens if I guess incorrectly?"

"Get it wrong and we'll part ways. You'll never see me again. So, I'll give you a moment to decide what your guess will be. Take your time."

The thought of never seeing her again was a bit frightening. It might sound odd, considering I had just met this woman, but it just didn't sit well with me. She was so intriguing, and I felt like I could get along well with her. So, I decided not to call out a number, since my week had been unlucky, and I didn't want to take the chance. If I called out the color, we could keep

talking, but we might not hit it off as much as I would like to, and she wouldn't be interested in seeing me again if that were to happen. But, if I called out the suit, I would get her number, and we could talk whenever we wanted.

"Well, my lucky suit for cards has always been the heart, but I think I'll guess that you'll pick out a black card."

She curled her lips into a slight smile and slowly pulled a card from the deck, making sure that it was facing away from me. Celeste took a quick look at the card and then flipped it around, revealing the black nine of spades. I sighed in relief, happy that I still got to talk to her. I felt like my week was turning around already. She told me that I could try again, possibly test my luck with a riskier choice. I knew that it would be stupid to throw this chance away just for the opportunity to get luckier. But, I was riding a wave of confidence, and took her challenge, calling out that the card would be a heart. She slowly pulled out another card, taking a look at it. Celeste's smile faded a bit, and I felt my heart sinking as

she revealed a club. I had screwed up. This was my chance to be happy again and I failed. I watched, unable to respond, as she put all the cards back and finished her drink. But, she

surprised me when she handed me the deck.

"You can keep it. I suggest you look through it, after all, the heart is your lucky card. My lucky card is the eight." She began walking away, then stopped, looking back at me.

"Even though you lost, I had a good time James. Thank you for the drink, and have a great night. Oh, and before I forget yes, I am single." I watched as she walked out with a slight sway to her hips, her vibrant pink hair flowing from her movement. My curiosity got the best of me as I looked through the deck for the eight of hearts. On the back of the playing card, there was a little slip of paper that had been taped to it. I lost, but yet she still gave me her number. I was so damn happy that I didn't even stop to wonder how she knew what card was my lucky one before she even met me, or how she put the slip of paper in a brand new deck. I didn't even see her do it. This thought came to me later, but at the moment all I was thinking of was talking to her again.

"Get it wrong and we'll part ways. You'll never see me again."



Young Janis
Cassandra Brennan - Acrylic



Sad to the Branch

James Blevins

The trees hold air sad to the branch.
As I, bated breath, coarse and slow,
hold beat to breast.

Under blind, I walk the foolish air
Of nearsightedness, of clouded sight.
I imagine our outline nearby.

Brittle, my hands hold the midcourse—
To front, to mouth, to back of throat—
a gauze for gashes undone.

I'm smashed, tucked in—as marrow
Spoils, as bathrooms gather themselves
from many steps distant.

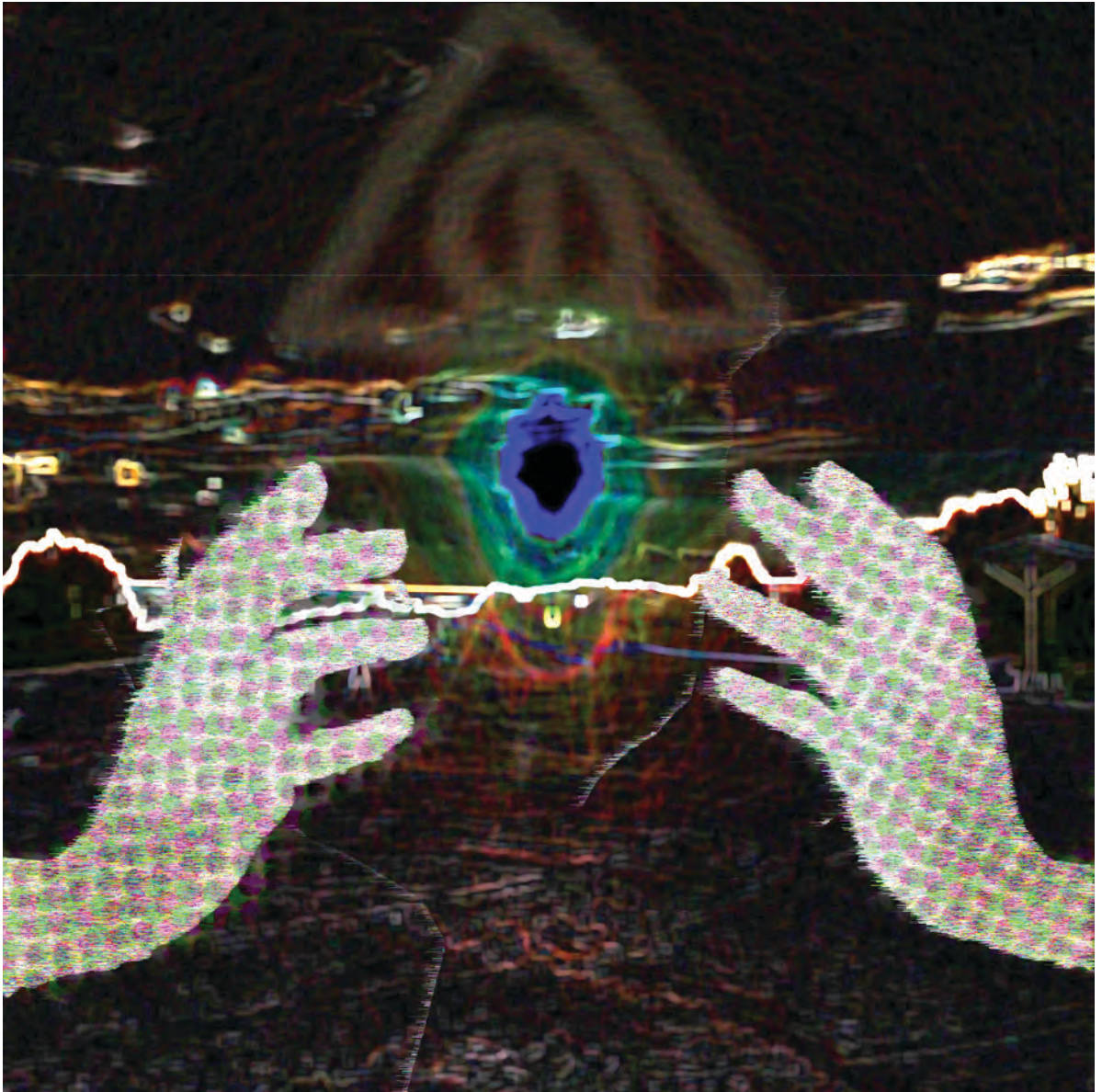
My liver canes itself.
(A lonely organ demanding more
from me.)

Bars threaten weak ankles.
Calcified bone (my heart)
fears another sprain.

A verse from the blind. An ode to
branches,
Aimless and content. I was a poem
folded,
torn in two by accident.

Specs pulled from a face, wiped on a
shirt,
Clearing the clouds, returned to
eyes still red.

A branch
still broken—held
sad to the bones of our last
breath.



The Trip
Dakotah T. Robinson - Digital Media

A p o s t a s y

Antonia Yerke

Softly lit rooms,
A terrifying intimacy,
Anticipation looms,
Emotional intricacy.

Thoughts drift,
A moment of inspiration,
Mood shift,
Mental elation.

Excitement awaits,
Questions abound,
Rising to meet fate,
A new joy is found.

Still Ticking

Emily Cyr

When an individual has met their time here in this world, one thing that still remains is their legacy. What kind of life did they live? How will their life be remembered? Who do they leave behind? Many grieve in substantially different ways. There are published works that specialize in the easing of grieving. However, what book do you refer to when half of your family won't even acknowledge your right to mourn the loss of a loved one? That is the tightrope where I reside. When Grandpa passed on last year, I was undeniably devastated. After not being allowed to see him right before his time had come, I was ridiculed whenever I expressed my sorrow. The reasoning would go along the lines of, "You never cared about him." I would be told constantly, "You had no interest in being in his life." Of course, this was my mother's way of grieving. I didn't think much of it then, but to this day, I can't say Grandpa's name without opening the wound. This remarkable man has made a huge impact on my life and many others. His story needs to be told, as the matter isn't about "Who loved Grandpa more" it's "Let us preserve our memories of him for generations to come." No matter how much denial, our time together has always held a spot inside my soul.

As a young child, I saw Grandpa as one of the most mysterious people in the world. From his attire to his life's story, he always kept my early mind turning. Every day, he would wear the red button-up flannel with the "pretty buttons" as I donned them. By "pretty buttons", I meant the opal snaps that lined up his shirts; then again, what four-year-old is going to be able to distinguish what opal is? Regardless, my four-year-old self was convinced that he had a

closet full of 365 "shirts with the pretty buttons." One for every day of course! Ultimately, he was the one who first explained the whole concept of 'laundry' to me. Of course, this was after many failed attempts of trying to sneak a peek into his closet to debunk my theory on the plethora of shirts.

As if that conspiracy theory wasn't enough, I never really got his life story straight until I actually sat down with my family and asked about him recently. I would ask him about the liver spots and his bruised skin, and he would tell little me the craziest of stories. One time he had me convinced that it was because he was a professional pig wrestler from Wetumpka. Or when asked where he came from, he would tell me Gary, Indiana, or some other ridiculous city name just to keep me on my toes. When

"To this day, I can't say Grandpa's name without opening the wound."

I sat down with my father is when I found out he was actually from a small town in Michigan. He had told me Grandpa was drafted into

the Air Force when he was just 17 years old, and served as a fighter pilot during many wars. The mysterious man little-me had come to know had just been debunked.

A couple of years had passed, and around the time I was eleven, Grandma and Grandpa had moved to Georgia. I was heartbroken. Going from practically visiting every other day to being five hours away really drew a part of me away. It was hard for me to process the change, and Mom could see it. In an effort to restore "the old me," she had provided the option of spending a summer up there with them. I was ecstatic! Words couldn't describe how excited I was when I called Grandpa up on the phone and told him I was crossing the



state border. Every day in Centerville was an adventure in my eyes. I would wake up and wouldn't know what would be in store for the day. Grandma would usually opt-out to stay and make dinner, so it was typically just the two of us most days. We would visit the Air Force base, the aviation museums, and he would even make games out of going grocery shopping. The premise of the game was to find the first person you saw and give them the most dramatic backstory you could imagine. Whoever would come up with the greatest Oscar-worthy storyline would get to have control of the radio on the way home or such. Needless to say, there was a lot of old gospel music and Justin Bieber echoing the summer of 2010.

When we would get home, Grandma would already have the dinner table set; folded napkin and fork to the left, knife on the right. We would all sit down together for dinner, but before we ate, Grandpa always said a prayer. His prayers were centuries long, as he would make sure to give thanks for every aspect of his life before he would even touch his meal. I thought I had mastered the incognito "reach for my food while he isn't looking" technique because, let's face it, I was a rather hungry and impatient child. I would soon learn that I wasn't as sneaky as I thought I was when he finally caught me nibbling at the cheesy biscuits Grandma made with the eggplant parmesan. He didn't want to embarrass me in front of Grandma, but we shared a similar understanding that what I was doing was disrespectful without having to say a word; just the way he looked at me with those solemn blue eyes of his. I learned to love those prayers after a while, no matter how long they spread into dinner time.

Dinner would be about finished when we heard that iconic whistle every day at six o'clock. It was none other than the *Andy Griffith Show* theme song. We would put our dishes in the sink and jump onto the couch immediately. I would say that was the only predictable part about our Georgia summers. It was our end-of-the-day ritual, and we could all go to bed knowing we

had made the best of our day knowing it ended with Andy Griffith. As the summer would come to a close, and school was coming around the corner, going back home was difficult. I would always have the next summer to look forward to, but that was just so far away from then. Mom would meet us at the halfway point: 2.5 hours each way we would find each other at the McDonald's in Valdosta, right off the highway. We would exchange our goodbyes, and every summer it grew more difficult. "Don't worry Emilio," Grandpa would reassure, "there's always next summer." As the years went on, to both our dismay, the Georgia summers came to an unfortunate end.

I had just turned thirteen when everything started going downhill. Mom had thrown me out. A miscommunication on visitation with Dad amongst other ordeals ultimately led to the action. But most importantly, in the time where I had no contact with my grandparents was when Grandpa's health was starting to decline. Until recently, I wasn't aware that he had previously had lung cancer and had one taken out. Atop the asthmatic tendencies was an even more unnerving issue: he had gone to the doctor for his splitting headaches only to discover he developed a brain tumor. To think that he braved through all the physical pain he was experiencing without me noticing a thing, it made me admire him more.

Once I got my first cell phone, Grandpa was one of the first people I called. It was always refreshing to hear his voice so chipper, it took my mind off of the pressing issues. In a time where half of my family hated me for wanting to spend time with my father, he was the one who stepped up and told me he still loved me and supported me, despite his strong faith.

"Love has no boundaries, Emilio. You can either ridicule your life away, or you can learn to roll with the punches. Life is simply too short to hold hatred in your heart. Hearts were made for love, and my heart's still ticking."

"I had just turned thirteen when everything started going downhill."

Opposite page: *Sunset Over the Ocean of Fabrics*
Ashley Southey - Oil Pastel





Hug
Steven Cavaco - Pencil

A Classic Romance

Mason Gonsisko

Girl meets boy,
Boy has insecurities.

Girl helps boy
Conquer his fears.

They have sex.
It doesn't work out.

An Old Poet

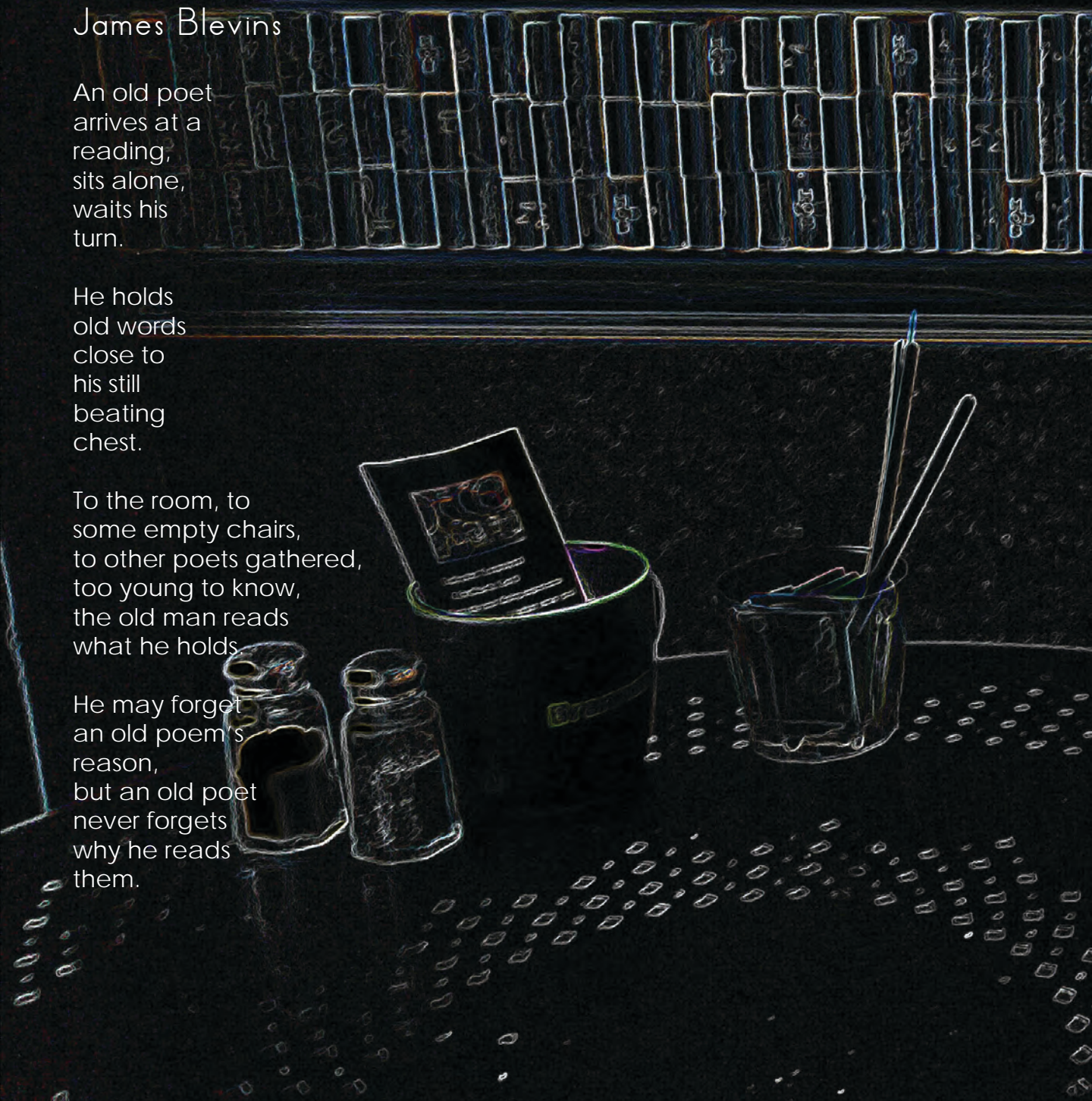
James Blevins

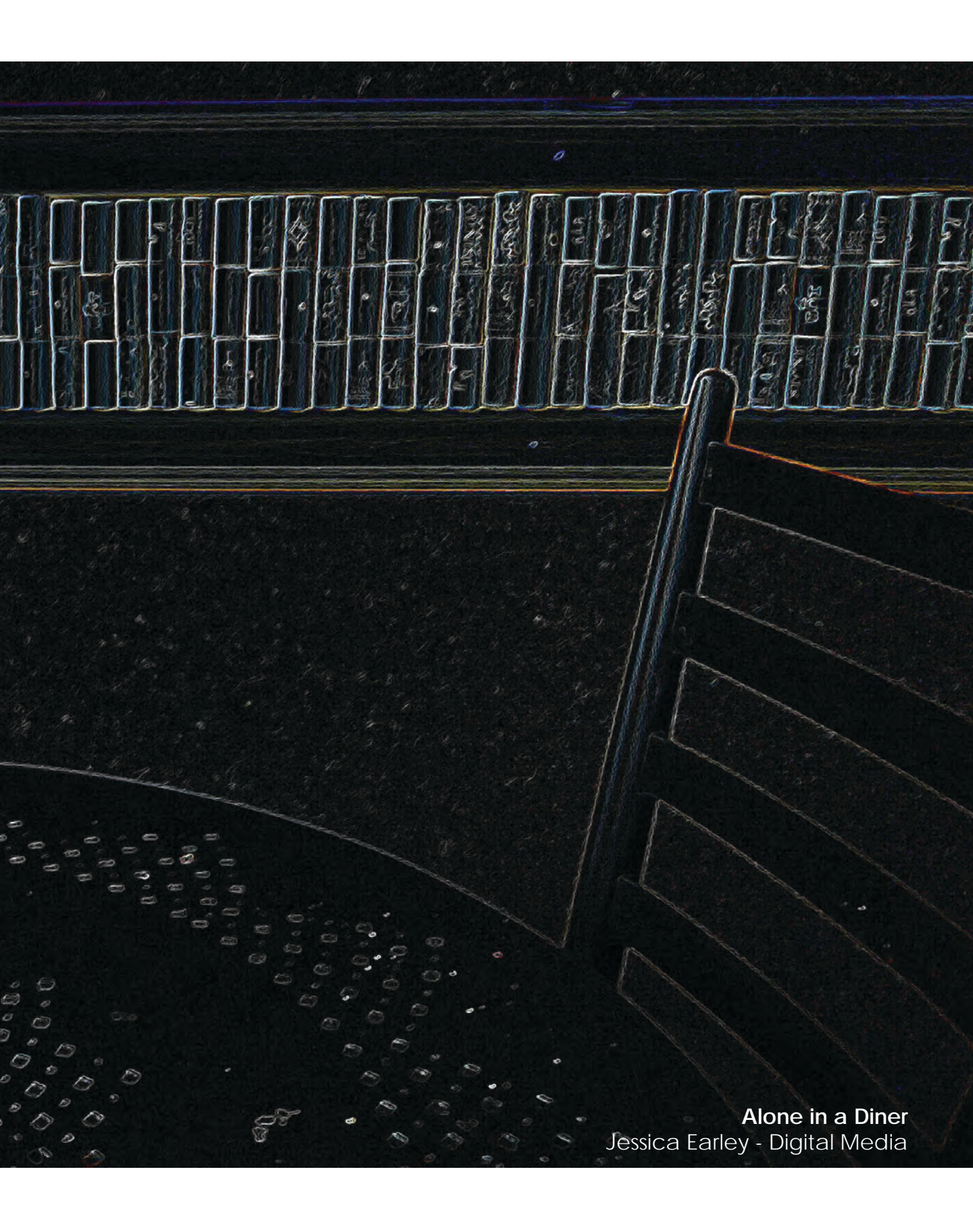
An old poet
arrives at a
reading,
sits alone,
waits his
turn.

He holds
old words
close to
his still
beating
chest.

To the room, to
some empty chairs,
to other poets gathered,
too young to know,
the old man reads
what he holds.

He may forget
an old poem's
reason,
but an old poet
never forgets
why he reads
them.





Alone in a Diner
Jessica Earley - Digital Media



Reflecting on Things

Josh Swander - Digital Photography



The Gift

Dorothy Bobst

When a gift is given of tremendous
value, words recede.

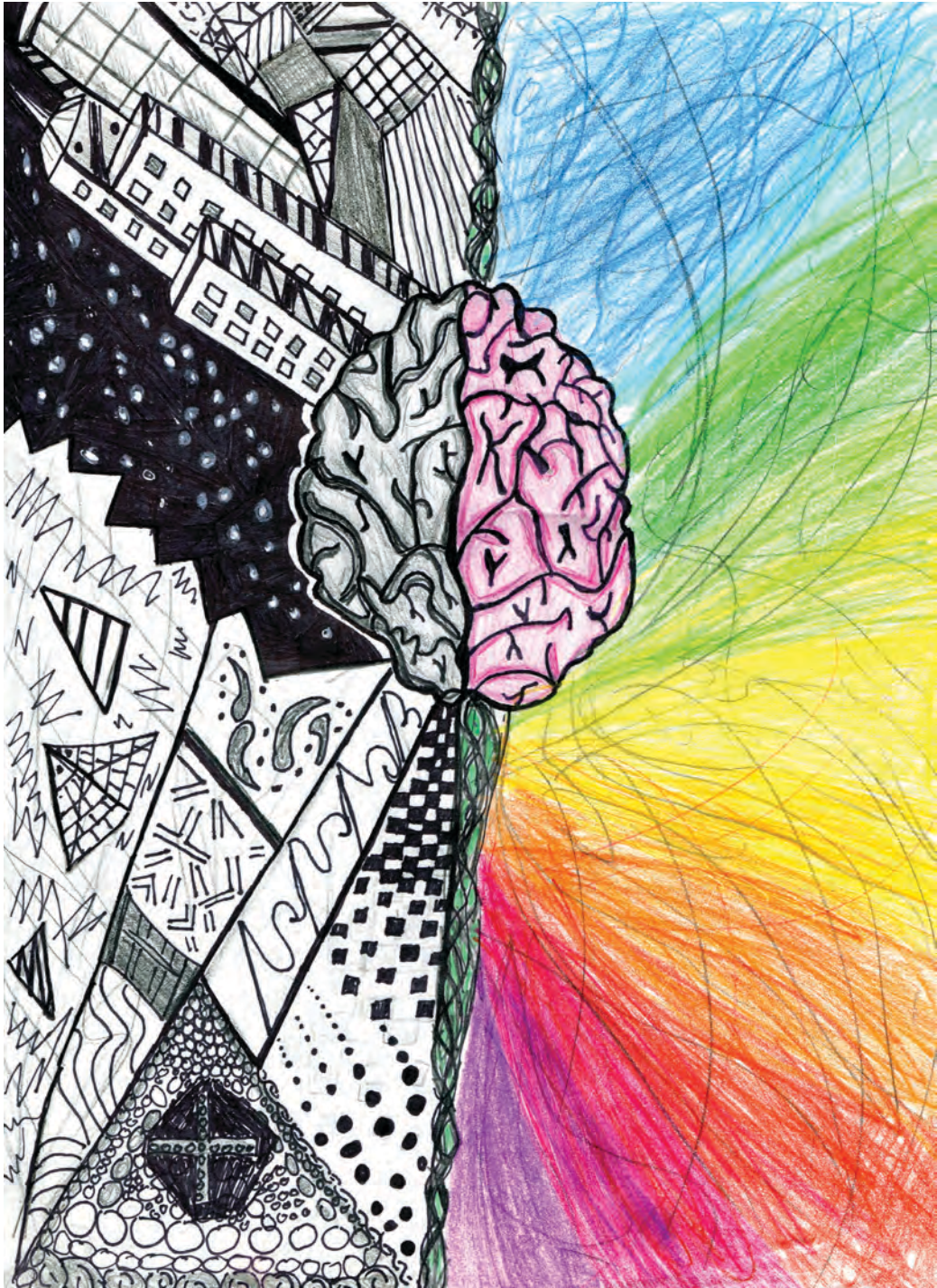
The mind struggles for expression, but
the heart swells.

A gift that dispels fear, heightens joy,
enhances creativity,

And enlarges curiosity, is an
extraordinary gift and frequently
defies words.

When every contributor to the gift has
proven precious, then one is blessed,

And the good in people is evident.



Different Way of Thinking
Christian Paul - Pen and Pencil

M y

J O y

Mason Gonsisko

I put pen to paper, and the magic flows:
Ink where there once was none.
But it doesn't look like anyone knows
That I do it all for fun.

The joy! A laugh! Euphoria found!

As the pen moves, the universe is me;
I am the center, and all will revolve.
Oblivious to the world around, I carry my task.
Ignorance is truly bliss.

Eureka!

When my creativity will die I won't cry.
Just put away the pen and come back again.
That's all there is to it. No big deal.

Money, fame, notoriety.
It's all cool, but in the end it too forms ashes.

Life is a journey, and experiences currency.
Nobody can take a car into the greater beyond.

Eureka!
I've found it!
My joy!
My love!

I put pen to paper, and the magic flows.

I Wish I Could Have Met You

Sean H. Campbell

Johnny was born on June 25, 1971 and right away his parents, John and Gayle, knew he was special. Johnny was a smart infant and child growing up, easily catching on to any new concepts others tried to teach him. When he first got into school, he loved it right away and excelled in his studies all the way through high school. When he was in elementary school, he found out he was going to be a big brother. He asked Gayle, his mother, if he could name the baby to which she became a little wary and asked: "Well, what would you want to name him?" Johnny replied, "Well, I want to name him Keith. Keith is the name of my best friend at school."

As he entered middle school, problems began to arise. Johnny started getting bullied for being overweight by his peers and it started having an effect on his home life. John and Gayle started seeing Johnny more depressed. Gayle told him to brush it off, while John said not to start anything but don't let them keep doing it. This was just the beginning of his problems in school unfortunately. When he made it to high school, everyone saw how he wore his heart on his sleeve.

In high school, Johnny was very bright in

his studies and held a near-perfect grade point average. He began dating more around this time and taking relationships more seriously. He did all he could for those who caught his interest, and was devoted to them in all aspects. He would buy them things, take them to expensive places to eat, and even just give them money; but unfortunately, he never realized when he was being taken advantage of and when he went through a breakup it was devastating. Finally, after the turmoil he endured, he decided what he wanted to do and that involved the military.

*"Johnny, whatever
you're thinking about
doing, it ain't worth it."*

His parents tried their hardest to talk him out of going into the Army, but it was to no avail. With his grades the way they were in high school, after

basic training, he got an offer to go and work on a nuclear sub. He turned it down because he didn't want to be gone that long away from his home and his family. Instead, he settled on becoming a national guard and was stationed at a base which I will not disclose. Due to a conflict in orders between two commanders, he was forced to take lethal action against a fellow soldier. He later found out the man had a wife and kids, and this had a tremendous impact on his life after he was relieved of duty.

When Johnny returned home, he was different. He wouldn't open up about his emotions or feelings to those he trusted any longer, he became more irritable, and he always seemed depressed. After some time, he found a well-paying job and set his sights on having a family of his own. By this time his brother Keith had a son, me, and Johnny thought the world of Keith's son. Johnny didn't want to admit it, but he cared deeply for me and on the very night I was born he spent hundreds of dollars on clothes and gifts. That settled it, he wanted a family of his own.

Johnny met a woman he fell in love with named Shannon. He gave her everything he possibly could to make her happy, whether it be cars or money and put himself in debt doing so. Finally, after some time, she became pregnant with a baby that Johnny could call his own. But unfortunately, the woman aborted the baby without Johnny's knowledge so she could stay on her cheerleading team. This crushed Johnny and he and Shannon began fighting a lot and one day, Johnny came home from work and was talking to her on his cell phone. He went out between a shed and garage while talking to her, and Gayle went out to check on him. She could see the look in his eye, and had a feeling she knew what was going to happen. "Johnny, whatever you're thinking about doing, it ain't worth it," she said. "Go on inside Mom, you don't need to worry about this," he replied. "I'll be in in a minute."

She went inside to finish breakfast while he cut into the tip of the bullet with his knife like the military taught him. The next thing Gayle knew, her sister yelled, "Oh my God, Johnny is laying on the ground!" Gayle rushed outside, fell to her knees, and held his head in her arms until the ambulance arrived. He died in the ambulance on the way to the hospital. John was called at work and Gayle told him, "Johnny has shot himself. Come home now." Keith had just pulled into the driveway when he saw John and John told him, "Johnny killed himself." Keith couldn't believe it and just said, "No. Not Bubba!" They all went to the hospital and met, but Johnny was long gone. Everyone says he was a great man and that I am just like him, I just wish I could have met him.



(Portrait of Johnny)

Ode to a
Housefly
Elissa Kane

I sat one late summer day,
And watched in fascination
As a housefly rammed itself
Against my windowpane.

Repeatedly, it threw itself
Against the glass,
As if by pure will alone
It could shatter the barrier.

Free to traverse
The muggy air once more,
Never realizing that if it stopped
And flew down six inches,
It would be free.





Purple Blur
Shaine McDonald - Digital Photography

H e r e I F l y

Mason Gonsisko

My wings stretch and beat the air.
An eagle, a raven, a lark, a swan.
(The specifics don't matter.)
Proud and majestic I soar.

The air bows before me, head inclined.
World around me free of all restriction.
Up is down, down is up, left is right, right is left.
(Or maybe right is down and up is left?)
Proud and majestic I roar.

My call reaches faraway birds;
And together we flock, we journey
Around the world, beyond the globe,
To the sweet unseen and the unknown.
(But the known and grounded is not bad.)
Proud and majestic I tear.



T a r n i s h e d

Anonymous

I didn't realize until
Seven days had passed
That nothing had been mine,

My thoughts,
My body,
My being,

I owed you.

I didn't realize until
You were told to leave
That I had been carved hollow,

Everything that I was,
Everything that I could have been,
Everything that I will never be,

I felt lucky to be with you.

I didn't realize until
My anger refused to cease
That I now knew what it felt like,

To be ruined,
To be tarnished,
To be forced,

By someone I trusted.

I will never be the same.



Peering into the Shadows
Kailen J. Price - Digital Photography



Bone Deep
Ashley Southey - Pen

My Gold Heart

Haley Giaras

It's amazing how one piece of jewelry can remind you of a person's whole life story. My great grandma was a beautiful woman who I miss and remember every day. She wore a lot of jewelry, but her favorite piece was a gold necklace in the shape of a heart with a few dazzling diamonds, that I now have the privilege to wear every day. I wear it not just because I miss her, but because it's a representation of the history that her and this necklace have made. My great grandma was a stay-at-home mom, world traveler, and a loving person overall, and her life should be celebrated.

Veronica Fetrow was her name, but her friends called her Ronnie and I called her "GG". She was born on August 5th, 1913. She attended an all-girls school in Baltimore, Maryland and was one of few girls to actually graduate in that time period. After high school girls were only allowed to work as a nurse or in an office as a secretary. My GG decided to go to business school instead (which is what I'm doing right now), and then worked in retail until she got married. At the age of thirty, she had two handsome young boys, one of which

"Sacrifices were made, but it was for the good of her family."

is my grandpa. By this time in her life America had gone through the Great Depression, World War I and now beginning World War II. My great grandma dedicated all of her time to taking care of her boys. A stay at home mom was a very common thing in the 1930's and 40's. After her youngest son David began high school though, she went back to work; working at the railroad in the retail department. Sacrifices were made, but it was for the good of her family. I admire that about her. Sadly, after twenty-six years of

marriage to the "love of her life", as she would always say, her husband passed away suddenly. This was hard on my great grandma but it did not stop her from

living her life. She worked and worked until she was sixty-five years old. At sixty-five she retired and began a new chapter in her life.

Traveling around the world is everyone's dream, but my GG made it a reality! After her retirement, she had enough money saved to begin her new goal in life; exploring what God created. In a recent interview I conducted with my grandfather David Fetrow, I asked which over sea adventure was her favorite and why.

"Egypt was her favorite adventure. She went at a very dangerous time because Egypt was not a big fan of America, which made me very nervous for her," David shared. "She was able to handle herself well though, and got to explore Jerusalem. She told me that she felt like she was able to walk in the same footsteps God once did. She appreciated everything He created." My great grandma was not afraid of anything, she had a strong faith in God and had a desire to explore everything He created, which in turn led her to be a well-travelled young lady. "Alaska was also one of her favorite places to visit. She went there three times so she could enjoy the beauty of the nature surrounding that state," David told me. I feel connected to my great grandma in the sense of adventure. I too want to become well-travelled just like her. I wish I could tell her how similar we are, how we both have adventurous souls. I can't wait for the day that I can take my gold heart on my first journey in her footsteps.

Being a loving person is not something to be taken lightly. It is truly hard to feel positive about everything; not for my GG though. My great grandmother had the biggest heart this world could ever see. She took care of everyone, starting with her husband, then her kids, then her grandkids, then there's us great grandchildren. I remember getting a card every year for every holiday possible from GG. Each card always had the sweetest note inside. My favorite one was when she wrote "go buy yourself a nice candy bar," which is exactly what I did. It was just so cute and simple, and meant a lot to me. But,

before me she had her grandkids. One of them is my mother, and I remember her telling me that my GG spent a lot of time with her and would always take her to Dairy Queen for ice cream; which my mother has always done with me. Ice cream just so happens to be mine and my great grandmother's favorite dessert. To further explain my point, she always spent time with her family and took good care of all of us. Her bright spirits didn't stop there though. According to my grandfather, she also volunteered at church and would spend most of her days helping homeless shelters and things like that. My great grandma knew what her purpose was in life, and it was to serve God and His people. She continued to do these things

for years on end, even after retirement. She never wanted to stop, she wanted to just keep it going. My grandfather told me about how strong she was in the end. She never complained about her aches and pains.

She always had a positive outlook on the situation, and when the time came, she chose to go see her husband again in Heaven. Knowing that makes me admire her strength and faith even more than I already did. I know that she enjoyed her life and she should forever be celebrated.

Though my little gold necklace might seem like just a necklace to everyone else, I know in my heart that this necklace holds the spirit and light of my GG; and she will forever stay around my neck and in my heart. Through my travels, parenthood, marriage and faith my great grandma will be by my side and for that I am grateful.

"Being a loving person is not something to be taken lightly."



Lightbulb Tenebrism

Kaylee Ann Rizzolo - Soft Pastel

R a g e
Jack Kelly

Tendons threaten to snap
as my shell tenses from
the sight which my eyes
unfortunately set themselves upon.

Lividity drives keratin daggers
to sink into my palms hoping
they will draw nectar while the
taxation within my conservative lungs
toll the molecule I fail to inhale.

The windows of my psyche
close before seeing the stars
who swim in peripheral waters
that threaten to abscond.



Trapped in a Vortex
Josh Swander - Digital Photography



Unhappy Meal
Patrick Gleeson - Mixed Media

Grilled Cheese

Michele Wirt

Pale orange corners inside thick slabs

Are pressed into exile and reformed

As brightest gold brittle star crunch.

The best parts of things

Are sometimes

Outside of the main.



Color Emphasis
Isis Marley - Construction Paper

Why Is It My Job to Bear Their Future?

Larissa Cabrera

One of the most aggravating issues that I deal with on a regular basis is being questioned about when I'm going to procreate and being told that it is my responsibility to have children. I have never been someone that was interested in having children, and being told that it is my duty when both of my siblings already have kids really pisses me off. It's my body, and it's my life. What makes people—especially my family members—think they have the right to force motherhood on me? Why am I wrong for not wanting to have children and thus completely change my life?

Being the oldest of five siblings in a divorced family—and also the oldest of more than twenty cousins—I was often stuck with all of the kids. The fact that I already had no interest in hanging around most kids as a child, and then being obligated to constantly watch all of them just reinforced the feeling for me. I mean, let's face it, kids can be really annoying! They're messy, loud,

and have no respect for personal boundaries. I can remember elementary school vividly, and when all the other girls would play "M.A.S.H" and gush about their crushes and how many future babies they wanted to have, my first response was that I never wanted kids. Hell, until I hit twenty-one I wasn't even sure I ever wanted to get married.

Growing up I was constantly told, "Oh you'll change your mind when you're older."

"I'm going to magically want to pop out my own personal gremlin?"

and "It's different when they're your own kids." My personal (and extremely degrading) "favorite" is: "Once you find the right man you'll want to have his babies." Ugh, like seriously? Once I meet

the right dude I'm going to magically want to pop out my own personal gremlin? I don't think so. I mean I get it; I really do. For some people settling down, having 2.5 kids, and a white picket fence is the bee's knees. Having a family is an accomplishment and fulfilling for some, but I just don't see it that way. I've helped to raise

my family's kids. I've been there through all the stages; personally I would rather spend time with my family actively participating than chasing down a three-year-old. I even gave up my entire summer when my Aunt gave birth to my cousin and was working sixty-plus hours a week. The first three months of that baby's life I played "mommy," and it wasn't an easy task. At the same time her other son was a toddler and potty-training; I did that too! I was a mere thirteen walking around carrying a newborn while holding a toddler's hand, and people actually thought they were mine! I've experienced the ups and downs, and honestly I'm okay without having "my own."

Once I hit twenty-three and my friends had started getting married and having babies my family (mostly my mother) really started pestering me about when I was going to settle down and give her a grandbaby. Not long after this started my sister got pregnant, and I (wrongly) assumed that meant I was off the hook. Now my sister's kid needed someone to play with.... which somehow became my responsibility. Then my sister-in-law got pregnant, and that only seemed to make the baby-badgering worse. Let's just say the cycle has continued, and currently I have three nephews and another as-yet-to-be-determined baby on the way. Wouldn't you think my family would be satisfied? The answer is no. I'm currently in a

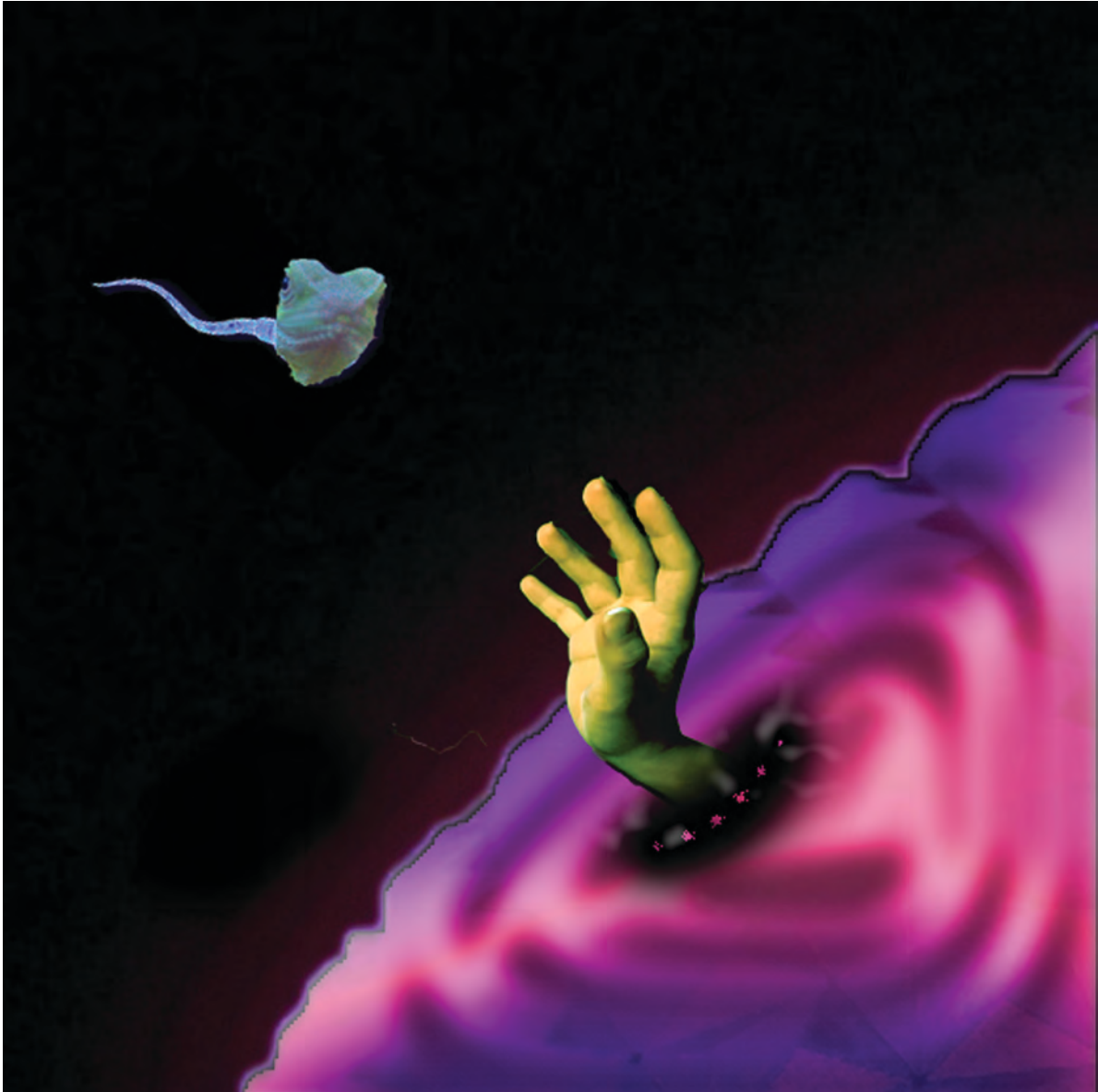
healthy, happy, and family-approved relationship with a great guy. In the three years since we've been dating, our parents have become best friends (which is awesome, don't get me wrong), but it turns out this wonderful guy of mine and his brother are the last males in his family line. Now for the past year or so I've been getting hammered double time by both of our families. (To which I would like to add, we aren't married or engaged yet, so even if I did want to carry his spawn he would have to put a ring on it first!)

Shouldn't my opinion on the issue matter? I mean, after all, it's my life that will change—and change dramatically at that. I don't foresee our families coming over to stay up

with a screaming baby at three a.m. so that I can do chemistry homework. It's my freedom that would be given up. It would mean no more rides on the motorcycle at midnight to go get ice cream, no more blowing up pyro for

the Fourth of July, and I would completely have to forget about going to breweries to try all the new beer and wine that I want. It feels like every time we're all together that's the only topic of conversation—my family with the whole "we need a blonde grandbaby since you're the only one," and his family with the whole, "we don't want our line to end; give us a baby." Honestly, I can understand them feeling this way, but why is it my responsibility? He doesn't want kids either; we're happy with our lives the way they are. Why is it my responsibility to bear their future?

"Shouldn't my opinion on this issue matter?"



The Virus
Dakotah T. Robinson - Digital Media



Twilight Blue
Kevin Sheridan - Watercolor

There's Nowhere Else

Cassandra Brennan

What,
is there
for us? In
the middle
of our dreams?
In the mid day,
remembering what
we had. Losing the
thought of past ways.
Joining our minds in such short
spurts. So invigorating. Back to
the present day. Seeing the future
in my mind, envisioning such sweet
dreams as I'm awake. Walking forward,
hoping to never see the past, through eyes
of mine. Just to remember sends chills down
my spine. For better days, for a better life. Walking
down to our future, there's nowhere for us to turn, but
this great destination of ours. The worst past turns into
the best destinations, where I see a future with my family.

Letters from the Editors



With this issue of *In the Write Mind*, we wanted to take a more clean and modish approach to the layout and design of the magazine. The staff has been an absolute pleasure to work with. For everyone on a team to be in sync is a rare thing, but the stars aligned and we all became a unified machine that was dedicated to the quality and production of this issue. This is the first time in years that *In the Write Mind* has strayed away from the norm of an annual issue. The stakes were very much against our goal of publishing a semester magazine, but looking at what we've produced, we triumphed immensely.

Jack Kelly
Editor-in-Chief



It has been my great pleasure to work on this publication. This mishmash crew of zany, nerdy, artsy, somewhat likeminded, and all uniquely lovely individuals has added a splash of color to my semester. Every member adds a unique hue to the rainbow that is our eclectic staff. You have all been memorable and made a mark on both the publication and myself. Thank you for a great memory and a great magazine.

Antonia Yerke
Assistant Editor-in-Chief



In the modern world, conformity is everything. Society is a series of black and white: either you fit in, or you don't. There isn't much room for a gray area. Individuality isn't celebrated the way it should be, instead it's suppressed, locked away. That's why I believe exhibitions of creativity like *In The Write Mind* are so important. We can't change the way the world works to accommodate for a more creative mind, but we can give them an outlet to express themselves. If you take one thing out of this publication, it should be this: break out of the box that society wants to put you in. In a world of black and white, dare to be colorful.

Jessica Earley
Design Editor

Letter from the Adviser



This editorial staff has made me proud; in fact, they surprised me—wonderfully—with their effervescence, talent, work ethic, and kindness. In the first week, they had already assigned themselves long hours for analyzing back issues, learning software, and creating chic new flyers. These students earnestly sought after their staff positions and attended meetings cheerfully. They allowed each other to lead, and they made allowances for each others' weaknesses. By week two, I think it was, we were ordering pizzas, cracking jokes, and giving props for design ideas. I love that Jack, Toni, Jessica, Alicia, Lacy, Cassandra, Laurie, and Mason itch to learn and create, as well as encourage others like themselves. I love that they truly care about finding and featuring other artists, intellectuals, and dreamers on the Citrus campus.

They are trailblazers (in my opinion) since they fearlessly opted to create this issue of *In the Write Mind* within our new, semester-long independent study, as opposed to taking a full academic year to produce our typical mega-volume. This staff worked doubly hard to present the issue you now hold, and I trust you will recognize that this issue represents their passion, dedication, and choice to work as a team.

This semester, we wanted to showcase the depth, beauty, and color that surround us. From you, our valued contributors and readers of the Citrus Campus, we sought images and ideas that would catch the eye and captivate the imagination.

We thank you for helping us create this clean, contemporary, and colorful issue of *In the Write Mind*, and for helping us deliver something with the potential to fill our lives with new shades of meaning:

Jodi Greene
Kaitlin Kirby
Justine Govantes
Michele Wirt

Trish Dukeman
Kathy Morse
Hannah Anthony
Berry Davis

Kailen & Morgan Photography
Marc Shapot
Rob Marino
James Blevins

Staff of the LSC, LRC, and Student Services, for allowing us to decorate your office spaces.

And, last but not least, our contributors, for your poems, stories, essays, photographs, and art; without you the magazine could not exist!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Melissa Alling". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the end of the last name.

Melissa Alling
Faculty Adviser

Here's What You Missed!



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Find us online!

www.cf.edu/inthewritemind

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Vol. 28, Issue 2 coming Spring 2017

How to Get Involved

Get involved with *In The Write Mind* by:

Submitting your work!

In the Write Mind continuously seeks submissions for publication. We look for writing, photography, and art that is:

- Fresh, original, and nuanced.
- Well edited, high quality, and exuding good craftsmanship.
- Insightful, meaningful, and deep.

Above all else, we value self expression and want to highlight that in each issue each contributor gets the chance to evolve as an artist as we respond to every submission with constructive feedback. If you want a chance to see your artistic creations on the pages of our next issue then go ahead, submit your work!

- Fill out submission form at www.cf.edu/inthewritemind

Becoming an Editor

Enroll in CRW-2903, Independent Study for Creative Writing (offered each fall and spring semester for 3 credit hours).

Or you could participate as a club member without earning academic credit.

Reading and Sharing

Copies are located all throughout campus.

An electronic copy can be found on our website.

Attend the release events that are held bi-annually at the end of each semester.





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2016
STAFF