

TURNING THE PAGE

VOLUME 3 – FALL 2011



“Wanderlust” photo by Amanda Gresl

“TURNING THE PAGE”

A publication of *The Catalyst*
Volume 3 - FALL 2011

STUDENT EDITORS:

Elizabeth Fleig
Jordan Viegut

FACULTY ADVISOR:

Dr. Natalie Eschenbaum

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

In this semester's edition of The Catalyst, we chose to focus on something we all can relate to- change. Big or small, we wanted to see what was moving our readers. As always, we also accepted submissions outside the theme, and enjoyed many imaginative entries that demonstrated the wide range of creativity we have here in La Crosse.

Keep creating, we cannot wait to see what sort of expressions we receive next!

Elizabeth Fleig and Jordan Viegut
Editors

“Do not go where the path may lead, go instead where there is no path and leave a trail.”

-Ralph Waldo Emerson.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

POETRY

I Can Go For Days... <i>Bobbi Jo Meng</i>	7
Oh, Baby <i>Lauren Siedl</i>	16
DNR <i>Maggie McHugh</i>	18
Untitled haiku <i>Jake Mohr</i>	20
An Awakening <i>Meg Kohlmann</i>	20
Old Love - New Light <i>Amanda C. Acklin</i>	23
Hints, Not Miracles <i>Corissa Voight</i>	27
Photograph <i>Zachary Kuschel</i>	38
Changing Seasons <i>Jordan Viegut</i>	42
December 5th, 2010 <i>Jordan Viegut</i>	44
Egyptian American <i>Mark Girgis</i>	46
The Shadow Cast <i>Brett Mueller</i>	47
LAWNMOWER GIRL <i>Laurel Devitt</i>	50
ODE TO DAVID <i>Laurel Devitt</i>	53
Seasonal Depression <i>Elizabeth Fleig</i>	61
Where Did It Go? <i>Dan Hanson</i>	67
The Shepherd	69
View From 257	73
Reflections <i>Ryan Kacvinsky</i>	86
Soul Carries <i>Amanda Acklin</i>	88
Unseen <i>Amanda Acklin</i>	90

PROSE

S.O.S <i>Jeff Steele</i>	9
(Re)turning to Grow <i>Bob Krajewski</i>	13
Time <i>Jessica Haugen</i>	25
A Moving, Forgotten People <i>Bethany Boersma</i>	28
The Carousel <i>Lauren Ihrke</i>	55
"Turning The Page from Dependence to Independence" <i>Ahmed Alfehaid</i>	63
A Response to Christians Against Gay Marriage <i>Rob Przywojski</i>	75
Entering the Unknown <i>Lauren Siedl</i>	79
Satori <i>Logan Shea</i>	91

PHOTOGRAPHY

Untitled <i>Samantha Schmidt</i>	8
Untitled polaroid <i>Zach Morin</i>	12
Untitled <i>Megan Steinke</i>	15
Untitled <i>Karlee Simkowski</i>	21
Untitled <i>Megan Steinke</i>	22
Sprout <i>Amanda Gresl</i>	56
Untitled <i>Samantha Schmidt</i>	30
Untitled <i>Samantha Schmidt</i>	33
Untitled <i>Jason Crider</i>	34
Untitled <i>Miranda Buxton</i>	35
Untitled <i>Amanda Gresl</i>	36

Finding Peace <i>Karlee Simkowski</i>	37
Untitled <i>Megan Steinke</i>	40
Museum Stairs <i>Jason Crider</i>	41
RMNP Columbine <i>Clare Tally-Foos</i>	43
Keyboard of the Winds <i>Jordan Viegut</i>	45
Gold Pools <i>Jeff Steele</i>	48
Spring Awakening <i>Jeff Steele</i>	52
Paper Cranes <i>Antonia Kaltsas</i>	54
Untitled <i>Ashley Blair</i>	60
"Snowboarding Lesson" <i>Karlee Simkowski</i>	66
Staples <i>Ashley Blair</i>	71
Untitled <i>Elizabeth Fleig</i>	72
Mimic <i>Amanda Gresl</i>	74
"Discovering Religion" <i>Karlee Simkowski</i>	78
Untitled <i>Miranda Buxton</i>	87
Sunrise Over Acadia <i>Elizabeth Fleig</i>	89

ARTWORK

Mixed media art <i>Stephanie Sharp</i>	24
--	----

VIDEOS & MULTIMEDIA

Music by Nick Shattuck	31
-------------------------------	----

I Can Go For Days...

Bobbi Jo Meng

I can go for days
But sometimes only hours
Without breaking down

There are days when it's hard to move
And some when I could run forever
If I even think about you

I'd like to believe the feeling is only temporary
That "it will get better before I get married"
That somehow, I'll think of you less

I'd even love to believe that you're better off
That it was best and we knew it would happen
I'd just love to believe it

I've given up on forgetting,
Given up on hurting less, missing less, and pretending I'm better
Pretending that in time this will heal

I've given up trying not to think,
Trying to smile when I talk about you
And even trying to talk about you so I smile

For now-I'll go for days and sometimes only hours
Knowing you're gone and I'm not better
Knowing you'd hate to see me like this but understanding completely

For now-I'll glance over your picture
Because actually looking makes it so hard to move
And most of the time even harder to run

Untitled

Samantha Schmidt



S.O.S

Jeff Steele

My name is Chuck Barley and I am a survivor of Flight 831. Our plane crashed last Thursday...or Friday. It's hard to tell. When you are marooned on an uninhabited sandbar, the days blur together. It was Thursday night when we left California for Hawaii. We were about five hours into the flight. I think it was Friday. Wait, Daylight Savings Time ended that night so maybe it was Thursday. We could have crossed a few time zones. Today must be Monday.

God, has it only been that long? I've been stranded on this warped piece of seagull crap for only three days? I have never flown before, but I knew this flight was trouble from the moment I set foot in the terminal. First off, it's called the terminal. Is that supposed to make me feel better? Then, I must have looked suspicious because they decided I was a perfect candidate for a cavity search. I didn't have any drugs on me, but after that experience I sure needed some.

After I waddled onto the plane, I sat next to a man wearing a kilt. Yes, a kilt. He smelled like wet sheep and mothballs. I don't even think he was Scottish. He didn't have an accent. Maybe he just liked wearing the kilt. He told me his name was Larry. I said my name was Chuck. I shouldn't have said anything. The last time I heard so many questions was from Alex Trebek. "Where are you from?" "Are you going to Hawaii for business or pleasure?" "Are you married?" "What's your shoe size?" "What's your mother's maiden name?"

We were told to stow our luggage in the over-head compartments so in the event of a crash our belongings would fall out and fly about the cabin knocking the nearest passenger's head off. I made sure to place mine close to Larry. There was then an announcement that the in-flight "entertainment" would soon "commence." The anticipation was killing me. After showing a few Friends re-runs they decided the passengers of Flight 233 would enjoy watching a moving map display of where the plane was. Six hundred miles per hour has never seemed so slow.

The last thing I remember before the crash was the pilot telling us we were experiencing some slight “turbulence” and “everything was under control.” They call this under control? I wonder what their definition of not in control is. I imagine it involves our airplane bending space-time and warping back into the Triassic Period. Our plane began to plummet. The first drop reminded me of my first date at Six Flags. My date took me on the highest roller coaster in the park. I puked on her lap after the first drop. I decided if I was going to toss my cookies I would aim towards Larry and have one last laugh before my untimely death. As we were hurdling towards the ocean, Larry grabs my hand and starts screaming “This is it! I love you!” As if the last thing I wanted to hear before my watery grave was “I love you” from my kilt-wearing acquaintance.

I guess I should be grateful I’m alive. At least I think I’m alive. Maybe I’m dead. Maybe this is Hell. It sure would explain the heat and Larry. Oh, I almost forgot. My cozy little atoll has another resident. Of the hundreds of people that could have washed ashore...I get to spend more quality time with the guy who can burp the alphabet backwards. This must be Hell.

Larry tumbled ashore shortly after I arrived. He was unconscious. I was trained in CPR; however, I found myself debating whether or not I should resuscitate him. I decided the guilt would be too much to bear. I began doing compressions on his bagpipe-like chest and feeding him oxygen. His prickly beard scratched my cheek. I cringed. The first thing Larry said to me after he awoke was, “We should drink our urine. I learned it on the Discovery Channel. You can drink it three times before it’s toxic.” Drink my urine? At the time I’d only been on the island three hours. I told him he could have my share.

By the end of the first day I had drawn a deep groove in the sand. I told Larry he could not cross it because I was coming down with a bad case of rabies. He believed me. Unfortunately, he’s still asking questions. Even now as I am writing this, he just asked me if I’ve ever cried during Sixteen Candles. I’m so hungry. I wonder what Larry tastes like.

If anyone finds this message PLEASE send help. I don't know how much longer I can last.

Chuck Barley

Untitled polaroid
Zach Morin



(Re)turning to Grow

Bob Krajewski

Hi, I'm Bob Krajewski. I teach in the Department of Educational Studies, and I'm completing my 21st year at UW-L. Most of my students call me Bob, and I prefer that.

Thirteen years ago I began teaching a one semester hour course now numbered EFN 207, a sort of companion course to EFN 205. Most commonly called Social Action Theatre, it also is a Student Organization. I like to think of it as a leadership course, because that's what we produce—Leaders. I love to see our students grow, and grow they do!

During those 13 years we enrolled between 50 and 70 students each semester. We meet an hour each week, each group of 5 or 6 produces skits on all aspects of diversity. We fine tune them in class, then present them in varied venues—university and Technical College courses, K-12 schools, churches, social agencies, Chamber of Commerce, Challenge Academy, nursing homes, (inter)national conferences, and abroad. We also performed in Civil Rights active Black churches and schools in Nashville, Atlanta, Chattanooga, Birmingham, and Memphis during my Freedom Rides. In one church we performed for 2000 people on each of two occasions. In addition, we created history in 2008 when we co-led the first Civil Rights March in Birmingham since Martin Luther King was arrested and wrote his famous Letter from a Birmingham Jail. As you would expect, our SAT students have interacted with and learned from Civil Rights leaders as Bernard Lafayette, C.T Vivian, Fred Shuttlesworth, Kwame Lillard, etc. And we train groups in diversity, one being the DC Metro, another being Accenture.

We're audience interactive. Skits are only 1-3 minutes. Students read their part from paper, and when the skit is finished, they stay in their roles and audience members ask them questions about what they did in the skit. That's where the leadership aspect comes in—our students don't know who will be asked, or what the questions will be, but they have to think on their feet and answer in character,

sometimes teasing the audience. It gets quite real. More importantly, it promotes leadership skills.

Our SAT students are dedicated and I push them and myself to stretch and grow. This semester we will perform more than 300 skits for more than 3400 people. By June 2011 we will have performed for about 50,000 people. In 2007, we received the Outstanding Involvement by a Student Organization award. Some students have stayed with me for 1,2,3 and even 4 years, and I'm proud of all of them. We grow each semester as new students enter SAT and learn from our veteran students.

I grow by being with them, guiding them, and at times being praised by them. But back to the title—(re)turning to grow. Twelve years ago I had a challenging group of students. To my surprise seven or eight weeks ago, I received an email from one of them. Now married, she has several children, and teaches middle school in the Minneapolis area. She asked if we would perform some scripts on bullying for her very diverse school. How could I not accept? So 4 of my students and I went, performed 4 skits to six groups each, 2 6th grades, 2 7th grades, and 2 8th grades (and teachers) = about 800 people. I'll not forget that experience, and I'll cherish it forever— because I returned to grow.

Untitled
Megan Steinke



Oh, Baby

Lauren Siedl

The pace of her heartbeat
Quickened as her bra was undone
By his fingers; his other hand gently ran
Up her inner thigh. They were finally alone.
The party still raved downstairs as she shouted his name.
Her body tingled and filled with life.

Before that night she had led a life
Filled with heartbreaks and a heartbeat
That fluttered when boys said her name.
At 21 she had relationships she wanted to undo
Because they left her feeling alone.
She thought they loved her, but then they'd run.

She had grad school goals and ran
Track in college. She loved her life,
But two weeks after the party she sobbed alone
On her bathroom floor, feeling her heartbeat
Course through her body as she longed to undo
The night she screamed his name.

She sat on the linoleum, too numb to name
Her emotions. Her breath quickened; She wanted to run.
A surge of heat made her undo
her sweater. She sighed and longed to forget this life,
To take away the forming heartbeat
Inside that made her feel so alone.

He told her she wouldn't be alone
In this. They would think of names

And cherish the new heartbeat
That steadied its pace when he ran
His fingers through her hair. They created a life
They couldn't undo.

Two months later her hair was undone
As she lay on the cold table, alone.
The pulsating machine found no signs of life
Under her goo-covered skin. Lilly was the name
She chose when it was over and she heard the toilet run.
Three months flushed with no heartbeat.

Her heart beat slowed as the nurse undid
Her gown. A tear ran down her nose. She was a lone
Mother without a name. A child robbed of life.

DNR

Maggie McHugh

My hazy eyes hardly registered the image in the mirror. I stared at the letters on my chest; oddly unaware of any sensation but the smell of sharpie on flesh. The idea had floated around in the recesses of my mind, never surfacing, but just slowly slinking along in the darkest corners of that I-can't-really-be-thinking-this area. I wasn't thinking. I wasn't feeling. I wasn't anything. Unhappy isn't the word. Depressed didn't even seem to cut it. No, I never tried cutting. I didn't let those thoughts surface either. Pills were out of the question. Too many things could go wrong. That's why those letters were so important. They were my way out.

My robotic hands seemed to start the engine without me. In fact, I hardly remember grabbing the keys off the kitchen counter. I didn't grab my purse. I paused, stared at that usually passenger in my car, but those not-so-quiets of my mind continued to pump the message that I didn't want anyone to identify me. I didn't want anyone knowing. I didn't want anyone to think they could have done something when they couldn't. I just wanted to escape the numbness. The perpetual numbness of not caring, not being, not showing up for life.... I needed a way to flee from the trapped thoughts in my mind before I could no longer find an escape route.

My knowing body tensed while the speed increased. That adrenaline thing kicked in. And though my body seemed aware of the rush around me, my mind failed to enter the race. It was on autopilot, executing the plan that bubbled to the surface, despite desperate attempts to keep those thoughts hidden, even to myself. The speedometer crept higher and higher, yet my desire to live sank lower and lower. And then I saw it. A light beaming in the darkness.

My unconscious mind started to scream. Here's your way to end all the never-ending numbness. The pain, the misery, the anguish of not-really-living a so-called life. And then I remembered those letters. That security blanket covering me if all else fails. So I pushed the pedal harder, drove that little white hand on the speedometer up

higher and higher and higher until my body and mind dove headfirst into those two, white, beaming lights ahead.

My weary heart stopped beating. That's what they tell me. The semi-driver walked away with a cracked rib and a few bruises. But he walked. I was pulled out, so they say. My broken legs were attended to, but that was the least of it. They didn't know how broken I was until they saw those letters. That was when their hearts stopped beating. Their adrenaline stopped rushing. Their hands stopped working.

My shaky soul is still here. It came back slowly after my heart started beating again on its own. No one has used the word miracle. No one has used the word tragic. In fact, no one seems to know any words to say. Least of all me. Words come floating up to the surface. As do images. Especially of those letters. But I'm just not ready to face all the words, all the letters, all the meanings behind those words and letters. I'm just not ready to do that today. But someday, maybe someday, possibly someday, hopefully someday, I will be.

The editors and the author of DNR would like to take a brief moment to note the availability of counseling services available on campus. If you, or someone you know, is in need, depressed or contemplating suicide, please contact the UWL Counseling and Testing Center at either 170 Morris Hall, (608) 785-8073, or online at <http://www.uwlax.edu/counseling/>.

Untitled haiku

Jake Mohr

I have finally
Exorcised my ex's ghost
From my broken heart

An Awakening

Meg Kohlmann

Beep. A new message.
1:10 AM "I love you"
Mothers should not text.

Untitled
Karlee Simkowski



Untitled
Megan Steinke



Old Love - New Light

Amanda C. Acklin

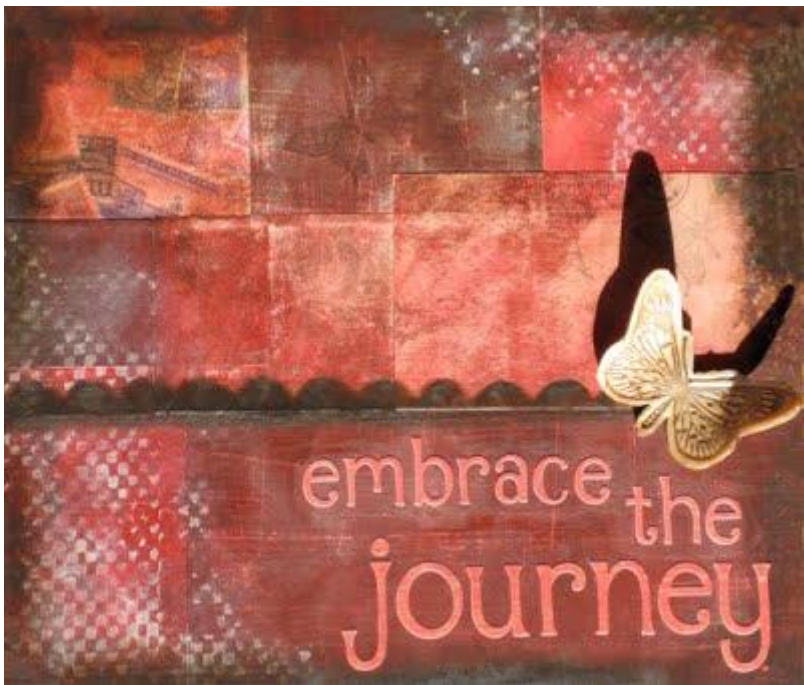
Sitting on the porch swing they see the sunrise. They bask in the glow of its brilliant and young beauty. The day moves on and they share every moment of it, the good and the bad. They reach noon and the sun is at its highest point in the sky. They feel full of life ready to make the best of what they have, happy for what they have gotten. They enjoy the rays of the light that embraces their every whim.

The sun starts to fall and they watch it's descent with admiration and joy. The day is starting to end. So much has happened and yet they still feel as though the day is young. They feel the warmth of the indirect sun still keeping them warm as it starts to run. Even though the sun is tucking away in the pocket of the horizon, the colors are now brilliant and they bounce through the heaven and shine on their face. They sit on the swing and remember the hours of the youth and the fun of the mid-day flight, but the sweetest part of the day was that moment the sun kissed the sky goodbye.

They watched the sun rise, shine and set as if it were the story of their life. Their love so old and yet new, like that of the sky and the sun.

The rise of a new love that has been there all along and sets with waves in brilliant colors and with that last kiss to the sky it promises a new day.

Mixed media art
Stephanie Sharp



Time

Jessica Haugen

Today, I began to wonder about the concept of time. All too often, time seems to consume our lives, often without our consent. And, as we grow, our perception of time grows as well. When we were young, it felt as if we had all the time in the world. The funny thing is, we always found things to fill it. We didn't need computers or texting plans to survive. We lived.

Now, time is everything. We're working five days a week and meeting deadlines. We need alarm clocks and planners to keep ourselves together. We often have trouble finding time to think. And, all the while, we're questioning ourselves: Is the price we pay going to be worth it?

We're taught to believe that with college and education and a degree, success will follow. But caught within our hopes and ambitions is reality, routine. Before we realize it, eight hour days turn to weeks, months. Years. And suddenly, time has passed from beneath us.

At times it feels like we can't live in the moment because we've got other plans. Yeah, time changes things. And I sit here and I think, why aren't we living the life we envision? Do we set expectations too high, or do obstacles merely offset our paths? Can our visions be blinded with time?

Maybe the reason for time is so everything doesn't happen at once. Maybe time doesn't have to be the enemy. After all, time is the one thing we are all given. Some walk, some run. And some do not move at all.

So why do we settle for later rather than sooner? Why not today?

Sprout
Amanda Gresl



Hints, Not Miracles

Corissa Voight

Time and time again,
God gives me these little hints
That everything
Will work out in the end

An unexpected thank you...
A friendly hand stretched out in support...
Unexplainable, undeserved acts of love
From the people who surround my life.

Sometimes, they are given,
Too few and far between;
Nevertheless, He does give them,
Hides them in my daily life.

It's up to me to take them
For what they are- hints, not miracles.
But who needs miracles
When you have hope?

A Moving, Forgotten People

Bethany Boersma

I sat in the Beijing train station and I watched the change from prosperity to poverty. It was not my choice to sit there that night but we had missed our train and now we were waiting until someone could figure out where we were supposed to stay for the night and how we were supposed to get to the Yellow Mountains. So after days of being stared at, it was now my turn. We were in a dark alcove in the tall lobby area that branched off to the waiting rooms for the multiple platforms on the second floor of the massive train station.

At first the people who came through were families and young people. The women wore teeteringly high heels and fashionably ripped clothes, and carried shopping bags. The business men dressed in pointed shoes and pressed suits, and carried leather briefcases. These were the people who would walk one direction with their heads still craned back our direction to stare at the waiguoren (foreigner). Sometimes I would notice that a phone was out and being pointed in our direction. Our picture was being taken yet again. And for the hundredth time it made me wonder, what in the world do they do with a picture of a random waiguoren, a stranger?

As night deepened the people coming through the station changed. Now there were small men in course pants and stained peasant shirts. They all wore the same cloth shoes. Many were old men with deeply lined faces. They had knapsacks of burlap or woven plastic thrown over their shoulder. Sometimes they moved in groups of two to six people but many were alone. These men were obviously from the lower class. They were small even by Chinese standards and some were bent from carrying heavy objects for much of their lives. Many were missing fingers or a hand and at least one white haired, age creased man was missing an arm from the elbow. These men just walked. They did not stride with purpose but they moved softly through the crowds, with emotionless faces. They did not look to the right or the left, they barely looked up.

They were the only people who did not stare at us, or even notice us.

I had heard of this: families who were split up because the father worked in one city and had to leave his family living in another. Or both parents worked in another city and their child was raised by grandparents, the parents traveling home only once or twice a year to see their child. It is called the great migration because so many parents are traveling “home” to see their children over the Chinese New Year. Is it because the Chinese government boasts zero percent unemployment that a city with officially five million people has an estimated population of more like nine million people, due to the number of migrant workers? And that is a relatively small town, the one I stayed in.

I had heard about this; but here was the first time I actually saw part of what that meant. It meant old men going to work in other cities with sacks over their shoulders. Men who walked hunched over and were missing appendages. Were these men happy? Did they even know their families anymore? What are their stories? Do people care about this subculture? Do people know that this group makes up a huge part of the Chinese population? Why do they not stare like the rest of the Chinese people? Do they just not care anymore if you are there; are they not even curious?

You will see working people all over in China but you may not see their fluid lifestyle, their continual movement to find work. But if you sit in one of the biggest train stations in China late at night you will see a whole forgotten people walk by.

Untitled
Samantha Schmidt



23

Nick Shattuck

<http://youtu.be/mWmmbw1nj04>

I Know

Nick Shattuck

<http://youtu.be/47-OfvKvsz4>

Best That I Can

Nick Shattuck

http://youtu.be/CuZOjv_k4i4

Autumn Sunset

Nick Shattuck

<http://youtu.be/YCfNO9cojt8>

That Love

Nick Shattuck

<http://youtu.be/6bovxmxB2Jw>

Roundhouse

Nick Shattuck

<http://youtu.be/iJYpV4kD95Y>

Blindman

Nick Shattuck

<http://youtu.be/QnHSkj2lZyU>

Bread and Roses

Nick Shattuck

<http://youtu.be/Wjn4i0aKKzk>

Sing and Rejoice

Nick Shattuck

<http://youtu.be/xOY9eErSDPs>

Follow You

Nick Shattuck

<http://youtu.be/CV5wBkJJ-4k>

Maple Leaves

Nick Shattuck

<http://youtu.be/iPuMG0kAACA>

Untitled
Samantha Schmidt



Untitled
Jason Crider



Untitled
Miranda Buxton



Untitled

Amanda Gresl



Finding Peace
Karlee Simkowski



Photograph

Zachary Kuschel

A picture is worth many thousands of things,
from emotions of elation
to love and motivation
to depression and to move a soul to sing.

I'm not sure though if I quite agree
For the worth of each shot
That has ever been got
May or may not mean anything to me

But for those I've been given or those that I took
Where each tells a story
bears meaning, or allegory,
Those pictures bring all my emotions every time I do look

But with wonderful memories comes the pain of the now
Each picture is past
No picture will last
for change touches everything over time no matter how

so much like a story we see these fading dreams
some characters will stay
others die, or fall away
and leave just this picture, this deathly silent picture...where only in
the past, it screams.

We mourn and move on, or cling to the past,
Some never let go
and say it's not so
but their hope eventually fades and ceases to last

Though loss I may feel and changes do come
My heart may feel pain
And experiences I gain
but my heart still yearns greatly for some

But perhaps they've moved on without looking back
The decision was theirs
To them go my prayers
And their piece of my heart I forever will lack.

I'm left with these pictures, my memories, of past things gone...and
never return to this beautiful storybook lie...

To decision, I weep,
Which ones should I keep?
And to which should I whisper, "goodbye..."?

Untitled
Megan Steinke



Museum Stairs
Jason Crider



Changing Seasons

Jordan Viegut

With the turning of each page,
Knowledge and understanding grow with age.
The well-read grow a forest,
In which reflection turns to sage.

I close the cover on a finished book,
And walk quiet through the wood,
Away from a sapling planted with care,
Thirsting for perspective others have forsook,
And finding Du Bois thoughts rich and rare.

With a zebrawood seed germinated to life,
By the turning of every yellow leaf,
More often than the changing seasons,
The biodiversity of understanding increases.

RMNP Columbine
Clare Tally-Foos



December 5th, 2010

Jordan Viegut

A muted backdrop of ethereal light

Cast by streetlights orange glow;

A long awaited crisp winter night

Of the first falling snow.

Leafless trees hold soft snow powder,

And the baritone ticking of the clock,

Quiets the late evening hour,

Unlocking a feeling of hope.

People unite tonight so clear,

Loving life's rhythmic tune;

With the first snow of the year,

Peace appears palpably true

Keyboard of the Winds
Jordan Viegut



Egyptian American

Mark Girgis

No one knows my struggle

No one knows how to carry on when no one knows you

I am an Egyptian American

I am me because of the color of my skin

I am the subject of ridicule because of the color of my skin

My personality is me because of the color of my skin

I am who I am because of the color of my skin

I go to an all white school with all white people

No one knows the struggle inside

No one knows the pain of an everyday fight to fit in

No one knows the absolute joy of feeling accepted

I am Me, I am an Egyptian American

Color of skin is important

Don't let them fool you

No matter what they say or what they do

They will always think of you as inferior

You are different

And for that reason you will always be You

I am an Egyptian American

No one understands the struggle of coping with loss

By myself I understand true success

By myself I understand who I am

That realization is a lonely and desolate one

I am an Egyptian American

I am Me

No matter what happens or what life throws

I am Me

I cannot change the world but

I am Me

I am an Egyptian American

Gold Pools
Jeff Steele



The Shadow Cast
Brett Mueller

A path I follow
Of mystery and mystique
Ideas of destination
Specifics unknown to me
When I find myself in question
Of judgments to be made
I reflect to find direction
Confronting roads unpaved
No matter which road is taken
I have a guide along this path
My light is my shadow
A reminder of my past
Sometimes we walk side by side
Other times I fall behind
And when I step ahead of myself
It's there for me to fall back for help
It reminds me of values I hold strong
It's a key to correct when I've gone wrong
Now older and "wiser" I should see the truth
Instead, blinded by distractions while in pursuit
It steps in and provides the shade
I need to see when I've gone astray
It's a reminder of when I was young and naïve
Not blinded by details, the heart truly sees
So when in question I look to the past
To see myself clearer, my shadow I cast

LAWNMOWER GIRL

Laurel Devitt

"Men work together," I told him from the heart, "whether they work together or apart." -Robert Frost

The lawnmower broke down again.
It ran for awhile.
Now it has quit like the train.

The first time the grass grew tall
as the tiller, greedy for me.
It meant to get me that time

I grabbed the grass shears.
We shore it to its shoots-roots shores.
The lounging lawnmower laughed.

I could hear the grass whistle,
Whisper of glory and green and
Grassy grovel graves.

That's when I grasped the shears.
We slashed the rangy mane close
to the head (dewey-eyed and earthy).

Now it has rained. No clouds
could contain that condensation.
The conjuror is in cahoots with

The growing grass has a calling.
No machine could get through
this mess. It takes a girl.

They will not win. I handle the
handle of the shimmering shovel.
It screams, "Lean on me."

We will turn it onto its green,
gandy-dancing, long-haired head
if we must. Damned lawnmower.

Spring Awakening
Jeff Steele



ODE TO DAVID

Laurel Devitt

Desire hours hover.

Covering darkness cowers.

Mab will have her way with dark,
nightly whipping her whimsical,
lifting her bounteous black slips
sinfully, so she, the fairy queen,
may puncture her and pull from her
formatting fluorescent fledglings
fumbling for removal from the womb tomb.

Some will come. Some will scurry.

I see you, David, newformed In
enlightened rightness. Darkness deserts;
ravaged, running mad. It has been
too much for the punch-drunk mama

Paper Cranes

Antonia Kaltsas

The artist, Antonia Kaltsas, included the following background information with this beautiful photograph:

"I did this before coming to Japan to study abroad. People fold strings of 1000 cranes in Japan for good fortune. It started when a girl who was victim to the atomic bomb in Hiroshima started to fold 1000 cranes for world peace. I arranged the white cranes around a red sheet to look like the Japanese flag."



May one wish be granted to the folder of one thousand cranes.

The Carousel

Lauren Ihrke

Snow fell on darkened streets, hitting the pavement and slowly molding into the caked on ice and snow that already adorned everything on the ground. The night was warm enough to feel like spring, though that season was still far from coming.

Earlier that night, many had gone out for a leisurely stroll, ready to face the cool air since it was not quite as cold as it had been. Now though, as the clock struck midnight and all well-behaved children were in bed, there remained only two.

The boy and the girl were a pair well known to the community, but tonight they walked like complete strangers. The great distance between them was less than friendly, and although the boy's gaze constantly flitted to the side as if awaiting some kind of change from his partner, the girl's gaze was everywhere but on him.

They both wore the ruddiness in their cheeks well, but the boy's looked more emotional than a response to the cold. As for the girl, neither cold nor sorrow penetrated the wall around her mind. All her focus was on the buildings and landscaping in the world around her. If she was going to leave soon, it would be with peaceful memories of her final walk, not of desperate depression.

Although snow covered everything around them like a thick blanket, obscuring nominal details, the girl was unaffected. Her eyes held a far away look. What she saw was another time, when these benches held lovers stealing kisses instead of lumps of frozen water. She was remembering the times she was running short of now.

Because, just like the season was slowly changing to make its switch from the harsh frozen months to the warmer seasons of life, she too was making a change. Her change would come much more swiftly, but it was completely out of her control all the same.

The boy on the other hand, was to be left behind. These city streets were his to haunt for years yet to come, and the snow was nothing more than annoying to him. Yet, this was a loss to him too. Not of a home, but of a love. This girl was his love.

No one knew what it would be like for the two to be apart. The truth was, they never had been. Theirs was not a tale of boy meets girl. They had grow up together, gone to school as a pair. All of their best and worst memories were side by side.

Still, that was changing now. Her family was moving, and she had no choice but to go along. For the first time, the two had to face the fact that they would be apart, and no one could tell them how long that time span would last.

That was what this walk was for. Both needed one last night to relive their memories together. That was where they had their first kiss, and that was where she first heard the news of her dog being hit by a car. That was where he had held her when the stress from school overwhelmed her, and again when she receive her A. Everything they passed held some sort of memory for the couple.

Each one was also a stab to the heart for the boy. He had spent the passed few months trying to convince the girl to stay, while convincing himself that the day would never come.

She did not have to go after all. They had already graduated high school, and she was free to live on her own if she chose to. But, she did not feel she was ready to live without her parents' guidance.

The boy disagreed. He did not think he was ready to live without her. His plan was to get an apartment for just the two of them, where they could be happy and together, just as they had been their whole lives.

He saw this walk as his final attempt to convince her to stay, while she was using it to say goodbye. When they had really begun walking, the boy realized his problem. He became so paralyzed by his fear of her leaving and his realization that it truly was happening, that he found himself unable to appeal. He was finally realizing it was their

final time together, and there was nothing in him that could ruin this moment.

They were just reaching the end of their walk, and the boy was just working up to his new request for her to stay, when the girl suddenly stopped. She turned her head away from him, staring up an adjoining street from where they stood. For a moment, she merely stared, then she took off, running up the street to the other end of the block, stopping to stare in a shop window.

The boy did not immediately follow, but when it became apparent that she was not going to come back, he walked over to see what she had found.

The girl had stopped in front of an old toy shop. It was one they had gone to as children. It was closed up for the night, but even the display window alone was enough to have their childhood come flooding back to them.

Each of the toys was wooden, handmade, and completely individual. The store was privately owned by a man that had been a carpenter in a past life, but now took joy from carving for children.

As they inspected the toys in the window, they each saw many of the same toys they had always wanted as children, but had proven too wealthy for their parents' budget. There was a boat sealed so it could really be used in water, and a castle with individually carved figures to run it. But, on top of everything was the prize jewel.

All her life, the girl had sought after a tiny, little carousel. It was not extravagant or high tech. It was small and hand painted, with several horse figurines, and it moved in a circle with nothing other than a push, but it had been in the girl's eye for years. They could both remember the times the girl had begged her mother to purchase the trinket, only to be denied every time.

Reminiscing on those times now, the boy made a joke, trying to keep their final moments light. However, his dishonest mood must have shown, because soundlessly, the girl reached over and took his hand.

She gave him a soft smile reassuring him that everything would be alright.

Suddenly, a pit formed in the boy's stomach. He did not want to be reassured that everything would be alright. He already knew that it was not okay. He was losing what he loved most.

Tearing his hand from her grip, he quickly stomped away down the street, leaving the girl standing alone in the falling snow, looking abandoned for the first time in her life.

When he had made it no more than a few paces away from her, the boy stopped and waited. He had made his point clear, but he would not leave her to find her own way home. Not at this time of night. It did not matter how upset he was.

Quickly, she caught up, and again they lapsed into silence while they walked, even more distance between them now.

When the girl finally had all of her things packed away into her parents' vehicle, her mood was beginning to drop considerably. She had been trying to get a hold of the boy all morning, but he did not answer. She was beginning to fear that he would not come to see her off.

Soon, her mother appeared with one last bag to add to the vehicle. When she saw the look on her daughter's face, she let out a sigh and gave her a reassuring look, along with a pat on the shoulder. Then, she reminded her how little time they had left before they had to get on the road, before disappearing back into the house.

The girl nodded, dropping her gaze to the ground as she let the feeling of disappointment wash over her. Pulling her cell phone out of her pocket, she dialed his number one final time though she was quite sure that he would not answer.

Putting the plastic to her ear, she held back insecure tears and took deep breaths. Slowly she forced her gaze up from the ground hoping

to refocus it on her neighbor's house to lock away the image for the rest of her life. When she refocused her eyes though, she let out a gasp of relieved delight.

The boy stood in front of her, looking sheepish. He held a box in his hands that was tied with a bow, and he gave her an apologetic smile. He told her he would have been around earlier, but he had some unfinished business to attend to. As he finished the comment, he stepped forward, pushing the box toward her as he did so.

For a moment, the girl could not take her eyes off of the boy. She was so overjoyed at his showing up that the box was nothing more than a blip in her mind. Finally, she noticed the box and reached out with shaking hands to pull the strings of the bow, letting the fabric fall when it was undone. Then, grasping at the sides of the lid, she pulled it off, already leaning over to see what it was.

When she did, she gasped. Lying in the box amid a good helping of tissue paper was the carousel from the toy store. It was just as it had been when she was a child. The paint even still gleamed in the light.

As she fawned over the gift, the boy explained that he had gotten up extra early to wait for the shop owner to show up so that he could buy the trinket for her.

Tear welling her eyes again, though for an entirely different reason, the girl lunged forward, pulling the boy into a bone crushing hug.

After some time, she pulled away, admitting how fearful she had been that he might not have been coming. In response, the boy smiled, reaching out to trail a hand down the girls' cheek, tracing her jawline. Holding out the box again, he assured her that no matter how far she traveled, they would always be together. Then, he pulled her into a hug so warm, they would both be able to feel it even hours after the girl left.

Untitled
Ashley Blair



Seasonal Depression

Elizabeth Fleig

I catch her eye as wheels spin by,
my legs glued to the street corner, while hers
churn as if she was running
Faster. Or away. Or towards.
I see those tears,
And see their tracks,
This isn't the first time shes run like that.
The cold air chills the saline
running down to pierce her heart—
 And I'm left to wonder at her tears
Her fears
And those spears
 That freeze through her.

I walk slowly, through muddied leaves
noting their colors
Shades of red, and yellow all smudged to
brown and mottled.
Their beauty pokes through, yet still they
have fallen,
 dropped,
 disregarded.
having served their purpose.
The harsh breeze blows
and down they float,
only to be stomped and strewn,
spinning to a sidewalk grave.
Fate stolen by the wind.

And me?
I'm just a stake withstanding the wind.
Catching the looks of the lost,
uncovering their lingering colors
and longing for desires
that are left up in the air,

while still they lie, fallen and broken.
Spring will come
and gray will fade.
But for now,
She runs away
 or towards,
 but faster.

Digging new paths
for new tears
That grow from realized fears
and losses.

“Turning The Page from Dependence to Independence”

Ahmed Alfehaid

Everybody has changes in life. When these changes happen, people must turn to a new page in their lives. For me the biggest change has been coming to USA. My name is Ahmed. I'm from Saudi Arabia. I arrived to La Crosse, WI in May 20, 2010. Before I came to the USA, I quit my government job at city hall in Riyadh the capital city of Saudi Arabia, which I had had for 2 years. This meant that I turned a page from work to study. Right now, I'm studying English at the E.S.L. Institute. After I graduate from ESL, I will go to New Jersey to study my MBA.

In some ways, I'm not like the typical UWL students. However, in other ways I'm just like every other freshman student. Since I arrived here, I have had to turn the page from being dependent on my family and friends to being independent, relying only on myself. For example, I never did housework before, so I had to learn how to do many common things for myself. One thing that I have had to learn is cooking. Of course, I eat the regular American food, but I have to eat our traditional Saudi food sometimes.

Every country has a traditional meal. In my country we have a famous dish. The dish's name is Kabsa. It is formed by rice and meat, and it doesn't matter if it is chicken or lamb. We eat this meal of the lunchtime or the dinnertime. It's not common to eat it for breakfast because it has a lot of fat. Also, it is commonly eaten in parties and ceremonies. In this article I'm going to explain how to cook the Kabsa dish. First of all, I put the rice in a container or Jerrycan with water inside and leave it at least half an hour. Second, I bring the mix to a boil, and I put in one a tablespoon of oil. Third, I put in the onion, and it must be cut by chopping. Fourth, I fry the onion with tomato sauce for two minutes. Fifth, I put the meat into the boil, and I put in the water to equal the quantity of the meat. Sixth, I put one teaspoon of salt into the boil and cook for 20-25 minutes. After I finish cooking the meat, I take it outside the boil, and I put the meat in the oven to bake. When I'm baking the meat, I cook the rice by the highest heat on the stove. Seventh, I should make sure the water in the rice is evaporating. After the evaporation, I push the key of the stove to “low

heat” and leave it for 5-7 minutes. When the meat is roasted, I take the rice outside of the boil. Finally, I put the rice and meat in same plate to serving the guests

Generally, I’m happy to have come to the U.S to study English. It’s the biggest page I have had to turn in my life. I hope you dear students will consider “turning a page” with me, and enjoy this recipe for cooking Kabsa.

The recipe of the Kabsa meal for two persons

1-one cup from Basmati rice (tip: the best place to find this kind is Woodman’s grocery store, La Crosse).

2-one teaspoon of oil.

3- one piece of onion.

4-two or three tablespoons of tomato sauce.

5-chicken or lamb.

6-one teaspoon of salt.

7-one tablespoon for any kind of powder spices, as you like



Basmati Rice from Woodman's



Rice with water in a Jerrycan



Fry the chicken with onion and tomato sauce



Put the chicken outside and boil



Evaporate the rice



Let the rice cook for 5-7 minutes



The dish is ready to serve

"Snowboarding Lesson"
Karlee Simkowski



Where Did It Go?

Dan Hanson

I look outside, it is snowing.
Not really, though, just the leftover precipitation
Floating nonchalantly in the twenty degree air
The barren trees not alone in loss,
Where did it go?

I remember when it was spring, and so was I.
I remember when it was summer,
The sun so warm, the day so lively
The running, the playing,
The blue, the yellow, the shaped clouds...

And when it was fall I went inside
And picked up my studies,
The blue and the yellow became Wavelengths
And the puppy dog fluff in the air
Became wisps of condensation.
Where did it go?

Now it is winter, where has it all gone?!

I sip my coffee, glance outside, then

As I stare blankly for a moment

At the compounds, reactions, and equations

In front of me, my heart suddenly threw itself

Against my chest.

When I glanced down and smiled,

I knew where it had gone.

Looking forward now, eyes clear

The season and time collide,

The catalyst still running, Beating!

The Shepherd

Once,
Before sleep,
I counted a thousand dying sheep.
One after another
They fell off the moon and I soon
Fell into a slumber.

That October orb, heavy and ripe
Jolted across ripples like
Pursing predators.
The wolves howled with appetite and
Prayed for prey.

I knew the monsters
Were out for blood
When I woke to hollers
From the wire byre.

My sweat turned to snow—
Slowly melting down my brow.
My faith was sheared short
And draped to dry. The hunt
Had begun.

With wool slippers and a shaky Colt
I braved the cold with my trapper coat
And stole through the moonlight to check on the herd
That was silent in the night
But now was clearly heard

The pack had come and gone
And slaughtered the lot
So I stared back over the mounds
Of chopped lamb and quivering wool
And shot to complete the beasts' bidding

I threw the sheep stiffs
Over the fence
And went to bed

I don't sleep well anymore
Not since last harvest
But I do my best and often tell
Of the night I counted
A thousand dying sheep.

Staples
Ashley Blair



Untitled
Elizabeth Fleig



View From 257

Setting is the Sun,
Quarter to Four.
The lake, frozen, is everything
But smooth, like glass.
Frozen collisions of where cold met warmth
Make deliberate cracks in the solid waters.

The bottoms of the eastern trees
Are shaded by early winter's night,
The tops reach for a few more moments of sunlight.
The sky above has layers of twilight.
From west to east,
Setting blues, bright blues,
Snow whites and purple clouds,
Run for the sun
And away.

As the sun goes down the wind
Calms it's self for a December night.
The bare, naked, and humble trees
Reveal their shapely and disfigured faces.
The lake, though cracked and spotted,
Is calm,
I know there must be madness underneath.

Mimic

Amanda Gresl



A Response to Christians Against Gay Marriage

Rob Przywojski

My first memories of the church are probably from when I was around four years old. Every week I'd look forward to being crammed into the family's dented Ford station wagon and driving to a place that I called "The Bong House." At first glance, "The Bong House" does not sound like a place where you'd take your children. Ever. But for a small child, a massive church that rang "BING BONG" on the dot of every hour was the best place on earth. At this "Bong House," I was treated to a variety of toys, discovered an amazing new concept called sharing, and I began to understand that not everything in life is about me. We children were taught "The Golden Rule."

Things have changed a lot since then, and fortunately, I have grown out of using the term "Bong House." Over the past sixteen years, I have always tried to remember to follow this "Golden Rule," and there is something that I am specifically applying it to today.

Gay marriage is probably the most misunderstood topic among our nation. Catholic schooling has taught me that allowing two men or two women to marry is an abomination in the Catholic Church, and I should not tolerate it. However, the "Golden Rule" that I have been taught since I was four years old restrains me from having such opinions, and I am in complete disbelief in how my religion, an institution structured upon selflessness and love, can back up its statements.

The Catholic Catechism states:

The equality of men rests essentially on their dignity as persons and the rights that flow from it: Every form of social or cultural discrimination in fundamental personal rights on the grounds of sex, race, color, social conditions, language, or religion must be curbed and eradicated as incompatible with God's design. (Catechism of the Catholic Church #1935)

How can a Catholic read such a statement, and then vote yes on something such as Proposition 8? It is clear that the Catholic Church does not recognize gay marriage. However, isn't it wrong that the Catholic Church is telling people that, regardless of their religion, two men or women should not be allowed to marry? The right that gay men and women are fighting for is not to become married within the Roman Catholic Church, but the right to gain any sense of the permanent bond that all straight couples are blessed with by the state. If a Catholic is going to vote against a marriage outside of his or her church, then he or she should also be protesting against the marriages of Jews, Buddhists, Muslims, and any other alternate religion's form of bond between two people. However, whenever the Church makes a statement about the topic of gay marriage, it seems that the assertion of equal rights in the Catechism is completely defenestrated.

A 47-Bishop Committee reported to the Catholic News Service:

The importance of marriage for children and for society is under attack in U.S. courts and legislatures and in popular culture and entertainment media, which often undermine or ignore the essential role of marriage and promote equivalence between marriage and homosexual relationships. (American Catholic)

Upon reading statements like these, it seems to me like the church is saying that the love between two people is going to rip families apart and wreak havoc upon our nation. We have learned from the past six years in Massachusetts and a handful of other states that gay marriages will not destroy family values. However, we do know what rips families apart and wreaks havoc upon our nation is teaching children that certain people cannot have the same rights as other people. An example of this includes the segregation laws among the black and white communities up until the 1970's. It was not until the late 1960's that laws banning interracial marriages were completely lifted from the states, and the Catholic Church was involved with pushing for this lift because they believed that love has nothing to do with the race of a person.

Therefore, I call upon any person reading this who is married to remember the excitement, the happiness, and the love that ensued upon knowing that you would be married, and I ask: Why you would ever want to ban that happiness, that excitement, and that love from another human being? Why must marriage remain so exclusive to straight couples? As a Catholic who has been taught all of your life to tend to other's needs, what makes you feel that you have the position to deny the right of marriage and love to another human being? If you still have the same opinion of negating gay marriage up to this moment, then maybe you should consider relearning the ideas taught to four-year-olds at Sunday School.

“Discovering Religion”
Karlee Simkowski



Entering the Unknown

Lauren Siedl



My boyfriend, Ryan, and I are sitting in JJ's La Puerta Restaurant in Sister Bay, or "Seester Bay" according to the table tent we laughed at while waiting to order. This eating establishment had quite the Mexican theme for a place that mainly served hamburgers. Although we're smiling in the picture, there's a hint of exhaustion on our faces and we're not exactly dressed to be eating out. It was 10:30 at night and we had just made the two hour drive to Door County from my house in Green Bay. Actually Ryan made the drive, and it was a little more than two hours from his house near Milwaukee. After walking 1.7 miles to our campsite in the middle of nowhere, setting up the tent and walking 1.7 miles back to Ryan's car, JJ's was the only place still willing to serve us food. This was the first stop on our six month anniversary camping adventure.

Just a few weeks earlier I had been crying to my mom after she told me she thought Ryan and I had been spending too much time together. Our summer separation had been hard, and we'd Skype for hours each night. I met Ryan during my sophomore year of college, the year we had both finished two months before this trip. He was my first boyfriend, and my mom, who always seemed to like that I wasn't caught up in boys, wasn't used to seeing me

dedicate so much time to one. She always had a hard time watching her children grow up. A few years ago I asked if she thought my brother, then twenty three, would marry the girl he was dating at the time. Although our entire family loved his girlfriend, my mom avoided the question, saying she didn't want to think about it. Since I was the only girl in the family, it was even harder for her to see me mature. After this episode of her telling me we spent too much time together, which might as well have been her telling me she disapproved of our relationship, I was terrified to ask her and my dad permission to go on a camping trip alone with Ryan. But I did, and surprisingly they were fine with it.

This camping trip wasn't the modern-day version, in which we set up a tent right next to a site with an RV and had the luxury of a fully functioning bathroom a few feet away. We had luckily gotten the last available site at Newport State Park, but we couldn't even hear signs of other people. Our site was described by the park as being "in the middle of a piney forest", and it was nearly two miles from the parking lot and a quarter of a mile from surrounding campsites. Site accommodations included a fire pit, an animal-proof box to store food, and a toilet that I wasn't aware of until our second night there. This toilet was more like a port-a-potty with one wooden wall blocking the user from the campsite. We were definitely roughing it.

Once we finished eating at JJ's and were back at our campsite, a fear set in that I'd never considered before. This would be the first time Ryan and I were ever truly alone together. No roommates, no parents, not even a television or bystander to break the feeling of isolation. I'm not sure why this made me feel uncomfortable, but being so secluded in what was still an early stage of our relationship scared me. If we ran out of things to talk about, nothing was there to save us from the silence.



The evening isolation was broken by the sun and a fresh day. We had survived the first night of our weekend trip and were ready to continue the anniversary celebration. So of course, we made reservations at a classy eating facility, Water Front Restaurant. This was the nicest place Ryan and I had ever been to, with meals starting at \$25. We were the youngest customers at the restaurant, and we could tell that our waitress wasn't exactly thrilled to be serving us. From the minute we ordered water to drink she knew her tip wouldn't be substantial. But she was nice enough to take this picture. The fact that we were taking pictures inside this restaurant showed our age and lack of experience with fine dining. From looking at this photo, no one would guess that we had been living in a forest.

We had spent our day driving around Door County, browsing various shops and stopping at a craft show outside of town. After admiring tractor engines and decoupage picture frames, we stopped at a gas station to change. Walking out of the lady's room to Ryan's smile of approval was oddly romantic. Before eating, we purchased a bag of gummy worms on an excursion to the grocery store and sat in Ryan's Volvo outside of the restaurant, devouring them. This was our first brush with food since breakfast, and we knew we'd be waiting for our meal once we were seated. While this photo may portray us as two young adults enjoying a nice meal, we were really just two kids trying to pull off the standardized "anniversary dinner" without

exhausting our funds. But somehow dressing up and eating a \$27 plate of swordfish made me feel like an adult. That dinner gave me the sense that Ryan and I were a mature couple making it on our own, and the slight feeling of isolation that lingered was nearly gone.

The trip Ryan and I took to Newport State Park may as well have been a team-building retreat. Putting up and taking down the tent, along with picking out and cooking food, were events that forced us to work together. But the task that required the most teamwork was carrying all of our supplies to and from the parking lot. Bringing the tent, sleeping bags, duffle bags, air mattresses, pillows, firewood, and food to the site wasn't bad because we took two trips. But hiking 1.7 miles with the same materials after the trip turned out to be a task, as we opted to clear the campsite with one grand walk back to the car.

While Ryan and I both enjoy going on occasional hikes, by the end of the weekend we were a little tired of walking nearly two miles each time we wanted to enter the civilized world. We had gotten into the habit of singing songs to help the walk go faster; Queen's "Bohemian Rhapsody" ate up an entire five minutes. But this didn't stop blisters from forming and fatigue from setting in. Neither of us were singing the day we left, taking our two-day home with us on the trek to the parking lot. We thought we were clever when I helped Ryan secure the sleeping bags, tent, and air mattresses to his back, using a rope for extra support and the pillows for cushioning. This left his hands free so he could carry the Styrofoam cooler filled with food, which luckily replaced the firewood. Meanwhile I was weighted down with two large duffle bags, their shoulder straps crisscrossing my front and back, and I used my hands to carry the tent box filled with the rods and stakes and a grocery bag of food, paper plates and napkins. Finding this genius method of carrying everything proved to be a task in itself, and carrying it all 1.7 miles was a test of strength and stamina.



I took the picture on the left right after strapping Ryan up with over half of our supplies. Based on this picture, we had an easy and efficient hike through the woods. But I captured the true essence of our journey in the photo on the right, which was taken five minutes into our walk. While our means of carrying everything was efficient, it didn't lessen the extra weight we were hauling along the path. At the beginning of the hike, we stopped every few minutes because either Ryan or I needed time to rest. But by the end we just wanted the hike to be over with, so we trudged through, encouraging each other with the small distance we had left.

About half way through the voyage, Ryan and I had changed our method of carrying things, and I gained possession of the Styrofoam cooler. Unfortunately, after one of our breaks I picked it up partially by the lid and it fell to the ground, breaking into several chunks. For a moment I stood in shock, staring at the breakfast sausages and eggs, one of which had broken and was oozing onto the trail. I looked at Ryan and asked him what I should do. Irritated and exhausted, he said, "I don't know but hurry up and decide." I'm usually an incredibly indecisive person, but at that moment my brain went into survival mode. I swiftly cleared the carton of the broken egg, packed the carton and other food into the grocery bag and piled up the Styrofoam pieces, shoving some into the grocery bag and carrying some with my free hand. That hike tested our skills as a cooperating and supportive couple, and the fact that we entered the parking lot smiling and relieved instead of arguing and bitter proved that we passed.

Overall, the camping trip that Ryan and I went on that weekend took our relationship to the next level. Going into it, I was excited and a little uneasy at the same time. I wasn't sure what spending a weekend utterly alone with Ryan would be like. He was my first boyfriend, and after six months together we were still a relatively new couple. But after the trip, I felt I had matured along with our relationship. I was no longer a girl who would often get homesick for my family and the life I'd been living for 21 years. I was a woman who could be in a mature relationship with another person; I could start my own life. My "home" was with Ryan; he was becoming

my family. During our drive back to Green Bay, I smiled at Ryan and his exaggerated dance moves as he sang off-key to the radio. I joined him, pleased with how weird I could act without feeling embarrassed. While we were both acting like children, this was one of the first instances that becoming an adult made me feel excited instead of frightened. I had overcome my fear of intimacy; my confidence level was finally rising. Ryan and I were not only surviving as a couple, we were thriving. We were entering the grown up world together, and I felt like with him by my side I just might make it.

Reflections

Ryan Kacvinsky

The key to being a better person is not changing your own views, but adapting to the fact that not everyone shares the same views. No one likes being told what religion they should worship, which socioeconomic class is better, what race is superior, what type of sexuality is “the norm,” or what gender deserves to rule over the other. Being a better person means subjecting yourself to every angle of a controversial concept, forming an opinion, and continuing to explore those concepts even more.

No one deserves to be caged in by a polarized environment that surrounds them; rather, people deserve to be appreciated, thought of, hugged, challenged, given opportunities, and most of all, listened to, through respect. Every individual, every human being, every person has a past and a story of their own that, if closely looked at, would probably make why they are the way they are vividly clear. Therefore, to judge people without getting to know them is lazy and spiteful.

To all of the hate groups, bullies, terrorists, and ethnocentric people: I could look down on you and hate you, but then I would be a hypocrite. However, this does not mean that how you’re expressing yourself isn’t extremely unhealthy and terrible. I wish you would be given the chance to reset the clock so you could mend whatever event(s) in the past that have made you so hateful. No, I do not hate you. I just wish you could have been raised without hate. Our society would be so much stronger if our love of power was replaced with the love of peace.

Untitled
Miranda Buxton



Soul Carries

Amanda Acklin

Peel me open like a can and feel my raw beating heart in your hands.

Feel the rhythm and the heat, as the blood drips down,

into the earth it slowly seeps.

The sun shines down & cries with the wind,

I am brought full circle my life does not end.

The beating of my heart is no longer felt in your hands,

my soul carries on and flows with the rhythm of all and the land.

Sunrise Over Acadia
Elizabeth Fleig



Unseen

Amanda Acklin

The breeze was warm and the heat caught hold of you.
Your heart was beating and the music was resounding as it began to
carry through.

The same will be told for a story unseen.
Absence of one, the thought of another, things are not what they
seem.

There is more to the book, those are not lies.
She has not a solo soul, but pieces that she has been prized.
There is not a fortune that is to be told, you see, the strings are
aligned.
With her eyes slightly closed she reflects calm and empty, she can
see into your mind.

Don't be afraid, don't walk away.
There is something to be said about the way you feel today.
There is a hunger, it is not pain.
You can feel the mental connection, don't think you're insane.
Come to the water, drink from the well.
Watch as the stream does not hold back or go away, to its beauty you
have fell.

Gaze as a river moves over and around.
There is nothing in the way, serenity can be found

Satori

Logan Shea

I'm a firm believer every dude in the world goes through an eighteen second stretch where he actually thinks he might be gay. This is the human condition, everyone does it. I think it is different for all the dudes in the entire world, like a fingerprint. Whether we know it or not, we have been involved in like a thousand of these eighteen second gay escapades. That's eighteen thousand seconds. And if you're actually gay, you are probably involved in more than eighteen thousand seconds worth of gay ponderings and possibilities.

Disclaimer – being gay is just as normally normal as being straight, but if you act like you haven't or you won't go through this eighteen second revelation, you are lying to yourself.

Everyone has them, I'm sure there was a guy in West Virginia, still puritan at heart, and when he was eighteen years old, he was riding on this four wheeler behind his best buddy in the entire world, Richmond Taylor. I'm sure Richmond was some stud, about one eighty seven that played power forward on the Shenandoah Valley All-Star Team. And there he was, James Thomas, sitting on the back end of a four-wheeler as Richmond plopped down this bucket of shelled corn he fed to the white-tail deer right in between James's legs. With not a word or even a look Richmond jumped on the front end of the seat, ahead of James, revved the engine, and headed down to the lower forty acres to feed the deer. Nice Wrangler jeans James thought, quite the display of manliness. Anyway, the five gallon bucket of corn flew out of James's extended paws as he sat slightly in awe, a mile away from the hopeful destination. James, of course, barely noticed what he had done; instead, he had this queasy feeling.

They slowed and before the thought could even be repressed on the smallest level, James asked himself, "Why the hell do I feel this way?" almost aloud. The two of them were bent over picking up kernels, Richmond's blue jeans seemed to be painted on his legs as James continuously whispered to himself, "I'm not gay, I'm not gay, fuck, I'm not gay." Nine seconds later James looked at his best friend, and in him he saw an image of himself, a mirror of how he acted and what

he thought. He realized he wasn't gay; instead, he admired the quality of their friendship. He was happy, not gay.

Then it could be Nelson Diego who lives in Truth or Consequence, New Mexico. Look it up, I dare you, Truth or Consequence is real. I've been there; we went through it when we visited family in Las Cruces. My aunt Louise, what an old hag. Anyway, Nelson here, is a scrawny Mexican kid, the white neighbors across the street think his whole family is a bunch of illegal immigrants, and the shit of it is, half of them are. Anyway, Nelson doesn't like the heat in New Mexico but his neighbor Kimberly Kelly does, so he has no problem pretending he likes it so he can stare at her in a swimsuit. So it's a Tuesday afternoon, Nelson just gets home from the eight block walk from school and runs to his bedroom. He struggles with his white pocket t-shirt and cranks on his black fake leather belt until it loosens and his jnco jeans sit lazily and lonely on the floor. He looks out the blinds, makes sure nobody is out in the street, rips off his new pair of Calvin Klein boxers and puts on his Hawaiian board shorts. He sprints down the hallway, opens the foyer door, and when he turns right, to head to Kimberly's house, he sees her older brother, fourteen year old Kevin Kelly wisp through the side yard sprinkler. Insert slow mo. For two seconds he stares, eight seconds he stands unsure of what to do, six seconds looking back at his front step, and the last two deciding, "Dude, it's natural that I look at his upper body, and try to compare biceps and torso's, I'm not gay." A done deal.

Or what about John Travis walking through the Mall of America with his girlfriend Grace Avery? Grace is a brunette, about five foot three, tan legs and a slight lilac scent. She wears a knit hat and tight jeans year round, fortunately the sight of her in jeans is comparable to the first time a person sees the Rocky Mountains. He's carrying her bags, there are only two, she's a pretty cheap date and he appreciates it. As they continue through the concrete maze, they bypass another baseball hat store and walk into the entrance of Abercrombie and Fitch. Being Christmas season, two male models stand and hand out coupons that bring clothes down to the normal over-priced price. They smell excellent, John thinks. One of the tan Aryans has his hair slicked to one side of his head and is wearing slippers and snow-

flaked boxers. As John clears his throat, he checks out the guy's abs, and moves directly to the next man's face. Dude had white teeth, so, naturally, John says, "Grace, did you see that one guy's teeth? He had really nice teeth."

"No, I didn't notice," she says.

"How did you not notice? His teeth are out of this world white," John said.

"Quit being gay, John," she said.

He followed her through the "poor quality section" to the "worse quality and higher priced section," the entire way looking at Grace's lower body praying to be aroused. It ultimately didn't come, but that wasn't abnormal when it was forced. She did turn and look at him, she did that smile that told him they would be moving from his bed to his floor later that night, to ensure his roommates could get a full night's sleep. He praised himself and bought Grace a pair of tattered jeans, they only cost forty-five dollars and a blow job from the cleanest hooker in America would probably run fifty bucks, he considered it a win.

Like I said, everybody has one. My spiritual enlightenment is a little different. It wasn't necessarily a self-revelation, instead it was prompted when my five foot four ex-girlfriend took my heart and seared it on a grill, barely leaving any juice in my veins. That event, funny enough, was prompted by my uncharacteristic ability to inhale the infested smoke, drink pinot noir out of green bottles and occasionally get bloody noses for unknown reasons. So anyway, like I was saying, I turned twenty-four and two days after that this girl stabs me with a butter knife – two days after my birthday. So obviously I'm trying to figure out why I couldn't keep her, and what part of me was so unbearable that she didn't want me to pinch her butt in public anymore. So I'm on a bender. I called my art major buddy and dropped off sixty bucks and picked up four grams of chronic. I smoked some of it and then put the rest of it in an empty vile I stole from the chemistry lab.

I walked through the entire University of Oregon campus, jealous off all the yuppies that can afford to go to school there since I am currently pretending to have a future at Lane Community College. I had tunnel vision. I ended up walking into Eugene's downtown YMCA, I don't know why. I snuck in. In the locker room I stripped and put on a towel and walked to the sauna. I sat down, alone. I giggled to myself at the hilarity of being alone in this sauna. I wished I had some vodka to pour on the rocks; I was unprepared. Eight minutes into my sweat a man with gray hair walked in. He didn't wear a towel at all.

"Hello, sport," he said.

Sport, what a bunch of bull shit, nobody should call anybody else "sport." I laughed, again. We proceeded to talk and I told him I liked to read and I thought the crossword was more America's pastime than baseball. He disagreed and showed me his tattoo on his forearm; it was the number thirty-three with a baseball bat underneath it. He told me his name was Grant and that he liked to take photographs and meet new people. I sighed and was hoping he wasn't one of those networking freaks.

Worse news, he was a Mormon.

Now, side story. I don't have any problems with Mormons unless they a) have more than one wife at a time or b) try to convert me to their silly religion.

So I tell him I don't follow any religion, but I listen to a lot of Bob Marley and I've always wanted dreads, so Rastafarian sounds neat. That made him laugh.

"But what do you know about The Church of Latter-Day Saints?" he said.

"Not much," I said.

“Well, being a young man, free of commitment, you should at least be speculative towards this new way of life,” he said.

“Yeah,” I said.

Here I was confused. It’s hard for me to even watch The Office every Thursday night at six pm, how did this schmuck expect me to follow a religious practice? I only do a few things religiously, and since Miranda left me, that number is dwindling. He scooted closer to me. I could hear his skin stick to the wooden bench as he slid towards me.

“What are you doing this evening?” he said.

“Well,” I said, “nothing I guess.”

“Great, sport. Listen, I live close to the church on Sixteenth Avenue, why don’t we meet there at six and we’ll attend the service and you can join me for dinner after,” he said.

I nodded and cringed simultaneously. I would need to smoke the entirety of that eighth of grass beforehand.

He said he had to go, he would see me that night. He put his hand on top of mine, our naked bodies now one.

“It is truly a pleasure to meet you,” he said, “I will see you tonight.”

He got up and left, I poured a gallon of water on the rocks and tried to figure out if this Mormon thought I was gay. I thought of my actions the last few weeks, did Miranda break up with me because she thought I was gay? Did I get really drunk and kiss a dude? I was paranoid. Sweat poured off of my head and sweat created puddles that looked like reptile skin on my arms. I walked to the door and put my towel on; my feet skidded on the floor as I went back to the locker room. All I could see were naked men ranging from twenty-two to sixty-seven. I am gay. Fuck. I put my clothes on, and saw the text

from Miranda. It asked if I had plans for dinner that night. I told her I was free.

The next week Miranda and I were dating again; she said she just needed a break, time to think on what she really wanted. I told her I loved her, which I did. She came back to Muskogee with me for Thanksgiving, she was going to meet my mother, father, and brother - Virginia, Jonathan, and Jonathan Junior - for the first time. We walked into the happy little world where I grew up, I expected Junior to tell me all about his first semester at Ole Miss. Instead I saw a family portrait broken splayed in the entree way, heard mother crying in the living room, my brother at the kitchen table patting our ancient black lab, and my father nowhere to be seen. Junior stood up and we embraced.

"What is going on?" I said.

"Well, I guess I shouldn't leave you out of the secret, Mikey," he said, "I'm gay."

I kind of took a step back, Miranda introduced herself and I was trying to figure out how my brother was gay. I mean, he liked football; he played football. Football players get pussy. He was smart, smart people don't choose to be gay; I knew that for a fact. I looked at him, up and down, and up and down, and up. He was wearing a flannel, but it wasn't tucked in (strike one), he wasn't wearing ugg boots (strike two), his hair wasn't gelled (strike three). Nope. He couldn't be gay, I was sure of it.

"Mikey, quit trying to figure it out, it is what it is. Still love me right?" he said.

"Obviously," I said.

Miranda found a bottle of wine and threw it to me; Junior grabbed three of those blue tin coffee cups that you use when you go camping.

“Is that Reisling?” he said, “I love Reisling.”

“...Figures,” I said.

