

TENTH *Muse*

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The staff would especially like to thank Professor Emerita Katherine Fischer, an innovator in and beyond the classroom and mentor to many, both students and colleagues. With her colleague in the English department, Ann Pelelo, Katie put the idea of a literary magazine at Clarke on the table and, largely due to the *Tenth Muse* endowment established in her honor, we'll be feasting for years.

COVER ART, "LOCH ACHTRIOCHTAN, GLEN COE, SCOTLAND"

Evan Heer, '17

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Editor's Letter

Tenth Muse may mean a collection of literary works to some, or just a bit of light reading to others. To others still, it may depict a moment in time at Clarke University and in the world. To me, *Tenth Muse* means opportunity. It is an opportunity for an aspiring writer like myself to get published for the first time, an opportunity for an up-and-coming artist to reveal her first masterpiece, or maybe it is an opportunity for a poet to present his inner self to an audience beyond his closest friends.

Whatever the opportunity may be for whomever, I would, firstly, like to thank all who have read, are reading, and will read our literary magazine for helping create these occasions. Your constant support, positive feedback, and constructive criticism has gotten us to where we are today. And where are we today, you might ask? We are sitting back in our desk chairs, relaxing, and enjoying an extra-large, long-deserved coffee because our seventh volume of the *Tenth Muse* has finally been released.

Secondly, I want to thank the many contributors and submitters. Your humorous, compelling, and thought-provoking prose, poems, photography, and artwork has given our magazine quality and diversity.

Thirdly, I want to thank my staff for an excellent year. Whether it was marketing our literary magazine, calling for submissions, replying to emails, or determining the look of the final product, you all have made an impact, and it was enjoyable working next to you. Emily, my Co-Editor-in-Chief, I would like to thank you for using your experience to help me—the new guy—lead our staff throughout the whole year.

Finally, I would like to thank Anna Kelley, professor and faculty advisor of our literary magazine class. She was the one who got us to focus when we got off course; encouraged us to look at not only the bigger picture, but also the small, nitty-gritty details; and guided us throughout the whole semester. It was a wonderful learning experience for me, and I know I will use all the skills I gained as a Co-Editor-in-Chief in my life beyond Clarke.

Now, readers, I invite you to explore the table of contents. Find a piece of work that intrigues you. Then put your feet up, settle in, and enjoy.

Kyle Majerus
Co-Editor-in-Chief

Editor's Letter

Two semesters have passed quickly and, with them, the last time I will be part of the staff of the *Tenth Muse*. Watching the end of something progress smoothly and quickly can feel nostalgic as one looks forward. However, although I am a bit sad to say this is the last volume of the *Tenth Muse* I will help piece together, I can confidently say that I am once again proud of the final product we've shaped.

The creation of this volume has been a team effort and so I must extend my thanks to my fellow Co-Editor-in-Chief, Kyle, and the rest of the *Tenth Muse* staff. Without everyone's joint effort and desire to make the *Tenth Muse* a quality collection of poetry, prose, and artwork, publishing this volume would not have been possible. I must also thank our advisor, Anna Kelley, for always guiding us down the correct path throughout this school year. Whether new to the *Tenth Muse* staff or an eagerly-returning member, we all benefitted from her supervision and experience.

We've worked hard on this year's volume and I think I can speak for the rest of the staff when I say that we hope you enjoy reading the pages to come. I hope the corners of the cover and the pages become worn and frayed from use—the marks of a thoroughly explored book. If you find yourself looking for more after you've finished this volume, please support and look for future volumes of *Tenth Muse* that are sure to be born in the years to come.

Emily Pape
Co-Editor-in-Chief

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NATASCHA MYERS

L'arte d'arrangiarsi

I am standing in front of the dining hall, waiting for my friends to join me for supper, when he lumbers up with a group of guys.

"You fellas can go ahead of me. I'm waiting on some people yet," I say.

His debilitating smile, which has the jaw-dropping effect of a meteor shower after a succession of starless nights, makes its first appearance as he replies, "Thanks so much."

Oh my, those eyes. Those brilliant blue eyes could contest for a spot on the list of Top 20 Beautiful Things In This World. Not to mention, I wouldn't mind being cradled in the nook of those chiseled biceps. And running my fingers down his muscular back, like a summer rain caresses the steaming pavement, would be—

Stop. Reality check. He's beautiful and you're you. Keep dreaming.

When I first saw you, I thought, "Why even bother? He's too good to be true." A catchy opening guitar riff coupled with my lyrics is meant to embed itself in the listener's brain the moment they hear it, much like the way being totally enamored with someone roots itself near the limbic system. Suspended chords are employed, meaning the third scale degree (the most crucial component in determining the chord's major or minor quality) is omitted. Much like you wait for that certain someone who will steal glances over the newspaper while you sip your coffee for every morning to come, the suspension yearns for resolution. All the chord needs is that third scale degree to complete it.

I am lucky to have a mechanism for expressing myself beyond

the conventions of conversation. Not only do I sculpt the words, but I also create the music, the part that summons the inherent beauty of language into recognition. Seemingly ordinary words, like “Hey there,” might turn heads when delivered by a soothing soprano voice. Words aiming to hurt can gain momentum with a dissonant chord, a minor second interval subtly nestled within it, that jolts the listener out of their reverie. “I’m sorry” can regain the validity it has lost over the years, thanks to broken promises and repeated offenses, once the keening tone only a cello can achieve accompanies it.

Words are inherently influential, but words accompanied by music are an entirely different weapon. In fact, even as a songwriter who makes it happen, I am consistently stunned that the right construction of sound can produce a song that might resonate with someone in the way they need it most.

When God created man on the sixth day, I’m pretty sure He spent a significant amount of time constructing in him a physical home for music, safely nestled under the protection of the ribs. As a result of His careful craftsmanship, there isn’t a beating heart that can truthfully claim not to have a song that speaks to them on a personal level and acts as an arsenal of saving graces. For example, Coldplay’s “Fix You” and John Mayer’s cover of “Free Fallin’” are in my armory because of what they have helped me endure.

When I was sick with a 423-day headache that couldn’t be figured out, “Fix You” was the song that forced me out of bed in an attempt to fix myself and return to writing the music I had abandoned. Similarly, “Free Fallin’” was on the playlist that was the soundtrack to every MRI, spinal tap, and agonizingly long afternoon in the waiting room. Since then, even in health again, it has become my anthem of courage. It reminds me that some elements of life are beyond my control and, rather than resist the unknown, I need to just free fall. These songs are my weapons, the language that speaks to me loud and clear. I can write that language, fluently and without hesitation, when I compose music.

I stand in front of a class of eager freshmen and their parents on move-in day. As student body president, I have been asked to deliver a speech about the opportunities college affords a person.

Suddenly I see him.

Although he is in the back row of the auditorium, I can feel the intensity of his presence, like the sensation of a summer sun burning skin. His shirt is stretched across his brawny shoulders as he leans forward, as if inching towards me.

I would gradually learn that his eyes could say more than words ever could. At this particular moment, I swear they are saying, “You think you’re going to deliver this speech any way other than breathlessly?”

Think again.”

I hesitate, say a quick prayer that my now-paralyzed lungs don't fail me, and begin.

Hey there, handsome, those eyes look good on you. The invigoration of the rhythm evokes excitement in the guitar while the lyrics confirm it. Rapid tempo and accented beats attest to the fact that there is possibility in locked gazes, while suspended chords are hard at work yet again. The song is in A major, scientifically-proven as one of the happiest keys there is. In fact, U2's "Beautiful Day" is in A major, as is The Beatles' "Here Comes the Sun." I have a tendency to dwell in the D minors, but this one puts rainy days and broken hearts and Nicholas Sparks movies to rest for a little while.

I am courageous when I write songs. I've come up with a few theories explaining my bravery with music, but my profound insecurity without it.

Theory 1: There's something about the act of breathing life into something that didn't exist two minutes before that feels like a tremendous feat. I often remind myself that no song I write will be a failure when the act of creating something beautiful out of dust-particled air is a significant success in and of itself. In turn, I obtain some sort of fearless honesty that I don't possess in conversation.

Theory 2: More often than not, if someone rejects one of my songs, I can try my utmost to criticize their music preference (or just lack of taste). Although it takes a concerted effort on my part, I can remind myself that I've done something the scornful mouths cannot do: forged my own experiences into a fusion of language and sound.

On the other hand, if someone rejects me as a person, I find it difficult to blame it on anything but the way that I am. I can't blame it on a wrong note or a voice crack, nor a person's preference of mainstream, auto-tuned pop to my acoustic folk blend. I only blame it on myself.

Theory 3: Magic. Inexplicable magic.

I truly believe that all of these theories play a part in the valiance of my songwriting (okay, so maybe the third theory is a little less credible), and as a result, make me unafraid to be honest. So honest that I've questioned whether life is worth living in a song before. So honest that I've told a guy I loved him a time or two. I've even abolished a toxic relationship in a song—and that was pretty darn honest.

The melody comes naturally, and the words soon follow. The visceral chords resonate from the piano and push me to say what needs to be said, without a second thought. The control that I have once the guitar is in my hands makes me feel in control of the words too.

But strip away the sound, and I might as well be a mute.

The sunlight cascades onto my face as I begin my fifth hour of homework outside. Funny I should glance up at that particular moment because out walks the stunner himself, limping from yesterday's injury. I easily could have cast my eyes back down to my homework and pretended I hadn't noticed his presence (which I'll have you know isn't feasible; the laws of attraction demand I notice), but today I feel like surprising myself.

"How's the leg feeling today?"

"Sore. Very sore."

"Well, that sucks." My face immediately registers an expression of pure panic at the words that just left my mouth. I surprised myself alright. I have a wealth of charming language at my disposal and I chose *that*?

At this moment a song lyric darts through my mind. *We're angels playing devil's advocate with the notion of me and you.*

Now's not the time, pretty words. You're a little late to the party.

Thankfully, he ignores my lack of well-articulated condolences and replies with an encouraging grin, "I appreciate you asking."

Those damn eyes might as well be amplified at a deafening 90dB. This time, they suggest, "That was a good attempt. Let's try it again sometime."

Let's not and say we did.

Much like my words (clearly) fail me sometimes, songwriting isn't always a seamless process, either. It is an art cast in an idyllic glow, but I would be lying if I said it didn't reside in some shadow every now and again. Contrary to popular belief, the words don't always float down and seamlessly settle on the paper. In fact, sometimes, they choose to stumble their way towards me and hope I can decipher them into a song. While they await their place on the paper, they sometimes taunt me, challenging the notion that I am indeed the songwriter that I think I am. But if I'm not a songwriter, who am I?

Despite these moments of doubt, no song is ever abandoned. I always return and give that song the existence it deserves, even if it requires some fine-tuning.

Today, I am called upon to lead a disciplinary meeting for the dormitory I supervise. I'm sure he can tell I am fretting over exhibiting a powerful demeanor, contrary to my relaxed nature. Today, his eyes say, "Relax. You've got this under control."

He issues what I'm sure is supposed to be a reassuring smile, but it has more of a crippling effect, if I'm being honest. In fact, I might be having a heart attack. Myocardial infarction, I think they call it. Like, I literally can't breathe. I also can't feel my hands all of a sudden. Someone should probably call 911 because I don't think swoon-

ing over a beautiful boy is supposed to feel like impending death.

Thankfully, a song lyric arrives and shifts my attention to something other than my probably-failing heart. At least I'll go to my grave with a creative possibility etched into my brain.

You steal my breath away, every damn time / When can I rightfully claim it as mine? The guitar melody almost breathlessly strives to keep up with the words that flow so easily from my mouth. The instrumental component is sparse, leaving space for the words to speak. Guitar slides and pull-offs provide a jolting sensation, much like the sharp inhalation that comes after holding your breath too long.

After an excruciating fifteen minutes of portraying myself as someone I'm not, while simultaneously hoping my breath will come back to me, everyone rises to leave. He does the same, but keeps glancing my way. There's a good chance whatever admiring thoughts he might have (possibly—maybe—probably not) had of me before have vanished. I blew it. I most definitely blew it. He thinks I'm an idiot. Maybe I am.

But to my surprise, he lingers.

"I wouldn't have taken you for a hard ass," he jokes.

"That's because I'm the furthest thing from it." Well said, Natascha, keep it up.

My best friend chooses that beautifully inopportune moment to pipe up in his habitual, immature way, "Dude, your voice is so sexy."

I chime in without a moment's hesitation, "It really is!" Because, I mean, who's kidding who? It really is.

My face immediately registers my mistake as eight men look at me and burst into laughter.

Dammit. I mean, I did overcome one obstacle and manage to give my thoughts the existence they deserve, didn't I? So that's progress, right?

Wrong, Natascha. So very wrong.

Staying awake until 2 a.m., hoping the right words will find their way through the darkness. Crumpled up pieces of paper tossed across the room. Lines crossed out so ferociously as to produce a hateful rip in the paper. Interrupting a conversation to write a brilliant lyric down before it evades me, and then having to apologize for myself after. It isn't all divine inspiration and songs written in an hour flat.

But I'll be damned if I don't write this song, with or without sleep. I walk past him in the dining hall and immediately feel the gravitational pull of his eyes. I glance up to meet them and exhibit a weakly-attempted smile (after all, I'm supposed to be the confident, fearless

girl everyone thinks I am), but I quickly avert my eyes. It's a shame I am the way I am. Wimpy. Weak. Worthless.

This is the moment in the brief history of time where Murphy's Law shook my faith. / If anything that can go wrong, will go wrong... Violins and cellos soar and intertwine in moving harmonies as the piano plays its consistent melody. A world of color erupts out of the sound.

People know me as the singer/songwriter. The girl who released an album all on her own. The girl who walks with her head held high, saying hello to everyone, whether she knows them or not. The girl who always has the right words to say, with the right notes to accompany it. The girl who "has it all together."

Little do they know, it's 3 a.m. and I'm still wide awake, engaging in an internal war with myself. Why don't you just ask him to go for a drink? Or initiate a substantial conversation with him? Why don't you just stop being such a fool around him?

You're not good enough and, at this rate, you never will be.

And then the song just ends, without the gradual decrescendo that a listener expects. And there is nothing left but the lonely piano, sending its final chord out into the void, as if to say, "Is there anyone out there?" ...*why do I try to evade the disappointment?*

I'm walking up the stairs as he comes down, immediately noticing that I am the kind of tired sleep can't cure.

Today, his eyes say, "What's hiding behind those sleepy eyes of yours?"

He doesn't speak it, instead, saying what I need to hear, "You look pretty today."

I really want to say, "If by pretty, you mean blessed with bags under my eyes, then absolutely." But I stop in my tracks, determined to stop this insufficient-self nonsense. I glance down at the tattoo etched on my wrist. Free fallin'.

Free fallin'. My anthem of courage.

There's a beautiful Italian expression scribbled on a Post-It Note, pasted to the inside of my songwriting notebook: "L'arte d'arrangiarsi." It means, "The art of creating something out of nothing."

I have the ability to create music out of silence. I can create lyrics out of hesitation. And today, I will create myself out of the anxious, timid girl who seems to have taken over my body. Today, I will create courage without a single musical note.

To hell with the crevices carved out in queen-sized beds /

Heaven knows there's one who will fill your heart instead.

"Thank you," I respond, accompanied by my best smile, one that I actually mean.

Well done, Natascha. Well done.

untitled

i.

to be perfectly honest,
i've got a rabbit's heart.

you know,
the kind that freezes
the moment it senses danger.
kind of like a january midnight where
all is still and the only thing you can taste
is the rawness of your uncovered
fingers.

and it aches
and aches
until your fists refuse
to loosen,
before finally it stops beating
and you're slowly dying
inside of yourself.

ii.

once upon a time
i fancied myself a she-wolf.

ivory fangs that bit down on
desperation,
silver eyes that could see
through hell itself,
and a blackness nestled peacefully
inside my chest,
sleeping all day and waking only
when the full moon rose.

but i have learned what i truly am:
just a deer
with terror blooming crimson like a gunshot
wound as she runs
and runs
further into the snowstorm.

iii.

perhaps the thing i most often yearn for,
the life i would rather live,
is one in which i have wings.

maybe a hawk or a raven or
even a sparrow. as long as i can
soar above the primordial, wretched winter that
is my mind,
i don't think i would really
care. the sky is calling to me
and i've made it wait
far too long.

iv.

i'm having a love affair with the idea of being a phoenix.

but i am afraid
my fire would not burn bright enough
to melt the ice away.

it has always clung to my lips,
and sometimes i cannot breathe,
or speak my own mind even when i
step into the flames and beg them
to brand the feathers into my spine.

oh god,
am i afraid.

not everything rises from the ashes.

HENRY HU



Accept
digital

The Rocks and the Birds

One foot brings itself down
onto the rough terrain of the loose gravel.
The rocks penetrate your pale skin.
Your other foot takes a step
as you begin to run.
Every limb starts to move together
in an unspoken harmony.
A bird chirps ahead
joined by many other avian voices,
creating a beautiful song.
They call you to fly with them,
but you have only feet
to set you free.
So you run
while each rock
replaces each pain.

EMMA DUEHR



Unearthed
wood

ELAINE ERICKSON

Perfect

Once there was a boy. The boy was of average height and average build. He had auburn hair and chocolate eyes and a timid crook of a smile that would periodically flicker upon his face. He came from a good family with cheerful and loving parents. Every evening after climbing off the bus and walking through the door, he would drop his book bag by the hearth, make himself a snack, and sit down at the kitchen table. His homework would be finished by dinner time, and his mom would call him into the dining room with a steaming plate of homemade food already waiting at his spot.

His mom and dad would ask him about school—if his classes were challenging enough, what his teacher was like, how his friends were—and he would always respond that they were all fine and he had had a great day. After each response, he would smile his timid smile and place another bite of food into his mouth.

But each night, when the boy had gotten into his pajamas and kissed his parents goodnight and lay in the stillness and silence of his bedroom, he would stare up at the dark, which seemed almost infinite without a light to define the subtle depths of the stucco that covered his ceiling. As he lay, he would think about himself and he would wonder what was wrong. He didn't feel happy. He felt like a stranger inside a body that wasn't his. He felt things, sometimes, that made him feel uncomfortable, things that sometimes pushed him to the point of feeling sick. Every once in a while he would find himself running to the bathroom at school and gagging into the toilet bowl, hot tears running down his cheeks as he heaved. It wasn't a stomach sickness, he knew that much. It was more of a mind sickness, some-

thing about himself that he knew wasn't right. He had these feelings, and he felt so dirty and ashamed. Above all, he was scared. He was terrified. He didn't know how to make them stop, but somewhere deep inside of himself, he knew he didn't really want to. And that was what scared him the most.

It was a struggle getting out of bed in the morning. He hated to leave the warmth of his blankets and the comfort of unconscious sleep, where his mind couldn't make him think and feel the things that he did during the day. Sometimes, on the rare occasion when he did dream, he'd dream of elation. The place and events that happened always escaped him when he awoke, but he could still feel the remnants of absolute happiness. He missed those feelings. He missed when he could skip out of his bedroom in the mornings without stopping at his mirror as he did now, checking to see that the small smile he forced upon his face looked genuine.

Every morning his mom would give him a kiss goodbye, and every morning he would pretend to gag and wipe it off his cheek, just to make her smile, before putting on his coat and running out the door to the bus. And every morning, he swallowed hard before ascending those steps.

"Hey kid, you checking me out? I know you like it. You're such a creep."

"Get off the bus, kid. Nobody wants you here. Stay home."

Then, one day, everything changed.

The morning felt like any other. He woke up, yawned, stretched, and rubbed the sleep from his eyes. He stared at the ceiling for a moment, trying half-heartedly to grasp the remnants of the dream that barely lingered. He closed his eyes. In his mind he could see the face—the delicate curve of the lips, the sharpness of the nose, the crinkles in the furrowed brow, the way the hair seemed to be as soft and touchable as an infant's—but above all, he could see the deep, bright blue eyes, shining so intensely that every other feature became a blur. He imagined himself gazing into them, becoming lost inside the contours of the brilliant blue, captivated. Stunning, of course, but there was something that didn't seem right about them. He let his mind linger on that image, pushed away the uneasiness, and let himself feel the waves of breathlessness and desire that overtook him. He loved this feeling. It made him so happy as he slept. But as quickly as he pulled the memory into his consciousness, it disappeared. It never lasted long once he awoke.

As always, he rushed to get ready for school, stopping just briefly by the door to put on his coat and for his mother to give him a kiss before he dashed out to the bus stop. He checked his watch. He was a couple of minutes early. Once outside, he could see that a few blocks ahead a small group of boys was waiting for the bus. Instinctively,

his footsteps slowed. He saw one boy point a finger in his direction, and the others followed his gaze, laughing. One stepped out of the group and took a couple of steps toward him. The others stood back until the first shouted something at them, and then they followed. The boy stopped and knelt down, pretending to tie his shoe. Quickly, he inhaled and closed his eyes. The words would hurt, but they were just words. Still, he felt his heart quicken when the boys suddenly appeared by his side. He felt hot breath on the nape of his neck, and, unexpectedly, he shivered.

"I bet you like being on your knees, huh? You want a piece a this?"

Laughter.

"I'm fucking talking to you. You should've stayed home today. I told you, nobody wants you here."

A firm, sweaty hand grasped the boy's shoulder.

"Come here. I wanna show you something."

Before he could think, before he could summon the courage to stand up and pull himself away, before he could even remember any of the advice on dealing with bullies he had learned in his first six or seven years of school, the boys had grabbed him and were pushing him down into the ditch beside the road. He stumbled, but did not fall.

"Leave me alone, asshole."

That last part surprised him. He didn't know he had the guts to say that to these boys, but he liked it. It was empowering. He let his eyes meet the eyes of the one who had grabbed him. He looked taken aback, but the others around him were laughing and nudging one another. Then, suddenly, the boy watched as the bully's eyes darkened.

"Who are you calling 'asshole'? Huh? Are you talking to me like that?"

Then he felt the impact, first in his abdomen, then coursing through his neck and skull as his head ricocheted off of the frozen ground. He felt dizzy. Spots clouded his vision and he couldn't blink them away. The one who was yelling was on top of him, and his voice was getting louder.

"Nobody talks to me like that. You're just a fucking fag. You gonna hit me back? Huh? You think you can take me?"

The boy forced himself to look into his aggressor's bright blue eyes, and for the first time, he wasn't overcome with breathlessness and weak knees as he did. He felt hurt, betrayed, and a little scared, of course, but it surprised him that there was another feeling bubbling up inside of him, and it was suffocating everything else. The feeling was familiar, but the difference was that this time, it was welcomed. And it was supported by a most intense rage he never knew he had.

Abruptly, the boy's arms were shoving the vile body sitting on top of him with all the force he could muster. The spots in his eyes were turning red. Adrenaline was pumping through his body, and more than ever before, he felt suddenly alive. He realized his fists were balled up so tight his fingernails were piercing the skin on his palms, and the feeling of hot, wet blood dampening his fists was gratifying. He threw a punch, hard, into the other boy's gut, effectively knocking the air out of him. Another punch to the jaw sent him hard to the ground. The boy felt exhilarated. Nothing could stop him now; he knew what his mind was telling him to do, what his fingers needed to do. The boy looked wild as he leapt on top of the boy on the ground and wrapped his fingers tightly around his neck. He felt elated.

The other boys from the bus stop stood watching, petrified. One ran forward, grabbing at the boy's wrists to pull them away, but it was as if his fingers were locked in place. The others started crying, begging the boy to stop—*he was hurting him, he was killing him, didn't he know what he was doing?* It didn't matter. Their words sounded muffled, drowned beneath the exquisite clarity of the choking coming from beneath his fingers. He felt so powerful, so strong, and the boy below him was growing weaker; the struggle was slowing, the limbs were no longer flailing.

Gradually, his mind cleared. The boy blinked. He looked down at his hands and, with a gasp, drew them away. The neck was bruised and bloodied, and the boy wasn't moving. He could see the others running then, probably to get help. He licked his lips and tasted blood, realizing that he had bit right through them. He looked down again. A wave of nausea hit momentarily, but he swallowed it back and spit onto the ground beside the body. He looked again. Petrified blue eyes stared vacantly up at him. The boy looked into them, trying to see the contours, the depths. Concentrating, he closed his eyes and brought forth the image of the face in his mind. The curve of the lips, the sharpness of the nose, the feather-light hair—but it was the eyes that were different now, different from the image that graced his dreams. Now they had looked at him with fear. Now they had gone dark and lifeless—because of him. Now, he realized, the image in his mind was complete.

It was perfect.

He opened his eyes, and he smiled. A real smile. And in that moment, he understood what he had really wanted all this time.

The boy slowly stood up, wobbly from over-exertion, and walked away. He did not look back.

KELSEY HAMMONS



Nose Cage
ceramics, glaze, acrylic, oil, min wax

RACHEL SPURLING



DonTRUMPet

DE'SHAUN MADKINS

Generational Trauma

Darkness preys on subtle light;
mysterious winds consume the night.

Vanamous drops infest the earth;
the Sun's shine awaits its birth.

Trials mislead the twisted truth;
modern culture blinds its youth.

SAMANTHA HILBY



Ice Cream Glacier Machine
wood, metal, ceramic, styrofoam

SAMANTHA HILBY



Oil Vacuum
wood, ceramic, metal, plastic, tar, oil

Deforestation Cannon
ceramic, metal, wood

The Union Nobody Likes

I hear her speak through world-weary lips.
I listen, my ears as sharp as the needles in her
snowy white body.
“I love you,” she says.
“I love you too, Mom.”
A few days ago, her rubbery legs abruptly announced their retirement.
It did not take us long to find out that Cancer was leading
this labor strike.
Her other employees are starting to buy into
Cancer’s idea, especially her lungs and kidneys.
“Fuck the establishment!” he told her once-loyal workers,
“Anarchy in Regina Corp!”
Each of us wanted to have a talk with Cancer,
especially my husband, whose facial expression
has every expletive known to man
etched in neon letters
for his labor brigade,
whose insurrection has made Regina
cough up more blood.
Now they’re traveling to see the boss
we all have
but no one can replace.
My thoughts are a glacier because my own boss
shows up to work less and less frequently.
The woman who brought me into a warm, bright world a lifetime ago
is
the woman I will see laid in the cold, dark earth in a few days.
Her other half is on the chair beside me.
Cancer will bankrupt his boss’ stock
in a few hours as well,
but he’ll have enough cash to keep going a while longer.
He’s stubborn that way, just like the stubborn Swede
she fell in love with over fifty years ago.
So much has happened since 1962,
but for all the moments in human progress since
then,
no one knows a hitman who can take care of Cancer,
let alone on speed dial.

NATALIE KALMES



What Have Women Done?
wood, wire, newspaper, yarn, books

PATRICK DEENEY

Shut Up! Shut Up! Shut Up!

Did I remember to start my instrument?

That's how it starts. A simple question that begins to itch, burrowing down through the gray matter and lodging deep beneath my corpus callosum, bugging my whole brain.

I like to think that I have an active imagination. My brain has almost perfected the conversion of electrical impulses into a variety of conscious thoughts and daydreams. I've often found myself in situations where I have forgotten to pay attention due to the overabundance of signals connecting simple instructions or lecture plans to a random internet meme or inside joke shared between friends.

But this rampant activity sometimes goes too far, leaving ideas festering in my head full of things best left forgotten. All it takes is a single thought, a volt of activity in the brain, to drive me into a neurotic breakdown. This is an unfortunate defect; it leads to increased anxiety and obsessive-compulsive behaviors, until a catharsis is found or necrosis takes over.

Did I remember to start my instrument?

I question myself again, debating whether to head back to work to check if the mass spectrometer I am responsible for is, in fact, running correctly. I try to brush off the thought and distract myself with television and video games to try to relax before another day at work. But the mental voltage spikes again. I look at my phone, checking the time and weighing the consequences of leaving my instrument until morning. Soon the thought reaches my hypothalamus, itching deeper and deeper down into the cerebellum and spreading its electrifying tendrils all across my brain. Soon, I can't take it anymore. I turn off the TV, grab my keys, and leave, letting my over-thinking brain get the best of me.

"Where are you going?" Dad asks, as I slip my shoes on near the back door.

"I'm heading back in to make sure I started my instrument. It's going to bug me all night if I don't," I reply reluctantly, accepting the grim reality that my thoughts control me and not the other way around.

I say goodbye and get into my car. The sky is full of massive black clouds only broken by occasional far-off flashes of lightning. I wind my normal way to work, through the side streets of Minneapolis, watching as the flashes increase in number.

Did I remember to start my instrument?

"I really need to stop being so unsure of myself," I say aloud. My brain starts wandering, wondering how I got this way. Luckily, I only need to make it one more day at work until I will be on my way to Dubuque to visit my girlfriend.

I get to work and sprint to the door, fighting through nagging thoughts and gale force winds of the oncoming storm. Soon the thoughts are quelled, as I confront my instrument midway through its sample queue just like it's supposed to be. I breathe easy, check my desk to make sure I didn't forget anything else, and head toward the door.

Did I remember to start my instrument?

The thought won't leave my head. "I literally just checked, calm down," I say aloud, cementing the certainty that I didn't forget anything. The lightning pulses the sky, defibrillating the thoughts in my head, which are now focused on what I need to pack for my trip tomorrow.

The highway is emptier now, giving me room to fly down the road. A few drops of water plop on my windshield, as the flashes become more frequent. Ahead of me, a distinct veil of torrential downpour creeps across the pavement.

I scream multiple profanities as the wall of cascading water assaults the tempered glass. Every mother figure I have would probably be worried sick if they knew I was driving on the highway in these conditions. I steer my car carefully through the jumble of off-ramps and overpasses, through the depths of an unknown ocean. Other cars are puttering along on their own journeys, and the people within them may be thinking the same things as I am, but in search of different destinations.

I finally pull into my driveway and nearly swim from my car into my house, trying to traverse through the multitude of drops. "It's just a little wet outside," I joke as I enter the doorway. My dad walks over to the bottom step of the basement. "Is it raining that bad outside?"

"Have you ever driven underwater?"

He climbs the stairs and looks outside. "Oh wow. Was everything okay at work?"

"Yeah, everything was fine. My neuroticism just got the best of me again. I really need to learn to quiet down my brain."

I spend the rest of the evening relaxing, trying to ground myself and avoid any unnecessary mental activity. I know full well that I

will need as much energy as I can muster for an eight-hour work day followed by a five-hour drive, a feat I have accomplished more and more as year two of a long-distance relationship drags on.

The day goes by fairly smoothly, and I am able to get on the road to Dubuque around 6 p.m. The other cars I pass, the variety of music my iPod plays, and the planning of the upcoming weekend keeps my brain busy from focusing too much on any one topic. The sun set an hour or so ago, but it keeps getting darker and darker as clouds accumulate in the sky above Waterloo. A lightning bolt flashes in the distance.

Did I remember to start my instrument?

A single thought, a volt of activity flickering deep within the gray matter, appears as I turn onto Highway 20. I grip the wheel tighter, feeling a wave of anxiety start to build. Rain starts hitting my windshield, and my mind flashes to the previous night.

I didn't think it was supposed to storm. How strong are the storms going to be? What if it's like last night? How can I make it to Dubuque like that? I was lucky I made it home!

I continue, the streetlamps of Waterloo trailing behind as the rain picks up, stabbing at the windshield. The lightning flashes more frequently, building up the anxious thoughts revolving in my head.

Will Hannah be awake when I get in? What if I wake her up? What if she's cranky because I wake her up? What if she doesn't like me the same because I wake her up? What about when she finds out I watched ahead in our show? Is Netflix cheating a thing? What does the future hold for couples like that? Will I be able to make it up to her somehow?

Thoughts of the future keep finding their way into my head. 100 million volts flash across the sky. 100 million thoughts scream to be heard in a metaphysical maelstrom of hyperbolic hypotheticals.

Will we actually move to Portland? Is she going to move to Madison? How far is Madison from Dubuque? How long is a bus trip to Chicago?

The storm intensifies. Lightning flashes ignite everywhere as thoughts pass the threshold, explode in my cerebrum, and send an action potential down my neurons. My palms are sweaty as my foot urges the gas pedal closer to the floor. I start feeling physically sick as I realize the lack of cars on the road.

Will I know anyone on the bus? Am I going to be awkward? Will I be awkward at the derby bout? Does her team think I'm awkward? Do I actually want to be a ref? Would she not like it if I don't want to ref? Can I ever learn to skate?

My heart starts beating through my sternum as the autonomic systems activate to the increased stress, shaking my seat belt with each palpitation. The potential continues through my entire body. Overworked mental activity starts leaking out, making me see things in the dark: rain in the distance drowning the cornstalks below; a funnel cloud of thought spiraling towards me, decimating the remaining shreds of sanity.

Why do I only think like this in my car?! More lightning? Is that a tornado? What's the best way to stay alive if there is a tornado out here? What if my car gets sucked up? What if I die and no one knows?

Why can't I stop? Did I remember to start my instrument?! Did I make a wrong turn? Would I even be able to find my way back if I did? Would I have to wait till morning so I could find the right roads again? Where are these thoughts coming from? Why won't they stop?! Why? Why? WHY!

Then it strikes, a bolt of that fleeting plasma far past the curve of the earth, lighting the sky as if the sun had decided to return for a brief moment. Blackness shifts ever so slightly back to the gentle glow of sunset.

In that moment, the world stops. The blinding strobe of lightning, the unceasing torrent of water and thoughts all fade away with a single burst of light just over the horizon.

I take a breath, awestruck by both sublime natural power and the flatness of Iowa. For a brief moment, the rain holds off, and only a few weak flashes break the blackness above.

A light at the end of the road. A single thought that quelled a typhoon. Whether it's a beacon of hope or a harbinger of the end, I won't know until I get there. And no amount of thinking can change that.

The rain picks back up but only as a fraction of what it was. Lightning blinks far off in the distance, like lingering thoughts on the periphery of my mind. I feel them growing, itching, burrowing down into my hypothalamus, but I hold them off as I calm myself down.

Soon, even these stragglers quiet down while my car races through the night. Rain dribbles on my windshield as muted lightning flashes echo each other far past my cerebral meninges, just white noise of autonomic processes commencing and resolving.

There will always be a reason to worry. The active imagination that I pride myself on can often get me into trouble. If let loose, it will run rampant, pulling my sanity down into the depths of neurosis; if I stymie it, I lose my creativity. It's something I need to learn, something that will hopefully come with time. And while that's not the resolution I want, it's all I have for now.

"Eighty-six miles to go," I say aloud, grounding the remaining volts in my head and urging my car further down the highway. Someone's waiting for me over the horizon near that calming burst of iridescent thought.

"I can do this."

MADISON BURNS



St. Joe's
photograph

ABBY FUNKE

Linger

Empty rooms aren't empty,
but full of inescapable thoughts
of loving and lusting, of caring and
crying—life's tiny snapshots.

Spectral movies play in corners;
delusive figures approach—
they run right through me,
like an ancient stagecoach.

Their laughs bounce the rafters,
while others' sighs shake the floors.
Enticing eyes bid me forward,
toward warm, sensual shores.

The worst figures won't move—
they stand just out of reach.
Standing, and taunting,
the divide too thick to breach.

Empty rooms aren't empty, but
full of translucent hosts.
This house isn't haunted,
but it's teeming with ghosts.

BRIDGET FAUSNAUGHT

interstellar

there is
something about the night that
makes me want to fly.

once, i had a dream
where my fingers could touch
the sky—and i pulled down the stars
from the velveteen darkness
to stitch them into my
skin. i was nebulae;
a smoldering quasar as
the universe flowed
through my ravenous veins.
a supernova landed on my
tongue and the bittersweet taste of
one million galaxies
circulated into my soul.

in that moment,
i became the cosmos—
with asteroids in place of eyes
and pluto orbiting between the confines
of my ribcage.

my wings are made of stardust
and luminescent constellations.

with them,
i will soar higher
than any god
ever has.

NATALIE KALMES



Apocalypse and Restoration
oil on canvas

The Halibut

Inspired by *The Fog Warning* by Winslow Homer

You're fickle, my love.
You chill my bones,
bake my face,
give me halibut.

You're vast, a sheet
stretching to grasp the horizon.
Your swells grow,
the winds cool,
the clouds enclose your bowl.
The stench of storm
carries on sea breeze.

Your power, your purpose.
My boat climbs your mountains—
topped by snow and ice,
nose straight up to heaven—
then falls down,
down into the deep,
your unimaginable void.
You fog the outside world,
all but you, never you.
Is the Halibut still attached to the string?
Your bounties cursed?

I devote my life
to your world.
I know your face,
like my own.
Your moods, currents—
I know your heart.
You are generous,
full of splendor.
The proof, the truth,
is the halibut.

MADISON BURNS



Topsy Turvy
photograph

MEG BRADLEY

Regeneration

It is a scientifically notable fact that the cells in your body are constantly dividing, dying, and regenerating. Some of them, like the cells lining the stomach, regenerate approximately every five days. Others might last around a week. Red blood cells stick around for four months, and liver cells for five.

Some parts of the body take much longer. Bones, for instance, might take up to ten years to completely regenerate. Certain muscles might last for up to fifteen. Some neurons in the brain will last for your entire lifetime. Only half of your heart will ever regenerate, at most.

But the part of your body that others might touch—the skin—regenerates every twenty-seven days. Every twenty-seven days—less than one month, even the shortest ones—any bit of you that came into contact with another human is gone, changed, new, whether for better or for worse.

When you think about it that way, every twenty-seven days, you have no longer been touched by anyone who touched you twenty-seven days ago. And which part of your body makes you yourself? Is it your heart, your brain, your red blood cells? Your skin? Either way, your body changes so much that you are not ever quite the same person as you were the day before. Your story might not belong entirely to you, but the person you were then.

I have found, then, that it is much easier to write about oneself in the third person. She did this. She said that. She lost this, found that, wrote this. Not me. It is someone else's story, in that way. Maybe because I am not yet ready to own it.

She (that is, me, four years—or fifty or so skin regenerations—ago) had not quite grown into her body at nineteen. But it wasn't entirely her fault; a woman doesn't stop growing until she is around twenty-one (that is to say, I can no longer claim to not be grown into my body; it is what it is).

Losing things was almost a hobby of hers. She would lose at least one thing every day, be it that one glove, her purple pen, her French notes. Be it her runaway thoughts, the words stuck in her throat, the weight off of her body. (I still lose things. Every day I play a game with myself, trying to see how long I can go without losing something. I lose the game, too.)

It was, in a way, because of this habit that she found herself in this particular hotel room (but that's not important yet) right outside the city, sixteen minutes away from the university hospital. The room is just like any other hotel room. Two queen-sized beds, two lamps, a television, curtains pulled over the window. She is wearing a variation on the same clothes that she has worn for the last six weeks: leggings that cling to her, a sweatshirt that hides her. (I had a habit of hiding in my clothes. Now that I am becoming an adult, I hide my fears under "grown-up" clothes built to make me look competent even when I'm not.)

A little bit of light leaks through a crack between the curtains, and the lamp next to the bed is turned on, but that is all the light she lets into the room. It smells like smoke—they hadn't had any non-smoking rooms available when she checked in six weeks ago, and still the smell lingers. She chokes on it whenever she buries herself in the blankets (but I choked on a lot of things back then, like my own fingers, so it isn't as if I could complain about it too much).

Tonight she is determined not to be alone in the room, no matter what it takes. She is determined to be touched by someone who is not checking her blood pressure, or sticking a needle into her arm, or guiding her onto the scale with a hand on her back. (That feeling, of needing to be touched so badly it hurts, is excruciating. It still is.)

She sits on the edge of the bed with her legs crossed tightly, the television blaring in front of her, waiting.

It feels like hours and hours before she hears the knock on the door. Cautiously, she peers out the eyehole in the door, just to make sure. (Make sure of what? I knew exactly what was going to happen.) He looks older than she had imagined. Somehow more frail. (I don't know what I had been expecting. *SWM, 41, looking for younger*, said the Craigslist posting.) But it is too late to back out now. He knows she (I) is (was) here (there).

Slowly she slides back the chain of the door and opens it. Up close he looks even more fragile. Hair thinning. No one to be afraid of. (I'm sure he was more than 41. But my mind was too full to

realize that at the time. I was willing to trust. I hadn't watched enough *Criminal Minds* yet to teach me not to.) He reaches out and touches her cheek (it was supposed to feel good, like a relief, but it felt strange; that touch will be branded into her skin for twenty-seven days) and whispers, "You're so beautiful." (She—I—wasn't. Skin was pulled tight against her cheekbones, and her eyes were sunken. Her limbs seemed too long for her body, or maybe her body seemed too small for her limbs.)

She sits back down on the edge of the bed, unsure of what to do next. It takes him less than a minute to be sitting next to her, hands on her face and tongue in her mouth. The touch that was supposed to bring so much comfort feels wrong, sour. (My last boyfriend before that, Dan—who left me for another girl because of my "barfing problem"—had felt so much different than this.) His lips cover hers entirely and she fights back a strangled, out-of-place giggle, imagining him sucking first her lips into his, and continuing until all the skin on her face has been vacuumed in.

Your skin—that stuff that covers and protects everything inside you—is made up of the protein collagen, which is produced by cells called fibroblasts. When it is wounded, the healing process generates new fibroblasts, which produce scar collagen—different from normal collagen. Although cells will die and regenerate, the scar collagen remains, although the scar may change in color or texture. It is the times you were hurt so badly that your body could not quite repair itself in the same way, that will be with you forever.

There is only one point in life where your skin can be injured and not produce a scar. In the fetal stage, bodies produce fetal collagen, which is different from adult collagen. Only once we exit the womb and become ourselves do our scars stay with us.

She (that is, I) sheds her sweatshirt almost without thinking about it. The air hits her skin (the outer layer, the epidermis, which will be gone in twenty-seven days anyway).

He slides his fingers over the scars on her arm. (They were raised and red. Now they are flat, and white—as we have learned, no matter how much your skin regenerates, scars will stay.) "My daughter used to do that." The second thing he has said. She is not sure why it feels so wrong. (I'm still not.)

She hadn't meant to speak to him, at least not more than necessary. But somehow the words tumble out, one after the other after the other. (Why I felt the need to spill my heart out to a complete stranger when I spent my entire day surrounded by therapists still doesn't make sense to me.) The days spent leaning over the toilet, fingers down her throat. The weight lost. The months in the inpatient unit.

The loneliness of her evenings now that she was allowed to be on her own at night, but too far from home to go back. The smell of the bus she rides to the hospital every morning before breakfast.

He listens. (Maybe he thought I would back out if he didn't. Or maybe he was a genuinely nice person. He did have a daughter, after all.) He listens and he whispers back that it sounds so hard, that he wishes she hadn't had to go through all of that. That he understands how lonely her nights must be, and why she had asked him here. Carefully, he runs his finger across the ridges on her arm again, and tells her she is still beautiful. (She still wasn't.) Later, he will run his fingers along the scars on her inner thigh, and say the same.

It feels so wrong. Not that it hurts—not that he is not gentle—simply that it does not feel anything like what she had imagined. Her hands slip on the sweat of his back, unable to hold on. She keeps her eyes wide open, looking past him and locking her gaze with the girl in the reflection of the TV screen. Maybe the reason it feels so strange is that she is thinking of him as a father now. (I still wonder about what his daughter was like. Did I remind him of her? I hope not. Somehow that would make it seem even more wrong.)

When it is over, she feels some sense of relief. He whispers something into her mouth, a cheesy line about how she has made all of his dreams come true. He says thank you. (Manners ingrained by my mother had made me reply “You’re welcome” even though it was a lie and at that point I couldn’t wait for him to leave. That makes me laugh, now.)

He gets dressed without making eye contact with her (I think maybe it felt wrong for him too). He slides some bills on top of the TV—like she had known he would—and then he is gone. (I used that money to help pay for the laptop I’m using to write this. Somehow that feels right and wrong all tangled together, to use it to tell this story.)

She locks the door to the room, then the door to the bathroom. She brushes her teeth until she is sure the taste of him is gone (it wasn't, it still isn't) and lets the scalding water in the shower burn the very top layer of her skin, until it is raw to the touch, until it feels as though anything he touched is gone.

(My body has changed since then. I learned to eat and to breathe, I grew strong. It is not the same body. But I know that it's not true, you know, that there will ever be a time when he has not touched me. He will always have touched me; just like I will always have scars, touch goes far beneath the surface. And is it even any part of our bodies that make us ourselves? Or is it something else altogether? I don't know. But I do know that no matter how many times my cells regenerate, I will always have let him touch me, and that this is not really—never was—someone else's story. I really do. It's all mine.)

EMMA DUEHR



Human
raw clay, steel

Who Knew?

Thoughts funnel a vivid dream
onto the stage, I dance.
What here? What now?
What will and how?
Spiraling an avalanche.

Pirouette to the right, and then to the left.
The murmurs keep rhythm and time.
How to? How do?
How to pursue?
Hollowed eyes never opine.

Gnarled fingers and toes fight to be free
by the woman with silken hair.
Where could? Where should?
Where if I would?
The spectators mock and stare.

Be my heart, be my mind, be real this time!
The color is stripped from my face.
Who you? Who knew?
Who thought I too?
Gold sorrow tries to replace.

Trade me your feathers, trade me your fetters.
Erase all that has come to pass.
When me? When you?
When I, anew?
But never to be, at last.

Neverland

It's a story as old as time,
aged by the naïveté of young souls
who don't yet know that
they don't know a thing about
matters of the heart.

Girl falls for boy;
boy doesn't see it.
Seeing is believing,
but only if you have someone to believe in.
Girl thinks he sees her;
he doesn't know she exists.
But existence isn't verified by
boys who can't find love with two hands.
Girl says hi to him;
he doesn't even know her name.
Name one time a boy
knew what hit him when a girl gave him the time of day.
Girl keeps trying to make him notice
until one day he realizes he's rather lonely.
But lonely doesn't mean you know how to love;
still, she loved him until it wasn't enough.
Boy leaves girl;
girl becomes bitter with the belief
that faith, trust, and pixie dust
don't work on lost boys who ignore fairytales.

HANNAH GOLDSMITH

Bruises are just Derby Kisses

W*hy do I do this to myself?*

Everything hurt. My shoulder blades crunched against the concrete, my thigh muscles seared with lactic acid, my fists grew numb as they held my tailbone off of the floor... but worst of all were the spasms in my abs. My wannabe six-pack twitched under my skin, straining to hold my legs in the air at a forty-five-degree angle. The whistle blew and I groaned as I lowered my skates to six inches off the ground.

Oh yeah, because I'm a masochist... I secretly love the pain, and torturing myself is what I do for fun.

I snorted at my own sarcasm, but the fires of hell in my abdomen reminded me that this was no time for jokes. I stared at the rafters waiting for the eternity of thirty seconds to end.

"Buy aluminum skates," they said... "They're stronger than nylon and not THAT much heavier," they said. Not that heavy, my ass! Clearly none of those Internet forum idiots ever had to do leg lifts with them. Screw 'em all!

The second whistle blew. A collective "hurmph" echoed as eleven girls simultaneously lifted their legs back to a forty-five-degree angle, instantly followed by a third whistle and the clatter of eighty-eight wheels hitting the ground.

But the pain wasn't over yet. We sprang to our feet with the momentum gained by our falling legs and sprinted across the gym floor, our roller skates making us human racecars. A few meters ahead of me, the faster skaters had already reached the back wall where they expertly twirled a 180, stopped on their toes, and zoomed past me in the opposite direction—to the wall where we had started. I, on the

other hand, was fresh meat. Less skilled than the rest, the only way I could manage not barreling head first into the brick wall was to force myself to topple on my kneepads, spin around on the floor, and hop back up. This took a few extra, precious seconds and I was the last one to slide back into the starting line.

Coach looked at his stopwatch. "Nineteen seconds. Not bad, ladies. But let's try to get that under eighteen. Reset!"

I groaned as I slumped back down on the concrete, still huffing and puffing from the dash across the gym. My lungs had joined the blaze.

Why the hell do I do this?

On an unusually cool day the previous summer, a high school friend stopped by my apartment on her way home from work. With no classes to occupy our time and the majority of our college friends staying back home for the break, we frequented each other's company to escape ourselves. We chose to spend this particular afternoon meandering up and down the roads surrounding my school.

"I finally picked a derby name!" she excitedly told me as we squeezed past a couple skateboarders.

"Oh nice!" I squinted up to see her face through the sun. "What is it?"

"Johnny Crash."

I let out an amused snort.

"Yeah..." she said, walking low to avoid a drooping mulberry branch. "I didn't really pick it, my mom did. I don't even like country music... I just can't think of something better."

"It's kinda punny though," I tried to reassure her. "What else is new?"

'Johnny' breathed an aggravated sigh. "We got in a fight the other day."

I nodded, acknowledging that I knew she was talking about her boyfriend. Quarrels between them weren't uncommon. I had been tempted before to suggest that maybe the relationship wasn't the right one for her. The frequency of their bickering and bruised egos made me question why she still bothered. But emotions are complicated creatures. So I held my tongue.

"It's just..." She paused to veer around a fire hydrant. Another sigh. "It's just that sometimes I don't understand him."

"How so?" I pried.

"He does these things and sometimes it's like he doesn't consider how I would feel! You know? It's just like... I don't know... it kinda hurts, you know?"

I cocked an eyebrow. I didn't know. Usually I was able to follow her train of thought but I must have fallen off somewhere. Before I

could ask her to clarify, she cut me off.

"But I still love him and everything... I just wish he didn't act like a poophead sometimes... Hey! You should come to a practice with me next week!" She perked up as if suddenly forgetting her relationship problems. "It'd be super fun and I'm sure they'd love to have you come watch!"

"Ha. Sure, Em—I mean *Johnny*. I'll come watch you wipe out." I gave her a friendly booty bump to the hip.

"Hey!" She laughed as she sidestepped to compensate for the momentary loss of balance. "Cut me a break! I only fell once last time. I'm still learning, okay?"

I sat surrounded by smelly gym bags and half-empty Gatorade bottles. The roller derby team had just finished running a drill I failed to understand. Having not purchased skates yet, I was confined to the sidelines, failing to keep up with what was happening on the track.

"Alright. Take five!" Coach announced, glancing at his stopwatch.

The girls rolled over, crimson-faced and panting. One skater dropped to her knees and skidded to a duffle bag next to me, which she furiously began riffling through. The dew drops of perspiration balancing on her heat-blotched collarbone rolled into her tank top collar as she dug around with accelerated speed. Every breath sounded scratchy like her lungs had sandpaper walls. Frustrated by being unable to locate what she was looking for, she proceeded to dump the entire contents on the dusty floor. Various items clattered to the concrete, creating a heap of personal effects. Among them, an inhaler rested atop a box of Marlboros. She snatched it up and, pressing it between her lips, drew in an extended breath. She exhaled the puff with a sigh of rapture.

"God my lungs fucking suck," she remarked as the medication settled into her respiratory system. "It felt like my chest was about to implode."

"Dude, why don't you quit smoking then?" another team member berated.

"Shut up! You're not a doctor. I like it and I do what I want!" She took another long drag from the inhaler.

My mom suddenly stopped washing the dishes and stared dead out the window, assuming an expression as if I had punched her in the gut.

"It's just roller derby, Mom. It's not like I decided to join a cult or commit suicide." But the look on her face made it seem as if I had done both. She drew a sharp breath and resumed her scrubbing—so vigorous now that I thought a plate would crack. Her eyes did not so

much as flicker in my direction. I shifted from foot to foot waiting for her to say something, but it was obvious I was being given the North Pole of cold shoulders.

"Okay then." I started shuffling toward the kitchen door. If she wasn't going to talk, I wasn't going to stand and listen to her silence. I almost reached the door.

"You're an adult. You can do whatever you want," she said. The words fell sharply and pinned me to the kitchen entrance. I couldn't tell if that was meant to make me feel guilty about playing a sport she disapproves of or to remind herself that I wasn't a child anymore. Maybe it was both.

"I had just hoped you'd support me...." My bottom lids were turning hot as I stood at the edge of the kitchen and I pressed a thumb into the corner of my eye to discourage any leaks. It wasn't quite working. I had saved the topic for weeks, waiting for a chance to excitedly share what I had thought would be exciting news. But similar to previous announcements—like the cats I adopted, my new job working late at the movie theater, or my first boyfriend—Mom wasn't too keen. Instead of the proud reaction I had crossed my fingers for, I was crushed by disapproval. Moms can be good at that. It kinda hurt.

"You did ruin your knee skating before, remember?"

A noticeable pop of my joint proclaimed the result of my sixth grade accident. Of course I remembered.

"You could dislocate it again! Or you could break a bone, or get a concussion or... you're so small and sweet and those derby girls I imagine are big and mean and... I worry about you..."

She paused. I stared at my socks, knowing there wasn't a single counterargument that would change her mind.

"Just... be careful," Mom said, softer now, right before I turned again to exit.

"I will."

She peeked over her shoulder. I could see her eyes brimming too—maybe just from the hot water in the sink.

"I love you," she said.

"I love you, too."

The whistle blew and I internally screamed as I lowered my skates to six inches off the ground.

Why do I do this to myself?

I thought this again as I waited for another century of leg lifts to end. Second whistle—legs raised to forty-fives. Third whistle—sprint across the room. Crash land before picking a fight with the wall. Get up and sprint back, sliding baseball style into my slot between two other girls. A wheel caught under my thigh as I did so. It bit through

my leggings and I instantly knew my skin would look like a grape Kool-Aid stain by the morning.

“Eighteen on the dot! Nice work, ladies. Take five!”

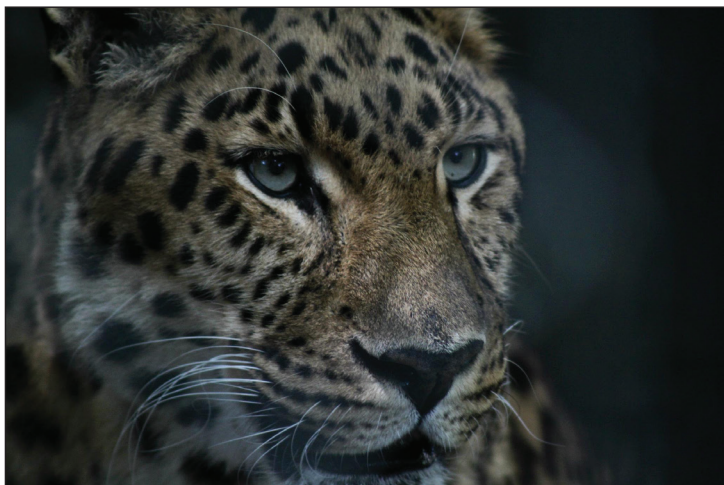
I collapsed backwards in sweet relief. “I’m going to be so sore tomorrow!”

“I know! Isn’t it great?!” My teammate nudged my ribs with an elbow pad.

I smiled back at her.

Yeah. It kinda is.

JACOB STRUNK



Jaguar
Elephant
photography

One of Many

It all starts with a warning:
a long message and, if you're lucky, a long talk.
Perspectives have changed; they proceed,
It's not you, it's me—and away they walk.
You're left there speechless,
broken, not knowing what to do.
How is it that your best wasn't enough?
Out of all people, why did this happen to you?
Then the brainstorming begins:
What the hell did I do wrong?
Did my efforts go unnoticed? Did they love me?
Why did they choose to wait this long?
You already believe there's someone else.
You stumble over your thoughts with no peace of mind,
then you try to adjust and modify yourself
to avoid the pain—*will I ever be fine?*
In the end, you end up with knowledge,
yet with a fraction of who you were before.
You will live way past this, I promise.
It's only one heartbreak—there will be plenty more.

Take Me to Church

His calloused hands clutch
a steaming Americano
that tastes the same as the one
in yesterday's city.
His heart, hardened without
a guitar string to blame it on,
seizes up at the sight of
a girl with Van Morrison eyes.
But love won't pack its bags
and hop on a tour bus,
so tonight he will sing as though he knows love instead.

Her needle-scarred hands are home
to chemicals that
spiral under her skin
with the promise of saving her life.
She cradles a chamomile tea
whose sweet aroma
stands in lieu of iodoform
for a short while.
But she reaches up to twirl
hair that isn't there,
and the white walls close in once again.

Their gossamer hands reveal
wedding rings
that haven't left their bodies,
like they haven't left one another.
Cups of café noir are forgotten
as they remember
days of dancing to Sinatra
in the kitchen light.
But she feels her time coming,
and he'll forever follow her wherever she goes,
so they savor every Sunday date until then.

My hands sit still for a change,
holding a white chocolate mocha
extra hot
with skim milk

and an extra shot of espresso,
no whip please.
This caffeinated congregation in front of me
hold hands over a phantom prayer
murmured on world-weary lips.
I cast my coffee aside
and wonder when the world went and got itself so
broken.

EVAN HEIL

Life on the Bluffs

“I remember it being prettier,” Samantha says. She is standing near the edge, overlooking the river. Her long brown hair flows from underneath a white beanie that separates her from the black sky. She keeps looking around uneasily, as if she is desperate to find the beauty of this cliff. It keeps her preoccupied. I’ve never seen her act this strange. I’m not preoccupied.

I do not see any beauty. There is nothing but grass, trees, a bench, a river far below, and hundreds of gravestones far behind us. We are alone atop the bluffs. It is impossible to feel safe here. My sanctuary is an incredibly lonely prison. There are deadly images, moments, sounds that I can’t keep out of my head: the screams of my mom, my stepdad’s dead body.

My brain goes moment to moment, separated by bright flashes between my blinking eyes. Authors write that you hear heartbeats the rest of your life. Playwrights also write that all you see is red. None of that is true; they are merely grand metaphors that signify guilt. The truth is that everything looks the same as before. Night has fallen just as it has every day of our lives. Darkness hasn’t stalked us either; we drove into it. We chose to.

Samantha finally sits down, but she remains restless. She looks at me, and I can see the fear in her eyes. I reply with my eyes, *everything will be alright*, but they lie. I cannot form the words to say this aloud, however.

“During the day the river appears like it can go on forever,” Samantha says. Guilt must not have penetrated her thoughts yet.

It’s so dark tonight that you can hardly even see the river below. It looks like a bottomless drop, but you know that at the end, you

will reach water. The river does seem to flow forever; like guilt, it never ceases.

I sit and I stare into water that is reflecting frantic red and blue lights. *It's only a matter of time until the cops find us*, I think. Samantha hasn't yet noticed them; she is preoccupied. *The sound must have gotten lost in the bluffs*. The silence is so harsh that my brain creates a ringing sensation that doesn't exist.

My eyes shut; it's an involuntary action by my brain that forces me into my past.

The bright light behind my eyelids transitions to a deep red. "So, Samantha, what is wrong with you that you are dating this piece of shit?" my stepdad asks. His whiskey-filled, repulsive breath fills the room. My mom laughs from the other side of the room, cigarette in hand, as if to say it was a valid question.

My mom used to be beautiful before my father died. Her smile could comfort me through anything. Now that smile has been ruined from the trenched lines on her face. In fact, you could say that once my father died, my mother never found love again. My stepdad was never beautiful, never capable of loving anyone.

There is a pounding in my head and I jolt up. The red fades as the darkness of the world comes back. *Oh shit, I can hear them!* Sirens are coming closer. My eyes search frantically for the sound while my brain begs them not to. I hear the pounding of a heartbeat in my head. Its thunderous sound beats me.

My eyes shut.

The white flash of light makes my brain feel like it is exploding. Then red flies at my closed eyes looking like a Rorschach test: a knife, my stepdad on top of a pool of blood, my mom charred and burnt all over, and Samantha crying in my arms.

There it is again! It's growing louder too. The stars' reflection off the river makes the black seem even emptier. The rocks and the grass on the bluffs are beginning to have frost on them, and the already brown leaves from the trees are falling at an alarming rate. Samantha is lying on the bench.

"My parents scratched their names into this bench," she says. "They used to talk of living their whole lives up here. They talked about how simple it is, how perfect, how beautiful: a life on the bluffs."

I haven't been here since they died." She etches our names into the bench while talking.

She must need beauty as much as I need love, but can they exist without each other?

"We were all up here when my mom told us she had cancer. It is interesting how one pained cell can spread that much. Do thoughts do that?" I don't know how to answer, so I don't. She leaves the bench and begins pacing. She doesn't normally act this way. "I love you, Kyle" is etched by Samantha next to our names.

My eyes shut.

Samantha's red dress flows gorgeously away from my parents' presence. "Kyle is a faithful man. He must get that from his first father," Samantha says. "You don't talk to me that way in my house," my stepdad says, throwing his bottle of liquor at Samantha who ducks away. My mother screams in fear just before the bottle hits her in the head and knocks her unconscious.

Samantha is falling asleep on the bench. The stars, glowing brighter and brighter, reflect off of the black river below. They remind me of Samantha's eyes, and of the fear they contain. But despite that fear, her eyes comfort me. They are truly beautiful; pure as the first snowfall, warm as a fire on a cold winter night, and comforting like my mother's smile used to be.

Right now I want to hide inside her eyes; they are the only thing that I feel can save me. She is my only safe haven. I look over to her and I can see her desperately working out a stain in her dress; her thumbs are rubbing intensely on the dress, and all the while she sleeps. Her stained mind refuses to be clean.

My eyes shut.

My mom's bloody face stains her dress. "You are nothing, you will amount to nothing, and someday you will die and be nothing," my stepdad says to me. "Love still exists within nothing," Samantha says. "He cannot be nothing because he has love, he cannot amount to nothing because love will prosper, and when he dies, his love will continue."

My stepdad pulls a knife out from the kitchen drawer and runs towards Samantha. "You disrespectful little bitch!" my stepdad says, stampeding his way into the living room. He jumps towards Samantha. I pull her away from him and shield our eyes. When we open them, he is dead. He must have slipped on his spilled

liquor. He landed on his knife, which dug right into his throat. Not even a second goes by before we see that my mom's lit cigarette has ignited her liquor-soaked shirt. Her screams are deafening, but I just watch. My stepdad is bleeding out, but I just watch.

I just watch.

Samantha has awakened. Her black jacket reflects the red and blue lights as the police get closer. She appears almost entranced and continually mutters about cleansing herself. "This river seems to go on forever," she says. She stands up and kisses me on the cheek; her eyes gleam like the canvas of stars behind her. She is looking deeply into my eyes. Finally, she smiles that beautiful smile I've come to know.

Then she turns to look out over the cliff. She says, "I've found the beauty, Kyle." The sun is beginning to peek over the trees on the other bank and onto the river, merging light and dark. A new day is coming. She is walking to get a closer view. I just watch. The wind is blowing her hair from halfway down her head, leading her towards the edge. Her white beanie separates her from the darkness as if she were an angel. "It's all here. The brilliant green grass, the autumn leaves, the river that travels forever. I used to think someone could see the whole world if they jumped high enough," she says. I finally realize what is happening. The cancerous guilt is spreading. So I stand and begin running. *I found it. I found love.*

"Don't you want to be clean again, Kyle? Don't you want to see the whole world with me?" I run with all of my might and say, "I love you, Samantha!"

She takes my hand.

My eyes shut. And I can feel the wind come up the bluff, caressing my chilled cheek.

My eyes open. And I stare into her eyes.

We jump. She's right. You can see the whole world from up here. It's beautiful.

I close my eyes and feel nothing.

Love still exists within nothing.

Isn't that comforting?

EMMA DEUHR



Game of Chance
plastic, wood, paint

BRENDA SCHILLING

Cold, Dreadful Haze

A clever invention
for bleating goats
that refuse to lament;
cogs in the wheel
busily making edges
out of air.

Original entrails
stink of decay
without apology—

Swaddle yourself!
Quick!
The haze is dreadfully cold.

Oh, Glory!
Glory!
Glory on high!
Your torchlight arouses only a Gadfly!

NATALIE KALMES



Homeless Spikes
oil on canvas



ANGELA PASKER

Photograph

“That is gorgeous!

But who is it by?”

“A dear friend of mine.”

She thinks I lie.

“Well I’d like to meet her!”

I tell her she can’t.

She becomes rude and bothered.

But heaven doesn’t have visiting hours.

MARIAH BERGAN

Mama

Mama is riding an adult tricycle through the aisles of Walmart like it's a wild pony. She's too big for it, so her knees poke out every which way, and though it doesn't go very fast, her carelessness with corners and horn honking makes surrounding customers flee in fear of having their toes run over, or worse. Her grandchildren—me, Kelsey, Kayla, and Mitch—laugh uncontrollably with her. This is pretty typical behavior, funny and carefree, and that is why I love her to death. My grandmother is now seventy-three and shows no signs of slowing down.

It is March 2012 and Mama is in the ICU. I walk frantically into a small, dark room. It feels like the walls are sucking me in closer to a lifeless person who is lying on a hospital bed. Annoying beeping noises from the electrocardiogram and humming from the other monitors fill the room. As I shuffle closer to the lifeless person, I see it is my grandmother, but it doesn't appear to be her in my mind. There are miles of IV's running all over her motionless body to keep her stable. Finally, I reach the bed and notice that a portion of her body is missing: the right leg is gone.

Phase 1: Denial. The first step of the grieving process. My whole family gathers in this cramped hospital room in denial that Mama lost her leg. *Will she ever get better? Will she be the same person?* No one knows at this point. The only thing my family and I know is that Mama is in such sheer, utter denial. She is so looped up on drugs that I barely recognize her. However, I recognize her when she asks, in a hushed tone, if anyone wants to go to the movie theater with her. In these types of situations, Mama always tries to make everything

better, but this moment will never be okay and nothing will be able to fix it. She doesn't know she can't leave her room for a few weeks, perhaps months, because the doctors fear the risk of infection. Most importantly, she refuses to remember the airlift to Wichita, Kansas, or even the amputation procedure. I hope Mama can recover and be able to walk again with a prosthetic leg. But mostly, I hope she will still love her family for making the decision to amputate.

Mama loves God and puts so much faith into Him; she prays every day and goes to church every Sunday. It is unusual for her not to make it to church. She absolutely loves church so much that she lectures me for not going as often as she would like me to. She never questions what God has planned for her and her family, and, when things do get rough, she goes to her preacher and prays for healing.

I sit in an uncomfortable blue chair, praying for healing in the waiting room of the ICU. However, as I pray I question God. *Why, God, why would you do this to Mama? She had faith in you and, in return, she gets punished by getting her leg amputated? Mama was a good woman her whole life—went to church every Sunday, volunteered at the hospice to help the sick, donated to charity—so she doesn't deserve this. How is it fair that she gets punished?* A loud snuffle from Papa brings me back to the room, but I do not want to be in this reality. I stare at Papa and see tears flooding his reddened eyes. He tries to hide by wiping his tears away with his red bandana. It is weird to see him this way because I have never seen him cry, and he is a “manly man” who tries to suppress his emotions. My sisters are trying to comfort him, but it is no use because nothing can fix this, not even God. I try to keep to myself, but I hear faint whispers from my parents and uncles. All I can make out is that Mama is angry at the world.

Phase 2: Anger. Anger can be directed towards any person—at God, a family member, or a complete stranger. Mama's preacher, Bruce, is here and wants to pray for healing with Mama. The only thing is that she doesn't want to believe in God's plan for her because she is furious at God for taking her leg away. Part of her freedom has been taken away. She can no longer sew, drive a car, or simply walk around. My mom and my uncles are also targeted by Mama because they made the decision of amputating her right leg. I fear that she will target her anger toward me next and will become a grandmother that I never knew. I wish she would get back to normal soon. I want to see her being the kind, calm, and collected person I once knew.

Mama's safe haven to de-stress and find calm is her sewing room. It is unorganized, with numerous colors of material scattered on the scrap table and her drawers stuffed with sewing notions. She thinks it is organized because she knows where everything is located. She sews passionately, like it's a professional sport, pressing the pedal

all the way to the floor and whizzing through an article of clothing. One of her favorite things to sew is quilts. Whenever a grandchild graduates from high school, she makes them a quilt. She has purple and green material stashed away for me in her endless supply cabinet. Someday, I hope, I will receive a beautiful patchwork from her because the patchwork would represent the bond that Mama and I share.

My family and I are back in the familiar ICU room where my grandmother is, and I wonder if she will ever sew again. However, I need to focus on the present, not the future. The room is dark, but somehow I see a puddle of tears in her reddened eyes. It is hard to see her suffer. I wish there was something I could do to help her. I wish it was my leg that got amputated. The only thing that I can think of doing to help her is to pretend that everything is still normal and to talk to her. Gradually, I walk to her bed and stare at the missing leg. I finally make it towards the front of the bed, hold her hand and say, "Hey, Mama, you look great today," even though it is not the truth. She tries to respond, but it is only a faint whisper that I cannot hear. My time is up and I bid her our usual goodbye: kiss on the left cheek, kiss on the right cheek, kiss on the left cheek again, and a warm hug. I wish this goodbye ritual would make everything better, and it won't, but it is nice to try to create some type of normalcy in this situation.

Phase 3: Bargaining. After suffering a great loss, many people feel they should have gotten a second opinion from another doctor or sought medical attention sooner. This is how my grandmother feels. She wishes she went to another doctor who could have spotted her clogged artery. She wishes she could have gone to a hospital right away when she felt the sharp pain in her leg. However, she did not seek these kinds of help. Therefore, my family and I will help her get through this hard time.

Whenever I am dealing with a hard day or need advice, I call Mama. She lives nearly 800 miles away, and we often talk over the phone. I call her every evening, but if I do not, I patiently wait for my cell phone to ring and wait for Mama to lecture me for not calling. Mama loves to keep in contact with her grandchildren by calling every single day, no matter how bad or how boring our day is.

Several months have passed since my grandma lost her leg. There really isn't anything good that is happening. I am back at school while my mom misses work in order to take care of Mama's grieving stage. I try to call Mama every day like I used to but she doesn't want to talk to anyone. There are questions that need to be answered and I call my mom to see if Mama is going to be okay, but she gives an answer I don't want to hear. I feel out of the loop and feel like my relationship with Mama is ending. I don't know this person

that she's become.

Phase 4: Depression. A person who is depressed often separates from their daily routine and separates from their family. From what I hear from my grandpa, Mama isn't going to church anymore. She's not reading or sewing. Most importantly, she's not being the grandmother that I once knew so well. She is sleeping a lot and eating less because she doesn't want to face her reality of the missing leg. From hearing snippets of how Mama is doing, I am both sad and glad that I am not there to help her. I do not want to see the strange grandmother she is becoming.

Finally, after two and a half years, Mama has made her first vacation after the procedure. I see a red truck coming down our gravel lane. It's my grandpa. I race outside to the cement slab and impatiently wait for their arrival. They finally make it to the driveway. Papa steps out of the truck, goes behind the flatbed, and gets Mama's wheelchair. He wheels it to the front passenger side where I see Mama blowing kisses at me. The door opens and I recognize the grandmother that I know best. Papa helps load her into her wheelchair and finally I get to hug and kiss her! There is an old twinkle in her eyes and a soft laughter that I haven't seen or heard in awhile.

Phase 5: Acceptance. The last step of the grieving process is when a person is able to make peace with a traumatic event, but it often takes time to reach the acceptance stage. Two and a half years after Mama's incident, I now see a twinkle in her eye that shows she accepts that her leg is gone. She often makes fun of herself about missing a leg and no longer thinks it's a burden. The twinkle in her eyes may not be the same, but I will take it and am glad that I have my grandmother back.

LAURA REISS



Big Dog
scratchboard

Surreal

Mist hanging in the air,
shots of color everywhere,
blurred by the white insubstance.
I stand here waiting, all alone,
for a ride to take me home.
And ghosts pass me by.
One by one they climb the hill.
Yellow, pulsing headlights fill
the air like a sign from above.

Bare trees around me creak and whine;
the cool, wet air I longed to find
swirls with the stoplight traffic.
Alone still, I don't know why
they haven't shown up yet today,
but I don't much mind.
Misty things pass by like phantoms,
shining their way through
to wherever they're off to.
Are they ghosts, fleeing on silent field?
Or is the ghost
really me?

NICK BECKER



Untitled
pine 4x4

Broken

{Holy Thursday}

All eyes turn to You
as silence fills the room,
silence brought on by tiredness
from full stomachs
and minds clouded by wine.
Your friends, who hang
on Your every word, watch Your face
and wait for Your next move. They have
eaten this meal with You so many times
before. They know what should come next.

But something feels different about tonight. The silence
is longer.
Heavier.

“I have so wanted to share this Passover
with you, my friends,” You say at last. Your eyes
shine with tears as You reach for the last piece of bread on the table
and as You look upon Your friends.
“For I will not share it again until God’s Kingdom is fulfilled.”

You raise the bread to Heaven to bless it,
then break it and begin passing it. “Take this bread and
eat it. This is my body; do this and remember me.”

Eyes begin to widen with confusion. This isn’t
how the meal usually ends.

You then take a cup of wine, raise and bless it.
“Take this wine and drink; it is my blood, spilled for
your salvation. Do this and remember me.”

“How can these be Him? He is standing right here
with us,” some begin to whisper.

But others receive the bread and wine with
hushed, reverent understanding
that to love is to be broken.

For only when something is broken
is it ready to be given.

{Good Friday}

The air is thick
with the smell of blood
and the buzzing of flies. Hysterical wails
mix with angry shouts of “you’re not our king!”
and “blasphemer!” and “save yourself!”
Curious passersby push through the crowds to
behold the spectacle.

But in this chaos and anger, she is calm,
silent,
standing dutifully by her Son
as she has all of His life.
Her eyes haven’t left Him since
He was nailed to the cross.
It hurts to look at Him,
but it hurts even more to look away,
at the hateful faces of the crowd.

Tears fall from her eyes as she remembers
the words spoken to her when He was
a baby: “And you yourself, a sword shall pierce.”

Her heart has broken for Him before,
but never like this.

Never into this many pieces.

EVAN HEER

Walking the Streets of Glasgow

I love this city. The people. The architecture. The culture. The history. The university. The old man with the walking stick and golden retriever who I see at what seems like every new bar I enter. I love all of it. Knowing what I did about Scotland, and assuming every city in Scotland resembled what I had seen in the film *Trainspotting*, it was difficult for me to imagine what it would be like to live in Glasgow. But, after having spent just under three months here, there are several things I have fallen in love with in this ever-friendly country, but there is one simple thing that I will always remember—walking the streets. When I arrived in Glasgow, I told myself that I should try to fully embrace the way of life that comes with living in a city. I knew that I needed to experience three forms of transportation that are necessary for city living: taking the subway, taking the bus, and walking. Although taking either the bus or the train is faster and easier, I wanted to push myself to walk as much as possible. This is the best advice I can give anyone looking to soak up the culture of a new city, and in a beautiful and culturally diverse city such as Glasgow, there is a lot to experience from just walking around.

Dogs. I feel obligated to first speak to the ridiculous number of dogs in Glasgow, and when I say ridiculous, I mean that in the absolute best possible way. Every day on my way to class, I am met by a new dog with an owner who is more than happy to wait as their dog sniffs every square inch of each human that crosses their path. If you ever visit Glasgow, I dare you to try walking through Kelvingrove Park without being sniffed by a dog. It's impossible. It's almost as if each dog is a TSA agent and you are walking through airport security, except these four-legged TSA agents are smiling, and so are you.

With such a large population of dogs, which I argue is higher than the human population in Glasgow, it only makes sense that dogs are welcome in bars and restaurants, right? Yes, you heard correctly. Dogs are allowed in many bars and restaurants throughout the city of Glasgow. The first time I saw this, I was sitting in BrewDog, a local bar. As I sat with two friends sipping the latest experimental BrewDog draft, I saw a middle-aged man waltz through the front door as a white and black spotted pug shuffled in behind him. The man sat in a chair at a table as the pug hopped into the booth across from him. I was first worried because I was waiting for the man to be told that his dog was not allowed in the bar, but then it became very clear to me that this was not this dog's first time in the bar. I realized that this dog was as much a regular as the chubby guy named Ralph sitting at the corner of the bar. But then, things got even better; a BrewDog crew member walked over to their table and held his right hand out. The dog high-fived him. I mean, come on. Then he reached out his left hand and placed a treat on the table in front of the pug as the dog quickly engulfed it in his mouth and chomped on it graciously. I spent the rest of my time at BrewDog that day just waiting for that pug to order a beer. I've seen dogs in several other bars as well, including the Islay Inn, the Park Bar, and Lebowsky's. I've even seen people dancing with dogs to bagpipe bands in pubs such as the Islay Inn. Let's just say that I would not be surprised to see legislation giving dogs the right to vote in the UK.

Weather. Ask any Glaswegian about the weather in Glasgow, and all they will do is laugh and tell you to look at your reflection in the puddle ahead of you. If there is one word to describe the weather in Glasgow, it would be "complicated." It is not uncommon to experience rain, sunshine, snow, and heavy wind all in the same day. With weather patterns changing every fifteen minutes, contrasts and color schemes are constantly rotating. This may sound completely miserable, but somehow, it isn't. It provides a surprise factor for each day and offers a subconscious influence for how to feel just as a film score influences us when watching a movie. As a student with a short amount of time here, I have quickly realized that the weather dictates each decision I make. It's calm and sunny? Better grab some friends and go throw a Frisbee in Kelvingrove Park. It's cold and rainy? Better head to Ashton Lane for a quick movie (or stay in and write that politics essay). Because there is so much rain, everything is so green. The rain cultures a curly, lively form of grass throughout the entire city, almost making Glasgow into one big golf course. One of my favorite places to walk is through Kelvingrove Park, just a five-minute walk from my flat. The paved walkways are normally damp from the sporadic rain cycle of that particular day; the grass is green and rubbery, and the leaves are turning in the core of autumn. The

complex climate of Glasgow fosters a tremendously vibrant, natural atmosphere that continues to reward those who take the time to use their feet for transportation.

Language. When I chose Glasgow as my study abroad destination, it was partially because I knew it was an English-speaking city. While this may be true, Glaswegians possess a language of their own that I am still struggling to fully understand. I have found that one of the best ways to learn the true Glaswegian language is to walk the streets and subtly eavesdrop on every possible conversation between locals like a true United States citizen. There are lots of simple slang words that I picked up rather quickly. For example:

“wee” = little

“chips” = French fries

“crisps” = potato chips

“half-ten” = 10:30

“rubbish” = garbage

“cheers” = thank you/you’re welcome... actually, cheers can be used for pretty much anything.

This slang is easy to figure out because it is familiar, but the real Glaswegian language is fast and difficult to decode. However, during my three months of eavesdropping and conversing with Scots in bars and lecture halls, I have come to understand authentic Glaswegian slang. For example, I overheard a guy outside of the tennis courts on Kelvin Way say, “Aw, muh leg’s a’ gawpin after dat match,” which means, “my leg is throbbing after that match.” Another time, I was walking behind a man and his girlfriend/wife, and I overheard him say, “Aye, guy’s a good mucker o’ me,” which means, “Yeah, he’s a good friend of mine.” By understanding this Glaswegian language, I am truly able to feel like another member of this great Glasgow culture.

These are just a few of the many things I have learned while walking the streets of Glasgow, and it is because of these things that I would urge you to always walk every time you can when in a new city. Listen to the way people are speaking to one another, pay attention to the weather, and pet the dogs if they’ll let you.

KASSIDY HANSON



Cheech
watercolor

Perhaps God Isn't a Man in the Sky

Perhaps God isn't a man in the sky.
Perhaps Allah is life,
impossible to understand,
yet we try.
Does YAHWEY exist, like beauty,
only when we can see?
Or is Brahman,
like science, always there whether or not
known to you
or me?

Perhaps God isn't a man in the sky!

Clanking swords and crumbled temples
defend our truth. Or so we believe.

we all seek a similar end through faiths
over which we fight.
maybe we are all looking for the same
Creator of beauty,
seeking the source
of the transcendent
guiding
Light.

KATIE MARTER



Spinning Stairs
photography

EMILY PAPE

Caught in Circles

The kitchen floor felt sticky and tactile beneath the soles of her feet, humidity clinging to the nape of her neck like a small child's sweaty palms. And the screen door leading to the backyard was wide open for no logical reason she could discern, ushering the heavy air and summer noise into the house. Cora watched the door stutter back and forth on its groaning hinges in a dispassionate breeze. The gaping doorway was a green light for all the outdoor entities one would rather not have in the house to enter, but she felt no inclination to shut the door. Cora merely stared at it. There was something oddly appealing about observing untidiness and choosing not to fix it, to merely let it exist as a nagging blemish, quietly, without the pretentious airs of details put right. And so she watched the metal door sway, waving at the grass that rustled in the yard, and at the fields and houses beyond the property line.

Cicadas perched on the trees in the backyard and screeched together in a nasal pitch, a choir of raw voices that echoed through the open doorway and into the kitchen where Cora stood silently. Sometimes the sound of droning insects clamored over all other thoughts and claimed Cora's attention forcefully, a crescendo of white noise, when the house was thrown open like this. Whether she found it unpleasant or soothing depended on whether glasses were half empty or half full that day. And then there were times like this, when she did not care one way or the other about much of anything, much less a few screaming insects.

The exception to her indifference was the black hornet that had invaded the house, grabbing the spotlight and leaving open doors and cicadas forgotten. She heard its droning flight, found its weaving

form, and backed away from it to the opposite side of the kitchen. The sound of a hornet's flight doesn't pick away at the back of the mind. Hornets don't require an army to immediately draw alarm. Rather, the sound of a solitary hornet instantly jumps to the foreground of our thoughts and demands fearful attention. The sound of that low, predatory purr seared over Cora's head as she ducked lower than necessary to avoid the unwelcome guest. Her soles squeaked against the sticky tile floor as she abruptly flinched from the disturbance.

"Jesus Christ, Cora. It's just a fucking bee." Noah was looking over his shoulder from the next room, smirking at her from the computer chair and pouring irritation into her thoughts. A greasy twist of lips with gray-streaked stubble, bulgy eyes painted blood-shot with bad habits and age. That was the face Cora's uncle always wore for her anymore. Smug and annoying, always poking fun at her while avoiding real conversation. Years ago when she was still small, Cora would have described Noah as disappointing, because he was constantly raising her hopes with that rare day at the zoo or the uncharacteristic suggestion for a movie and then dashing any faith she placed in him with cruel comments designed to fracture a child's self-esteem. She came to understand that he did this when he was feeling low and that she just happened to be there, but the hurtful words remained as bookmarks in her memory; she could visit them anytime and rehash Noah's dysfunctional lurch between hints of kindness and a healthy serving of scorn. And so the disappointment Cora felt towards her uncle faded to angry acceptance. She no longer had any optimistic hopes that her uncle would ever gain any sort of stability, but she knew that he would always circle back to take out his insecurities and failures on her.

Noah said it was just a bee, but Cora knew he had only looked back when he heard the menacing buzz. He too instantly noted the dark insect as it panicked around the kitchen, a blotted dash of ink against pale walls. And even now, his eyes followed the circling hornet around the room rather than settling on his niece. It shot high over the cabinets. Swung low and glided over the stove. Turned slightly towards Noah, who tensed, before looping away towards the sink.

Cora's face was unsmiling as she stared at her uncle and his twitching eyes. Her brows were smooth, lax and without the tell-tale signs of hurt. It was good to show no weakness to her uncle. It irritated him, she knew. "Sorry." But she spat the meaningless word bluntly, almost without inflection, betraying the simmering, lurking undertone of resentment.

Noah's gaze snapped back to Cora for a few seconds, drawn by the coldness of her voice. His smug expression shifted into what Cora

instantly recognized as the disappointment she had felt years ago. He wanted back the small child who looked at him with both hesitant fondness and watery humiliation, not this opaque wall that stared at him with empty orbs. His face pinched around the mouth, almost angry, Cora thought, the eyes tired. But it was a fleeting expression, one that dropped back into a mask of brittle pride.

His brows lifted and he let out a short, pointed breath. The chair creaked as he turned away from Cora, facing the computer screen once more, as he always did.

Cora studied the back of Noah's head. Her arms were limp at her sides as she repressed the urge to clench her fists, resisting the fleeting temptation to do something impulsive and instantly regrettable.

This was how it always was now. Both dissatisfied with the characteristics of the other and not saying anything about it. Never changing. It was understood that as soon as Cora turned eighteen, she would probably disappear as suddenly as her mother had dumped her at Noah's feet. The two of them would move on and go about their lives and occasionally think back to moments like these with a bitter taste in their mouths, Cora thought.

The ceiling fan ran in circles upstairs. The cicadas screamed and the hornet scratched away at her composure.

She turned away from the back of Noah's skull and walked towards the open door. The skin of her feet stuck and peeled off the sticky floor like Band-Aids as she crossed the kitchen and walked out into the open air, to escape the hornet and Noah and go barefoot into the territory of a hundred dozen more translucent wings and barbed threats. Cora hoped that Noah got stung, hopefully without provoking the hornet in the slightest. That would be far more satisfying than if he tried to kill it and was attacked as recompense, for some reason.

The sun blotted her eyes like white computer screens as soon as she crossed the threshold and stepped into grass that needed to be mowed. The cicadas drowned out the deeper-voiced hornet that had invaded Noah's house, and she felt her shoulders ease because the distraction of background noise was suddenly comforting. Cora moved towards the dappled shade of the single elm slumping like an old man in the thick heat. She rolled her weight onto the outer edges of her feet as she walked, like that could prevent her from getting stung on her soles. And she looked down and scanned for bees and their nastier, older cousins, sidestepping the ugly clover flowers.

Cora blamed the pear tree at the far end of the yard for the multitude of hostile insects. The fruit rotted as soon as it hit the ground, with a cloyingly sweet stench, and the hornets and wasps and everything with stingers seemed to regard the decaying failures as finely aged wine. They invited all their friends and even the coworkers they

didn't really like, so Cora was constantly watching the ground as she kept far from the rotting fruit beneath the pear tree. She should have worn sneakers, even if they were too small and pinched her toes. Flip-flops at the very least. But she never wore shoes during the summer, so it was a vicious cycle of stressing over easily avoided fear and wondering why hornets existed in the first place.

But there was a lawn chair resting under the poorly postured elm, in the patch of shade that was thickest at this time of day. That was the refuge where Cora liked to sit to avoid her uncle and his computer desk. She walked cautiously to the chair, a leaning collection of white planks. She paused, brushed the leaves from the seat. Then she kneeled on the seat and craned her head at every angle to make sure she hadn't missed some unwelcome surprise. Nothing. She sighed and twisted her body and sat on the cold wood smoothed by paint, feet pulled up from the ground with her chin rested on bony knees.

Cora had been looking down at the grass as she had walked to the chair, but now she was looking across the yard with her chin propped up. She was watching as the road in front of the house stretched on and away. The heat shimmered and meandered like lake waves above the burning surface of the pavement. It stretched the siding of the white, two-story house across the street. Cora tilted her head to the side and watched the black of the road leak up into the white, melting.

But the white of the house was uncomfortably bright in the sun, so she looked up only to find that there was nothing interesting to be found in the crumbling branches of the elm. So she looked next door, to the gray brick ranch house to the left. Dark windows. She looked right, to the house with peeling yellow paint. The windows were open, but still and quiet. Cora was not surprised that the neighbors were not at home. Normal adults worked on summer Tuesdays and the day after that and so on, rather than sitting in front their home computer day after day.

There was nothing in her surroundings to distract Cora from her own discontent. The whole thing made her not want to sit still and the lawn chair was no longer peaceful. So she stood, but she didn't want to go back into Noah's house.

So she walked across the yard, pointedly avoiding the clover flowers. Cora crossed in front of the gray ranch house and walked onto the uncomfortably bright road. The sun had cooked it so thoroughly that it flared hot against her bare feet, but only enough to flush her skin a lively shade of pink. She walked down the road, past the white house and away from Noah's house, loose gravel from the shoulder biting hard against her feet. She began to follow the weaving patterns of the sun-softened tar, balancing on the black curving

stripes with her arms extended like airplane wings to keep her upright. The tar molded satisfyingly beneath Cora's weight, black patch jobs that wove together and extended until she reached the curve of the road. She drifted away from the yellow lines in the center, realizing that she had been walking around in the middle of the road. Sweat had already begun to cling to the back of her shirt.

The road sloped up, too bright in the sun, and took her to a stretch with trees on either side. The world softened under the shade of branches. The hard surface cooled against Cora's flushed feet. As the shade from the trees washed against her, she felt like a glowing coal suddenly cast in water and sighed accordingly. There were no houses here, just the road and thickening trees on either side and their branches that reached for one another with mangled fingers. That's all there was for a while on this scarred road laced with tar stitches, just trees and pavement. Fewer distractions, just when she needed distractions from the feeling that sat tight in her throat and pulled at the back of her tongue. But Cora was determined not to acknowledge the troublesome feeling and the key, she knew, was to walk fast enough that exertion was distraction enough.

Splotches of sunlight dappled her body through the branches of the trees as Cora rushed down the road. She paid no mind to the protest of her soles against the rough pavement. She looked away from the ground, up at the gaps of sky that showed through above the world. The tops of the clouds puffed up, their bases smooth and cast in shadow, hiding from the sun. It seemed to Cora that they floated along an invisible barrier and she thought they resembled algae resting on the surface of some nameless lake. The trees swayed like pondweed in a current. And here she was at the muddy, murky bottom, staring up towards the surface she would never breach. Something heavy settled in her chest, looking up at the surface of the sky, and she jerked her head back down. She did not need thoughts like that. It was a good thing she had looked down when she did; she quickly avoided the roadkill squirrel smeared on the road, its eyes gone and its guts strewn out brightly by some other passerby. That, Cora reminded herself, was the penalty for not paying attention on a road with no shoulder, and so she set her gaze in front of her. Her breathing, which had at first struggled with the increased pace, now settled in a steady rhythm.

A strong gust roared in the distance, grew louder, and swept over the trees. The leaves rustled together. Cora thought it sounded like an applause under radio static. The wind brushed past her as well, snagging her hair as it did, but it died quickly and the trees quieted. She was left only with the sound of distant birds—one she had not noticed before, echoing from deeper parts of the woods—and her rhythmic footsteps, and she tilted her head back and breathed in—

A sharp pain shot through her left foot.

Cora gasped and lurched all her weight onto her right leg, recognition dawning as the pain pulsed and grew stronger. And sure enough, there it was. Along the arch of her left foot, a small pinprick swelled white while the skin around it colored in painful irritation.

On the pavement, a black hornet thrashed with broken limbs, consumed in its final death throes. Round and round in circles it went, struggling desperately, carried by its pointless momentum. Cora stared at it in silence, the corners of her mouth tugging down uneasily as she watched the hornet try to avoid the looming truth of the situation. The wind rushed back, more softly this time, and the leaves cackled far above her. And it occurred to her that she could walk as far as she wanted. She could walk the whole day, even with the pain in her left foot. But she would eventually have to circle back to Noah's house. Back to the house where her mother had left her. Back to the house she would leave in a couple years. Back to a place where she had once placed her hopes, only to have them stolen away by the cruel twist of greasy lips and the reality of bonds that could not be tied again.

RACHEL SPURLING



Unwanted

Death!

Sing with delight! Oh, broken bones!
Worms wroth with decay
extol your final crowning tones
to death, I finally lay.

Begone sorrow! Begone shame!
You whores of duty be
for sure as the game, for sure as thy name
shackles, finally free!

Oh, beautiful maiden of no one
defying steady pokes and prods.
It is me, I, who finally won!
Below ground where others trod.

You rejoiced for my beginning, now rejoice for my end.
Life grips the hand of Death.
Only fools think they can apprehend
eternal, ceaseless breath.

Contributors

NICK BECKER is a graphic design student at Clarke University.

MARIAH BERGAN received her Bachelor of Arts in English from Clarke University in 2016. She was a member of the *Tenth Muse* staff last year, and this year is excited to have her work published in the magazine.

MEG BRADLEY studies elementary/special education at Clarke University. Prior to coming to Clarke, she studied playwriting at Cornell College, taught outdoor/adventure education in Texas, worked at a Girl Scout camp in Virginia, and worked with preschoolers at the Dubuque YMCA, which she continues to do today. She is thankful for the people who have reminded her that she has been a writer throughout it all.

MADISON BURNS is currently a second year student at Colorado State University studying wildlife conservation. Her interests include writing, reading, photography, running, and art. Maddi loves animals and traveling, and she hopes to travel to all seven continents and see everything under the sun. Her life goals include working with wildlife conservation and restoration in Africa and becoming a published author one day.

ERIN DALY is from Rockford, Illinois, and earned her Bachelor of Arts in religious studies from Clarke University in 2013. After graduating, she spent two years doing youth ministry in West Virginia before landing in Cincinnati, where she currently works in youth retreat ministry. Erin is passionate about Catholicism, music, and writing, and is only slightly less passionate about ice cream, breakfast food, and craft beer. She aspires to be known as the patron saint of introverts and Twitter.

PATRICK DEENEY has been working hard protecting the environment! In whatever free time he has, he can usually be found out with friends, gaming, overthinking life and all of its struggles, or trying to get back into the habit of writing.

EMMA DUEHR is a senior studio art major, emphasizing in sculpture at Clarke University. She was born and raised in Dubuque, Iowa and stayed in her hometown for Clarke's art program; she is thankful that she did. Her experience at Clarke has been inspirational, thanks

to the faculty members within the art and design program. Post-graduation, Emma is headed west, to the Oregon coast, to pursue graduate studies in sculpture.

ELAINE ERICKSON is a 2012 graduate of Clarke University, where she majored in English and elementary education with a minor in music. She currently lives and teaches in Dubuque while working toward completing her master's degree in special education (so she can, at long last, be finished with school). Elaine fills her time with teaching, lesson planning, reading, writing, baking, and rewatching the two greatest shows in TV history: *Lost* and *Friends*.

BRIDGET FAUSNAUGHT is a history major at Clarke University, but writing has always been a passion of hers. She writes poetry more often than short stories and fiction because it's a healthy way for her to express her emotions, and it challenges her creativity. Fantasy and historical fiction are her favorite genres, so when she does write short stories, they often fall into those categories.

HANNAH GOLDSMITH graduated from Clarke University with a Bachelor of Fine Arts in studio art. Working in both sculpture and painting, she has exhibited work nationally, including at galleries in New Hampshire, Oregon, and Georgia. She has also received recognition through various fine arts awards and scholarships. Hannah lives and works in Dubuque, Iowa.

ABBY FUNKE is a senior elementary education major at Clarke University who loves opening young minds to the wonders of the world and encouraging them to pursue their passions. She served on the *Tenth Muse* staff for two years, first as the Social Media Guru and then as the Editor-in-Chief, and now she continues to write poetry and short stories in her free time. When she's not reading, writing, or teaching, you can find her binge watching *Grey's Anatomy*, exploring the outdoors, or spending time with family.

KELSEY HAMMONS is majoring in studio art at Clarke University with aspirations to become an art therapist. She enjoys art, thus the reason she has chosen to pursue a life in it. Her favorite part of art is the expressive qualities one finds within it. Her hope is that by being an art therapist, she can share the comfort that creative expression brings to her with others.

KASSIDY HANSON is a Clarke University alumna who graduated in 2016 with a Bachelor of Arts degree in studio art with an emphasis in painting and a minor in art history. She does a lot of work fo-

cused on companion animal issues and is currently working with the Dubuque Regional Humane Society to eventually paint murals in the shelter. Kassidy also enjoys playing music, getting tattooed, making lists, and drinking wine. Find more of her artwork at www.kassidyhanson.com.

EVAN HEER is a senior biology major and writing minor at Clarke University. His interests include playing guitar, fishing, brewing and drinking delicious beer, traveling, and seeing live music. He recently returned from a semester abroad at the University of Glasgow in Scotland where he gained a new perspective on life and found plenty of inspiration to write about his experiences. Evan hopes to one day move to the Pacific Northwest and continue on his path to become a physician assistant.

EVAN HEIL is a senior musical theatre major at Clarke University with a minor in history. He has always had a love for great writing and has wondered if he could express his creative side through writing. Evan has lived in Dubuque, Iowa his entire life and has performed in plays and musicals since he was five years old, with his first one being *Cinderella*. Besides theatre and history, he also has a creative outlet in music composition. Someday, if his creative juices flow enough, Evan would like to write music to the story published in this magazine, "Life on the Bluffs," and make a short musical.

SAMANTHA HILBY graduated from Clarke University with degrees in studio art and art education. When she is not in the studio creating sculpture, she loves to be outside, enjoying nature. This appreciation for nature has influenced much of her artwork. In the future, Samantha is excited to share her passion for both art and nature with her students.

HENRY HU is Hong Kong bred, Sydney based. Most of Henry's artworks are personal and intentional, with a focus on storytelling. A big fan of presenting artworks as a complete series, Henry usually creates individual collections, consisting of multiple pieces, often in the same style, and grouped by specific themes, concepts or stories. By utilizing digital tools, a variety of styles can be seen across collections matching their subject matters. Many of Henry's works explore subjects that interest him personally, and others touch upon life itself. Films and music play a major role in progressing and influencing Henry's works.

NATALIE KALMES is a student at Clarke University double majoring in business and art, with an dual emphasis in sculpture and painting.

EMILY LEMIRE is a junior at Senior High School in Dubuque, Iowa. She wants to be an author in the future, and she sees this publication in the *Tenth Muse* as a good opportunity to start out.

DE'SHAUN MADKINS is a third-year student at the University of Dubuque. In the past two years, he has developed a deep interest in poetry, and he hasn't looked back since. De'Shaun enjoys writing about world issues, but he also likes to add a personal spin into his work at times. He plans to attend law school to become an international attorney. He would also like to continue to study political sociology and maybe one day publish his own book of poems.

RICKY MARIÑEZ feels like the best way to describe himself is through art itself: art seems to be always in progress, sometimes understood, sometimes admired, sometimes judged, but it always finds a way to create elation to those who can identify with it.

KATIE MARTER is a junior at Clarke University studying art and computer information systems. She looks to combine these creative and technical fields in her future career.

NATASCHA MYERS is a senior music major at Clarke University. As a singer/songwriter, she is often seen with a pen in her hair, ready to scribble whatever lyric randomly pops into her head. Natascha plays guitar, piano, and a smattering of banjo, but is especially talented when it comes to air drumming on her steering wheel and dancing terribly around her kitchen. She has a thing for the stars, reading whatever she can get her hands on, and running. She recently released her debut EP, *Do Not Go Gentle*, which is available on iTunes and www.nataschamyers.com, and is planning a summer move to Nashville.

LUKE NORTH is a senior English major and history minor at Clarke University. He is also a member of the Clarke University Cross Country and Track teams, the Scholars Program, and Campus Ministry. In his spare time, Luke enjoys running, reading, writing, film analysis, and spending time with family and friends. After graduating from Clarke, Luke plans to attend law school to become an attorney.

EMILY PAPE grew up in Dubuque, Iowa, and is currently majoring in English at Clarke University, with minors in writing and art. This year, she serves as Co-Editor-in-Chief of the *Tenth Muse*. Emily has always enjoyed reading fiction and tends to devour books whole when time allows.

ANGELA PASKER, from Cedar Rapids, Iowa, is an elementary education major at Clarke University. She is a senior this year and can't believe how fast the time has gone. She loved getting to help out with the *Tenth Muse* during the fall semester. In her spare time she loves traveling, drinking tons of coffee and tea, reading, and singing loudly.

LAURA REISS is a sophomore studio art major with an emphasis in drawing and a minor in graphic design at Clarke University. Laura loves writing, watching movies, and dogs in general.

CHARLOTTE RODEWALD is a freshman at Clarke University, majoring in graphic design. This is her first submission to the *Tenth Muse*, her first submission to anything really. She loves to read, draw, swim, write poetry, and spend time with her family and friends.

BRENDA SCHILLING is a psychology student in the TimeSaver program at Clarke University, but she was able to take day classes to major in philosophy as well. Though looking forward to graduation at the end of the year, it will be bittersweet as she will miss the students, faculty, and the overall experience of education. She plans to apply to graduate school next year with the hopes of teaching philosophy some day. The year off of school will allow a bit of normalcy, and spontaneity, which she enjoys immensely. She looks forward to spending more time with her husband, Ray; their wiener dog, Friedrich; their rat, Booke; and her family and friends. She also looks forward to reading and painting. Brenda is new to poetry, but had the opportunity to write it for an English course and found the process quite cathartic.

RACHEL SPURLING is a studio art major with an emphasis in sculpture. She will be graduating from Clarke University with a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in the spring of 2018. Rachel was born and raised in Dubuque, Iowa and has been involved in many local arts programs. A majority of her work focuses on social and political topics in an animated and satirical way. Her goal is to keep pushing controversial concepts through her sculptural creations as a way of allowing her voice to be heard.

JENNA WEBER is currently a first-year student at Clarke University double majoring in English and secondary education. She loves to write, read, and paint in her spare time. She has always been a fan of English, literature, and the arts.

Artists' Statements

NICK BECKER

Untitled, page 65

My work embodies chaos and order. Chaos is nature. Within this chaos, humans try to create an artificial and temporary order, but in the end nature will always prevail.

Chaos and order have a unique relationship. Each cannot exist without the other. They are complete opposites, but together they create perfect harmony. Mother Nature antedates humanity and, throughout her existence, has resided in a state of chaos. Order manifests in every function of her chaos, including the direction of the wind and the growth of roots. No season begins promptly on its designated calendar day, but autumn, winter, spring, and summer never fail to arrive. The order that does exist within nature is not constrained, in comparison to that of the order created by the human species.

Humans are creatures of habit and order. This is the reason for the standard forty-hour work week, the weekly paycheck, and monthly bills. It's no surprise, then, that the human race has reached a place where it is difficult to exist in harmony with nature. Mother Nature has been negatively impacted by the mass consumption of non-renewable resources and the clearing of forests or land for industrial parks, factory farms, and subdivisions. The effect is massive, and lasting.

Despite our impact, nature will prevail. When nature is tampered with, she pushes back harder with torrential rains, earthquakes, landslides, hurricanes, tornadoes, and other destructive forces. Human construction cannot withstand such forces of nature. The chaos Mother Nature creates will only increase until she can return back to her natural order of chaos.

EMMA DUEHR

Unearthed, page 12

Unearthed is my first venture into my senior capstone exhibition series, which is responding to the unsettling relationship between nature and the human species. My research regards the upbringing of the Sixth Mass Extinction and the role that human behaviors have on the causes. *Unearthed* illustrates our destructive transportation habits; as the human walks upon the land, s(he) rips up the land below and leaves a trail of the impact.

Human, page 38

Through this work, I am illustrating the war between man and nature, and how humans will be defeated as inferior. The human is created from raw clay to symbolize how the human species will be broken by the natural elements within life. Through time, the clay begins to crack and break off the armature. The sculpture belongs outdoors as a performance artwork done by nature; the nature's behavior illustrates what will happen to the human species over decades. For example, rain makes the clay become weak and return to liquid, warm days crack the clay further, wind topples it.

Game of Chance, page 54

Game of Chance is responding to the addictive behaviors that are present within all humans. The faces upon the set of die are different expressions of apes in agony, with one face of happiness. This explains the deep nature within us all to repeat behaviors that we acknowledge aren't good for us and continue to do them anyway. The face of happiness represents that there is always an upside.

RACHEL SPURLING

DonTRUMPet, page 18

DonTRUMPet is a political nightmare come to life. With political campaigns constantly circling the media, and America's boisterous reactions taking over social media, I couldn't resist exploiting the most controversial candidate of them all, Donald Trump. *DonTRUMPet* is loosely based off of Cohen's fourth monster thesis, *The Monster Dwells at the Gates of Difference*, in which it gives an example of a master and slave relationship. I want to represent that relationship by giving America the power to control what Trump says. In my opinion, Trump is continuously making a joke of himself, so I decided to embrace that idea by making him into a ventriloquist dummy. I want viewers to laugh when they see Donald Trump as a dummy, to convey that we shouldn't take him seriously as our President. The accessories he is wearing contribute to this notion. They are associated with many of the features of his campaign. Overall, my goal with this satirical creation is to start a conversation among the viewers, whether they agree with Trump or disagree.

Unwanted, page 80

My sculpture, *Unwanted*, is a representation of the mass production of poultry within the food industry, more specifically, the extermination of freshly-hatched male chicks. The process of execution is called chick culling. It is a method that is used within the United States food industry and other major corporations around the world.

This involves several unethical methods of termination including: suffocation, cervical dislocation, gassing, electrocution, and maceration through a grinder. Obviously, these procedures are cruel and inhumane, but also quick and cost effective, which is more beneficial to America's needs. Meanwhile, the female chicks are kept and grown to produce eggs and provide meat. Through scientific engineering, the chicken matures faster and grows plumper, damaging its health and limiting its mobility.

One of the reasons we eat animals such as cows, pigs, and poultry is because we consider them unintelligent creatures. However, I believe it is completely possible that these animals have a capacity to learn, similar to an infant child seeing and discovering the world for the first time. I chose to transform the baby chick into a hybrid of my own design. Since the baby's face is incredibly expressive when portraying an emotion, this provokes the viewer to feel sympathy for the chick and possibly even want to embrace it. The cast-iron skillet adds a level of fear and intimidation for both the viewer, who feels the need to save the chicks, and the chicks that sit within the pan. The eggshells surrounding the skillet resemble the millions of chicks that have fallen victim to the torture and cruelty within our twisted food industry.

