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WHAT'S NEXT?

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“WHAT'S NEXT?”

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WHAT WE ARE:

The Catalyst is a student-run creative journal of the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse English Club publishing prose, poetry, photography, art, music, and all other creative works by the students and faculty of UW-L. Each semester, the student editors pick a new theme and accept submissions about and outside the chosen theme.

THIS SEMESTER'S THEME:

It has been 15 semesters since *The Catalyst* was taken up by the UW-L English Club. This semester's theme was brought about by the Editor-in-Chief. As graduation neared, and the thoughts of what to do after a college education started to get very real, our Editor-in-Chief began to wonder, what's next? And so, the birth of this semester's theme came to be. Hope you enjoy!

- The Editors

WORD OF THANKS TO:

William Stobb for being such a great advisor, supporting us and pushing us to grow into the publication we know we can be

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And, of course, all those who read this publication and support the amazing creativity we have here at UW-La Crosse!

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Cigarette Substitute
Courtney Lloyd

Memories revived into reality,
When old circumstances become new again.
A cut pried open, scar tissue to reform, solely internally.
A familiar agony, a reminiscent personal torment.
Open and vulnerable yet closed and stoic.
The toxins of reality seep in.

Craving,
The tarry taste, the seeping smell,
The gentle burn that numbs simultaneously.
A sweet exhalation of soggy smoke and smoldering sorrows.
A temporary reprieve, a flood of thick nicotine,
But as the smoke dissipates,
The guilt seeps in.

I know not
Your specific sorrows, but
Pain, heart wrenching, soul crushing,
Torrents of torment I know with great familiarity.
These circumstances rolled me tightly in my own papery armor,
Packed with the world's toxins, the people's poisons,

Yet, I too, am ready for the flicker of a flame
To ignite me, ashen my armor,
Take a pull of me,
A new bliss.

Yet, feel my filter,
For it transforms my internal
Contamination, into another substance,
Composed of endless empathy, and undying understanding,
Take a drag of me, to pull the sorrows from you.
Your cigarette substitute
Ceaselessly.

Raveled

Sabrina Miresse

11/17/10

I know you don't know me very well, but I'm hoping that someone like you will read this and understand what I have to say. It's been so difficult without anyone to talk to, so let me reassure you that you very well might save me.

I'm working on a theory: Five is the number of years it takes you to figure out you aren't the only one with parents who have separated. Eight is the number of years it takes you to find out that it is normal to like boys. Ten is the age when singing is reserved for the shower because rejection is something that is very much alive in this life and not something you wish to feel. Twelve, the age you realize that what you thought was fat is actually breasts and "that's what she said" is no longer acceptable to say in a sentence unless you want to be laughed at. Thirteen is dedicated to the fact that having a boyfriend is totally cool and among the most important things in the world. Fifteen is the number of years it takes to realize that boys, in fact, are stupid (despite years of rebellion against your mother who has been saying this as if it was routine), and when wearing sweatpants to school has become the only option.

Fifteen is the number of years it took me to realize I only have about three true friends; and one of them is myself. Fifteen is the number of years it took me to realize the world doesn't stop if your boyfriend breaks up with you, your friends fade away, or if your father doesn't want to see you on the weekends anymore. Fifteen is, most importantly, how long it took me to notice that not everyone notices you.

Have you heard of the "18-40-60" rule? I read it in a psychology book once. Eighteen is when you care too much about what people think, forty is when you don't care about what others think, and sixty is when you realize that no one has been thinking of you at all. I think, that I have superseded this rule because I am fully aware that no one has been thinking of me, and I'm only fifteen. I wonder where that will put me when I'm sixty.

11/23/10

High school isn't one of my favorite things. Actually, I would rather do a lot of things instead of going to school. I've noticed this year that I have closer relationships with my teachers than my classmates, which might sound creepy but how am I expected to have an intellectual conversation with the drones shuffling beside me in the halls? That's the way I look at it. When I don't have a teacher's room to go to, I go to the "idea center"—or more simply known as the library. It's extremely ironic it has such an elaborate name, because being there does not help me to think of new ideas; mostly because there are so many people talking to their friends in the midst of one very troll looking teacher yelling "be quiet" at them—also very ironic.

Its not that I don't have friends, maybe I put off that sort of impression. I could be social if I wanted to. However, I prefer to be alone and I don't think that will ever change about me.

11/30/10

I remember in eighth grade I had a boyfriend. His name was Justin and he was my first boyfriend. We dated for quite some time. By dated of course I mean walked with each other in hallways and showed off our deep passion for one another by hugging for an everlasting, awkward minute before classes. When you're fourteen, you just don't quite grasp that one boy that lives down the block is not the boy you will be with for the rest of your life, so you could guess I took our relationship much more seriously than I should have.

As you know, things fade with time. My second and last boyfriend was Caleb. That was in the start of freshman year and we only lasted about three months. With my "feeling down" (as my mother would like to say) not fully gone, I was a masked wreck. So that may be why Caleb and I didn't last long, but I did find myself to like him very much. I'm not sure why. Maybe because he was freckled and smiled when I got flustered, or because I was just surprised someone as magnificent as him could like someone as duck-like as me.

When Caleb broke up with me after our solid three-month run I turned into a typical weekend "trollip" (for lack of a nicer word). I figured that

I'm young and have little to no cares—or morals at that point. Simply put, I didn't know half the guys I would be kissing. You would think they would know better than to choose the young girl with braces out of the crowd, then again it was just a bunch of concert floozies. It only lasted as long as long as the music festival did. Then I went back to being utterly alone.

You may have noticed the “feeling down” I mentioned above. To keep it short and semi-sweet, I was having issues with my Father that a psychologist was slowly picking apart for a price too high for my mother to keep up with. In the end, she diagnosed me with “seasonal depression”. Those damn dark, cold winters made me the way I was (remember this was a professional). I was prescribed Venlafaxine and my mom was advised to take the locks off the bathroom doors and keep all of the household scissors in a “safe place”.

12/5/10

So far, sophomore year is going surprisingly good. My favorite teacher is Mr. Franklin, my history teacher. He's very welcoming and good hearted. I like to go to his room during lunch for what he likes to call our “study sessions”. These consist of having deep conversations about the civil war and sometimes about the meaning of Nirvana lyrics. I have a feeling he knows that I don't enjoy going to lunch but he hasn't said anything about it yet.

My English teacher, Mr. Hanson, thinks that I'm a talented poet. I never really thought of myself as having a talent like that but I would like to take his word for it. He says what I have to say is very “insightful” and “truthful”. Personally I think that is because people who need to be on Venlafaxine, like me, have a more realistic outlook on life.

I only started writing because of the poetry unit we had in his class. I wrote a lot about my future and what it will be like when I can move away from this pointless little town to somewhere with opportunities for things other than cubical jobs. I also wrote about my father.

Ever since I can remember, my parents have not been together. But my father has floated in and out of my life like a deflating balloon, if

you know what I mean. He would take me on his weekends like he was supposed to only when it was convenient for him. I don't blame him though; he was only twenty-one when I was born, still practically a child himself.

It practically got worse as time went on. My irregular visits to his house ultimately created a relationship that couldn't be fixed. It was too late for him to get to know me because he had missed too much. Such a cynical and judgmental person like him did not care much about that though. Caring about his own interests and judging mine were like second nature to him.

12/26/10

Merry (belated) Christmas! My mother bought me some books for Christmas. The one I'm reading so far is very good; it's titled *By the Time You Read This I'll Be Dead* (maybe you've heard of it). It sounds odd and depressing but I like books that involve internal conflict.

Seeing my father's side of the family for Christmas was never as awkward as it is these days. Mostly because my grandparents don't talk to me anymore because my father's wife, Laura, says I'm mean to her. I'm a firm believer that there is a difference between being mean and being honest.

I made my father a mixed CD for Christmas. It included twenty of my all-time favorite songs. I put a lot of thought into it and the order in which the songs were. Each song was supposed to symbolize a period in my life as to give him a timeline of all he's missed. It started with "Across the Universe" by The Beatles because he told me that when I was younger he would dance with me to that song. The CD ended with "Holocene" by Bon Iver. I put that as the final song because I heard it when I was driving home at night in the summer. It was the first time I really thought about my life and youth and the fact that I was growing up and there was no going back—at once I knew, I was not magnificent.

"Well Buddy, I listened to your CD."

"What did you think? Did you like it?"

"It's crazy how much you like music."

"What was your favorite song?"

"Across the Universe"

"You knew that song already though. Did you like the last song? It was by Bon Iver. I wrote down the artists on a piece of paper for you."

"I don't remember that one."

"Oh."

"I can tell by listening to it that you use music to express how you are feeling. It's like someone hurt you and you use the music to figure out how to feel about it. Maybe a boyfriend?"

"No, I don't have a boyfriend Dad."

"Oh well you can tell me that kind of stuff you know."

"I know."

"Well I've got to go Buddy I'll see you next weekend maybe?"

"Sure Dad. I love you."

Click

My father didn't get me anything for Christmas. I understand because he's always making a fuss about how he's tight on money. Instead, he called everyone into the living room at our family Christmas party and told us the news: "Laura and I are having a baby!"

It stabbed me like a knife. He already ruined the relationship he had with one kid, what makes him think he can do any better this time? I walked out of the room once he said it and went straight to the bathroom where I sat and cried. No one noticed because they were too wrapped up in congratulating Laura and him on the "big news".

The tears streamed down my cheeks and swelled my eyes until they burned. I can't help but ask myself why I was never enough for him.

1/14/11

I turn sixteen today. I almost don't want to be sixteen, because fifteen is what seems to be the last year of your youth. Once you're sixteen, the general public perceives you as what seems like fifty years older than fifteen. That's both scary and exciting at the same time.

My father took me out for an early birthday dinner last weekend. I wanted to just grab a sandwich and some coffee at my favorite coffee shop downtown. But my father of course wanted to go somewhere he liked. So we went to Outback Steakhouse (even though I'm trying to be a vegetarian, but he didn't know that about me). He got sirloin and shrimp and I got the "bloomin' onion" to share with a side of rice.

Dinner was quiet. Questions like "how's school?" and "what are your hobbies?" made me feel uncomfortable and more disconnected with him than ever. Then, he started with "Are you excited for the new baby to come?" and "I'm hoping for a boy". I asked him if we could not talk about it at dinner but he quickly responded with "It's my dinner and I can talk about whatever I want". I didn't say anything the rest of the night until I said "goodbye" when he dropped me back off at my mother's house.

Right then was the moment I realized I was done trying to make this man proud of me. You just can't force that kind of thing.

2/18/11

I haven't spoken to my father since my birthday. This isn't unusual because I regularly go months without seeing or speaking to him, but this time it all feels different. I feel sad all the time and I'm constantly asking myself if I had been different, acted different, maybe he would want to know me. Maybe he would try to see me.

I'm slowly starting to give up on my studies. I stopped going to my "study sessions" during lunch with Mr. Franklin and started sitting in the stalls in the girl's bathroom until the bell rang. I also started to go out every weekend basically looking for trouble. Smoking and drinking became routine as well as going to Rave concerts behind my mother's back.

"Want to try some of this?"

“Sure, what’s in it?

“Cranberry juice and vodka just try it, it’s good.”

“Alright... it’s not bad”

After that, everything went blank. I woke up the next morning in the hospital. My mother was furious, but relieved at the same time. The doctors said I started having a seizure. Whatever was in the drink I tried just didn’t agree with my antidepressant. To be honest, my body alone doesn’t cooperate with my antidepressant.

6/15/11

This is my last letter to you. I haven’t written in a while because I’ve been busy “recovering” in therapy sessions with my new doctor. She took me off of the Venlafaxine and started actually talking to me about what may have been triggering my depression over the years.

Oddly enough, writing all of this down for you to read has helped me just as much. I was able to tell someone my story because of you. You’ve been right there with me over the past few months and it was almost like I had a friend with me that I could talk to.

Remember my theory I told you in my first letter? I’ve thought of one for sixteen:

“Sixteen: the number of years it takes to figure out not necessarily who you are, but who you aren’t and who you don’t want to be.”

I don’t want to be a push over, someone in distress, someone who is unappreciated, or underestimated. I know that I don’t want to be someone who relies on pills to feel happy or alive for a little while. I want to be someone who can feel alive simply by being alive and making the best of it.

Fallen Birch
Brooke Ranta



The Beauty and The Beast

Mikayla Peters

I watched the black lid on her toss-away coffee cup press to her bright-red lips. She came here every morning around the same time I did, ordered black coffee, and sat in the corner. The same thing day in and day out. This morning, her brown eyes didn't scan a magazine, as normal. Instead, she looked at me through her dark hair, scanning me.

I couldn't help but notice her pink dress that caressed her rather large breasts. The fabric didn't even touch her collarbone, leaving little to the imagination. The sleeve started inches off her shoulder, in line with the neckline—if it could be called that, for it didn't touch her neck—showed off the porcelain and perfect skin.

Her lips curled into a smile as she beckoned me, reaching out her hand in my direction. I paused, looking around as I stood. As I glanced back, she was just heading out of the door, the layers of her hair shimmering in the sunlight.

I couldn't follow fast enough. My eyes remained locked on the ends of the longest pieces of her hair, hanging just above her hips. She had beckoned me, and I couldn't say no to that beauty.

The concrete tried to trip me up, but it didn't dare touch her high-heeled feet. She floated across the ground, glancing back over her shoulder every so often with a daring, flirtatious grin that sent my heart racing and butterflies fluttering in the pit of my stomach.

I needed her.

My fingers traced the silver blade in my pocket, the one I had bought just for her, once I had figured out her morning routine. I wouldn't hurt her, not unless she made me, but I needed to ensure she would take me seriously. Looking as she did, I knew guys asked her out all the time, but I would stand out!

She turned down an alley, and I followed, watching her. Every movement she made entranced me and captured my memory. I no longer noticed where we walked, focusing only on her.

Suddenly, she turned to me, her grin slightly wild. Her white teeth flickered in the dim light of wherever we were. I glanced around, realizing we had entered a building of sorts. It felt like a small room, for I heard no echoes and felt only warmth. Perhaps we were in an apartment of some sort, but I couldn't quite see.

I pulled out my knife, holding it in a shaking hand. "Please," I said. "I want you to go out with me. I want you to be mine!"

Even her laughter sounded graceful, like little bells ringing in harmony around me. "You only want my body," she said. I couldn't argue. After all, I didn't even know her name, but I knew how she looked.

"No, I want you for you!" I said. "I want to know you, to learn all about you! I know I love you!"

She laughed again, and I gripped the knife tighter, stepping up to her. I pressed the silver tip to her chest, right in between the two, perfect, pale mounds. However, she didn't look worried. In fact, she kept laughing, her eyes latched onto mine.

I don't know what happened after that, but I felt my wrist break, the knife fall to the floor, and my legs give out underneath me. Landing on the floor, I looked up at her, confused. My wrist didn't bother me at all, nor did the knife now in my foot. My entire focus centered on the beautiful woman straddling my waist, holding my shoulders down.

Her teeth flashed in the light—or maybe it was my knife. It seemed to glitter with a bloody darkness, but that might have been her lipstick. Her hair fell over my face, and a cold pain shot up and down from my neck.

My vision began to grow darker and darker as I breathed in the scent of her hair, my limbs growing weaker and weaker.

Stick Around for Open Mic

Ryan Oakeson

Low ambient light with
Dark, frothless beer—
A lager by the taste of it.

The buzz of voices
Reverberates as chair legs
Scratch the hardwood floors.

The red brick walls sealed with
Mortar absorb the background
Music as silverware clinks carelessly.

The bar fills with hipsters
And artists; conversations brew
As the smell of espresso lingers.

There are many holes in the ceiling, specifically
One next to the stairs that
Lead to the basement full of crates.

In front of me is a lamp with

No shade. The only shadow
Is the one connected to my pen and the page.

Coffee mugs rise to the mugs
Of men and women muttering
Cacophonous utterances.

I'm lost in my pint because
My paper and pen are my only
Points of interest.

The man asks to turn off my light,
I look to him and smile and say,
That'd be alright.

Blanc et Noir
Brooke Ranta



My Little Dragon Forever- For “Aubs”

Benjamin Schilz

Six-years-old, wide eyed

One glimpse, a thousand pictures (1)

What to do with them?

Along came a friend

Who helped you hold your breath long (2)

And to never quit

Swimming in water

Karate chopping on land (3)

I am by your side

The leaves are changing

Spring is on the backburner (4)

Then I graduate

Week by week you grow

With help you will fly so high! (5)

Let your fire show

As we count the days

Before I must say goodbye (6)

Remember the good

Years later, all grown up

Will you remember rule four? (...)

“Never say I can’t”

The Change Begins

Mikayla Peters

Ariel ran her hand through her tangled hair, feeling the rough, salt-worn strands wrench free from each other and float behind her. She sighed, a flurry of bubbles rising before her lips. A fish swam in front of her. With a flick of her tail, Ariel propelled herself forward and caught the fish in her sharp teeth, tearing flesh and scales as she chomped her prize.

Her grey-green tail flipped a few times, getting her out of the area of the kill before the blood attracted things more dangerous than she. As she swam, her red hair tangled behind her once more. Her tail, over twice the length of her torso, moved effortlessly as she turned, dragging her long nails through her hair once again. Her nails slid along the skin on her waist, scraping off the scales which had begun growing up her waist. She didn't want to lose what remained of her humanity just yet. The scales, covered with the same glycol-protein slime that exuded from all her cells, sometimes grew up and tried to overtake the skin like a rash. She still had her scales—they hadn't fallen off yet, though they would throughout the next cycle of the moon. She knew it. She'd seen it happen to her own sister after she was bit. One month of reality left, before the transformation was complete. Before she turned against her own.

Her skin had already begun to turn the slick, fleshy gray color, like the moon in the shallow depths near the shore or the sands shimmering gray beneath the moonlight. She had begun to avoid the surface during the day, though most mermaids did, avoiding the loud machines that would tear across the surface just as their metal propellers would tear through flesh and bone and leave only pieces for the sharks and bottomfeeders to eat. Ariel had lost her mother to a propeller that way, on one of her first trips to the surface.

She had found a dinglehopper half-buried on the bottom, covered by a shell. Upon showing it to her mother, proud at the shining, shimmering metal that signified just how long it had been at the bottom, Amphitrite had brought her up to the surface to introduce her to the land of the humans via a rather crazed old bird. The bird, a seagull, had told her the shiny piece of metal was a dinglehopper, used by humans to comb their hair. Ariel hoisted herself up to sit on

the rock beside him, wanting to try out the dinglehopper for herself, trying to pull the metal through the salt-ruined locks that grew from her head. Amphitrite had called her home. She had slid into the water, dinglehopper firmly in hand, and followed after her mother, but the distraction of trying to brush her hair with the dinglehopper slowed her.

Then, she heard it. The long, low, loud hum of a machine churning up the water. The fish below scattering. Her mother, too distracted by Ariel's antics to notice, had been sucked up into the five spinning, whirring blades, the bubbles left by the blades turning red with small chunks and pieces of hairs slowly floating to the bottom. Most chunks didn't make it to the bottom. Turtles, dolphins, sharks, fish...Ariel no longer knew which creatures had eaten the remains of her mother. She didn't want to know. Mermaids had sharp teeth to eat the fish and other creatures in the water. It was strange, even to the young Ariel, how quickly the hierarchy turned at death. How quickly did Amphitrite, queen of the oceans, indeed, the oceans themselves, fall prey to a metal whirling thingamajig.

With a flick of her tail, Ariel concealed herself in the shadows. Far above, she could hear the whirring, whirling, spinning. She could feel the currents created, even far down here. She bared her teeth. Her two rows of teeth had begun to grow the extra four rows necessary for the change, and each tooth had lengthened and turned hollow, like a straw directly into her bloodline. Her tongue got stuck between the last two rows, and the irony taste of blood filled her mouth. She parted her lips gently, softly, letting the blue blood rise in front of her eyes. No red light down here to show the true color.

Blood. It all came back to blood. The blood of the fish, the blood of her mother, the blood in her mouth, the blood she would need to survive now that her sister had bitten her. The blood of fish, the blood of mammals, the blood of other mermaids. She would need it, and soon. Her hand ran over her spine, feeling the dorsal fin that mimicked a shark's, but in that same, sickly gray-green color as her tail. She made a face. That color. That gray-green, sickly, slimy color. It wouldn't go away, even when she shifted her form from her mermaid form to the great white shark form. Perhaps it was because the transformation hadn't finished. Perhaps, when she fully needed the blood and flesh of others to survive, she could truly transform into

a great white shark, without the color, without the rotting scales falling off.

She had heard of similar creatures to herself and her sister living up on the surface. Now, she couldn't stand the touch of sand or the sting of sunlight, though as a girl, she had loved to go there. But the stories! Humans that preyed on other humans, with fangs and claws, pale skin and dark eyes, who shifted from human to wolf or bat and back again just like she transformed from shark to mermaid and back again. And the counting! Someone would understand her need to sit and count all the shells in a pile! Someone would understand the transformation! Someone...would understand...

Her sister had gone off somewhere. The Arctic Ocean or maybe the Antarctic. Somewhere far away from the people they knew. Ariel couldn't do that. She couldn't leave the place she grew up, the place she loved.

The low hum still vibrated up above, and Ariel made a decision. She left her blue-blood floating in the water as she sped her way up to the surface and broke out of the water, landing on the deck of a human's wooden floating gizmo in the pale moonlight. Her eyes narrowed and her teeth bared. It no longer mattered if this were the gizmo that killed her mother. Ariel just wanted to destroy them all.

She didn't know where the nets came from, but she was suddenly pinned down. Ariel shifted. Her tail thickened and lengthened first, bones popping and shifting as her hips widened and popped and disappeared into her spine. Her ribs shifted upwards towards her head as her skull sharpened to a point, her jaw growing harder and more outstretched. Her gums widened and moved out, and tooth after tooth added to fill in the new space. Beneath the nets lay an outstretched, grey-green great white shark, teeth snapping.

From the shadows stepped a man with dark hair with pale blue eyes. He wore a white shirt, open at the front, and a red belt kept his jeans from falling down his muscular legs. His black boots reached almost to his—what do you call them? Oh!—knees. Ariel slowly shifted back to her original form, sitting up beneath the nets and watching him.

The man grinned, two sharp teeth glinting in the moonlight. "So, there are some of us among you, too."

“There Is No Other Way To Say This”

Wesley Isberner

You and I are going sideways through dimensions, stuck in concrete shoes. Spines recline under dusky sheets. Misused lips curtain crooked yellow teeth. There are pomegranates on the table. Nods and Nos creak the four-year-old floor. Outside someone opens a car door to a black eye.

The humanity of the Voyager is still moving further and further away from tears behind closed doors and declarations of independence and stem cells.

Roots are stretching down. We put on coats and shuffle out into the world. Alarms keep going off for millions of eyes and ears.

Somewhere a star stops fusing hydrogen into helium. Somewhere a man shoots himself in the head. Somewhere a kid borrows a grandma for grandparents' day at school.

And you and I are waywardly still.

Insomnia, Midnight Escape
Brett Gluth



Infinity Home

Wesley Isberner

sitting, staring up,

infinity

above,

up, away, out.

a way out.

and sleep infected eyes, low, low,

drooping

curves

hugged in red

flesh.

plastic street lights,

antennas

imitation corruption

but out and in is

seen

only

from red

to lack,

lacking,

lack,

everything.

light of light

light from light

to show light sources

within the lack:

up

Dear Questioner of Footing,

Wesley Isberner

Get up.

Get up with the wounds of your body.
Engage holistically with your bullshit and baggage.
Stop trying to shake off your history, trying
to induce amnesia, autobiographical rupture.

Get up.

Sometimes we must be our own Doubting Thomas;
stick our hands deep in our wounds, feel the ridges of scar tissue
and be amazed, individually raptured by the simple fact we are
standing.

When the sun or someone's son asks,
"What's your story, morning glory?"
don't scowl, saying you're like everyone else.
Pull out books, histories, portfolios of You.
Open and repetitive and ever expanding.

Waterfall
Liz Alexander



Potato Anthem

Alyssa Braun

Dani Gallup played a three-
String banjo in the marching band and couldn't sing
And everybody hated her
Except the ones who loved her
A banjo usually has four strings, but Dani ate the fourth one whole
and probably killed her boyfriend with her black stallion on a Thursday

If only Dani Gallup ate potatoes everyday she would have been happy
Maybe she would have not suffered such a sad end
She maybe would have
Not tried to eat another banjo string
And would have been just content singing songs to her boyfriend in
the afternoon

So turn the tunes up really loud and sing the lyrics really wrong
'Cause even if your house is burning down, it doesn't mean you're
failing
Wear your t-shirt inside out and write a novel in the dark
And bring your yo-yo to your work
And eat potatoes daily

Potatoes small and dimpled
Potatoes brown and peaceful
You can cook potatoes too,
It's painfully simple
Make your potatoes badly,
Make your potatoes proudly
Potatoes banish evil
Potatoes save the people
Potatoes gleaming proudly from the top of every kitchen table

Joey Anderson took a candlestick and gave his mother forty whacks
Then gave his father forty-two, and left them in the pool room
If only his parents made him potatoes for dinner, those pesticide
protestors,
See what happens when you boycott potatoes

And prohibit a person's right to consume even hash browns
And do not let them mash potatoes, it's not that hard to teach
someone to smash potatoes, about how long it takes someone to
learn to
Throw a hand grenade
It's more fun to launch a potato out of a potato launcher and score a
touchdown with a potato
Instead of blowing someone's brains out
YOU THINK ABOUT THAT

So turn the tunes up really loud and sing the lyrics really wrong
'Cause even if your house is burning down, it doesn't mean you're
failing
Wear your t-shirt inside out and write a novel in the dark
And bring your Mr. Potato Head to your work
And eat potatoes daily

Potato, thing of wonder
Potato, incredible conductor
You can make a circuit out of a potato too
In London and Down Under
Make sweet potatoes, and sweet potato fries
And potato chips and potato farms
Tell the children
Smash the hatred
Make your potatoes naked
If anybody tries to eat your potatoes, let them

Imagine there's no potatoes, imagine there are no french-fries
Imagine that John Lennon wasn't shot in the city of Manhattan, New
York
Now imagine if John Lennon had composed "Imagine" about the
potato
Maybe people would have truly gotten the message

You may think my approach is simple-minded and fairly odd
Like if you want to change the world then why not quit and feed the
hungry
But people need food to eat, so who doesn't like potatoes
And that is why I promised John that I will make potatoes for the world

So play your favorite Beatles song
And make the potato smasher utensil of the year
A 5lb bag is only \$2.55, that isn't lots of money
Mash until the sun comes up
And smash until your fingers suffer
And put all the cheese from your cupboard into the potatoes

Quit the bitching on your blog
And stop pretending skinning potatoes is hard
Just limit yourself to just potatoes so you don't have to make anything
else
And always share the potatoes
You'll minimize some stranger's sadness
With a plastic fork and goodness
Holy fuck, it's so fantastic, making potatoes buttery perfection

So turn the tunes up really loud and sing the lyrics really wrong
'Cause even if your house is burning down, it doesn't mean you're
failing
Wear your t-shirt in the dark and write a novel inside out
And bring your clip-on sunglasses to your work
And eat potatoes daily

So don't forget
Your salt and pepper
Your neon slippers
Your fear of spiders
Your disposable camera
Your brother and sister
Your glow in the dark spork
Your soundtrack to the Beatles
Your plastic knives
Your pair of clothes for the night after
Your new potato masher
Your favorite kitchen
Your comfy bed
Your stuffed Potato Head
Your new glass eye
Your urge to fly
Your breakfast tea
Your need to pee

Your broken plates
Your last good date
Your missing dog
Your will to sing
Your itch to zing
Remember we're all gonna die
So make your potatoes daily!

Warmth Within the Shadows

Brett Gluth



The Faucet

Abby Barickman

You left the faucet running.
The whole room filled with water
While you ventured away.
You left the faucet running.
I'd turn it off but can't.
Broke off the handle and with it, you went.
You left the faucet running.
I'm drowning in the water.
I've been staring at it for days.
You left the faucet running.
It floods with my emptiness.
I look but you're not around.
You left the faucet running.
I'm sick and gasping for air.
I scream with no sound.
You left the faucet running.
Fixing isn't an option.
You've left me without tools.
You left the faucet running.
How could it be flooding?
I followed all the rules.
You left the faucet running.
It seems simple but it's hard.
Everything I own is soaked.
You left the faucet running.
The pressure is too much.
The pipes tried but they broke.
You left the faucet running.
The neighbors hear the noise.
They call for help.
You left the faucet running.
Someone drains the water.
I clean it up by myself.
You left the faucet running.
But it's all all right now.
The handle is shiny and new.
You left the faucet running.

But I turn it on again.
It's all I have left of you.

The American Tragedy

Alyssa Braun

Honey, why are you coloring on yourself?
The three year old boy turns to me and says,
I don't want to be this color anymore.

I cry when home.
I did this, I cry.
I am a part of this tragedy.

Cacti Live in Wisconsin

Alyssa Braun

Its sharp arms run
down my body,
quills tattoo my
skin, bloody bruises
pooling. Skin
cracks and lips
are like salt. Crisp
edges open my
legs like a book,
its needles embroider
my inner thigh.
Skin branded
with sandy
desert. Blood puddles
next to the cactus
standing erect.

Cyanotype, Untitled. Pinhole, Leaves.
Ellie East



Texting for Two

Hannah Murphy

9:55 PM Delivered
I've got George Foreman in my kitchen
Frank Ocean in my bed
And you on my mind.

9:55 PM Delivered
Hahahaha

10:13 PM Delivered
What do you think when you hear your
neighbors having sex very loud?

10:15 PM Typing
...

10:27 PM Delivered
What do you think of when you see the
mailwoman with her satchel strap between
her breasts?

10:58 PM Delivered
I've considered sending you a snapchat of me
drinking in bed.

10:59 PM Delivered
I've suddenly reconsidered that snapchat and
sent it to my sister instead.

11:01 PM Delivered
What are the odds you open a snapchat if you
refuse to answer my texts?

11:15 PM Delivered
She responded.
"Do your homework and stop drinking on a
week night."

11:17 PM Delivered
Do you have homework?

11:18 PM Delivered
You're such a conversationalist.

11:36 PM Delivered
What's your position on pink wine?

11:43 PM Delivered
What do you think of when you see a crop top
in November?

11:45 PM Delivered
Are you as opposed to panty lines under yoga
pants as I am?

11:57 PM Delivered
Okay, cool.
Thanks for responding to none of all my texts.

12:22 PM Delivered
I know you've seen these.
I think you should come over.

A Long Summer
Libbie Miller



Brown
Libbie Miller



Five Minute Butterflies

Kelsey Heller

The black jeans
No
The grey ones
You saw me in the black ones on Monday

Waking up earlier
So that I can strategically race to school
Because I must make that green light
Lest I sit here and let it consume those
five minutes that I have already made a reservation for
“Move already! The arrow is green!”
How selfish
Don’t they know
I have someone to see?

Knowing
You will arrive at the same time
Pulling up
While I’m getting out
Pretending I’m doing something important
Ruffling through my bag
Damn well knowing everything is
In place
Buying time
Until we can randomly bump into each other
Like every other unplanned interaction

Forging ahead to another day into the creative
Imprisonment of high school
So that I can have those five minutes
To possibly
Most likely
See you

Haikus in Winter

Libbie Miller

Early morning moon
and frosted crabapple fruits
greet the winter day

Yawning, blinking child
awaits the rumbling cold bus,
guarded by her cat

Snowy fae dance down
air currents in coy courtship:
kisses for the ground

Gently huff spirals
of warm air. Crane your neck back,
the surrounding sky

In the Stillness
Bekah Kienzle



Texas Sky

McLaine Schwerfeger

The air clung to my skin, holding, cuddling so close and so humid it was almost as if walking in a sauna. The railroad ties were damp and made a sloshing sound every time my bare feet hit them. The sun tie-dyed the Texas sky a mixture of deep orange and violet paneling up to a miraculous display of summer stars. The rain was strange this part of summer, but I was never one to complain about a little change.

I slipped. My right foot loosing it's grip, shooting out in front of me throwing my back down towards the track, there was a sickening crack and my head split against the uneven railroad tie. My vision went white; I felt my eyes roll back into my head, red veins spilling through my mouth. I felt my spine turn to jelly.

Come find me

The Joker

McLaine Schwertfeger

Consciousness found me, but I immediately wish it hadn't. I was blindfolded, all I could see were a million swirling dots, and the echo of my veins across the inside of my eyelid. I felt around. Sharp, itchy carpet had made it's imprints on my bare legs. I couldn't extend my arms, the space I was in was too small. Crammed. I was crammed inside of something. No, under something. A desk. My desk. The air tasted of burning plastic, gasoline and the faint tinge of industrial toner. It hurt to breathe. My throat burned, as if I had been screaming for a long, long time. Then a horrible, moist, familiar voice found its way into my ear, cracked lips pressed up against my neck. I had to stifle another cry. The words were taunting, sweet and simple. Tears streamed down my cheeks, silent and warm. Strong hands pulled mine together, I could hear the zip ties tighten, but my wrists were already numb with fear. I couldn't feel the stomp, but the metallic bite of blood in the back of my throat told me my nose wasn't as pretty as it had looked that morning in the mirror.

Landscape #1
Ashley Dechant



Joan of Arc
Liz Alexander



Seasonal Self Progression

Kelsey Heller

It felt like
four years of summer
with you
I stayed too long
growing from your light
I didn't mind

I didn't notice
when I stopped
changing colors
Or when you started shining
on someone else

I withdrew
into the ambiguous
frigid shade
Continuing my process of
decaying brown
Surviving on the
peaks of sunlight that
graced through our
cracks of grey

Skipped past fall
to find myself
stuck in winter
All while someone else thrived
from your warmth
The sun was setting
so I left to find
more light

And I did

With a warmth
never felt before

Light poured out
of every crevice of
my body
Self-radiating at last
I entered into spring

And met you
once again
for summer.

Happy Miscommunication

Kelsey Heller

Sitting on my brown, slightly-worn leather couch that was adopted after it was discovered on the street corner earlier in the summer. Next to each other, yet still so uncomfortably distant. You try putting your arm around me, at the exact moment I lean back on the couch.

Hand frozen in the air
Think quickly
This could be damaging

Like a slow motion crash scene from a movie, I watch you try to navigate your hand to a new destination. Watching in puzzlement as you move towards my knee, quickly deciding that's the worst idea, until finally landing on my shoulder. Once a co-author to my chapters, it was as if it was the first time you were reading this book. How did we get to this point?

Confused glances meet one another
React
Say something
Anything

"Boy that could not have been more awkward" I feebly joke. We laugh at the horrible reality of the situation. Somehow, the visible distant misunderstanding between closest of friends was the most ridiculous thing in that moment. And yet, the best fixture.

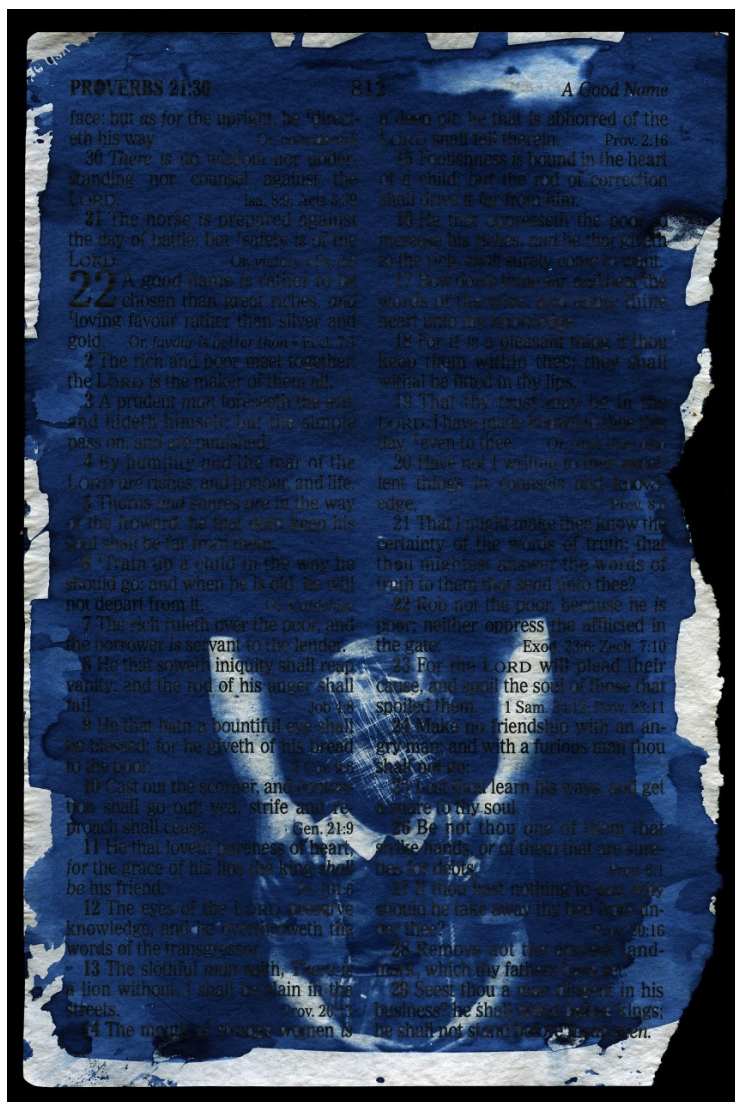
Sitting on that brown
Slightly-worn leather couch
In happy miscommunication.

Female Expectations
Liz Alexander



Identity

Liz Alexander



PROVERBS 21:30

812

A Good Name

face; but as for the upright, he ^{Or: consistent} directeth his way.

30 There is no wisdom nor understanding nor counsel against the LORD.

Isa. 54; Acts 5:39

31 The horse is prepared against the day of battle; but ^{Or: victory} safety is of the LORD.

Ps. 28

22 A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches, and loving favour rather than silver and gold.

Or: favour is better than • Eccl. 7:1

2 The rich and poor meet together: the LORD is the maker of them all.

3 A prudent man foreseeth the evil, and hideth himself; but the simple pass on, and are punished.

4 By humility and the fear of the LORD are riches, and honour, and life.

5 Forns and snares are in the way of the forward: he that dash keep his soul shall be far from them.

6 Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.

Or: care/hope

7 The rich ruleth over the poor, and the borrower is servant to the lender.

8 He that soweth iniquity shall reap vanity: and the rod of his anger shall fail.

Job 4:8

9 He that hath a bountiful eye shall be blessed; for he giveth of his bread to the poor.

2 Cor. 9:6

10 Cast out the scorner, and contention shall go out; yea, strife and reproach shall cease.

Gen. 21:9

11 He that loveth pureness of heart, for the grace of his lips the king shall be his friend.

Ps. 141:6

12 The eyes of the LORD reserve knowledge, and he overthroweth the words of the transgressor.

13 The slothful man saith, There is a lion without: I shall be slain in the streets.

Prov. 26:13

14 The mouth of strange women is

a deep pit; he that is abhorred of the LORD shall fall therein.

Prov. 2:16

15 Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child; but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him.

16 He that oppresseth the poor, to increase his riches, and he that giveth to the rich, shall surely come to want.

17 Bow down thine ear, and hear the words of the wise, and apply thine heart unto my knowledge.

18 For it is a pleasant thing if thou keep them within thee; they shall withal be fitted in thy lips.

19 That thy trust may be in the LORD, I have made known to thee this day, even to thee.

Or: read this day

20 Have not I written to thee excellent things in counsels and knowledge.

Prov. 8:9

21 That I might make thee know the certainty of the words of truth; that thou mightest answer the words of truth to them that send unto thee?

22 Rob not the poor, because he is poor; neither oppress the afflicted in the gate.

Exod. 23:6; Zech. 7:10

23 For the LORD will plead their cause, and spoil the soul of those that spoiled them.

1 Sam. 24:12; Prov. 23:11

24 Make no friendship with an angry man; and with a furious man thou shalt not go.

25 Lest thou learn his ways, and get a snare to thy soul.

26 Be not thou one of them that strike hands, or of them that are sureties for debts.

Prov. 6:1

27 If thou hast nothing to pay, why should he take away thy bed from under thee?

Prov. 20:16

28 Remove not the ancient landmarks, which thy fathers have set.

29 Seest thou a man diligent in his business? he shall stand before kings; he shall not stand before a poor man.

THE CONTRIBUTORS

COURTNEY LLOYD

SABRINA MIRESE

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BENJAMIN SCHILZ is a senior at UWL majoring in Biology: Cellular and Molecular Biology with minors in Psychology and Chemistry. On campus, he is a tutor at OMSS, a student manager at Cartwright for food service, and a student researcher in the genetics lab. He draws inspiration from everyday life and some amazing people. The greatest challenge about his work is trying to capture a mood or a feeling in a style of poetry with such a limited, standardized structure.

WESLEY ISBERNER is trying. Out of sheer interest in people, they are a Sociology major in their junior year. Out of sheer interest in themselves, they try to figure out how to keep moving forward.

BRETT GLUTH- is a freshman at UW-L, originally from Milwaukee. While pursuing a business degree in marketing, he loves to wander around the local areas of La Crosse, capturing stories, scenes, and emotions through photography. He doesn't know exactly how he's going to do it, but Brett wants to help change this world for the better.

LIZ ALEXANDER

ALYSSA BRAUN

ABBY BARICKMAN

ELLIE EAST

HANNAH MURPHY- From the mind of a Chicagoan settled in Western Wisconsin.

LIBBIE MILLER

KELSEY HELLER

BEKAH KIENZLE

MCLAINE SCHWERTFEGER

ASHLEY DECHANT

