

SAVE THE WORLD

VOLUME 2 - SPRING 2010



photo by Katie Nolan

“SAVE THE WORLD”

A publication of *The Catalyst*
Volume 2 – SPRING 2010

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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.

EDITOR'S COMMENTS

Greetings, Readers!

For the second volume of The Catalyst, we set out to see just what makes our world worth enjoying. We ended up receiving several indicators of the talent that captures the phenomena that convince us to perpetuate the beauty that surrounds us. Through photos, poems, short stories, essays and music, we hope you enjoy all the reasons we found to save our world!

--Editors Elizabeth Fleig and Laura Imming

P.S. What would YOU like to see in The Catalyst? Tell us what theme would best suit the Fall 2010 edition of The Catalyst at catalyst@uwlax.edu.

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All The World Would Fall

Kelsey Greenwood

I hated having to go to the bathroom. The smell was so rank and repulsive. There was only a trickle of light coming from the upper right hand corner of the room thanks to some broken roof tiles. If you were lucky, it would rain while you were showering, giving you that much more precious water to rinse off with. You were better off germ-wise not washing your hands rather than touching the sink...

I was hovering over the already dangerously full toilet when an alarming rap at the door caused me to almost tip over. It was Tara.

“Kels...everyone’s going over to the clinic. Hurry up; I don’t wanna get left behind in here,” she whined.

“Yeah, ok,” I mumbled barely audible. Haitian days are exhausting. It’s not the heat that drains, although it doesn’t help by any means. Shock, sympathy, and remorse suck out all positive views on the world, chew them up, and then regurgitate them, leaving life’s outlook in a mangled, dirty, helpless mess. I stood up slowly at first, but then I started to cook up images in my head about why everyone was going over to the clinic. Blood? How much blood? I don’t really like blood... Emergency surgery? A knife fight? What are they going to do about it?

Ever since I was a little girl, capable of imagining gruesome things, I would think about the kind of cases Mom would see on her trips. Without fail, she would bring back hundreds of pictures every year, not a one matching up to the ghastly images playing over and over in my head. I was being haunted by the thought of things going terribly wrong and it weighed on me.

“What’s going on?” I figured it was easier to simply ask than torture myself about the details.

“HA! You think they tell us anything around here? Yesterday, Dan asked me my name for the fourth time.”

“Doctors...their people skills are hopeless.” We giggled. I grabbed some germ-x and slid it into my pocket.

We linked arms and strolled across the rock laden path, serving as a road, by light of the bobbing flashlight in tune with our steps. The air was still and thick. Even the stones held their breath. The grasshoppers dared not to move, in fear of what the night might bring. And step after heavy step, I began to understand their fear and claim it as my own. The large waiting area outside was queerly deserted, as it was normally swamped with desperate people seeking our wisdom and talent. But on that night, no one wanted to hear what we had to say. No one wanted to know what we knew.

With my consciousness at its peak, I swung open the dusty glass doors to see a mass of people in the center of the waiting room. They were crowded around an unconscious woman. The darkness of their skin blended with the darkness of the night. It was an eerie effect. But I soon heard voices I recognized.

“Michelet, tell them thank you, but we can take her now. Tell them to stay here in the waiting room.” It was my mother. She was standing along side the makeshift cot, both of her hands clinging to it as though if she let it go, all the world would fall. She, along with the other doctors, had headlamps on which illuminated the white clinic in long, straight streams of light. The voiced of my people escalated as the scene became more and more chaotic, which in turn caused my adrenaline to run wild. But the Haitians just let her go – the woman they had carried so far. They knew she was in better hands. So trusting. Why? What had we done to earn their trust? We had cared, that’s what.

It only took two of them to transport her frail, pregnant self to the operating room.

“Get her on the bed,” Tony barked concerningly. “And someone go turn on the damn generator. We need some frickin light in here!” Tony was frightening.

“Lois, what’s going on with her?” asked Jennifer, one of the pre-med students, sort of just along for the ride. She got what she asked for by coming along.

“It looks like she’s going into pre-eclampsia. We’re gonna have to get that baby out of her, or we’ll lose them both. Maureen, do we have a vacuum extractor anywhere?” Lois was the mid-wife. She was grey-haired and knew everything.

“Um, yeah...it should be in the back,” she said, but she was already half way down the hall when she said it. Tara and I hadn’t released each other’s arms since we left the rectory. The atmosphere in that now partially lit clinic was dense. It was standing on the edge of a cliff, looking down into an abyss, with no one to pull you back up if you fell. It was waiting on death.

As could only be expected, Tara and I were not allowed into the operating room. That, or there just wasn’t room with all the American doctors crowded around the Haitian woman. There was shouting at first, arguing about how to handle this sorry plight. And then a hush swept over the place, as if the grace of God himself had descended upon us.

“Go to the rectory and grab some peanut butter and animal crackers for her family. We might be here awhile.” My mom was serious. Too serious. Tara was out the door before I even realized what she had said. Peanut butter. Right. Awhile...how long is that? Just long enough to grieve over what’s been lost, I suppose.

They assembled themselves side by side against the wall. Hands in their laps, they didn’t stir. There were four of them. Michelet said they had carried her sixteen miles. Tara handed one of them the unopened box of animal crackers.

“American food; it comes in a box!” She failed to lift the weight of the night off our shoulders; we were still being crushed by its gravity. But I gave her a reassuring smile anyway. I took a lion, dipped it into the peanut butter, ate it, and then gave the food to them to mimic me. They did. They were ravished.

Fifteen minutes of uncomfortable silence ticked by. Fifteen minutes is such a long time. After awhile, Lois emerged with a tiny bundle of death wrapped in a baby blanket.

“We saved Fifi. She’ll be fine. It’s her little one we’ve lost. It’s a boy.” She handed the dead child over to the man who stood on his callused feet when she came from the room, whom I took to be the father. “I am so sorry.” Lois was crying a little. She’s a strong woman, and she was crying. Michelet relayed the news to them in rapid Creole. They did not falter. Their faces remained the hard stones time had turned them into. The man held the baby away from his dusty body, as though it had a communicable disease and he didn’t want to catch it. I was offended by his distance. “Christenson. She wanted Christenson.” Michelet repeated the mechanic words to us that had miraculously found an exit at the man’s cold mouth. Those were the only words he said all night. When asked about godparents, he simply pointed to Lois and Tony. They all lined up side by side for a photo for Fifi to remember her dead son by. Her Christenson. Lois and Tony’s cheeks were tear-stained. The man was still wide-eyed and expressionless.

Christenson was a feeble being. His gray skin was translucent. I could see every single vessel which used to pump life giving blood through this tiny body. His eyes were closed, but they were bulgy. His head was much too large for his body. His fingers were smaller than how I felt at that moment, which was awfully diminutive. People murmured their sorrow into words. This was a sacred time. God really had sent his grace upon Christenson and Fifi and I could feel its affects. I hadn’t ever felt anything like the grief I felt for this tiny dead boy, and haven’t since. I did not know these people. They did not mean anything to me. Why did they move me so?

That perfect mother-son relationship. Time had not been allowed to poison the love. Maybe it’s because when she woke up, all she could think about was her baby. Maybe that’s why their unbreakable bond moved me.

“Where’s my baby? Where is he? Is he alive? I want to see him!” She was frail, but tough. We had to hold her down to keep the IV’s in. Regrettably, by the time she’d recovered, we had buried his tiny body in the solid Haitian dirt and marked his presence with a small circle of the most flawless stones we could find. She didn’t even know him. She grew him. They are the core of love itself. If she was given the choice, I know she’d let him live. She was beautiful. She is beautiful. A beautiful mother of a dead baby boy.

Grandma
Susan Niedzwiecki



hollow, i am hollow inside and the
sun was out and the roof was tinted
topwise down into the wall shadows
while birds falling in love fell with

one another, the dust is growing dusty
old man, even the wildflowers full
of reasons are dropping golden petals
on floors of mausoleums, I am with-

out a way of speaking fullness only
hollow words and songs are sung
now and ears are growing hollow
with the nothing melodies of these. it

is the way the rain hits dry earth
and disappears, the way a key fits
into a lock, how the wind comes and
goes from nowhere, I trace your face in

dust for remembrance, old man
you will know I fell away even before
falling and felt the weightlessness
of hollowness and how it's easier to fly

Untitled
Sarah Sodermann



To spill a drop of honesty

Ben Payntner

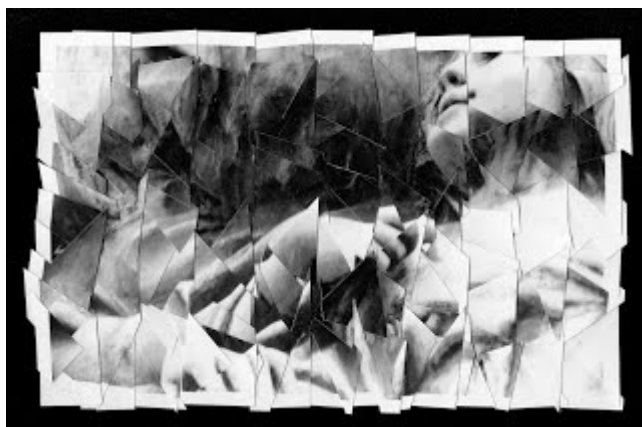
to have them know that even
when it pours down rain there's
still dry patches down beneath
the cloth and skin and bone

and you can tell them, where
or when they ask why all
the world's soaked heavy through
and they are dry as desert loneliness

you can tell them, young ones it's not
that I didn't want you to grow tall be-
come some green eyed beauty with a
way about her, a him, or I, it was
the fear of too much rain, the drown-
ing of a soul at sea, the misery of
watching a smile sink beneath the
waves is why I held the tide at bay.

to have them know that even
though a body floats it's only after
the life's gone and the heart is
at the bottom of the sea.

Untitled
Deborah Braun



an old friend

Ben Payntner

nighttime comes, an old friend
moonlight on piano keys smile.
I do not know how long it's been,
other than awhile.

let the dogs bark, let shadows
come and go to bed and rise.
there is nothing more than

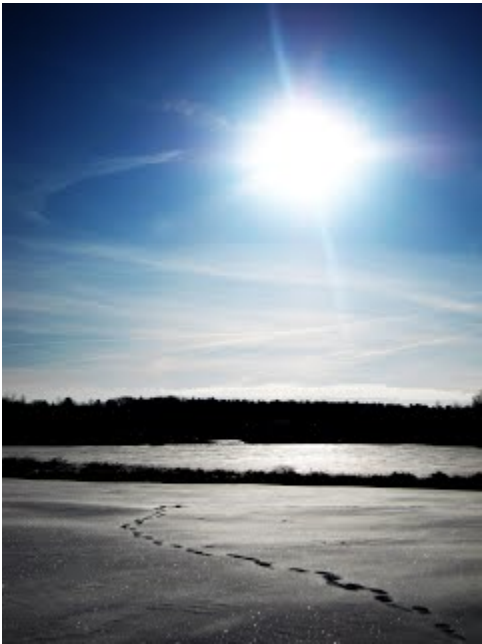
washington street.
no yesterday,
no next time try.

the shops are closing,
now the lights are turned down low.
all the moths have found their death
I walk where I've seen others go.

the cities gone.
disappeared in all its metal rust.
the moon went round the river bend
the bitter clouds all vanish into dust.

this is an old cracked trail friend,
I walk
to walk
with you again.

Untitled
Karlee Simkowski



Bluff Top
Karlee Simkowski



Concept of Connection

Jane Thissen

the concept of connection
beyond others understanding
is the stronghold of who we are
who we will be
our link to the past
all interwoven at this moment in time

why is a question
with possibly no answer
yet I ask
just as I do when I stand
amidst the glow of fireflies
or starshine
that same radiance
emanates from you
draws me to seek your light
your passion
your essence
20

you exist apart from cultural median

a place I long to reside

ultimately

in everything I do

feel

create

the mystery of spirit

long caged in silence

I tenderly ask you to share

with trust of loyalty

and acceptance

Untitled
Lindsey Gall



Joni

Benjamin Gilbertson

...laughing and crying, you know, it's the same release.

Her heart lays in pieces, strewn across Hawaiian asphalt,
parched by tropic sun rays that now bronze visitors.
Feet buried in the white sand, eyes fixated on the setting sun,
keeping paved paradise behind her, she finds what is hers.

Her voice ebbs, it flows over the hills of Yasgur's farm,
unable to be amongst the stardust and turning cogs.
Harmony strikes and settles today's hearts
and would have done the same for the half million united, fearful of
smog.

She dances with her old man, his arms around her waist,
as she professes her love with the simple act of a gaze.
Needless of legal nuptials, she prepares eggs in isolation,
awaiting his return and eager to show him praise.

Her piano becomes holiday bells, healing the wounds
of her heart and the ice-skate blisters on her feet.
She glides down the thick ice covering the black water beneath her,
humming melodies of joy and peace.

This brief taste of freedom and solace matures to an urge,
a yearning for warmth, unfamiliar to the frigid north.
Her eyes follow the flocks of geese flapping heavy wings over the
dead earth
as they well with tears, freezing on her cheeks as they seep forth.

She finds love approaching her downriver, weary of how to receive
him...and herself..

She finds truth in his sidewalk tune, his words.
She surrenders sadness and doubt for an eternal bond with this
candid man,
only to return to the city with its values backwards.

Her fingers first pick at the open chords, distinctly hers.
Some fifty novelties later, rhythm accompanies her skill,
with an occasional slap heard behind the lyrics
depicting laughter. pang. angst. thrill.

Her palms brush across the ebony and ivory,
unique and distinct harmonies produced thereof.
Her voice conceals a hint of Saskatoon winter – later, cigarettes –,
expressing pain. joy. melancholy. love.

Her voice soothes, it calms busy hands, calloused palms.
Her hair a shade of honey, her words just the same.
She casts aside the veil obscuring ourselves, the world.
She bleaches the stain on our daily bread, our Christian names.

Untitled
Jaclyn Beckford



Produced and Mixed by Tyler Keyes, working with Kandid McFly & Mr. Peter Parker (DJ from the Twin Cities) on board as the host for their album.



The Extraordinary Day of the Ordinary Man

Melissa Carlson

There was a man who was very special. He was not a man of great whims or wits nor a man of high repute. He was simply just a man. And what a man he was. If I were to tell you his name, you would not recognize or remember it, but I certainly will always keep him some place special with me. People are only as important as they are remembered, you know. So you may be wondering what this man did that was so extraordinary. What he did was live.

I am jumping ahead of myself though. Any extraordinary story as this begins somewhere. He worked as an accountant in a town that had a fairly small population, at least compared to the megacities like New York and Los Angeles. He worked at that company for twenty years before I met him. Like most people working in the same job day-in, day-out he got into a rhythm. One that eventually made him unawares of certain things. But my boss did not know that. My boss, you see, was a man far less extraordinary, in fact he was a criminal. He was scummier than the scum you find in most prisons. And boy did he like his money. On a not particularly special day in August my boss made a mistake. He claimed part of his transaction in a way that was far too questionable, at least if the accountant was paying attention. My boss blamed his mistake on the weather, on bad luck, on anything he could think of but himself. He ordered me to do my job. He ordered me to take out that accountant.

I thought nothing of it at first. I have killed many people for my boss, most were rivals or politicians, even a cop or two, but this was my first accountant. I thought it would be a simple job. Quick and easy. I too made a mistake when it came to this man. I followed his movements and patterns for a couple weeks. He really did not do much. He lived alone in a decent apartment. He really did not seem to have many friends, at least none that called or came over. He did not even really go anywhere besides work, home, and the grocery store. I thought that this would be quite a synch. On that day that became his extraordinary fate I waited on a rooftop across the street. My line of view into his apartment was perfect.

I have to admit, as I lay there gun in hand I felt a tug in my gut. And that was when something most strange occurred. He did not get up at exactly 6:17 A.M. as he did every other morning. He got up at 6:32. He dashed around his apartment to get ready quickly, otherwise he would be late. He ran down the stairs, tie in one hand, jacket in the other. He nearly fell twice, but caught himself in time. As he ran out of his building he collided with a woman, she dropped all of the papers she was carrying. Even though he was late he stopped. He helped this woman pick up every last piece of paper, apologizing for running into her with each piece he returned.

It was nearly seven o'clock by this point, he would be late if he stopped again. I quickly dismantled my gun, bagging it up deftly, then it was my turn to run. I wanted to see what he would do. I saw him waiting at a stop light fidgeting for the "walk light" to come up. A blind man felt his way up next to him. This man almost stepped into traffic by accident—the lights here do not give any audible signals for the blind like the bigger cities do. He was saved by my target just as a car was about to hit him. When the little white-lit figure popped up, my man carefully, slowly helped the blind one across the street. He would most definitely be late to work today, something that he had never done.

I could see the sweat beading on his forehead as his pace quickened with each step. He clearly did not know what to expect with being late and it seemed to worry him. He surely would not be fired for this one late occurrence. I saw plenty of his fellow co-workers arriving late, some every day, yet he did not notice their ineptitude for punctuality. He only noticed himself and his lack of being at his job five minutes early and he was five minutes early on the dot always—except today. As he reached his office he fumbled with his keycard, he dropped it before finally entering. Something very startling happened as he opened the door; he turned, looking behind him and he saw me. I expected to blend in with the others around me and yet he smiled at me. I know he did not recognize me for who I am—no one does. I am like the shadow awaiting the perfect light to be nearest the body.

Had he known my purpose I doubt he would have given me such a kind gesture.

He raced up the stairs to his office and I raced up the fire escape to a good vantage point. As he straightened his desk which was always full of papers, a young couple came in, most likely seeking advice of some kind, and, yet again, I saw something different about him on this very fated day. He no longer had that dazed look his eyes. His eyes seemed cleared from their lack of life. He somehow awakened. Perhaps that extra bit of sleep really did him some good. Who knows. I am no philosopher, I am just a hit man.

I watched him the rest of the day, amazed at his change. As he left work I followed him again. This time at a much greater distance so he would not recognize me. I climbed those stairs back up to my spot and watched. While digging into his pocket for his keys a woman approached him. It was the one he had run into earlier that day. She was smiling, so was he. They went up to his apartment together talking and even a few laughs escaped each person.

I left that rooftop with one less life to add to the many I have taken. I could not help but smile. This man had no right to die. He did nothing wrong. He was nothing like those who I did take the lives of.

His face is the only one I can recollect. His name is the only I remember.

Untitled

Sarah Sodemann



Hurry

Kacey Harasimowicz

Hear the water pouring down the culverts.

The dirty, wet grass showing its
teeth through the remaining slush.

College kids stepping out in hoodies and mittens,
willing the sun to cancel out the lingering ice-wind.

Spring pushes. Impatient.

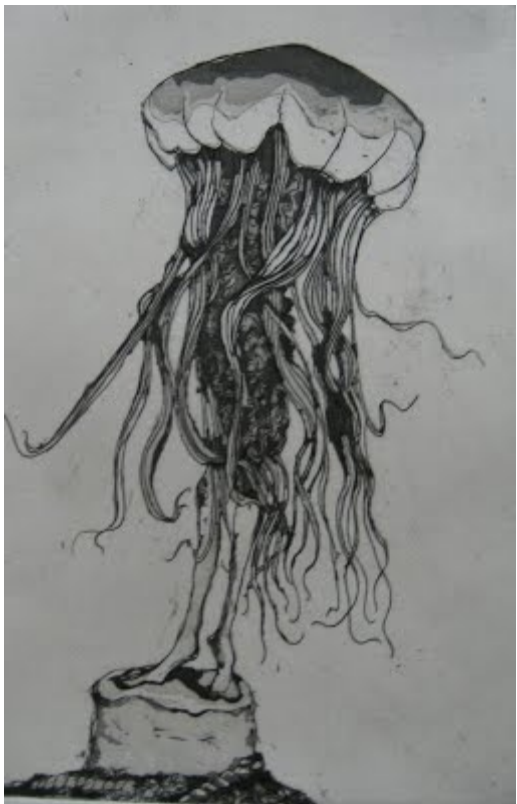
Hurry.

There is a Need

Katie Kiesler



By Catch: King Jelly
Chelsie Heidke



ragged eyes

Jane Thissen

do not walk by me
disheveled though I am,
army green worn decades
shields inner battle,
the war long gone
but not in my mind,
and I heard on the street
there is another
and
another

do not look
away

though my eyes
frighten

the peace and balance
in your shopping day
of sequins and silk,
these eyes could be
those of
your brother
your sister
your son
years from now

do not ignore my silent plea
for respect and simple dignity,
I have seen much
but will not share,
it is too much
for anyone to bear,
I only ask that you perceive
I am not merely

a haunting face
with nowhere to go,
I am you
sent on another path
long ago

Untitled
Elizabeth Bowman



Saving the World One Person at a Time

Amanda Groshek

Most people think that saving the world is a job too big for them. How can one person possibly save the world? What most people don't realize is that saving the world isn't something that requires one massive, life changing event, but rather, saving the world is done through dedication, love, and lending a helping hand. This is why friendship is one of the ways we save the world.

When we look back at our lives, the people who have left and will leave the most impact are our friends. They are the shoulder that we cry on when upset and the first person that we call when we're happy or excited. They know our secrets. And it's for these reasons and so many others that they have such a huge impact on our lives. It's because we trust them that we seek and believe their advice. We know that they both can and will help us.

Friendship isn't a one way street though; it goes both ways. You don't have friends unless you are a friend. Much like so many things in life that are worth while, friendship takes effort and work. You get what you put into it, and it's never stagnant. Friendships are either growing or dying. They need love and care, just like a plant needs sunshine and water. That doesn't mean that it's always easy, oh no, sometimes friendships are put through a storm or two as well. But after the storms, if they don't destroy the friendship, it only grows stronger.

It's because of the strength and power of friendship and because they take work that friendship is so valuable. Where would we be today with out our friends? We would each be very different because our friends whether we still know them or not have all had an impact on our life. Every person that has touched our lives has left an imprint on them, no matter how large or small.

In the end, friendship is the glue that holds society together. It's because of friendship that individuals are able to accomplish the unimaginable. Friendship provides the behind-the-scenes structure that supports the individuals that make up society. It is for this reason

that something as seemingly simple as being a good friend is a way to save the world.

Untitled
Katie Nolan



With Liberty and Justice for All

Jeff Steele

I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America
It is with this oath that we entrust
The people, ourselves, the earth, and the dust
This is the oath our country recites
Through brightest of days and the darkest of nights

Why is it that this world has stopped turning?
Why have our hearts stopped from burning?
Do you ration your passion in hopes for the best?
Take it on faith and claim we are blessed?

Mother earth is bleeding the blackest of blood
Father time is laughing at the oily flood
Children on the street
Crying, starving, dying
Rich on the Wall Street
Spending, investing, sighing

Like an angry beast pushed in a corner
We thrive on chaos and disorder
Fighting hate with hate and hope with fear
Love is not reserved for a queer

And to the Republic for which it stands
I touch this land with my hands
The trees cry and the skies grow dark
There is a glimmer of light, a hope, a spark
A sigh of relief...

For a moment you gamble on a brief belief
That someone somewhere is watching, waiting, caring
For one nation under God
To reach out and silence this angry mob

Is it right to be white and shine bright in a world that casts its
shadows on the innocent and poor?
In light of the shore within arms reach
Hope's tiny hands are lapping the beach

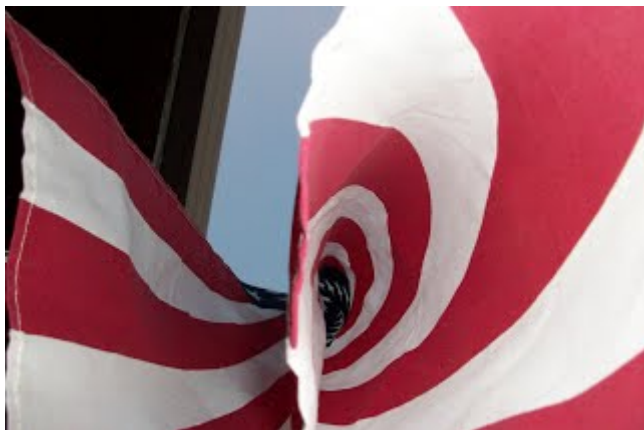
Let your voice cry out with aggression
Express your confession without oppression
This land is scarred with heaps of trash
Handiwork of a corrupted politician's lash

Leaving problems for a future generation
Won't mean much without an education
Equal rights are a fool's feeling
When women are stopped by a glass ceiling

The races of this land are in a race they can't win
Without the help of brotherly kin
We feel invisible when we are indivisible
Yet everyone thinks they are invincible

The way we live is just plain wrong
Silencing a woman's voice and her song
Wedding the hate in holy matrimony
This nation of ours is becoming quite lonely
When all the dust settles will you stand tall?
And cry out with liberty and justice for all?

Untitled
Lydia Gumness



Work of Genius

Alyssa Weber

My pencil glides over the page

a quick ten second sketch

I pick one color, and then another, pushing them into the paper,

Cardboard, sketch pad, paper bag

Creating a magnum opus

I pull back, squint my eyes a little, tilt my head to

the left and smile

She's is all mine, nothing like her has ever been created or will ever

be

I hold her in my arms and admire her every

feature

Set my paintbrush in the cup of water

Waving it around to get rid of the pigment

Use the white to blend and the water to unify

Take a red with green, blue with orange, purple with yellow

Take two separate entities and perfectly merge to create a

masterpiece

His eyes, her nose, ears just like her grandma's

The first steps she takes are a little wobbly

Her fingers grasping one of mine, like I had

always dreamed

I grasp the oil pastel and cover the lines of the pencil

Too focused to hear the school bell ring or the person next to
me passing a compliment

My hands are covered in thick ink, charcoal, pastel, and graphite

I use my finger to blend, to make it look like a mirage, like a
dream

Her nightmares send her into my room at night

She asks me to look for the boggyman under her

bed

I teach her not to be afraid, to take chances, to love

But first I teach her to draw, to paint, to create

She dips her fingertip in color

Draws geometric figures, in the perfect sequence

Lets her feelings go on a piece of paper, cardboard, sketch pad,
paper bag

Creating a work of genius

Untitled
Jaclyn Beckford



Parasite Disease

Meghan McClellan

Something once so sweet has turned oh so sour
Past confidences now used to exploit and gain power

Like parasites living off of one another
For one to stay alive the other must suffer

Using each other to survive
Although each one is abused
Neither can die

He is weak he is lonely
False memories of a now seemingly unattainable happiness
Induce feelings of regret
He lacks purpose, He lacks sense

She recognizes his agony and remembers the pain
She provides minimal attention to barely keep him sane

No room in a heart that she has filled with fear
Conditioned to resist through past abandonments, and tears

He takes what she gives him although lacking satisfaction
If only he could break down her walls
And obtain once again, the true attraction
Embarrassed and discouraged passion twists to resentment
As the anger harbors he becomes more independent

He breaks away in need of a more gracious host
She was almost ready
That real feeling of devotion was so close

She panic,
She crack,
Her barriers fall apart,
What if that was the last chance she had to reopen her heart

She is weak she is lonely
Unrealistic dreams twist her previous intents
She loses all purpose
She loses all sense

Power hungry he basks in the temporary independence
She yearns she begs for more sufficient attention

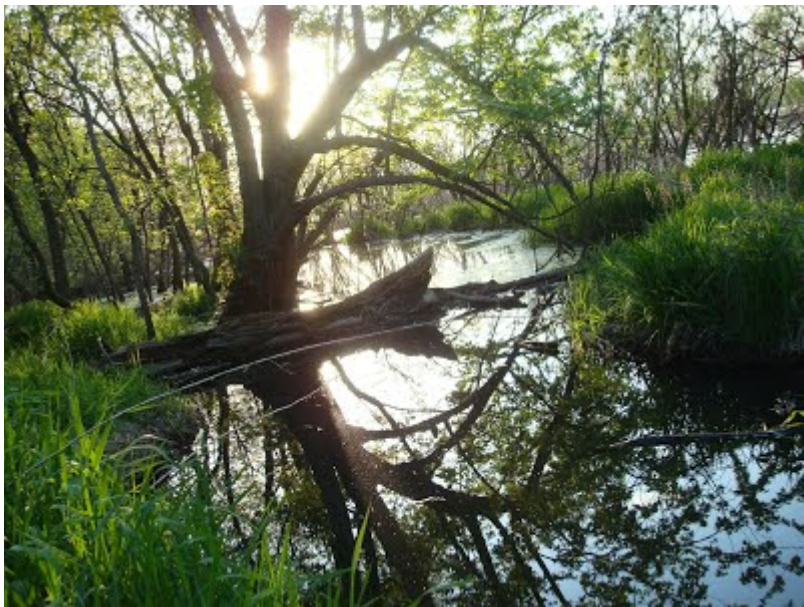
Her hopes diminish
Despair exchanged for rage
As her dependency falters
His power wanes

Stuck again he wants her
He needs her to feel alive
She won't give up control
She holds tight to a fake pride

They both chase that high
The adrenaline of their first kiss
An unattainable sensation
That is entertained through a strain
Of if onlys' and what ifs?

The cycle is vicious will it ever cease
This is not love
This is a parasitic disease

Myrick Park
Megan Steinke



Sammy
Lindsey Gall



The Climb

Elizabeth Fleig

Its times like this I consider my alternatives. I was starting to sweat, and was fighting the urge to turn around and just forget the path set in front of me. I was only a quarter of the way up and the descent is always easier than the climb...right? The trees were quiet; the only sign that I wasn't in a painting was the rustle of a breeze that caressed leaves I couldn't touch. I stopped for a second; let my back hit the rough bark behind me. My neck dropped back and my eyes met the glittering canopy above me—how could I give up on this? I examined the rock caught in my treads—that little guy would definitely impede traction, and I couldn't risk slipping on the spring mulch left untouched by the sun. I flicked it out, watching as it dropped down and bounced down the incline, setting off to lodge in someone else's shoe. I kept walking, my knees folding as I mounted the exposed root systems laid out by trees much wiser than me. My heart pounded, and my eyes sought out my favorite nook—set in amongst knarled roots and limestone deposits. I nestled in, like a child anticipating her favorite story from an elder, and marveled at the layers, textures and colors that decorated my little home. The bottom was jagged and ruddy, a clear victim of years of runoff and erosion, and yet this frail looking base had the strength to support such an imposing cliff artifice.

Each layer carried its own story, a grey pebble smashed between a layer of black and yellow, a rivulet of melting snow flowing through the patchy moss that covered the scars of wear, even the hastily carved initials at eye level...the only indication that another life form had attempted to unlock the rock and its secrets. I sighed and checked my watch—time stops for no man. I was close, but at this height the footing becomes almost all sand, and my only companions were the scraggly trees that can be sustained by it. I had moved out from under my organic umbrella, and the sun beat down on the back of my neck, irritating my already boiling blood. I cursed my muscles for not being able to jump back to shape after winter's hibernation, but inaction almost always results in stagnation. I saw the plateau that was my destination, a rock that jutted out from an impossible

angle, looking much too unstable for any human to cling to. Yet it had supported me before, and I continued to trust the natural physics that kept me and my rock from sliding down the incline. The peaceful allure of this spot kept me going, kept me pushing against the sand that flowed so easily from beneath me. It was engulfed by the sun and yet never blind, in fact, you could see for 7 counties on a particularly clear day. My shoes finally found the familiar ridges, and my eyes searched the face of the rock for the hidden caves where small wild flowers could grow unscathed.

I reached out to anchor myself against the never-ending pull of gravity, grabbing a rough ledge and cutting my hand on an unseen glass shard. I scampered up to my rock, letting my bones sink into the sandy surface and tracing the grooves with my finger, feeling the tension leak out of my blood even as it flowed from my hand. I pressed it to my side, knowing it would stop eventually under pressure. As usual, I smiled when I thought of my now petty struggle, laughed when I realized that I had considered giving up just because an unseen force had strained against my muscles. I looked across the 7 counties, finally feeling my height and the breadth of wonder around me. The wind tore at my hair, whipping it against my shoulders and teasing the sun...and yet, I was untouchable, confident in the feeling of belonging and peace that enveloped me on that rock. The wind was fuel more than fury, forcing air down my tired lungs and snatching away the carbon dioxide it craved...but that was fine by me, I could share. Time passed and the splendor became familiar, so down I went, but confident that no hibernation could encapsulate me again. After all, mountains beg to be climbed and zeniths long to be reached, who was I to deny them?

“Happiness makes up in height what it lacks in length.” –Robert Frost

"Non est vivere sed valere vita est"--Life is more than just being alive

Untitled

Karlee Simkowski



Untitled
Lindsey Gall



Letter to a Friend

Dave Briggs

It is so good to here from you.

And, of course, to touch paper with pen.

You're asking how things are on my end.

I must summarize well before I go send

My message to you. Now diving on in:

As I am writing this, it is almost ten,

But I'm still alive, hallelujah, amen,

I simply can't wait to see you again,

But I've been learning to dance, to twirl and to bend,

And my knees may or may not last me until then.

How have you been?

Grape Stems and Banana Peels

Jeff Steele

Order up
That barking black box has got to go
Those belligerent babbling fools spoon feeding us prescribed
nonsense
Slowly decaying our insides and coarsening our emotions
Running out of places to point their fingers
Planting weeds in the mind instead of seeds in the soul
While our obedient sheep-like eyes stare unquestioningly into oblivion
And our pixilated brains download the fear
Beautifully disturbing if you ask me

Wake up and smell the greed
It's as ripe as acid rain and oil spills
My skin crawls
The smell of suffering rapes my nostrils
Violating my sanity and secretly breastfeeding my insecurity
It sickens me
Their flapping heads ooze lies and bleed intolerability
And judgment
And dark, damp alleyways filled with trench coats
Terrifying, subduing, feeding

Acting as though the world—a mere playground full of fidgety toddlers
Oblivious to the selfish temptations of narcissistic bureaucrats
They reek of incompetence and dusty attics
Numbing souls with lies and landfills
Eating away at logic and reason
Stupefying our very existence
Suffocating hope and strangling beauty
With tomorrow's sins and yesterday's sanctions

Don't lie
We're all violently oppressed and mildly impressed
And nothing but grape stems and banana peels
Blinded by chaos and living in perpetual darkness
Unsure whether it is the end of the beginning or the beginning of the
end

Next time your eyes water and you're not sure why
Skip a stone across the mind
Yell at a mirror and say hello
Reflections of insanity
Echoes of eternity
Check please

Chiles in Semporna, Borneo
Susan Niedzwiecki



Truth

Rebecca Reinhold

...is the key that frees from the cage.

...is the shackle that binds the mind.

...is the sword that bites the heart.

...is the balm that soothes the wounded soul.

...is a tear of sorrow and joy.

...is friend and foe.

...is fear.

...is HOPE.

Dove for Carol
Jane Thissen



Untitled
Eman Alihassan



Nocturne

David Briggs

I miss the nights. I miss the nights as they used to be. Night was my time. There was nothing quite like it. Ever go outside at night? No, no no no, I don't mean like this. I know we're outside, but this? This? This isn't night. As long as there's still cars driving and crowds out, this isn't night. And I don't mean outside in the city either. Though I guess there's something beautiful about a city at night. When there's not a soul around. When you can look down the street and not see a single car anywhere. You might hear one driving far off on a different street, but I'm talking not one goddamn car in sight. Under the city lamps, in that pale yellow light, everything seems so much... so much more real. Like it's alive.

Everything's crisp, dramatic. Everything there is, you just see it more clearly. Like it's defined. Highly defined. It's even better after it rains, 'cause you get the reflections of the traffic lights on the streets as they flash red or stay green or whatever they want to do. Life seems to be put on hold when... You know what I'm saying? No, that's not what I'm saying though. I'm saying going outside at night. Away from the city. You see, here downtown, there's lights everywhere, even at night. And I know there's a beauty in the emptiness, but you look at the sky and see nothing. Absolutely nothing. Here in the city, you can't see a goddamn thing. It's all covered by the haze... the haze of the lights. It wasn't like this when I was a kid. Oh man, going outside at night, that was something special. You could go outside, go far away from the house, and just look at the sky. And oh man, it was nothing like it is here. There's nothing really like it. Stars. And I mean millions of stars. Bright ones, small ones, there were tons and tons. It stretched on forever. It was so incredible.

Some people liked to watch the sun set, and that's all right, I guess, but for me, the real beauty was well after it was gone. After the sky went from that dark blue that forms in the distance to that indescribable color... it's not blue, but it's not really black either. Here in the city, it's just a dull hazy grey, just a solid color, but out in the hills, out where I lived... that was something else entirely. So beautiful. And the moon. Oh my God, the moon. That was the best

part, because no matter what, it was always gorgeous. On nights when there wasn't a cloud in the sky, it was so bright, so clear, so... striking. 'Cause you couldn't look away from that thing. When it was full, you could see every detail on its surface. Just a bright, solid circle, so intricate in its design and yet so simple. When I was a kid, I would spend ages just staring at it, memorizing its features. I stared at it like some kids stared at their girlfriends' pictures in the yearbooks. And on the way home from someplace in the car, good God, that's all I would look at. I would be so disappointed if I couldn't see the moon from where I was sitting. Good Lord, even cloudy nights were great, especially in winter. You could see the moon's light through the outline of the clouds. On a cold, bitter night, I would lie on my back in the snow, with my boots and hat and gloves and all, and I'd just gaze up at the sky. It didn't matter if it was summer or winter; the nights were my favorite part. I remember when other kids were taking their girlfriends out a movie or a concert or something, I took the woman I loved out into the grass on the hill behind my house and we'd just lie on our backs, holding hands and looking up, always looking up. Some nights we were lucky and we even saw those lights in the sky, whattaya call 'em, the Aurora something. Those nights we'd just be so enthralled we could hardly talk. All we could do is stare up at the shifting colors in the air. Borealis. Aurora Borealis, that was it. Man, I bet you've never seen those in your life. Just wisps of green, mostly, but it was so awe inspiring. I mean there are no words to describe what I felt when I saw those. You know how some people say that looking at the sky makes them feel small, insignificant? Not me. It always made me feel amazing. Like... like I was swelling up inside. You wouldn't believe how amazing it was, but my God... it was incredible. You know, someday I'd like to get back out of this city, away from the lights that never stop and the people who never leave. Just be out on my own somewhere, with the solitude of the night sky. To be underneath that transparent canopy... I would love that. I think you should try it sometime too. You just might see everything differently. Who knows, maybe that's what we both need. I haven't felt right in years. I think it's about time I did.

Untitled
Megan Steinke



Seasons

Brianne Rogers

Mother Nature grants us four unique seasons,
Each bringing different facets to paint the land.
A life is made, designed and lived much the same
Four matchless times to experience and live.

Spring is enthusiasm and whispers of joy.
Birds come or pass by to share their songs of cheer.
A young man meets his love at the corner store.
A future life of the two begins to bloom.

Summer brings energy and beautiful nights.
Baby birds fledge, testing their wings of freedom.
Three sons of distinct talents and gifts are born.
Adventures are forged and memories are made.

Fall is bright, bold colors and gentle breezes.
Jays, doves and more remain loyal companions.
Sons marry and grandkids times four bring much glee

The man's wisdom is shared, knowledge is given.

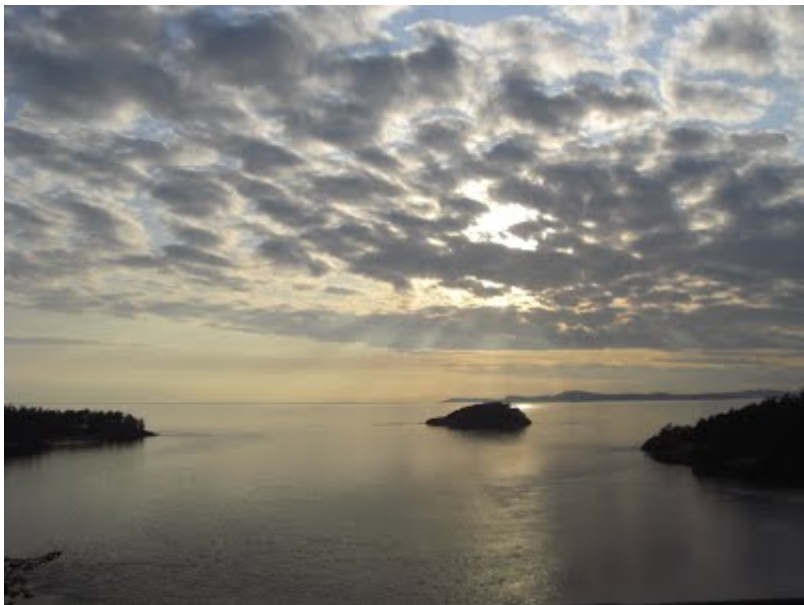
Winter brings the peace found in freshly fallen snow.

Chickadees and other friends grace our feeders.

A devoted wife and others love the man.

At peace, he lets Mother Nature call him home.

Untitled
Ashley Blair



Wordsmith
Dave Briggs

I am but a humble wordsmith

All I do is tell

I cannot draw a single page
or show things very well

I cannot paint a Starry Night
with awe-inspiring hues

Coals and inks are not my trade
and colors not my muse

My implements are black and white
Just text upon a page

Yet I can stir up such emotion
Sadness, joy, and rage

I cannot show a person's face
But I can give them life

I can give them harmony
And I can give them strife

These words you see in front of you
Were written here with care

Crafted lovingly with pride
Not pulled out of the air

I may not be a carpenter
I cannot sculpt from wood

But I can create worlds with ease
And see that it is good

But bear in mind, if it seems
In plainness I dwell

That I am but a humble wordsmith
All I do is tell

State Street Band
Deborah Braun



Untitled
Megan Steinke



Untitled
Lindsey Gall



Wanted
Hli Vang

In this man, eat man world
It's ground breaking to know
You are on the way bottom
In the realization that 'the' title meant so much less

Less
Less than what one really has ownership to
Cant odium those who thrive above her
Yet impounded by greasy stain
Wickedness
I mean who is she to oath?
Confusion is defined so clearly
Even I cannot get upset with the situation
Maybe it is time to step out of the plane
One that so eagerly waits to be
What once illumination was

What once was, now harder than ever to envision

Memories of what only she can see

Only what she can be

Resentful beyond anger

Boiling down to nothing but a phony glare

Time has come to stuff it all back in

Until then my friend, until then

Wanted

Immediately:

A Superhero

To enforce CHANGE

Nobody Ever Told

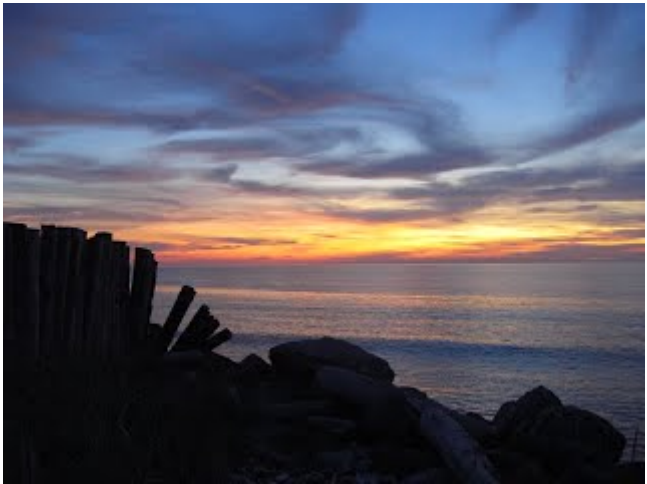
Dave Briggs

Nobody ever told Michelangelo
That he had too much time on his hands
And nobody ever told Leonardo
That he should go get a life

Nobody ever told Shakespeare
That nobody reads fanfiction anyway
And nobody ever told Edgar Allan Poe
To stop being such an emo
Nobody ever told Gilbert and Sullivan
To stop wasting time with such silly nonsense
And nobody ever told Richard Wagner
To get control of his anger issues

Nobody ever told Miles Davis
To do something productive for a change
And nobody will ever tell me
That I won't amount to anything

Untitled
Ashley Blair



Ha Long Bay, Vietnam

Susan Niedzwiecki



