

Ergo

FALL 2022





- Faith McCombs

ERGO is the literary and artistic publication of Alfred State. It is funded by the Student Senate and is freely distributed each semester. Students, alumni, faculty, and staff of Alfred State are invited to submit their original works of art, poetry, and prose by e-mailing their submissions to Ergo@alfredstate.edu.

Our thanks to everyone who participated this semester and keep the submissions coming!

Sincerely, The Ergo staff

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**The waves crashed against the sand
Children screaming, playing in the water
Boats on the horizon, shining in the distance
The most beautiful sight nature holds
Yet all I see is the woman sitting next to me**

Tristan Searle

Four Walls

The very first time I set foot within these four walls, I knew something was different. I could never pinpoint what it was, but it wasn't until I was older that I realized that these four walls were more special than any others I have ever set foot in. Besides being covered in mirrors on two of the four walls, these walls were safe. These walls proved the meaning to me that home was where the heart is. These four little walls of 139 Main Street allowed me to smile and laugh; they let me frown and cry, and most importantly, these walls let me be who I was without any judgment. The four little walls of the Dansville Dance Academy stole my heart and became my home.

Bethany Wadsworth

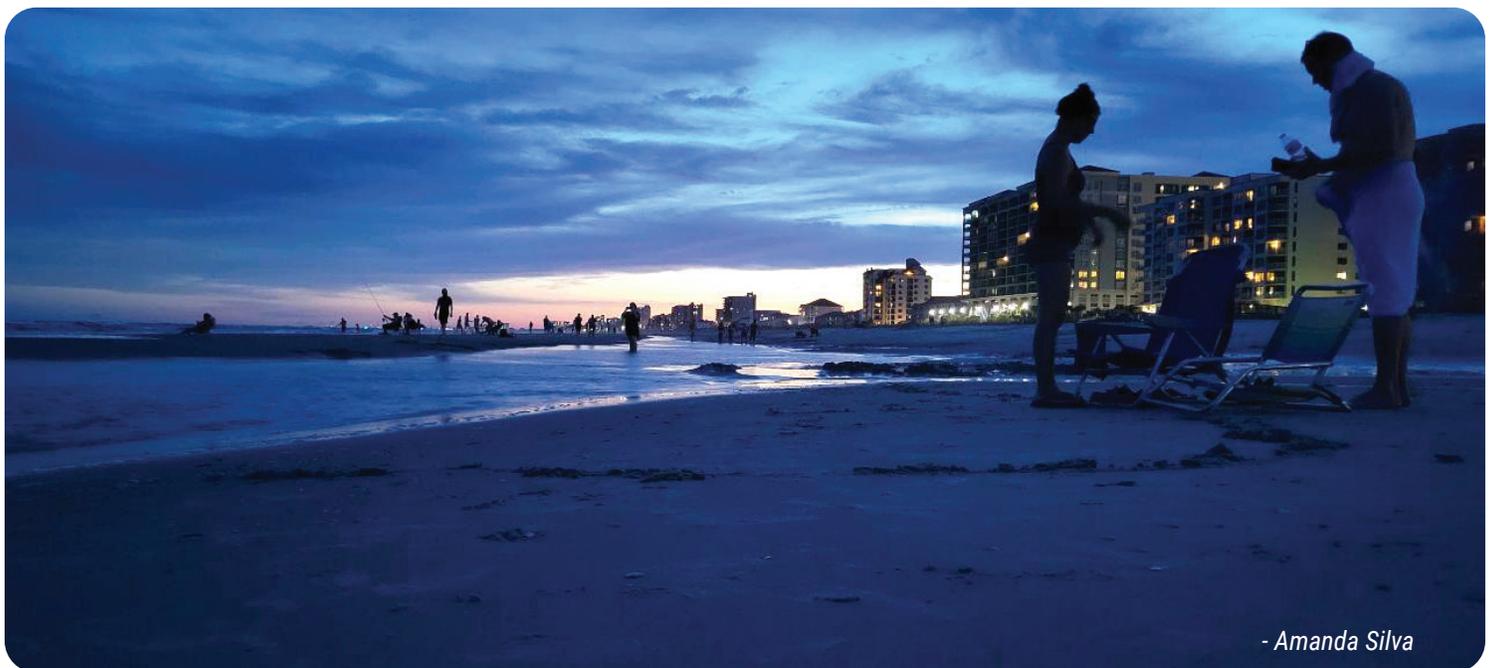
Fai-de

I don't want to leave, but I don't want to breathe. My anxiety got me thinking of all the things I may never achieve. Sometimes I wish I was never conceived because this world has got me praying to a God that I'm not sure I even believe in.

Donavin Doty

Throughout life, everyone always says there will be ups and downs, like mountains and hills. For me, the passing of my dad became the biggest mountain I have faced. Since his passing, I have only faced things that can be compared to little hills. My inspiration and guidance throughout my childhood have not traveled far, though, as he is still with me. I remember to put my reminder on every morning. To everyone else it may just seem like an accessory, but to me, the simple necklace that reads, "My Michael," is the only thing that makes all the mountains throughout life seem like little hills.

McKayla Kavounas



- Amanda Silva

Ascension Protocol: Lucretia

Fall. Crawl. Climb. Stand. Forward. Engage. (Repeat). The instructions coursed through her in whelming spirals. It was simply automatic, predestined as if programmed. A cyclical inability to transcend the constraints of her construction. Automaton.

She was born of the broken things, her knuckles forged of wedding rings and tendons torn from bleeding-heart strings. Last years' leaves would wreath her, skin around the refuge of refuse. A hint of fervor in a cloud of rust. Dreams of yesterdays, retired to the West, made up her mind.

"Again, I fall," she thought as she awakened to the first rays of consciousness. Her eyes opened and she met the muddy impression left in the ground; it was akin to a cake-pan in the shape of her. "Is this the mother? Is this the maker? Is this me? How could that be? For I am here, and you there. You are always there for the fall. Who are you?"

No One knew, but they wouldn't say. So the journey continued with only the seasons, the setting, to change. Scars of earth, gashed like names in a tree, proved that she was once there-existing in progress, but not why. The cycle of struggle remained unbroken.

"Are we born, or made this way?" No One knew, but they wouldn't say. "There must be more to this than the cycle. Life is made of this struggle, but what of those little moments to come before involuntary action? We live between breaths," she resolved.

After many years the ground hardened, and her falls were no longer followed by the embrace of the familiar unknown. The image was gone, but the feeling remained. "If I leave here today, don't you cry. If I leave here today it doesn't mean goodbye," she promised the ground as she crawled away.

Flattened plains turned to a rocky incline. Against such mountains a fall was a mere stumble, a crawl became a climb, the climb was a matter of standing, and so on. So forth she wrought a greater destiny.

"Once more I try to break free only to find myself becoming the rage, the will to escape. The will to try soon turns to hate. Frustrated and crumbling down, all these words are lost in sound. In silence the meaning is clear. I've come so far, but still I'm no nearer than clear blue skies. If I were to leap, might I fly?"

For the first time there was no view of where the fall might end. The world had changed in ways that wouldn't support her sequence. Unable to reroute, regardless of circumstance, the amalgamation moved on.

Forward. Engage.

"Free fall, now I'm on my way. Wings don't fail me on this day."

What distinction is there between flight and falling, both being mere moments between breaths, held or not? Is it merely the time it takes to return, or is it the grace by which we eventually do?

Fall farther. "Is that you old friend? I hardly recognize you anymore."

Crawl faster. "So nice to see you again, but I must be on my way."

Climb higher. "The destination is not so far from this height."

Stand. "Always the same."

Forward. "Because I can't go back."

Engaged. "In this state I shall remain through every fall, and all that comes after."

She was born of the broken things.

D.A. Burton

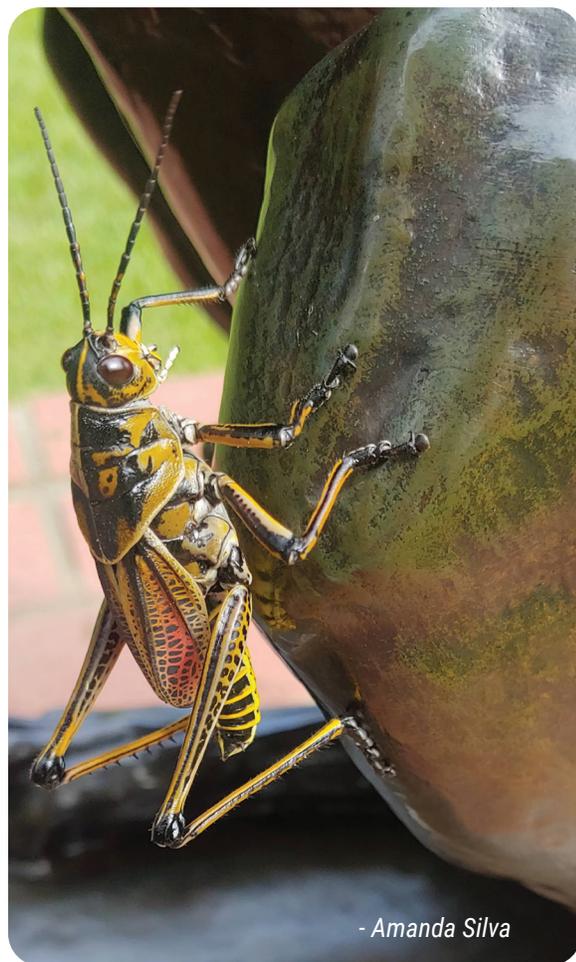
Her eyes are so wonderfully green
As green as emeralds
As green as evergreen trees
As green as clovers
Those same green eyes have such a sparkle
A sparkle you notice when she has that smile
That smile gives you butterflies
That smile warms you up from the inside
That smile that makes you smile and beam with pride because of her
These same eyes are connected to a beautiful figure which has the most beautiful hands
Hands that know what hard work is
Hands that have a firm grasp with such a gentle touch
That makes you feel safe and secure in your abilities
A gentle touch that gives you those butterflies
The same butterflies as her wonderfully green eyes.
And when you notice her
She gives you that look.
That look that makes you melt a little bit on the inside that makes you wonder
How did I come to be in awe of this woman?
This admirable woman who is her own breed of deity?
This woman who makes me feel like every time I see her I fall for her no matter how hard I try not to
fall deeper and deeper?
Is it because of that look?
That smile?
Her hands?
Her gorgeous body?
Those goddamn emerald green eyes?

Lydia Lapierre

Pi

The hiking trails behind this campus have been very important to me since the day I set foot on campus my first semester. I spent my first few months here bored because I didn't really know anyone. I didn't know what there was to do on campus or in town, but I did eventually find the hiking trails. To me they provide a sense of peace and freedom from the stress of school and social life. While hiking, I am able to be completely free of worry. I can go hike, and my only concerns are making sure I have water, and trying to follow the deer around for fun. Many people drive past the trail-head daily and probably think nothing of it besides the number of mosquitoes and patches of mud, but to me it's safety and simplicity.

Piper Connolly



- Amanda Silva

Hunting is a big thing in my family. For as far back as I can remember, my father would take me into the woods and show me what nature had to offer. He taught me how to respect the land and the animals that we pursued. Duck hunting was our favorite, and I often would look up in awe at my Dad when he was calling in a flock of birds. I was amazed at how much time and effort it took to be able to communicate so well with wildlife. My Dad's favorite duck call wasn't fancy or expensive. It was a single reed wooden call that had a crisp and powerful sound that would echo through the timber and across the pond. When I turned 12, I knew that it would be my first year to legally hunt. After my party and opening gifts from friends and family, my father took me on a drive to our favorite honey hole. Out of his pocket, he handed me his duck call on a new lanyard. Upon receiving it, I was immediately overcome by emotion and spent the rest of the day learning how to use it and talking back and forth with a lone hen mallard on the pond. Today, I have numerous calls on my lanyard, but the one that will always remain is the one my father gave me that day.

Daniel McDonald



- Amanda Silva



THE THINGS I PACKED

— Emma Fritts

In the summer of 2021, I moved to Europe to live with my aunt and uncle. It was an eight-hour flight to Denmark, and I could bring two suitcases: a carry-on, and a checked bag. A checked bag must weigh no more than fifty pounds, and a carry-on must be less than thirty-five pounds. The task ahead of me seemed impossible; pack my entire life into two bags, in less than eighty-five pounds, and anything that did not fit would have to be forfeited until I returned home three months later. The weather in Denmark is much more temperate in the summer than it is in the United States. The warmest it generally gets is about seventy-five degrees Fahrenheit, despite the sun only setting for four hours each day. I was arriving in early May, and leaving in late August, so I had to pack a variety of summer clothes such as t-shirts, sundresses, shorts, and sandals, while also packing spring clothing for the climate there, including sweaters, jeans, and sneakers. Sweaters proved to be quite a challenge, as they weighed roughly two to three pounds, and took up quite a bit of space. The shoes also weighed heavier than I had expected, with my sandals being a pound and a half.

By the time I had packed my clothes and some other essentials, such as a toothbrush and paste, shampoo and conditioner, deodorant, and other hygiene items, I was left with only a few pounds left and a very small space to fill. It was at this point that my mother informed me that she had gifts for me to bring to her family, and they all had to travel with me. Now I was down to two pounds, and the small front

compartment on my military-style backpack. I looked around at my belongings, trying to decide which I needed most. I could leave my books at home, as I had many more on my phone that I could read in a summer. I did not need another pair of shoes, despite my urge to bring twenty-six pairs instead of two. I could live without my beloved sketchbook and had planned on purchasing one upon arriving anyhow. I could not decide what to fill that last bit of space with. That is until my journal waved at me from its home on the headboard of my bed.

Journaling has always been something that was a therapy to me: writing about my day, or stressors in my life, or things that were going well. It almost felt like talking to a best friend who just listened, and never judged. While I do not write in it daily and I sometimes leave it to collect dust for a month or two, its leather-bound pages are always something I return to.

On my three-month trip to Denmark, I only used my journal four times. While this may seem like a waste of space to most people, I do not regret carrying it with me at all. In those four entries, I overcame home sickness, detailed the amazing country that I saw, and described the incredible people that I met. Having been on this trip and experiencing what an asset one item can be, I am more certain than ever that my journal will always travel with me.

Used Poem

I left a poem between the seats
of a ten-year-old Ford.

It was one of those skinny poems,
so it just fit. It wasn't even finished.

Someone brushed it when sitting down.
It sure wasn't the seatbelt.

The dog unit sniffed it out,
but the cops wouldn't touch it.

The repo guy didn't have trouble,
from the poem, starting the car.

Winter and spring, car and poem sat on the lot
through extreme temperature changes.

There was nothing in the poem
that affected the car's resale value.

It gets about the same mileage, after all this.
The car, I think I mean.

Kidd Williams



- Andrew Hvisdak



- Andrew Hvisdak

Twenty-five cents seems like a small amount to most; however, it is all relative to your point of view. To some, it means only a mere quarter; to some, it could be a lifesaver; to me it means a lifetime of memories. Around my girlfriend's neck, she wears a quarter; a quarter that means so much to me. Only as a high school student, I had less than thirty dollars to my name when we met, but I knew when I saw this girl that she was worth spending even my last penny on. So when we went out to eat, I paid, and it cost me everything I had on me, everything but one quarter; a quarter I knew I should save because one day it would mean so much to me. I decided for our six-month anniversary to take the quarter and make it into a pendant and give it to her as a gift. It has now been close to a year since, and that quarter has been worn through every moment we've ever had. It was there through every joyous time, through every argument.

Sebastian Thomas

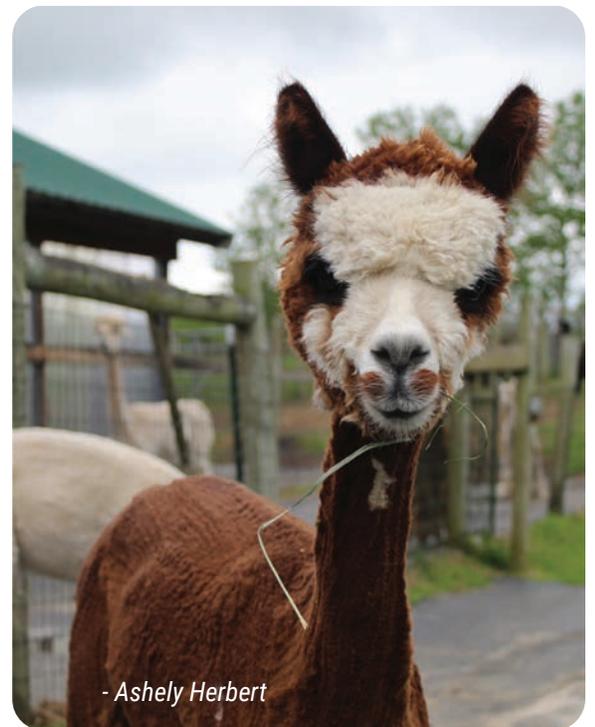
Ever since I was little, I would panic when I felt I would fail. During my third grade year in elementary school, I thought I was going to fail reading my paper out loud to the class, so I ran out of class crying instead of reading my paper. My third grade teacher found me and took me by the water fountain. She told me something very important. She told me that if I ever thought I was going to fail to remember this song. It goes like, "Roses are red, and I am okay. The trees will grow but the leaves will fade away, but the leaves will come back and grow every day." That song has stuck with me ever since the third grade. I still have those feelings that I might fail today, but whenever I get down on myself, I still say those words my third grade teacher taught me. When I feel like I am failing myself or the people around me, I never lose hope or give up because I know that the leaves will always come back, and that if keep trying, I will always grow and find success.

Seth Dade



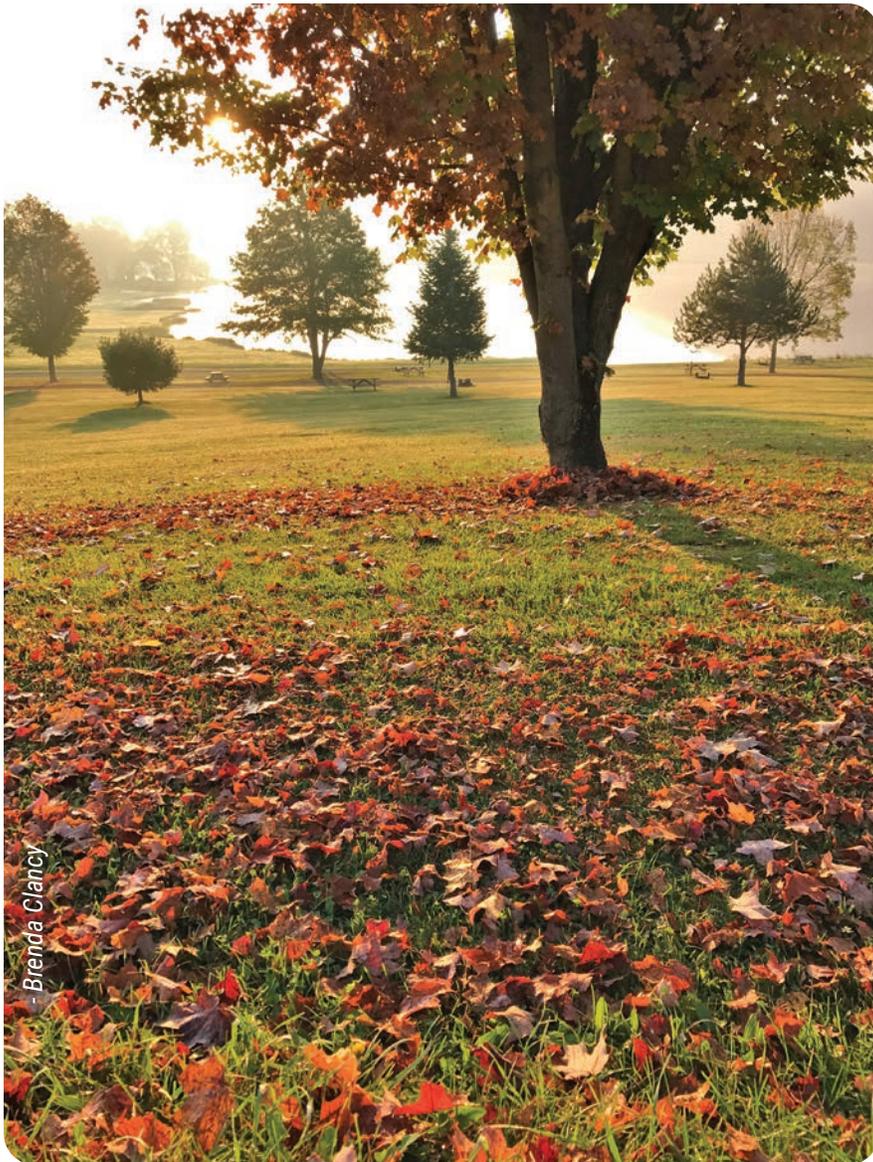
**When I put on my jersey, I feel alive
It gives me a sense of pride
I wear it with integrity
It's not just a jersey; it is my identity
I wear and let go of all my pain, my aggression
It gives me a deeper form of self-expression**

Jeremiah Nixon



My grandma gave me a necklace after my grandpa passed away. The necklace is heart shaped and has his fingerprint and the date he passed. There is also his birthstone on the necklace. He was not my blood-related grandpa, but that did not stop us from loving each other. He was there at the hospital the day I was born, so I grew up calling him grandpa. Every time we saw each other, he would give me a hug. Now that the necklace is the only thing I have left of him, I hold it when I am sad. The necklace makes me feel safe and close to him. I know he is looking down on me and is proud of me.

Autumn Michalski



The home I grew up in reminds me of the moments of joy and the moments of loneliness during my childhood. I left my home to move to a foreign country, leaving behind my family and my memories. When I think of my home, I can't help but miss it, not because of how big it was, not because of how good it looked, but because I try to avoid the bad memories and hold on tightly to the good ones. To be honest, I'd rather not go back to home. My home is a lonely box. I grew up in a home where I always felt lonely, especially because I am an only child. I did not have many friends at school mostly because I had different personalities and felt as if I did not fit in. I was never allowed to play with the kids in my neighborhood because it was believed by my parents that they wanted to do me harm, because of our differences in social rank. My home is a box, or should I even say a cage, where social acceptance and freedom do not exist. What I was taught growing up in that home is to play by the rules and be the puppet of the societal norms that my parents believed in. I could not truly be myself because I constantly felt pressured by my parents' expectations, and there was no room for comfort. It is as if I was constantly on my tippy toes. Some may think that I am ungrateful because I am not thankful for at least having a home. My answer to them is this, I am grateful, and I thank the Lord every day for my family. But I also can't forget the way my home impacted who I was and that it took me to leave it to figure out who I truly am.

Alissah Tehrani

Time keeps slipping, slipping by.
 I try to hold onto the little moments
 And etch them into my memory but
 The clock isn't on my side.
 This fall I found fast friends.
 And bonds that will carry us through this roller coaster.
 We lounge around campus and laugh
 Until we're clutching our stomachs.
 I'll keep hanging onto these mundane moments.
 Moments of joy found amidst the chaos.

Sarah Hayes



- Brenda Clancy

Asked and Answered

What if the moon were further away?
 Then we'd yearn for a dimmer light.
 What if the sun was red, not yellow?
 Then we'd be counting the days, counting the days.

What if we walked on our hands, not our feet?
 Then we could still learn how to swim.
 What if all the trees could talk?
 Then we would give back all the leaves that fell.

What if you and I and mommy were rich?
 Then we'd find other ways to be poor.
 How come you know all these answers?
 Because it's you who asks.

Kidd Williams

The cold river runs
 My heart longs for the swift chase
 Who will give me peace

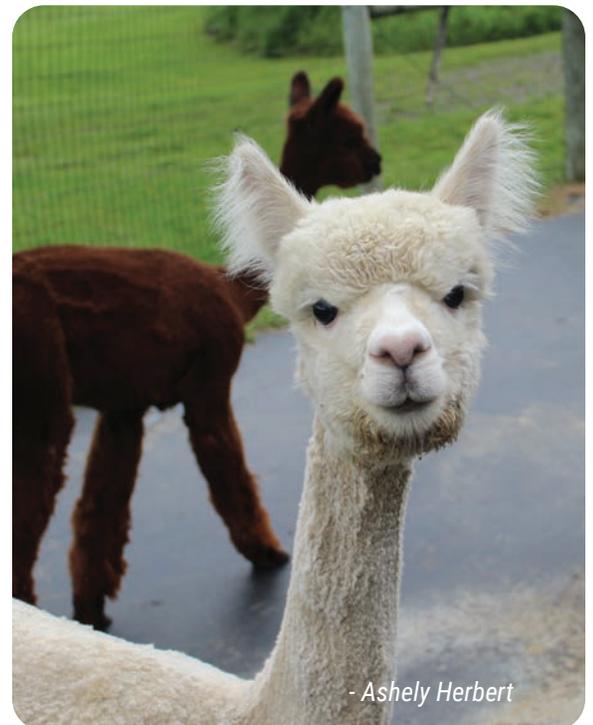
The drink speaks for me
 The hollow words I speak please
 Those that surround me

Trapped in my own mind
 No bars or cells to keep me
 Only heavy thought

My eyes stray from yours
 I've become disconnected
 Maybe to find peace

A brave mask I wear
 To make those around feel safe
 Too much pain to show

DB



- Ashely Herbert



- Brenda Clancy

Lost

Who are you?

The reflection in the mirror is not familiar, almost Phantasmagorical.

The reflection mirrors back...you know who I am.

It's you...me.

Again, looking at the image within the boundaries of the mirror that say me...you.

Still studying the image as if there will be a revelation to clear up questions sought out from the image in the mirror.

Deep thoughts consumed with emptiness.

The mirror asked...still don't recognize me...you?

The image mouths the word...no.

The mirror replies...me...you...we...are lost.

Lost!

Brenda Clancy

In the darkness
The spotlight glares
On all my flaws
The cracks are there.

In the silence
A deafening roar
Of shattered hopes
Screaming for more.

The pain is met
With pleased peace
As demons recede
And I hope I cease.

Cease to feel

Only second best
Feel more normal
More like the rest.
I inhale deeply
Feeling the strain
My lungs on fire
Heart full of pain.

Exhale slowly
Count to ten
Still not better
Begin again.

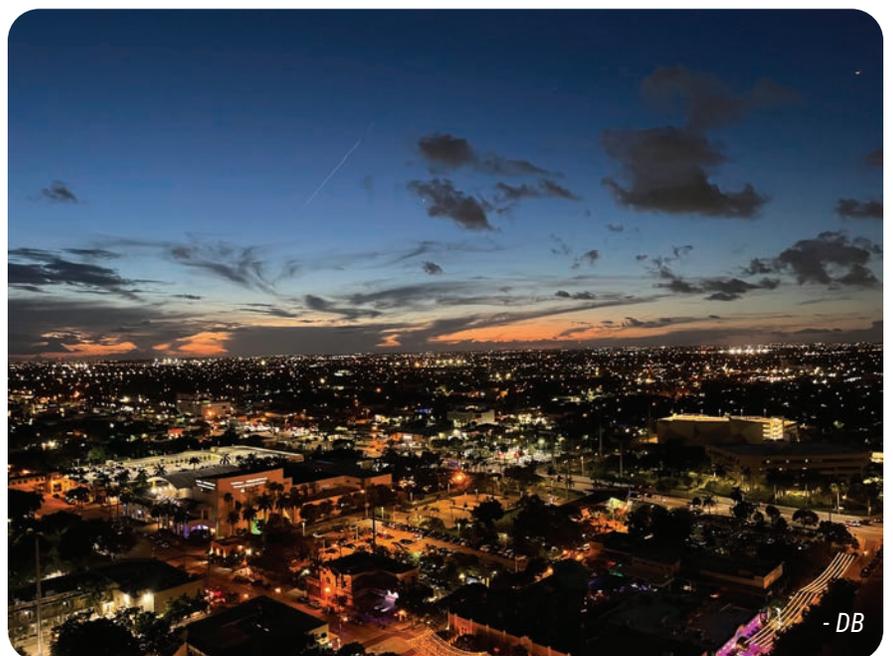
Mary Hribar



- Daniel Mustico



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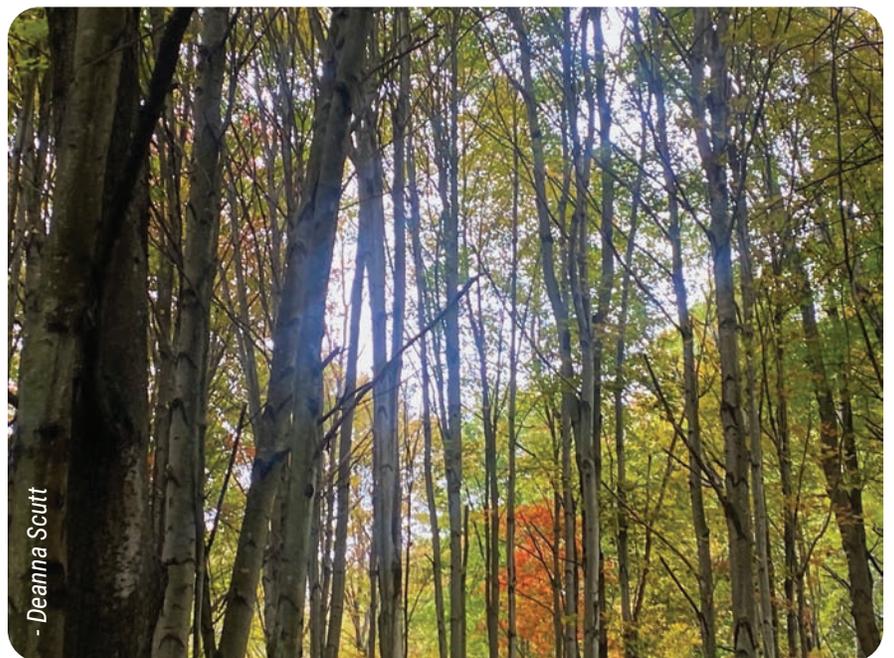
- Elizibith Geiger

**Mom, you are the sunset,
And I am the waves.
You're always watching over me,
Each and every day.**

Elori Rodriguez



- Elizibith Geiger



- Deanna Scutt

Best Friend

Nature is a beautiful creation.
We are drawn by nature to unite.
Relationships are natural bonds,
Grown the way buildings are built.
Left unattended, they will revert to their origins.

The Beauty of her is like the night sky
Eyes as blue as the seas.
Knowledge as plentiful as Nature.
Her heart like a warm fire on a dark, cold night.
Body of an angel from heaven.

It was like the cities of the world.
Many flaws mentally and physically.
Afraid to expand past their walls.
Thought to be a burden to nature.
But always trying to be like her.

Alone we are surviving.
Together we bonded, it was scripted.
I was too afraid to go beyond.
What could have blossomed.
Lost to time –
Forever

Danny Browning

Those Old Boots

A pair of torn up, dusty, ripped cowboy boots would look like they're ready for retirement to any ordinary eye. However, my five-year-old torn up, dusty, ripped cowboy boots are far more than "just a pair of boots." To me, those boots hold so many memories, like the day I brought home my horse Jenny; I wore those boots for ten hours straight. They caress the side of Jenny's stomach, fit so perfect in those stirrups and ride for hours. They sit so snug and perfect on my feet, no blisters, no aches and pain, just pure comfort. Without those boots, I would have never sat on Ol' Jenny's back. Those boots, resemble the hours of literal blood, sweat and tears put into riding and training my Ol' Jenny. When I fell down, you betcha those boots brought me right back up again to try harder the next time around. As Nancy Sinatra said "These boots are made for walkin' and that's just what I'll do," I like to say "These boots are made for riding and that's just what I'll do." Without these boots, Jenny and I wouldn't be where we are today. The hours of work and play these boots have made possible, is like no other. I suppose it is almost time to replace them, but they'll never lose the meaning behind them- and they'll sit in my closet, and remind me every time I open that door, of everything they gave me the courage to do.

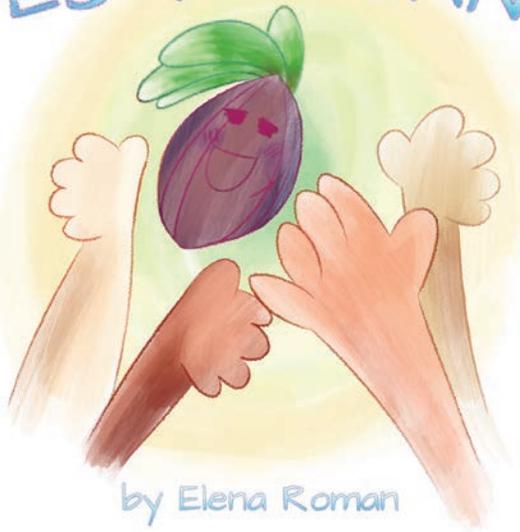
McKayla Palmer



My high school swim cap sits on my desk, dry and dusty. I haven't touched it since my last meet. The cap itself still reeks of chlorine, just like I used to after a hard practice with my team. I had promised myself that I would continue to swim after high school, but still, the cap sits dry. When I look at it, I am reminded of the times I spent with teammates and friends. I used to wear it when I cheered for my team as they swam, and they for me as I swam myself. We were like a family, but now everyone has gone their separate ways. I haven't seen most of the people who were on that team since high school, and I suppose it's mostly my fault. Just like the promise I made to myself to keep swimming, I have broken the one I'd made to stay in touch with my team.

Noah Ayer-Codding

YES YOU CAN!



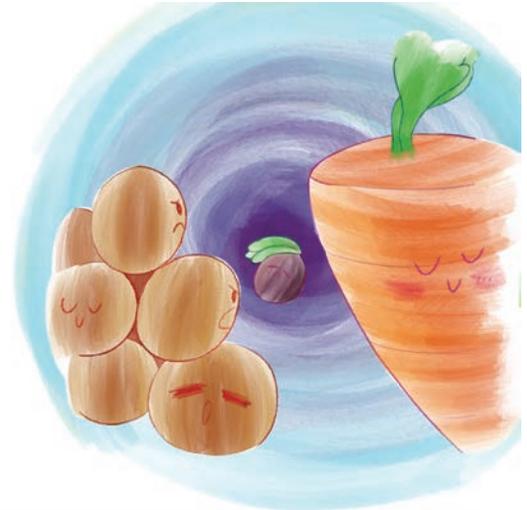
by Elena Roman



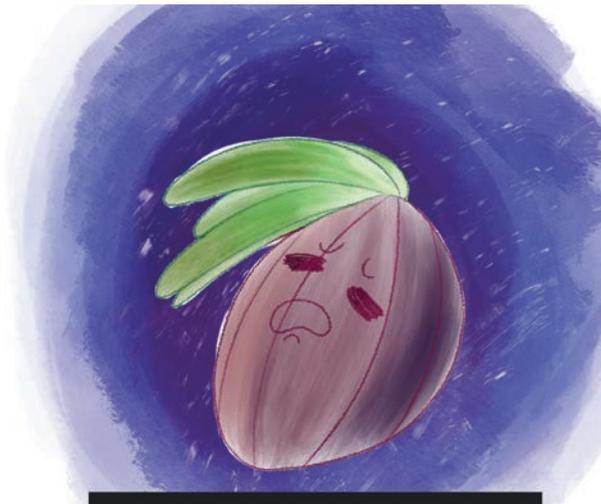
In the back of a food truck travelling far, far, away



Lived veggies, getting pretty for a show not today.



While they got ready, one veggie was left out.



A small, tiny, shallot, all short and stout.

With a very crooked stem.



Days went by of being picked on or ignored.

And with a mighty push, the shallot went flying.

For even the ants didn't care for it dying.



But just when the shallot thought,

'Oh that does it, I'll be alone forever!'



She said to her students 'no matter what you look like'



A kind teacher took it out of the weather



'You're perfect as you are, through any walk of life!'



"And with the right kind of people..."



"You can be loved, oh yes you can."



- Emily Flores



- Faith McCombs

Cocoons

A caterpillar dead inside
Cross your heart and hope to rise
Leap from the cliff, just close your eyes
Pray for wings and hope to fly
Or rot inside the shell, and dream of being
something else
No more complications
So sick, so tired of waiting
All chains remain for breaking
Victory eludes the patient
Escape this jar of flies
Whose maggots laid serve to remind
Of the ground from which wings sprout to fly
Even flowers from dirt reach for the sky
For something more than to live and die
Given time even pigs would fly

Someday you'll fall away
A moth through the flame
Or hide yourself away
In silence reclaim
What was only a shell to you
The cathexis of your cocoon

D.A. Burton

Warborn, We Are

How long has it been since I lost the dream
How long has it been since I felt in me -
The drive
It seems like only yesterday
We were young and strong, nothing stood in
the way
Of the path to glory we lost so much to tread
We were all so sure it only led
To the promised land of which we had
dreamt
I know we'd have made it if we only kept
On-going, patience and regret
Still I curse the world I fight against

But the war is long over, and the battle's lost
No longer do we count the bullets we shot
The war-paint fades from our face when the
dream is dead
Still I carry the flag though no one's left
To carry me on, sing me the old songs
To carry the dream after I'm gone

When my will had died, and all the dreams
of mine
I left behind were thrown aside
I realized I was born for war
Born if only to be something more
Than my heart and my mind combined
Fueled by the hate, the anger, the pride
I rise, from the wound where the heart was
torn
Peel the skin back to be reborn
I need no one else to stand alone
You cried for more, but only I showed

Now the war is long over, and the battle's lost
No longer do we count the bullets we shot
The war paint fades from our face when the
dream is dead
Still I carry the flag though no one's left

D. A. Burton

As a 'Pragmatic Idealist'

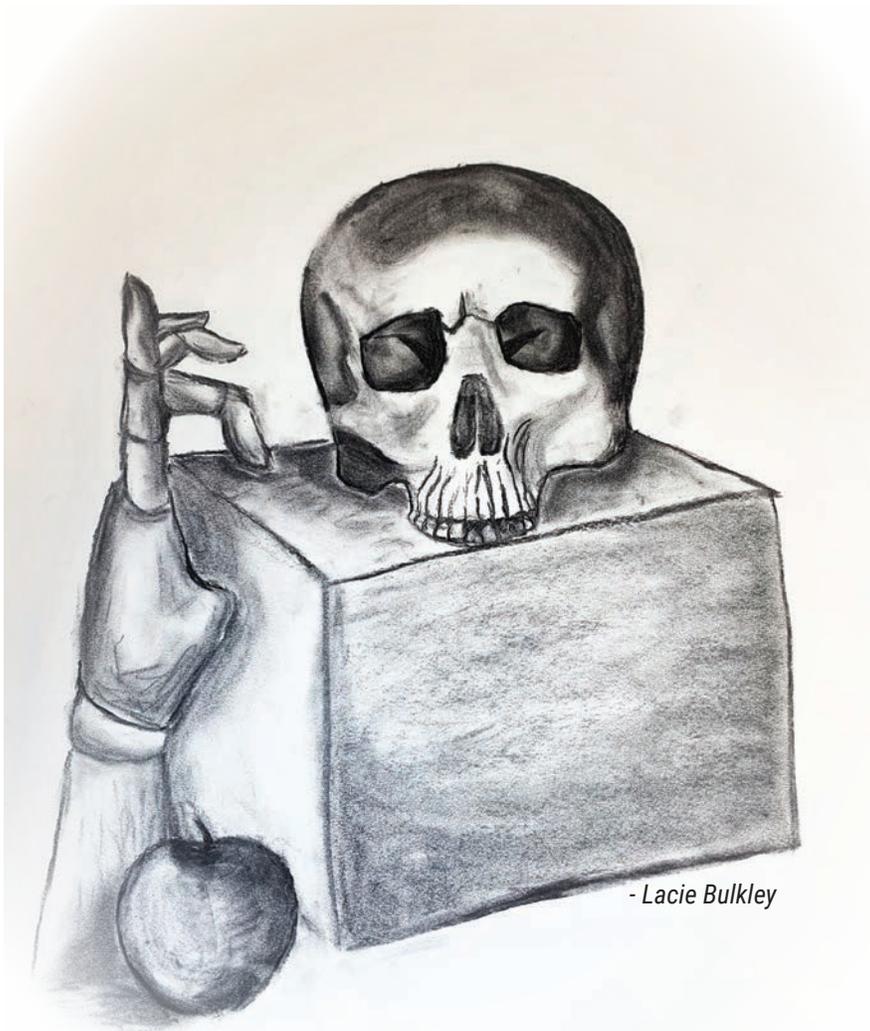
Tell me about the tundra.
Give me this open space, flat from
the weight of the sky pressing down.
I want to feel the girth of cold winds
that tell nothing here to grow tall, and
to give away only small, lichen successes.

I want to be the guard that stands
over all that sleeps here, so still because a
wronged witch long ago chose this poison.
Tell me what's not possible nearby, then I'll agree
and try it anyway – scofflaw, fool of the gods, I'll try
to show you how to climb the staircase that isn't there.

Kidd Williams



- Faith McCombs



Dia de Los Muertos - *Calaveras Literarias*

On Wednesday, November 2 our class (Music of Latin America and the Caribbean) celebrated our own version of Dia de Los Muertos (Day of the Dead) with much of the Hispanic world. I set up an Offrenda for my father and told stories of his greatness – including funny ones. I then, as tradition dictates, challenged my students to compose on the spot Calaveras Literarias (Skull Poems) that praise or make fun of the living gathered for the celebration. While Calaveras Literarias are usually written in a specific meter and pattern, I encouraged them to write whatever and however they felt. Think of these as rap battles or poetry slams that would take place at a wake or other celebration of life.

My Kids

— Professor JD Struckmann

I used to be a guy who taught kids

Goofy, spastic, wonderful kids.

For decades and decades I taught them

in the north in the west in the east and in the south

I even taught them (briefly) in the mid-west.

Goofy, spastic, wonderful kids.

Brown ones, red ones, green ones, white ones, black ones, yellow ones, pink ones, purple ones and some who changed colors every day

Goofy, spastic, wonderful kids.

Rich ones, scared ones, entitled ones, ones who didn't know which Ivy League they'd fall on and ones who didn't know where they would sleep that night.

Goofy, spastic, wonderful kids.

Together we learned, struggled, fought, laughed, cried, had Epiphanies and set backs

We grew and grew and grew - me too!

Oh, did I learn and grow and I am a better human for it all!

Goofy, spastic, wonderful kids.

And then I gave it all up.

Now I teach The Music of Latin America and the Caribbean at Alfred State College of Technology

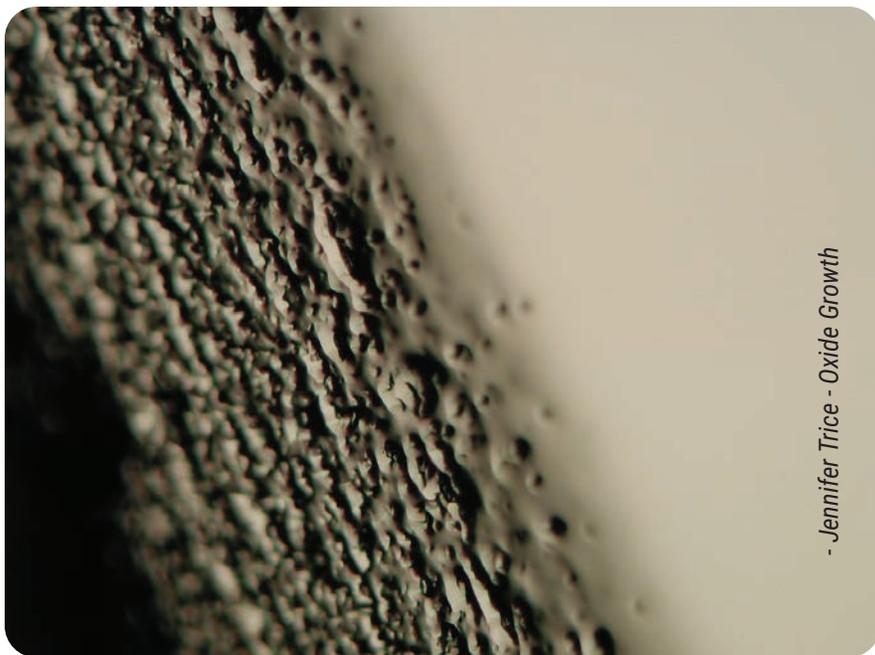
and nothing, nothing, nothing has changed...

Goofy, spastic, wonderful kids.

The Tale of the Fan

He is a Cardinals fan with all of his heart
Even though they're out of the playoffs he
wears his shirts tall and proud
No matter the outcome he's still a Fan
Through thick and thin he still stays up day
and night
Watching Pujols hit all night

Logan Nowack



- Jennifer Trice - Oxide Growth

I Apologize in Advance

They drive off sad like Winter Savory,
as we partake in our tri-weekly knavery.
We have the same class
and my prose are ass
... sorry, Avery

Lex Harding

Our dear professor John prides himself as a neat, orderly and fair.

Despite this however, he sometimes forgets to email or post on BlackBoard the chapter links for assignments. We have to remind him about it and lately he's been giving the assignments on the day they are due.

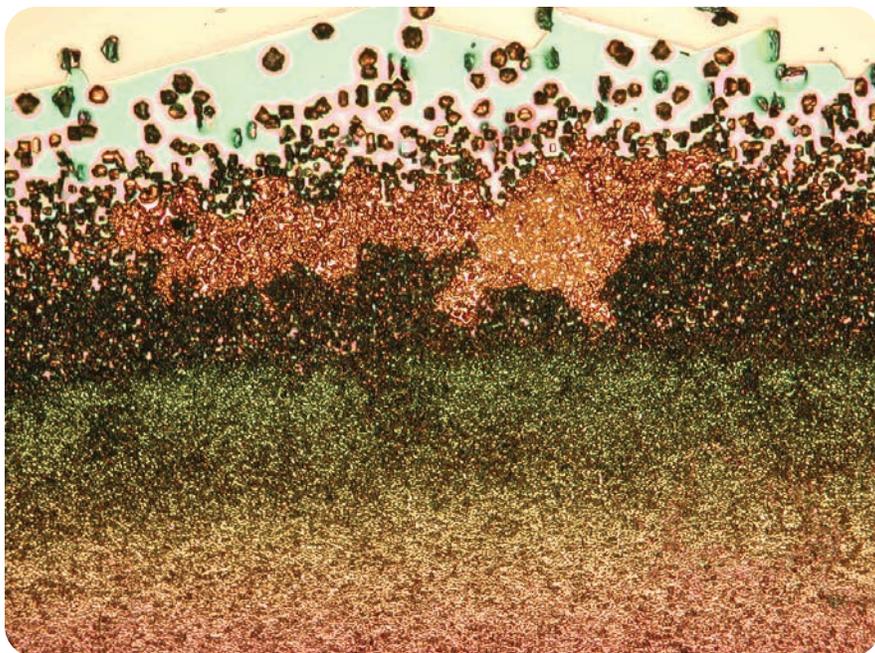
Personally, I find it amusing that such a dedicated Professor would miss assigning such important work to his students.

For how is it fair to the students who actually get it done before or on time; only to be missed on the day it's due?

Then being foolishly made procrastinators by accident fault of our own.

However, he's been working tirelessly to correct himself. I only hope he keeps doing this for the sake of all students taking his class.

Travis Thomas



- Jennifer Trice - Gallium Arsenide



I'm Zay and I'm from New York City,
the city that tests your limits where it's
also gritty.

I'm from a Dominican generation,
where it's also my proclamation,
to represent Black & Hispanic culture,
and to show that I can paint a bigger picture.

Black & Dominican are the mixture,
don't look at me as if I'm insane,
Cause I got a brighter future,
than most of y'all can capture.



I can't make a diss cause that's not my style,
the extra distance I must make, it's not worth
my while.

I find this class to be fundamentally insane,
from the Bronx, but like Cypress Hill its
insane in the membrane.

(Last line is a reference to the music group
Cypress Hill in NYC.)

Isaiah Weatherly

My Dad

Imagine a crazy old man,
He doesn't drive to work in a van,
The forty-minute hike,
He rides his bike.

A baker at heart,
Pie better than the mart,
But in a rush,
He drops it to mush.

Stuck in his old ways,
Sometimes puts me in malaise,
But it's pretty funny,
When he can't get youtube running!

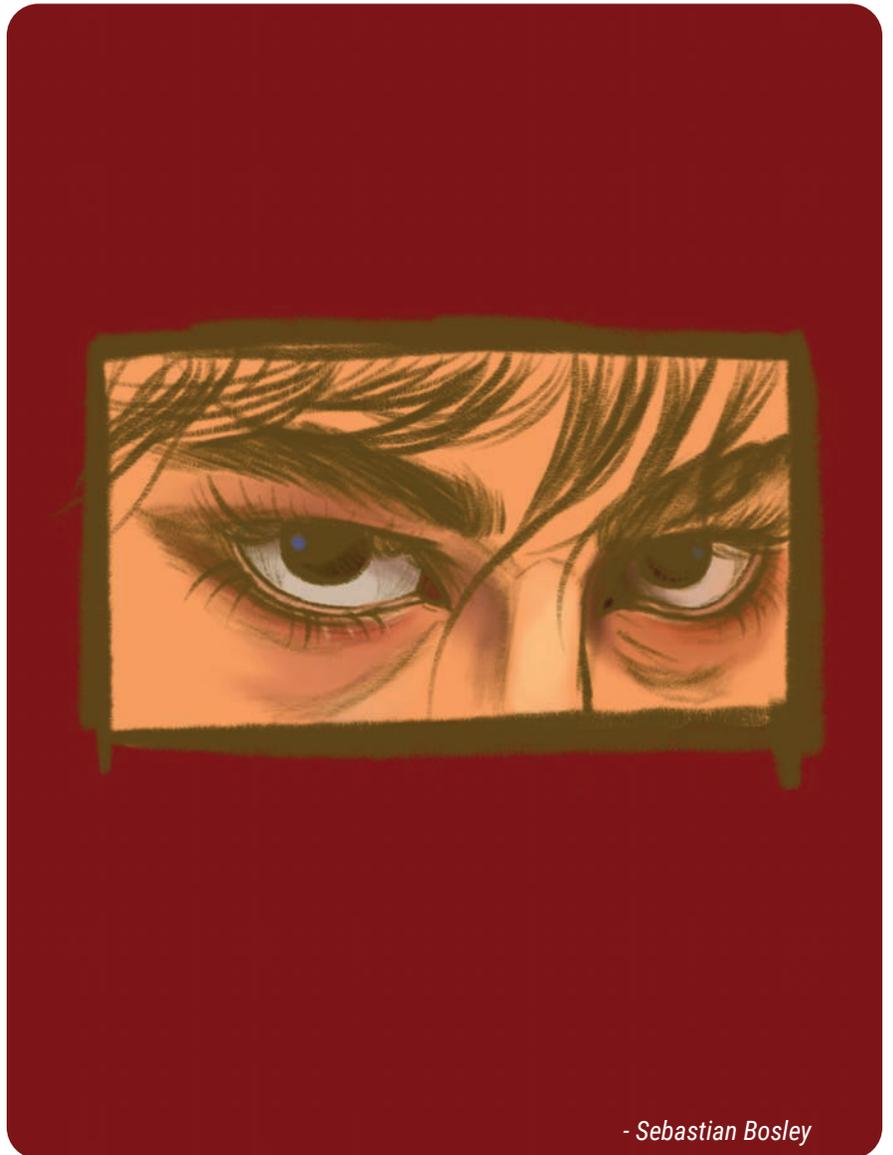
Will this guy ever retire?
He always seems so tired.
Luckily he saves his money,
Like a Mr. Krabs wannabe!

Raider the cat,
Sticks to him like a hat.
But there goes the crook,
Raiding the dinner he cooked.

Ty Steinwachs



- Nadia Raj



- Sebastian Bosley

Wouldn't Be

We made eye contact today after
Such a long time
I had forgotten how pretty your eyes were
So, I looked away out of nervousness
But out of curiosity returned my gaze back to you
This time I saw the sparkle in your eyes engulfed
In sadness
Who made your eyes look that way?
Was it him?
Was it her?
Could it have been me?
We made eye contact after such a long time
Today
I thought I had forgotten all about you
But those eyes reminded me of how much that
Wouldn't be

Blooming Cereus



- Ronald Good

When I was little, my grandfather took note of how fascinated I was by his old cuckoo clock, so one Christmas he decided to get me a mechanical pocket watch which further pushed that fascination. I carried that pocket watch with me everywhere until one day I thought I broke it by over-winding it. Lucky me, though, my grandfather once dreamed of being a watch smith. We managed to get the watch fixed and working again but as neither of us was a professional by any standard, the watch ended up ticking in a funny way. It still kept time just fine and still does, but the second-hand moves in a funny way that would make most wonder if it even keeps time right. From then on, I started to collect broken clocks and watches to then fix with my grandfather. We fixed about ten before his age really caught up to him, and he could no longer see the small parts or keep his hands steady anymore. His health only went down from there. My grandfather spent about three years in assisted living before passing away. To this day I still fix and collect clocks and watches, and I still have the one he gave me. It is my most cherished watch no matter how oddly it may run as it reminds me of all the time I spent with my grandfather.

Carnes Wasilako

Consumed

Consumed by anger
Lost in fear
No longer a danger.
Soon my feelings will disappear
Imprisoned by loneliness
Living in regret
Realizing you're gone
Realizing there is no other
That will make you disappear
Realizing I will forever be imprisoned
By this fear

Blooming Cereus

Winter's Sunset

When the winter sun sets
I'll be waiting at the ends of the world
To be consumed by you
Though we said our goodbyes
In another life we'll grasp onto the idea of love
And make it reality
When the winter's sun sets
We'll finally be happy
In our last goodbye
I could taste the end of our love
But I refuse to let our love end in such a tragedy
So, when the winter sun sets
I'll still be waiting desperately
At the ends of the world
For you

Blooming Cereus



- Ronald Good

Before class, Lewis is sitting at the desk ready to go. His leg is shaking up and down as he watched all the other students trickle in. One student walks in wearing running shoes. Lewis thinks to himself “He is a runner. I heard he is getting a full ride to college. I wonder if he will be a professional runner. I wonder if I could do that too?” Then another student comes in talking about how she baked two hundred cookies for the upcoming dance. He thinks “Maybe she will go on to start a baking business.” These thoughts flood his mind as each student walked through the door. His train of thought is suddenly broken with Mr. Williams saying “Lewis, can you hear me in there?” Lewis responds, “What?” Then looks around to see everyone moving around. Mr. Williams says, “I said to partner up. We are going to do an exercise for the beginning of class.” Lewis looks around again and sees everyone already has a partner. He walks up to Mr. Williams and tells him there is no one left. He then responds, “Well, that’s no problem, I’ll be your partner.”

Mr. Williams raises his voice and says, “Okay class, today we will be talking about the psychology of routines. They help to show what we enjoy doing and how we become the people we are. The exercise will simply be to share each other’s routines with one another. This way we can make some connections with each other’s personalities and behaviors with what we do on a daily basis.” Everyone begins talking to one another while Mr. Williams makes his way over to Lewis. He then sits down next to him and says, “Alright, so what does your daily routine look like, Lewis?” Lewis’s leg starts shaking, and he starts looking around. He doesn’t say anything for a moment with struggle displayed on his face. Mr. Williams looks around and says, “I asked you Lewis. Not anyone else. Come on, I promise I won’t judge” Lewis then reluctantly responds, “Well...I don’t really have a routine.” Quickly Mr. Williams responds, “Well of course you do. Do you eat dinner at a certain time? Do you eat the same thing for breakfast? How do you get to school every day? What about hanging out with



- Ty Steinwachs

friends' after school? These are all routines. You have them. You just may not realize." Lewis digging deep musters up, "Well...um...I guess my dad drives me to school every morning. That is a routine." He then looks around and says, "...and I go to swim practice every day after school." Mr. Williams glares and says, "well that is good except I just overheard Benny say he has swim practice a few seconds ago. I'm asking you, not Benny. You really don't have a routine? What do you enjoy doing with your free time?" Lewis's leg bounces higher than before and looks around. Mr. Williams notices and says, "Alright, meet me at my desk after class today."

After the exercise, the rest of the lecture continues on. Mr. Williams goes on to lecture about the importance of the exercise. That a huge part of what we do makes us who we are. Routines can give people a sense of control and help relieve many anxieties of life. So, if we choose good routines, we can choose to have a great life. The class ends, and Lewis walks over to Mr. Williams. "Have a seat." Says Mr. Williams. "I have noticed you are looking around the rooms a lot during class. It seems like you are paying a lot of attention to the people around you. Can you give me a reason for why you might be doing this?" Lewis says, "Um...I just like to see what's going on around me. That's all." Mr. Williams looks at him a moment and responds, "Lewis...I think I may know what your problem may be. Correct me if I am wrong. I believe you are paying too much attention to others and not enough attention to yourself. When we had our exercise earlier it seems you don't even know what you do on a daily basis. That tells me you are not putting enough time into yourself. What do you think?" Lewis says, "Well I guess I didn't even realize. I was just seeing what other people are doing to try to help me figure out what I want to do when I graduate. I cannot figure it out no matter how hard I try. So, maybe if I take inspiration from others, it could help me."

Mr. Williams says, "I see. My advice to you is if you focus on other people's lives you will live pieces of theirs and none of yours. You have to simply focus on you. Don't pay attention to what anyone

else is doing. That is exactly how you get lost. That is how you are continuing to stay lost. It is not your journey. It is theirs. Sure, you can take inspiration from others, but the inspiration is where it ends. They are not giving you blueprints to life. There is no such thing. Every single person has their own path with their own experiences. Trying to walk along that path they have built will have you living a life not meant for you. I am going to help you out, Lewis. I am going to write down some exercises here for you to do. I want you to complete each one until they are gone, then come back to me. Then we will talk again and see what your routine looks like." Lewis responds, "I appreciate that, but I feel like If I allow myself to be my true self, I will be judged." Mr. Williams pauses for a moment, then says, "Then you are killing who you are really supposed to be, my friend. If you live your life not being you, then what did you do with the real you? That is the reason you cannot figure out what you want to do. You cannot make much meaningful progress with a mask over the real you. Be you. It doesn't matter what others think about it. If they judge you, it is simply because they are envious that they cannot find it in them to take off their own mask."

He hands him the paper and says, "Let's chip that mask away." Lewis makes his way home. For a while he refuses to look at the list mostly out of fear. He sits at his desk at home and finds himself scrolling through social media, seeing all the cool stuff everyone is up to, the places he wishes he was. It makes him feel very sad and empty. He looks over at the paper and said to himself "He is right." He looks down at the list, and there are five exercises. He starts with number one which reads "Challenge yourself." He sits for a moment and thinks. He tries to think of something that may challenge him. Then it hits him. Every single morning he is almost late for school. He sleeps in all the time. So, he decides to start waking up earlier in the morning. In order to do that, he needs to go to bed earlier. He looks over at the clock, and it is already 11 pm. So, he races to bed. When morning comes around and that alarm goes off, he is very tired. He remembers the challenge and throws himself out of that bed.

continued on page 28

The first exercise is complete. Now, Lewis is unsure what to do with all this extra time. Every part of him just wants to sit on his phone until school, but he understands that is the problem. So, he pulls out the list and reads another exercise. The next one reads, “consume less, create more.” At first, he is at a loss for what to do. Then he remembers in art class they learned about photography. He pulls out his phone and starts taking pictures. Different angles of objects in his room. He heads outside and takes a picture of the trees and the rising sun. It gives him a feeling he has never felt before. Like his mind is exercising. Lewis then heads off to school feeling more energized than he has in a while. The classes go by faster as his excitement builds for the next exercise. During lunch, he reads the next exercise. It reads, “Do one selfish act, and one giving act a day.” Now this exercise really stumped him. He thinks for a moment then decides to treat himself to some ice cream. He looks across the lunchroom as he gets up and sees a poster. The poster

is for a beach cleanup after school. “Perfect” he says to himself. So, he makes plans to attend. That will be his giving act. He decides to save the selfish act for when the opportunity arises.

After school, he meets up with everyone that is attending the beach cleanup. Everyone starts to break apart and pick up trash. Lewis remembers from looking at the sheet earlier that one of the exercises is “Sit and walk in silence for ten minutes.” So, he thought this was the perfect opportunity for another exercise. He breaks apart from the group and walks along the beach. As the chatter from people in the distance starts to disappear, his ears start to adjust to the waves crashing. Then he hears the seagulls squawking. Then his ears hone on the sound of the rocks and sand he is walking on. The longer he walks in silence the more he hears nature going on around him, the big sounds and the little ones. He feels a connection to nature that refuels him. His mind starts

- Zachary Callahan



to wander but doesn't get stuck on any thoughts, just a constant steady flow from one thought to the next. It gives his mind a sense of clarity. Usually, his mind is clouded by constant stimulation. Then, out of nowhere creativity strikes. As he looks around, he sees tons of opportunities for pictures to take. The seagulls, the crashing waves, trees, and so much more. This experience offers him a clear mind and inspiration. Lewis feels amazing.

After the cleanup, he heads home to read the next exercise. It reads, "Move your body." Even though he just went for a walk, he thought it was best to do more. Lewis remembers the runner from class. It gives him the idea to go on a run outside. He is using the runner as inspiration rather than trying to copy, unlike before when he would copy others. Lewis throws on a pair of old gym shoes and starts running.

At first, Lewis struggles. His body feels like it weighs a ton, and his lungs are on fire. Even through the pain, he keeps going. These exercises have worked thus far so he is not giving up. After a while he is about to quit because it is so difficult. Just before he is about to stop, he feels light. His lungs hurt a little less. Nature sang louder. The world becomes a little brighter. His mind a little clearer. Once again, he has never felt so great. He receives many weird looks as people drove by watching him struggle. He didn't let that stop him because it was something he wanted to do. He focused on himself. He fought through the pain for the betterment of himself. Through the pain and weird looks, he completed the task.

Later that night Lewis is lying in bed, excited for the next day, for what he may learn about himself and what challenges he will overcome. He is thinking back on his day, letting thoughts float around his mind. Then he remembers he forgot an exercise. He forgot to do his one selfish act that he was saving for the right opportunity. He realized that opportunity never came. The next day Lewis goes to see Mr. Williams. At the end of class Lewis walks up to Mr. Williams. Mr. Williams says, "Hello Lewis, how are your exercises going?" Lewis responds, "Actually I

am almost completely done. I just have one more." Mr. Williams smirks and says, "Let me guess. It is the selfish act." Lewis nods. "A lot of people really struggle with that one. It is expected for that to be the last exercise. The funniest part of the whole thing is that every exercise on that list was selfish. You just didn't realize it. The only reason you did these exercises was to learn more about yourself, not for anyone else. The problem with the word selfish is that it is used in a negative way much too often. It is okay to be selfish at times. We have to be selfish in order to be better for others. If we focus on ourselves to become better, it enables us to help others. We cannot pull someone out of the rough waters if we cannot yet swim. All

We cannot pull someone out of the rough waters if we cannot yet swim.

these exercises are aimed to make you sit down with yourself and talk. Figure out what you gravitate to and the journey your mind will take you on. Even become inspired by your own mind. In that you will learn a lot about yourself. Congratulations Lewis, you completed the exercises. Repeat them often and build. Now you have the tools to become you, and with that you can build your future.

Lewis leaves his classroom that day not with all the answers but the tools to learn more about himself. The beauty of Mr. Williams' exercises is everyone chooses different ways of going about completing them. Their reasonings for choosing their ways are all different. That is what makes them unique. Sometimes all we have to do to get somewhere is start, not watch what others are doing or how they are doing it. Now, Lewis is able to use them to carve his own path, to remove the mask he was so afraid to part from. If Lewis tried to chase a job that did not align with who he is, then the mask could be hard to remove. He may have only found the job that aligns with his mask. He learned to not be afraid to remove the mask. He realized the life he is supposed to live may depend on it.

TOO HIGH A PRICE

— Jael Washington

I remember growing up in a big house on Lawnsberry Place that always smelled of fresh homemade bread. My parents were avid Christians that believed in eating well to fuel our bodies but also believed in spiritual nutrition. We went to church every Sunday and never missed mid-week service. We had homemade meals three times a day, and my mother would wake us up with her melodic voice every morning. The house ran like clockwork, and the schedule was hardly ever missed. My father was a hardworking man. He was not only a Pastor but also had his own landscaping business. He was the bread winner and proud to be. He loved that my mother stayed at home with us and could keep us “out of the world” as they would often say. Unfortunately, nothing was ever as it seemed. From the outside looking in, all the “i’s” were dotted and “t’s” crossed. The boys’ shirts were always tucked and the pleats on the girls’ dresses were never wrinkled. But, no one ever knew of how much we pretended.

We became the cream of the crop. Six children in total, two boys and four girls could not have behaved more perfectly. In church we sang all the hymns; we listened to the sermons and participated in children’s church. We were the perfect picture of saintly-ness, and everyone knew who we were when we walked in. At least, they thought they knew. Lo and behold my “perfect” family was a facade. We had secrets. We had terrible awfals that would never go public. We had lies and loyalty all in one. I remember when everything fell apart. When the perfect ceased to be. It was four years after my older sister was diagnosed with epilepsy. I was about four at the time. My mother was rushed to the hospital with my sister one early morning. My Godmother and sister lived with us at the time. Then my two eldest brothers and I were the only ones left in the house. We waited patiently by the phone to hear news of my sister. Later that day, we received a phone call that all was well, but the hospital would be keeping her for testing. What a relief. We could all breathe again. My father returned home late that night without my sister or my mother. The look of exhaustion and relief plagued his face.

Several years went by with my mother and sister constantly visiting the hospital and returning with new medications and fixes for a problem no one knew how to solve. My father and mother fought long and hard to get my sister the help she needed. At church, we were revered as a strong family, a faithful and enduring family. People would give testament of how blessed we were and how much God would use this testament for His glory and our good. Yet nobody knew what behind the scenes looked like. Nobody knew that a few months after those first few bouts of consistent hospital visits, my mother and father began to become distant. Our “perfect house” was falling apart. My mother’s mental state began to waiver from the stress. It became so evident that she would pass out from being too overwhelmed. She was taken to the hospital for fear of being epileptic. She was not. My God-mom would often take care of us as well as my uncle and aunt who had moved in with us. We had a perfect community of prayer warriors and fighters. Still, no one knew of the plague that haunted our home. The shepherd had began hunting his own sheep. A wolf in sheep’s clothing is what my father became. I never knew peace in that house. I became the hunted sheep. When my mother was not home, I was the fix that replaced her. I was the sacrificed lamb. I was the secret.

My father loved his family but was not the best at expressing it properly. He labored hard and sacrificed a lot but at the expense of others. At the expense of me. My mother, never was the same after my sister passed. I was ten when it happened. She grew distant which allowed my father’s appetite to grow. When my mother found out, we hid. The terrible awful was never to be spoken of. Forgive and forget had become her best friend, but in all her forgetting, she forgot me. The secrets we keep would indeed make us pay too high a price.

*A poem written by the attendees at the
Fall 2022 Poetry Reading:*

HOW TO BE A PIONEER

Wrestle more!
Love yourself and appreciate your uniqueness.
A Pioneer is someone who puts their all into everything that they do.

Ask Kate, "Why?" when she hands you a book.
A Pioneer is built different.

There's just too much to say and a lot to experience. The numbness you feel will leave behind abrasions, scrapes built over a decade. Breathe with self-love and patience, a strong foundation finally started with foreign help and careful decisions.

Go into computers.
Try it all, you are doing great!
Bitcoin.
A Pioneer is a student with goals to make someone proud.
A Pioneer is someone who strives for greatness.

Listen.

A Pioneer is a leader.
A Pioneer is our future.
A Pioneer is an explorer, an inventor and a trail blazer.
A Pioneer is a person with passion and purpose.

Beware the woman.
College doesn't kill creativity.
Stand up for yourself.

Relax more often and give yourself care. Take the advice you give others. (P.S. Don't stress about homework).
It's not as important as you think.

A Pioneer is lost along the Oregon Trail. You died of dysentery!
A Pioneer is surely to blame.
A Pioneer is a Revolutionary.
A Pioneer is exhausted.
A Pioneer is a mystic.

Go Pioneers!



