

The literary-art magazine and contest  
of Crowder College  
**Volume 33 | Spring 2013**  
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Free

## Mission Statement

The *Crowder Quill* is a literary-art magazine published by the Magazine Production class at Crowder College in order to encourage and showcase the creative abilities of local writers, artists, and photographers, as well as to provide a cultural link between Crowder College and our surrounding communities.

The publication is funded through Crowder College as an educational tool and service to the community. Both the contest and publication are free.

The *Crowder Quill* is published each spring semester. The contest deadline is on or a few days after Feb. 1 each year.

## Contact Information

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*Inside front cover, top: Freedom* Allie Oxford | Neosho | Staff | Color Photography  
*Below: A Lion's Yawn* Patti Richardson | Fayetteville, Ark. | Community | Gold | Color Photography  
*Inside back cover, top: Hello There!* Hillary Garman | Diamond | Crowder | Gold | Digital Art  
*Below: Wall, Baby!* Jaclyn Kidd | Neosho High School | Bronze | Color Photography

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## Reflective Moments

Latonia Bailey | Goodman | Staff Adviser | Color Photography

*This is the rewarding view at the end of one of my favorite places to walk. A slow shutter speed smoothes the flowing water.*



# My Journey to a Higher Education

Jennifer Campbell  
Monett  
Crowder  
Nonfiction  
Honorable Mention

Here I sit, fingers placed on the keys of my laptop, staring at the screen, pondering ideas about my future. I never thought I would have this chance; but here I am writing and essay for college.

Only 17 at the time of High School Graduation, I was consumed with desire to start adult life.

My career aspiration was to attain a data entry job, with no thoughts of attending college.

Adolescent and naive, I wasn't concerned with such things as; start out pay, increases', or advancement opportunities.

The next two years were spent working a factory job that paid only minimum wage. My goal was attained when I advanced into a data entry position with an acclaimed company. By

that time, I was also married with two children.

As the years past, with no opportunities to advance, and very few raises, I was at a standstill in my career. I tried to prove my capabilities with hard work, innovative thinking, and cross training. All of that, plus years of experience, were not enough. A college degree was still a requirement to advance. Disheartened, I felt that there was no other choice but to settle and make the most of the position I held.

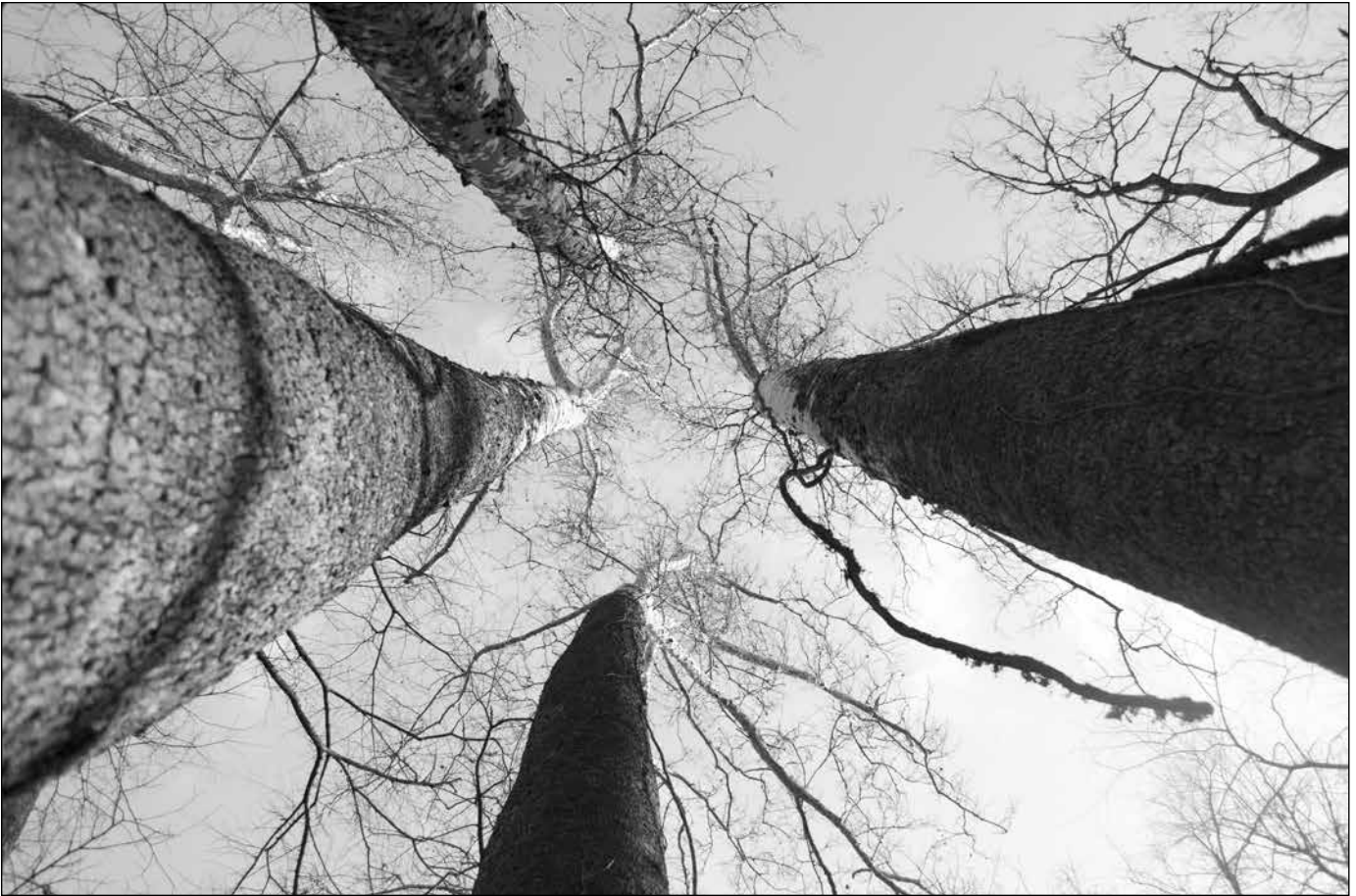
Due to a brutal economy the company went through a time of difficulty. A couple of years ago, management resorted to job elimination to balance out cost. During that time, my department went from twelve people to a mere four. Seniority and experience were all that saved my job. I felt anguish for my coworkers, but appre-



**Glacier**

Amy Sampson | Monett | Community | Silver | Color Photography

*Glacier National Park is my absolute favorite National Park. Being from Missouri, I was unable to grasp its enormity the first time I traveled there. This shot embodies all I felt that first trip--very small!*



ciative I was still employed.

After the layoff's, additional job duties were dispersed among remaining employees. My job was now more difficult with no extra pay, but the increase of responsibility gave me a sense of security. We were now down to one-third of our department. The thought of functioning on any less was absurd.

As absurd as it seemed, six months ago, my position was eliminated. Shocked and confused, I went home that Wednesday, unemployed. That thirteen year chapter of my life had come to an end.

Never before had I been fired or even laid off. Now with two kids, a mortgage, car payments, and only one income, I was at my wits end. Immediately the job searching began; phone calls, emails, internet searches and frequent visits to the Job Center. The availability of jobs in my search area, were scarce to non-existent. As months passed, with no consequence, reality hit

me again that it was now a necessity to acquire a college education.

**“Never before had I been  
fired or even laid off.  
Now with two kids, a  
mortgage, car payments,  
and only one income, I  
was at my wits end.”**

On my next visit to the Job Center, I inquired about funding for college. My bleak finances left me in no position to take on more debt. Obtaining financial support was my only hope. Because resources were no longer available through the Job Center they suggested I speak with an advisor regarding a Pell Grant. I was astonished with the acceptance of qualification for the grant!

I now have a new sense of pride and am excited for what the future holds. I hope to inspire my children, so they realize the importance of a college education. For the first time, my career options are endless! I will settle no longer! No longer do I feel stuck! My only dilemma now is concluding what DO I want to be when I grow up?

*I hope my entry inspires and informs others on the importance of a college education.*

## **Skyward**

**Cathleen Bailey  
Neosho  
Crowder  
B&W Photography  
Bronze**

*This photo captures the reaching of trees as they reach for the sky. In particular, it captures how four trees are doing it together.*

# We Are All Life

Hannah Scroggs  
Joplin  
Staff  
Poetry

I am a bird.  
I am a tree.  
I am every human,  
walking free.

You are the star  
You are the sun.

You are the air,  
that fills my lungs.

We are the truth.  
We are the lies.

We all are life,  
and we all must try.

*A poem about the beauty of human connection to nature, and the importance of leading a life worth living.*

## New Beginnings

Tori Murray  
Neosho High School  
Silver  
3D Art







## Beauty in the Waning

Cathleen Bailey  
Neosho  
Crowder  
Gold  
Color Photography

*The sun shining through  
lights up the leaf,  
bringing attention to the  
beauty that is found in  
the waning.*



## Resting Red Fox

Becky Biehl-Wylie  
Neosho  
Community  
Bronze  
Color Photography

*Red foxes are one of my  
favorite mammals. This  
vixen was kind enough  
to pose near her den one  
evening.*

# Cold as Death

Kaitlyn  
Yunek  
Neosho  
High School  
Nonfiction  
Honorable  
Mention

*A mare was dying.  
I didn't know this  
when I went outside.  
I just knew I had to  
go out. I wasn't quite  
prepared for what  
I had to do.*

I watch air escape me in a small cloud of freezing vapor. The day is frigid, which shouldn't be so shocking for the middle of December in Southwest Missouri.

Yet here I stand, wishing my fingers weren't numb and aching from the wind that bites them every chance it gets, like a rabid dog. I trudge up the hill, making slow progress getting to my destination, the heated house that I live in.

Nobody would've blamed me if I hadn't gone outside. It wouldn't have been my fault if she had died out there, cold and alone and so sick that she couldn't stand on her own.

But I did go outside. I went outside because I felt like there was something I needed to do. It turns out, I was right.

Go back in time two hours, and I'm putting on my coat and a hat.

"I won't be out long. I'm just gonna go check on the horses," I tell Carlee, my best friend, and Amanda, my older sister. They're upstairs, taking a short break from the lame video we've decided to make.

I walk out the front door, and all is silent. The house is on the south side of the property, and I soon determine that it's blocking me from the ferocious beast that produces a wind-chill of less than ten degrees. I walk down the hill, careful to not slide on the gravel that crunches with every step I take. No longer protected by the barrier of my home, I clutch my coat to my body while attempting to keep my fingers warm in my pockets. The chill beats against me unrelentingly until I finally make it to the red tin barn at the bottom of the hill.

The too-white door is slammed behind me. The cold is becoming vengeful at this point, making me afraid to go back out. I have to, though. I have to make sure that nothing's wrong.

I brace myself for the onslaught before I go out again. The dim room whistles as wind splits through the holes in the roof and walls.

I open the door, and I'm crushed by another wave of the cold air. My eyes scan the pasture in front of me, searching for a sign of trouble.

I spot it soon. To the left, there is a dark brown horse lying down near the fence line. I zip up my jacket, ready to face the cold that is now

causing my nose to go numb. I try to whistle at the mare to get her attention, but the cold freezes the sound and carries it in the wrong direction.

I suppose I have to walk.

The ground that the mare is lying on is relatively flat, but it is at least ten acres away. I walk anyway. I walk even though the cold is telling me not to. I walk even though I can no longer feel my face.

I perambulate to where the mare is laying. I let out a sigh of relief when I notice that she is still breathing.

I kiss to her while standing near her hindquarters. "Get up," I command. I gesture towards her as if to say, "Go on, get," but she does nothing but roll her big head towards me.

"Come on," I moan, holding myself and bouncing a bit in my spot to keep as warm as possible.

I stride to her head and crouch on the barren earth, clutching the halter in my right hand. I slip it on over her nose and toss the strap over the back

of her head, trying to not tangle myself in her scratchy black mane. I clip the halter together and stand up, now only holding the lead rope that is attached under her chin.

I begin to pull. The mare lets out what sounds like a mix between a groan and a sigh, but does nothing else. I curse under my breath. If a horse refuses to stand up, it generally means that they're colicking. If she doesn't get up and walk around to let the tension in her intestines go, we'll have to call a vet. I walk by Liz's legs and slap the ground near her hindquarters with the lead rope, hoping that this will give her a reason to stand. It's not enough, and I'm beginning to get desperate. I let the rope hit her hindquarters once, a short slap that doesn't hurt the mare, but is generally enough to trigger a horse's flight instinct.

It doesn't work. She does another sigh slash groan as I crouch low to the ground. My fingers are numb. I don't know what I'm supposed to do. I feel a sharp prickling in my eyes and squeeze them shut. Now is not the time to panic.

I pull out my red slider phone and call my mom, who is in Tulsa at a horse show. The tone rings a few times before she finally picks up.

**"I feel a sharp prickling  
in my eyes and squeeze  
them shut. Now is not  
the time to panic."**



"Hello?" she says loudly. I can hear a crowd of people in the background.

"Mom, Liz is sick. She won't get up," I say, trying to hold back tears.

I hear a sigh. "I'll call the vet and have her come out. She's been sick all week. Just try to get her up in the barn."

"Alright. Bye, Mom."

"Bye."

The line cuts off. I stare at the phone in my hand for a moment before looking back at the mare, who is no longer holding her head up. I am sitting on the ground in between her front legs and her head at this point, so I dig my fingers into her fur, bury my head into her neck, and cry.

For the first time since I stepped outside, the air is still. The wind isn't vengefully trying to freeze me. The mare breathes out heavily. My fingers are becoming warm from the heat produced by this sad creature. The dirt is hard under my frozen knees. I inhale the scent of dirt and horse, something I've been familiar with since I was four.

I don't notice time passing. The sky is filled with flat grey clouds that make the landscape emotionless, so I don't have any perception of time at this point.

I feel a vibration in my hand. I lift my head just enough to answer the phone with my no longer numb fingers.

"Hello?" I utter.

"What's taking you so long? We need to finish the video," my sister gabs.

I forgot about the video completely. "I need your help with something."

"Why?"

"Just get Carlee. Liz is sick and we need to get her to the barn, but she can't stand up," I assert before hanging up.

I look into the eyes of a frightened animal. "It's okay, girl. We'll help you."

By the time Carlee and Amanda are in the pasture with me, I'm standing up, ready to try again. Carlee goes to action. As I pull the mare's head forward, Carlee holds her arms up and makes noise behind her. "Gedup! Yah!" she yells sharply.

After a minute of this futile action, we decide to get the mare part of the way. Amanda grabs Liz's front feet one at a time and forces them in front of her body so that she could get the balance to stand up. Carlee and I trade positions so that I'm pushing the mare from behind and she's pulling. I give Liz a sharp smack on the hip.

The mare jumps up too quickly and can't

keep her balance. She falls right back down, but we have hope now. We know that she can get up. She lets out another groan as we push and usher her, finally convincing Liz to stand up. My hands are numb again, my fingers barely able to move. The wind came back with full force as we were forcing her to stand and is now at our backs as we slowly convince the mare to be lead to the barn. It's a slow journey, but we do eventually make it. The barn isn't heated, but it feels at least ten degrees warmer being out of reach of the wind.

The vet arrives soon in her grey pickup truck. She gives the mare a shot, gives us a bill to give to Mom, and drives off.

Carlee, Amanda, and I trudge up the hill, watching our breath freeze in front of us. The day is frigid, but it was worth it to help that mare. I don't know the mare well. In fact, she isn't even our horse. We wouldn't be blamed if she'd been left out in the cold, sick and helpless.

We don't care that our fingers are barely able to move. We laugh about it as we run them under warm water in the kitchen. It's something that doesn't really matter to us. What matters is that we saved a life.

## Saddle Up!

Chad Cox  
Rocky Comfort  
Community  
3D Art  
Gold

*The handcrafted sculpture is composed of 100% raw steel. It was constructed by means of sheet metal tools, hammers, grinders, and a welder. My inspiration for this artwork was to bridge the gap between contemporary art and Western culture.*



# Breath of a Crimson Sunset

Ashleigh Long  
Joplin  
Crowder  
Gold  
Poetry

Soft velvet shadows cast,  
Is this life, or is it death?  
This shimmering veil  
Of flickering candle  
A whispered breath of crimson sunset.

Upon a thought, my dreams did rest  
As the cooler air of darkness crept  
The night did sleep,  
Silent and deep,  
Within a moonlit caress

I saw you watching me  
From the edge of infinity  
From a corned glance  
I read romance  
From the prose of cool summer breeze

I tasted the warm sweetness of your lips,  
Felt your caressing fingertips  
I felt allures

Within your power  
The power of a tender kiss

We chased rainbows in the dead of night  
Licked by flickering candlelight  
Floating through mists  
Of swirling twists  
Blurred in ecstatic Delight

I felt allures in your embrace  
I felt our spirits rise  
To fly, to soar  
Away, forevermore  
In the blush of morning sunrise

Lay once more within my arms  
Oh how I long for your return  
On a peaceful breath  
Of crimson sunset  
Within the memory of a silken dream

*I love looking at the sunset and one night I got a kiss from the boy I liked while the sun was setting. It gave me the inspiration to record every detail so I would never forget it.*

## Sunset in Hope, Idaho

Latonia Bailey  
Goodman  
Staff Advisor  
Color  
Photography

*All the best elements  
combine for the  
perfect, relaxing  
vacation in  
northern Idaho.-*



# Message in the Pouring Rain

Jesse O. Walls  
Neosho  
Staff  
Fiction

A heavy rain poured down incessantly as Brad walked into the crowded Burger King, scanning the dining area to find the young lady who had swerved in front of him as he was on his way home. He understood that people could be hungry after school or work, but to swerve into oncoming traffic just to grab a bite to eat seemed ridiculous.

Moving around the crowd of teenagers that had assembled, he finally spotted her in one of the booths, sitting alone. He casually approached her, wanting to know why she had been so reckless but not wanting to come across as if he were looking for an argument. He had been angry at first, but now that feeling had passed; now he just wanted to know why.

Turning momentarily to look back out the window, he could see the commotion outside, but he was inside now, and that world seemed miles away. Taking a seat across from her in the booth, he didn't bother to ask her permission.

"Are you waiting for someone?" he asked, and she looked up at him with sad green eyes.

"Who are you?" she asked defensively.

"My name's Brad. You swerved in front of me to get here. Do you know how dangerous that was?"

"I'm sorry," she said, looking away. "I had other things on my mind."

"It's pouring out there. Even in good weather you shouldn't just swerve in front of oncoming traffic."

"I don't need a lecture," she retorted, looking down at the cell phone she had clutched in one hand. It seemed each time she looked down at the screen, her face would grow even sadder.

He again looked outside. The lights were bright, but they seemed so far away right now, and, for them, it really didn't matter. The lights were outside...worlds away; they were inside, where it was safe and warm and dry.

"Have you not ordered yet?" he asked.

"The place is crowded; no one would even bother to take my order. I guess it's because

of how many people are here. I'll wait till it's cleared out a little before I try ordering again." Her eyes were still fixed on her cell, a silent tear rolling down her cheek. If only she knew the truth, he thought, then that solitary tear would seem irrelevant; whatever life she'd had before she had left behind.

He frowned. "Why do you keep looking at your phone?" he asked.

"No reason."

"Was that why you weren't paying attention?" he asked, accusing the device in her hands.

"I got a text," she answered.

"And you decided to check it instead of keeping your eyes on the road?"

She cast her gaze away. "Maybe."

He looked back outside, and she started to wonder what he kept looking at. She had noticed him looking outside into the rain a couple of times already. "I'm Anne," she blurted out, thinking of nothing else to say.

He looked back at her, smiling slightly. "It's nice to meet you, Anne, though I wish it had been different circumstances."

Her face dropped, and she looked back at her phone. "My boyfriend sent me a text...he broke up with me."

"I'm sorry to hear that. That still isn't a good reason for not paying attention, though."

"I'm not trying to justify my actions, I was just saying. I know what I did was wrong, and I should have been more attentive; I just..." She paused noticing him still staring out the window. "I was already upset...I knew he was going to break up with me. I shouldn't have been driving, but I wanted to get away from him, to leave it all behind me."

"And you have," he replied, turning his gaze to her. "You've left it all far behind."

She looked at him, confused. "What do you mean? How would you know? And what do you keep staring at outside?" She jumped to her feet, looking out the window, only to see the flashing lights, and now she could hear the wailing sirens. Pressing her hands against the glass, she peered out, seeing her car sitting at the

**"If she only knew the truth, he thought, then that solitary tear would seem irrelevant."**

[Continued to 12]



## Message in the Pouring Rain

[Continued from 11]

intersection, smashed, as other cars surrounded it, having crashed into her because of the poor driving conditions. Her negligence had caused a wreck...a terrible wreck.

"Don't worry," Brad said. "We're the only two who died. Others will need to go to the hospital, but, in the end, they will be alright. Your text only cost two lives. These were not

the best conditions to be inattentive, but nothing can be done about it now. We should go; however, our time here is done."

She looked at him, wanting to burst into tears but knowing they would do her no good. Taking his hand, she allowed him to lead her out, as she left the life she had always known behind.

*When I sit down to write, I usually have some idea or moral I am wanting to portray, and this story is no different.*



**Raindrops**

Crystal Moody | Rocky Comfort | Staff | Color Photography

*I went exploring after a summer rain shower and found these great raindrops.*

# In the Passenger's Seat

“Yeah, I want a girl to shake it for me, too!” Dakota Wheeler shouted as the Luke Bryan song played on the radio. It was just after dark on New Year's Eve and Dakota was driving on Highway 37 from Pierce City to Diamond where his best friend, Jeff, was hosting a party at his house. Dakota was always up for a party, but he was particularly anxious to get to tonight's *soirée*. Jeff and his girlfriend, Hailey, had set Dakota up on a date with Hailey's best friend, a girl named Michaela.

“She really wants to meet you,” Jeff had promised. “Hailey showed her a picture of you; she thinks you're cute.”

“Really?”

“Yeah, though God only knows why. But as the saying goes, there's no accounting for taste.”

Dakota playfully punched Jeff in the arm. “What does she look like?”

Jeff pulled out a picture. “Try not to drool too much.”

Dakota studied the photo. The picture of a lovely young redhead smiled back at him. “A girl like her isn't seeing anyone? She's gorgeous!”

“Hence my amazement at her wanting to go out with you. But hey, you never know.”

“Jeff, old buddy, if this works out, when we have our first child, I'll name him after you.”

“But what if your first child is a girl?”

“Well, then I'll just send you a fruit cake instead.” Dakota suddenly grew serious. “Jeff, you know, at last year's party, it was my first time drinking, and I got wasted. I still don't know how I got home.”

“I never knew you were drunk, man. I guess I was pretty wasted myself,” Jeff replied.

“The point is, I had the worst hangover ever the next morning, and I barely sobered up in time to get to that job in Montana. If I'd missed out on that, I would have been out of six months of work. On top of all that, I had the worst nightmare before waking up. So I hope you'll understand if I won't be drinking this time.”

“It's cool, buddy. You can be our designated driver,” Jeff laughed. “Hey, what was your nightmare?”

“My memory is kind of hazy, but I dreamt that I hit a girl while driving home that night. Fortunately, I didn't, but it gives me a bad feeling every time I think about it. I wouldn't want something like that to happen for real.”

A week had passed since Jeff had shown Dakota the picture of Michaela, and now Dakota was impatient to get to Jeff's house and meet her. In fact, Dakota was so impatient that he didn't notice a patch of ice on the road ahead of him.

The Explorer spun out of control. Instinctively, Dakota pushed his steering wheel with all of his strength in the opposite direction, fighting to bring his vehicle under control. His efforts were too little, too late though, and soon

the truck was nearly on its side in a steep ditch. Dakota tried to reverse it, but after a few minutes, it became clear that there was no way the Explorer was leaving the ditch under its own power.

Dakota forced open the driver's side door and struggled out of the cab; once he was upright on the ground, he surveyed the damage to his vehicle. The scene reminded him of the nightmare he'd told Jeff about. “*At least I don't have to worry about something like that,*” he thought to himself. He fished his cell phone out of his pocket, and started to turn it on, but nothing happened.

*I can't believe I forgot to charge it again,* he thought to himself, almost smashing the phone to the ground in his anger. This was not good. If he didn't make it to the party, Hailey was going to be angry with Jeff, which would mean that Jeff would be angry with him. He looked around.

Light from the crescent moon illuminated the area, but all Dakota could see nearby were trees and fields. In the distance, he saw the lights from one of the small rural towns located in the area. It would be a good hour's walk and he didn't know if he would be able to find a phone there, but he still had no other choice but to try.

Steven Chapman  
Monett  
Community  
Bronze  
Fiction

**“Dakota was surprised by what he saw. The driver was a beautiful woman with curly blonde hair, wearing a turtleneck sweater and jeans.”**

[Continued to 14]

## In the Passenger's Seat

[Continued from 13]

As Dakota was walking along the highway, the sound of an approaching vehicle reached his ears. He turned and saw the headlights of a car coming down the road. Soon, a Grand Am was pulling up beside him. The driver turned on the car's interior light and rolled down the passenger side window.

Dakota was surprised by what he saw. The driver was a beautiful young woman with curly blonde hair, wearing a turtleneck sweater and jeans. She was maybe 20 years old, just two years younger than he was. "Is that your vehicle in the ditch back there?" she asked.

"Yeah," Dakota answered sheepishly. "And I did that while sober. Imagine how much worse it would have been if I had been drinking."

She gave him a sympathetic smile. "You could be hurt. Maybe we should get you to a doctor."

"No, I'm fine," Dakota replied earnestly.

"But I really need to get to a friend's house in Diamond. It's very important."

"You're in luck; I'm going to Diamond also! Get in, I'll drive you."

Dakota climbed into the passenger's seat next to her. He was a little surprised that a girl would offer a ride to stranger while driving alone, but decided not to question his sudden stroke of luck. "My name is Dakota Wheeler," he said, extending his hand.

"I'm Taylor Mason," the girl answered while shaking his hand. Her hand was cold, but Dakota felt it would be impolite to mention that.

"Say, you don't mind if we stop off at my parents' house on the way, do you?" she continued. "There is something I have to do for them. But I promise it won't take very long."

"Sure, that's fine."

The two rode on for awhile, chatting about various things. Soon, they came to a house



**Smiling in the 60's**

Jordan Heigle | Oronogo | Crowder | Honorable Mention | Color Photography

*An old 60's work truck was used in this shot for a senior photo session. Something new and creative that I was lucky enough to find. Surprisingly not much editing was used in this photo. Color correction, sharpening, and adding some definition to some areas of the photo. Natural eye color was used, no color enhancement.*



where Taylor pulled her car into a drive way. 'This is my parents' house,' she said as she pushed the button on a garage door opener.

"Nice house," Dakota observed as the garage door went up.

"It is, isn't it? Some days, I wish I could live here again."

"Why don't you move back in?"

Taylor's only answer was to smile at Dakota. She steered the car into the garage, but instead of shutting it off, she hit the garage door button again and the door came down.

"You should shut off your engine, Taylor," said Dakota. "It's dangerous to run a car inside a closed garage."

"We're not in danger," Taylor answered softly. "At least I'm not. You can't kill a person who's already dead."

"Quit joking around and turn off the engine or open the garage door," commanded Dakota. He tried to open his door, but Taylor had parked the car with his side practically against the garage wall. "This joke is going too far!"

"This is no joke."

"What?"

"I picked you up because I wanted to meet the man who killed me."

"What are you talking about?" Dakota laughed nervously, trying to figure a way out of the car. "You're not dead—"

Dakota froze in mid sentence as he turned to look at Taylor. Her beautiful face was now pale and marred with cuts and bruises, while her blonde hair had become dark and matted with dried blood.

"Who are you?" Dakota gasped.

"I told you, I'm Taylor Mason. Or at least I was. I was killed last year when I was hit by a drunk driver." She looked him square in the eye. "You."

"I don't know what you're talking about!" Dakota stammered. "I never killed anybody!"

"Think about it. That nightmare that pops up in your memory from time to time. The one where you hit a girl with your truck while driving. See if you can focus on the girl's face."

Dakota replayed the nightmare in his mind, trying to picture what the girl looked like. A realization suddenly hit him like a freight train.

"You! You're the girl in my dream!"

"Yes, only it wasn't a dream. You just don't remember because of the stupor you were in," Taylor replied coldly.

"I-I didn't mean for it to happen!" Dakota sputtered. "It was my first time drinking!"

"And it was my first time dying!" Taylor shouted back. "I was lying on the road for hours, unable to move! I froze to death out there while you crawled into a warm bed and slept as if nothing happened!"

Dakota began to feel woozy as the carbon monoxide fumes filled the car's interior. "Please, don't do this," he begged as his vision began to blur. "Mercy!"

Taylor's face softened and she gently stroked Dakota's hair. "I am having mercy, Dakota," she said. "Your death will be far less painful than mine was."

Her eyes were the last thing he saw before he closed his own in eternal sleep.

The owners of the house, who had been away with relatives for the holiday, found Dakota Wheeler's body in their garage a few days later. It had not begun to decay, luckily, due to the cold temperature. On Dakota's body, a suicide note was found in which he confessed to his role in the death of Taylor Mason, the homeowners' daughter who had been killed in a hit and run accident the previous year.

Ultimately, the discovery brought a great deal of closure to the Mason family, but it still left some questions unanswered. There was no explanation as to why Dakota had abandoned his own vehicle, or how he had come by Taylor's car, which had been kept in storage since her death. How did he manage to get into the Mason's garage? What baffled people the most, however, was the fact that most people who commit suicide by carbon monoxide poisoning in a car usually sit behind the steering wheel. Why had Dakota sat in the passenger's seat?

*I am a former English instructor at Crowder College and I enjoy writing and learning new things in my spare time. I currently reside in Monett, Mo., with my lovely wife, Sabina.*

# My Unforgettable Experience

Jessica Schmidt  
Monett  
Crowder  
Gold  
Nonfiction

*This was a very important time in my life and this very moment guided me to wanting to become a nurse, just by witnessing how great they are and how they work so hard to save lives.*

I was eight years old. There I was, lying in a bed at St. Jude's Children's Research Hospital, wrapped up in the bleach-scented white sheets. I stared at the bright green walls that had zoo animals painted on them, as if that were to make this place "happier." I heard the nurses pacing in the halls; obviously very busy caring for all of the children on that floor. I heard the IV machine beeping and buzzing. I remember looking over to see my mom sitting by my bedside with tears in her eyes. I was so confused on why I was there but was too young to understand the reasoning. This stage in my life was quite an adventure with being oblivious to everything going on around me, the emotional impact on everyone in my family, and the struggles that came along.

As a very young girl, I was constantly getting horribly ill. My immune system would just crash without hesitation. My skin was always very jaundiced, in addition to my eyes being the same way. My parents took me to many doctors, trying to find answers to my condition. Finally, after so many unknown diagnoses, we found a doctor that discovered that my spleen was swelling at a very fast pace. After going into deeper findings, the doctor said that my body was going into shock and that something in my liver, spleen, and gallbladder was cancerous and spreading. He sent me to St. Jude's Children's Research Hospital in Memphis, Tennessee, right away. My family was so scared and began to assume the worst of the situation. I was so used to being in so many different hospitals and doctor's offices that I didn't understand why this one was so much different. My mother and I left on a midnight flight to Memphis. I woke up in the hospital hooked up to an IV. All I remember the first time I went to St. Jude's was being in operation rooms, getting X-rays and CAT scans, as well as getting multiple blood tests done and sitting in waiting rooms every day for a week. I also remember my mom crying a majority of the time because she was so stressed out and worried because my doctor said I could possibly have cancer. I would hear her in the middle of the night talking to the main doctor on the floor.

"Doctor, what's wrong with my baby?" Mother whispered with a shaking voice.

"Lorie, we don't have any for sure answers yet, but hopefully will soon."

"Do you mean you don't have the test results or blood work back yet? We're going crazy in this place waiting for them to come!" Mother said with tears forming in her eyes.

"I know, but with Jessica's condition, it's very hard to determine what exactly is going on. How about this, we send you guys back home to your family to relax at home and come back down when the results are in? We can have you and Jessica out of here first thing in the morning."

So we left the next day.

The following week, St. Jude's called us to come back and do some follow-up tests. This time, my dad joined my mother in going down to Tennessee. While I was there, I played in the play room a lot while my parents were in meetings with doctors, specialists, and nurses. One day after a meeting, I asked my mom a question that I had been confused about for the last couple weeks.

"Mom, why am I the only kid with hair here?"

"Honey, it's because they have cancer. They take medicine that makes them lose their hair," she replied.

"Am I going to lose my hair since I'm here too?"

"I hope not, sweetie," she said softly.

I would lie awake in bed and quietly cry in fear that I would lose my hair and be deathly sick 24/7. I hated being in this hospital, even though the staff was super sweet and caring and all the kids were really nice as well, but I missed my family, my younger sister, my basketball team, and my friends. My assigned hospital room was not a great place to be either.

My dad and mom had to sleep in chairs over in the corner of the room. I slept in the most uncomfortable bed. It was as if I were sleeping on a rock. And with the IV beeping all through the night and the scent of alcohol wipes, I couldn't get any sleep because it wasn't our home. I wanted to be home in my own bed and not have to worry about any nurses coming to wake me up in the middle of the night in order to check my temperature or prick me with an ice-cold sharp needle.

After a couple days in the hospital, the doctor gave us some relieving news. I didn't have cancer or any signs of cancerous cells anywhere in my body! This news meant we



## Butterfly Wing

Evelyn Stanley  
Seneca High School  
Silver  
2D Media

*A charcoal drawing on yellow paper, I felt the need to create something that showed the gentleness of life... And what better than a butterfly? The male hand shows softness and trust from the butterfly, something I think we should all follow.*

finally got to go home! But with that blessing also came a curse. I had a hereditary blood disorder that affected some of my organs such as my liver, gallbladder, and spleen. This was passed on from my grandpa on my mom's side of the family. He told us that my blood cells produced three times as fast as a normal human body, and when the old blood cells were dumped into my liver, the liver is overloaded. He also told us that I was going to have to get my spleen removed eventually in my life.

The outcome wasn't the best, but it beat cancer by a thousand miles. My blood disorder became something that I had to accept and control. I have had my ups and down with it, but it has remained quite tame. I was very weak and extremely scared; however, I had to be very strong at such a young age. And to this very day, I appreciate all of the skilled individuals at St. Jude's Children's Research Hospital and loved ones that helped me through that difficult journey.



# Boredom

Madison McDonnell  
Neosho Christian  
School  
Bronze  
Nonfiction

Almost everyone I know seems to live a really awesome life. So many of my friends got the amazing chance to grow up on a farm or were blessed with siblings. So many stories could be written of all different varieties: inspirational, sorrow, comedy, drama. However, I, though very blessed, had neither of those experiences. Therefore, I will write about something I understand, and am very familiar with: boredom.

For example, you are in a Lowe's parking lot, waiting for your ride to finish picking out the 20 straightest pieces of lumber in the store, and you have nothing to do. You begin by thinking, pondering whatever comes to mind; but after pondering for a few minutes, you come to the conclusion that you don't feel like thinking much anymore. So next, you fidget, trying to get comfortable, most likely unsuccessfully. The next thing that happens is the most daunting: be warned. At first, you are just bored, but then you are bored and hungry.

In most cases, you begin by waiting out hunger, thinking, "They'll be out in just a minute." After approximately half an hour of time has elapsed, you consider going into the building to buy a candy bar. If you have no money to carry this out with, you attempt to fall asleep, thus eluding hunger. Sadly, at this point, your mind is commonly too bored to succumb to sleep.

The next plan of action starts by calling the person you're waiting on and asking how much longer they intend to be. If the answer is more than an hour, you most likely sit in the vehicle, crying while singing Adele songs and making funny faces at all the people that look at you weird, because you are beyond the point of caring.

If the answer is under an hour, there is hope! You can now fill 5-10 minutes of your time staring at a clock and waiting for the number to change every minute. If you're lucky, you could see two numbers change. When the time draws near for your boredom and hunger to

come to an end, you look back on your experiences and begin to realize that, in all reality, your situation wasn't that dire, and, if it were to happen again, you probably wouldn't mind as much. At this point, you can visualize your fast food favorite in hopes that whoever has caused you to go through this long, hunger-filled wait will swing by a burger joint and let you pick up something yummy to fill your tummy. And alas, the trials of boredom have momentarily subsided.

Now let's look at the principles of boredom. If you ask me, being bored is one of the easiest ways to strengthen your imagination. For it seems that, when one is bored, the world around you becomes 10 times more entertaining than it was when you were entertained! This is thanks

to the fact, I'm assuming is true, that being bored also helps you learn how to entertain yourself.

For example, when one is swinging on a swing set, you are entertained, and your mind needs not attempt to find something to entertain it. But when you are bored, you see the leaf that looks like

**"If the answer is more than an hour, you most likely sit in the vehicle, crying while singing Adele songs and making funny faces at all the people that look at you weird because you are beyond the point of caring."**

Abe Lincoln and the clouds that remind you of your pet rabbits storming the beaches of Normandy.

In the early stages of boredom, you begin to do little self-entertaining things such as, figuring out what "twiddling your thumbs" really means, or staring at whatever's above you, whether ceiling or sky, waiting for something interesting to happen up there. When you're bored, there is obviously nothing extremely apparent for you to do, so you use your very self and the things surrounding you to amuse yourself.

Hunger is the next phase of boredom. When you're bored and there's nothing to do, you have time to realize that your stomach is not currently satisfied. Having nothing better to do, you focus on this problem and begin to wish for food. If you are in a scenario where food is available, you will most likely ingest it, thus momentarily entertaining yourself.

## Rings and Things

Bunny Isham  
Neosho  
Community  
Bronze  
2D Media



After being bored so many times, you learn to always be prepared for boredom. You make sure that you almost always have a snack with you, or at least money to buy something with. Be prepared entertainment wise: bring paper and pencils, music, books; something fairly small and travel ready. If you're an adventure seeker and enjoy challenges, take nothing with you and face boredom and hunger straight on to test

your endurance and strength. Making boredom easier to cope with and far less bothersome, thus overcoming boredom.

*A senior at Neosho Christian School, Madison is a 2010, 2011, and 2012 Crowder Quill Award recipient. She enjoys photography, writing, drawing, playing piano, reading, doing arts and crafts, and being a Christian.*

# Where Did It All Start?

Kim McCully-Mobley  
Aurora  
Community  
Bronze  
Nonfiction

“This love  
for the Ozarks  
that gets bigger  
by the day.”

Where did it all start?”—quipped the lady behind the counter as she sacked up my treasures for the day. Lost in thought about my next adventure, her question gave me lots to think about on my ride home.

That was the question a middle-aged lady asked me a few weeks ago as I was winding my way through some towns, flea markets, thrift shops and used book stores in northwest Arkansas and southwest Missouri on a rainy Saturday afternoon. The truth is, I should have been home doing laundry, cooking supper or blowing the dust off my bookshelves in a small pretense at cleaning house. (Dusting ruins the historical integrity of your antiques, you know!)

Well, it started on the front porch of a small cabin off of Highway 62 near Green Forest, Arkansas. I have been making the trek there almost every year since I can remember. It is a place my Grandpa Herman McMorris built with his two hands in the 1920s. He took me to the cabin and told me stories throughout the 26 years that we shared this world together. When I visit, I can still hear his low, resonating voice telling stories about “the witch of Paxton Mountain” or the “little red-headed girl I was supposed to marry.

It is the spot where my mother, Faye McMorris Estes, was born—while Grandpa Herman put the gable ends on the roof above during a Thanksgiving snowstorm in 1924. My grandparents had a 63-year argument going about which one of them had the harder job. It is a place I read about in Mom’s diaries of growing up during the Great Depression. She writes about “beating peas”...“picking up rock”...chasing livestock...and walking to school. It is a place I go for quiet solitude and reverie to remember the stories of those who lived there, most of whom are now long gone from this world. Yes. That’s where it all must have started.

It could have started on a ladder-back kitchen chair, where I stood to reach the cabinet as I helped my Grandma Marie McMorris make mouth-watering sugar cookies using an old biscuit cutter to make the perfect shape. We decorated the tops of the cookies with circles lightly made with the sprinkles of sugar and the kiss of a thimble, that had been used to

darn socks, patch britches and quilt the covers for our antique bed—that was graced with the presence of welcomed, newspaper-wrapped hot irons on a cold winter’s night. Yes. I guess that’s where it really all started.

It might have started on the edge of a brown, Naugahyde couch with a big, silver mirror behind it reflecting the fingers of my Grandpa Frank Estes as they danced across the strings of an old banjo, that normally hung on the wall across the room. He would grin and play the familiar tune of “Cripple Creek,” while he did a little jig in his modest home on a rough backroad in Boone County, Arkansas.

Tapping my toes and trying my hand at my own little dance, I was mesmerized with his spirit, his flash for being just a little bit ornery when folks (mainly my Grandma Carrie Morris Estes) expected all of us to be so prim and proper. He’d put down the banjo, stoke the fire in the old pot-bellied stove, wink at me and pick up his cane as he headed for the door. That meant we were going for a magical walk up the small hill to the big, red barn that still stands today—near the green sign marked Elmwood Springs.

He gave me a beagle pup, which was the runt of one of his litters, one Christmas. The dog wasn’t supposed to make it. I connected with this little pup as I had heard all of the stories about how I wasn’t supposed to make it either—back when I was born. I learned early on, I think, how to take satisfaction with meeting challenges, proving people wrong and placing credit for small miracles in the hands of a loving and forgiving God—who heard the bluegrass sounds and the whispered prayers of my Arkansas kinfolk and granted them mercy to eek out a simple living in that rocky soil. Yes. That is surely where it all started.

It started on the pages of a worn law ledger owned by my great-grandfather, Thomas S. Estes. He hired out as a justice of the peace as a young married man making his home near Harrison, Arkansas, right after the Civil War. Interviewed by a Little Rock reporter before he died in the 1930s, he told a raucous tale of gathering up a posse to find the infamous Cole Younger, who had hid out in an alleged safe house near Lead Hill. Upon arriving at the scene and telling Cole Younger to come out and surrender, the alleged target stepped out



onto the porch and shot the hat off of the man nearest my grandpa. “Let’s go home, boys; Cole Younger ain’t done nothin’ to me today.” Cole Younger later said “The world may believe as it pleases,” when he was asked about his life of crime. That’s good enough for me as I choose to believe Grandpa Estes was pretty sharp that day as he realized he was in the thick of a battle he might not be able to win.

The truth is, I don’t actually know for sure where it all started—this love for the Ozarks that gets bigger by the day. I love the people here. I crave their stories. I get lost in research, reading through old newspapers, digging through letters and pictures and postcards from the lives of those who have made their homes here. We can only know where we’re going when we know we’ve been. The tenacity of heart and the strength of the spirit of the people of the Ozarks never ceases to amaze me as I file away the tidbits of my collections on marker trees, outlaws, home remedies, ghost towns, tomato canneries, the strawberry business, brush arbor revivals and Civil War stories

and artifacts that weave a powerful tale.

I have finally made peace with the fact that I don’t really know where it all started. I just latched on to the stories, the history, the lore, the legends and the magic of it all as a child—who spent summer mornings and holidays skipping, dancing and singing in the footsteps of my ancestors—not realizing the effects it would all have on me until I was grown. It may have started on the front steps of that old cabin, propped up in that wooden kitchen chair, toe-tapping on that brown Naugahyde “davenport,” or amidst the musty pages of marriage licenses and property disputes in that 1800s law ledger. You see, the beginning doesn’t matter to me as much as knowing that this “thing” I have for the Ozarks (its people, its heritage, its culture and its traditions) will never end.

*People often ask me about my passion for writing about the Ozarks, its colorful people and its rich history. This essay explains my belief in how we can only know where we’re going when we know where we’ve been.*

## Forgotten Riches

Jessica Cole  
Neosho Christian  
School  
Silver  
B&W Photography

*This reminded me of the changing traditions. This car was a treasure once.*



## Spiderland

Jessica Cole  
Neosho Christian  
School  
Bronze  
B&W Photography



# Indecisiveness

Sean Armstrong  
Neosho  
Staff  
Nonfiction

*People constantly ask me  
what I intend on doing  
for the rest of my life.  
I've never been able to  
give a straight answer.  
So, I decided to expand  
on the many different  
and somewhat strange  
things I want to be..*

“What do you want to do for the rest of your life?” That has been such a difficult question for me to answer lately. Most kids can shoot off answers like, “I want to be an orthopedic surgeon,” or “I want to be a chemical engineer for Pfizer.” But not me. I usually stutter off some ridiculous answer that makes no sense to anyone but me. It’s not that I’m lazy or anything like that; I just can’t decide what I want to do for the next 80 years of my life.

Maybe I should be a writer. I think I could be good at it. I have lots of ideas, and I’m pretty good at the fundamentals of writing. It’s just that too many ideas rush into my head all at once. I have problems deciding what would be interesting to someone else, and what’s just nonsense I should keep to myself. If I were a writer I could write a book. I don’t know what it would be about though. I truly feel like I have the capacity to write something that would make the human race stop and see the world differently. I just don’t know how to put it on paper. And I’m really indecisive. For

example, I’m writing this to just get a grade in my Magazine Production class. It started off about how I am a bad kid, and then changed into a sad story about my last relationship, and now it’s just a few paragraphs of me rambling about nothing.

**“I just wouldn’t want  
to rush into something  
with the very likely  
possibility to  
crash and burn.”**

Maybe I could be a picker like Mike and Frank on American Pickers. I kind of already do it. I haven’t made any money from it yet, and in all honesty, the things I pick probably have no monetary value whatsoever. But that’s fine with me. I have a good time doing it. The rush I get

when I start digging through a pile of “junk” that people pass by every day is probably near to that of a cocaine addict just after a hit. I go insane. My mind starts thinking about all the people who have used the stuff. What if someone famous had owned it? What if the matching license plates I found in the woods used to be on Brad Pitt’s first car? Probably not, but it makes for some interesting thoughts...

Maybe I should be a musician. That’s what I’ve wanted to be since I was a little kid. Even



though I didn't get my first guitar until I was 15, I've always had this dream of standing on a stage with thousands of people singing along with me. That has to be the greatest feeling in the world. I want to hear someone tell me that the chicken scratch that was once on my palm is now their favorite song. I can actually play the guitar a little, and when I sing along, it sounds fantastic. For the longest time, when people asked me what I wanted to be when I grew up, I just simply said, "Rock-star." Then one day my mom said I had no talent. I know she wasn't serious, but that sort of killed that dream.

Maybe I should be an actor. I could totally do that. People tell me all the time that I act like Seth Rogan and Zack Galifianakis. I don't know if they mean it in a good way, but I just say thanks because they're hilarious. However, if I wanted to be an actor, I would have to start trying out for plays and stuff, and that's not about to happen. For some unknown reason, kids that are in theater or drama have always seemed really strange to me. I don't mean that in a bad way. I'm just being honest. And besides, I wouldn't be able to keep my cool around Anne Hathaway if I met her in person. That woman is perfect in every sense of the word.

Maybe I should be a journalist. That would be awesome. I would get to meet and interview interesting people all the time, and I love doing that. I could learn about so many different things. After a while, I would be like a walking encyclopedia. I'm actually a journalism major right now. Recently though, I've been wondering if I should have chosen a different major. I love doing it; it's just that I just haven't had the chance to write about anything that interesting yet, so I'm having doubts. If I got to write about something really controversial, that would be neat. Also, I'm really bad with deadlines, and those are pretty important in journalism.

Maybe I should be a photographer. That would be so dang cool. I would get to travel the world to take pictures of mountains and models and old stuff. If I were a photographer, I could be artsy and creative. I could take all of the jumbled thoughts in my head, and try to interpret them on film. My first photography class assignment was supposed to be a self-portrait that described my personality. So, I took a bunch of the random things in my room and made a collage as a background. Then I sat in front of it and made a bunch of weird faces until I had that perfect shot. It actually turned out really neat. Maybe I'll enter that in the Quill too. The only bad thing bad about photography

is that it's a really competitive field. I would have to be VERY good to make it a career. Not that I don't have faith in myself, I just wouldn't want to rush into something with the very likely possibility to crash and burn.

What do I want to do with the rest of my life? I honestly have no clue. At the moment, I'm just too interested in too many different things. I cannot decide. But maybe, just maybe, one day I'll wake up and my mind will stop "freaking out". Maybe one day I'll be able to make sense of the overwhelming mountains of thoughts in my mind. But until then, I'm not going to stress out about it; I'm just going to do what makes me happy...whatever that is.

## Old School

Chad Cox  
Rocky Comfort  
Community  
2D Media  
Silver

*Composed of symmetrical designs, lines, and old school hotrod vibes, this pinstripping piece is made up of three colors hand painted on plexiglass.*





# Elementary Years

Brandon Carry  
Neosho  
High School  
Silver  
Nonfiction

**I**t was a cool fall day. The sky was clear and the wind was shallow. As the kids ran around the playground I was having an unusual recess. I ran a couple laps like my normal routine goes, but there was talk happening on the west side of the playground. Two girls were having a secretive discussion. I finished my laps and moved on to play at the tunnels with Kameron. Some time went on and Ashley appeared at the side of the tunnel. "Hey, umm, so do you want to go out with Reba?"

I shyly looked around unconfident and embarrassed. "I don't know?"

"Okay I'll tell her."

My nerves were dancing around, kicking and poking at my body, and I felt this need that I needed to avoid answering this question. I liked her, but my mom didn't like dating. As I began

to get out of the tunnel Ashley popped her head back in, "She said she wants an answer."

"Well... I just don't know. I don't want to say."

"Just uhh say oink for yes or moo for no."

I sat there letting my nerves get the best of me. At this point Kameron was laughing at the babbling fool sitting beside him. "Oink," I screeched.

I had done it. A huge sense of relief took over my nerves and executed them where they stood. The rest of recess I spent ignoring her, but occasionally looking over to see her running around with her friends. Elementary dating, such a joke.

*I wrote this to recall what my friends  
were like growing up.*



**Mirror Mirror on The Wall** Patti Richardson | Fayetteville | Community | Silver | B&W Photography

*This piece takes a look at our obsession as a culture over beauty.*

# The Wonderful Life of a Pencil

This is a warning for all others of my kind. The humans call us... pencils. They use us nearly constantly. The lucky guys are lost and never to be used again. Oh, the cruel humans and their excessive writing.

I was once as beautiful as the others, with the eraser on my head, full and gorgeous as the humans' hair, and my stylishly trimmed foot that was cut to perfection. But all that ended when I was 'bought'. And they say slavery is illegal, posh. My new "owner" took me to a wretched machine that sneered and laughed as I screamed in agony from the pain it wrought by scraping my foot to the lead. The human powered it unfazed by my desperate pleas for it to stop. When it finally did, however; my suffering was far from over. They brought me over to, what they call, a piece of paper. And before I knew it, I had an awful feeling on the inside that was a constant pain that slowly nicked away at my sanity. When I finally decided to look down, I first noticed that the constant buzz like sound was the paper laughing and exclaiming rather loudly, "Oh stop it, stop it! You're going to tickle me to death! It huuurrzzz! Pleahehezzz! Stop itzz!" Confused as to why it would say that, I looked at my numb foot and fainted at the horrid sight that my eyes beheld before my denying brain. When I came to, I saw that my foot had been sharpened to a point and my innards were now being forcefully scraped across the now unconscious paper. As I felt the scraping pain I realized the painful future fate had in store for me, in turn, I fainted again.

After who knows how long, I was once again graced with consciousness and felt only an unnerving numbness that encased my whole being. Then I regrettably opened my eyes to a horrifying sight that still gives me nightmares today, an empty notebook entitled *1,000 Uses of Pens, Pencils and Other Writing Utensils!* A BOOK ON TORTURE! AND I WAS GOING TO HELP CREATE IT! Oh the horrifying possibilities it would show. I just knew that the pain would be unbearable beyond belief! And if I didn't escape soon, I too would lose my sanity as my cousin did. They called him a... highlighter. He lost his mind after the humans used his very blood to go over our other cousin's blood, the pen; oh, by the ink in his vein and the lead in my body, I was petrified!

After what felt like hours, the human finally came to 'relieve' me of the agonizing anticipation of the awaiting terrors called torture. Well, at least I thought so. Instead my "caretaker" took me to a fear ridden place, a filing cabinet drawer. It was filled with family members from every ethnicity, everyone ranging from the English quill to the Asian brush. Such a heart wrenching sight. I was laid in between my siblings and half siblings, the 'mechanical' pencils.

When the drawer closed, a 'clicky' pen rolled over and on to me and four others apologizing the whole way. Most of the responses were incoherent mutterings of the insane with only a few "its ok"s from newer 'sane' guys like me.

The sobbing from a pencil next to me broke my thoughtless trance I wandered into. After feeling unrelenting guilt, I finally gathered enough courage to ask what was wrong. The answer almost brought me to tears. He came in with a sister of ours and she was taken and never brought back. With a few sniffles myself, I asked how long he had been here. They had been here roughly two days! How long will it take me to go missing!

Contemplating the possibilities of 'no return', I wondered aloud when I would also go insane. The 'clicky' pen actually answered, with an angry tone filled with resentment, for whom I could only wonder. He called me a newbie!.. Then I knew I was doomed. Anyway, he said it depends on my resolve and that if I stay resilient and don't give in I would be 'just fine'. With that in mind, I asked how long he had been there. He replied with an astounding six to eight weeks! He also said he was the oldest 'sane one' minus the quills and brushes, yea right.

Even though I learned such 'wonderful' information, I had just to ask what happened to him when he was used. But instead of the 'clicky' pen answering, the mechanical pencil, that previously laid there quietly, spoke.

"When I was used, the human pounded on my head rattling my brain and forcing the very inside of my body out of my only appendage!" he exclaimed rather loudly which cause a chorus of 'shushing, that made me think 'why?' In a much quieter, but equally intense, voice he continued, "It hurt tremendously, and when it broke, they pounded

Lorhanna Childers  
McDonald County  
High School  
Silver  
Fiction

*This story is to entertain its readers and to make the reader think "What is inanimate objects were alive?" I was only writing something for fun to relive some stress from the days work.*

[Continued to 26]

## The Wonderful Life of a Pencil

[Continued from 25]

### A Boy and His Truck

Evelyn Stanley  
Seneca  
High School  
Honorable Mention  
Color Photography

*My younger brother has always loved this truck at my grandmas, and always says it's his.*

*Of course, it's so old it probably will never run.*

*So, I felt like it was a good piece to shoot with when I did pictures of them for Christmas.*

*the first or second pounding, but if bad jujū had struck, I'm conscious for three or more!"*

*"My experience," the 'clicky' pen interrupted, "was much like his. But I dealt with the sickening feeling of being drained of your very being as you watched your blood be scribbled down on paper in the form of illegible Quill scratch!.. I then realized I had to stay awake no matter what, or risk losing my sanity!.."*

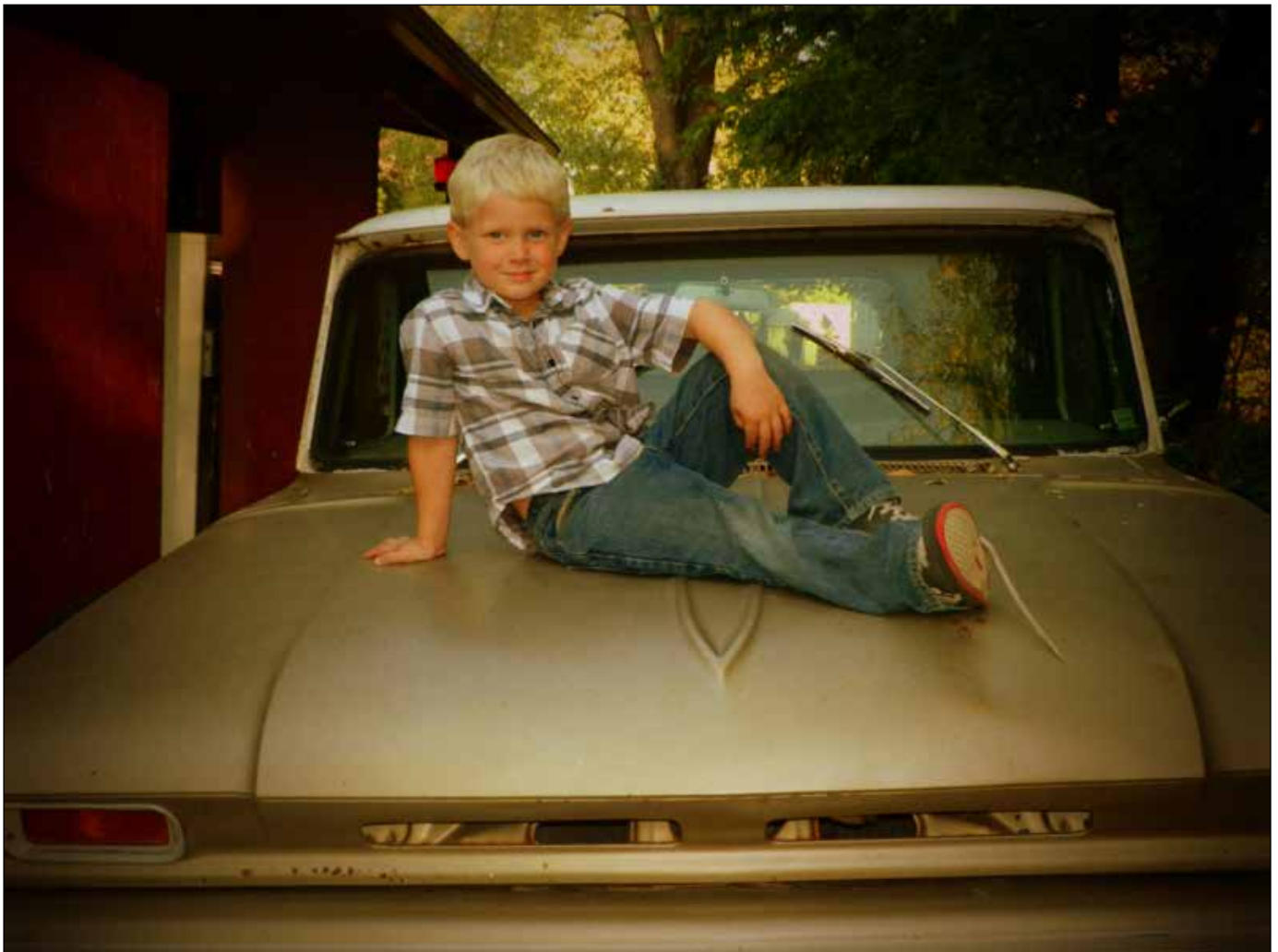
After telling them my gruesome experience, the world around me shook as the drawer opened. All I could do was wait and pray that it wasn't me being picked. Instead, the oh so brave 'clicky' pen was chosen.

He left screaming, **"BRING IT ON! I CAN HANDLE ANYTHING YOU MONSTERS THROW AT ME!"** When his voice was finally muffled, all I could do was hope he was true to his words.

After a while, I drifted off to sleep and

into nightmares of horrendous volume. I saw the notebook laying on a table open to the first page that was silent for once, that truly scared me. I was being carried over to my awaiting torture when it suddenly vanished out of sight and the floor came flying to me at an alarming speed. Then, "SNAP" echoed through my ears when I land. Fearing the inevitable, I laid there staring at the lead that I once called my foot. Blinking slowly, I watched the silhouetted human pick me up and take me to the cruel machine that was black as the night with the lights out and with eyes as red as the ink in red pens. I tried and tried to convince the human to let me go until I lost my voice and watched my ruined foot slowly enter the bladed mouth of my torturer. Right as the machine started laughing, I found my voice and screamed as I woke up.

I heard a few laughs and someone had the nerve to say it was just newbie nightmares. Before I said anything, the drawer opened and mister "clicky" pen was dropped in. He was unconscious. The mechanical pencil then stated





that it was an ink induced coma that is caused when pens lose too much ink in one setting. All I could do was stare at his lifeless body. The first sign of his awakening was a horrible gut piercing scream. Then he lapsed over into an unnerving silence. Shocked stiff, I just stared at the ceiling listening to the now muffled voices of my 'roommates'. When I realized I was out of the drawer I started to hyperventilate. I was horrified when saw the table come into view, but as luck has it, I was dropped, some deja vu moment huh. As I landed, I heard a bark like noise and felt something pierce my sides in multiple locations causing a searing pain to course through my body. As I was soaked by some slime, I was being yanked around in all directions until I

heard the missing "SNAP". I fell to the ground and with a shudder, I finally lost consciousness into a dreamless sleep.

When I awoke, I first noticed a bright light shining right in my eyes and my other half laid before me. When my eyes adjusted, I was greeted by an odd sight, a screen. It had words flowing a crossed it at a mesmerizing pace. When I read them I realized it was trying to communicate with me. **"Hi, I'm Computer. Who are you?"** All I could was answer. He told me his story and how he had *so* much knowledge in his possession. So I told my story. Now I just sit here in the dark with you and a jabbering can and a bag that doesn't know the meaning of quiet. It's a wonder I didn't snap earlier.

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## Being Oneself is Forever Cherished

Our society is all about having the nicest things and looking a certain way. People who do this are the ones who get noticed and idolized by others.

Why is it that people act this way and all have this same goal? Americans never get tired of having the nicest things, looking like the people in magazines, and showing off as much as possible. Media has a huge effect on Americans and sometimes it is hard to see that, but popularity has many effects on Americans.

The first affect is people putting their selves so far in debt that our economy is in a terrible condition. Americans think that having the nicest homes, vehicles, or wearing the nicest clothes makes them somebody. But in some eyes flashing unnecessary things can be a sign of ignorance. Is popularity so important that it means going into debt for some people? Thousands of people lose their homes or vehicles because of the unnecessary decisions that are made, people tend to learn the hard way that material things are not important. Working hard for these things can give a person a sense of pride and accomplishment.

Another affect that the media has on people is the way people should look. Not only by the clothes that they wear but the way peoples bodies should look. Women in magazines are always perfect, from their thin bodies to their styled hair that takes hours to get exactly right. But this is not only an issue for women. All men in magazines are also extremely handsome and have the perfect body type as well, Needless to say, starting at a young age, both sexes start

thinking about what they should look like. With this topic comes the many cases of anorexia and bulimia. Diseases like this should never even be thought, it is sad that so many Americans do it.

Issues like this are not going to be fixed anytime soon. Watching it pass from generation to generation is what we have to look forward to. As little kids grow up having all the nice things and whatever they want they will expect the same. Shockingly this does not stop there, when their kids come along some day they are going to try to give them everything they want. It is a repeating cycle that cannot be stopped. Depressing as it seems it is true. Is there even a way that we could stop Americans from stopping this trend? No, not with all of the new technology, the new fashions, and hot new muscle cars every year. There is no hope; this has been going on for a long time and will continue to keep expanding.

We as the people are the ones who invent these things; getting paid pretty well to do it to. Having nice things is not bad if people can afford it, it is when they become broke and in debt the rest of their lives over it when it starts to become sad. Having the natural urge to want something better for yourself is not necessarily a bad thing, but spending every penny you have is. There are plenty of people in this world that do not have money and that are happy with their lives.

*My entry is to inspire people to be happy with what they have and to be happy with who they are.*

Micayla Blinzler  
Pierce City  
Crowder  
Bronze  
Nonfiction

## Horse

Santos Torres  
Neosho  
High School  
Bronze  
3D Art



# Life, Serenity and the Dark Trunk of Despair

James Walls  
Neosho  
Crowder  
Silver  
Fiction

*This was a random work of mine, concocted from various measurements of boredom and sleep-deprivation, in which the end results depict a strangely humorous predicament for the main character.*

I stood there alone, gazing off into the far distance ahead. I could see it all so clearly now, as if for once I finally saw things with open eyes. The fields were so vast and expansive, with only a few trees standing tall and proud in the lush green world around me. And the sun, so bright and luminous in the sky above, seemed to shine down with its warmth as it touched upon my skin. I couldn't help but smile a bit, trying not to take this moment for granted as I breathed the warm air, spreading my arms out wide as I took it all in. This was life. This was what it meant to be alive. This... This...

I slowly opened my eyes, finally coming to once again. I could feel the trunk of the car seeming to close in around me, and I now found it very hard to breathe as I looked about. It was dark, very dark, and I felt rather confined and claustrophobic as the car sped on at its reckless

pace down some highway I could not see. Feeling the painful knot on the back of my head, it all came rushing back to me like some horrid nightmare come to life.

It was supposed to be a simple delivery – two regular pan pizzas and a bottle of Coke on the side. How it had gone so terribly wrong, I did not know. But now, locked in the trunk of my own delivery car, I couldn't help but wonder what would happen next. This wasn't supposed to happen, not to me. I was only doing my job. Watching as the close confines of the trunk seemed to move in even closer, my mind began to panic once again.

My mother had always told me to go to law school, but no, I just had to take up pizza delivery! And now look where it had gotten me – hijacked and locked in my own trunk. I had better get a good tip out of this; otherwise, I would really be pissed by the time this was all over.

# The Quality of a Leader

Ray Kroc, founder of McDonald's, once said, "The quality of a leader is reflected in the standards they set for themselves." But what does that mean?

Many people go through life wanting to be the leader, feeling that it is about power and control, casting aside their responsibilities so that their followers (or employees, whatever the case may be) can pick up after them. There are many people who get into leadership positions without truly understanding what it means or what it takes to be a good and effective leader.

On planet Earth there are more than 7 billion people in existence - 7 billion souls that could be leaders. The question is, if all 7 billion were to have the ambition to become a leader, how would there be any followers? In truth, the answer is simple: a true leader knows how and when to be a follower. A true leader can support another without having all the power and control. Also, they can see a cause and lead by example; in this case, as an example of what a faithful and diligent follower or worker should be. A leader does not always have to be the head of a group or organization but a living standard for others to see and aspire to.

Another misconception about leadership is that a leader gives the orders and everyone jumps at his command. A good leader, however, realizes that he has an obligation to his followers, that he not only must lead them, but also must humble himself and be a servant to them. A leader must ensure his followers' progress and not fall behind. He has an obligation to his group or organization, to be there when his people need him, to be willing to listen when they speak, and to be willing to consider when they give counsel or complaint. He must be willing to look at situations from all angles and decide what would better help his followers, not himself. A true leader recognizes that they must be selfless.

Pride and arrogance are not qualities becoming of a leader either. Being a good leader doesn't always mean standing behind one's convictions, right or wrong, but, at times, means being able to humble oneself in front of others

and admit one's mistakes. Again, good leaders are servants to their people, so they can not expect any better of their followers if they can not humble themselves. A leader who can admit they are wrong is stronger and braver than one who stands behind their words or actions even when they know they are wrong, and others will recognize this strength.

Good leaders resolve conflicts and issues within their group, ensuring that everyone is working together toward their collective goal. Miscommunications and disputes within a group can slow progress, if not halt it entirely, and, in many instances, others in the group will take sides, enlarging the original issue. Leaders must work promptly to see that small matters don't get out of hand, work as a mediator and help others come to a compromise; they can not ignore internal issues and hope they go away.

Lastly, being a leader does not mean working alone. Even if there is only one follower, there is still someone to consult with. Good leaders realize they are part of a group, and as a group, realize everyone has a say. Participation is essential in all things, but people quickly lose interest when their words fall on deaf ears, or their suggestions are overlooked because

leaders feel they know best. Good leaders will hold group discussions, gain feedback from their followers, consider their words and weigh them against their own beliefs, and compromise as best they can. Not all advice or counsel will be sound, not all of it will be used, but the willingness to listen, to consider, even compromise, will show an effort in not only being a humble servant, but also in recognizing that everyone is part of the group.

All in all, good leaders realize they lead by example and are a servant to their followers. Nelson Mandela, anti-apartheid activist and former President of the African National Congress (ANC), once said "It is better to lead from behind and to put others in front, especially when you celebrate victory when nice things occur. You take the front line when there is danger. Then people will appreciate your leadership."

Jesse O. Walls  
Neosho  
Staff  
Nonfiction

*This was inspired by a talk I got to have with Mr. James Tatum, in which he talked about servant leadership.*

**"Good leaders resolve conflicts and issues within their group, ensuring everyone is working together toward their collective goal."**





*I looked at an old baseball glove to draw this portrait with pencil.*

## The Monster That Never Knocked

Alison Pendergrass  
Lockwood  
Community  
Honorable Mention  
Poetry

“Look at those fangs!” the little boy said,  
Staring from the top of the stairs with dread.  
Those eyes big and green,  
Filled with anger it seems.  
Why are mom and dad leaving me,  
With a scary monster, ugly and mean?  
This monster, huge with talons that gleam,  
Its fiery mane colored a dark burgundy.  
Mom and Dad leave -- the monster turns and looks at me.  
“Jacob would you like to eat some cookies and watch T.V.?”  
Maybe this babysitter won’t be so bad.  
So far she is better than the last one I had!  
“Of course you have to do your homework and clean your room.”  
OH NO! I spoke too soon...

*My inspiration is a personal babysitting experience; I being the monster.*

# Sugar Creek

Sugar Creek was as cold as ice,  
where it ran  
below our shack,  
Rippling; crystal water, just right for  
fishing way out back.  
We didn't have a well, so we carried  
from that stream,  
I used to trudge those buckets, thinking  
mom was mean.  
For I couldn't see that dishes needed  
to be done,  
She always interrupted, when I  
was having fun.  
Come Saturday night in the summer-  
time, we'd head for that water,  
To do our weekly bathing, cleaning  
all the things we oughta.  
Now mama, was the praying kind,  
she tried to teach us well,  
All the things about the Lord, to save  
our souls from hell.  
She even brought the preacher home  
to baptize everyone,  
He said he used the water, I thought  
it might be kinda fun.  
We went to the edge and gently  
waded in,

He said this will clean your heart,  
and save your soul from sin.  
I didn't worry none, till he pulled me  
truly down,  
And I came up yelling, and dancing  
all around.  
My brothers were all laughing, but none  
of them could see,  
It wasn't the Lord who made me jump,  
but a crawdad hold of me.

Jean Stevens  
Granby  
Community  
Silver  
Poetry



## Exquisite Life

Maya Garner | Seneca High School  
Honorable Mention | B&W Photography

*The waterfall looks like life itself is gushing out from the rock.*



## Woman's Work is Never Done

Sherry Sandtorf  
Seneca  
Community  
Honorable Mention  
Digital Art

*Wanting to help even  
standing on a chair.*

[Left]  
**Country  
 Fields**

Josh Leyva  
 Seneca  
 Crowder  
 Honorable Mention  
 Color Photography



*Taken in Colombia, South America*

[Right]  
**Windmills**

Madison McDonnell  
 Neosho Christian  
 School  
 Honorable Mention  
 Digital Art



*Using the energy provided through wind God created*

# Escape from Florida

Heath Jenkins  
 Monett  
 Crowder  
 Silver  
 Nonfiction

My family has always looked forward to leaving Florida in the torrid summer months. It is a tremendous relief to get out of the heated hustle and bustle of summer living in Florida. Each summer, we follow the yellow brick road to our hometown in Southwest Missouri.

As we drive through several states, the world round us changes. In Alabama, we begin to notice changes. The trees appear to be touchable, offering soft, plush, leaves that sway in the breeze, and the grass actually invites us to share its place rather than persuading us away with mounds of intruding fire ants. As each state brings new surroundings, our anticipation builds, and home seems closer all the time.

Leaving the sandy flat lands and entering an area where we are suddenly surrounded by the hills and limestone rock are by far the most awakening moments. Mississippi and Arkansas offer brilliant scenery with majestic hills and checkerboard farmlands. As we wind through the curves of the northern region of Arkansas, home is now very close: we are almost there. In eighteen hours, we have driven from wide-open flatlands to a narrow, winding road surrounded by hillsides of stone and trees. Around every curve deer and turkey claim their place in the world as they graze through the land.

The journey home is almost complete. As we begin our final descent through the state of

Arkansas into southwest Missouri, the surroundings become comfortably familiar. Before long a sign that reads “Branson 12 miles” welcomes us along with fields of grazing cattle. Through the last stretch of Arkansas the brown foliage from the summer drought surround us as we make our way across the Missouri line.

It is at this point that our family, even our youngest daughter, knows that our journey home is almost complete. Our middle daughter is jokes that she can “smell” Me maw’s biscuits and gravy already. Approximately thirty minutes passes and as our vehicle takes us through the “Queen City of The Ozarks.” We see the red and white smoke stacks of Battlefield Power and Light plant. As we travel down Highway 60 through the familiar towns of The Ozarks, our journey is getting closer to the end. In approximately twenty minutes we reach our destination of Monett, Mo. The 21-hour journey through five states is coming to an end.

As we pull into our hometown of Monett, Mo., we began to see familiar faces that we haven’t seen in several months. The feeling of home surrounds us all and the excitement to see family and friends rises. As we reach the driveway that leads to our home, a group of family members are there to greet us. As I put the car into park, the feeling of exhaustion overwhelms my body. Barely able to move, I climb out of the car and, at that moment, I realize that there really is no place like home.

*This is a descriptive essay on my family’s return home from Florida.*



# Mama's Clay Marbles

Mike stood listening to the many strange sounds in the old barn. The school bus had come and he had run away to hide. Before coming here to live with his great-grandpa, he had walked to school with his mama.

She sang silly songs to him. Big trees had lined the walk, in fall their leaves crunched like cornflakes before you poured on the milk. Mike saw something in the dust. Bending down he found five round balls. Picking them up, he felt their coolness.

"You have found your mama's clay marbles," his great-grandpa said

Mike wanted to drop them but something kept his fist closed over his treasure. "You were supposed to ride the bus to school."

Mike felt lost and cold, cold as the marbles in his hand.

"Mike, she is coming back. She has to go and serve our country for a little while," his great-grandpa said.

"Daddy left and never came back," Mike said.

"This is different, she will come back," Great-grandpa said.

"No she will not; she has left me like daddy did," Mike said.

"Would you like to talk to her?"

Mike had not spoken to his mama since she went away. "You can show her what you found," his great-grandpa told Mike. Mike shook his head.

"Mike, grandpa said you missed the bus." His mama's voice came from a cell phone. No, he was never speaking to her again.

"I love you, I wish you loved me," his mama said.

Her voice began to sing, he could smell the leaves, feel the cold of the air, and see the frost pictures. Her voice touched him. He wanted to show her the clay marbles.

Turning slowly he looked into her face. She smiled. Mike opened his fingers to show her his treasures.

"They look like the ones I made; Grandpa can teach you how to make them," his mama said.

"You are not coming back," Mike said.

"Mike, I love you. I will come home. This is just something I have to do," his mama said.

Mike looked down at the marbles in his

hand, the marbles his mama had made.

"Mike when you want to think about me, look at the marbles," his mama said.

Touching the round balls in his hand would be like touching her hand.

"I love you mama. Promise me you will come back?" Mike said softly.

"I promise. I have to go now. We can talk again. Maybe you can send me some clay marbles that you make," his mama said.

"Maybe," Mike said as the call ended.

"Want to come inside? We can have some milk and talk," his great-grandpa said.

Touching the marbles he knew she would come back. He would make her some clay marbles to remind her of her promise, that way they would have a part of each other to hold in their hands.

Sandy Jordan  
Neosho  
Community  
Honorable Mention  
Fiction

*A child needs something to hang onto when there seems nothing left. This is for the children life behind through the endless wars we are now enduring.*

## Ferris Wheel

Julie Krueger | Carl Junction | Community  
Honorable Mention | B&W Photography



*I was inspired...to take this after seeing some other pictures of 'abandoned' amusement parks. I happened to catch the sun at the right time.*

## Standing with Texture

Jordan Heigle  
Oronogo  
Crowder  
Gold  
B&W  
Photography

*I love textured  
backgrounds. I base a  
lot of my photos on the  
texture that I can find  
around me. This photo  
is just that, a textured  
background with the  
model right up against  
it.*





# Fading Memories

Silently, painfully  
Names forgotten,  
Drip, drip, dripping  
From river of mind.

No longer seeing  
No longer hearing,  
No longer cheerful  
No longer friendly.

Sadder, lonely  
Never brighten,  
Always lost  
In fading past.

Curse these bitter  
Fading memories,  
Half forgotten  
Friends and dreams.

But friendly face  
Ever buried,  
In this heart  
Of fading memories.

JoJo Brinkhoff  
Stella  
Staff  
Poetry

*The things that matter  
the most will never be  
forgotten.*



## Glacier Daydream

Amy Sampson  
Monett  
Community  
Silver  
Digital Art

*On the Canadian side  
of Glacier National  
Park is the Prince of  
Wales hotel which boasts  
an outstanding  
panoramic view of  
Upper Waterton Lake.  
This afternoon view  
took my breath away  
with its beauty, and  
I cannot wait to visit  
again!*



# Venture

Lea Carter  
Salt Lake City, Utah  
Community  
Silver  
Fiction

*I wrote this to capture a  
snapshot of an  
interesting character.*

*formerly from  
southwest Missouri*

Ellen took off her hat and threw it in the trash can. The funeral was over. The lawyer was setting up downstairs, and after the will was read, even the relatives would go home. Ellen smiled despite herself as she thought of the will. William O'Hara, her father, had never been a conventional man.

A firm rap on the door brought Ellen back to the present. "Come," she responded, not bothering to try to rescue the hat.

"It's just me, Miss," Thomas announced, opening the door without so much as leaning in. "The lawyer says he's ready."

"I understand," she acknowledged. Then, as the door began to close, she called, "Thomas? You will accompany me down, please."

After a fractional pause, Thomas opened the door the rest of the way. Young and strong, he didn't look much like a tutor, let alone the gifted artist that he was. Not only was he both, he was also a valued friend, and had been since her father had brought him home almost six years ago.

Stepping into the hall, Ellen waited until he'd closed the door to her bedchamber, and then carefully straightened his tie. They were friends, strictly, but these days the house was full of prying eyes... Sighing as she heard her Aunt Bethel approaching, Ellen dropped her hands and took a step back. Cueing up a smile, Ellen turned to greet the inevitable complaint.

"Ellen," barked the older woman, "I don't understand it. I don't understand it at all. When I was your age," she shook a plump finger at her niece, "I didn't let the servants wonder who was boss!"

Ellen blinked rapidly, trying hard not to laugh aloud. "Why," she asked demurely, "has someone been trying to boss you, Aunt Bethel?"

"That parlor maid of yours!" snapped Aunt Bethel. "She up and packed all my things. Without asking! Told me all the guests were leaving after the will reading." Aunt Bethel's demeanor changed noticeably now, and she reached out to pat Ellen's arm. "Of course, I have no intention of leaving you here by your lonesome."

She shot Thomas a disapproving look –

what had her sister's husband been thinking, bringing a strange young man into the house, right *into* it, as though he were family? And then leaving the mess behind when he died. Well, Bethel wouldn't have it. She was going to stay right there and protect her niece's reputation! And not in that pokey old guest room, either. As soon as the will was read, she planned to have her things moved to the Sapphire room. She'd soon have this house straightened out, she would!

"Oh, but it would be quite impossible for you to stay, Aunt Bethel," Ellen responded, trying to sound a little dismayed. "We're closing up the house!" Ellen felt Thomas' steady gaze on her, and wished she'd had more time to talk to him over the past few days. "I'm afraid I have urgent business with our representatives in Vega."

Aunt Bethel's mouth dropped open at a peculiar angle.

"We mustn't keep the lawyer waiting," Thomas inserted hastily, and taking Ellen firmly by the elbow, propelled her down the hallway. He'd been

assisting her father with his business endeavors for so long that he knew every detail, and was perplexed at her reference to an appointment in Vega.

Mr. Poulton had scarcely set the computerized pad down before Uncle Bertram exploded to his feet.

"This is nonsense," he sputtered, looking for something to slam his fist down on. A long-time Judge in the colony, he was used to emphasizing his declarations in this fashion.

Mr. Poulton didn't even blink. He'd been expecting the fireworks, had even won a private bet with himself as to who would verbalize their disbelief first.

"It is not nonsense," Mr. Poulton said clearly, his voice cutting through the excited chatter that had begun. Mr. Poulton was not a physically imposing man, but when he rose the room fell silent. "It is the last will and testament of Mr. William O'Hara, father of Ellen O'Hara. Miss O'Hara," he turned to her, "if you will add your signature to that of your father's, I shall be on my way."

"When I was your age," she shook  
a plump finger at her neice,  
"I didn't let the servants wonder  
who was boss!"

Ellen acted quickly so that none of the relatives had a moment to protest. Setting the stylus on the desk beside the pad, Ellen smiled at Mr. Poulton. That much was done. To be sure, the storm had just begun, but what a relief to be at last beyond the black clouds and distant rumblings and into the thunder and lightning stage of things!

Turning to Thomas, Ellen held out her hands. "Welcome to the family, brother."

Thomas rose slowly, his face composed, but his eyes signaling his confusion. "Brother" was not how he would have Ellen thinking of him. Bypassing her outstretched hands, he boldly folded her into his arms. "You might have told me," he whispered reproachfully.

"You might have said 'no,'" she laughed softly, hugging him back. "And it meant so much to Father to have his beloved home and business in capable hands."

"And his daughter?" Thomas dared ask. He reluctantly released her when she pulled away, but noted the color in her cheeks hopefully. The tumult around them at that point was too much to ignore, and he turned, calmly, to face the dozen or so people who, for whatever reason, had expected to be rewarded for being born into the same family as William O'Hara.

"It would seem," he said firmly, speaking just loud enough to be heard, "that your business here is concluded." An honest young man of exceptional character, Thomas did not flinch under the gaze of the disappointed crowd.

Realizing that they had no recourse, legal or otherwise, relatives shuffled out, muttering to themselves that it just wasn't fair. Mr. Poulton closed his case, nodded briskly, and saw himself out, shutting the library door behind him. Privately, he thought Ellen would have to look long and hard to find a better man than Thomas.

Ellen took a deep breath and a few steps away from Thomas. She could see now that it wasn't going to be easy. The last thing she wanted was to hurt him...could she make him see?

"I've always dreamed of visiting Vega," she said slowly. "The spiraling mist columns, the whistling plains...and they've discovered a new spice field that will need developing." She stared out the window, imagining that if she watched his face, she might change her mind and marry him, a grave injustice to them both.

"It's too much, Ellen," Thomas said at last. "This house has always been your home." Stepping towards her, he held out his hands, forgetting that she couldn't see the gesture. "Can't it be *our* home?" A man with few familial connec-



tions, Thomas instinctively wanted a family of his own, one of which he could be proud. He could imagine no better partner in such an undertaking than his dear Ellen.

"No, Thomas," Ellen whispered. Turning to face him, she shook her head. "I'm a fool for saying it, but no." Studying his face, she watched as he shut himself off. Looking into his eyes now was like trying to see through blast doors. "I happen to know that you're in love with someone else."

Thomas opened his mouth, startled out of his calm, but could think of nothing to say.

"Soon you will realize it for yourself," she assured him, smiling a little. It was true in a roundabout way. Her suspicions were based on past observation and confirmed by his hesitation

[Continued to 38]

## Caught

Jaclyn Kidd  
Neosho High School  
Honorable Mention  
B&W Photography

*I wanted to catch the raw tribal look of my sister as a dancer.*

## Venture

[Continued from 37]

now. He wanted to love her, but in reality her primary recommendation to his heart was that she was convenient to him. "I'll ask only one favor of you, if you will. I cannot picture myself traveling alone from here to Vega. I have done little traveling, and never in such a provincial area. Could you secure a companion for me? Someone strong and honest, who will keep me from making too many mistakes?"

"Provincial?" he echoed, hiding behind amusement. "There's nobody out there but a few pirates and pioneers. Law is a distant thing, one that troubles them little." Frowning, he

stopped himself mid-tirade. "You will indeed need a protector."

Ellen wisely chose not to contradict him. Nothing she could say now would change the way he saw things and she had already said all that she intended to say on the subject.

"How will you live once you arrive?" he asked, his frown deepening. "Your father's will left you only the income from his shipping business."

"I shall live as simply as possible," she answered calmly. "Father bought a house there for me months ago and put it in my name. And my new wardrobe arrived yesterday."

[Continued to 41]



### Disintegrated

Kayla Hopper | Carl Junction | Crowder | Silver | Digital Art

*My inspiration for this piece was to emphasize the struggles I've been through and how it has slowly torn me apart over time.*



# Eccentric Neighbors

It was a lazy summer day. I was sitting in my old rocker on the front porch, my eyes closed, feeling the gentle breeze trickle across my skin and I began to contemplate my neighbors. In my childhood days if you needed to borrow a cup of sugar it was common to go to your neighbor. Everybody knew each other by name, and if there was a need you lent a helping hand. Today's society is a different story! In the hustle of this fast-paced, computerized world, there is little time for pleasantries. Regardless, I try to make myself friendly. Upon close examination you could easily say; "I am surrounded by eccentric people in my neighborhood; there's the little bald lady, the writer that only comes out after dark, the couple that are reunited every day, and the widow with cats."

First there's the little bald lady by the name of "Georgia." Georgia is the kind of proper lady that you'd see in Glamour magazines. Her pastel dresses hug just the right curves embellishing a slender frame. Her words are spoken with an elegant grace, but her most astounding feature is the magnificent hair piled in luscious mounds atop a delicate face. I was outside planting asters when I heard a piercing howl for help. Jumping up, I saw Georgia catapult over the fence arms thrust in the air. Sprinting over I reached up grasping the object she was so desperately trying to catch, "a wig!" You can imagine my shock, when upon closer observation, I discovered Georgia was bald. My thoughts swam together, "Did Georgia have cancer? Was this horrible disease the product of her baldness? Where was her family? Or was she simply fending alone?"

Noticing the questioning look in my eyes, she responded with exasperation, "I shave my head, because I prefer wigs to the real thing!" That I would say is "a little eccentric."

Another instance of eccentricity is the neighbor across the street "Mr. Winter." I probably would not have even noticed him except for on the day he moved into his new home seven moving trucks were perched out front. I was pondering over how the movers would

accomplish squeezing all that furniture into such a small house, when I caught sight of Mr. Winter, (although I did not know that was his name at the time). He was a tall, imposing man with a red mustache and grey penetrating eyes. His lean frame was draped in a black cloak that gave him an almost gothic appearance. In an instant he'd disappeared into the house, and for three months it was as though he did not exist! The shuttered windows of the house remained ominously dark, the yard become overgrown with weeds, the mail piled up, and I began to wonder if something serious had happened to the man. On my daily walks, I found myself

"Why don't you ever come outside?" Scowling he replied,  
"I do, but only at night to refresh my writing abilities."

slowing when I passed his premises and sniffing the air for a stench. Certainly I would inform the proper authorities if there was any sign of a discrepancy. Then one day I got a manuscript in the mail marked Mr. Win-

ter with his address on it. Curiosity getting the better of me, I impulsively rang his door-bell. After several moments I heard a scuffling sound and a yell, "Stop that incessant ringing!" After what seemed an eternity the door was flung open and he stood there glowering. Flustered I said, "The mail carrier put this in our mail box by mistake," handing the manuscript over. After a few tentative moments with no response I said, "Why don't you ever come outside?" Scowling he replied, "I do, but only at night to refresh my writing abilities." Sensing this man was quite odd, I beat a hasty retreat home.

Then there was Mr. Smith and his wife. My first encounter with the Smiths was quite an event! I was reclining in my rocker on the front porch, minding my own business, sipping freshly brewed coffee and breathing in the crisp morning air. The sudden banging of a door and shouts caught my attention. Across the street a tall, grey haired, barrel chested man clothed only in sagging white briefs, ran for his life. His pursuer, a small silver haired woman, was wrapped in an aqua colored bathrobe and brandishing a rolling pin. "You beast," she shouted. "What kind of a person are you? You came into my house without invitation, helped yourself to my food, and then tried to climb in

[Continued to 40]

Amanda Howe  
Seneca  
Crowder  
Honorable Mention  
Fiction

*The purpose of this story is to make you think about the people around you, remember to lend a helping hand, and do not be so quick to judge. Because when we compare ourselves, really we are just all human!*

## Eccentric Neighbors

[Continued from 39]

bed with me! If my husband Henry were here, he would teach you a lesson!" With that, she let loose the rolling pen and it went sailing dan-

gerously close to his head, as he dove for cover. Seemingly satisfied, she returned to the house. The click of a deadbolt sliding home echoed in the now-silent morning. Awkwardly the man got to his feet, and then made a hasty retreat to the vehicle parked out front. Popping the trunk, he

## Xylophone Picnic

Becky Embry-Kirby  
Lanagan  
Staff  
Color  
Photography



pulled out an extra set of cloths and a cane. As he hurriedly dressed, he glanced up, meeting my somewhat shocked gaze. He ambled over, smiling sheepishly. "Pardon me; I don't believe we have had the pleasure of meeting. My name is Henry Smith, and that lovely lady you seen attacking me is my wife!"

"Please have a seat" I said, indicating the other rocking chair. By this time he had my full attention, and between cups of coffee I got the full story. Mr. Smith and his wife were childhood sweethearts that married fresh out of high school. At the age of 43, Mrs. Smith was diagnosed with early on set Alzheimer's. The disease progressed rapidly, turning their normal life into chaos. Every morning Mrs. Smith awoke unable to recall who her husband was, so the process would begin with her kicking him out. Mr. Smith retaliated by purchasing a dozen red roses which got him in the front door.

From there he proceeded to romance his way back into his wife's life. Amazingly around dusk you could see them cuddled on the front porch swing. Most evenings I found myself opening the window to hear the whispers of old love turned new. During one of our many morning excursions, I asked Mr. Smith how he dealt with the difficulties of Alzheimer's. "I would not have it any other way," he said. "Each day I get to court my wife, and fall in love again. But to be truthful, the most exciting thing is the challenge of not knowing if she will fall in love with me. That my dear, is what makes life interesting!"

Last but not least, the widow with an obsessive-compulsive disorder. She always appeared to be slightly disheveled, cat hair clinging to her clothes, and the pungent odor of cat-nip perforating the surrounding air. I never knew

her true name, but I dubbed her Cat Lady. Every day at eleven o'clock we met at the mailbox.

I would politely stand to the side, while she opened and shut her mail box approximately 20 times. Then as if by magic, she would produce a dainty yellow handkerchief and sneeze into it exactly four times. I often found myself rubbing the end of my nose as I watched this display. Not long after her husband died, it became apparent that she was not taking the medication prescribed for her disorder. She adopted a kitten to ease the grief, and in a short time cats became her obsession. If you weren't careful she would steal your cat and call it her own. Something about this strange lady pulled at my heart strings. So once or twice a week I went to visit her. I always used an excuse like, "My cat will not eat this food. Maybe yours will?" The truth was I had no cat and we both knew it, but that fact we simply ignored! When she passed away, there were over 53 cats residing in her home.

There are many ways people exhibit eccentricity. Georgia had a fetish for wigs that exceeded her need to have any hair.

Had I not accidentally stumbled upon her secret, I would still feel quite intimidated by her beauty. Mr. Winter believed that nighttime regenerated his ability for writing, so he never came outside during the daytime. Nevertheless he was a distinguished author. Mr. Smith thrived on not knowing if his wife would fall in love with him. But perhaps that was his only way of dealing with his wife's illness? And the widow lady had an unnatural obsession for cats. But maybe that is all she had left in her life? Consider your neighbors... "Are they also eccentric?" I suppose if our lives were an open book, we'd all be a little eccentric too!

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## Venture

[Continued from 38]

"You'll be leaving as soon as possible, then," he observed gloomily.

"The sooner the better. Mr. Poulton will take care of any legal trouble with my relatives, and once I am out of their reach," Ellen shrugged slightly.

"I believe I can arrange for you to leave tomorrow," stated Thomas after several silent moments. "A school acquaintance is travelling that way and may be just the sort of person you will find useful in developing a new spice field." At her unspoken question he elaborated, "He

has recently acquired a ship and is looking for a business venture fit for an ambitious Captain."

Ellen nodded. That was good information and a far better situation than she'd hoped for.

She didn't doubt that her father's old friend, Elias, would know everything about everybody in the entire Vega system, but having an extra ace in the game of life never hurt.

"Wish me luck, won't you?" she asked, holding out her hand for a friendly shake.

He took her hand gently in his own, but did not shake it. "When the solar winds howl about your cabin, draw nearer your warm coat and fear not, bold Traveler, for adventure is nigh," Thomas quoted Rondstadt's poem, *Living by Starlight*, and gently kissed Ellen's fingers.



# Heart of the Wild

Brian Savard  
Greenfield  
Crowder  
Honorable  
Mention  
Fiction

*"I have always had a fascination for were-wolves but my favorite animal is the panther due to its beauty and feline qualities. When I heard of were panthers I looked them up but found no lore for them. So I wrote my own story."*

The sun started to set when it was closing time, turning the sky into a landscape of orange and purples. While preparing to lock up, I heard the soft jingle of the bell and turned around, seeing a woman of breathtaking beauty.

Her eyes were something from a dream, sparkling like the brightest stars with a green hue. Her long blond hair danced with each step she took as well as did her beautifully crafted hourglass figure that only the immortals could create.

She sashayed over to my front desk; with a seducing smile she placed a gold metal box in front on the table presenting it to me like a gift. I was completely mesmerized by her beauty and didn't even take a glance at it. Clearing my throat that had grown tight, I said: "Welcome to Cats Eye Antiques"

She said hello, with a sweet angelic voice, that gave me goose bumps. Unlocking the latch, she showed me its contents. I broke my trance and looked in the box, it was a single ring as stunning as the woman that presented it, it was a panther molded to fit around a finger.

The emerald eyes shined under the lights, glimmering magically like a bright aura. Still smiling, the woman said to me, "I would like you to examine this then try it on"

A barely audible yes escaped my mouth. Her eyes twinkled as I took her to a work station. Taking my seat and opening the chest, I pulled the ring out

The woman started to look over various statues and jewelry that I had about. She ran her hands over one in particular. A black panther surrounded by blue flames, a recent piece created by a friendly artist, not so long ago. She smiled almost in irony.

When I was satisfied with looking at the amazing workmanship of the Ring she looked me in the eye. "Now put it on," she ordered. I wanted to question her but I couldn't resist her hypnotic beauty and obeyed. The metal slipped across my knuckle like butter, it fit like it was made for me. "Perrrrfect," she whispered eerily, too much like a real cat!

My skin began to tingle, my heart began to beat wildly and my body began to feel weird, but why?

As she continued to watch me with green eyes that seemed to change to black and yellow,

I began to feel uneasy. It was as if something inside of me began to move around, like an inner body forcing its way out of me, wanting to run and be free; and I felt the same way.

The hum of the blood from my heart ceased and all was quiet. Looking down, I saw her masterpiece; the ebony panther coming alive and moving! It was a creature of such feral power and beauty with emerald orbs for eyes and white blades for teeth.

I couldn't help but be shocked, and yet amazed by the magic all the same.

My finger began to burn while the ring glowed and clamped down on my finger. It dug its fangs and claws into my flesh, sending energy up my veins like venom. A severe painful feeling traveled though my body following the energy. Burning each limb with no means of stopping, I fell to the floor, screaming in utter pain.

Looking down, I saw the ring come alive on my hand once more and crawl off my finger as my nails started growing and sharpening. Smooth skin on my palms became rough and black, and I heard my own shoes rip as my toenails became sharp while my feet elongated and increased my height.

I could feel my skin stretch and tingle as I winced in pain. Bones cracked, creating a grotesque sound that stung my ears. On my arms, I witnessed black fur coming out of my pores like an uncontrollable growth that crawled across my skin.

The pain didn't stop, no matter how much I screamed. It went to the base of my spine, pulling the fleshy skin. Soon a long, black tail forced its way out from my pants. On the floor writhing in pain it dawned on me. Despite the pain I quickly looked up in a full sized mirror I had placed on the wall. It was then that I saw the extent of my transformation; I was changing into a panther, but not just any panther, a werepanther!

I didn't want to believe it but it was hard not to. I became a new...wild soul, present in place of my old self, and I could feel it, the feral power and strength that was growing in my muscles, as I watched them grow and become more toned than before.

My jaws felt painful as fierce, sharp fangs formed, all the while skinny whiskers growing out from my soft cheeks. Soon my ears traveled

to the top of my skull, while a muzzle grew right in front of my new golden eyes.

Finally the pain receded but I didn't feel the same. I was able to stand up on two legs but I didn't want to see myself. Still, I gave into curiosity and stood in front of the mirror, only to find a human sized panther staring back at me.

With wide wild eyes, I stared at my new feline form, trying to figure out how all this could've happened. But when I saw her reflection, I fit the pieces in their places. This light haired woman turned me into this creature.

Turning around, I saw her smiling at me with a wide grin I growled and leered at her. "What did you do to me?" I roared. She didn't answer, but walked towards me very calmly. When we were face to face, she scratched my furry chin.

Her touch felt soothing and it made me purr softly. She made her way towards my ears and rubbed them. After a few minutes of petting me, she finally said, "I have given you a gift. A power that everyone wishes for."

Everyone? But I didn't wish for this, I thought. She continued to talk in that sweet angelic voice of hers, "Oh my little kitten, you'll love this new form of yours. Embrace your wild self that has been kept inside for so long"

She took my paw and led me towards the back door. Outside, the sun was gone and it was completely dark. The cool wind went through my new black fur as my ears picked up all the different sounds of the cities.

"Run my panther. Be wild and free, like all cats are," my goddess said as she leaned on my arm. As I stood there, I felt this yearning to escape from humanity, to run and accept this wild soul, that is finally free.

So I ran through the alleyway, behind all the buildings and the old trash cans, and bounded up the tall walls covered with graffiti and onto the roof tops, climbing and leaping with my new limbs and muscles, picking up scents and sounds that I never knew existed.

Indeed this new feeling and power was exhilarating. I didn't want to lose it or trade it in for something more, no matter how painful and terrifying it was to receive it. The excitement of having it made up for the pain and fear.

As I looked up towards the deep dark sky I let out a roar that echoed through the city. From then on, I embraced my new feral power, given to me by the beautiful artist and her ring.

# The Phantom Queen

I mourn this day for none shall see  
My phantom queen and me  
Her shadowed lips, her silver hair  
Her haunting voice, her chilling stare  
And still I pray one day to see  
My phantom queen and me

A timid dream is all we be  
My phantom queen and me  
I search for gold and harvest tin  
My concrete hold unfolds within  
A quest in vain for her decree  
My phantom queen and me

To doom, for we shall never be  
My phantom queen and me  
Our full retreat from passion's shore  
We shant defeat a world at war  
As fire smolders, so shall we  
My phantom queen and me

Yet blessed the day when all shall see  
My phantom queen and me  
The sun will rise and will not set  
The ancient lies to soon forget  
And ere the dusk, all dawn will see  
My phantom queen and me

Guy Wilkes  
Seneca  
Community  
Gold  
Poetry

*The phantom queen is the girl you're looking for. Sometimes you think you find her in every girl you meet, other times you question her very existence, and yet you'll never quit looking because even if you never find her the journey is worth it.*



## Tranquility

Jessica Sellers  
Carl Junction  
Community  
Bronze  
3D Art

*I am inspired by nature and clay is a calming force in my life. I love to combine clay with things from nature such as stone.-*

# A Thief's Escape

Cathleen Bailey  
Neosho  
Crowder  
Gold  
Fiction

Jayce was stuck, trapped. Eisle frantically looked for a knife, a stone, anything that could cut that wretched net!

"Run!" he shouted at her.

"No! I can't leave you here!"

She scrambled back to the pit, staring down at him. The fury in his eyes shocked her.

"Run you idiot!" he shouted, "There's nothing you can do!"

Shouts echoed across the rooftops. Eisle whipped her head up and saw their pursuers closing in, one pointing as he led the way.

"Run!"

With a desperate wrench of will, Eisle shot to her feet and ran.

"Think while you run!" Jayce's voice called after her, "Remember!"

Coming up to the edge of the roof, Eisle tensed herself.

Don't think, just jump! Don't hesitate!

She planted a foot on the edge and leapt out over the six-foot gap between buildings. Her arms flailed in the air as she fell down to the lower roof of the next building.

She fell with a crash, rolling several feet before her momentum gave out. Her knees, elbows, and palms were scraped. She had no doubt that she'd gained a bruise on her right shoulder.

But the shouts of the guard urged her to her feet.

With a grimace, she got up and continued running, with just a glance showing the guard coming to the edge of the last rooftop she'd been on.

She kept running. There was nothing else she could do. Lives depended on her, whether she wanted it or not. Coming to the next roof edge, she let herself think

Alright. Gotta land better. Bend knees, roll. Drop and roll.

She leapt into the air again. The next rooftop was on the same level, and closer. She landed with her knees bent and she stayed on her feet, scrambling into another run.

Now closer to the outer edge of the city, the buildings were closer together, but at varying heights. She had several choices of buildings, and she could drop, climb or leap to them.

Dropping a few feet down to the next building, she sprinted across the small rooftop, seeing a chance of shaking the guard, if only for a minute.

"Ha! Your friend's got no chance," the man left to guard Jayce taunted him. "She's too weak to evade them long over this terrain."

"Then you underestimate her."

The guard smirked, looking down at the prisoner. His eyes widened though, seeing the stern determination in the captive man's eyes.

"You underestimate me," Jayce emphasized, "As her teacher."

The man turned, staring back over the rooftops.

At the next edge, Eisle dropped again. Then, she darted across a few feet, dropped again, then scrambled back up the wall to another building, on the opposite side from where the guard could see her. Using windows and jutting bricks, she climbed as she had never climbed before, thankful for all those grueling hours in the caves.

Reaching the top, she rolled over the edge. Laying flat on her belly, she scooted over to the edge that would be closest to where the guard would be running across one building below and dropping to the next. She could hear their boots clunking on the stone.

"We've lost sight of her!" one cried.

"She's norobat," another growled, "She'll keep dropping to the buildings. But keep on eye out on the others as well, she might use that against us."

Stilling her panting, Eisle couldn't help but smile. That was exactly what she was trying to do at that moment. Hearing them drop down out of sight, she shot to her feet. Running, but not so fast or heedless, she let her feet fall almost soundlessly as she sped over the rooftop. She dropped down to a building, ran, leapt over a small gap, ran again, clambered up a wall, turned, and leapt out over a wide gap. The next building squatted lower, though, enabling her to make the leap. She bent her knees, absorbing the impact, and fell into a controlled roll. Springing to her feet, grimacing, she continued on, her right ankle protesting at each step with a twinge of pain.

Looking ahead, she gaged her situation. Her position now was much closer to the wall.

The wall. Got to get to the wall. Then the lake. Then the tunnels, and I'm free.

Hearing distant cries, she let herself look back.



About eight buildings over, the guard had finally spotted her. They were scrambling over the buildings to get to her.

Turning, she pressed on, jumping to grab onto a windowsill on the next building. Scrambling up, she stood on it and leaped again to grab a jutting brick, barely glimpsing an elderly lady huddled with some children in one corner of the room. Eisle kept climbing.

Rolling over the top of the roof, she found she was right at the level she needed to be to reach the wall. But right in front of her, a man stood in her way.

He held a rope, swinging it as he let the loop grow wider and wider. He flung it.

Ducking, Eisle leapt to the side. She felt the wind of its passing right above her head, and it nicked her foot, but she had evaded it. She somersaulted and sprang to her feet, sprinting for the longest jump yet. She could hear the man running after her.

Steeling herself, she planted a foot at the very edge of the roof, and leapt.

Arms outspread, her feet still running in the air, she could see she had misjudged the distance.

She slammed into the outer parapet, nearly tumbling over down to the desert below. Her body ricocheted off the stone and she fell to the side, her head striking the rough edge of the parapet.

"Awgh!" she groaned, rubbing her head, feeling a slight dampness of blood.

Gritting her teeth, she got to her knees and up to her feet in a slow jog. Behind her, she heard her newest pursuer land on the wall. Lowering her hand, she looked ahead.

Good. I'm on the right side.

Willing herself not to feel the pain that pulsed in every part of her body, she urged herself into one last burst of speed.

"What's she doing?" the guard could hardly believe his eyes, having witnessed Eisle's whole run away from the other men pursuing her.

Gripping the net, Jayce leaned out, watching as Eisle ran.

The guard figured it out.

"No," he said in disbelief, "She can't..."

"But she will," Jayce grinned to himself, nodding, "She will."

Eisle approached the corner of the wall as a guard sped along the other wall, intent on intercepting her. She lowered her head and ran.

Coming to the corner, she leapt up onto the parapet, just evading the grasp of the guard. Then, she flung herself out into space.

The water below shone blindly bright from the midday sun. She let her body turn and she



curled herself up.

With a surge of cold and wet, she splashed down into the lake.

"She jumped! She jumped into the lake!"

Jayce sighed as his guard shouted frantically. Nodding again, he slumped down.

"God be with you," he murmured.

Next Chapter....

The coldness nearly froze her joints. Eisle stretched herself out and with a surge of her arms and legs, she began to swim. A current caught at her and she let it carry her along as she swam. Opening her eyes, she could barely see through the murky water. Fear twisted her

## The Fairy in Normality

Jessica Cole  
Neosho Christian  
School  
Bronze  
Digital Art

*Every thing on earth can be changed to where we barely recognize it.*

[Continued to 46]

## A Thief's Escape

[Continued from 45]

*The inspiration for this entry is the sport par-kour, as well as the movie "Prince of Persia: The Sands of Time." Its creation has further inspired me towards the writing of a novel. This story is a short blip that should make other people curious about the main character, about what is going on, and make them want to read the whole novel.*

stomach as it always did when she realized she really had no idea how deep this lake was, or what lurked down below her.

But I can't think about that! I have to get to the tunnels. I have to complete the mission. For Jayce, if for no other reason. God, please help me!

A dark shape loomed up to her right. Recognizing its shape, she swam towards it, even as her lungs burned for air. Coming up to it, she rested her hand on the slimy rock surface. Letting her legs lower down, she began swimming up, using the rock to propel herself back up to the surface. Coming closer though, she gripped the rock so she would not burst out. Slowly, tilting her head back, she let her mouth break through.

She breathed deeply of the live-giving air, resting for a moment. Though she longed to, she dared not lift her head out of the water to look back. No one could know where she was.

Taking another deep breath, she lowered herself back down.

Gripping the rock, she looked down into the depths. Fear chilled her stomach and sent waves of nausea through her. She had always been able to do it before, but Jayce had always been with her. Now, alone and weaponless, how could she?

But I have to! Oh, but why? I don't want to! Why me?

Closing her eyes, she willed her mind to go blank. Then, ever so slowly, she let a white light creep into the darkness of her mind's eye.

I see white. Only white.

Without looking, she tilted her head back once more to take another breath. Then, still without looking, she turned and began to go down, pulling herself down along the rock.

God, I can't do this on my own. I need your strength. If I've ever needed it, I need it now oh so much more! Please, please help me!

Every time her hand slipped into a crevice, she jerked it out with a surge of panic, but willed herself to go forward. Finally, she began to feel the moving water, swirling in that black eddy.

Curling into a floating crouch next to the rock, she slowly opened her eyes. Light filtered

up to her from around the tunnel entrance. The whirlpool spun lazily around, eddying down into the hole.

Pressing her feet against the rock, Eisle dove down to the hole, eyes closed and her hands facing palm forward, one over the other.

The whirlpool sucked her in.

She felt herself sped along, the same, stomach churning feeling as always, accompanied by ever-present burning of her lungs.

Then, she felt herself being sucked upwards. Turning her head, she lifted her arms up.

Her hands, arms, and then her head broke the surface with a whoosh! Her palms slapped against the stone roof overhead and she grabbed onto two of the handholds, letting her body float above the jet of the back-end of the whirlpool as it bubbled beneath her.

Opening her eyes, she could see that light filtered down to her through the shaft. Someone was waiting. Probably Mark. But she did not feel like moving.

"The wall.  
Got to get to the wall.  
Then the lake.  
Then the tunnels,  
and I'm free."

Finally she could relax, floating above the turbulent water, the jet drumming into her back, vibrating her body. Somehow, she wished she could just stay there.

But I can't.

Sighing, she

reached forward and began easing herself along the handholds to the shaft. Slowly, she began climbing up.

As she pulled herself out of the water, the air drifting by chilled her, raising goose bumps all over her. She shivered, and as she continued climbing, she realized just how beat up her body was. She ached all over, her hands and knees were bleeding. Her head throbbed, no longer eased by the coldness of the water. Her muscles felt weaker and weaker, trembling as she pulled herself up the shaft.

Can I make it?

"Hey!" a shout echoed down to her, "I think I see someone! I think it's Eisle!"

Scrambling footsteps echoed down and the light increased. Squinting, she just leaned her head against the shaft of the wall, no longer able to move.

"Eisle? That you?"

Mark's distinctly deep voice rumbled gently in her ears.

"Yes," she croaked out, too weak to call, relying on the shaft to echo it back up, "I need help."

"Lyle, get down there," Mark ordered,

[Continued to 47]

"Grae, Joph, man the winch."

Soon, she heard someone climbing down. As he came beside her, she turned her head.

"It's okay," Lyle said, reaching over to secure the harness around her. "We've already heard about Jayce."

As he secured the last buckle, Eisle relaxed. At least she wouldn't have to tell them that.

"We're ready down here!" Lyle called.

"Alright! Guide her up!"

Eisle let go of the wall. Lyle held onto the short lead line, keeping her in the center of the shaft. The wince began cranking and they slowly went up. Eisle shivered the whole way up, both from the cold, suppressed fear, and the sadness that gnawed at her spirit.

Finally, strong hands gripped her arms and hauled her out of the shaft. A heavy blanket was wrapped around her and someone began to rub

her head with a towel. She grimaced.

"Ouch," she mumbled. "I hit my head, so be careful."

"And a few other places besides that," Mark commented, squatting down in front of her as she felt someone inspecting the cut on her head. "You did well, Eisle."

She gazed blankly back at him. Another shiver shook her body and she tucked her head down between her bloody knees.

No one said another word. Someone tucked the blanket in closer while someone else began to unbraid her hair gently, rubbing each swatch of hair with the towel with gentle strokes. Soon, a warm sensation eased the pain in her head as she felt something being rubbed in.

She knew she needed to thank everyone for helping her, but she wasn't ready.

I'll do it later. They'll understand.



[Above]

## Emerging

Jessica Sellers  
Carl Junction  
Community  
Silver  
3D Art

*"I was inspired to create this clay vessel with crystals emerging from the top from rock hunting trips in Las Vegas Nevada desert where rock crystals can be found emerging from clefts in the ground."*



## Pumpkin

Lauran White  
Carl Junction  
High School  
Honorable Mention  
3D Art

*My inspiration for this teapot was a pumpkin.*



## Cupcake

Lisa Capierra  
Carl Junction  
High School  
Honorable Mention  
3D Art

*I did a cupcake with clay and real colors.*



# Rumplestiltskin Revised

Vada Harris  
Neosho High School  
Honorable Mention  
Fiction

Once upon a time there was a regular joe named Jim. He was hard at work kneading dough, when a sobbing woman rushed into the kitchen. Seeing her tiara, Jim guessed that she was royalty. He was not left long to wonder what had her crying.

"Oh, it's terrible, simply *terrible!*" she wailed. "I t-told the king that I could, could..." the queen was quite overcome. Jim was burning with curiosity, but allowed the queen to catch her breath. He couldn't really do otherwise—not if he wanted to keep his head.

The queen composed herself, and turned suddenly to Jim. "YOU! You must help me. Come here." She grabbed his arm and dragged him out to the corridor, where she promptly burst into tears. Jim waited for her to confess, to some boast of being able to spin straw into gold, but the queen surprised him. "I told the king I could... bake."

Jim sighed. "I wish I'd traded with Glenda when she asked me to stir the stew for her," he thought glumly. "Then *she'd* get to deal with the nutty noble." He kept these treasonous thoughts to himself, asking instead, "Bake, your majesty?"

"Yes, that's what I said, isn't it?" she snapped. "I told him I could make bread."

"Your majesty, this seems like a problem between you and the king. I don't see why you need me."

The queen gave him a look suggesting she believed him to be an idiot, and didn't have the patience for it. "I need you to *knead*. To make bread. Do you think you can do that for me, Sir?"

"Name's Jim."

"Does it matter?"

An idea of a plan was beginning to take shape in Jim's mind. He'd taken this job for money to send home—who was he to ignore a chance to make a little extra? "I don't know your majesty. You're asking me to neglect my duties..."

"On my orders!" she said quickly. "I'll provide whatever you need!"

"Well..." Jim said slowly, "What could I expect in return?"

Jim was kneading dough. Again. "For extra

pay, too." Jim shook his head. "Never thought I'd get *paid* to break rules." He whistled a cheerful tune along with the gold coins jingling in his pocket. "Silly woman. She could've bought herself a loaf from the baker for much less trouble."

He set the dough where it could rise, and brushed the flour from his hands. "I am a bit worried about what trouble this might cause... but it's not like any of this is my fault."

"Besides," he asked himself, "What harm could a loaf of bread do?"

"Here you are, Majesty," Jim said, handing her the bundle. "A loaf of bread, just like you ordered." The queen nodded.

"Thank you, Jack."

"Jim, your majesty."

The queen waved her hand dismissively, "Whatever. Now, I trust you'll tell no one about this little exchange?"

"My lips are sealed. If there's anything my mother taught me, it's when to keep my mouth

shut." He smiled, "That, and how to make bread." "Mother always said—good bread makes strong children."

"But, anything that does that must surely be magical!"

"Magic? No, no! I said nothing of the sort!"

Her majesty did not listen. "I distinctly heard you say your mother taught you to make bread. Bread that makes strong boys—*heirs*." She looked in awe at the ordinary loaf in her hands, "Bread like that *must* be magic."

Jim sighed, knowing he wouldn't be able to change her mind. "Royalty, nobility? More like gullibility." Out loud, Jim said, "There's no magic in *that* bread."

The jangling in his pocket made him feel a little braver. "Magic has a much higher price."

The queen had Jim kneading yet again, but this particular ball of dough had a few odd ingredients. The list included various spices he'd rattled off to the queen: a few herbs from the garden, a small diamond "for strength," a tiny ruby "for valor," a rose petal "for compassion," and a few strands of hair from the king and queen. It was the most expensive and aromatic ball of dough he'd ever held.

It was also the sharpest, which he didn't



realize until he nicked himself on the diamond embedded in it. “Must have forgotten to add servant’s blood, for ruthlessness,” he thought darkly to himself, as a tiny drop welled up from the cut and dripped into the dough.

Jim put the ball aside to rise, and shook the flour from himself. Then he sat down to tend to his wound. “This is nice,” he said, glancing around his new cottage, “But I still wish I’d traded with Glenda.”

“Here it is, Majesty. Magic bread.” It looked perfectly ordinary, but the queen held it as if the loaf *was* her heir, and not simply her means of getting one.

“Beautiful,” she whispered. “Look at it! You can see it sparkling with power.”

“Yes, it’s lovely,” Jim said, playing along. “Goodbye, your majesty.”

“Enjoy your cottage, John.”

“Jim... It’s Jim.”

Her majesty didn’t reply. She’d already gone.

“What harm could a loaf of bread do?” Jim asked himself again. He didn’t feel as reassured this time.

Jim was as surprised as anyone when the

queen announced her pregnancy a month later. Of course, they didn’t use that word. *Pregnant* was such a *common* term. No, no. The queen was *with child*, was *expecting*. “The queen is bloody *kidding* herself,” Jim said scornfully.

But it was true, and the queen grew and grew until, nine months later, a royal midwife was called.

Servants in the kitchen were taking bets on the sex of the child. Everyone hoped it would be the longed-for heir, and Jim hoped most fervently of all. Terrible things might happen to the royal bread-maker if the queen accused him of witchcraft. “Failed witchcraft, no less. Who knows what will happen if she doesn’t get what she wants.”

“Although,” Jim thought worriedly, “it might not go much better if she does.”

Jim was awoken in the wee hours of the morning by a knocking on his door. He adjusted his dressing gown, and opened it to find a nervous servant in front of him. “Are you Joe?” the man asked nervously. There was only one person who would call him that. Jim nodded resignedly. “She... she wants to see you.”

“Show me the way.”

## Road’s End

Cathleen Bailey  
Neosho  
Crowder  
Bronze  
Digital Art

*This piece is supposed to evoke a sense of end. It shows the end of the road, and the fall colors make viewers think of summer’s end and winter’s coming. Yet the vibrancy of the colors make the picture pleasing and not depressing.*

[Continued to 51]





## An English Grandmother

Casey Spurlock | Anderson | Community | Gold | 2D Media

*"An English Grandmother" is a surrealistic portrayal of the many ways in which my grandmother, Winifred, has influenced me with her history, and tales of growing up "cockney" in London, England.*



# Rumplestiltskin Revised

[Continued from 49]

Up ahead was a very ornate door. Jim assumed it, and the room beyond, belonged to the queen. "It's really quite unusual," the man said, wringing his hands. "Very out of the ordinary. The midwife was sent off as soon as the child was born. She and the queen are the only ones to have seen the baby. Her majesty's being very secretive." He swallowed, "No one knows why."

They reached the door, and the man knocked, calling out, "Your majesty, the man you sent for is here."

There was a pause, and then the queen opened the door and pulled Jim inside. "Ronald, you can go."

Ronald bowed. "Yes your majesty. Goodbye your majesty." The door shut behind him, and the queen turned to Jim.

"You *lied* to me," the queen hissed. Jim couldn't really defend himself, because it was absolutely true. He was guilty. He'd lied.

"And you know," he thought strangely, "I don't feel bad about it." But he still valued his life, so he said, "Your majesty, I don't understand. You have a child. The bread did as it was supposed to." But he did seem to recall saying something about *healthy* children. "Is the babe sickly...?"

"No, it's perfectly healthy, *she's* perfectly healthy. But you didn't just promise a child, you promised an *heir*!"

"I promised nothing of the sort," Jim said, taking the child from her to see it for himself.

He looked at the squirming bundle in his arms, and saw a healthy, happy baby girl looking back at him. "Hello," he whispered, completely smitten.

"You see! A girl! What use will she be?" Her majesty pulled at her hair. "A girl can't run a kingdom! She's useless!"

Jim had lost his heart to the little child when he first laid eyes on her. "I don't understand, queen, why you can't seem to find it in yourself to care half as much for your own flesh and blood as I do...But if you don't want her, I'll take her back." He gathered up his courage, and turned to leave with the baby.

"You can't take it!" the queen shrieked, "The child belongs to me!"

"*It?*" Jim echoed, turning back, "Have you not even named her?"

Her majesty was taken aback. "Well, no," she said. "I was rather caught up in the fact that I've spent the last few months thinking up the wrong names." She glared at Jim, "*Henry* isn't really suitable for a girl."

The royal bread-maker glared back. "My mother could not always afford to provide for my brother and me, but she loved us with all her heart. You have the means to give this little child the world, but refuse to give her so much as a name."

Jim continued, "I am taking her with me, unless you can prove you have so much as an ounce of care for others left in your soul. Answer this one question: What is my name?"

She scoffed, "What a stupid question! Hand me the child, you insolent creature!"

Jim held the baby tighter. "Answer me, queen. I'll give you three guesses, as I've told you my name three times. You believe I'm the reason you have this child? Well then, she rightfully belongs to me. Humor me."

Impossibly, Jim's words convinced her. "Fine, I'll play your foolish game."

She paused for awhile, thinking. "Jacob," she said finally, "Your name is Jacob."

"Two more guesses."

"Jonathan," she said, "Surely it's Jonathan."

"Try again."

She asked, "Is it Jericho?" in a tone that said this was really too much work just to keep a "useless" girl-child.

Jim shook his head. "No, your majesty." He turned and left. No one was sent after him.

Everyone was told the royal child was stillborn. Under a gravestone bearing the name "Henry Jordan Greensburg," there lay a loaf of bread wrapped in a child's gown.

The queen was most upset over the fact that she had to wear black.

When Jim appeared at his mother's front door, he placed an infant in her arms. "And who's this little dear?" she cooed.

"My daughter," Jim told her proudly, "Abigail."

*I was looking through an old storybook of mine for a fairy tale to show to my little sister. The name "Rumpelstiltskin" jumped out at me. I wondered, what if that story had gone a little differently?*

# A Dream to Soar

Logan Stark  
Neosho  
Crowder  
Staff  
Fiction

“I want to fly,” said Artie.  
“What?” asked his friend Polo.

“I want to fly.”  
“That’s crazy talk. They’re going to sacrifice you to the killer whale if you keep talking like that.”

In the cold lands of Antarctica, both Artie and Polo were members of a large penguin colony. Like every other member of their clan, both birds were dressed in their black and white, feathered tuxedos. Both of their beaks smelled of fish and squid from their last meal, and their bodies had a salty scent to them, left over from their recent swim in the freezing ocean.

“No, I mean it, Polo,” Artie tried to reassure his friend.

“Did you hit your head?” asked Polo.

“No! We’re birds, Polo. We’re supposed to fly.”

Polo huffed. “Fine, do what you want, Artie, but I warned you. Do you even have a plan how you’re going to fly?”

“With this,” said Artie, as he rolled out a schematic. “Plan A.” Artie held a diagram of a penguin blowing a bubble with gum and floating off the ground.

“Bubble gum?” asked Polo.

“Yep, it’s fool proof,” said Artie.

“If it’s fool proof, then how come someone hasn’t done it already?”

“Because they haven’t had my intelligence.”

“Or your stupidity,” mumbled Polo.

Artie ignored him as he strapped a pair of goggles around his eyes and pulled out a piece of gum. He chewed it until the morsel was soft before he tossed another into his mouth. He did this again and again until he could hardly chew. Artie then parted his beak and started to blow.

A pink bubble squeezed out of his beak. It started small, then it grew and grew. Polo was surprised by how big the bubble was growing, and a small part of him believed that it was going to lift Artie off the ground. But no matter how large it got, it never helped Artie take off. The penguin felt winded and light headed, but he couldn’t stop. Not now. The bubble had grown twice his size.

*Almost there, Artie thought to himself. Almost. Just a little more—*

POP!

The bubble bursted and covered Artie from head to toe in the sticky substance. Polo rolled

on the ground in laughter, as Artie slowly waddled to the ocean to wash himself off.

“Plan B,” said Artie, after an hour of washing the gum out of his feathers; he still had splotches of the stuff stuck to him here and there. He had drawn up a new diagram, with a penguin in a bubble, floating off the ground.

“You’re going to try again?” Polo asked.

“Of course. I haven’t flown yet, and this plan is bound to work. I’ve done the math. The bubble gum failed because it was trying to lift too much weight from one direction, but if I surround myself in a bubble, then hypothetically, I should be able to fly.”

Artie dipped the bubble wand into the bottle before he tried blowing a bubble—it popped. He tried blowing a second—it popped, too. He tried again, but a bubble would not form around him. It would pop as soon as it touched his skin.

“So does Plan B stand for ‘Plan Bust?’” asked Polo. Artie glared at him.

“I need your help in Plan C,” said Artie to Polo.

“Oh no, I want no part in this stupidity,” replied Polo. “It won’t be long before someone catches us out here, and I don’t want our colony thinking that I’m a nut.”

“They won’t find out, and when we’re flying, they won’t care. We’ll be heroes in their eyes.”

“Or whale food,” said Polo.

“Quit being a downer.”

“I’m just saying, bad things happen to penguins who try to disobey the laws of nature.”

“Polo, just trust me.”

Polo took an uneasy breath. “What do you want me to do?”

“Hold this string and run as fast as you can.”

Artie had tied himself to a kite and was handing the string of it to Polo.

“What is that thing?” Polo asked.

“It’s a kite. The Chinese invented it.”

“And they tie themselves to it?”

“No, but they’ve probably never had the smarts to think of such a brilliant plan.”

“Whatever,” said Polo, before he started waddling. He waddled as fast as he could, but all he was doing was scraping Artie’s feet across the ground. When a blood trail started to follow them, Artie thought that it might be a good idea for him to stop.

[Continued to 54]



*The purpose is to catch and suspend the drip from the melting icicle.*

# Frozen in Time

Stalling  
Frozen in time  
Like the winter's water  
Waiting for the perfect moment  
Alone

Brenden Phillips  
Neosho High School  
Silver  
Poetry

*I feel this piece is very powerful in the fact that it talks about waiting for something with anticipation but not just waiting. Waiting for the perfect moment in which to deliver or receive something.*



## Hike to Hidden Lake

Shawn Sampson  
Monett  
Community  
Gold  
B&W Photography

*Taken on a trip to  
Glacier National Park  
this fall, Shawn's sister  
Amy Sampson did minor  
editing for a brother-  
sister duo entry.*

## A Dream to Soar

[Continued from 52]

"What are you hatchlings doing out here?" asked an elderly penguin who had waddled out to the secluded area.

"The nutcase is trying to fly, Feathers," Polo answered the old bird.

"I'm not a nutcase!" said Artie.

"Fly! Fly!" responded Feathers. "Back in my day, there was a crazy bird that thought that he would be able to fly."

"What happened to him?" asked Polo.

"He ramped off a glacier and was eaten by an orca."

"Whale food," commented Polo, as he looked at Artie with a smug smile.

"Glacier! I never thought of that!" said Artie. Polo shook his head.

A bald patch on his back from a failed attempt using an iceberg ramp and a hang glider, bruises from using a catapult and a bat suit, and burns from tying himself to a rocket, Artie was tired of failing and being laughed at. A crowd would now gather around him in anticipation

and laugh at his failures. It was a sport to them, taking bets, eating popcorn shrimp, and selling crackpot T-shirts. He had become both a loon and a social event, but he was ready to prove himself, to feel the wind on his feathers as he soared in the sky. He had a dream, and he was willing to do whatever it took to achieve it.

"Time for Plan I," said Artie. He had engineered a complicated, mechanical contraption that was sure to work—a biplane.

"Polo, can you turn the propeller please?" asked Artie.

"With everyone watching?" asked Polo. "My reputation will be ruined."

"Just do it. I've got a good feeling about this one."

"Fine," huffed Polo. He spun the propeller as the plane roared to life. The plane started to roll down the runway that Artie had carved out of the ice.

The clever inventor was lying on his stomach on the lower wing. He had no lever or fancy buttons to control his contraption, but a cradle around his waist that would warp the wings and



turn the rudder when he wiggled his hips.

The plane was gaining speed!

*This is it*, thought Artie. He pointed the nose of the plane up into the air. Nothing happened—at first. The wheels started to lift up, and then bump back down. Lift up, bump back down, and then lifted up. Higher, and higher, and higher! Before long, Artie was air born.

“I’m flying!” shouted Artie into the air. “I’m flying!” The air tasted fresher up here, and the wind gently ruffled his feathers. Never had Artie known that the clouds were made of water, which moistened his feathers as he flew in them. He always assumed that they were soft and fluffy, from watching them from below.

“So this is what I’ve been missing out on,” mumbled Artie to himself. His colony below was a glob of black specks. He could barely hear their voices, not in mocking laughs, but in cheering! The bleach white snow, the deep blue ocean, everything looked so beautiful from up here.

Then, everything instantly changed. The ice near the colony cracked, as an orca *smashed* out of it. It tried to gobble a morsel, with its teeth inches away before it splashed back into the sea. “WHALE!” shouted hundreds of cries below. The ice was breaking from the whale’s impact, and starting to drift away as ice chunks.

“I’ve got to help them!” said Artie. “But how?”

*Why? They did nothing but tear you down. Why should you help them?*

“But . . .”

*Fly away from here, save yourself. There’s nothing that you can do for them.*

The thought crossed Artie’s mind. For several days he had been mocked, called a nutcase, a loser. Why should he risk his life for those who abused him so?

But what about all of the times that they went hunting together? Their underwater games, the belly flop contests off the iceberg slopes?

No! He couldn’t leave them. Somehow, he was going to save them.

The whale leapt up again, and swallowed a few tail feathers before diving back into the water.

“Think Artie! Think. What can you use to distract the whale?”

*You have the plane, but . . .*

*That’s suicide! . . . But what choice do you have? . . . Be brave. You’ve lived a good life, and you’ve achieved your dream!*

With a heavy heart, Artie plunged the plane.

The cold air stung his eyes as he zoomed downward. The air around him was growing colder as the wind wrapped around him and gave him speed.

“No, Artie, don’t do it!” he heard Polo shout from somewhere below.

*I have to.*

The whale jumped again—just inches away. Artie flew toward the whale. It opened its mouth wide, baring its yellow teeth. Artie closed his eyes.

“Goodbye Polo,” said Artie.

The plane flew into the whale’s mouth—the beast roared as the propeller ripped through its organs. The orca cried out a final breath, before its limp body began to sink into the waves. Blood bubbled all around. The propeller stopped—the plane sank under the whale’s weight.

## 10 YEARS LATER

“Who is that Poppy?” asked Polo’s young chick.

The two were standing at the bottom of a two-story statue, a silver tribute of Artie flying in his plane. The words at the base of the sculpture read:

### **In Tribute to Artie, The Killer Whale Savior, and The Penguin Who Could Fly.**

“That was my best friend,” answered Polo.

“And he flew?!” asked the chick.

“Yes, he flew.”

“Did you fly with him Poppy?”

“No. I wish I had.”

*Instead of mocking him, Polo thought to himself. He had a dream, and I made fun of him for it. A dream that he got to live out before he saved us . . .*

A tear came to Polo’s eye.

“Are you alright Poppy?” asked his chick.

“Yeah, I’m good,” he answered, wiping the tear away with his flipper. “Come on, let’s go get some lunch.” The two started to waddle away from the statue.

“Poppy,” said the chick.

“Yes, Artie?”

“Someday, I want to fly.”

Polo smiled. “Artie, if you work at it, someday, you will.” The chick grinned before the two dove into the ocean.

*To achieve a dream, you must fight for it. It won’t be easy, but the feeling, the taste of victory— is sweeter than any ambrosia. If you have a dream, don’t just wish you could have it, accomplish it.*

# Times 2

Lea Carter  
Salt Lake  
City, Utah  
Community  
Fiction  
Honorable  
Mention

*formerly from  
southwest  
Missouri*

Helen smoothed her short brown hair and put her hand back on her lap. She felt as though she could either hold perfectly still or start climbing the walls.

A young man with a pleasant smile and a forearm monitor approached her. "The Ministers are ready for you now," he nodded at the closed door at the end of the hall.

Helen smiled tightly as she rose, tucking her cap under her arm. She was ready, too. Her head was up as she entered the small room and stayed up even as the doors shut behind her. She'd saved the life of a man who would go on to influence generations of people for good. That was nothing to be ashamed of.

"Agent Rasmussen?" asked a plump old fellow with more laugh lines than actual wrinkles.

Helen nodded. When he indicated the empty chair near her, she seated herself. She found a place for her cap beside the tabletop monitor before her.

"You have been summoned to this disciplinary council, Agent Rasmussen, to give your account of the events which took place on March 15, 2043."

As a group, the elderly gentlemen turned expectant gazes in Helen's direction. Most of them were ex-military, so she felt a sort of kinship with them. Minister Harris frowned a

little as he looked at her. He had been part of the original committee that selected her for the mission and probably felt personally affronted by how she'd handled things.

"As you know from my report, I arrived safely at the refugee encampment three days before the attack." Helen disciplined a grim smile as she remembered how their tidy little plan had been shattered by a pickpocket. "It took longer than anticipated for me to reach the battle site and required me to assume the guise of a soldier recently discharged from the Royal military. By the time I located Patterson, it was less than twelve hours before the attack." She paused, her stomach dropping when a photo of Patterson appeared on the tabletop monitor. He was just as devastating in real life.

"You were sent as an observer, Agent Rasmussen. Your report indicates," Minister Walters tapped his monitor, "that you actually met Patterson. Did this in any way affect your decision to intervene?" There was something strangely penetrating about the way he looked at her.

A page from her report stared up at Helen from her monitor. "Amiable and surprisingly optimistic" were such pale words to describe the man she'd met.

"Yes," she answered the question as stated.

## Approaching Warp Speed

Brad Stout  
Neosho  
Crowder  
Color Photography  
Silver

*Using a Nikon D3000, this photo was taken in the dead of night with an exposure of twenty-five seconds, allowing enough time for two cars to drive through the frame. The initial purpose of this picture was simply practice for taking a clear night photo, as well as how to use light as a subject. It has since become one of my favorite photographic works.*





“Because,” she added, “as my report also states, he informed me that he intended to lead the attack himself.”

A wave of frowns made its way around the table.

Minister Harris leaned forward, folded his hands together, and said, “The history books clearly state that he did not lead the attack, Agent Rasmussen. If he had led the attack, he would have died along with his men when the Royal military detonated its fail-safe device to keep the monitoring installation from falling into rebel hands. Why did you feel that you had to intervene?”

“At first, I didn’t,” she answered this question more slowly. “I took pictures, made notes, and waited to see what prevented him from following through. An hour passed, then three, then seven. Patterson was still at the camp, planning to lead the charge.” Frowning a little herself, she scrolled down in the report to where she had documented her disclosures regarding the installation’s defenses. “According to the history books, they had detailed maps of the installation. Some mysterious source of information that allowed them to come within seconds of successfully capturing the installation.” Her hand dropped back into her lap and she shook her head. “There were no maps. There was no spy. I needed to stay in range of Patterson in order to observe him, but I had no excuse unless I created one. So I became the spy.” She ended with a small shrug.

“What was their reaction to your detailed information?” asked Minister Jackson, a lean man who still carried himself like a Major General despite his twenty-five years of retirement.

Helen allowed herself a smile at that question. “They were suspicious. I spent an hour in a holding cell for believing the historian who wrote that Patterson’s brief capture was common knowledge.” She felt more than a little foolish at that memory. Once she’d gotten past revealing her “former connection” to the Royal army, she’d thought it was safe to refer to Patterson’s escape from the Royal prisoner of war camp. “They would have held me longer, but Patterson made a forceful speech about why he hated the Royals and tossed me the keys.”

Minister Harris’ frown deepened. An enormous digital library of history books, official papers, news reports, medical records, and so on, was kept in a protected vault by the History Department of the Time Travel Division. An exhaustive review of those records had revealed no difference between history before her assignment and history after, not excluding a distinct lack of new rumors about Patterson’s capture.

Had it been otherwise, Helen would already be in a modern jail cell.

“Agent Rasmussen,” Minister Walters spoke again. “What happened? Why did you interfere?”

“I had no choice. At thirty minutes to time, Patterson was issuing orders and checking his weapons. According to the history books, he never even left the camp that day.” She clenched her hidden fists until the nails dug into her palms. “I waited until he was getting in the jeep before I acted. It took considerable persuasion to get him back in the tent. His driver, Irish, assured him that he could ‘get him to the war in plenty of time,’” she slipped into Irish’s accent without thinking. “Patterson knew something was terribly wrong but it was almost more than I could do to convince him to stay.”

“You told him,” surmised Minister Walters.

Helen looked up. After a moment, she nodded somberly. Ignoring the angry mutters that began circling the table she explained, “The history books state he had no injuries at all. I would rather have knocked him out with something, but I couldn’t change history, could I?”

Minister Walters chuckled. Then he laughed aloud. “Gentlemen,” he turned from Helen to the rest of the committee. “Observe.” Tapping his tabletop monitor, he brought up a holographic display of items that made Helen gasp.

“That’s me!” she exclaimed, staring at the photos on her side of the slowly rotating display.

“That,” Minister Walters said, “is Patterson’s wife. You see,” he permitted himself a broad smile, “we were so focused on answering a military question that we never looked at the civilian records. In fact, we were so focused on not altering history that we neglected to review what happened after the battle.”

Minister Harris’ interrupted, “Rubbish. You manufactured these!”

A hush fell over the room. Minister Walters’ smile faded into a hard glare.

“I got these photos from the digital library you protect so zealously,” he replied coldly.

“I move that we adjourn to consider this new evidence,” Minister Jackson said mildly.

The move was seconded. All the screens went blank. Helen sat a moment longer than necessary, staring at her darkened monitor. It wasn’t every woman who got to see her future. Dazed, she allowed a pleasant usher to guide her out of the building. Somehow she even managed to give her correct address to the automated transit cab. She couldn’t eat though or sleep. Every time she closed her eyes she saw the pictures again. Patterson with his arms around her. Patterson with a baby in his arms. Herself with a young child and

“  
“That’s me!”  
she exclaimed,  
staring at the  
photos on her  
side of the  
slowly rotating  
display.”

*If time travel was possible, and you could see your future in the past - would you look?*

a baby. The pictures had gone on and on, documenting Patterson's life – his life with her.

A persistent pounding on her door jarred her out of an unsatisfying sleep. She stumbled to the door, yesterday's clothes rumpled and skewed from sleeping on her living room couch. Luckily she caught sight of herself in the black, polished dispenser face as she passed it.

"Hot pancakes and eggs," she ordered as she quickly straightened her blouse and smoothed her hair. She left the plate where it was and hurried to answer the door. "Minister Walters!" she greeted cheerily. "Come in, won't you? You're just in time for breakfast."

"Thank you, I've just had my lunch," he smiled kindly.

She blushed but stepped aside to let him enter. "You have news?" she asked.

"It's official," he held out a small epad. "You've been cleared of any wrongdoing."

Helen took the epad and read carefully. Her

smile slipped when she scrolled down to the second page.

"I don't understand," she looked up at him. "I'm being reassigned?"

"Let's sit down, shall we?" he gestured towards the couch she had just vacated. He noticed that she left the pancakes in the dispenser and that there was a pair of shoes under the coffee table, but he said nothing. "Determining your innocence was relatively easy once we realized you went on to become a part of our timeline. A terribly important part, too. Patterson's sons went on to form the Continental Alliance." He paused and smiled in almost paternal pride as she blushed again. "However, we then had to determine our role in your future in our history."

She blinked and the corner of her mouth quirked up in a half-smile.

"In short, my dear," he leaned forward and winked, "you're being transferred home."

## The Chicken Coupe

Leslie Wright  
Neosho Christian  
School  
Digital Art  
Silver

*I love cars, and my father took me to a car show preceding the H.A.M.B. Drag races for my 17th birthday where I saw this and fell in love.*



# Discovery

My long-brown hair stung my cheeks as gale-force winds whipped about us. Everything that wasn't nailed down was airborne, including centuries-old dust. Forcing myself to my feet, I shouted, "Excesin!"

The winds stopped as suddenly as they had begun. A chair crashed into the wall opposite the main door, the resulting pieces clattering to the ground. Papers rained down from above, along with keyboards, monitors, and various other pieces of equipment. For a moment, nothing human could be heard.

Finally, someone moaned. That did it. Everybody who could talk did, all saying the same thing – what was that?! The noise level rose quickly as each of them tried to speak loudly enough to be heard over the others.

"That's enough!" boomed an authoritative male voice.

I ducked my head. I hadn't even realized that the General was in the room...

"Clear out. If you can't walk, crawl. Starting now, this chamber is off limits." Scowling, the General motioned MP's into the room.

I joined the "herd" at the first opportunity. Hopefully, he wouldn't notice me. In the chaos I could probably slip out as easily as I had slipped in. My own injuries were limited to bruises, thankfully. I was jostling my way up through a downward flow of able-bodied manpower when a hand settled on my shoulder. My heart lurched like a yacht striking a sandbar. As casually as I could, I looked around.

"You again," said the General's voice. "I might have known."

I wasn't sure what he was thinking, nor did I particularly care to. His hand still firmly clamped on my shoulder, the General turned and headed back down.

"Uh, General," I resisted as best as I could, "we really don't want to go back down there." To my pleasant surprise, he stopped. Then he shoved me against the nearest wall, none too gently. Air wheezed out of me, and I coughed on the dust that rose from my clothes.

"Why don't you want to go back?" he asked, his tone a deadly calm. "You're an expert on so-called extra-terrestrial encounters, aren't you?"

I couldn't swallow. My mouth and throat were dry, but not just from the dust. For two hundred years, my family had lived in peaceful anonymity on this planet. There was barely

enough of their original DNA in my cells to even prompt a recognition signal from the few remaining pieces of their equipment. I hadn't even been sure that the machine would accept my order...

"Aren't you?" he repeated, leaning closer, his coffee-breath curling my nose hairs.

"Really, General," I retorted, my back literally against a wall, "there are no such things as aliens." He was not amused. Yanking me away from the wall like I was a half-full suitcase, he marched towards the chamber.

I thought rapidly as I stumbled along beside him. If my grandmother hadn't made up those bedtime stories, this was a lot more than an underground chamber. It was the bridge of the long-lost ship, The Connection. A hand-picked crew of fifty recruits had left the Academy, bound for the Solar System. Their orders had been to settle among the local populace, educating their children and grandchildren against the time that this world was ready to realize it was not unique in the universe.

As a child, I had been fascinated by the stories. Weeks of hypersleep during the trip here; hiding the ship after arriving... I told the stories now, to my nieces and nephews. I had even made up stories about the hero/heroine who would eventually reveal the truth to this world. They'd never been as scared as I was, though. Were the 7 billion other people on this planet ready?

The chamber was a wreck. The General paused in the entrance, staring grimly at the shattered monitors and piles of damaged equipment.

"You stopped it," he told me, shoving me forward. "How?" Arms folded across his chest, he blocked the door. He was flanked by two MP's, though I couldn't remember when we'd picked them up.

"You're crazy," I said, trying to look scared. It wasn't hard given that I was actually terrified. "Can we go before this place caves in?" I begged.

Just then, the MP on my right leaned forward. One eye on me, and his hand on his gun, he spoke softly to the General. Whatever it was, it wasn't good. The General's face went from red to near purple. I couldn't quite hear what he said as he left, but he was probably swearing. The MP's stood in the doorway now, effectively blocking any escape.

Lea Carter  
Salt Lake City, Utah  
Community  
Honorable Mention  
Fiction

*formerly from  
southwest  
Missouri*

*This is one of many  
stories I've written on  
the subject of friendly  
contact with mortals  
from beyond our sun.*



## Discovery

[Continued from 59]

"No dice, huh?" I asked. Seriously, where had all the MP's come from? A spark of an idea popped into my head, and I began carefully scanning the room. I'd only been here for a few moments before someone had tripped the interstellar gate, an equipment delivery system, creating the windstorm that we'd been lucky to survive. What I hoped to find now was the Master Switch, so to speak. I wanted to believe that the sudden energy depletion, after two centuries of sitting idle, had destroyed some wiring or drained the power source...but, that was Solan thinking. I supposed I couldn't help it, having been raised in a world of wires and exhaustible energy sources.

"What are you doing?" snapped the MP who had spoken with the General.

"Exploring," I retorted. "Nothing better to do." I wasn't sure he'd buy it, so I toed a heap of debris, shaking my head. By now, the crowd immediately outside the doorway had dispersed, most of the people hastily heading for the nearest ambulance.

I forgot about that, though, when I noticed that a debris pile was moving. Not much, but definitely moving. A faint whirring sound caught my attention next, and I began backing away from the wall where I suspected the gate was camouflaged. I had no idea what the MP's were doing, but I found myself wondering...suppose the last time it came on, it had been turned on all the way, like a fire hydrant? Suppose this time it was a controlled activation, more like a faucet? And who had turned it on? The whirring sound grew louder. I dropped to the floor behind the nearest desk, but couldn't help peeking around it. The MP's weren't as curious. When I looked over my shoulder to see what they were doing, they were gone. A heavy metal compression door, like they use on submarines, was creaking shut, sealing me in.

"Good riddance," I muttered, turning away. What I saw now made my jaw drop! A portion of the opposite wall had dropped its cave-wall camouflage. It was like looking through a fun-house mirror into another world, a world of the future. I jumped when a boot came slowly through the gate. It was followed by one leg, then another. On top of the two legs was a torso with two arms and one head, all encased in some sort of metal alloy. Too stunned to think properly, I stood up... The metal-person turned towards me.

The helmet opened like elevator doors, the sides folding back into what had looked like

exceptionally large ear slots. I found myself staring unabashedly at a rather attractive young man.

"Hello," he said.

I swallowed, wishing I could rinse some of the dust out of my mouth before I tried talking to him. "Hello," I managed at last.

Smiling, he looked around the room. His smile quickly changed into a distressed expression.

"What happened here?" He asked, his English only slightly accented.

I shrugged and folded my arms. I probably looked as bad as the room. "Someone accidentally opened the gate," I nodded at the wall he'd come through, "without activating the force field first." His eyebrows rose, and I almost giggled. It was a relief to see how similar he was to the Solan's I'd grown up with.

"Not, I trust, a descendant?" He was smiling again, but it took a moment for me to realize he meant me, well, us, the descendants of the original group.

"No," I shook my head. My hair, usually kept firmly pulled back out of my face, was tickling it now. "Most of us can't even control the machines anymore." I bit my lip to keep from babbling on.

"You've got to get out of here," I told him after a moment. "If they find you in here, I don't know what'll happen but it won't be good."

His eyebrows went up again, but he didn't say no. I answered a couple of questions, about the status of the mission, who had discovered the bridge, etc., and then he nodded sharply.

"Time to shut it down, I'd say." Moving swiftly, he turned back to the wall behind him. "Put your hand here," he pointed to a spot on the wall, then removed his glove and placed his hand on a second, higher spot.

What I hadn't been able to hear, I now felt as my hand came in contact with the wall. The machine was there, pulsing silently, waiting for orders like the perfect butler. My unique DNA permitted me to connect with it using a mental interface instead of a keyboard and monitor. Data poured into my mind – star charts, unique elements, the most famous works of the poet Arthus...

"Somnate asque susetauret," he ordered.

I blinked, slumped against the wall.

Through a haze, I heard a creaking sound. I thought it was the compression door.

"Go," I mumbled.

"I can't leave you!" He knelt beside me.

"Forgive me, I didn't realize it would..."

"Get out!" I hissed, my vision clearing. "I'll

be alright, but they can't find you here!" I don't know how I expected him to leave a sealed room, but I had no doubt that he could manage it.

"I still don't believe your story," growled the General as he handed me my bag.

Geothermal forces creating a wind shift storm through miniscule cracks in the cavern wall? I didn't believe it either, but that was irrelevant. An impending audit at the military mental facility where I'd been imprisoned for

almost a year was enough to make the General let me go anyway.

"Believe it or not," I slung the bag over my shoulder, "you had no right to hold me." Turning on my heel, I walked past the guards into the fresh, free air.

A limousine pulled up to the curb, glistening in the afternoon sunlight. The chauffeur sprang from the driver's seat and our eyes met. He was the man from the cave!

## Exploring New Worlds

Jessica Cole  
Neosho Christian  
School  
Silver  
Color Photography

*A mantis's glassy  
gaze reminds me  
of the far-away look  
of someone looking  
across the distance  
at a place they are  
seeing for the very  
first time.*



# The Love of a Galaxy

Ryan Land  
Goodman  
Staff  
Fiction

One time, there was an alien, named Guildon, who went to the school of aliens on the downtown square of Neutronia with all of his alien friends.

Guildon lived in a neighborhood full of his friends from school, and also lived in a house with his alien parents, along with his 2 brothers. He was the youngest alien in his house.

Everything always seemed to be normal with his life in Neutronia, but one day, he happened to spot one of his female alien friends, named Ericonia. Guildon has known Ericonia for almost his entire life, as he has lived in Neutronia for all of his life. Guildon never thought that he would ever have mutual feelings for his longtime friend, but on that very special day before Valentine's Day, he thought to himself and went to talk to his dad Wiltry, who was always good at giving advice out to anyone who asked for it.

"I know she's one of my best friends, but I really feel like I won't ever know what true love feels like until I earn Ericonia's heart," replied Guildon with a puzzled look on his face.

"You must follow your heart, if your heart tells you to do something, you must do it," said Wiltry. "That is how I met your mother."

"But dad, I've known her all my life, what would be a great way to tell her I like her, and not scare her away from me if she doesn't like ME back," asked Guildon with a questioning look towards his dad.

"Son, in life, you must take risks," instructed Wiltry. "If I never took a risk of asking your mother out, I might not be married right now, which means you would not be here asking me how to pick up a girlfriend."

Guildon knew what he had to do, but still wasn't so sure about going on with the plan to ask his crush out. He knew that there would be a dance at his high school, and he wanted Valentine's Day to be the special day in his life that he would finally get to confess his love for his longtime friend.

Guildon spent all night lying in bed, thinking about what he should do in order to keep his friendship with Ericonia, and after staying up until almost three o'clock in the morning, he decided that his father was right and he must step up to the plate and ask his longtime friend. So, the morning of Valentine's Day, Guildon rode his bicycle to the local flower shop to pick up a bouquet of flowers and a card, as he was planning to write down his feelings towards Ericonia on the card. Upon entering the flower shop, he was greeted by an older alien, who has been a cashier at the local flower shop for almost 40 years.

"Morning sir, can I help you with anything?" asked the older alien.

Guildon told the older alien, "I'm looking for some beautiful flowers for a beautiful lady that I am planning to ask to the dance tonight."

## April Baby

Cathleen Bailey  
Neosho  
Crowder  
Silver  
B&W Photography

*This photo is supposed to make one look at a rose like a baby. It was born in April and is now coming into full bloom. The white of the rose contrasted with the background is supposed to signify the uniqueness of the rose.*





"Why don't you take a look at the rose section over to your left," instructed the older alien with a warm smile on his face. "These roses are always the best to give a lady on this very special day."

So Guildon thought that the flowers looked absolutely beautiful, and proceeded to buy everything he needed, when he received a message from Ericonia on his space telecommunications system. She was wanting to meet up with him for breakfast at school before the first bell of the day rang for first period. He then thanked the older alien for his help, and ran out the door, as he was afraid that he might be late getting to school.

As Guildon entered the doors of the school, he went down to the cafeteria, only to find Ericonia sitting by herself, beginning to eat her breakfast of mutton and rabbit pellets. He slowly walked up to her, debating in his head whether or not he should go with his plan of asking her out for tonight.

"Hey Ericonia, how are you doing this morning?" asked Guildon.

"I'm doing great buddy, who are the roses for?" asked Ericonia with a wonderous look.

Just after she asked him that question, Guildon felt the butterflies tighten in his stomach, and as he looked her in the eyes, his heart started to pound wildly, and he started to lose breath, as she kept staring at him, waiting for an answer.

"Well, these are for you," said Guildon in a shy voice.

"What do you mean they are for me?" asked Ericonia.

"Well, Ericonia, we have been friends for almost our lives, but the last few months, I've really started to notice the nice things about you, and I think I might be falling in love with you more and more every day," Guildon confessed.

"Why that's really sweet of you to think of me like that Guildon," said Ericonia with a big smile on her face while her cheeks were blushed.

"So, I wanted to know if you would like to maybe go with me to the Valentine's Day dance tonight as my date," Guildon asked with a big smile on his face and a tears of acid forming in his eyes.

"Why sure I will Guildon, you have always been my friend, so I would always be there for you sweetheart," replied Ericonia as she went up to Guildon to give him a hug and kiss him on his upper left cheek.

So later that night, Guildon went to go pick up Ericonia to take her to the Valentine's Day dance at the high school. Ericonia was waiting at the front door when Guildon arrived with his

dad in the family UFO.

"Wow son, I am proud of you for stepping up to the plate and getting what you want in life," said Wiltry in a proud fatherly voice.

"Thank you dad for teaching me that you must take risks in life to live your life to the fullest and get what you want, and for that, I will always respect you and mom for that," said Guildon with a smile on his face.

So, Guildon and Ericonia arrived at the dance on time when the doors opened, and they had one of the most memorable nights of their lives, which came in second on the list of memorable times of their lives, only to their wedding day that took place 5 years to the day after Guildon built up the courage to tell his longtime friend his true feelings about her. They lived happily ever after in Neutronia.

*Love can happen to anybody of any form.*



## Intricacy

When we connect and flames of truth are  
sparked,  
A recognition bursting from within  
Sends shudders through my world and leaves me  
marked.

Oblivious are others to my sin.  
A look and I am frozen in my stance.  
Your eyes, the color of the deepest blue,  
That of the sky, is mirrored in my glance.  
Exposure of my soul, revealed by you.  
The thousand ways that I perceive your smile  
Are merely proof of your intricacy.  
The hours spent in thought not worth the while,  
For you do still remain unknown to me.  
And yet I will continue to explore  
The essence of your soul, the very core.

*A sonnet about a person with whom I have a very  
deep connection and yet still have not figured out. I  
thought of it as I was about to fall asleep.*



Maya Garner  
Seneca  
High School  
Honorable Mention  
Poerty

# Love

Angela  
Bracken  
Greenfield  
Crowder  
Bronze  
Poetry

A butterfly emerging from its cocoon  
A young colt running free and wild  
A rainbow embracing the heavens  
A bright smile beaming from a child

A westward wind whistling in the trees  
A majestic mountain, tall and proud  
A blossom's blush of bright color  
A sunbeam streaming beneath a cloud  
A bubbling brook flowing among flora  
A boy or a girl laughing out loud

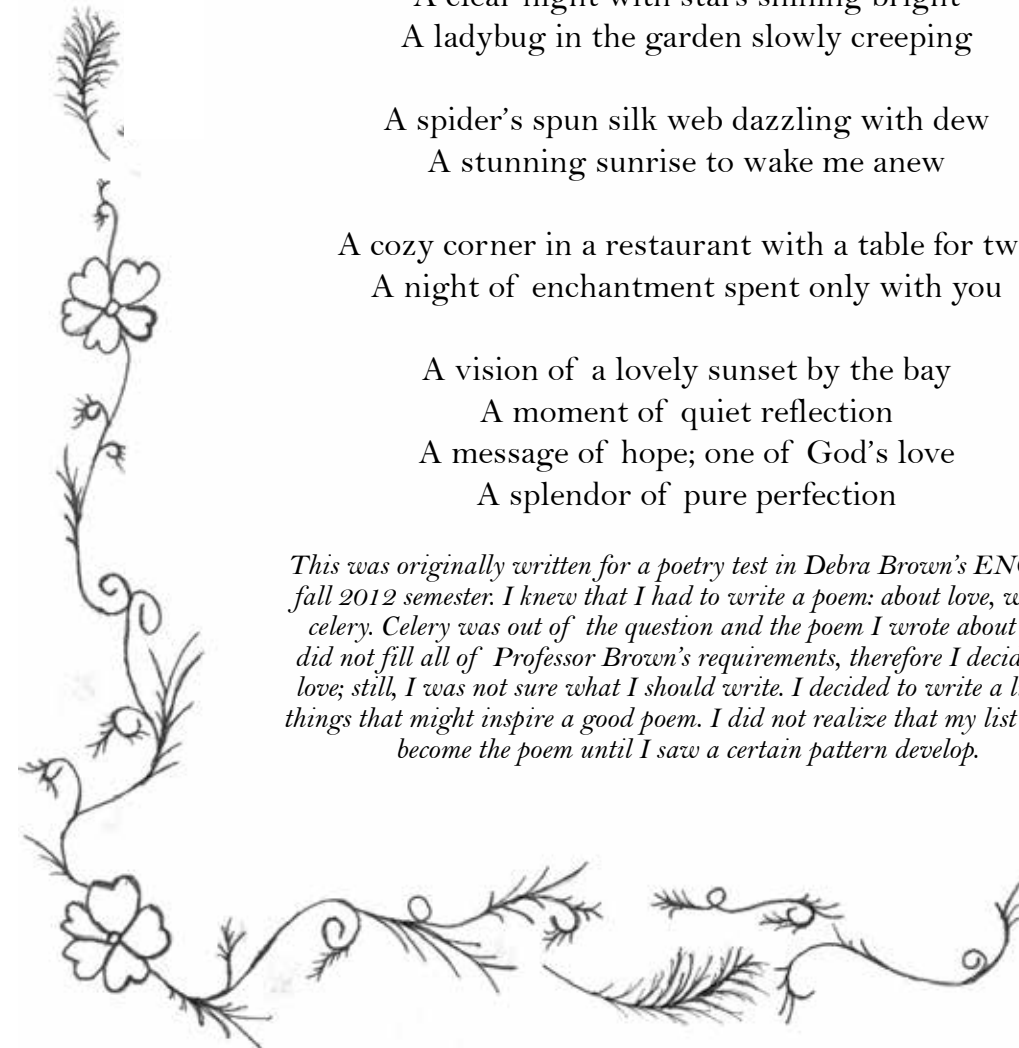
A sailvery moon reflected on the lake  
A wonderful willow tree sadly weeping  
A clear night with stars shining bright  
A ladybug in the garden slowly creeping

A spider's spun silk web dazzling with dew  
A stunning sunrise to wake me anew

A cozy corner in a restaurant with a table for two  
A night of enchantment spent only with you

A vision of a lovely sunset by the bay  
A moment of quiet reflection  
A message of hope; one of God's love  
A splendor of pure perfection

*This was originally written for a poetry test in Debra Brown's ENG 109 fall 2012 semester. I knew that I had to write a poem: about love, war, or celery. Celery was out of the question and the poem I wrote about war did not fill all of Professor Brown's requirements, therefore I decided on love; still, I was not sure what I should write. I decided to write a list of things that might inspire a good poem. I did not realize that my list would become the poem until I saw a certain pattern develop.*





## Butterfly Brilliance

Susan Roberts  
Neosho  
Community  
Honorable Mention  
Color Photography

*This photo was taken in my yard in the summer of 2012. After chasing the butterfly around for a few minutes, I snapped this picture as she landed on the fully blooming azalea bush. Notice the dappled sunlight coming through the tree above that naturally illuminated her brilliance.*



## Butterfly

Samantha Timbrook | Neosho | Community | Bronze | Color Photography

*This is the best photo I have taken this year; it is amazing how you can have so much fun and create such a beautiful image.*



# Mother

Cynthia Middaugh  
Lamar  
Community  
Honorable Mention  
Nonfiction

I see her hands, now bent and full of pain to the point that on certain days, she can no longer even hold her telephone. I see her in her wheelchair, waiting for someone to push her along because she can no longer push herself.

As I get closer, I see her smiling and visiting with another woman, who my mother is trying to cheer up. I am suddenly flooded with memories of this incredible, strong, Christian woman who God blessed me with as my mother.

My mother never walked anywhere. She ran. She ran to the mailbox. She ran to the clothesline. She ran to the car when we were going somewhere. Most of all, she ran to the door when my dad, my step-father, came home from work with a smile that displayed her love for him.

My mother's smile is legendary. Although she is beautiful, and has been compared to a green-eyed Elizabeth Taylor, my mother's heart is why her smile is so beautiful.

I can remember watching her dust mop our hardwood floors. She would dance with the dust mop all over the house. Usually, as Bobby Darin or Elvis was playing on the stereo.

Now, she tries so hard to walk a few steps with the guidance of the Physical Therapist.

I again see her hands, the very hands that held me, wiped away my tears, and held numerous books as she read to me.

Her hands were always reaching out to others who needed help. There were some, who took advantage of her, and she knew it, but said God saw her heart.

Mother played beautiful piano at home and at church.

I can still hear her playing and singing. Our favorite song was Blue Moon. "Blue moon, you saw me standing alone..."

She has such a beautiful voice. She started singing in the adult choir at her church when she was twelve. She sang in the church from that moment on, until her arthritis made it nearly impossible for her to go to church. The disease never affected her beautiful voice, however.

Mother taught children in Sunday school for a lifetime, and taught her own children about Jesus at home. She made certain we knew the Lord, and we all accepted his call.

She has fed multitudes. It was never enough

[continued to 67]

## A Mother's Love

Crystal Moody  
Rocky Comfort  
Staff  
B&W Photography



*I had a great shoot with this little guy who was born premature.  
There is nothing like a sweet baby to make a mother's heart flutter.*

## Mother

[Continued from 66]

to offer visitors, and there were always visitors, a glass of sweet tea or a cup of coffee. Mother fed them all. She baked every day and always had something good to offer.

That Southern Baptist southern belle has always been the epitome of elegance and good manners. She is honorable, truthful, and loving.

My mother never complains about the pain.

We know that the pain of the Arthritis that has taken over her entire body must be horrible. So many people complain so when it is only in their knees, or shoulders, but not Mother. She usually

quotes scriptures instead of complaining.

She has been given so many gifts, and she has always used them to serve God. But there were times I could only shake my head.

My mother always knew exactly what each of her children had done wrong, long before we

confessed to her.

I asked her about that one day. She told me that good mothers always knew and admitted when their children did something wrong. That way, the mother could help and teach her child. She said that is how a child not only learns right from wrong, but also about unconditional love.

At which point she said she would never lie

for her children. Well, I don't think Mother ever lied about anything.

I wanted to be like her so badly as I grew up, and in ways, I am. But in so many areas, my mother stands

alone, as the goal to be reached.

I love her with all of my heart, and I thank the Lord every day for choosing her to be my mother.

"And her children shall rise up and call her blessed." Proverbs 31:28

"I again see her hands, the very hands that held me, wiped away my tears, and held numerous books as she read to me."

*All children love their mothers. As children, we associate a mother's love with God's love.  
Thank you, Lord, for my mother.*

---

## A Long Drive Home

I remembered that day the way I remembered all the others spent with him: one drop in an endless bucket of tears. It was a day like all the rest and somehow singular with its own breath of indifference. It was a bitter day, when the air stung cold. This icy chill could creep through the warmest of sweaters. Matt was looking down from the tops of a tree I had told him countless times to stay out of. His sandy blond hair was getting long. It rippled in the wind with the remaining leaves of the branches. Tyler was watching in awe with eyes that saw only the heroics of his brother. Mattie was stumbling along with not a care in the world, her small legs trying to cover the ground her brothers had long-since abandoned. And then there was me, the outsider looking in at all the things around me- the observer.

I stayed in the car, refusing to join in any of the lives I was watching from the safety of my seat. It was cold. All the warmth was gone. I breathed on the glass, letting my breath haze this scene with these images of these people out

of my mind. It didn't last though. Within seconds it was gone and I watched this play unfold again before my steely eyes. Mattie had caught up now. She was sitting on the ground hugging her legs and looking up the tree, squinting to see Matt. He had dared to go a few limbs higher for his audience, but I could tell he was nervous. He was leaned up tightly against the tree, truly becoming one with the bark. Tyler, still paying rapt attention, refused to blink. I sighed.

I rolled down the window slowly and called to the man who was deeply concentrated on painting the mailbox. He doesn't answer. I didn't expect him to. I raise my voice. This time he responds with a grunt, "What is it?" he asks, obviously annoyed at the interruption of his work.

"Can we go home now, Dad?" I ask a little more quietly. He doesn't say anything, and turns back to his mailbox. He looks it over. He missed a spot. Metal peeks through streaks of black. I remember when there were more names on that box, but he must see the places he missed too. Another coat of black hides any remainder of

[Continued to 71]

Catherine Kelley  
Neosho High School  
Bronze  
Fiction

## Senorita

Jaclyn Kidd  
Neosho  
High School  
Gold  
Color  
Photography

*I used the flower  
to set off the  
beautiful profile of  
the model.*





# Just for Tonight

Yesterday's just a vision to me  
A vision of a goddess  
With black wings  
And a devil's smile  
Her eyes as dark as midnight  
Her skin cold to the touch

Yesterday's just a vision to me  
A vision of sorrow  
Of tears without end  
And darkness for miles

For the goddess cursed me with darkness  
She cursed me with sin  
She cursed me with sin after sin after sin  
And I have to find a cure  
A cure to break her curse  
A cure to stop her evil magic  
A cure to help me forget yesterday  
And all the sorrow that came with it

I need to find an angel  
An angel to rid me of this sin  
To take me up to Heaven  
I could have sworn you were an angel  
When I looked into your brown eyes

Would you be my angel?  
Would you rid me of this curse?  
Just for tonight would you be my angel?  
Would you take me up to Heaven  
And give me what the goddess never could?

Just for tonight would you hold me in your arms  
And make love to me  
By the light of the moon  
Just for one night  
That's all I ask  
Just for tonight  
Would you be my angel?

Jesse O. Walls  
Neosho  
Staff  
Poetry

*This is basically a pick-up line in the form of lascivious poetry.*



## Afternoon Delight

Catherine Meyer  
Exeter  
Crowder  
Bronze  
2D Media

*This started out as my first ever painting on paper, not to mention that it's my favorite dessert.*

# A Long Drive Home

[Continued from 67]

what was once so hopeful. After a few minutes, I watch him toss aside the empty spray can. Finally, he yells for everyone to load up. I stay where I am, and wait for the motor to rumble back to life so I can breathe again.

Mattie runs toward me with enthusiasm, leaving the boys behind her. Tyler stays faithfully where he is, waiting patiently for his brother to join him back on earth. I watch Matt pick his way carefully down the tree. He plops down with pretended ease and races ahead with Tyler trailing closely behind him. I lean back.

Dad opens the door on his side as the kids file into the backseat. I watch them squirm out of the corner of my eye before I fix my gaze on the things beyond the glass again. A squirrel races up the bark of an old Oak tree. It's the one with my old tire swing. It stirs in the breeze, taking me back to a time not so long ago. My days would begin like all the rest. Waking up to our happy home, I'd rush down the hall to breakfast. Mom would make pancakes and Dad would kiss her on the cheek. She'd straighten his tie and he'd rush off to work, hating to say goodbye. I'd sit on that swing and wait for him. I'd play with my dolls and pick flowers from the garden, but I always came back to the swing. It was our special place. When he got home, Dad would come push me on the swing. No matter how tired he was, my face was the first one he saw. He'd lay his briefcase on the grass beside our tree and loosen his tie. He'd push me in the swing and we would sing together, our voices meshing with each other and disappearing on the air. We'd stay like that together till the sky grew dark and the air felt cold and crisp. Then he'd scoop me up and we'd come inside with cold noses and warm hearts.

The dinging of the key in the ignition brings me back to reality, and I look over at the old man beside me. He is old. I see it in the tired lines around his eyes and mouth. It's in the way he holds himself. He slouches and his face is serious. I miss his smile. I haven't seen it a long time. The stubble on his face is silver and the hair on his head is thinning. We pull out of the driveway leaving the swing and all its memories behind us.

It's quiet in the car, at least in the front.

The three siblings in the back all chatter amongst themselves about things only they would understand. Attempting to break this isolated silence; Dad asks one of his safe questions. I call them safe because that's what they are. He asks about school or talks about the weather, but he never talks about the real things we both wonder. We have a system. I guess I took too long to answer because I hear him clear his throat a little as he asks a second time, "How you been?"

How have I been? How have I been since when? The backseat is forgotten, and the car is a million miles away. I think back to the time when I could say I was fine and mean it. I think back to the swing. I feel something hot burn down the side of my cheek. I can't remember. I turn my head so he can't see and focus my eyes hard on the landscape blurring by. I think for a second of telling him how I really feel. I think of telling him how much it hurts for him to be gone. I think of telling him the truth. All these emotions are running through my mind and down my face, but all I can do is hear myself lie one more time. "Fine."

Suddenly, I felt sick. I was sick and tired of us lying to each other, always ignoring what was right in front of us. It was the elephant in the room no one dared to speak of. I didn't know who I was anymore. I didn't know who he was. These bantering children felt as distant as the old life I had. I knew it would be painful to talk, for us to really speak and listen the way we needed to, but I think it was even worse not to say anything at all. My face was red and my heart pounded at the thought of confronting such sadness.

We were passing things too quickly now. Familiar houses were coming into view. I recognized my own. Mattie and Tyler were saying goodbye to Matt. "See you next weekend," they shrieked in unison. I sit for what feels like an eternity. Tears are pouring down my face, but I don't try to hide it anymore. He won't look at me. I try to think of something to say, to make him understand. He never will. My lips touch his scratchy cheek in a soft kiss as I let him go. My determined fingers deftly find the handle of the door. They lift up and my feet crunch in the dead grass. I lift my chin in a way I had never had the strength to do before. "Goodbye," I whisper. I'm free.

*This is the story of a girl who struggles to find her voice and speak in a world she had no control of.  
Divorce changes lives, but it takes away more than just a ring.*



## Looking into the Eyes of a Young One

Allie Oxford  
Neosho  
Staff  
Photography

*This is my little brother, surprisingly he sat still long enough for this. His name is Orion and he is 4 years old and I just love his eyes.*

# The Dream

We were standing in a meadow. The sun was shining brightly around us, touching every blade of green grass. The air was warm and still. The sky was baby blue, and there wasn't a cloud in sight. It was breathtaking, perfect. As bright as the sun was, as pretty as the meadow was, I couldn't take my eyes off of the beautiful woman who was standing in front of me.

She looked radiant, as if she was full of joy, full of life, but I knew that couldn't be. She had been gone for months. Still, something inside me leaped at the sight of her, her smile, her glowing features. As she moved closer to me, I realized that this was her. I could smell her perfume; I could see each individual wrinkle in her skin. It was as if she had never left, but I knew that wasn't true. As she smiled at me, tears began to form in my eyes.

She finally came closer to me and wrapped me in one of her unique, loving hugs. I knew then that she continued to care for me, and the feelings of grief and joy bubbled over as I let the tears flow from my face. She looked beautiful, but that was no surprise. She had gotten her hair done, just like she did every Wednesday: a typical shampoo, set with a curling iron and a little bit of hair spray. I could barely smell the hair spray as I continued to embrace her. Our hug was warm and soft, much like the last hug I had ever given her.

My dad interrupted our moment, startling

me out of a near daze. "Sweetie, don't you have something you'd like to say to your grandmother?" he asked. As I turned and looked back at her, the words got stuck in my throat behind a sob. I let both out. "I love you, Grandma." We locked eyes through our tears, and she whispered to me, "I know, honey. I always have." The emotion that I felt at that moment was unlike anything I have ever experienced.

She then began babbling on about Heaven, how great it was. It was wonderful to see her without any pain or struggling, just pure joy. My father and I took our turns telling her how much we loved her and that we missed her. She just nodded and told us that she missed us too. As we began to survey the scene around us, she was suddenly gone. My grandma was gone once again. I couldn't believe that our time together had passed so quickly.

I began crying uncontrollably as my dad held me, trying to soothe my gasping cry. He then told me something I have never forgotten: "This is not the last time you will see her, Em. You'll see her again, one day, when the time is right. Until then, she is looking down on you always, and she will always love you just as you love her. Remember her as she was in your life, not at the end." I knew that there were no words that could be truer than those. I woke up suddenly, at peace for the first time in months. My grieving was finally over, and I could focus on the happiness we shared.

"She looked beautiful,  
but that was no  
surprise."

*This is about a dream I had; it was so vivid and full of emotion, it almost felt real. It has never left my memory and I think about it all the time.*

Emily Gritten  
Neosho  
Staff  
Nonfiction



# Devolution

Guy Wilkes  
Seneca  
Community  
Bronze  
Poetry

A silent watcher stained  
with sins astray  
He sees the life he knows he  
could have had  
He watches as his wife with lover lays  
He hides at home, a child, a lonely lad  
His seething, bleeding, creeping,  
kneeling down  
Resulting rage that reaches  
toward the sky

His temper tiptoes like a circus clown  
To slay the harpy teaching him to fly  
The dark idea comes in whispered voice  
His actions disregard the quiet source  
His sanity, long gone, does mark  
his choice  
His execution with a shark's remorse  
A hatred fueled by his heavy heart  
A burning passion tears their  
lives apart

*It was written to illustrate the mind of a man who has been betrayed by his woman,  
and the downfall that becomes them.*

# Pieces

Charles Burns  
Granby  
Crowder  
Honorable Mention  
Poetry

I feared you would leave, the day you told me.  
That things are not how they used to be.  
I told you I love you, but you didn't feel the same  
And now I feel like I'm to blame  
You said "it would feel awkward, me being with you"  
"You are like a brother to me" the words rang true  
There is another in her heart, one I cannot deny  
One I cannot fight, no matter how I try.  
My heart lay shattered on the ground, its hard to see  
To see all the faces lying within me.  
But I pick them all up, I work through the pain  
My tears being covered by the rain.  
My heart was shattered, now to be rebuilt  
To be made of a metal, that may never melt.  
I hope to find that love again someday,  
And I hope that again, I don't push it away.

*Inspired by true events*

# Lies

I wrote another poem here  
In my hand it lays  
Not of truth but lies this time  
For in lies I am amazed

You needn't stand your ground of course  
Hold fast to something true  
For in the end the wind is friend  
Blowing in the blue

Samuel McFerron  
Neosho High School  
Gold  
Poetry

They walk around, a pompous crowd  
They dance, they sing, they play  
They'd like to make you second guess  
The good, the bad, the grey

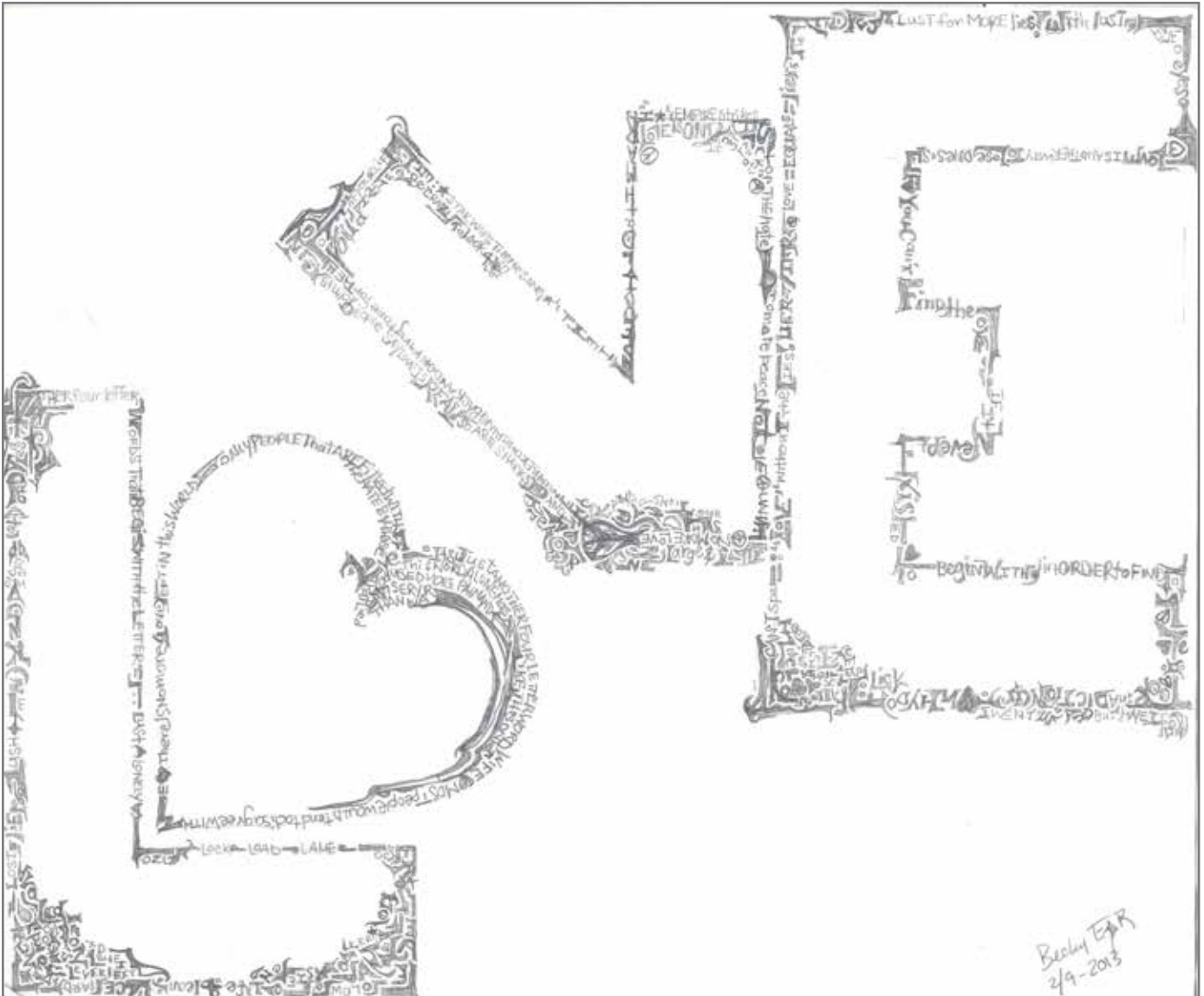
Raise up a kite of tolerance  
Give way to all and see  
The peace that you've been fighting for  
Is simply anarchy

*I have always been fascinated the characteristics of  
lies--this is a clever expression of their true nature.*

# Love Equals Lies

Becky Embry-Ross | Lanagan | Staff 2D Media

*The piece speaks for itself.*



# He Knows Where We Live

Sharyn Crouch  
Cassville  
Community  
Silver  
Nonfiction

*This is a true story that happened to my sister and me when we were young. I wrote it while teaching Stephen Crane's story "The Open Boat." My goal was to teach the students how to write a personal narrative.*

The warm, early spring, Arizona sun had finally decided to show its face after several days of rain. It rains so rarely in this desert region, but when it does, the caliche clay soil quickly absorbs the moisture and turns to glue. It was a common sight in the lettuce fields surrounding Mesa to see the tractors that usually pulled the lettuce harvesters being dragged themselves by cat-tractors because the clay would become three or four feet thick on the wheels. My sister, Bonnie, and I were carefully making our way through the driest parts of the vacant lot behind our house. Bonnie was twelve and in the 6<sup>th</sup> grade; I was ten and in the 4<sup>th</sup>. Mom had asked us to go to Jack's Grocery store for a few items. We had to walk through the vacant lot, across an irrigation bridge, then navigate through another empty field before we reached the parking lot at Jack's. We scraped the mud off our shoes before entering the store. After making our purchases, we started back across the muddy field when a kid came running after us. He was taller and bigger than us, maybe fifteen or sixteen years old. Though he had brown skin, his face was red and scarred from acne. He was dressed in dark clothes.

"Hey, Jack wants you," he called, motioning with his arms for us to come back. Oftentimes, Mom would call Jack and add something to our list, so at this point we didn't think anything was strange. We turned around and headed back to the store. The young man fell instep beside Bonnie. A smell of stale cigarette smoke and apricots exuded from his clothes. When we reached the side of the building, I was a couple steps ahead of them. I distinctly heard Bonnie's frantic whisper.

"Sharyn." I turned around to see that the kid had Bonnie in a stranglehold. He had his arm around her neck pulling her tight against his chest. He had twisted her right arm behind her back. Something shiny glinted in the sunlight by her right ear. I froze.

At first I couldn't tell what was happening. When I finally came to my senses, I recognized Bonnie mouthing the words, "Go get help!" and motioning with her head towards the store. I slowly backed towards the store. He continued to half-step, half-drag Bonnie towards me.

"Tell her to come back," he demanded.

Bonnie didn't say anything. Her eyes continued to direct me towards Jack's. As I neared the front edge of the building, I was about to turn and run to the door when he let Bonnie go and laughed, "Hey, it was just a joke. I wasn't going to hurt her." He backed away from her holding both hands high in the air.

I ran to where Bonnie stood. She grabbed my wrist and pulled me along. "Come on. Let's go." We started running towards home. This time as we crossed the field, we took the shortest distance. The gooey mud sucked at our shoes. I could feel globs hitting the back of my legs with each step. "He's following us," yelled Bonnie. "Faster!" I glimpsed quickly. Terror surged through my stomach as I saw him enter the field. "Faster!" she screamed. My legs tried to move fast, but the mud pulled me back with each step. The clay began to layer my shoes. First a half-inch, then an inch, soon two inches of mud caked the bottom of my shoes.

"I'm going to lose my shoes." I sobbed. The black, patent leather shoes used to be my Sunday shoes. At one time they had a strap across the top, but when it broke, the shoes became my everyday play shoes. Now, without the strap the mud sucked the heel of the shoe off. Then it would flip back and slap the bottom of my foot.

"Just keep running," she yelled, "and quit bawling."

I was terrified. My thoughts raced. "I'm not a fast runner. He'll catch up to me. Everyone always catches up to me. My shoes, oh, my shoes! Please stay on! Please, dear God, help me!" Bonnie reached back, grabbed my hand, and propelled me forward. After what seemed forever, we reached the bridge. I needed to stop and catch my breath, but I didn't dare. My lungs hurt, and my side throbbed. I could see my house now, but I could also see that he was still coming. By the time we reached the gate to our backyard, he was standing on the bridge. He stopped. Mom had heard our screams. Two frightened little girls ran into the arms of an alarmed mother. The next few weeks were a blur. We told our story to our Mom, and then we told the story again to our neighbor, who was a policeman. Later that night we told it again to a police detective. Bonnie had recognized the boy from school in years past. A couple days later we were called out of class to



go to the principal's office. We identified his picture from class photos taken two years earlier. The following week we were taken in a police car along with the principal to the police station. Once again we identified him, only this time it was face to face. He was sitting in a chair beside a desk with an officer by his side. Another officer brought us close to where he was sitting. His eyes were cold and hard. Hatred screamed at us. Without a doubt, it was the same kid.

We were told later that he confessed to the crime against us plus several other similar incidents in the city. He was sentenced to time in juvenile detention. One night after it was all over, Bonnie and I were lying quietly in bed when she turned to me and said, "You know Sharyn, he knows where we live." Once again terror surged. It wasn't until later that summer when we moved to Idaho that I was able to sleep peacefully.



## The Ghastly Ghoul Phenomenon

Brent Cosby  
Carl Junction  
High School  
Honorable Mention  
2D Media

*There really wasn't any purpose for this painting, it just happened.*

## My Final Battle

"We're under attack". These are the first words my waking brain can understand. A half second later my hand latches on to my sword, Exitium. As I jump to my feet ready to call upon the elements to come aide my wishes, I start to tremble with adrenalin. The wind whispers in agony, as arrow after arrow headed for my retreating silhouette. My back twitches painfully as fire crept up my spine; my hands swing back and forth, left and right as I defend my castle. Hoping, praying, and wishing for this nightmare to end, I fight.

My little sister's scream fill the air as a new wave of intruders steps up. With fear in my throat, I race to her side, lunging left and right

taking down her enemies, my enemies. We stood side by side in despair; the never ending battle coming to a halt. Choices made and promises are broken, lies start to become our reality. As I look back, I stare at our fallen; friends, foe, cousin, brother, all dead. For what purpose, a decision made by none alive, to fight this war. Who was our enemy, what is our enemy? My thoughts turn in exile; my labored breaths come to an impasse.

What should I do now, should I continue on this path of my own destruction or should I start listening to my own dreams and ideas? With that thought in my waking conscious, I roll over and wake up.

Megan Nash  
Neosho  
Crowder  
Bronze  
Fiction

# The Last Call

Zachary Ezell  
Neosho  
High School  
Gold  
Nonfiction

*This is a true  
story about my  
friend, Patrick, and  
the last call he ever  
gave me.*

I am awakened by the familiar ringtone of my phone at 2:00 in the morning. At first, I was disoriented because I didn't know where I was. However, after a moment, I remembered that I was in my room of the Marriot Hotel in Detroit, Michigan. Walking into the hallway with my phone in hand (because I didn't want to wake the others), I answered.

"H-h-hello?" I muttered in a confused, just-got-woken-up-at-two-in-the-morning voice.

"Zach. This is Patrick. I need to talk to you. It's an emergency."

Judging by the seriousness in his voice, I knew he wasn't kidding. I am fully awake at this point.

"What's up, dude?" I asked very concerned.

"I need you to pray for me. It has been so long since I have actually prayed that I have forgotten how to, and I knew you were a Christian so I thought I'd come to you with this."

"Sure I can pray for you. What do you need prayer for?"

"I need peace. Have you heard anything from Kenzie?"

Kenzie was his girlfriend. They had a very different relationship. They were great for the first couple of months, but then they would start arguing. They would have some stupid argument every day, threaten to leave each other, break up, get back together as soon as later that same day, and then start the process all over.

"No. I haven't heard anything from her. Why? What's going on? Is she ok?"

"Just pray for me."

"Ok. Here let me get my pastor real quick. Stay on the phone."

I walk back into the room and wake up my youth pastor.

"Jeff. Hey I need you to wake up," I gently shake up awake, "Come on wake up."

"Zach?" He said just as tired and confused as I was. "What's going on? Its 2:00 in the..."

I cut him off, "My friend is in trouble and he asked us to pray for him."

"What kind of trouble?" Jeff asked.

Not even answering his question, I put the phone on speaker. "Patrick, are you still there?" There was no reply. "Patrick?" Still nothing. "Patrick!?"

"Yeah I am still here. Hey you go ahead and pray for me. I have to hang up for a moment. I'll

still text you, but Kenzie is on the other line."

"Ok." The phone went silent. "Jeff, can you start the prayer?"

He started to pray that God would watch over Patrick. Keep him safe. And give him peace. I was already doing the same thing.

After the prayer, I looked at my phone and saw that Patrick had texted me. The message read: 'Take care of Kenzie for me. I know you care about her as much, if not more, than I do.' Immediately I called him back. One ring. Two. Three.

*Come on Patrick pick up the phone,* I thought.

Another ring goes by and to my surprise I hear him pick up the phone.

"Patrick !!? Thank God you are still here. I..."

"Zach, thanks for always being there for me." I hear him cock back the hammer of the gun.

"Patrick stop! Don't do this!" A loud noise comes through the other end of the phone, and nearly deafens me. Also, a split second after the noise my phone lit up saying 'Call ended' he must have shot through his phone somehow. I didn't know what to do. I tried calling him back multiple times, but the only thing I got was that stupid automated voice recording: 'We are sorry the person you are trying to reach is not available. Please try again later. Goodbye.'

I sat there in the hallway trying to process everything that just happened. After everything I still couldn't come to grips with him being gone. Memories suddenly flooded over my mind like a hurricane. One moment, I was at school laughing with him, Adam (my best friend), and Kenzie. The next moment, I am at the campsite where Adam, Patrick, and I decided to go to get Patrick away from Kenzie. We got him away from Kenzie because she was making him too upset. I remember we nearly drowned ourselves in the creek that ran through the campsite because we were acting like a bunch of idiots. It was such a good time. Such a fun memory. Another memory flashes by. We are sneaking out one night in the middle of summer for no reason at all but just to do it. Patrick, Adam, and Jacob (another friend) come to my house wearing their ROTC BDUs and boots. I didn't have BDUs, so I wore all black instead. About midnight we snuck out by jumping out of my window. That is when Patrick confessed that he was scared of heights.



## Rain

Catherine Meyer  
Exeter  
Crowder  
Silver  
2D Media

[Below]

## XX

Catherine Meyer  
Exeter  
Crowder  
Gold  
2D Media

We all had a good laugh about that. I remember every time we saw a pair of head lights coming from any direction we would drop to the ground and stay there like we were getting shot at from above. We were such idiots. It took us three hours for us to get around a few blocks.

I remember the good times as well as the bad. There was more than one occasion when Patrick snapped at me because he thought that Kenzie and I were “fooling around” behind his back. To be honest, I did have a thing for her, and she had a thing for me. However, she and I agreed not to do anything because neither of us wanted to hurt Patrick, but I guess we openly flirted a little too much in front of Patrick to give him those ideas. He and I would get into very heated arguments about her. He would accuse me of seeing her behind his back, sleeping with her, etc; and instead of simply denying it and walking away like I should have, I would throw an insult in his face.

“I would at least treat her better if we were seeing each other behind your back!” The memory of me saying this brings a tear to my eye. I don’t have the control to hold it back anymore.

Why did I say that? Why didn’t I simply walk away? Now he, himself is just a memory, and I can’t even apologize. I should have cherished him while he was still here. I should have been a better friend. Patrick, wherever you are... I am sorry.





# Vengeance

Maya Garner  
Seneca  
High School  
Honorable Mention  
Fiction

*The psychology of  
a man who has sworn  
to take revenge.*

The air burns like fire as I drag it into my lungs with every ragged breath I take. My shaking fingers loosen their cramped grip on the knife and it collides with the floor. I stare into the dead eyes of the man I have just killed. The last emotion he ever felt is written across his face.

Have you ever experienced hate? Have you felt the emotion that is notorious for destroying lives, sense, and empires? I thought I had. But it was not until that evening when my wife and unborn child were brutally murdered in front of my very eyes that it emerged in my heart and took a hold of my previous self. And from that moment I knew hate.

Let me describe the sensation to you. Underneath all the anger that burned me up and the pain that made life unbearable was something solid to hold on to. It was cold, cold as the feel of a dead body. It became the core of my being and turned me into a creature with only one desire, only one *purpose*:

Revenge.

I take an insecure step backward. My eyes cannot tear themselves off the lifeless body, slouched against the wall. For eight long years have I chased this man. Across the states have I traced his footsteps like a wild and vicious hound. There was nothing to go back to. Obsessed, and mad with the thought of seeing him dead, revenge was the only thing I had to look forward to. I devoted my life to find the person who slaughtered my family while I could do nothing to stop him.

He lies before me now, reduced to nothing but a cadaver. The abruptness of his death has stiffened his features. However many times I imagined it, however much I dreamed of watching the light leave his eyes, I never envisioned this.

I remember how I lied to the police when they interrogated me, the only witness. The decision was spontaneous, but I knew I could not let them find him. He was mine. I led them on the wrong track, made them search for the wrong person. And all the while, I began the

hunt myself.

It was really luck more than anything that led me to him in the end. He had constantly succeeded in fleeing just before I managed to get to him. I was always a step behind. But a coincidence occurred, and I discovered his location.

I find myself wondering what my beloved wife would think, had she seen me now. The old me was killed on the same night she was, and some heartless monster took my place instead. All the old feelings were discarded, taken from me, and replaced with hatred. Can I even feel the sorrow anymore? I think it is there, somewhere,

unless the bitterness of my mind has etched it away like acid, just as it has with the last tattered pieces of happiness and delight. What would she think of me, had she seen me with this man's blood on my hands? Would she still think I was the same person, that I was *still a person*?

When my family was murdered, I was left with a void inside of me where happiness had once lived. As the days dragged on in agony, this void

grew bigger and continued to consume more and more of my soul. I refused to give in to it and wallow in the grim satisfaction of ennui. Part of me has always known that had I only had the patience to endure my sorrow and begin a gradual healing process, then after many years I would start to regain some of my lost joys, and eventually the hollowness would disappear with only a faded scar left as a reminder. But I needed a quicker solution. A much more primitive side of me had desperately wanted to get away from the pain before it destroyed me. And the only way I knew of escaping it was to inflict it on the person who had caused me this grief in the first place. So I filled this void with thoughts of homicide. The hunt for vengeance kept me going, drove me forth, and became the only thing I lived for.

But I have reached my goal, and the hunt has come to an end.

I have taken my revenge.

And now, there is only  
Emptiness.

“What would she think  
of me, had she seen me  
with this man’s blood  
on my hands?

Would she still think  
I was the same person,  
that I was *still a person*?”



## State of War

Emily Berry | Carl Junction High School | Gold | Digital Art

*It doesn't matter what side of the debate you're on; somebody is hiding something.*

# Self

Daniel Alec Garcia  
Neosho High School  
Gold  
Fiction

**A**t first there was nothing. And then there was darkness. So began the thing I now know are called “memories.” I can’t recall an exact date for when I began to “remember.” All I know for sure is that, one moment I did not exist, the next moment I did.

My first memory was of a pain in my gut. This feeling I now know as “hunger.” I did not know where I was, but I did not care either. I had no other thoughts than to quell this unpleasant feeling. Unfortunately, I had no idea of how to stop this urge. I don’t know how long I remained like that (my memories are fuzzy, at best), but at some point I felt something enter the vicinity near me. At that point, without my input, my hunger began to fade. I did not know it at the time, but this was my first experience with feeding. It was delicious, and I remember, after the last of my pains ended, falling into sleep.

This became a daily routine for me. At least, I believe it is daily, as I have no real idea of how to measure time in this prison I reside. My eyes eventually began to adapt to the darkness, but I still could not make out the full details of where I was. I knew it was warm and safe, and that was all that really mattered to me at that point in my life. There was also a steady beating of...something that I found to be incredibly soothing. I came to learn that this was called a “heartbeat.”

As time passed, I began to grow larger. It was a very slow growth, but growth nonetheless. I also began to notice that the time it took for “feeding” to start and end became longer and longer. I was unsure of how long exactly, but I could tell there was a difference.

At some point, I began to hear a noise

in my head. It started as an odd scratching noise, a piercing noise that echoed in my skull like a scream. It was only slightly annoying at first, but as it became louder and more frequent, I began to grow frightened of it. There was a voice inside my head that was not my own, and I had no way to make it stop. After some time, however, I began to grow less frightened of it, and more intrigued. So, I began to actually listen to it. It spoke strange noises I had never heard before. I came to learn that these were called “words.”

Some time went by, and I no longer feared the voice. As I grew older, I noticed that some of these words began to be repeated, and were set up in an orderly, almost intentional fashion. This was my first experience with sentences. By listening closely to the sentences, I began to piece certain words with certain meanings, and over time, I began to understand them. I have come to believe this is how I understand language.

Many words were repeated by the voice, but one stood out more than others. *Brother*. I liked the sound of this word. I wasn’t sure why at the time, but the word very much clicked with my brain. From the way this word was used, “brother” seemed to mean protector. Friend. Guardian. Companion. I began to refer to the being I inhabited as “brother”, and the strange voice in my head is his voice. The voice of my brother.

My brother did not seem to be aware of my presence in him, however. I was not worried. He did not need to know of me. I was content in the knowledge that I simply knew of him.

I eventually learned something new of my brother. He was a rather religious creature. Religion is something that I had no concept of until his voice entered my head. My brother thought a great deal about something called God. From the way his thoughts were structured, this God was a creator. A protector. A father. He was treated with the utmost respect, and was worshipped and loved by many, not just my brother.

I was intrigued by this concept. A creator, a life giver. After some thought, I came to believe that this being was real. After all, how else could I have been created? This God gave me a chance to live. He gave me life. I accepted Him, as my brother did.

Soon, however, came....complications. I cannot recall the exact point of occurrence,

## Repetitive Motion

Faith Fraser  
Carl Junction High School  
Bronze  
2D Media



*My grandfather died in January of 2012. After he died, I felt my life was just a pattern. I decided to express my life in my artwork.*



but some new words came from my brother's voice. The sentences and tone seemed agitated. Worried. He dwelled on a conversation with something called a "doctor." I was somewhat aware of what this was; some kind of medical professional.

The conversation seemed to be dire. He spoke of something that was inside him, making him sick. The doctor was very worried, and wanted something called a "scan". I did not know what this word was. He spoke of something called a "parasite." I did not know this word either, but I could tell it was not a good thing. My brother seemed to be worried about it as well.

I had noticed my brother seemed to be growing sick. He seemed to be consistently ill, was growing noticeably weaker, and was in much pain. I was worried about him as well.

I was most concerned about the doctor's words. "A parasite inside him?" *That could not be...no.* I told myself. It was not I. I could not be.

I had my fears confirmed when I experienced a growth spurt over night. My brother experienced tremendous pain, and I knew for sure. I was that parasite. I was making my brother sick. My life is dependent on his. If he dies, I die.

After this revelation, I had thoughts about my nature. My existence. My faith. For a very long time, I believed I existed because God decided I deserved a chance to live. Did I really, or was I just a parasite leeching off of an unsuspecting host?

My brother was growing sicker. He had refused the scan the first time, but I believed from his thoughts he was considering it. I was at a loss on what to do. Not that I could really have done anything. All I could do was pray for better times.

After this, I spent much time reflecting on the nature of my faith. I admit, I had doubts. Was there really a God? If there was, why did He give me life in the first place? If I truly was the cause of my brother's illness, why did He allow me to come into being if He was well aware of the problems it would cause my brother? I found myself struggling with the concept of it.

The more I grow, the sicker my brother seems to get. He made the decision to have the scan. Surely, if I am discovered, I will be removed. My death would follow shortly. A sinister thought occurred to me. I had grown very large over the past amount of time. Perhaps, if I made the effort, I could remove myself from his body. Forcibly.



I found myself sickened by the very thought of such a thing. Surely, such an action would kill my brother. It was not right to think about doing something that could harm my brother. Right?

My thoughts turned to the morality of such a thing. Was it really right to place my life over my brother? It wasn't his fault I was born from him. Yet, he was still the thing standing between me and freedom. He had lived for much longer than I. Perhaps God had decided that my life was of more importance than his? After all, what God would give me life only to have me die trapped inside a living prison?

Then, my brother's health reached a critical point. I am unsure how or when, but at once, my brother collapsed. I was sure my presence was responsible for his sudden sickness. It must have been in a public place, as I could feel his body being moved afterward. He seemed to still have some degree of awareness, as I caught flickers of his surroundings through his eyes. He seemed to be on his way to the hospital. I could hear the pounding of his heart in my ears, like a blaring siren warning of impending death.

And so here I find myself, trapped inside my collapsing prison. There was likely a good chance the scan would be performed the moment he reached the hospital, and once I was discovered, the doctors would do everything in their power to destroy me. Escape, though it would likely kill my brother, would allow me to live.

However, if I stayed, there was likely a good chance my brother would survive, though my death would be key in giving him a chance.

One last time, I asked myself the question that has haunted me for a very long time.

*Whose existence mattered more? Myself, or my brother?*

## Spotted Fish

Miranda Holcomb  
Neosho High School  
Gold  
3D Art

*I wrote this story mostly as a way to explore a very interesting and somewhat unsettling idea I had...its purpose is mostly to provoke thoughts on whether it is ok to value your life over the life of someone else.*

# You Don't Know Me

Cynthia Middaugh  
Lamar  
Community  
Gold  
Nonfiction

*Our paths cross with  
those who suffer from  
mental illness every day...  
it is time to dispose of  
our inaccurate, at times  
cruel, stereotypes.*

You don't know me, yet you think you know me inside out. You sit next to me at school, and we run around together after school, as friends do.

We laugh at the same jokes, listen to the same music, and have common interests that bind us.

During class time, when the teacher is lecturing us, I talk with you on one side of me, and talk with another friend sitting on the other side of me. On more than one occasion, you both have told me to be quiet so you could take notes from the lecture.

I readily stopped talking, because I always do what I am told. I don't trust my own judgment on how to behave, because of mistakes I have made in my past.

On numerous occasions, you have mentioned with a hint of jealousy in your voice that

you don't know how I can never take a single note, and still make straight A's.

I always tell you that I am paying attention, whether it seems like it or not. I smile at you, and we go on.

What I have never told you, or anyone else for that matter, is this. The conversations between myself and you two friends sitting next to me aren't what disturbs me. It is the continuous conversations in my head, usually three or four at a time, which are the loudest and most disturbing to me.

The conversations in my head are usually about me, and they are quite critical and negative.

Also, there is the constant music. My

life is scored with music, as a movie is.

When you consider the music, the conversations (I refuse to say "voices") in my head, and the distractions outside where you are, it truly is amazing that I can make straight A's in school and never take a note.

My answer is this. I am extremely auditory. If even a part of me, and there are many parts of me, hears you, or a speaker, I will remember what you said. I can remember almost every conversation I have ever had in my life.

That is why I do talk to myself. I can remember better if I hear something out loud, than if I try to rehearse it in my chaotic mind.

Then, of course, there's my IQ, which dwarfs everyone else's I know. My IQ is the reason I can learn and understand anything, anything at all. I am always searching for mental challenges, just to end the boredom.

A high IQ is not the only gift that seems to accompany the curse of my mental illness. I am very gifted in music, literature, and art. The more abstract something is, the more I can understand it.

On the other hand, I am known for making irrational decisions. It seems I do lack common sense, even with my high IQ. I have been called stupid because of this, even though I am anything but stupid.

Now when we are at school together, or at work together, you look at me and believe with all of your heart that you know me. You don't know me. But, I do know you.

I can be around a person for a matter of minutes and know them well enough to mimic them. I developed my behaviorist skills when I was quite young.

It is extremely easy for me to size you up. I can imitate you and do as you expect me to in all events of life. That is how I exist without my illness being detected.

When you see me, you are in reality, looking at your mirror image. That is why you think you know me.

Emotions don't play into it, since I basically have none anymore. I have drained myself of my emotions for my own protection. My emotions were used up years ago in grief, terror, shame, and anger. The circumstances surrounding each will go to the grave with me. I will never tell anyone what I have gone through. You wouldn't believe me anyway.



## Mind-bender

Bunny Isham | Neosho | Community  
Honorable Mention | 2D Media

There are times when you think you know me, because I remind you of a family member, a neighbor, or another friend who at times, I acted like. They were never diagnosed by a doctor so you never realized they were ill.

Apparently, 1 in 4 Americans have a mental illness of some nature. Not all are to the degree of my own illness, but that ratio is narrowing. That ratio is only of the diagnosed cases. There are many undiagnosed cases still to be found out.

Not all mentally ill individuals are homeless, unemployed, or in prisons. Not all Schizophrenics are serial killers.

The tendency toward mental illness runs in families, and is made manifest by life's circumstances.

Now the heart of the matter is this. You don't know me, but I do know you.

I no longer know myself, if I ever really did. That is what hurts most of all.

I have mimicked so many of you, that you all have become a part of me. I can blend into any crowd with ease, such as a Chameleon blends into its surroundings, but my own individuality is lost.

I was once asked, "Who are you?" And my reply was, "Who do you want me to be?" I have no idea who I am, but with the gifts I was blessed with, I know I could have been somebody. To quote Brando, "I could have been a contender!" But life got in the way.

The most important thing I want to tell you is, I do know the Lord. When you see me at church, sit next to me, sing hymns with me, I am not mimicking you. My feelings, worship, and praise of Him is real and true.

There are still some people today who associate mental illness with being unsaved, or at the very least, demon possessed. I personally know many Christians who have cancer, arthritis, diabetes, heart disease, and the list goes on and on.

It is my mind that is ill, not my soul. The truth is, I may be closer to Him than most, because not only do I love Him and need Him, I have to have Him in my life, just to survive.

You don't know me, because years ago I learned you didn't want to know someone who was ill. At the time, that broke my very young heart. I vowed to be more like you, so you would like me better.

The irony of all of this is, I just didn't want to be hurt again, yet I have hurt myself by not risking being who I want to be instead of who you want me to be.

The truth of all of this is, I never really

wanted to be like you in the first place. I just wanted to be able to fit in, be accepted, and not have my illness found out. It has all been a daily struggle at best.

Who in their right minds would want to be like you, with your mediocre brains and your mundane lives?

## Palace Theatre

Latonia Bailey | Goodman  
Staff Adviser | Digital Art



*Nostalgic architecture catches my eye, and I tried to enhance those qualities through digital special effects.*

# Masquerade

All the faces I see  
all of them, are part of me  
All these masks, dancing in time  
All forged by parts of my mind  
black for the anger  
red for the lust  
all of them there  
all of them i touch  
I wear all these masks  
The first and the last  
As twisted as they may be  
They are still part of me  
A shattered mind having a ball  
To the sound of madness, a terrible song.  
For no one can see  
all the faces of me.

Charles Burns  
Granby  
Crowder  
Silver  
Poetry

*Musically inspired*



# MUSIC IS INSIDE OF YOU!



*I am extremely inspired by music. I feel that everyone has music in the soul but only a few of us express it louder than others.*

[Above]

## Music Is Inside of You

Patti Richardson  
Fayetteville, Ark  
Community  
Gold  
Digital Art

## Froman Andy

Patti Richardson  
Fayetteville, Ark  
Community  
Bronze  
B&W Photography



*Andy Frasco is a moving-grooving type of musician... He is very active on stage and to catch him is a very tricky thing. This shot shows people just one of the many sides of his character.*

# Magic Music Box

Drip, drip, drip, water in brook  
Crock, crock, crock, green frog's speech  
Caught in my magic music box.

Tweet, tweet, tweet, sparrow's rhyme  
Swish, swish, swish, branch in breeze  
Caught in my magic music box

Tick, tock, tick, father of time  
Clip, clop, clip, traveller's song  
Caught in my magic music box

Whoosh, whiz, whoosh, snowball's flight  
Ehco, roar, ehco, on mountainside

Caught in my magic music box  
Boom, bang, roll, terror of night  
Strike, zap, pow, light with power  
Caught in my magic music box

Snap, crunch, crack, leaves under foot  
Munch, chomp, gulp, beast's green feast  
Caught in my magic music box

Listen, listen to those sounds  
All, all, all about us  
Caught in my magic music box

JoJo Brinkhoff  
Stella  
Staff  
Poetry

*One of my favorite things is to stroll outside and listen to different sounds.  
It's amazing what sounds are out there if one is silent for a moment.*



*This is a cropped picture of a painted glass bottle. 'Let it be' was something the person who painted the bottle told me a while back, and because of the impact they had on me, I wanted to create something in recognition of them...*

## Let It Be

Jordan Heigle  
Oronogo  
Crowder  
Honorable Mention  
Digital Art

## Acknowledgements

Cindy Brown, Public Information Office  
Jon Finley and Marsha Welch, Print Shop  
Travis Christensen, Lights and Sound  
Mark Kalmbach, Maintenance

Kathleen Kimball and Nancy Hutchins,  
Information Desk  
Eric Deatherage and Jennifer Johnson,  
Lee Library  
Rob Vessel and Brad Stout,  
Communication Department

# 2013 Contest Participants

## About the Contributors

The magazine is a compilation of winning entries in fiction, nonfiction, poetry, photography, and art from aspiring authors, artists, and photographers. Entrants generally reside in the communities within a 100-mile radius of the ten Crowder College campuses in southwest Missouri, including Cassville, Neosho, Nevada, McDonald County, and Webb City, Mo. They may be high school students, Crowder College students, or community members. The employees of Crowder College are classified as “community” in order to avoid competition with Crowder students. Each entry includes a short reflective statement from contributors about the creative process, inspiration, or subject matter of their entries.

There were 71 individuals published, including staff entries. The contributors, divided by division, hail from the following cities and towns:

### Participating high schools

Carl Junction High School  
Diamond High School  
McDonald County High School  
Neosho Christian School  
Neosho High School  
Seneca High School

### Crowder College students from

Carl Junction  
Diamond  
Exeter  
Goodman  
Granby  
Joplin  
Monett  
Neosho  
Noel  
Nevada  
Lanagan  
Oronogo  
Pierce City  
Seneca  
Wheaton

## 2013 Traveling Trophy

The award is presented to the high school winning the most awards for its entries in this issue. The award is calculated on points: gold entries and covers count as four points, silver as three, bronze as two, and honorable mention as one.

Neosho High School,  
1st place

Neosho Christian School,  
2nd place

Carl Junction High School,  
3rd place

### Community members of

Anderson  
Aurora  
Carl Junction  
Cassville  
Diamond  
Fayetteville, Arkansas  
Granby  
Lamar  
Lockwood  
Monett  
Neosho  
Rocky Comfort  
Salt Lake City, Utah  
Seneca





## About the staff judges

The primary task of the *Crowder Quill* staff is to produce the magazine as a result of the contest entries, not produce the contents. However, staff members are required to submit entries as a class assignment to be judged by honorary judges. This is done in order to demonstrate their expertise in their field of judging.

Winning entries are honorarily published but do not receive awards. The staff entries published in this issue were judged by the following honorary judges:

**Poetry entries:** Literature instructor Debra Brown

**Art entries:** Art instructor Allen Bishop

**Digital art and photography entries:** Photography instructor Patti Richardson and students

**Fiction and nonfiction entries:** Quill faculty adviser Latonia Bailey

Staff members publicize the contest, select winning entries, and design the magazine. A variety of majors are represented on the staff. See biographical statements below for the staff judges.

When he's not writing for the Crowder Sentry as Campus News Editor, **Sean Armstrong** is out being an amateur photographer and devoted antique collector. His nonfiction piece "Indesiciveness" was honorarily chose to be published in this year's edition of *The Crowder Quill*. Also, he judged nonfiction and designed pages 21-27.

**JoJo Brinkhoff**, Journalism and Public Relations major, is an author of a small collection of poems, short stories, and one book in progress. She judged poetry and designed pages 32-33 & 80-83.

While being a Journalism and Public Relations major and The Crowder Sentry's sports editor, **Becky Embry-Kirby** judged the art category for this publication and contributed a 2D composition titled, "Love Equals Lies." She designed pages 66-67 & 70-75.

**Emily Gritten**, Journalism and Public Relations major, judged nonfiction and designed pages 16-19. She is an aspiring special events planner, and helping to plan the Quill awards ceremony is her first taste of the industry.

A native of Goodman, **Ryan Land** is currently a sophomore at Crowder College. Upon completion of an Associates Degree in Journalism and Public Relations, he plans to attend Missouri Southern State University to major in Mass Communications with an emphasis in Broadcast. He judged fiction and designed pages 34-41.

**Crystal Moody**, an inspiring photographer, is a double major in Photography and Journalism/Public Relations. She judged photography and digital art and was a 2012 Quill winner in the

photography category. She designed pages 6-7, 30-31, & 84-85.

**Allie Oxford** is an aspiring songwriter, fiction writer and photographer. A Journalism and Public Relations major, she judged both photography and digital art and has a photo and art piece published in this edition. She designed pages 76-79 along with making corrections throughout the magazine.

**Hannah Scroggs** is a freshman interested in a career combining graphic design and journalism. She judged poetry and her poem "We Are All Life" is in this publication. She designed pages 48-55.

**Logan Stark** is currently working on a fictional account of the nearby May 2011 F-5 tornado in Joplin. A Journalism and Public Relations major, he judged fiction, designed pages 4,5,8,9, & 56-65, and had a fictional piece published in this edition.

A published author and songwriter, **Jesse O. Walls** is the managing editor of the Crowder Sentry. He judged poetry and laid out pages 10-15, 28-29 and 68-69.

**Mason Whitman** is a Journalism and Public Relations major. The author of The Hardball Chronicles blog, he was also judge of the 2D media, 3D art, and digital art. He designed pages 42-47.

A published author and photographer, **Latonia Bailey** has served as faculty adviser since 1994. She holds a bachelor's degree in Journalism from University of Missouri and a master's degree in Writing.



# About the Contest

The magazine is a compilation of winning entries in literary and art categories:

**Nonfiction:** Essays, character sketches and other true-to-life writings should be limited to 1800 words.

**Fiction:** Clear plot development and well-defined characters are expected; also limit of 1800 words.

**Poetry:** Whether free verse, blank verse, rhymed or metered verse, poetry should make a point, state emotion, or relate an experience.

**Digital Art:** This graphic art category includes computer-generated art or extensively manipulated photographs in order to create special effects. Photography with only minor adjustments should be entered in one of the photography categories.

**Black and White Photography:** Entries may be reproduced from film or digital files with only minor corrections and adjustments.

**Color Photography:** Film or digital files that emphasize vibrant color reproduction are sought.

**2D Traditional Media:** original paintings, drawings and hand-made prints including pen, pencil, woodcut, etching, screen print, charcoal, oil, colored pencil, pastels, and acrylic creations, both black & white and color. Entries may also be scanned and uploaded.

**3D Art:** includes pottery, ceramic, sculpture, assemblages, recycled materials and reliefs that protrude at least 1/8 inch off the surface. Photographs of the art (front and side view required) may be uploaded online instead of bringing the art for judging.

*For more details about the contest and an entry form, see pages 89-90.*

## Colophon

This publication is designed annually by Crowder College students enrolled in Comm 111, Magazine Production. Text was set in Bell MT 10 point regular. Story titles were set in Papyrus 36 point regular. Other fonts used include Adobe Caslon Pro, Arial, Bodoni, Letter Gothic Standard.

The *Crowder Quill* was produced using Adobe Photoshop, Illustrator, and InDesign CS5. The magazine was printed in the Crowder College print shop on the Neosho, Mo., campus. The cover stock is Sappi Flo Gloss Digital Cover 12 x 18 80 lb. 7TP coated, and inside pages are on 11x17 70 lb. white Husky Opaque Offset Domtar.

Funding of the publication comes from the college as a means to provide a cultural link with the community and for an outlet for creativity and expression.

For the 2013 contest, more than 863 entries were received, and 107 awards were presented in a public ceremony and poetry reading in May 2013 on the Neosho campus of Crowder College. Award winners received certificates and are published.

## Awards from the American Scholastic Press Association

2012 First Place with Special Merit  
2011 First Place with Special Merit  
2010 First Place with Special Merit  
2009 First Place  
1992 First Place  
1991 First Place with Special Merit

1990 First Place with Special Merit  
1989 First Place with Special Merit  
1988 First Place with Special Merit  
Outstanding Service to the Community  
1987 Second Place

**Division:**☐ High school, grades 9-12 only

School \_\_\_\_\_

Teacher \_\_\_\_\_

☐ Crowder student☐ Community**Category:**☐ 2D Traditional Media☐ 3D Art*All other categories should be submitted online, except with permission from the Quill contest.*

Title \_\_\_\_\_

**Source of inspiration for creation of art:**☐ Memory☐ Imagination☐ Real life*Real life includes still life set ups, live models\*, landscapes, and building interiors or exteriors.*

\*If you used a live model, check the box to indicate securing permission of the model, including parents/guardians if the model is a minor. ☐

**Medium:** (pencil, oil paint, woodcuts, sculpture)**Artist's statement:** Write 1-3 sentences explaining this art's purpose, process, inspiration, or effect.*Attach additional paper if necessary.*

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City/State/Zipcode \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

*Failure to complete all sections may result in disqualification.***CATEGORIES****Accepted via mail or hand delivery with an attached entry form:**

**2D Traditional Media:** original paintings, drawings and hand-made prints including pen, pencil, woodcut, etching, screen print, charcoal, oil, colored pencil, pastels, and acrylic creations, both black & white and color. Entries may also be scanned and uploaded.

**3D Art** includes pottery, ceramic, sculpture, assemblages, recycled materials and reliefs that protrude at least 1/8 inch off the surface. Photographs of the art (front and side view required) may be uploaded online instead of bringing the art for judging.

**Categories to be uploaded at [www.crowder.edu/quill.pdf](http://www.crowder.edu/quill.pdf):**

- **Nonfiction:** Essays, character sketches and other true-to-life writings should be limited to 1800 words.
- **Fiction:** Clear plot development and well-defined characters are expected; also limit of 1800 words.
- **Poetry:** Whether free verse, blank verse, rhymed or metered verse, poetry should make a point, state emotion, or relate an experience.
- **Digital Art:** This graphic art category includes computer-generated art or extensively manipulated photographs in order to create special effects. Photography with only minor adjustments should be entered in one of the photography categories.
- **Black and White Photography:** Entries may be reproduced from film or digital files with only minor corrections and adjustments.
- **Color Photography:** Film or digital files that emphasize vibrant color reproduction are sought.

*Carefully read the category descriptions to avoid miscategorizing. For example, graphic design should not be entered as 2D traditional media.*

**Crowder College**  
Presents

The Crowder

*Quill***Literary & Graphic Arts Competition**

Winners published in the  
*Crowder Quill Magazine*

*Crowder Quill*  
**Newton Hall-2nd Floor**  
Neosho, Mo 64850  
(417) 455-5410

Entry Postmark Deadline:  
Feb. 1 each year

Hand-delivery and online deadline:  
A few days later,  
to be announced each year

website:

[CrowderQuill.wordpress.com](http://CrowderQuill.wordpress.com)



## WHAT IS THE CROWDER QUILL?

The *Crowder Quill* is a literary-art magazine published annually by the Magazine Production class at Crowder College. It is our goal to encourage and showcase the creative abilities of local writers, artists, and photographers as well as provide a cultural link between Crowder College and our surrounding communities.

### GENERAL ENTRY GUIDELINES

- All entries except traditional 2D media and 3D art should be sent online at [www.crowder.edu/quill.pdf](http://www.crowder.edu/quill.pdf).
- Postmark deadline for traditional art: Feb. 1
- Deadline to be announced for online submissions and hand-delivered entries, usually a few days after Feb. 1.
- Email [LatoniaBailey@crowder.edu](mailto:LatoniaBailey@crowder.edu) or call 417-455-5410 to make arrangements for hand delivered entries, if you have difficulties with the online submission process, or do not have internet access.
- Individuals may submit up to four entries per category in every category.
- Failure to meet all guidelines may result in automatic disqualification.
- The *Quill* is not responsible for technical malfunctions associated with submitting entries.



## VISUAL ARTS

### Artwork, photography, and digital art

- Digital art is *extensively* altered digital photographic images and computer-generated art.
- NEW CATEGORIES: 2D traditional media includes both black & white and color two-dimensional entries. 3D art has been added for three-dimensional entries. Photographs of 3D art may be submitted online.
- A model consent form must be submitted for photographic or art entries of live models.
- Art should be created based on real life (still life, landscape, or live model), memory, or imagination rather than copied from published materials. On the rare occasion that an artist alters a previous work of art, credit should be given. For example, an alteration of the *Mona Lisa* could be titled *Mona Lisa's Smile* with source credit given to the original artist: *The Mona Lisa* by Leonardo Da Vinci. "Copy art" used as learning exercises will no longer be accepted as contest entries.
- 2D media should be mounted, matted or placed in clear plastic sleeves for their protection. Please do not send entries in frames or with glass. Attach entry form to the front left-hand corner with single-sided tape.
- 2D media may also be scanned with a high-quality scanner and sent digitally.
- All photography and digital art should be submitted online; see general guidelines.

## LITERATURE

### Poetry, fiction, and nonfiction

- Whether free verse, blank verse, rhymed or metered verse, poetry should make a point, state emotion, or relate an experience.
- Fictional writings should have clear plot development and well-defined characters. 1800-word maximum.
- Character sketches and personal essays should make a statement, whether serious, dramatic, or humorous. 1800-word maximum.
- All literature entries must be typed and double spaced; multiple pages should be numbered.
- Literature entries should be sent electronically through the website, following the general guidelines.

All entries except 2D traditional media and 3D art should be uploaded online as digital files at [CrowderQuill.wordpress.com](http://CrowderQuill.wordpress.com)





