

FIRETHORNE

The Gustavus Journal of Literary and Graphic Arts

FALL 2013

GUSTAVUS ADOLPHUS COLLEGE

FIRETHORNE SUBMISSION POLICY

Firethorne is Gustavus Adolphus College's student-run literary magazine comprised solely of student work. *Firethorne* is published twice a year, with a supplemental issue in the fall and a full-length publication in the spring.

Students may submit their work by emailing firethorne@gustavus.edu with "*Firethorne* Submission" in the subject line and the student's name, year, and major included in the body of the email. Emails must attach prose and poetry in Microsoft Word format in a standard font without color (Times New Roman, 12 pt.). Attachment file names should reflect the titles of the work you are submitting, and the student's name should not be included anywhere in the document itself. Artwork and photography must be sent as a JPEG file with reasonable file compression (300-600 dpi), again with the file name reflecting the title of the piece. Multiple submissions should be sent as separate attachments. Drawings/paintings/etc. that are being submitted may either be scanned and then emailed, or can be a high quality physical copy. *Firethorne* encourages collaboration between artists and photographers; pictures of sculpture and other multimedia works will be credited to both their creators and photographers. Physical copies of paper artwork can be submitted through the Gustavus Adolphus post office and sent to Professor Baker Lawley. *Firethorne* will not publish anonymous work or materials submitted from a non-Gustavus email address.

The Managing Editor will systematically code all submitted work and turn over the submitted work, without attribution, for the editors' scrutiny. *Firethorne* staff will admit submissions for creativity, originality, and artistic value.

For prose, submissions should be 2500 words or less. Artwork and photography can be color and up to any size, however please take note that color may be cost prohibitive depending on available funds. In this event, *Firethorne* staff will convert artwork to grayscale with the submitter's consent.

Submissions marked for publication will appear in their original submitted form except for technical aspects such as font, size, page placement and corrections of obvious grammatical errors. Stylistic changes (i.e. word substitutions, changes in length of the work, word omissions, etc.) recommended by the editors will be made only with the submitter's consent. If recommended changes are not approved by the submitter, they will not be made; however the publication of the work will then be determined by the *Firethorne* staff as it reflects our artistic mission for the publication as a whole. It is against *Firethorne* policy to publish works that do not reflect the submitter's artistic integrity.

Firethorne will publish up to two works from an individual student in each issue. This policy is applicable to both *Firethorne* editors and the general student body. Staff members' works will undergo the editing process like all other submissions.

The views and/or opinions expressed in the publication are not to be taken as those of *Firethorne* staff or its associated bodies. Materials deemed to place the publication at risk for liability with regard to obscenity or profanity in connection with hate speech, slander or other illegal forms of speech will be removed at the staff's discretion. Work found to be fraudulent in nature or plagiarized will be disqualified upon confirmation.

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and to you, our cherished readers, for your interest in and passion for the written word and artistic expression.

Thank you,
The Firethorne Editors

LETTER FROM THE EDITORS

Dear Readers,

We're excited to present to you the Fall 2013 edition of *Firethorne*. We sincerely hope you enjoy flipping through the pages and soaking up the artistic endeavors of fellow Gustavus students.

But you're not the only ones who enjoy this publication. As editors, one of our favorite duties is reviewing all of the submissions we receive each semester. We are always blown away at the talent this campus houses. It makes selection very difficult, but it's a wonderful problem to have.

This semester we received close to 160 submissions from a wide variety of majors—everything from Computer Science to Scandinavian Studies. And we happily reviewed a diverse array of works, from villanelles and vignettes, drama and memoir, tea pots and makeup design. The creativity of Gusties is truly inspiring.

We thank you for these last few years with *Firethorne*. It's been an honor to present the work of Gustavus students to the public. Even though leaving Gustavus and *Firethorne* is bittersweet, we could not be more excited about the future of this publication. We know we leave it in good hands.

Happy Readings,

Kristina Ericksen & Abby Huff

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Cover art: "Serenity" by James Hiner, Senior Management Major

Back cover: Excerpt from "A Wheelbarrow of Remembrance" by Erika Clifton, Junior English Major

DAYS OF AUTUMN

When morning air is likened to a dream,
And the ground is patterned with green and brown,
And leaves change from vibrant curtains
To canvases of bleach-spattered paint.

When it's just hot enough to keep you warm,
And just cool enough so the heat is weightless,
And the birds seem as imaginary as paper cutouts
Effortless like swiftly moving clouds.

When the hand of darkness comes softly, creeping,
And the waters are still in breathless suspense,
And the stars shine coyly betwixt bare wooden fingers
That reach toward that comet's sashaying dance.

When your eyes are clear with the morning bite,
And your hands feel warmer when they're linked with mine,
And nothing is sweeter than your voice against
The tossing of hills as they find their sleep.

Then I know though these moments are dear, they're fleeting,
And soon wishes are gone from the fallen leaves,
And the birds are gone and the rest are sleeping,
And the preparations are complete.



FLIGHT

AIMEE CICHON
JUNIOR PSYCHOLOGICAL SCIENCE MAJOR



CHANGE

MIND GAMES

“Rules are made for people who aren’t willing to make up their own.” — Chuck Yeager

TONY *is in a coma. UUNI is a figment of his imagination—not a real physical character, but just another entity of his mind. UUNI’s words are not spoken out loud, but only in the mind of TONY. The audience is also a figment of TONY’s imagination. The setting could be anywhere, but it has a feeling of emptiness—like purgatory. Not a dark loneliness, but not a completely relaxing one either.*

TONY *is lying on the ground, sleeping in the fetal position. He wakes and slowly sits up.*

TONY: Are you still there? (*Looks to the corner of the room. There’s nothing physically there, but...*) Why are you sitting in the corner by yourself? I thought your friends were coming today.

UUNI: (*Points to audience.*) I brought them.

TONY: (*Turns to look at audience. Gasps.*) That’s a lot more than last time, Uuni. I’m really not that entertaining.

UUNI: I think you are.

TONY: You really do flatter me. But honestly, how can anything I say truly be worth their time?

UUNI: You have great ideas.

TONY: If you say so. Alright. I suppose I can give it a shot. But only because everyone’s already here.

UUNI: Thank you.

TONY: (*Addressing the audience.*) Well, apparently Uuni thinks you could benefit from listening to me talk for a while. I still don’t fully

understand her thought process. But I trust her judgment. But just stop me if I start to ... Well ... not make sense, I guess.

UUNI: ~~Get on with it already.~~

TONY: (*To UUNI.*) I’ll go at my own pace. It’s not like I don’t have all the time in the world anyway.

UUNI: ~~You don’t know how much time you have.~~

TONY: I do.

UUNI: ~~How much then?~~

TONY: I’m not going to tell you.

UUNI: ~~Then get on with it.~~

TONY: Fine. (*To audience.*) Sorry about that. We get on each other’s nerves sometimes. It happens when you spend every waking moment with someone. It practically drives you insane. (*Beat.*) Anyway. Uuni seems to think that I have this weird talent of being insightful or something, but really, it’s nothing like that.

UUNI: Stop being so modest.

TONY: (*To UUNI.*) I’m NOT being modest. It’s really not a big deal. (*To audience.*) Seriously. I just have a lot of free time to myself ... (*Glances at UUNI in corner.*) well ... mostly to myself ... to think about things. But you can really only think about something for so long before you’ve exhausted everything there is to think about that particular thing. And then you have to come up with something entirely new to think about, and that gets quite difficult. So, I came up with ... Games. I mean, I know that sounds stupid because games are normally played with more than one person or you at least need something tangible to use to play it, but that’s the closest word I can think of to describe it. (*To UUNI*) Unless you can think of something better.

UUNI: (*Shrugs*)

TONY: Didn’t think so ... (*To audience. Stands up.*) Okay. So the first

one is pretty easy. I just think of a word and then say it. Over and over again. I break up the syllables. I say it slowly. Then fast. Then with an accent. Then with a different accent until it doesn't even sound like a word anymore—just a sound.

~~UUNI: Doesn't that have a name?~~

TONY: I think it's called ... semantic ... satiation. That's it. Semantic satiation. It's fascinating! I especially like using it with color words. Purple. Pur. Pull. Purrrrrrpuuuullll. Purplepurplepurplepurplepurplepurple purplepurplepurplepurple (*Etc. This goes on for a while.*) After a while it just feels like I'm just talking gibberish. Then what's even more fun is speaking backwards. I'm starting to get really good at it. (*To UUNI*) Give me a sentence!

~~UUNI: The dog and cat played happily together.~~

TONY: Rehtegot ylppah deyalp tac dna god eht. (*To audience*) Pretty cool, huh? What's great is you really don't need anyone else to help you with these games. You can be perfectly content playing them on your own. (*Frowns.*) You're probably getting bored of me. I warned you I'm not that entertaining. It's hard to maintain a sense of humor when you spend so much time alone.

~~UUNI: You're not alone. You have me.~~

TONY: (*To UUNI*) You're right, I suppose I do have you. (*Laughs.*) Alright ... let's see ... what else can I teach you? ... Well. One time I tried to count to a million, but that got boring really quickly, so then I thought doubling numbers would be more fun. You know, like 1, 2, 4, 8, 16, 32, 64, 128, 256, 512, and on and on and on? Well once I got to 16,384 I realized that I'm terrible at math and gave up. I've also tried counting backwards and by threes and listing perfect squares, but that just gets boring after a while. Oooh! But a fun one is to think up a story in exactly seven words. No more and no less!

~~UUNI: Examples!~~

TONY: (*Holding up fingers and counting down.*) Can't tell if it's day or night.

~~UUNI: Hmmm. Contractions.~~

TONY: Contractions don't count! But I'll think up another one ... that one was kind of boring.

~~UUNI: I liked it.~~

TONY: You only liked it because of our conversation a while ago. Ooh! Perfect, "Remember when we talked about my life?"

~~UUNI: Clever.~~

TONY: Well I like it anyway. Which one should I teach next?

~~UUNI: Tell them about your favorite one!~~

TONY: Shhhhh! Uuni! You know I don't like talking about that one. It's sad.

~~UUNI: But it's the BEST ONE!~~

TONY: I really don't know if I can. It gets harder every time I play it. (*Slumps to the floor.*)

~~UUNI: Just try! You can do it!~~

TONY: I really don't know if it's a good idea.

~~UUNI: They'll understand. Promise.~~

TONY: (*Sighs. A beat.*) Okay. I'll try. (*Looks at audience.*) This one used to be my favorite. It's really difficult. I get so frustrated at times, and then I give up. And that makes me even more frustrated, so I've just stopped telling people about it, honestly. But I suppose it wouldn't hurt to try again. (*Looks at UUNI*) It better be worth it.

~~UUNI: It will be. I can feel it.~~

TONY: If you say so. (*To audience.*) Okay. I want you to think of a person you spoke with face-to-face recently. Now try to remember exactly what they were wearing. (*A beat.*) Okay. Now, try to remember the last thing you said to them. (*A beat.*) Difficult? Maybe ... maybe not. It probably depends on how long ago you talked to them.

Okay, now think even farther back—last week. Recall a conversation. What was the last thing that was said? Do you remember? Probably not. You probably don't. Because it's impossible. It's just not possible to remember details like that.

~~UUNI: Some people have photographic memories, Tony.~~

TONY: (*Turning sharply to UUNI.*) I don't believe that!! How is it humanly possible for someone to remember the end of a conversation that you had months ago? Why would you feel that necessary information to store in your brain? (*Getting physically upset.*) All it does is take up space that could be used for—I dunno, multiplication tables. Real people don't actually remember that stuff!

~~UUNI: Some people just have better memories, Tony, it's nothing to get mad at yourself over.~~

TONY: (*Yelling.*) I'm not mad at myself! I know I could remember if I really tried. I can hear and remember everything that was said to me *after* the accident, but everything before ... is just a blur. (*Puts face into hands and begins shaking.*)

~~UUNI: Maybe you should move on to the next game.~~

TONY: I don't want to move on to the next game. I want to remember the last thing I said to my mom. My dad. My brother, Jordan. All of them. Did I tell them I love them? Or was I storming out of the house, cursing at them? I don't know, and it kills me!

~~UUNI: I doubt even they remember. Whether it was good or not.~~

TONY: (*Standing up.*) You know that's not true! You know they remember exactly what I said because that's all they have left of me to hold on to. I can remember the last things they said to me. Each and every one of them. "Hey Tony, it's me, Jordan. Just stopping by to see how you're doing. Still hanging in there I see. I wish I could know if you can hear me." "Hey sweetie. It's Mommy. I love you so much. Please come back to us." "Hey shooter. It's your pops. Wake up soon. I need my fishing buddy back." And I scream and I shout their names and wave my arms and jump and whistle and pound...but nothing! They hear *nothing*. I'm dead. Don't you see? Just give up your hope

because it kills me again and again every time you come and ask me to wake because I can't. And then you leave in tears and all I can think is that I've disappointed you and I can't do it anymore, Mom. I can hear you, Jordan, but I can't tell you that. I want to wake up Daddy, but don't know how to.

~~UUNI: We'll keep trying, Tony.~~

TONY: SHUT UP!! I'm so sick of hearing myself! And it's just getting worse. Every day, more and more. Why do I feel the need to make up people in my head? None of you are real! *None of this* is real. I'm just pretending it is so that someone or something will hear me—respond to me. Because I'm here. This is where I exist. Me and only me. Tony (*points at UUNI*) and Tony (*points at audience members*) and Tony and Tony and Tony! It's just.... Me. (*Slowly begins to sit down again.*) And I can't escape myself. (*Long beat.*) I remember feeling fear when it happened. I was terrified because I was alone. But whatever happened couldn't have been as scary as what's happening now. Because I don't understand it. I don't know where I am. I don't know how I got here. All I know is that it's me. Only me.

(*He curls back into the fetal position. A long beat.*) ...Are you still there?

End.



TEAPOT SET

MAX MLINAR
SOPHOMORE STUDENT

FREE

Gentle breezes carry the pine scent.
Inhale deep; behold the essence of being.
Satisfying, intoxicating, for it is of us
And we of it.

Free of the gilded padlock, the beast roams
Embraces the open space and hunts for wisdom.
The Lord sinks his teeth into the earth,
Carving out open canyons of nothing
Yet there is no ruler, no dictator.

The soil we lust for rests in our gut.
Curious beasts roam our boundless minds
Peace and vengeance held in our hearts
Life flaring from our fingertips

The landscape our partner
Waltzing with our heartbeat
Melting into one being, one truth
Beauty around is also within



PEOPLE ON ICE

IAN ELLETON
JUNIOR COMPUTER SCIENCE MAJOR

MEMOIR

The welfare office is not too far from the bus stop.

Sometimes we have to walk a long ways to get to places from the bus stop. I have to squint when I look up at my mom. She pulls me through the crowds and the heat. Inside the office, the air is colder, and there are rows of seats, not unlike the bus. Half the seats are full of people scribbling away at the forms in their laps. On one side of the office is a playground with a yellow slide and scattered toys.

“Mom?”

“Go play. Mommy’s busy.”

I run over to the play set, climb up the ladder, and stare off the slide. There are a few noisy kids around me, but I don’t want to play with them, I want to watch my mom. She’s wildly waving her arms at the lady behind the counter. I slide down the slide. I play by myself for a little while before my mom comes over and pulls me up by the forearm, “Come on, we’re leaving,” she barks.

We leave the cool office and go back in the direction of the bus.

“I’m hungry!”

“Hi hungry, I’m Shannon.”

“Moooooooom, I’m really hungry. I didn’t have any breakfast.”

“Sounds like a personal problem.”

“Come on! Please Mom?”

“Okay, fine.” We continue walking. I hold her hand when we cross the busy streets. My mom has a habit of jaywalking. I think she likes to get honked at.

“Mom! Arby’s, Arby’s! Let’s go!” She sighs and opens the door. I run in and find a booth. My legs stick to the vinyl seat like Velcro.

My mom asks, “What do you want?”

“A big roast beef!”

I watch my mom go up to the counter and I look around the Arby’s. It’s a lot like being in the lunchroom at school. Except the brown tile floors are a little cleaner. I wait for a few minutes before my mom comes back. She hands me a meaty, paper-wrapped mass

and tells me to dig in. I tear off a whole mouthful and scarf it down. My mom sighs while she watches me eat.

“Mom, where’s your sandwich?”

“I didn’t get one.”

“Why not?”

“I’m not hungry.”

I dig back into the sandwich. I don’t understand how my mom can’t be hungry. She didn’t have breakfast this morning either. I asked my mom about it when I was older. She said there wasn’t enough money for us both to eat.

My mom was 19 when I was born. I don’t think she ever had time to grow up.

A call comes into my third grade homeroom. My mom is in the office; she’s here to pick me up. I zip out of the classroom, my shoes squeak and scuff the tile floor. Just moments after the phone call, I am in the Edinbrook Front Office, Mom waiting. “Surprise, jellybean!” She uses a chained pen to finish signing me out. The secretary shoots a glance at my mom. She signs me out a lot.

At the bus stop, I ask my mom where we are going. She hesitates.

“We’re going to get food, jellybean.”

“I just had lunch.”

“We’re going to CEAP. To get food for the house.”

“What’s CEAP mom?”

She hesitates once more. “It’s like a grocery store. They give us food.” We get on the bus and I find a seat for us in the back, where it’s four seats in a row instead of two. I sit by the window because I like to pull the yellow cord that tells the bus driver that we need to get off. There are advertisements plastered all over the walls.

“Have you found a job yet, Mom?”

“There’s nowhere good hiring.”

“What about McDonald’s? You could work there!”

“I’m not going to work at a fucking McDonald’s, Ian. I’m too good for that.”

“Okay Mom, jeez, I was just askin’.” My mom got fired a while

ago from Kelly’s 19th Hole. My mom said she was ‘overqualified.’

“You know I don’t like Spaghetti-O’s, Mom!” I yell.

“You are going to eat what I put in front of you!” she hollers from the kitchen.

“Can’t I just have something else?”

“You eat what’s on your plate or you don’t eat anything at all!”

I’m sent to bed without supper. There is no sneaking out. I am nine years old and my mom still locks me in my room.

My mom and I fight a lot. When she screams, I scream. When I cry, she calls me a pansy. When I call her a bitch, she slaps me. When I hit her back, I get the belt. She tells me I should be careful because she can leave whenever she wants to. She says, “I brought you into this world, so I can take you out.” Sometimes I threaten that I will move in with my dad. “Go ahead and try. He only sees you because the court makes him. You think your dad is so much better than I am, don’t you? I’m not good enough for you, am I, Ian? Maybe if your dad paid child support.”

One night, my mom threatens to kill herself while I am away at school. For weeks, I run home from the bus stop, and if she’s home I give her a big hug. When she’s not, I search the whole house, I look in every closet, I rip open the shower curtains.

I got to stay home today. I put in my *Linkin Park Live in Texas* DVD. I dance and sing along. I jump off the couch, play air guitar, spike my hair. My mom joins me.

“You don’t call people girls when you are mad at them, Ian!”

“He called me one first!”

“That’s why he’s in trouble too.”

My mom pulls out two dresses from the depths of hell and makes

Zack and me put them on. Then, she marches us outside where she has us stand back-to-back in the front yard, arms straight in front of us.

It's the middle of the summer. We're all sweating. The smell of cooked dog poop hangs in the stale air. We stand there for what feels like hours. Whenever either of our arms go down, "That's five more minutes!" A neighbor asks what she's doing. "They called each other girls so I'm making them look like girls."

My mom is on strike. This means: she's not cooking dinner; she's not doing the dishes; she's not taking out the garbage; she's not cleaning up our dog's shit; she's not listening to me bitch and moan. It's the last day of school and like everyone else I am looking forward to summer. I run home.

My mom is waiting at the top of the stairs.

"You're grounded mister."

"What did I do now?"

"Don't take that tone of voice with me. You didn't take out the garbage like I asked last night!"

"I'm sorry! I forgot! I'll do it right now."

"Damn right you'll do it right now. I don't know how many times I have to tell you how to do things."

"Well maybe if you weren't on strike I wouldn't have so many things to do, Mom!"

"Fuck you! I do everything around here. It's my turn for a break. I'm your mother and that means you listen to me. When I say jump, you jump."

Sometimes my mom will be gone for a few days without telling me.

Without telling anyone. I am always scared. I call her. I leave messages. I tell her I love her, I miss her. Sometimes I am afraid she won't come back.

Sometimes I hope she won't.

I am riding in the car with Evan, on my way to Mankato. I haven't

seen my mom since I was a freshman. It's been almost six months since I've spoken to her. I haven't returned any of her calls. I don't respond to the text messages that say: "Did u kno gma and i almost got in a car crash? We could have died, u kno." "This is ur mom Ian i rilly want to talk to u." "Its my birthday and i would rilly appreciate it if you would call ur mom im the only 1 u have!"

My phone rings; it's my roommate. He's at work right now, so I am prepared to answer a tech support need. He says that someone is here looking for me.

"Hi who is this?"

"The woman who gave birth to you, who do you think?"

1287 CARS

we counted 1287 cars that day
off the intersection of 11 and 46
that was our job
that summer
a tally for each car
though sometimes
we missed one

two men came
that morning
with a backhoe
and smoothed out an area
in the ditch

one of the men
in blaze orange
with bronzed, leathered skin
pulled out a long, silver pipe
that looked like a bugle.

he looked at us
and made horn like noises with his mouth
fingers moving wildly on the tube
a grin white against his dark skin

from his truck he pulled a diamond shaped sign
and fitted it on the smoothed ditch

the sign read:

Think.
Why die?

and I thought

then I thought why

and I didn't know.
maybe he did, though
the man with the dark skin
with his amazing grace

EVER AQUEOUS

I wish I could roll out
tonight's black sky into:
 deep oil reserves
 hedged in remote, hidden hills
 & unending highways
without regret or
consequence—
instead I see a darkening sky
above the land—

as oil fields pucker and expire:
 arid & unfeeling
 now their innards
 carpet the nighttime

I wonder:

where
the canary last trilled
when the wells first dried,
I wonder:

when
devalued prudence
 meant the world
 needed
 more time
to process sterility—

even if
I could name
a canary—
 or two—
would their caution
reach
 a listener?
lodge itself
 in the mind,
or melt away,
ever aqueous?

MOLLY BUTLER
SOPHOMORE STUDENT

SISTER

Sister, you are sick
The black spider
Who scrabbles the
White linoleum wall
Of the bathroom
Found your ear
And hiked an earring
Like a playground
His clicking voice
Dragged you away

ABBY HUFF
SENIOR ENGLISH MAJOR



SISTER & BROTHER

GARY MEYER
SOPHOMORE COMPUTER SCIENCE MAJOR

AN ELEGY TO BOB ROSS

Gather all your hardships on a palette
And wet the canvas with tears.
It's a bird now, it's a tree,
It's a happy little cloud.

LAURA HERBERS
SOPHOMORE THEATRE MAJOR



PRAIRIE COLORS

THE REDEEMER

Rain crashed upon the black urban landscape as I peeked over the lip of the concrete roof. I was standing atop a three-story apartment building, staring into a gaping crevasse of darkness and slick asphalt. A thunderhead rolled listlessly overhead as the roaring gale tore at the frayed edges of my singed black hood. The ripped fabric of my tattered shawl whipped and cracked behind me as I clung to the icy cement, tensing with anticipation. The alley remained empty.

I flashed a smile as I heard the first of the man's hurried footsteps echo from the canyon below. I let my hood fall over the crook of my nose. I didn't need to see him. I could feel him, like a fire in the darkness, like a vein of revulsion running through my core. His every heartbeat was a stabbing pain. I savored the agony as I waited on his approach, counting his footsteps like the seconds to my death.

He passed me by. I snapped into action.

Stepping casually from the edge of the tenement, I let myself plummet to the shattered pavement below. The rubber soles of my black boots made contact with a resounding *boom*. The man whipped around fast enough to send a small spray of rainwater fanning out in all directions. An arc of lightning breached the clouds. His pale skin glistened in the dancing light, blonde hair plastered to the rim of his wide head.

The man pulled a knife from the pocket of his soaked sweatshirt. It was a pocketknife, maybe two inches of blade with three inches of plastic handle. With a flick of my fingers, I tore it from the grasp of his hand and embedded it into his retina.

The man screamed, clawing at his injured eye as it wept a muddy red soup onto the flooding asphalt. He turned, gasping for breath, and made a break for it, sprinting for the end of the alley with an irregular, staggering gait. I reached out my hand and slowly clenched it into a fist. A whisper of cold air swept through the alley. With a satisfying crack, the bones in his left leg shattered. He bellowed in pain.

I followed him at a leisurely pace. Supporting his weight against the crumbling brick wall to his right, the man hobbled forward, gasping frantically as he struggled against his own failing body. I gestured again. Another echoing crack. His form crumpled to the slick ground.

Even as I approached him he struggled, shrieking in desperation as he clawed toward the alley's end, dragging himself inch by bloody inch across the watery pavement as curtains of rain slammed across his back and shoulders. I broke one arm, then the other. With a swish of my fingertips, I rolled him onto his back. His eyes were panicked, throbbing, terrified. They bolted in every direction as I stood over him, stretching my hand over his face. Every muscle in his feeble body struggled for freedom. I clenched my fingertips around his head.

The end was fast, but brutally enjoyable. Fluids poured from his flattened head as I stood up, throwing my gaze to the weeping heavens. Weight lifted from my burdened shoulders as I stood there, bathed in rain, painted with blood. In the maelstrom of violence I found peace.

One down. Two to go.

We were five blocks from our apartment. Thunder rolled through the empty streets; the black anvil of the approaching storm shrouded the horizon with anguish. A cold gale cascaded from the rooftops, whipping through her hair as we shuffled, hand-in-hand, through the darkness. I took my coat off and wrapped it around her shoulders. It was an autumn coat, more a fashion statement than a heating device. It went down past the knees and billowed incessantly in the wind. It had a flimsy cotton hood that was anything but waterproof. She pretended like she was the luckiest woman in the world as I gave it to her.

We took directions from a kindly old beggar on the corner of Hedgebrook and Faraday. His hair, ratty and gray, cascaded down to his chest, draping his shoulders in a thick rug of tangled fibers. He covered the crown of his head with a tattered flat-cap. His thickly stubbled chin contorted as he broke into a jolly, toothless smile. A cardboard sign was slung about his neck with a short length of wispy white string. In crude black letters, it declared: "THE END IS NIGH."

He pointed us down an alley that cut between an office building and an aging tenement. We stumbled through the black urban labyrinth, glued to one another's side. I wrapped my arm around her shoulders and held her so tightly my knuckles turned white. She smiled and rested her tired head against my shoulder, eyelids heavy with exhaustion. The sky howled with furious thunderbolts. It began to drizzle.

They were waiting for us. Three of them. We rounded a bend and saw them standing in the alley. Their heads turned. We caught their gaze. We ran. They overtook us.

They were big, all of them burly, accomplished muggers. They rifled zealously through our belongings, tearing fabric and leather alike as they searched our pockets, raided my wallet and ransacked her Spartan leather satchel. They quickly collected a paltry stack of green bills and aged cellular devices, which they split between themselves and stowed greedily in the hungry chasms of their empty pockets.

They weren't satisfied.

They started undressing her. I kicked and screamed. I took a blow to the back of my head that set the world a-ringing. A powerful arm fastened around my neck. Everything after that was a hellish blur. I caught glimpses of my wife as I phased intermittently into consciousness. Her eyes were reddened. Tears streamed down her muddied cheeks. Her soulless gaze spoke of nothing but corporeal agony. I saw no trace of the gentle, passionate woman I loved within the tortured form of that ravaged body.

She was absent, like an empty house, a sobbing lump of flesh and nerves devoid of mortal vitality. She was dead before her heart stopped beating.

The knife flashed as an arc of cobalt lightning burst through the roiling annals of the approaching thunderhead. Blade tasted flesh. My wife went silent. I flinched as the cold edge made contact with my pallid skin. The pain was excruciating, but brief. My bloodstained body collapsed to the dank pavement.

Veering listlessly from the corner of my bludgeoned eye, I caught my wife's vacant stare as we bled out into the alley. They'd deposited us side-by-side. They tossed her clothes on top of us; the world went dark as my coat fell over our heads. Reality began to fade. A whiff of gasoline drifted through the sodden fabric. A match was struck.

Things brightened. The world vanished into a maelstrom of searing light as I gradually slipped into oblivion.

I plummeted like a black meteor through the night, bending the car's tarnished hood as my boots made contact. Rain and wind pummeled my back as the city's lights whipped by at sixty miles an hour. The man behind the wheel panicked: big mistake. He slammed on the brakes and jerked the wheel. The deafening screech of wet tires filled the air as the car swerved out of its lane, bounced off the curb and cascaded onto the sidewalk.

An explosion of shattered glass and metal scrap riddled my body with shrapnel as the car collided with a street lamp. Inside, a puffy white airbag inflated, catching the driver's face as the impact threw him from his seat. I held my footing as the hood contorted under me and debris grazed my arms and legs, opening dozens of little black cuts from which no blood emerged. With a twist and a lurch, the vehicle came to a decisive stop. The street lamp flickered overhead as the weight of its head slowly bent its damaged carapace.

Inside, the airbag deflated. The driver was dark-skinned. His face was puffy, and blood poured from his broken nose. I still had no trouble recognizing him. I could feel his breathing in my chest. Even now, as he gasped for life, his every shiver was a silent agony.

I extended my palm towards him, then pulled it behind my head. With a scream, he erupted from the shattered remains of the vehicle's windshield, his seatbelt snapping like an elastic band. I considered him for a minute, watching, with a vein of pity, how he struggled against his fast-approaching death as I held him suspended.

Then I remembered what he looked like with his jeans around his ankles, my wife's bruised flesh under the palm of his hand. In a flash of white-hot rage I dismantled his body, pulling his head from his neck and tearing organ after organ through the hole. I left pieces of him hanging from the street lamp as its dim light flickered softly in the darkness.

The sky was howling. I gagged on the ashen fabric of my singed autumn coat as I awoke, sitting bolt upright amidst the downpour. I pulled the garment from my face. Water cascaded down my matted black hair, streaming down my flesh in glimmering rivulets before collecting in pools on the scorched pavement beneath me.

The rain had extinguished the flames before they could devour our

bodies, but the damage was considerable. I saw nothing recognizable in my wife's charred face as I crouched above her, gently pushing her eyelids closed with a careful flick of my index finger. Our clothes had been butchered in the inferno; what remained of my dark jeans and wrinkled cotton shirt clung to my frame like a mantle of black rags. I slipped back into my frayed autumn coat, pulling the ripped hood low over the contours of my face.

I didn't have long to say goodbye. Hunching low above her broken form, I laid one final kiss upon my wife's branded lips before lifting into the night, letting the wind clean the soot from my balmy, pale skin. I felt a tug in my chest as I tore through the sky, sensed the rhythmic throbbing of three little hearts fumbling through the storm.

Three little souls stumbling in the dark. I smiled. *The hunters have become the hunted.*

Blood poured from the back of her head. It ran down her shoulders in scarlet tributaries, staining her shirt with ugly red streaks of disgorged fluid. She was just a girl, really. Her slender neck contorted around the man's dark hand as he crushed her throat against the pocked cement wall of the alleyway. Her eyes were boggled, mouth agape in desperation as she kicked the man's chest pathetically, squirming in vain against the hand's iron grip.

I touched down behind him, crashing to the slick pavement with a resounding *bang* and a blast of chill air. The man had a split second to react. The girl's throat slipped from his fingertips. His face contorted. He spun around, legs tensed with anticipation. He raised his powerful arms, hands curled into white-knuckled fists. Rain poured down his neck and shoulders, plastering his shirt to his hulking, muscled torso.

I stopped my fist an inch from his sternum. The man howled. His body crackled like a fireworks show as his chest imploded. With a *snap*, his spine folded backwards. His broken body crumpled to the soggy asphalt like a bludgeoned tent. Splintered ribs protruded from the tortured cotton of his lacerated shirt. Blood seeped incessantly from the punctures.

The girl collapsed, her shoulders jerking madly as her diaphragm tried, in vain, to pump air through her shattered windpipe. She was dying; her hands clawed her pulverized throat, glazed eyes raking the heavens in desperation as her awareness slowly faded. Hazy and sluggish, her gaze fell upon me. Rain draped her beaten face. She was

trembling badly.

I flexed my hand. The girl's airways were closed; her injuries were grievous, but she could still be saved. I pointed at her trampled neck. Power coursed through my outstretched fingers. My brows furrowed with concentration. My arm tensed. I hesitated.

Our eyes met. Her face had gone blank. The soft curves of her youthful visage went slack. She sagged, her shoulders propped up against the stained, dripping surface of the cold cement wall behind her. Her hollow glare implored me faintly. A quaint smile danced across her face.

Her lips parted. Her jaw struggled. She mouthed a single, quivering word:

"Angel."

Force cascaded from my fingertip. I tried, in vain, to stem the flood. An avalanche of power rumbled through her pummeled throat. A wet *crack* permeated the alley. The girl's head drooped; blood poured from the knotted remains of her mangled neck. A dark cloud of filthy crimson stained the flooded concrete of the gushing corridor.

The wind boomed. The sky spewed rain across a black jungle of slick asphalt.

It was cool. I floated listlessly through the chill, windless air. The world was bathed in silence. Withering bands of liquid darkness raced through the nothingness around me, lurching through the ebon dusk like denizens of the deep. A soft light trickled through the void from somewhere above me; shafts of white punched into the seething blackness, riddling the horizon with dancing belts of undulating gray. Beneath me, the light petered out and reality faded into total gloom.

A pillar of darkness descended from above, bleeding through the desolated hollow like an obsidian cloud of waterborne ink. A visage emerged from the billowing shadows; a body, cold and weathered, slid into the roiling chasm. The man smiled with sinister delight, appraising me briefly with a callous flick of his hollow black eyes. He clicked his silver tongue menacingly. His words were sharp, yet soft, like woolen daggers that ran me through with the lure of sweet sentiments and the promise of everlasting revenge. I was immediately under his spell.

My anatomy rung with hollow anguish as my strength slowly dissipated. I crumpled to the moist asphalt, gasping for breath as my mortality caught up with me. I watched, with horror, as my skin contorted grotesquely, healthy flesh degrading into charred sinew. I slammed my face to the blacktop and screamed inwardly. My body roasted alive.

The beggar appeared, exactly as I remembered him. His knotted gray hair draped over his hunched shoulders in a thick, wet mat. His beard, slick and inundated, was plastered to his glistening throat. His waterlogged sign hung haphazardly around his pale neck; the last three characters of its text had been altered, crudely erased and overwritten with a clumsy “ow.”

It read: “THE END IS NOW.”

“This ... this wasn’t worth my soul,” I gagged choppily, struggling to suck air as a weeping gash opened up on my throat.

The beggar clicked his pointed tongue. He removed his flat-cap, revealing a jagged pair of keen black horns.

“Our deal is not refundable. I have fulfilled my end of the bargain. The men who killed you are dead.”

“The girl...” I choked the words. My throat was badly desiccated.

“Unfortunate collateral. You shouldn’t have tried to save her.”

“You ... killed...”

“No, Jacob. *You* killed. I merely gave you the gun.”

I tried to gasp another phrase, but the air barely escaped me. My arms went limp at my sides; my head drifted to the flooded asphalt. My temple rested in an inch-deep pool of brackish crimson blood. Death was a familiar sensation to me. My body slackened as I drifted once more into the icy oblivion of unlife, my tattered carcass spread across the urban street like the slain messiah of an infernal cult.

JORDAN RANDALL
SOPHOMORE STUDENT



TAKING A REST

HOME IS NOT THE LIFE I LEAVE

Home is the catharsis trail I tread —
Free — as Indian Paintbrushes fade to points
Of red and mountains swell. Living bed
Below me, in humbled rhythm my joints

Pound; my lungs heave, but your restful might
Surrounds my struggle. The wild roar of beauty
Welcomes my bones worn from human fight
With causeless birth. In birth my duty,

Choice: To revel in a pathless climb,
Or in hackneyed stillness wait for sullen death.
Choosing — reaching for footholds in time —
I daily hoist myself with wistful breath.

In struggle free this truth I bear:
The certainty of welcome in untamed air.

PHOTO BOOTH

Part I.

Scene: The stage is empty except for a photo booth, a bench, and a trash can. PERSON 1 is standing, staring at the photo booth—occasionally digging through the pockets of his or her jacket, pulling out small unidentifiable objects, bringing them to eye level, and putting them back. PERSON 2 enters with haste and purpose, stands next to PERSON 1—pays him/her no attention and stares at the booth.

1: *(Says nothing.)*

2: *(Still staring at photo booth.)* Are you going to use the booth?

1: *(Shakes head.)*

2: Is someone in there?

1: *(Shakes head.)*

(Long pause.)

2: *(Finally looking at PERSON 1.)* Would you like to take a picture with me?

1: *(Looks at PERSON 2. Stifles a mischievous smile and nods.)*

2: *(Motions toward booth.)* After you.

(They enter booth.)

2: Do you have a quarter? It's 50 cents. We can split the cost

1: *(Digs in pocket. Pulls out a quarter. Inspects it. Puts it back in pocket. Reaches into other pocket. Pulls out a different quarter. Inspects it. Hands it to PERSON 2.)*

2: Thanks.... *(Inserts money.)* Black and white or color?

1: *(Points to one of the buttons.)*

2: Color? Really? Because I personally prefer black and white. I think

it makes for a more vintage and classic feel.

1: *(Shrugs.)*

2: *(About to press button. Hesitates. Sighs.)* But I asked you and you picked color, so I guess we can do it in color.

1: *(Smiles at PERSON 2.)*

2: *(About to press button. Hesitates.)* You're not even wearing a color. Why do you want color because honestly I'm kind of breaking out today and my skin just looks like shit so why should we use color because I'll look terrible I know that sounds cocky but I just HATE terrible pictures of myself so is it okay if we use black and white because I always look better in black and white?

1: *(Stares at PERSON 2 for a beat then slowly nods.)*

2: Thank you. *(About to press button. Hesitates. Sighs.)* Now I feel like shit. I'm a terrible person. You want color. I asked you, and you said you wanted color. Okay, fine. We'll do it in color. It's no big deal.

1: *(Silence.)*

2: *(About to press button. Hesitates.)* Can I ask why? Why do you want it in color?

1: *(Pauses a moment. Takes out a deflated yellow balloon from pocket and begins to blow it up. It has a smiley face on it that becomes visible when inflated.)*

2: Oh ... okay ... uh ... color it is.

1: *(Smiles. Finally speaks.)* Thanks.

2: *(Blinks.)* Uh... no problem. *(Hesitates. Finally presses color button.)* Do you always carry balloons around with you?

1: *(Still smiling mischievously. Nods.)*

2: How come?

1: *(Thinks. Shrugs.)*

2: Well it's kinda weird.

1: *(Says nothing.)*

2: Okay. Are you ready?

1: *(Nods. Holds balloon up between the two of them, smiley face showing.)*

2: *(Smiling.)* Alright. 3... 2....

1: *(Stabs balloon with a pin. Balloon explodes.)*

2: *(Screams.)*

Blackout. Shutter sound. Lights come back up briefly. PERSON 1 and PERSON 2 are frozen in a "snapshot." PERSON 1 is beaming, holding pin in one hand, popped balloon in the other. Person 2 looks shocked/terrified.

Blackout. Shutter sound. Lights come back up briefly. PERSON 1 and PERSON 2 are still frozen. PERSON 1 is still smiling hugely. PERSON 2 is looking at PERSON 1 in utter confusion.

Blackout. Shutter sound. Lights come back up briefly. PERSON 1 and PERSON 2 are still frozen. PERSON 2 is leaving booth. PERSON 2 is angry—shouting at PERSON 1.

Blackout. Shutter sound. Lights come back up briefly. PERSON 1 is frozen—alone in the booth. Looking into camera confused and upset.

Blackout.

FOR YEARS AND ALL THAT'S GONE

A yellow smile in the moon
among the wicked, winking stars
brings me to my knees like
a soft-sounding bird on the sky,
swallowing you whole
in the midst of a love song.
Oh bright bane of hate and
wrongdoing, kiss your heart
with mine and tell the world
we belong; I'll swim in yours
for years, and all that's gone.



SKELETON GRIN



PRECIPEACE

KRISTINA ERICKSEN
SENIOR ENGLISH MAJOR

COLLECTIONS OF INDIA

“India is a country that belongs to any human being,” — Sharred

I

Indian men gathered around
a deck of cards on the ground
though monkeys screech and traffic honks
they do not make a sound

II

Americans crossing a Delhi street
a simple task, a mighty feat
solace on the median
flee on quick feet

III

Above the busy city, still
they perforate the skyline till
the sun descends, a golden weight
the domineering Jaipur hills

EARLY MORNING NIGHTMARE

I sit alone in the early morning darkness, barely able to see a few feet ahead. Mist curls around my feet, muffling every sound; it soaks through my thick, camouflage hunting suit and blaze orange vest. The water weighs me down and seeps through to freeze my hands, making it harder to hold the black muzzleloader with its silver barrel. I watch the mist and light rain collect on the gun in shining beads of brightness. Then a sharp, unexpected noise brings me from my reverie. A quick glance to my left and right. Was that *crunch* real, or just in my head? There it is again. Closer ... closer ... closer, until I'm sure it's right behind me. I slowly turn in fear: nothing.

The oppressive silence is painful; it seems to take hold of my ears and pull. The absence of sound puts me on edge, as I wait for the slightest whisper of movement to tell me that this is all real, to let me know that I am not dreaming, even though I might wish I were. The silence lets me think about the fearful creatures that could be sharing the forest with me. I remember the rumors and the confirmed sightings of bears nearby; then there are the stories of cougars only a short distance away. I even think of the times that my own family has had encounters with animals that I do not want to meet face-to-face — especially in the wild, gloomy darkness of the forest.

The darkness is deceiving. I never truly know if something is there until I see it. What could be out there? The answer: anything. My prey, the deer that I hunt, are right to be afraid, for if they cross my path they may not live to see another day. But I have reason to be afraid as well; fear is out there, following me everywhere I go. Fear itself is a shapeless fog, like the mist that makes it so much harder to hunt. It floats by, not sure if it wants to stop for a moment or continue on to some other helpless victim.

Snap! Crunch! I jump in fear and my throat closes up in terror; I turn to look ... nothing again. A rustle of leaves, footsteps? No, *pawsteps* maybe. A nearly silent stalking, something is coming. I look up at the knotty pine behind my stand. Could a cougar be lurking

among those dark, gloomy branches? I shoot a glance at an uprooted oak. The crevasse created by the ancient roots is a huge, never-ending chasm. Could a bear have its den hidden in that deep abyss?

Then I catch a glimpse of the rising sun flashing off a golden-colored pelt, the glimmering shine momentarily blinding me. The creature has a long tail with a midnight-black tip; it possesses giant paws with dagger-like claws, sharp and ready for the kill. A starving, snarling face with long, deathly marble fangs and a mouth ready to snap my neck and taste my bright crimson blood. Paralyzing terror rises in my throat like foul bile. *If it sees me, I'm dead.* Is it possible that those huge, flashing, glowing eyes with their slitted pupils could pass me by? Or am I to be the great cat's next meal?

I blink, and the vision is gone, vanished with the morning mist. It was nothing more than an apparition, something that my mind created. But still, no matter how fake it was, it was real. The images are etched in my mind, never to leave me alone: a fear that awakens and rises up the moment I set foot outside in the dark, something that lives within and tries to escape as I sit in a stand while hunting. I cannot help but wonder, who is the hunter and who is the prey?

A CONDITION OF EXISTENCE

standing alone
before the decaying derelict
the numbing rains fall
reminding me to remember
something i cannot

i walk to the stairs
of the apartment stoop
and hit the buzzer
so i may be let inside
but is there anyone upstairs



ADVENTURE



WITH THESE HANDS

EMILY HAMBERG
SENIOR BIOCHEMISTRY & MOLECULAR BIOLOGY MAJOR

INTEREST RATES

I tried talking last Sunday.
All you wanted was to go back.
I wanted that too, once,
But my interest rate has changed.
Because if I had a penny for “the way things used to be”
I could buy back the past
And pay dividends on the future.



YORKSHIRE

AARON LAWRENCE
JUNIOR ENGLISH & ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES MAJOR

RESTLESS SUMMER

he kept saying he wanted to see the world
that he was tired of this town.

there's no culture, you know
he'd tell me
this desert of a place.

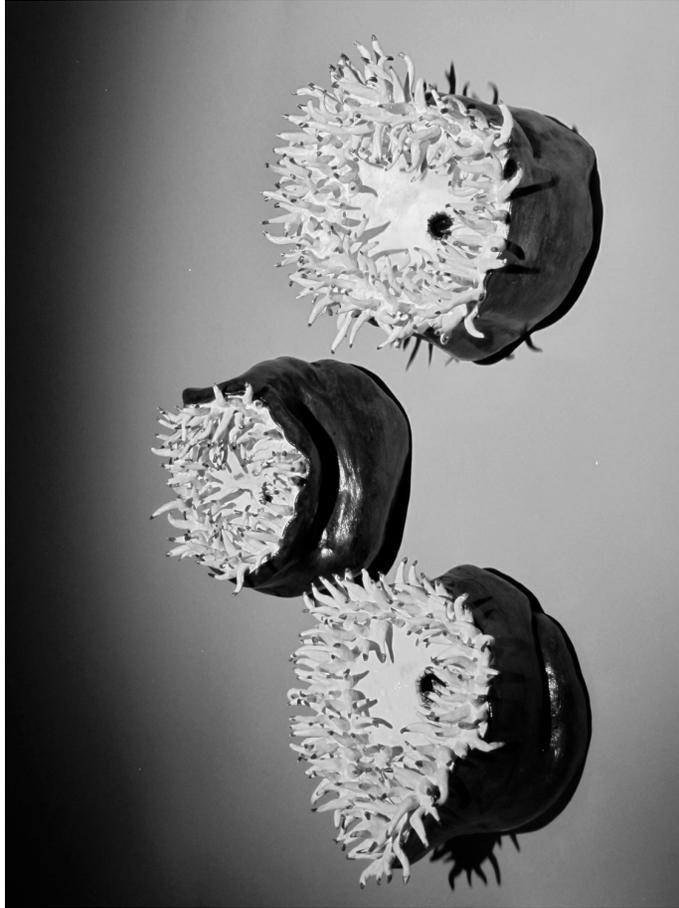
I want to see cathedrals
and castles
and those little villages.

he kept talking about those sorts of places—
the places that really mean something
he'd tell me.

yeah
I'd say
I agree.

but have you seen the swans of Sand Lake?
have you met the waitresses from Yankton?
have you stayed at the Dew Drop Inn outside Miller?
or tasted the ice cream from Kree Mee in Britton?
have you bought the melons in Woonsocket, population 634?
or watched the sun set over the Missouri?
listening to the sound of the carp on the water?

I told him if he thought there was nothing in South Dakota
there was nothing in Europe.



VORACIOUS EATERS

ELIZABETH LUTZ
JUNIOR ENGLISH MAJOR

THE LIGHT REVEALS

The afternoon sunlight
falls softly
on all the objects and fabrics
around the room.
It feeds the plants.

It reveals smooth wooden floors
a half-knitted sock
a lamp balanced on books
with an army of pines positioned in the west

And all the time in the world lies
stretched across that floor

The light slowly diminishes
Until it is no longer enough to read by,
Only see
Fingertips

BODY AND SOUL

Private Erickson took a seat across from him and hunched forward over his coffee. "That's just it, though, Scott. What makes someone human?"

Scott furrowed his brow and stared out the window at the driving blizzard. Training wouldn't be resuming today, he thought, that's for sure.

He turned back. "I guess it's the soul, Len. It's what separates the men from the beasts."

"What's a soul, then?"

Scott blinked. "Something in everyone, I don't know ... some inherently humane thing, I guess."

Erickson shook his head, grimacing. "Come on, Doctor. You've got to do better than that. Humanity is an inherent humanity? Socrates would be appalled."

The doctor's smile twitched. "I guess ... what I mean to say is, being human is having a humane spirit."

Len leaned back, coffee untouched. "People are inhumane all the time. Are you saying that not all people are human?"

Scott hesitated for just an instant before replying. "Yes. I guess that is what I'm saying. So many people squander their ability to be humane that ... well, it's not even fair to call them human."

"Humor me, Doctor. Is there anything inherently human about the human body?"

Scott smirked. "Of course. It's the only vessel capable of containing the humane spirit, the soul."

"So..." Erickson paused. "A zombie would have a human body, let's say. Would it be human?"

Scott laughed. "Of course not. The human had to have died before their body became reanimated. The soul would have long since departed."

"Assuming the soul leaves. What if the soul is trapped in the body, since you said that is the only vessel that may contain it?"

The zombie would then have a humane spirit trapped, unable to show it. Would it be human then?"

Scott shifted nervously. He knew where this conversation was heading. "No. Even if a benevolent spirit is in the body, if it is not being expressed, if it is not the controller of the body, the body cannot be called human."

Len hunched forward again, nearly spilling his coffee. "What about prosthetic limbs, then? Or simply people without limbs? What about mutations, deformities, et cetera? Do these make the souls less human, that the vessel of this soul of yours is compromised?"

"I've already answered you. If the human element of a person controls the prosthetic limb, then there is no reason for the soul to be made inferior. Just because we view some vessels as inferior does not mean they are any less human nor have any less of the humane spirit. Remember, any number of fit, strong human beings have failed to live up to their humanity."

Private Erickson slowly nodded, staring out at the raging blizzard. The doctor turned to the window as well. Somewhere behind the pale grey curtain, the sun was going down. Crack teams of flakes drove hard against the sill to no avail, silently ricocheting into the night. The flakes, in spite of their howling determination, stood about as much chance of getting through as the two men did of living through the next three months.

The silence stretched. Scott broke it with the words neither cared to say. "What about the I.U.s, Private? That's where this is leading, isn't it?"

Erickson nodded slowly, staring into his lukewarm coffee. "You know that they're learning, right?"

"They're designed to."

"They're talking to each other. Mine's starting conversations, conversations that have nothing to do with being here."

Scott frowned. He hadn't wanted to mention it to anyone, but his intelligence unit had been changing as well. It had started asking questions ... it had started caring...

He shook his head. "Well, Len, all I can say is, they can't become human. You can't grow a human soul, no matter how far technology goes. That privilege ... and burden ... belongs to us alone."

Erickson nodded again, apparently satisfied, and took a sip of his coffee. Privately, however, Scott wondered.

SIBLINGS

The two sisters built a fort
Of old blankets clothes-pinned
To the living room sofa.
Four feet from the fireplace
They huddled in their shelter
Giggling and whispering
Important secrets.

The dark haired sister
Crawled through the
Entanglement
Gripping her sister's hand
In a pinky promise.
"Best friends forever.
Just us two."

They transformed
The mass of stain quilts
And old bed sheets
Into a restaurant.
A yellow construction paper sign
That said only Diner
In purple crayon.
The older sister became the owner;
The younger, the hungry customer.

In the background
The Lion King played on the widescreen.
Scar gripped his brother's paws
And sneered,
Thrusting him
Into the bottomless pit
Of deadly antelope.



PROMISE



HOVERING BLISS

JOEL STREMMEL
SOPHOMORE MATHEMATICS & PHILOSOPHY MAJOR

TO THE MAPLE

In the flustered fall maples cling not to leaves as some might say.
But as day fades, so does hope — life's nectar turns barren.
Sinewy trunk, hold firm! Shall December shoo you away
As though even you, omnipotent maple, can perish once again?

Yet firm you hold. Impervious will, though bronze bracts crumble,
You persist. I too have been chilled by icy fear, life's end.
But my leaves will not return: My soul will stumble
Into nothingness. In black void, in stillness, without friend,

I shall weep, forgetting all promise of renewal: no spring,
No cycle. I admire your 200-year-old ways, unyielding timber.
No! Be it 70 or 200 years, time decays nonetheless. It sings
To no one, but bears us all. And we remember:

When fortune is our only ally, harkened beauty ours still,
We have not but a few seasons, and a wistful, hopeful will.



THE PARTNERSHIP

ERIKA CLIFTON
JUNIOR ENGLISH MAJOR

A WHEELBARROW OF REMEMBRANCE

Pick up those sticks
throw them in the old, rusted out bucket.
Grab those stones along with them.
Pull up on the weathered, splintered handles.
Carry it wherever you need to go.

Pick up that night
when you could smell fire from yards away,
when you feel the heat of charred marshmallow flesh
burning the roof of your mouth.
Throw it in the bucket.

Grab that night
when your friend decided to hide under the slide and couldn't retreat,
when you played dark volleyball with only a cell phone light.
when you felt the heat from flaming hand sanitizer on your fingertips.
Toss it in the bucket.

Grab those nights, when summer was at its peak,
throw them in the bucket.
Remember that you can carry them wherever you need to go.