



# Ergo

SPRING 2020

- James Paul

# Ergo

Spring 2020

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**ERGO** is the literary and artistic publication of Alfred State. It is funded by the Student Senate and is freely distributed each semester. Students, 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](mailto:Ergo@alfredstate.edu).

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

Sincerely, The Ergo staff



The woodshop. Filled with every tool imaginable in a small space. Each tool is placed exactly where only I can find it. Flurries of sawdust roam the shop unvacuumed. Music bounces against the walls while I craft the next project. It is my hideaway from the world allowing me to create anything I've ever wanted. I find peace when I work alone or even with my father. Time goes away as the smell of rich wood fills my nostrils. The woodshop is my therapy. It drives me to work unconditionally hard in life to return to what I love. My creative mindsets helps make and shape everything I have ever designed.

*Timothy Marshall*

# Virtual Poetry Reading Brings Alfred State Pioneers Together

Jeff Cole, '09

Even in the midst of the ongoing coronavirus pandemic, Alfred State Pioneers are still finding ways to come together virtually to connect, bond, and lift each other's spirits.

One of these ways came in the form of a recent virtual poetry reading hosted by the English and Humanities Department. Thanks to the technical knowledge of Assistant Professor Dr. Travis Matteson, the reading was able to take place on Blackboard Collaborate, the instructional videoconferencing platform that faculty have been using to teach since classes transitioned online in March.



Ashley Rosario was joined by her 3-year-old sister, Olivia, during the college's virtual poetry reading.



Dr. Travis Matteson reading his poem, "The Distance Between Words".

SUNY Distinguished Teaching Professor Dr. Aniko Constantine noted that roughly 112 participants signed into the poetry reading, about 20 of whom were employees, while the rest were students. This turnout, Constantine said, was even greater than what the face-to-face poetry readings typically receive.

"With sequestering and isolation and the threat of COVID-19, it was an exquisite time to see the power of poetry to bring people together to share," she said.

Kicking off the event was a slideshow of student artwork, which was accompanied by violin music provided by Sarabeth Matteson, the director of Alfred State Voices. Dr. Skip Sullivan, president of Alfred State, opened the poetry reading with a light and fun poem about remembering and forgetting.

Following Sullivan were poetry readings by Dr. Daniel Katz, dean of the School of Arts and Sciences; Dr. John Williams, dean of the School of Architecture, Management, and Engineering Technology; and English and Humanities Department Chair and Professor Calista McBride.

As for the students who participated, some had submitted prerecorded videos of their readings, though most of them recited poems "live" on camera. While some recited famous poems such as "Fire and Ice" by Robert Frost or "Ozymandias" by Percy Bysshe Shelley, others read poems that came straight from their own hearts and minds.

Mary Hribar, a human services management major from Olean, read a poem she wrote about the road taken and the one not taken, while her daughter listened online from Arizona. An excerpt from the poem reads, "The road you have taken was perfect for your destiny to unfold. Don't worry about the one less traveled. Yours made you strong, and bright, and bold!"



Mary Hribar, reading a poem she wrote while her daughter listened online from Arizona.

Accompanied on camera by her 3-year-old sister, Olivia, Ashley Rosario, an undeclared major from Bronx, recited a poem by Joy Harjo called "Crossing the Border." Another especially moving poem, Constantine said, was provided by Justin Minaya, a biological science major from New York City, who shared his pride of his Puerto Rican heritage.

"Another student acknowledged his reading with a comment in Spanish," Constantine noted. "It was all truly lovely."

Matteson said the virtual poetry reading "really fulfilled a need for human contact and a need for a sense of normality."

"The campus poetry reading is a longstanding tradition and I am thrilled it proved pandemic-proof," he said. "I think it is also a testament to the power of poetry to connect people at a time when we are all feeling disconnected."

# The Nature of North

My Grandpa Ray was a product of his generation. Born during the 1920s, as the only child on a small farm, he was no stranger to hardship. He was tempered in a world of have nots, and therefore saved everything. This kind of sentiment invokes images of hoarders, with towering mounds of chaos. I wish to clarify that this is nothing like that. My grandfather was very meticulous, and every little thing had its place and meaning. His need for structure was so great that his food couldn't even touch on the plate. He'd always arrange neat spaces between the different dishes. If they ended up touching, out of spite, he wouldn't eat it, that's how poorly he viewed those who transgressed against his will. Working with him over the years, I quickly learned that there was only one way to accomplish a task, and that's the right way.

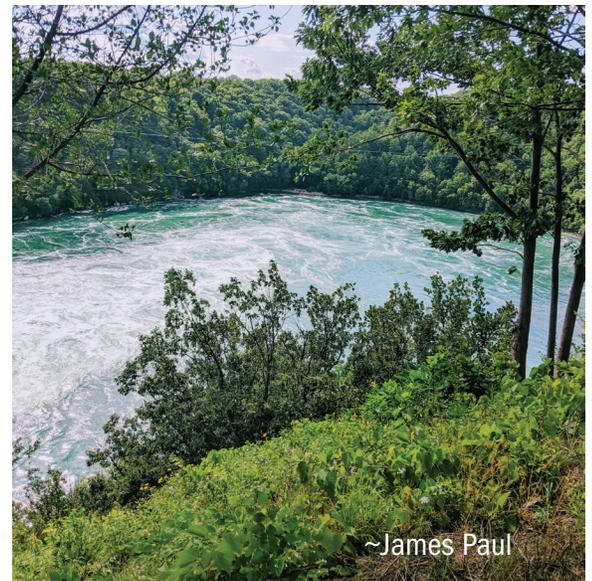
I worked with my grandfather almost every day until I left for college in 2008. Over the years, I never received money from him. My grandfather paid me in lessons, stories, and trinkets from his hoard. I absorbed his teachings and committed his stories to heart; however, my greatest joy was the trinkets. Grandfather had the neatest pieces of antiquity. Each one I was given had its use and history.

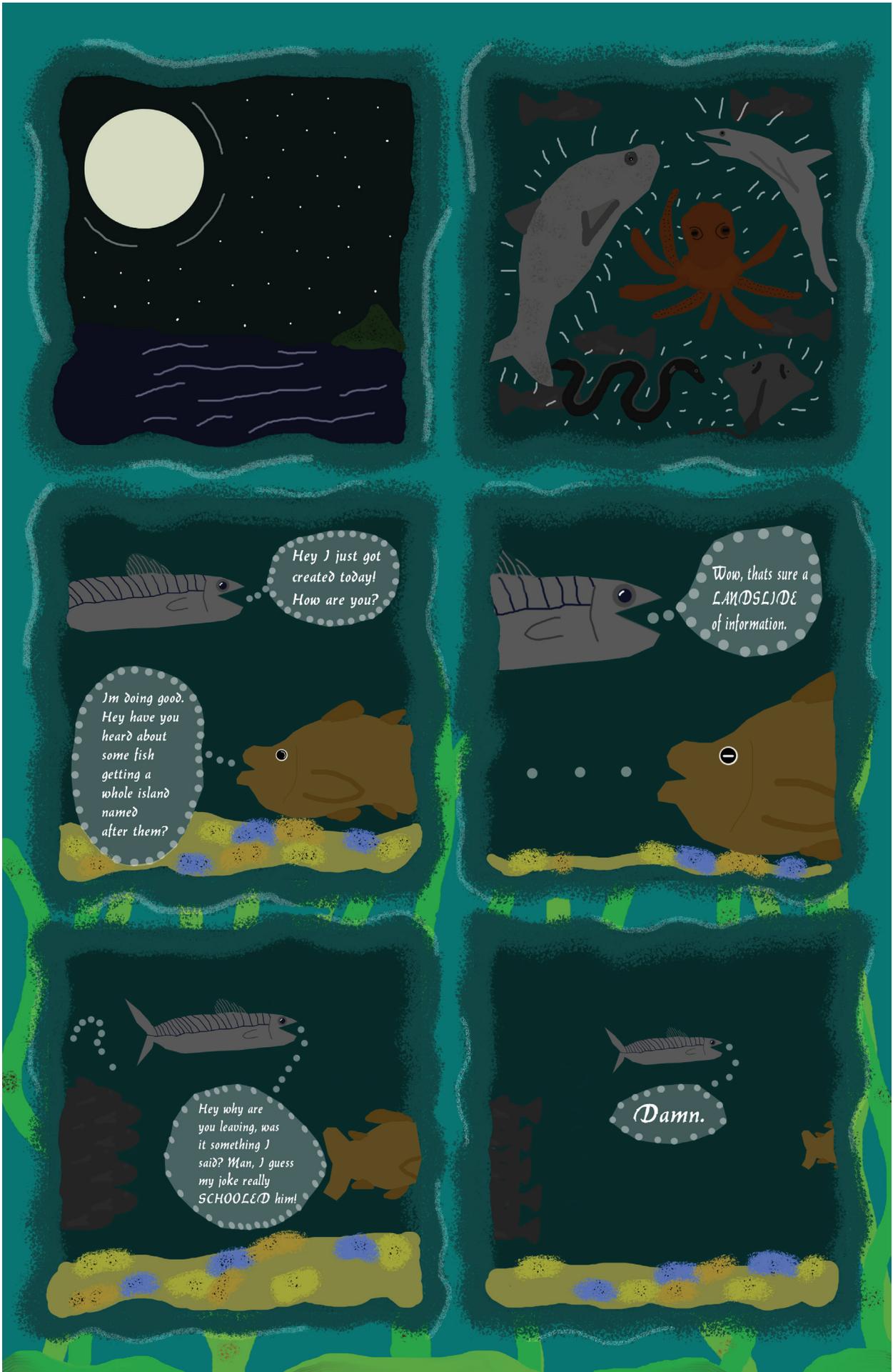
When I was eight and adventurously beginning to explore our property, I received a small golden compass. The dial was no bigger than a quarter. To me, the science that drove it was no less than magic. From my grandfather, I learned the cardinal directions and a new concept. Until this point, I had never thought of my place in this world. Now I had the means to express it. Instead of just being somewhere, I could quantify where I was. As my grandfather explained to me how the compass worked, I started to build on his words with my imagination. Even from a young age, I have had a grand talent for hearing what I wanted to hear. As he explained to me that this was a device to interpret the cardinal directions, what I heard was that this was a device to tame them. In my eyes, I saw this as a great magic treasure that bent the directions to my will. I thought that wherever I set the dial became true north. Rather than lining up the dial with a direction and a corresponding point to determine my position, I was under the impression that at a whim, I dictated what north was. It quickly became that I hadn't grasped the nature of north when my grandfather gave me a small test to follow his directions around the yard. As he became more and more confused, watching me go wherever I pleased, he finally asked me to explain what I was doing. He found my explanation to be hilarious and then told me something I'll never forget; "using it that way may not get you to where you want to go, but hell it'll get you somewhere that's for sure." It was an offhand remark, but I never forgot it.

As I grew older, I applied this simple truth to life. I know that many of the decisions I made along the way may not have been the best, and there were certain things I didn't do or use right. I may not have ended up where I wanted, but I was somewhere, and here there was a new adventure to be had.

Every time I look at that small golden compass, I can't help but laugh, smile, and fight a tear. Like grandfather, like grandson, we understood the existence of the cardinal directions, but we never truly grasped the nature of north.

*Clayton Winspear*

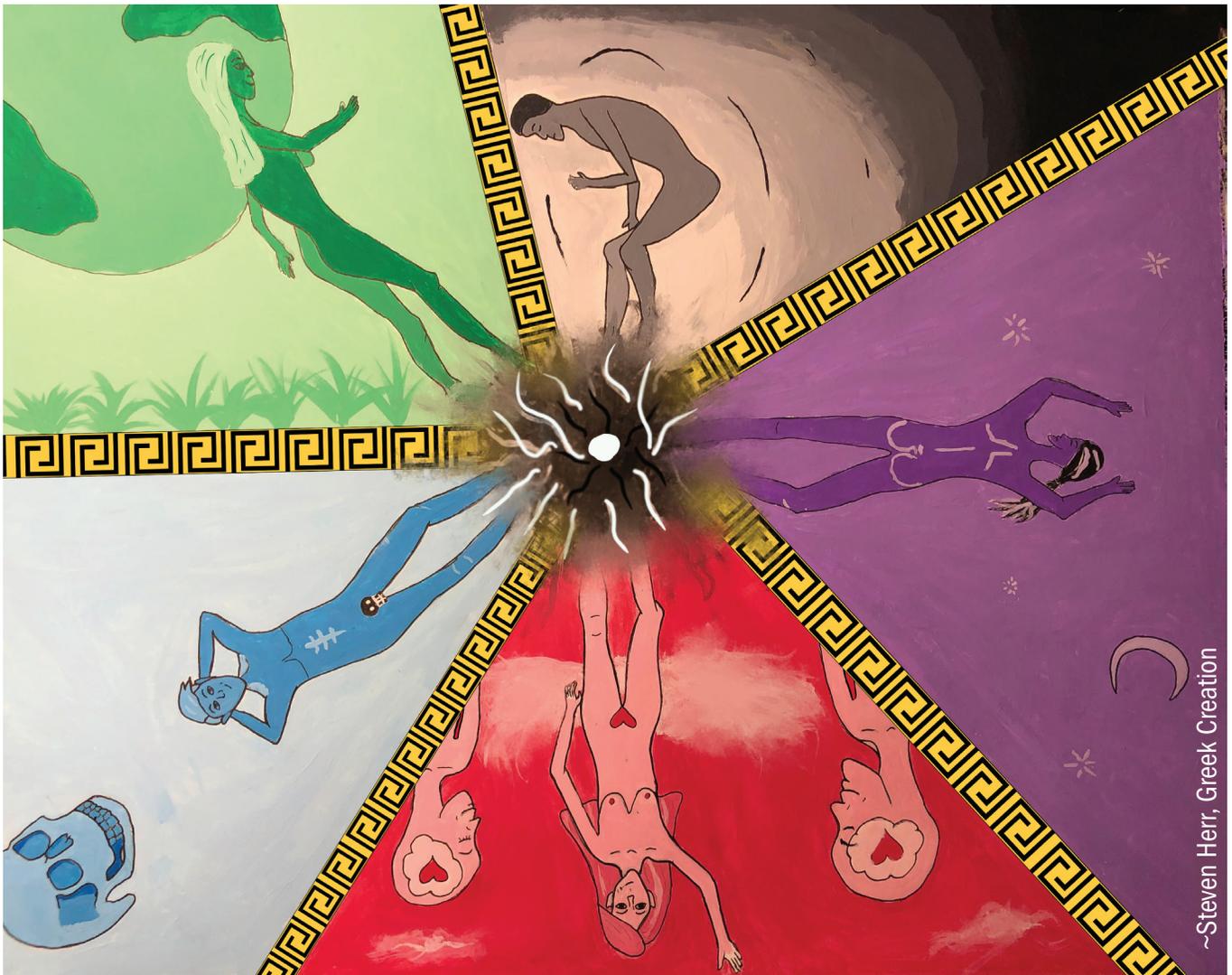




~Cameron Smith, Creation Comic

One thing that I have kept throughout the years from my childhood is a cracked old green plastic ruler, with “#1 DAD” marked on it in white text. I usually come across it in a storage crate or maybe on the back of a table. I either leave it be or put it up somewhere, where it may not be touched or potentially thrown out. I doubt my father will ever see it again, let alone use it, but I personally enjoy being reminded of its existence. When I was younger, I noticed the ruler wore a long crack on its side, and I pointed it out to my dad, suggesting that it was no good. And he told me since I got it for him, that it would always be good enough to use. It made him feel like my father, and maybe he hadn’t always had that feeling as much as I’d like to think. But I am glad to know that he looked into things more deeply than I and let me know to think twice and consider its importance before deeming it as only a cracked ruler.

*Iyanna Rogers*



## The Black Journal

My black sketchbook was the only thing I valued at the time due to its ominous dark shade of black. Somehow the shade of black allowed me to see its anonymity, but also its charm. To elaborate, it was a tiny journal with blank pages and a black leather cover. Perceiving this journal as one huge secret, I was able to treat it as an opportunity to run wild and spur my creativity in all different directions. I drew constantly, letting nobody peek until every page was full of my ideas, vibrant colors, and whatever went through my mind at the time. It was not only an opportunity to self-reflect on what my past has brought down on me but coping with traveling upstate for college became much easier because it was a way to process how I felt. When it filled, I was beyond excited to show others its various pages in projects and ideas that I kept in those pages.

*Aizayah Mingo*



## Pocket Sticker

Over the summer I moved to Brooklyn with my parents. Having a lot of free time, I decided to look for a job. I found a gig as a waiter, off books, and it paid very well. During the same time, I was going out with a girl. She would introduce me to new places in the city and bring me to her favorite restaurants. I would offer to pay, and I always did. I would always look at the prices of the clothes, food, etc. we bought. During our time dating, she only gave me one gift, a sticker. I held onto it even after we broke up. At first, I was angry that this was the only thing she left me with. However, I stuck it on my wallet. I learned that I can't buy affection and happiness; it is the things I do that define my relationships.

*Leslie Jiang*

## I wear mine.

Everyday I wear my symbols. My watch that I got when I was in boot camp. I remember setting it to the time it would be back home, so I would know if my family was awake. My Saint Michael Navy necklace just happened to turn up one day over break. It called to me in a way, asking for me to put it on. I wanted to throw it away; it's not for me anymore. The back side that once bore my name is now faded away as if it were never there. These items are all that connects me to RTC anymore. I don't know why I still wear them. Maybe to torture myself? So I don't forget about what I originally wanted to do? I have this habit of not letting go of things that I should. I just hold on to them, put them in the back of my mind, but not too far. No, I keep them in sight. I keep the watch in 24 hour format as if I think I'll need to know it that way still.

These items, they keep me connected to my ultimate failure. It will always follow me, over my shoulder. It tells me that I failed, my friends, my family, my country and all the strangers I meet day to day. I feel like everyone knows I failed too. I mean obviously they don't, but it's a feeling I get everywhere I go. I wish I could make it up to everyone. But I will just fail more. Like that poem it's not hard to master losing. I have perfected the art without even trying.

I have grown a little since then; I can give myself a little bit of credit. I've done more things this semester than I did last one. I've been able to meet new people and actually...socialize with them I guess is the word I'm looking for. I assume I can only get better, but I feel like I just plateaued, and this is as good as it gets. What do I know though? For now I am just gonna keep wearing this mask, with my watch and necklace. I mean if I can pretend it's not there, then it must not be there. Right? Now I'm not trying to gain pity or make people feel sorry for me. Just that they understand me, understand where I am coming from. I know a whole two people will read this. So I know no more than a few people will see this, and I am pretty content with that. This is more for me anyway.

I had a good time in literature class. I learned new and interesting things, met some and heard some really nice people in class, and that is all that matters.

*Anonymous*



~Susan Perry, Ribbon Vase



~James Paul

A common personal metaphor that many people make when describing things, people, or places they hold dear to them is, “\_\_\_\_\_ is my life.” It is an interesting metaphor to me in that when I applied the same metaphor to myself regarding swimming, an activity I do upwards of 15 hours a week, I realized that it started to become more of a factual statement. There is no lie in my stating “swimming is my life.”

When I'm in a bad mood, I can hop in the pool and complete a difficult practice and feel exuberant after.

When I feel my brain won't stop functioning at a rigorous pace in the evening and I can't fall asleep, I can go swim for two hours and fall asleep after with no issues.

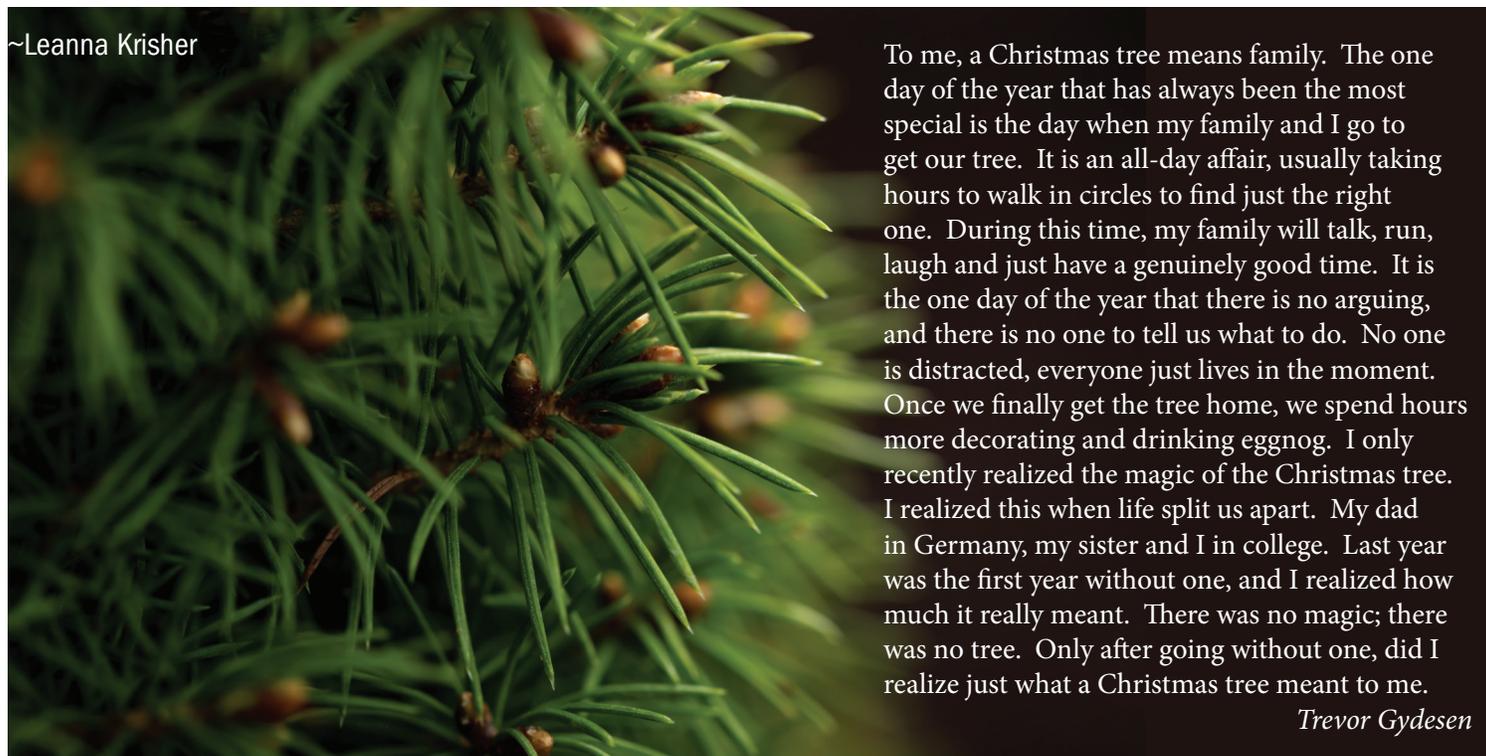
When I'm bored, I will hop on the computer and fill my YouTube search history to the brim with videos about competitive swimming, swimming technique, nutrition for swimmers, and any other swimming related news.

When I daydream, I just tend to think about the way the human body moves through the water, and the most efficient ways the limbs and various ranges of motion of the human body can be utilized to reach maximum speed when moving through water. It's almost therapeutic to me to go into deep thought about elite athletes who manage to practically hydroplane when competing, and how each stroke and pull of the water rolls into the next so fluidly, yet so quickly at the same time, while a kick that manages to be thunderous and smooth simultaneously provides heavy propulsion from behind.

And from these deep daydreaming states, I awaken myself and fight against the idea that “swimming is my life” isn't just a metaphor. Because if I didn't fight against the idea, my homework would never get done, which in reality should be treated like my life more so than crawling my way through water, to one wall and back for hours on end.

*Anonymous*

~Leanna Krisher



To me, a Christmas tree means family. The one day of the year that has always been the most special is the day when my family and I go to get our tree. It is an all-day affair, usually taking hours to walk in circles to find just the right one. During this time, my family will talk, run, laugh and just have a genuinely good time. It is the one day of the year that there is no arguing, and there is no one to tell us what to do. No one is distracted, everyone just lives in the moment. Once we finally get the tree home, we spend hours more decorating and drinking eggnog. I only recently realized the magic of the Christmas tree. I realized this when life split us apart. My dad in Germany, my sister and I in college. Last year was the first year without one, and I realized how much it really meant. There was no magic; there was no tree. Only after going without one, did I realize just what a Christmas tree meant to me.

*Trevor Gydesen*



~Leanna Krisher

I never thought about it that much until now, but my father bought me Mexico's soccer team's official jersey, and since that day, it became one of my favorite shirts. At first, I thought it was because it was comfortable to wear or because it was a 100-dollar shirt. Now I realize it was none of those things.

My father was a stereotypical Mexican father, and I hated being Mexican because of that. That shirt was the first thing my father gave to me, not because he had to, but because he wanted me to have something he considered important to him, which was his home country. My father was not in my life after a certain point, but he came back a few years later when I most needed him. I was glad he did because despite my not telling anyone, I hated saying I don't have a father.

That shirt he bought me during the World Cup reconnected us, and now I talk to him when I get the chance and visit him when I am home. That shirt demonstrated to me that he was able to change for the better, and I wear it proudly knowing it shows that I'm Mexican. I have learned to appreciate my home parent's country for what it is and have gained back an important part of my life. Wearing the shirt makes me feel empowered and glad to be who I am, and I also look good wearing it, even if others don't think so.

*Saul Nepomuceno*



~Bryan Schulte,  
Norse Creation

In Greek Mythology, Pandora's box is a gift given to the supposed first woman ever to inhabit the Earth. Inside it are all the evils, illnesses, and hardships that ever could and would come to mankind -- put there by God and opened by the woman he gave it to. After opening the box and releasing such things to the world, in her panic to shut the evils away, Pandora is said to have shut 'hope' away inside the box as well.

The story is surely meant to be a lesson about the dangers of curiosity; it is meant to teach the young why they should listen to what they are warned against, and that to be curious about something they are forbidden to know about should be a bad thing. While this is a rather interesting story to read to a little kid before bedtime, I have come to find that I have, in my own way, created my own Pandora's box.

My 'box' is a rectangular shape, colored in gold plastic cardboard container. There is a handle atop of it that is broken, and there are metal clips across the front that lock it closed -- locks that have been strained from the amount of crap stuffed into it. I won the box, then stuffed with assorted home goods and treats, at a basket raffle held at a cancer-funding event for a family friend. It was, in fact, the last time I saw this friend alive as she succumbed to her illness not much later.

If you were to open this little plastic and cardboard box, you would find papers and photos of all sorts. To any normal person, these various items would come off as nothing more than a common hoarder's junk; meaningless and copious amounts of nothingness, congregated into one not-even-neat jumble and stuffed inside a box.

I have always called this box my Safe Box, and this Safe Box is the Pandora's Box of my life.

Inside are all the things in my life that have given me great pain. I have letters written from exes and old friends, along with pictures I told others I had burned. I have wish lists from when I was little that I never fulfilled, hateful notes, bad report cards and more than one goodbye letter that I had written to the world. These are my evils, my illnesses, these collections of nothings are my pain and the hardships of my life. I collect such things, and I shove them in this Pandora's box, for here they are gathered, here they are safe, and here they can be safely forgotten.

But, much like the original mythic tale, evil is not the only thing this box contains.

Among the documents of pain and self-hate, sitting side by side and tucked in between, are things I hold dear to me. Alongside pictures of exes that I wish to forget are pictures of my family: of my parents, of my twin and me as babies. of my older sister, and of my pets. Alongside tests with horrid scores written across them are written works praised by old teachers, and even a letter from my old swim coach accepting me to my first team when I was just a lonely twelve-year-old. Tucked up back-to-back with goodbye letters to my loved ones are birthday cards from deceased family members, and side-by-side with a letter from a forbidden friend is an old movie ticket from my first ever date.

From written letters to grade accomplishments to things I am proud of and things I am ashamed of, to photos of friends and family, to photos of those left forgotten, to dates and wrappers and poems and pain, it is my Pandora's box. Locked inside it is my misery and locked inside are all the evils of my life. But locked alongside those evils are some of the best moments of my life; at some point or another, that box became something so much more than just a collection of papers and dust.

Sitting in a dark corner of a room I do not currently inhabit, is my Pandora's box, and locked inside are all the reasons I am still alive.

*Mickayla Raichel*



~Bennet Taylor

It sits on the nightstand next to my bed surrounded by the clutter of the chaos that is my room. Its brown leather cover is simple and nondescript, making it almost invisible upon the wooden surface. I rarely open it, but in the last six years, during which I have moved nine times, it always rests in the same spot. My parents gave me the Bible when I entered the fifth grade, over a decade ago. They wrote out a proverb on the blank page at the front, followed by a paragraph in which they told me that they loved me and wanted the best for me. Whenever I used to experience difficult times, I would look through the book for answers or an explanation, but invariably I would turn to that first page. Seeing their handwriting and reading their encouragement always did more for me than any amount of meditation on the Psalms. I gain comfort from reading their words and the knowledge that they will always care for me. It reminds me that they are rooting for me, and it has helped me to get through several difficult moments in my life. To me it's not just a dusty, leather-bound book, it is a symbol of my parents' love for me.

*Eric Burleson*



## Grandma's Sunshine

Rocking in the bouncing chairs  
 Blue beetle bus sits still  
 Glasses taped to faces  
 Draped with smiles  
 -ear to ear-

Painted leaves climb up the wall  
 Smiles are all around  
 The ashtrays and the bellies full  
 Sunshine has a sound

Northern summer celebrate  
 Sun's high at noon and nine  
 Soft cheeks, sweet face; so delicate  
 like hers and his and mine

*Cassandra Robbers*

# LONELY DRIVER

Loneliness is something I am currently struggling with. I have lived in the state of New York for seven months now and have all of three friends. Only one of those I count as a close friend. About two months ago, I was at an all-time low. Now, I refuse to kill myself with a gun because I refuse to be a political pawn for gun control, and I refuse to hang myself because I am too much of a pussy. I have found an overly convoluted way of attempting to kill myself. It's by driving my car extremely hard. I consider myself a good driver, and I won't purposefully crash, but if I overestimate my ability and go out that way, it is a happy medium that I won't see coming. Then if the worst does occur, my mother doesn't have to live with the fact that I killed myself and can believe it was an accident.

It was about a month ago I was going to start my commute home. It was a bitterly cold day. It was about 7 pm. and I was on my 8th cup of coffee. I hadn't slept or eaten in two days. I didn't care at that point about my car; I would have been so happy for it to die, but even still it hadn't. By that point I was fed up with everything and just wanted to end it all. I was pretty sure I was going to be a college dropout. I was going to do something I hadn't done in a few weeks: beat on my car and drive it hard. I started up my half-dead engine, cracked my window, and took off. I thought one of two things was going to happen that night -- either my engine would finally give out, or I would end up flipping on an icy hillside.

I then start the commute home climbing a huge hill at 30mph because that's all my dying engine could muster. Eventually a Jeep pulls up behind me, and I feel bad holding him up, but I had no choice. I wasn't going to rev the engine too high and kill it before I had my fun. We continue the climb at a depressing pace, but then we get to the peak and things start to flatten out. I gain more power as a result and pick up some speed. I knew the road well and just kept a pace of 55mph. The jeep was glued to my bumper the whole way. Finally, we get to the long downhill section where I start working with gravity. I start increasing the speed, first 80, then 90, and finally 100mph. I was topping my car out; when I heard the fuel cutoff triggering everything was shaking, and I was giving it my all. I knew where things were going. I flicked my CD track to a song called "Crazy Little Love" for good luck.

The wonderful, burning smell that I still can't pinpoint began by that point. The Jeep was keeping up until we approached the first corner when I wasn't braking [I didn't have to]. The only thing I was doing to keep traction on each corner I was sticking my inside tires onto the shoulder that's about an inch or two lower than the road, and try to hang my tires onto the road that way. It's an old 1930's technique pioneered by Rudolf Caracciola. It slingshotted me out of the corner without losing speed. It's extremely hard on tires and suspension, but I didn't care, I welcomed my suspension breaking. If I had mistimed putting my tires on the shoulder or taking them

off, I probably would have spun or lost control. I kept using that tactic down the hillside and I would always lose the guy in the corners, but in the straights he would just speed up and be on my bumper again. I never dropped below 95mph. He was keeping up with raw power.

I end up keeping on like this down the hillside. That was until a sharp left-hand turn. I did my usual shoulder trick, but something was different. I was sliding: I had hit a patch of black ice with my rear right tire. Time had slowed down in that moment. I just stared ahead, not even flinching. I heard the lyrics to my song so clearly "But now I feel like I'm reborn, I'll be fine." I felt the differential change what wheel was getting power. I was perfectly in tune with my car. I like to believe that was my turning point, where I was done with the semester, I was going back to Ohio and could pretend I didn't hate myself before classes started again. My heart was racing for the first time [in the entire downhill]. If I hadn't put my tires in the shoulder I might have spun out. [I might have become Carlsson on the roof.] In that moment I had three options. One, brake and understeer, lose control when my tires leave the shoulder, and flip. Two, keep my speed the same and maximize traction on my tires and ride the sliding out. Three, increase my speed and possibly initiate oversteer. I was suicidal, not stupid, so I increased my speed. This was not the safest option, but not the stupidest. If I was going to die, it was going to be by an accident, not by my purposeful screw up.

After that corner and possible near-death experience, I kept pushing. I was so close to what I wanted. The Jeep behind me must have been slipping too because I would gain a lot of ground in the corners. He was backing off to the point where he was struggling to make up the distance in the straights. The rest of my commute home that night was dangerous and uneventful. I kept the lead and [gaining] in the corners. The Jeep had lost its nerve.

So, that was my low point caused by my loneliness. I hesitate to consider it a suicide attempt, but the few outsiders who have heard the story consider it one. What scares me is that things will get worse. I am in counseling, but the shrink tells me I have no real issues. I disagree wholeheartedly. Starting my second semester I went to clubs, not because I enjoy them, but as a cry for help to meet somebody. Four weeks in at the time of this writing and I have nothing to show for it. I still sit alone at my home on the weekends [barely talking to people]. It's truly soul crushing. As sad as it may sound, the joy of my day for the past 6 months has been my 20-minute commute to my classes every day and I am losing even that. I want to buy some beater British roadster or Swedish airplane as my car, so that as I fix it hopefully, I am fixing myself. But I'm scared I will never find the car and never fix myself.

*Ian Evans*

# DUSTY'S POEM

---

All in all, I would say I don't have any regrets  
Which is good, because there are no resets in life  
Whether you win or lose  
Or whether your fucking dog dies  
Gums turned blue  
From fluid that oozed  
Into the membrane surrounding your heart, it squeezed  
Constricting around your arteries  
It's hard to breathe  
When there's no oxygen left for your lungs  
Believe me, I know the feeling, bud

The pounding that should've been in your chest  
Made its home inside my head  
Clawed a patchwork nest from futile prayers and promises  
I can't unsee the way you looked at me the first time we met  
Do you remember?  
I was ten years old and didn't know my parents had just brought you home  
You were nine weeks and eight pounds of dark fuzz and sporadic energy  
Even back then, you were the most perfect thing I'd ever seen

You used to fall asleep with one paw in your water bowl  
An angelic face with fur black as coal  
Snoozing in the sunlight by the patio window  
You were a cute little shit and sharp as a whip  
Only took you three tries to learn how to sit  
And every day I'd come home from school  
To be greeted by you at the door, with your tail wagging-

...I'm sidetracking.

Apologies,  
I only got three hours of sleep and besides,  
I don't have the capacity  
To handle this on my own, need someone else to know  
How it feels to lose what you loved the most  
Gone in a split second, the things you thought would last forever  
Were really just temporary  
Exemplifies of why I have this aversion to getting attached to those who don't live as long as I

A part of me still believes that there's no way this is happening  
That even your tenacity  
Couldn't overcome the invisible catastrophe  
The unforeseeable obtrusion  
The monster called Pericardial Effusion

The doctor who gave your killer a name wore blue shoes under her scrubs  
And your nurse had tattoos that ran  
Down her arms to gloved hands  
To fingers that held the clipboard with your EKG scans.  
They're not good, apparently,  
The fluid in your heart is filling up too fast for them to drain it  
And then she tells me that there's nothing they can do to save you.





For some reason, I can't find it in me to be surprised  
After all, when it rains, it fucking pours, right?  
It's not like I'm keeping score, but  
Isn't it somebody else's turn to get screwed over?  
And it sucks, because for a minute there  
I think you almost made it

Too bad 'almost' only counts in horseshoes and hand grenades  
Because Chuck just lost his brother  
Mom and Dad don't want to get another dog  
So what the hell am I supposed to do when my memory of you fades?

What if one day, I can't picture how you'd come to the window  
In five degree weather with your face covered in snow  
Except for two brown eyes and a wet little nose?  
What if I forget how you'd sleep in my bed  
And take up three quarters of the mattress like some kind of bone-head?  
Or the way you would play outside when your heart was still beating  
How you'd put your face up on the couch armrests whenever I was eating?

Is this really where your journey ends?  
Not at home, on your couch, but on a goddamn hospital bed?  
With your head fogged up from sedatives piped in from tubes  
And your fur infused with antiseptics instead of the lavender of mom's perfume?  
Still, as sodium and ethyl lie like lead in your veins  
You wag your tail, lift your head from the table and try to lick my face  
I kiss your forehead as we say our last goodbyes  
It's the first time in two years that I've seen my father cry.

I blink and I blink but my own tears don't come  
There's nothing except this cold numbness  
Like ice water that freezes my lungs and stills my lips  
From forming what I want to say, which is probably something like, "This is such bullshit."

Because life isn't fair  
And God doesn't care  
About all the marks we've made on this town  
The footprints we've tracked across its muddy streets in mid-July heat  
And I will try with every beat of my heart to act like I'm fine  
Even though sometimes I feel like I am dying  
From the hole your absence has left inside me  
And I know one day these hurts will heal, but for now  
I need to remember the good days,  
When we would tackle every hurdle life threw our way, one after another  
Like they were part of the agility courses we would run in the summer  
But now your paws are caked with dirt and my shoes are worn from beating the ground  
You know I'm not going anywhere, pup, so you can put your head down.  
You're probably tired and you just want to sleep  
So the least I can do is give you some peace

The world's a little colder when you close your eyes  
But Dusty, if you really have to go, if it's really your time  
Then I just want you to know that your life was the best part of mine





## Goodbye Old House

Goodbye creaky stair, goodbye rooms  
Goodbye gardens perennial blooms  
Goodbye new roof, goodbye old floors  
Goodbye house; close the door

An empty house with empty goodbyes  
Just wood and space. Why do I cry?

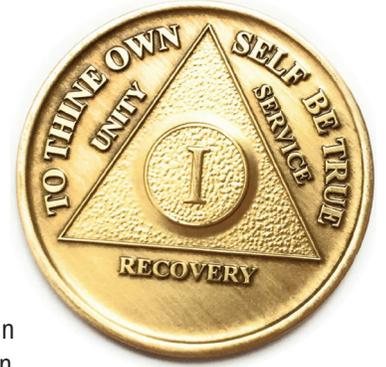
Goodbye small footsteps down the hall  
Goodbye brownie-baking fall  
Goodbye Legos, hide and seek  
Goodbye first haircuts, first lost teeth  
Goodbye to all those dancing days  
Goodbye our home; you kept us safe

Goodbyes go on, too long to list  
I guess it's not the house I miss.

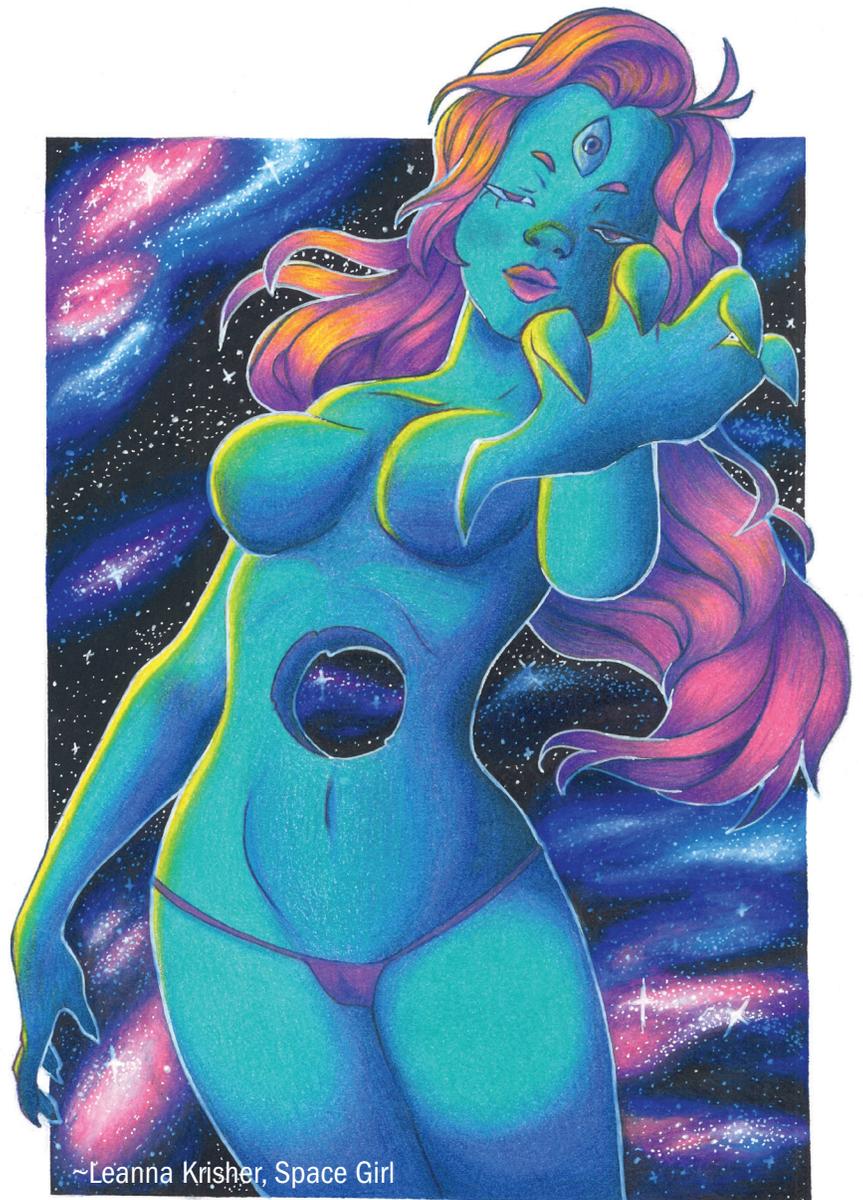
*Cassandra Robbers*



~Bennet Taylor



My 1-year coin from Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) is pictured below. This coin is a metaphor for hard work, determination, pain, growth, change, opportunity, freedom, faith, peace, and so much more. This coin represents a new way of life for me. I have since gained a 2-year coin, but my 1-year coin has by far been the most significant. I was an addict and alcoholic for 10 years, starting at a young age and therefore hitting the milestone of an entire year without substances was absolutely elating and was truly a life changing experience. I've tried sobriety before and failed each time, until now. This coin also represents happiness; I have never experienced happiness the way I have in recovery. This coin stays in my wallet and goes everywhere I go. This coin equals life for a once hopeless addict/alcoholic.



~Leanna Krisher, Space Girl



## Emotions Behind the Wheel

With Rage behind the wheel  
 It would wreck all in its path  
 From beginning to end  
 Its speed is rampant and hysterical  
 Although an ending  
 It may not have  
 For it may face self destruction before it ends  
 Please beloved Rage  
 Please see peace  
 As a pleasant and gentle stop sign  
 Before it's too late  
 Before it hurts a stranger  
 Or  
 Before it hurts someone that it cares for

With Joy on the wheel  
 It's such a pleasant experience  
 Don't you think?  
 Never in a rushed danger  
 And never on a boring pace  
 Never ever ever  
 It's clear blue ocean skies  
 All around this pleasant trip  
 If only Joy could last a lifetime  
 But Joy is only a stranger  
 That rarely takes the wheel  
 And it knows as much as everyone else  
 Joy never lasts long  
 So Joy  
 Takes in this perfect fresh air  
 And inhales happiness  
 Appreciating this rare drive  
 As long as it lasts

Oh dreadful Sorrow  
 In an unmoving drive  
 Stuck in the loudest and most hateful of places  
 A place where violence  
 Is proper  
 Where words mean nothing  
 Or could show insanity  
 Do not cry  
 Do not cry  
 Do not cry  
 Traffic will move  
 At some point in time  
 Just endure this day  
 No matter how far the end may seem  
 It is assured that later on  
 it will be a mere memory  
 Of this painful experience  
 Just keep waiting for this to end

At home I have a guitar: it is not a great guitar, nor is it even good. It has a terrible tone and a large chunk of wood missing from the body. When the guitar was new, it was worth maybe \$80, now it's worth maybe \$20. To me, my guitar is priceless. Some may look at my guitar and see garbage. When I look at it, I see the past, I see memories, I see when my life seemed so much better. My late aunt purchased the guitar for me as a Christmas present close to 15 years ago. When I unwrapped the box, I was ecstatic. I took it out of the box immediately, but to my surprise there were no strings on it. My eldest cousin tried to help me set it up even though he had no idea what he was doing, and a string broke as a result of that. That was my favorite Christmas ever, and now it's all gone. My aunt passed away five years, one month, and seven days ago. I miss her more and more every single day. She was like a second mother to me. She taught me many important lessons in life; she taught me to not be afraid of being myself. When I got my guitar, my life seemed perfect to me; my aunt was alive. I didn't have to think about death. When I look at my guitar, I see my aunt. When I pluck a string, I hear her voice.

*Anonymous*

*Anonymous*



# The Squirrel Story

By Sarah Stevens

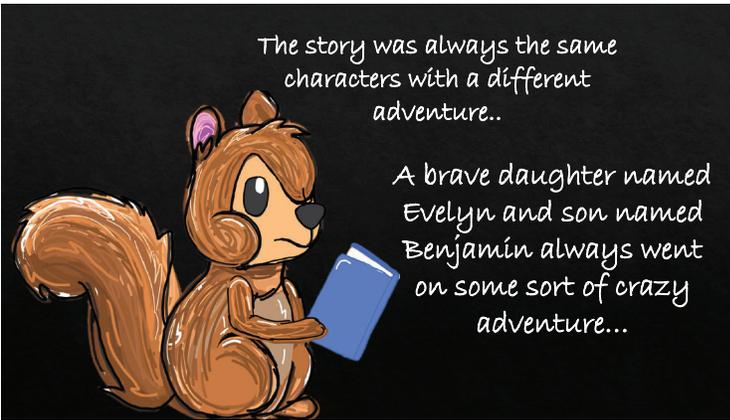


Once upon a time there was a beautiful family of squirrels living in the biggest tree in the Northwood forest



The family was filled with 5.. Momma squirrel, Papa squirrel, Brother squirrel, and the twins, Sarah and Becca.

Every night when Momma squirrel and Papa squirrel would tuck in the siblings for bed papa squirrel would tell them a story..



The story was always the same characters with a different adventure..

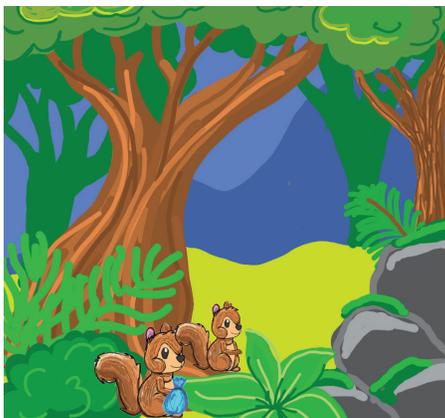
A brave daughter named Evelyn and son named Benjamin always went on some sort of crazy adventure...



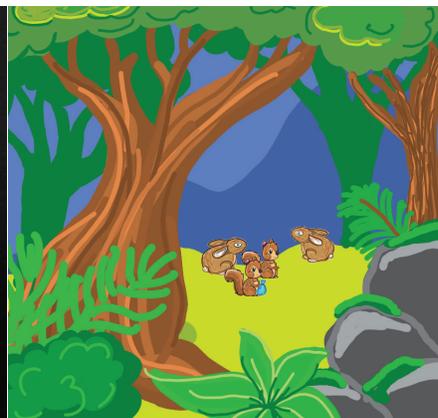
One day momma and papa squirrel were out collecting nuts for the upcoming winter while brother squirrel and the twins were at home. The twins kept asking brother squirrel to play with them, but he was too busy snoring the day away...



The two decided to play without him and go on an adventure like Evelyn and Benjamin... The twins had never gone outside on their family's tree, but to find an adventure like Evelyn and Benjamin they were going to need to!



The girls packed a small bag with some snacks and made sure to leave a note for momma and papa squirrel before they left, they knew they would be home in time for dinner, so they didn't pack too much.. When the twins left, they decided to explore the Eastwood forest. They had never been but had heard the stories of the biggest and most beautiful castle in the trees of the Eastwood forest.



To get to the Eastwood forest the twins had to get directions from other animals in the forest and they found the only way to get there was over the Whistling River.



When the twins got to the Whistling River, they came across a big Bullfrog protecting the bridge.. The Bullfrog told the twins that crossing the bridge would not be free..  
 "to get across the bridge you will have to retrieve the magic acorn"  
 "The magic Acorn?" the twins asked.  
 "the magic acorn is an acorn that grants one wish" responded the bullfrog.  
 The twins asked, "where do we find this magic acorn?"



The frog said, "you must travel to dark part of the forest."  
 Becca shouted "yes" while Sarah shouted "no!" Sarah was very scared to go into the forest she asked Becca "Aren't there witches in the dark part of the forest?" Becca responded, "no Sarah, stop being a baby!"  
 Off to the forest they marched. They had to walk along the river, through the swamp, over the rock piles and find their way through the dark forest to hopefully find the magic acorn.



Sarah looked at Becca and said, "it feels like we've been walking forever!" Becca said, "don't worry we finally made it to the swamp."  
 "oh great" Sarah said, "we have to get in the water," Becca gagged "its going to be SLIMY"  
 "Yes, it is, so let's get this over with." Sarah jumped in and grabbed Becca and yanked her into the water with her.  
 Becca fell in making a giant splash and when her head popped out of the water, she gave Sarah the dirtiest look...



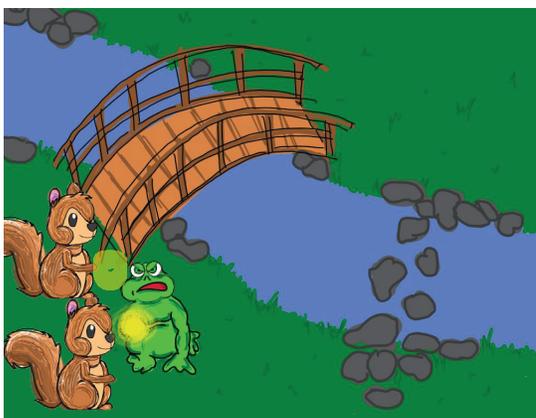
As they were walking through Becca kept hearing things behind them. Becca continued not telling Sarah because she knew Sarah would get scared.. They made it through the swamp then came to the rock piles. "good thing we're squirrels Becca; this climbing will be a no brainer!" As they started climbing, they heard a scream. "what was that Becca?" asked Sarah. "let's check it out" said Becca. They turned around and saw a fox "Oh no a fox!" said Sarah.



"Don't be scared, my name is Lizzie, I saw you guys adventuring and wanted to join!"  
 "I don't trust her" Becca said. "oh come on, she just wants to hang out with us!" Sarah said.  
 "Fine, she can come but I'm watching her!" Becca responded. They continued and eventually saw a glowing tree in the distance! All three ran toward the tree. At the top of the tree full of acorns one was glowing. "I'll go get the magic acorn and put it in our bag!" Becca said.  
 "okay" Lizzie and Sarah responded.



Becca came down finally carrying the magic acorn in her bag. "you got it?" Lizzie asked Becca. The three ran back toward the bridge and the frog but when they got to the rocks Sarah and Becca felt a shove.. Lizzie had shoved them! When they were hanging off the edge Lizzie said, "give me the bag!" Becca handed the bag over in defeat. Lizzie ran away with the bag.  
 Sarah climbed up and helped Becca up then they returned defeated to the frog. "we messed up" Sarah told the frog. Becca tapped Sarah and pulled a golden acorn out of her cheek. "why do you think I didn't argue?" Becca laughed.



They handed the frog the acorn and crossed the bridge to the Eastwood Forest.. Once they got there Sarah yelled "these are the biggest trees we've ever climbed!" laughing..  
 "you're welcome" responded Becca. After the girls were done playing, they returned home and told their parents about their wonderful adventure..



Buzz, buzz, beep, beep,  
A ping, a sound, a light,  
Who is it? What could it be?  
Is everything alright?

A box that's three by six,  
Glass-filled light and sound,  
I am just realizing,  
It's what my life revolves around!

I wake up to the glowing,  
Too bright for sleepy eyes,  
But anxious to unlock it,  
And see what is inside.

All the social media,  
Emails and posts galore,  
My fingers glide so easily,  
As I search for more and more.

Isn't it a little crazy?  
This box that rules my life?  
But if I have to put it down,  
It feels like a sacrifice.

So here I sit engrossed  
In a world of digital glee,  
Liking, tweeting, posting  
Superficial parts of me.

Nothing very stressful,  
My cyber world is safe,  
Here no one ever  
Truly sees my face.

My electronic mask is flawless,  
In this box I hide inside.  
Faceless nameless followers  
Of the tortured soul I hide.

*Mary Hribar*



~Harmony Hafner



~Katelyn Haltiner, Isometric Chaos

## My Worst Enemy

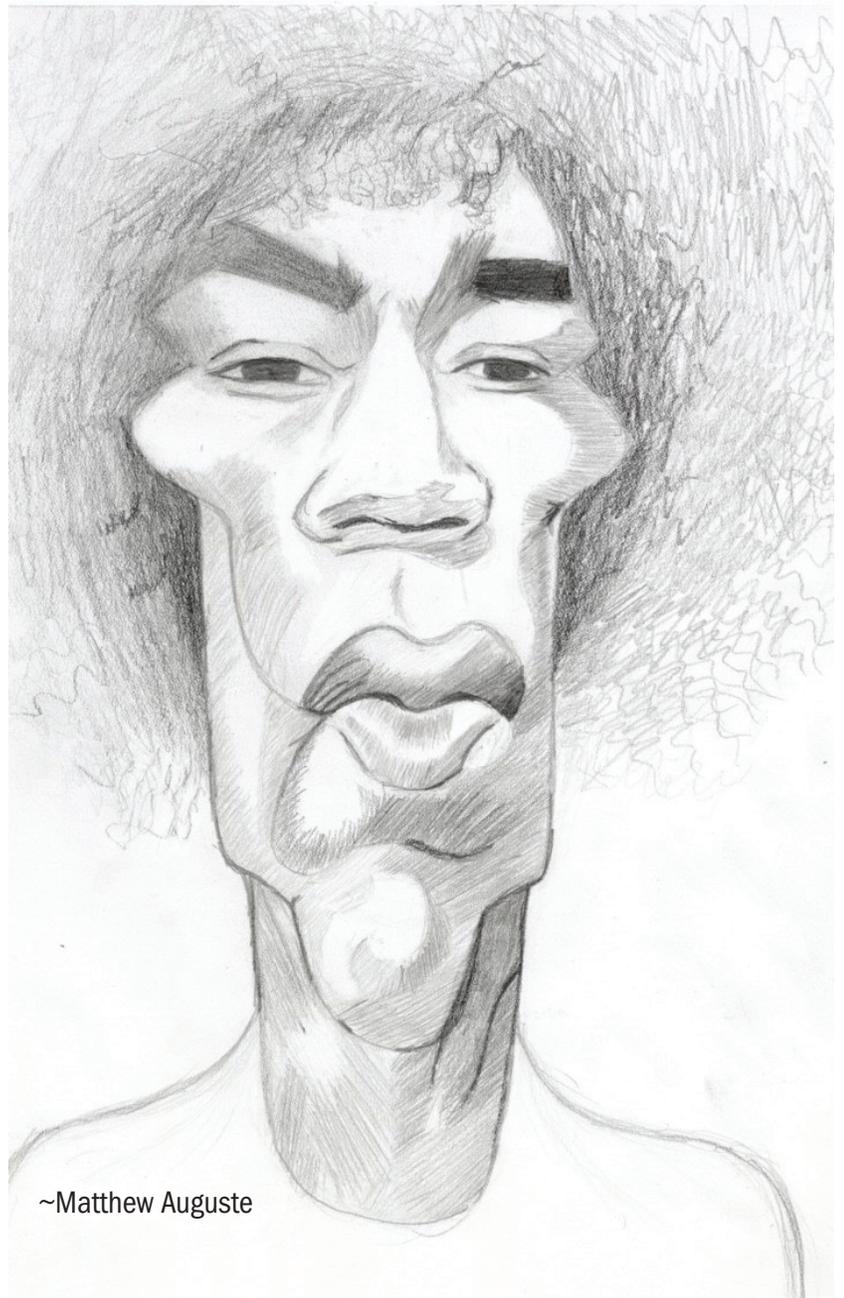
I am fighting a demon inside my head, but this demon is the worst of all. Her voice sounds like mine, and she's infatuated with my brain. Bright and early or late at night, she's always there. She's on call for all hours. She doesn't take any breaks; it's a full-time job. I'm beginning to think she knows me better than I know myself. She makes me doubt my thoughts and drains most of my self-esteem. She easily influences me and my daily choices. I am constantly overthinking irrelevant scenarios, or rather most things regardless of their importance.

In the morning when I am getting dressed, she teases me about my curves. She mentions how all the boys stare at me because of my large chest; she doesn't forget to remind me how unpleasant it feels when all the old, thirsty dogs rape me with their deceiving eyes. So, I wear the baggy shirt and the sports bra. My demon will never let me go out without a little harassment. Too many days she has convinced me to crawl back under the blankets to my haven. I hate missing class, but she's usually the reason I'm skipping.

If I do survive her pregame, I am usually miserable and paranoid. As soon as I leave, I long for the protection of my bed. As ridiculous as it sounds, I am convinced that people are laughing or staring at me. In public, I always check my surroundings to check if people are looking at me. I refuse to make any eye contact with passing strangers; it makes me nervous. My demon has destroyed any social skills I have struggled to build. I'm awful at making friends, and I am even suspicious of the one's I do have. Meeting new people is always the worst; I get extremely anxious and quiet. Sometimes, I can't even speak with my professors because of how much she puts in my head. She says I'm stupid, so they must think I'm stupid... right?

I would love to go to the gym, but my demon doesn't support me. She harasses me about any weight I gain, but she mocks me until I leave the gym. She won't let me get up in the morning, but she bullies me when I don't wear makeup. There's no standing up to her; it's too exhausting. She brings all my insecurities and problems to the table. She brings me to a dark place of pity hopelessness. She follows me to school, work, and everywhere else I go. Her favorite thing to do is embarrass me in public by attacking my brain with infinite thoughts. But how do I control her when she's me? I have found ways to befriend her, but she will always have power over me.

*Anonymous*



~Matthew Auguste



~Leanna Krisher



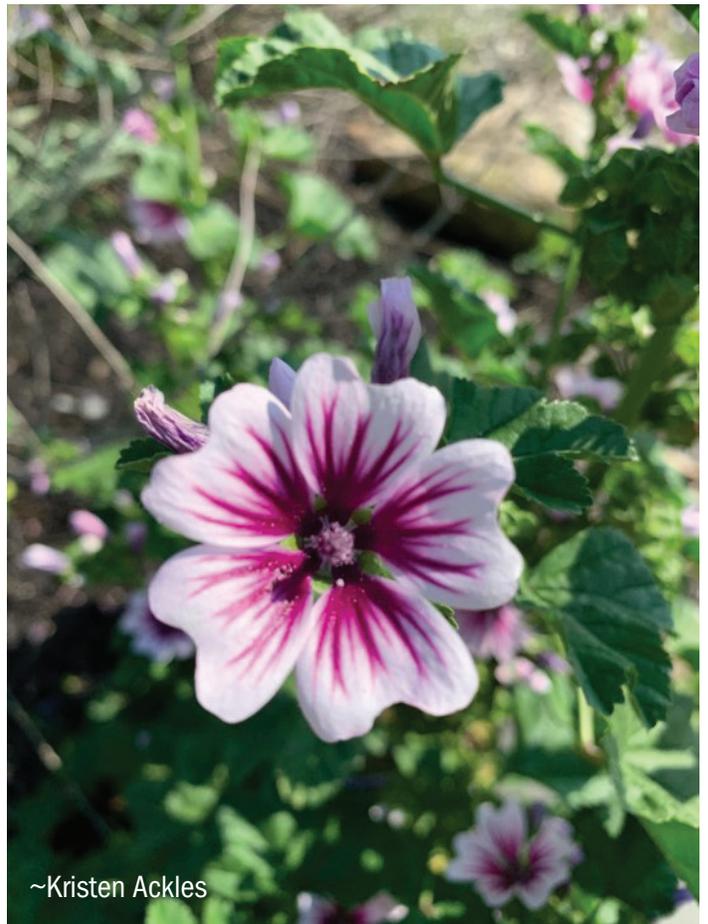
~Kristen Ackles



~Kristen Ackles



~Kristen Ackles



~Kristen Ackles

# Anne

This is not Rapunzel's tower.

Rapunzel, though locked away  
against her will, was not  
forced to study  
the very patch of grass  
on which she would  
lose her head.

The curve of the window  
repeats the dried  
paths of each tear  
that once stained your face.  
The courtyard beneath you,  
a cruel reminder  
of the status pressed  
between your fingertips,  
now fills with hypocrites,  
slaves, and deceivers  
waiting for a glimpse  
of the first lock of hair  
to fall from your crown.

Henry, the greatest deceiver  
of them all, led you to believe  
in love. He gave you the world  
and promptly took it away,  
like the raven who left  
one beautiful, black feather  
but took part of a finger.  
The search for the truth  
was short, ending before  
it began, leaving you  
alone, outnumbered,  
and mystified.

Ready to die a traitor's  
death, the sword is sharpened  
and you parade to the lawn  
on emotionless feet, counting  
each beat that echoes from the  
cobblestone to your hardened  
heart. It is a strange way to let  
the crown fall from your head,  
but not as strange as a queen  
kneeling before her people.

*Amanda Silva*



~Madison Miller



~Zachary Groh



~Leanna Krisher



HEAD

NECK

CHEST

HIPS

ABOVE  
KNEE

BELOW  
KNEE

SKATE  
WHEELS

I have this one necklace that my mother gave me when I was about 14 years old. I never understood why she loved that necklace and why she gave it especially to me. One day, she sat me down and told me the backstory to this necklace. She told me she was going through a rough time in her life, and she had little money left. She went out one day with her friends and told me she saw the necklace with the heart jewelry on display. Once she saw that necklace, she knew she had to buy it. She bought it with the last bit of money she had. After a day or two, with the help of her friends, she found a place to work in. Her life was getting better every day. She wanted to give it to me because, at the time, I was also going through a rough time. She thought that by giving it to me, it would bring me good luck. Honestly, it did bring me good luck. I didn't believe my mom at first, but a few days passed, and I was feeling better. I keep this necklace in my room because I'm afraid to wear it and then lose it. Every time I am going through a rough time, I just take out the necklace and talk to it.

Kassandra Marcelo

Name: Odgerel Ganbold  
Height: 5'4"  
Weight: 125lbs  
Age: ~19 yrs.



~Nicole Carr

## The Ring of Connection

It sits on the middle finger of my right hand. It is no more than the ring from the Lord of the Rings movies. What makes it special is that it once belonged to my older cousin, who is so much more like a brother to me. We were raised like siblings. If I talk to a stranger about my cousin, I will usually call him my brother. In reality, we are both only children, whose mothers happen to be sisters. A few years ago, my cousin enlisted in the Air Force, and he has been living in Japan for the past two years, which is beginning to look like it might become permanent. I have not seen him since he came home last year for Christmas. However, wearing the ring makes me feel connected with him. It was given to me some time before my cousin left for base camp, after he discovered it no longer fit. I have worn it every day since it was given to me. Wearing it makes me feel as though a part of him is with me. Where others see a simple ring from a movie, I see a symbol of the connection I have with my cousin. No matter where we both end up in life, I'll always have the ring.

Kathryn Davies

~Jake Maley



The silence it is deafening,  
As I lie here in the dark,  
My quiet mind is racing,  
Over each invisible little mark.

The words that seemed so happy,  
Take on a sweet distaste,  
As I replay all the blackness,  
Of this enlightened space.

Your gentleness astounds me,  
As I see you in my mind,  
Reality suddenly chills me,  
As your grip begins to bind.

The sweet embrace is turning,  
Into an ever tightening vice,  
I inhale through suffocation,  
Breathing once, then breathing twice.

I scream with silent pleading,  
I'm sorry for what I've done,  
But you just keep on squeezing,  
Your quiet laughter has begun.

Your words being to soften,  
As they rip into my heart,  
Your whispered words of horror,  
We will never be apart.

The tears begin to flow,  
Down my upturned face,  
Hoping there is rescue,  
From this godforsaken place.

Your grip begins to lessen,  
As you roughly hold me tight,  
Your lips forming that smile,  
That says you're not alright.

I sink into the darkness,  
I wonder how it will end,  
I hear the silent screaming,  
Of the demons from within.

I race to find the quiet,  
To slow my beating heart,  
To figure out a way,  
For us to be apart.

*Mary Hribar*

Carefully I craft it,  
With a slow and steady pace,  
I know I must be strong,  
For you fill this empty space.

In person you are nothing,  
But my mind keeps you alive,  
My soul a tortured vessel,  
For all I have survived.

I breathe once into the blackness,  
A tear comes rolling out,  
I inhale very deeply,  
I know what you're about.

You tried to control me,  
To own every fiber of my core,  
But let me tell you something,  
I am yours no more.

Shall you compare her to a summer's day?  
 Try a winter's day instead.  
 She's stone cold, what can I say?  
 Don't use your eyes, use your head.  
 I know she looks so pretty and nice  
 But looks can be deceiving  
 What's beauty compared to a heart of ice?  
 Well it's anything but relieving.  
 She'll say she cares for you and all that stuff  
 But she says that stuff to every guy  
 She doesn't really like you and I know that's rough  
 But that means she's not worth it so don't even try Shakespeare, buddy,  
 you can do so much better  
 Leave her to her shenanigans, don't sweat.

*Cameron Woodard*



~Leanna Krisher

## Object Piece

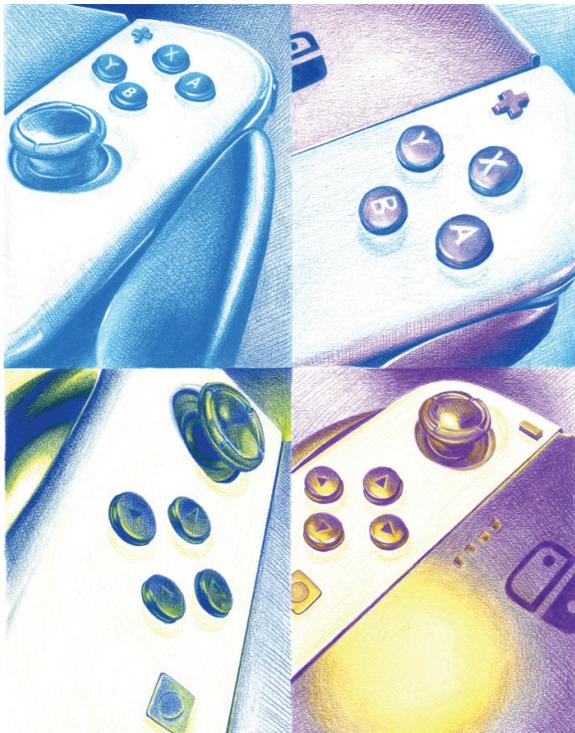
It wasn't hard to pick that stupid little clay ring to call my most treasured item. I'm not sure what that says about me, that I'm a sentimental piece of shit or that I'm mentally incapable of letting go of the past, but there's always been some comfort from slipping it on my finger. I never wore to school, of course; I'd lose my head if it weren't screwed onto my shoulders, there's no way I'd keep track of something that small. But when I'm home and feeling down or stressed out, or just missing its maker in general, it's a nice little sentiment to have. Even if it makes me cry sometimes.

He made it in 8th grade, in art class. I didn't even sit next to him, I just moved over there every day because I thought he was cute or something. Anyway, he made that dumb little ring and then asked if he could put it on my hand. It wasn't perfect, there were bumps and uneven edges, but it fit me and that seemed to be enough for him to smile over. He tried to etch something about mosaics in the underside, but it rubbed off when I tried to wear it before it dried. I kept it long after he left.

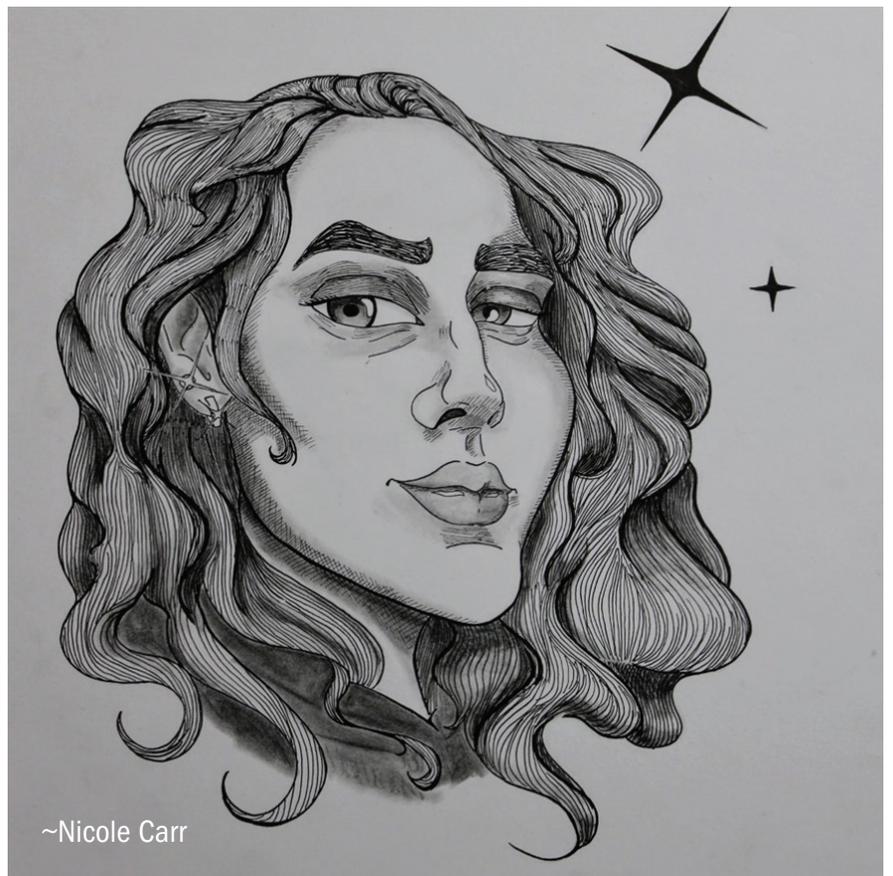
Anonymous



~Samantha Caba



~Leanna Krisher



~Nicole Carr

11/22/16

Our conversation was awkward and stilted. I did my best, though, to smile and meet your eyes. They, at least, haven't changed, except they don't crinkle in the corners when you see me anymore.

You greeted me first today, which surprised me. I think that's the first time in two years you've acknowledged my presence without my having to shove it under your nose. Maybe this is a step forward, old scars finally starting to heal. That thought both elates and terrifies me, so for fear of being let down, I'll try to sweep it under the rug.

Our brief exchange was nothing special. I praised you on the reenactment you and your friends did of *Antigone* for English, and I suppose I lost you somewhere. I probably wasn't that eloquent. It took a few stuttering sentences for me to get out one of your friends who was in my class showed that video for his project, and after that you nodded, said thanks, and went on your way. You didn't mention the ceiling tile I painted, though if you'd been to our classroom, I'd assume you would've seen it. Our teacher put it right in the front of the room, said it was 'stunning' and 'insightful.' That doesn't matter much to me. I don't fish for compliments. I didn't spend three days on one painting to awe the class, I did it because I myself would've been disappointed if I'd done anything less than my best.

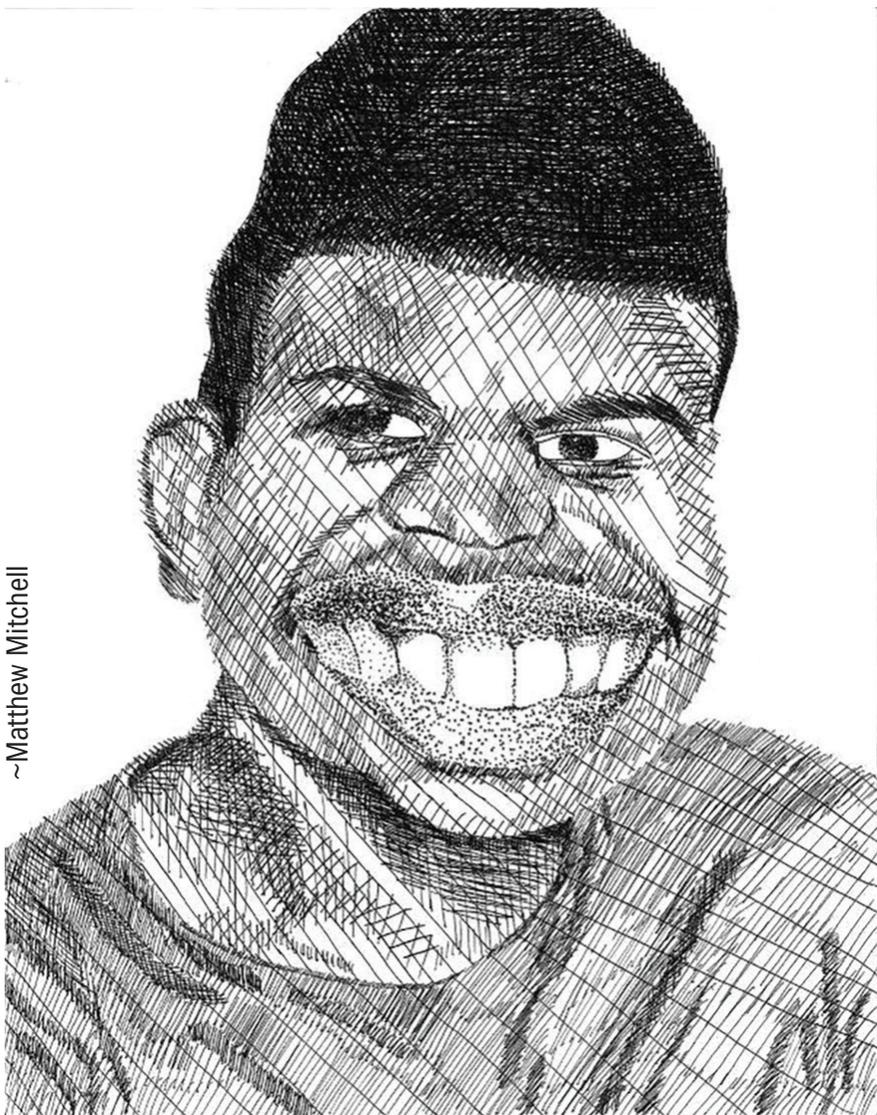
I didn't do it to please you either, but it would've been nice if you'd said something. You never do. I'm well aware that I'm the only one who wants to mend this friendship right now, but I suppose that's only fair since you were the only one holding it together before. I try to talk to you, try to make you see that I'm different now, not so hot-headed, but you're like water and you slip through my fingers every time.

*Anonymous*

~Markyian Maldonado



~Matthew Mitchell





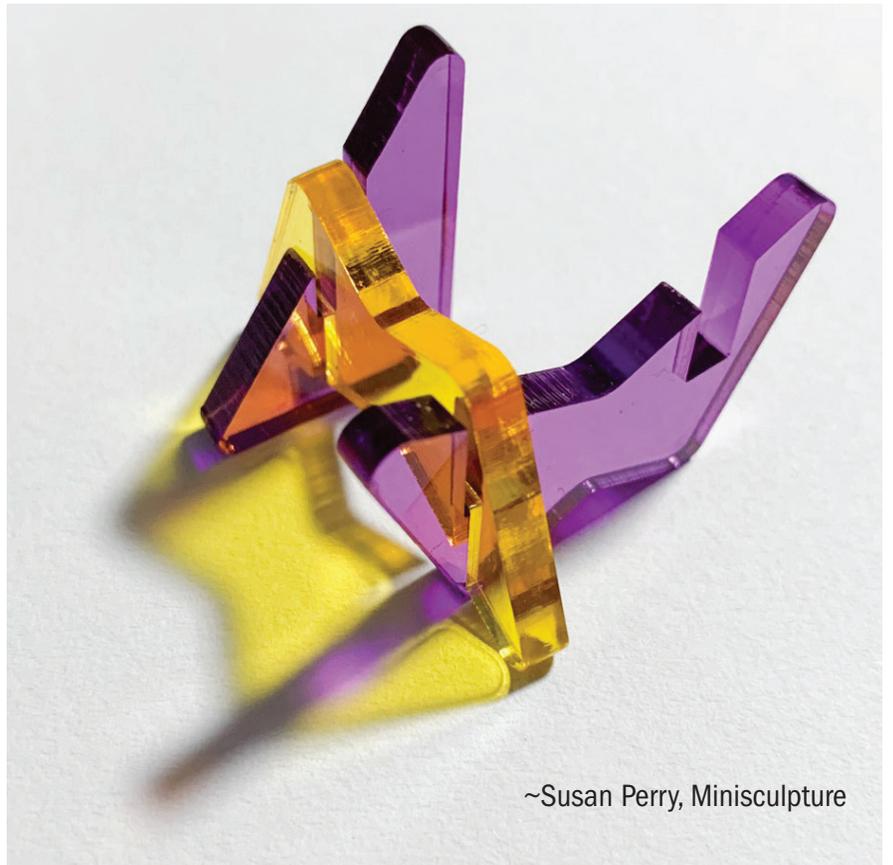
~Megan Metildi



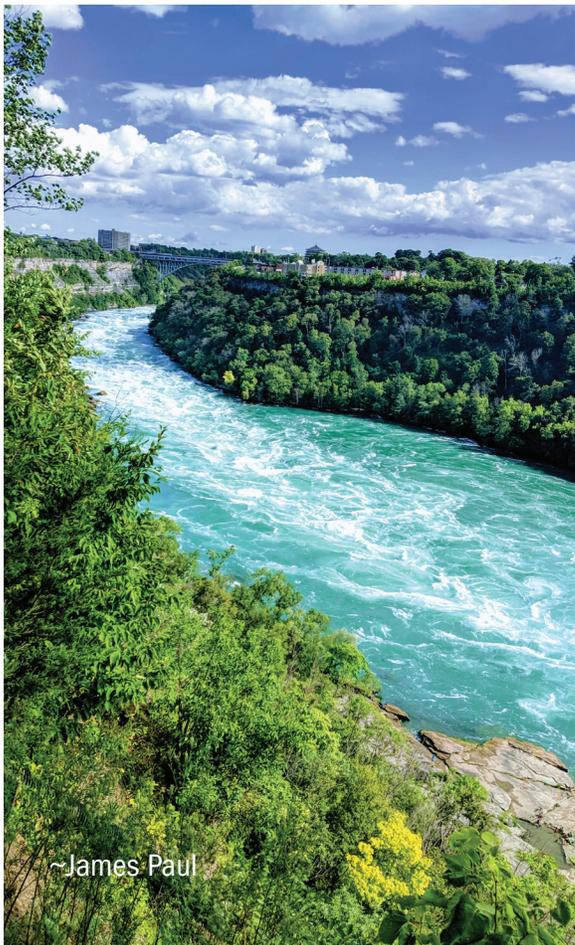
~Medina Rier



~Samantha Salzler



~Susan Perry, Minisculpture



I have a giant bag.  
I carry it everywhere.  
It's heavy and it's bulky.  
It's crap from here to there.

That comment that I heard,  
When I was ten years old,  
I'd never amount to anything,  
It's in the bag it goes.

At thirteen years of age,  
When I looked in the mirror,  
My reflection seemed too barren,  
My heart was full of fear.  
So in the bag, I stashed it,  
In hopes no one could see,  
That empty hollow image,  
I saw staring back at me.

At sixteen I was elated,  
Such an awesome boy I'd found,  
But he liked someone else,  
And left my heart upon the ground.

I gathered all the pieces,  
Except the ones too small,  
I unzipped my giant bag,  
Inside I put them all.

The bag just kept on growing,  
As eighteen made its way,  
College wasn't for me,  
As emotions led me astray.

My shame and failure handy,  
I stuffed them in my sack.  
All the things I hoped to hide,  
The many ways I lacked.

Then came early marriage.  
I'll need my bag no more,  
But somehow many years later,  
I lugged it out the door.

The years of hollow promises,  
The vows were all a lie,  
I unzipped my bag again,  
Loading all the tears I cried.

Half a decade later,  
Standing at Alfred State,  
I now look at the bag,  
And see this is not my fate.

Upon this mountainous campus,  
I am learning inner peace,  
Now when I unzip my bag,  
It's because there are things I'll leave.

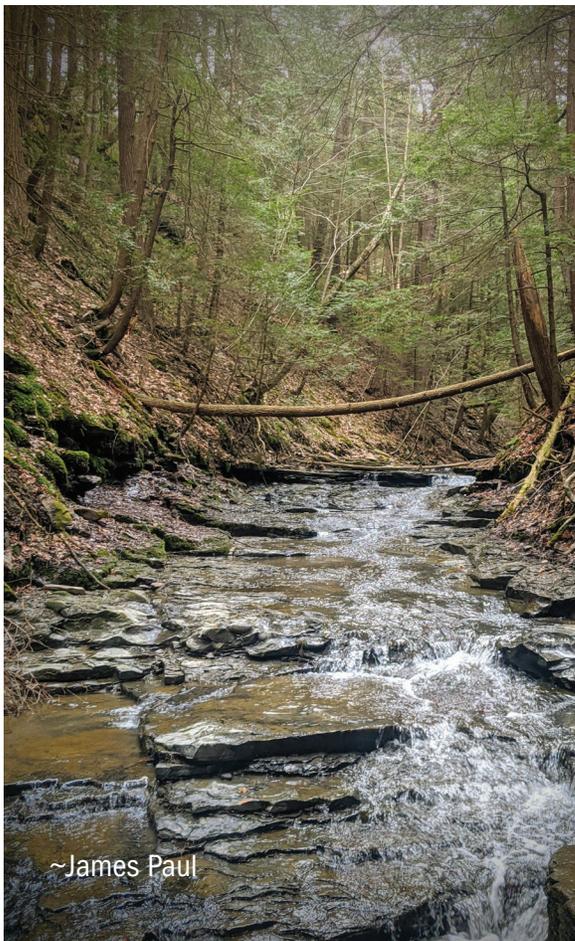
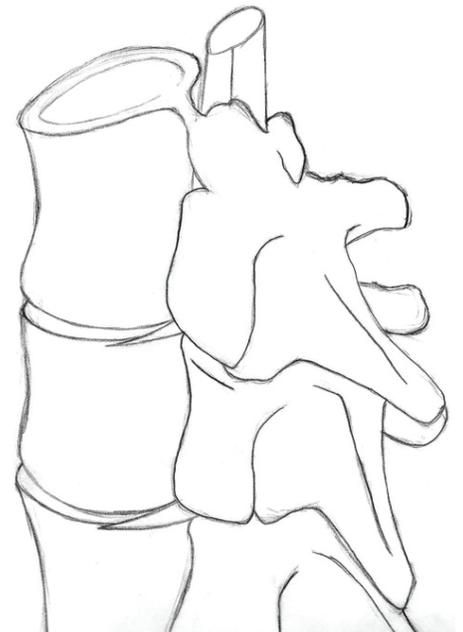
I'll leave behind that child,  
Who was too afraid to play,  
Leave behind those feelings,  
Of all those lonely days.

I'll leave behind the teenager,  
Who never felt enough,  
Who struggled with identity,  
And lived a life so rough.

I'll leave behind that woman,  
Who walked broken out a door,  
Dragging around a heavy bag,  
That she now needs no more.

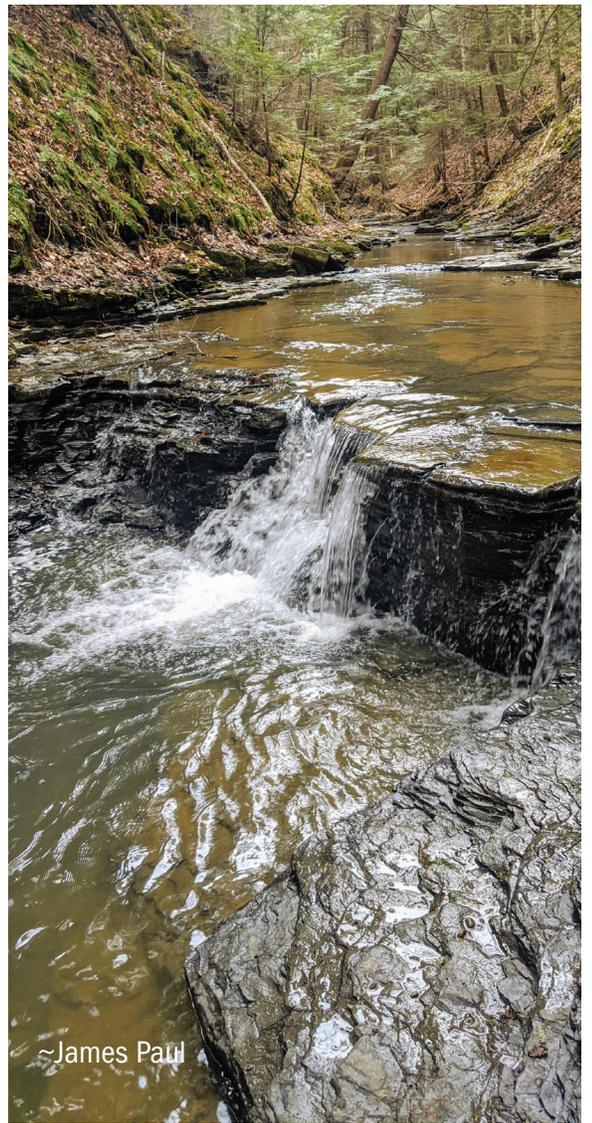
*Mary Hribar*

~Trevor Thomas, Spine





~Sofia Baldwin



~James Paul



~Susan Perry, Produce sticker



~Susan Perry, Minisculpture

If you take the road less traveled,  
It may mean you're being brave,  
But it also could have been,  
A mistake that you had made.

Two roads you may choose to travel,  
One may lead a different way,  
One may be your savior,  
The other leads you astray.

No matter where your foot treads,  
To the left or to the right,  
You'll always be where you belong,  
No matter day or night.

You see the road less traveled,  
Just gives you an easy out,  
To look back upon your miseries,  
To whine and mope and pout.

It rarely matters where you've been,  
More important is the now,  
It's what is right in front of you,  
Not so much the how.

How did I get here?  
How did this all start?  
Those are questions with no answers,  
Just impressions in the heart.

You control the journey,  
The rearview is the past,  
The future is what's important,  
And it's coming way too fast.

Too fast for you to wonder,  
About the road you left behind,  
Too fast for you to worry,  
And clutter up your mind.

The road you're on has brought you,  
To this very time and space,  
And no amount of wishing,  
Makes a past you can erase.

If monsters are invading,  
And demons steal your breath,  
Remember you survived them all,  
You passed unbearable tests.

You are now the victor,  
Of the space in which you stand,  
The conqueror of battles,  
Your foes spread across the land.

The road you have taken was perfect,  
For your destiny to unfold,  
Don't worry about the one less traveled,  
Yours made you strong, and bright, and bold!

*Mary Hribar*

- Kristen Ackles

