



Fall 2006

The Forum: Fall 2006/Spring 2007

Jan Sher

University of North Dakota

Amanda Frank

University of North Dakota

Bernie Thomas

University of North Dakota

Amanda Unruh

University of North Dakota

David A. Barta

University of North Dakota

See next page for additional authors

Follow this and additional works at: <https://commons.und.edu/und-books>

Recommended Citation

Sher, Jan; Frank, Amanda; Thomas, Bernie; Unruh, Amanda; Barta, David A.; Oberhelman, Kelsey; Bold, Jeremy; Klym, Kodi; Anderson, Estee; Hill, Emily; Walker, Sarah; Ulrich, Jessica; and Kovarik, Kara, "The Forum: Fall 2006/Spring 2007" (2006). *UND Publications*. 61.

<https://commons.und.edu/und-books/61>

This Book is brought to you for free and open access by the Elwyn B. Robinson Department of Special Collections at UND Scholarly Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in UND Publications by an authorized administrator of UND Scholarly Commons. For more information, please contact zeineb.yousif@library.und.edu.

Authors

Jan Sher, Amanda Frank, Bernie Thomas, Amanda Unruh, David A. Barta, Kelsey Oberhelman, Jeremy Bold, Kodi Klym, Estee Anderson, Emily Hill, Sarah Walker, Jessica Ulrich, and Kara Kovarik

the Forum

Volume 37, Issue 1
Fall 2006/Spring 2007



. stories . poems . essays . art .

Journal of the Honors Program
University of North Dakota

Contents

Jan Sher <i>Quiet Elegance</i>	Cover
Amanda Frank <i>(Untitled)</i>	5
Bernie Thomas <i>Picture of a man playing a harmonica</i>	6
Jan Sher <i>Out of the Blue</i>	8
Amanda Unruh <i>Hopeless</i>	9
David A. Barta <i>The Pool In My Mind</i>	10
Kelsey Oberhelman <i>North Shore—Duluth</i>	17
Jeremy Bold <i>Voyage, Undertaking</i>	18
Jeremy Bold <i>La Dune du Pyla</i>	19
Kodi Klym <i>Wistful Melancholy</i>	20
Bernie Thomas <i>Trust and Chocolate</i>	21
Estee Anderson <i>Beauty by the Coulee</i>	22
Jeremy Bold <i>Untitled</i>	23

Emily Hill <i>Endless Summer</i>	24
Kodi Klym <i>Dreaming of Dancing</i>	25
Amanda Unruh <i>Crane Wife</i>	26
Sarah Walker <i>Skin</i>	27
Jessica Ulrich <i>Steps to Serenity</i>	36
Kara Kovarik <i>(Untitled)</i>	37
Bernie Thomas <i>June</i>	38
Jessica Ulrich <i>Over the river to Johnstone</i>	39
Jan Sher <i>Fireflower</i>	40
Amanda Unruh <i>Alice</i>	41

Editors

Holly Johnson
Nikki Manuel

Editorial Board

Amanda Frank
Amanda Unruh
Angela York
Brittany Goter
Jessica Skroch
Kodi Klym

Advisor

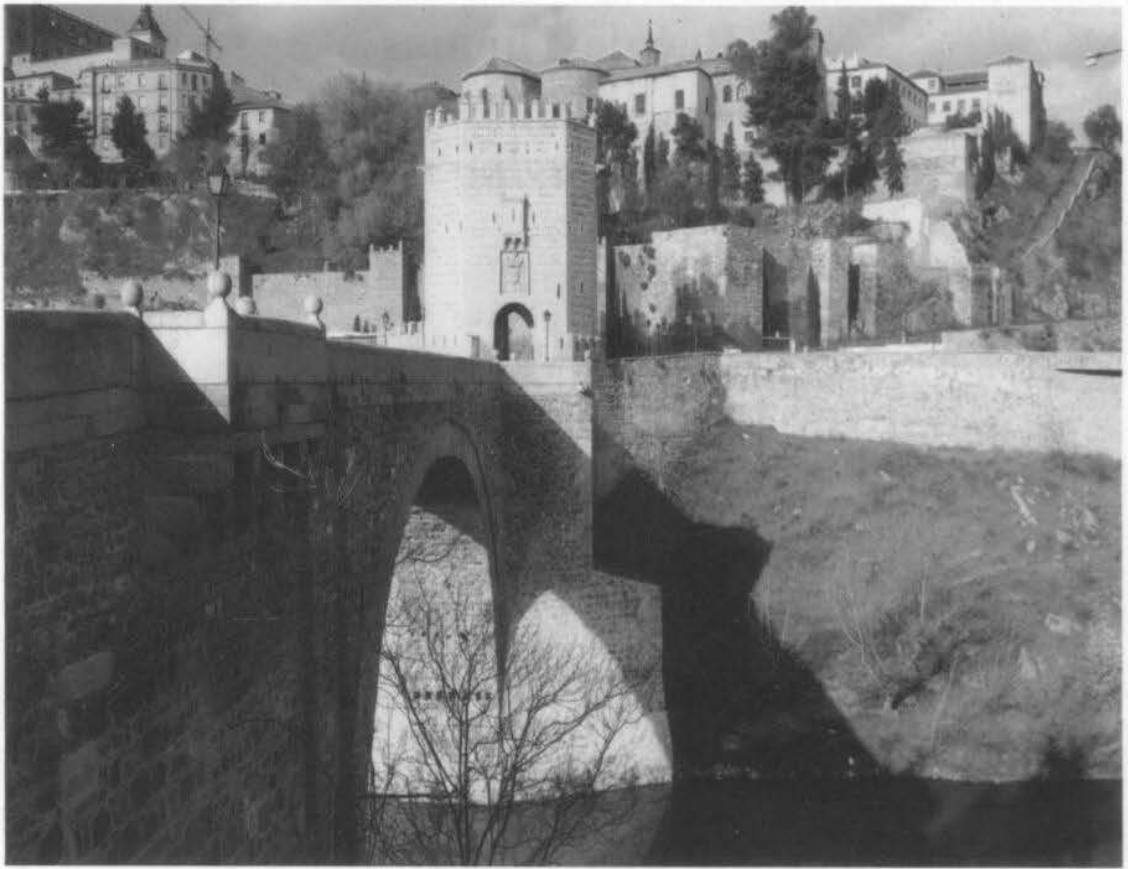
Kay Powell

Editorial Policy

The opinions and ideas expressed in this publication do not necessarily represent those of the University of North Dakota, the Honors Program, or its editors. It is the policy of this publication that anyone wishing to have something published must have his or her name attached to the submission, although names will be withheld upon request.

The Board of Student Publications is the publisher and primary fund contributor to the Forum. BOSP is a division of Student Government.

BOSP Chairperson: KerriAnne Tyler
Phone: (701) 777-4386



Amanda Frank
Digital Photography

Editors
Holly Johnson
Alex Mendel

Bernie Thomas

Picture of a man playing the harmonica

In light of something I have
recently learned
I would like to open
the envelope
you gave me
fifteen years ago
the one I'm only supposed
to open when you're gone
for good
the one that will
make me understand

For fifteen years I did
nothing but obey,
while it
gnawed upon the very nerve
endings of my curiosity
by existing
in my dresser
drawer

Finally,
on a winter evening
when you and everyone else
were away for the week,
I snuck into my own dresser
drawer
grabbed the faded
crème-colored envelope
cut it open with a
red pair of scissors
and
looked.

And because of this,
I will always be left
with more questions than
I ever had
until the day
you're finally gone for good.

Jan Sher

Out of the Blue

Painted with a wide brush
The Prairie Sky appears endless.
The rich farmland pastures
Are natural and uncomplicated.
Its beauty is rare and almost sacred.

Listening carefully out my window
I take in the quiet night air
Beyond the outskirts of town
I hear the automated world shake
It is active
Its breath is heavy



Hopeless
Amanda Unruh
Charcoal

David A. Barta

The Pool In My Mind

There is a pool inside my mind. It is not a pool in the literal sense, but then again, it isn't completely metaphorical either. It's blue. It is not a fake, plastic blue brought on by man-made cleaners and solvents. It is a deep, clear blue that, in some twist, or joke of nature, is the progeny of the divine clarity at the surface, and the inscrutable, seemingly endless depths, that mock the very sun with their unending defiance of light.

There are mountains in my mind as well. Tall, majestic mountains that fill the horizon and stretch to the sky, their snowy peaks glinting like the silver crowns of kings or men. They stretch out as if they, amongst all the lands of the earth, are worthy enough to reach and touch heaven. And maybe, just maybe, they are. The mountains straining grasp for the heaven prevents them from ever seeing the valleys at their feet. Clothed in the silk of flowing grasses, and bedecked with winding, untouched streams that shine like strings of pearls in the setting sun, the valleys seem to stretch their arms towards the mountains they can never have, like star-crossed lovers who will never meet. The slender swaying trees that spot their grassy slopes stretch like fingers towards their lovers of stone, but are never met in love's warm embrace. In a way it's sad and I know this bittersweet triangle of love can only end in unhappiness. The valleys love the mountains, and the mountains love the heavens, and the heavens love only themselves, because it is the only way they can soar, wild and free. But as I look at it all, it is beautiful. Supremely beautiful, and I think, that maybe it's just the way it has to be.

The pool in my mind is nestled in a perfect, sheltered little alcove somewhere inside the spot where the valleys turn to mountains. It is ringed with large rocks, the biggest of which is the most perfect place to lie and watch the unfold. From that rock, you can see the clouds rolling slowly through the sky, in a never-ending migration through the atmosphere. You can see the mountains and valleys in their endless, heartrending struggle for love. You can even see the peaceful woodland creatures that frolic through

the fields grass, never knowing anything more than the beauty of this peaceful life in the wilderness of my mind. From these rocks you can watch nature in all its glory. In the evening sky, the mountains' silver crowns are lit up by the waning light of the retreating day, and as the world prepare to sleep the entire universe erupts in a dazzling display of gold and fire. It adorns the clouds like evening dress, and highlights the flight of two eagles, passionately entwined in their last dance before the setting sun. Never will you find a more beautiful sight than the one found sitting on a rock beside the pool in my mind. There only problem, however, in this seemingly idyllic paradise, is getting on that rock.

I am floating in this pool in my mind. Everything is so beautiful and serene; peaceful and divine. And although I want to sit atop that rock; although I know I have sat upon that rock and see the glorious sunset on creation; although I know I knew how to get on the rock; I cannot. I cannot remember how to get from the water to the rock. It almost drives me mad. Almost.

It is all an illusion. I think it's an illusion. I think I might really know how to get on the rock, but that maybe, just maybe, I've forced myself to forget. Maybe I don't want to remember. Maybe it isn't an illusion.

I dive down into the depths of the pool. I take a huge breath of pure, unadulterated air, that, even though I know it's as pure as the day it was created, fills my lungs with fire and smoke. I wonder how the fire and smoke could hide in that sparkling air, without me noticing it, and I think maybe it was hidden behind the sparkles. Yes, that's it. The fire hid behind the sparkles and the smoke behind my eyes where I couldn't see either of them. It wasn't in me to start with. It was hidden. Yes, I'm sure it was hidden.

I think again about sitting on the rock beside the pool in my mind but I shake the thought out of my head. The movement, although slow in the cold water, sends tiny bubbles racing towards their entrapment in the atmosphere. I stop and watch them slowly head to the surface and I pity them. Here they are free; here they are all their own bubbles. Yet somehow, they defy gravity with the sole purpose of enslaving themselves to the crystal air with the hidden fire. I think "Maybe the bubbles do not know of their inevitable enslavement." but I know where they came from, just as they know where they came from, just as we both know that each of us is going the wrong way. I don't tell the bubbles this; however, and they continue upward to their enslavement, a mirror of my own descent without saying a

single word to me either.

I continue swimming deeper into the pool in my mind. I know that there is something down here. I know that if I just swim down deep enough I will find what it is I'm looking for, and then I can go back to the rock and watch the divine. Unless it is not there anymore. Unless the rock is actually hell and is destined to swallow me whole.

"No, that's not right," I say to myself and I push the thought from my mind. I have pushed too hard. I must turn around. I reverse my course and swim upwards, and despite the setback, I'm not mad I had to turn around. I think I caught a glimpse of heaven as I swam down the pool. It was somewhere in the blackness that lay before me. "Of course, it might be hell down there," I think, "it might be hell that I glimpsed," but as I break the surface with the fire air I say to myself without speaking, "No. If hell was down there, why would gravity always pull down?"

I push the thought from my mind. I will swim farther this time. As I gather in more air and the fire sneaks into my lungs from behind the sparkles, and the smoke from behind my eyes, I notice that the surface has changed somehow. Somehow it's grayer, somehow duller, yet only for a second and then I can't notice it anymore. "It's the smoke behind my eyes," I think and I gather in the fire and sparkles and smoke and dive again.

I'm flying down into the pool towards the blackness towards the depths. "Please let me find it this time." I pray but I can't say to who. Maybe someone will hear it, some god-man or man-god or some no-god from everywhere, but I know it won't happen. As far as God is concerned, she's simply too busy, and he just doesn't give a damn.

I'm getting deeper into the pool now, and this is where it begins to get difficult. Because it's so black, and so cold, as I descend deeper into the pool it gets easier to become disoriented. It's easy to get switched around. Sometimes I get scared of running out of air and dying down here in the pool. But I can't think about it now. Need to get down farther. The answer is down there, it has to be down there.

The fire is burning my hands now. It is spreading through me even as the smoke escapes my ears. I stop. I need to turn around but I can't remember or tell which way is up. The panic grips my throat like choking gauntlet of steel and ice. Like a velvet glove. Only made with razors. I want to scream and for a moment I lose the control that is necessary for life down here, and a scream escapes my lips. Surrounded by the nothing void

of the pool, I slam my hands over my mouth to keep the precious air my slave, but it's too late. A tiny bubble of sound and fire escapes and like a ballerina it dances upwards, and away from me towards its new form of enslavement. Its scream rings through my ears.

It is so beautiful for a moment, so supremely beautiful. Like diamonds aglow with the light from a burning moon. My hopes soar. I think, "Maybe this ballerina will succeed where the others have failed," but then I wonder why the ballerina is screaming. Why is she so afraid? Why is she so angry? Then I tell myself that it is not a ballerina, it is only the fire from behind the sparkles trapped inside a bubble, stolen from the servitude of the surface, and sentenced to servitude in my lungs. From one slavery, to the other. Then I realize that this slave is showing me the way to live. I follow the tiny bubble of my screams to the surface and as my lungs cry out for sustenance, I break through the crystal surface into a jeweled clouds of a thousand different rainbows, from the crystalline drops of water, set ablaze by the alizarin sun. Sweet air, sweet surface. I am overjoyed. I can breath. I did not die deep inside the pool of my mind. I survived.

I look around and again the weirdness hits me. This time it's more distinct. It's less apparent and yet, more distinct, but I'm too busy preparing myself for my next dive to notice.

I must find it. I must find it. I know it's there.

So I breath in the fire and smoke, filling my lungs with even more than before and I dive again. And again. And again, and again, and again. Each time I surface I become more determined to find what it is I'm looking for. Each time I fail I grow more frustrated, more tired, more angry, and more obsessed with achieving my aim. Hundreds of times I dive, as I've done hundreds of times before, and every time I surface It grows more important, more necessary, until it approaches hysteria or exhaustion, or maybe both or none at all.

I stop for a moment. I'm almost done. If I continue I might not be able to return to the surface. But I must go forward, and so I prepare myself to dive. My mind screams at me to look around and in a moment of clarity I do. Suddenly everything goes into slow motion. I see the mountains and the valleys and the beauty of every aspect that surrounds the pool in my mind. A bird. A little red bird flies by. A mountain glints like a sweet grandfather in the nighttime stars.

"It's not night," I think, "birds don't fly at night," and simultaneously it switches back to the setting sun as the red bird turn into an owl. I

do not notice this transformation however, because I have already moved on to something else. It's all so beautiful. So beautiful.

I must dive.

"Wait!" the Owl screeches. "You don't know what it is you are looking for. Are you willing to risk everything to find it?"

I stop. I look at the Owl and he looks at me.

"Would you have me enslave myself to the beauty and the rock?"

I ask the Owl.

"You are already enslaved to the object in the pool," said the Owl.

"Wouldn't you rather be chained to the rock and beauty because at least you already know what it is?"

"I choose to search this pool Mr. Owl," I say as I stare at him defiantly.

Yes, I do choose to search this pool. I think...maybe...If needing to search the pool is even a choice.

As I stare at the Mr. Owl he turns into a magnificent shimmering dragon. His feathers turn to scales that shine like rubys, and emeralds, and all the precious stones of the world. He rises, a monochromatic, shimmering colossus, a shining star that, compared to the beauty of the world around him, stands out like a dazzling, jeweled rainbow in a wasteland of brackish water, and noxious sand. His face was noble and strong, and his body was lithe and strong. He moves with a grace found only in creatures so dangerous that words do not exist that can explain the perfect grace in which they move. He could dance along the blade death, and weave through the seams in his cloak, and still fly free to mock his eyeless gaze. Yet, despite the inherent danger of his massive jaws, and the surgeon-like precision of his scythe-like claws, I was not afraid. Something this beautiful could never cause harm.

Then, from his jaws he issued forth a torrent of flames over the pool. I drew back in fear, but they were on me so fast I could but watch as they danced like gypsies around my head. I knew then that even had I not been immersed in the pool, the flames could not touch me.

"So you're the one who hid the fire within the sparkling air," I said accusingly.

"No," said the dragon as he unfurled his great, leathery wings and soared into the air. Through he air he flew, and in a single graceful motion he came to land upon the rock. Upon touching it, he once again turned into the little red bird.

"The fire is in you. You are the dragon as much as I am the

dragon, and we are each other when our open eyes are closed," he said.

"No, little red bird, the dragon hid the fire in the air and it is why I can't find what I'm looking for," I reply.

A wave of fatigue washes over me and fills each of my bones, muscles, and cells with the agony of a thousand different pains. Maybe it is pleasure. Either way it is immaterial because there doesn't exist a difference in a contradiction.

I have one more try. One more dive. The red bird trills, begging me to look around. Begging me to think about what will happen if I dive, but I can't listen to him because I must focus on what will happen if I don't dive. There is no choice.

I open my mouth and begin to take in the burning air. I need more. More. And I begin to bring in more and more until I am swallowing up the grass and trees, the valleys, mountains, clouds, sunlight, and color. Everything outside the pool I swallow into my lungs, and as the final drop, the little red bird disappears into my lungs to fuel my one last dive.

As I close my mouth and dive, stronger, harder, and faster than ever before, I think, "The dragon hid the fire behind the mountains, streams, and even the little red bird. I wonder why he did that?" but as soon as the thought and question come to mind it is gone, replaced by the burning need to find what it is at the bottom of this endless pool.

I dive through the deep, through the clear, the gray, to the black and beyond. Through the abyss into the deep, pressing cold, and suffocating black. Down, down, down, past all meaning and sense, until he isn't even sure where or who he is anymore.

"I AM ME!" he screams in chaotically pure hysteria even as he swims deeper and deeper. It can't stop. It can't stop until it finds what it's looking for in the pool of my mind. In a maddening crescendo It screams as the white hot fire inside him consumes all that he taken in and a cacophony of bubbles filled with tiny dancing fire escape his lungs. And the scream pervades the very essence of the pool until it seems as if it was always there. The scream grows and grows and in the exact moment his body consumes the very last little drop of fire filled air, it climaxes with a shock that tears away at the very essence of his soul, and sends a myriad fractures racing through the void of the pool.

All is still.

Then, in a moment, everything shatters into thousands of tiny

shards leaving nothing but the pool and the It that the pool still holds. It is frozen. Time is standing still, and inside the Its head thoughts flash by. Thoughts of pain, love, loss, and freedom. Thoughts of some indefinable something so wonderful, that the It would travel nine hells covered in burning shards of glass to simply touch the dirt of the ground that was near it.

The It thinks this and then eternity falls in a single red feather.

The feather falls toward the It, growing larger and larger until the It can't even see that it is a feather anymore. As it falls closer and closer he can make out mountains and valleys, and hills, and streams; an unknown space through nothing and everything, and heaven and hell. The in one insane, enlightened moment, he opens his eyes and falls asleep.

I'm wide awake now, and nothing has changed. I'm lying on a rock beside a cool mountain pool. A pool so pristine, so pure, so refreshing and mysterious that it draws me like a moth to flame. I stand up and take a long look around at the flawless beauty, the perfection of the mountains and heavens, valleys and streams, all untouched and immaculate in the cleansing fire of the setting sun.

It is in that cleansing fire that I catch something shining back at me. Something in the pool. Something I immediately know I must have. Then without looking back, I dive once again into the pool of my mind. As my hands break the surface of the water, a thought plays across the surface of my unconsciousness. A slight déjà vu, as if I have done this all before, but it quickly fades away. I know it's impossible. Then eternity drops with a single red feather, and I begin my search.

Jeremy Field



North Shore—Duluth
Kelsey Oberhelman
Digital Photograph

Jeremy Bold

Voyage, Undertaking

white many-windowed planes
the purple sea beneath
passing under (Dear mother, I won't forget you nor all the things
you've done)

The brick bridge is no more
I see steel today
beyond the iron age,
a brawny hist'ry, a rational art
The Life of the French I undertake

I'm still in my room
Jeremy de Dakota du Nord
I'm missing her womb
I want to return before I'm gone



La Dune du Pyla
Jeremy Bold
Photograph



Wistful Melancholy
Kodi Klym
Charcoal Drawing

Bernie Thomas

Trust and Chocolate

Your shape is difficult to place,
Though your presence is all I need.

I bid the light goodbye
As I join you on the floor,
And for the moment I see nothing,
Save
For the swirling sheen of the
Glimmering light of the
Fear not quite dry
Across your face.

I can see myself.

You cry like a broken toy soldier
As I place the pieces back
Onto your red painted shell.

I know you're still there.

I paint the pieces of myself to
Match the color of your face
And click them into their missing spaces
And hid the cracks with glue.

You're still shivering.



Beauty by the Coulee
Estee Anderson
Digital Photograph

Jeremy Bold

Untitled

It happened when we fell together
among the birds and bees
and covered with some limbs and leaves
we huddled in the trees
Naked fawns and pollen scratched
a serpent brushed the grass;
the garden lost and yet we smelled
each other's scent at last.

Emily Hill

Endless Summer

Listening to the philosophy of the Beach Boys, not realizing they are not wise Ocean Men.

The illusion of endless summer in the distance...Don't worry baby.

Foolish.

A utopian dream, with no hope.

Artists of a landscape. Warm, smooth sand and placid waters.

So why? Why I ask?

Why are there shards of glass and stone hidden within the path of my salt-stained feet?

The sun aimlessly directs its rays upon the waters. Waves smooth out the sand's rough edges.

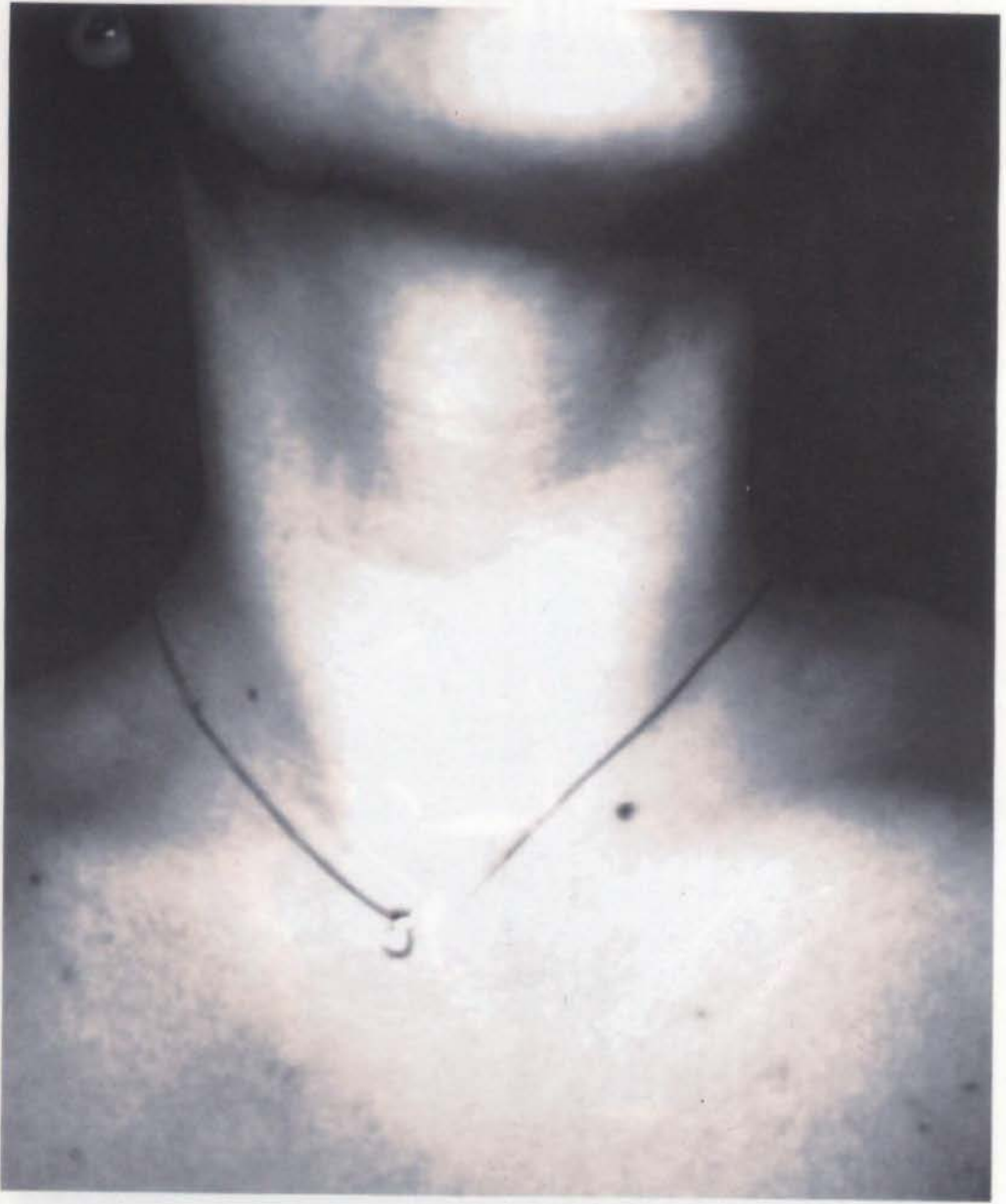
Naive. Not Foolish.

Wouldn't it be nice if we were older, so we wouldn't have to ask, "God only knows what I'd be without you?"

Emily in the Country
Eaton Anderson
Digital Photograph



Dreaming of Dancing
Kodi Klym
Scratchboard Drawing



Crane Wife
Amanda Unruh
Photograph

Sarah Walker

Skin

Skin. That was all he could see. A wide expanse of skin, smooth and creamy and untouched. He imagined himself reaching out, pressing his warmth to the cold. It was so white.

Emerson Talbot Fredericks, Esq. looked away and turned back to his work as she flitted around. She knew what she was doing, he was sure. She dressed just the right way, wearing clothes that curved where she did. He shook his head. "Annie, can you leave or stay quiet? I'm trying to concentrate."

"Sorry," she said, turning. The expanse of skin was covered as she straightened. He tried not to stare at her lip while she bit it. "I didn't think I was making that much noise."

"Yes, well." She wasn't making any noise, but her presence was a distraction he didn't need. "I'm just sort of caught up in this." He ran his hand through his salt-and-pepper hair.

"What are you working on?" She tilted her head to the side and leaned over his shoulder, and he could smell something like cinnamon. She didn't look so young. More like she was twenty-nine than nineteen. She acted more mature than any of the other interns ever had.

"This is for the Haroldson case."

"Oh, right." She moved slightly, shifting the stack of papers in her arms. The movement pulled her shirt up a bit in the front, and he could see the lower part of her belly button. "What's it all about, anyway?"

"Normalcy," he said shortly. He didn't think it was proper to talk about his cases casually, and she definitely was asking casually. "More depravations of human nature."

She wrinkled her nose at him, and for a moment only she ruined the effect of her gentle maturity and beauty. "That could be anything, Especially for you." Her tone was pleasant.

"Such is the case with law." He sat back, frowning, but pleased

despite himself. It was nice to be appreciated.

"Spare me the justice speeches," she said, and she made a very attractive noise that apparently emerged from the back of her long, slender throat.

He snapped his gaze up at her. "What?"

"You're a workaholic, I swear."

She talked more as if they were friends than she his intern.

Well—not that she was *his* intern, but she was *like* his intern, since she did more work under him than under her boss. Her boss—and his own—who was also her uncle—had ordered him to act as her supervisor. Emerson imagined that the relation was how she got the appointment at that law firm, and he had been very unhappy about it. Oh, she was supposed to be bright—but she was not as bright as others had been. He stewed in his own thoughts the first week of her arrival. He started to get used to her, after that.

"I choose to devote my time to justice. Some agendas must be accomplished. Some things are more important than going home when the hour is up, as you know."

"I know," she said, and he suddenly felt noxious. And happy. And irritated.

"So what *is* the case about?"

"Murder," he said in a voice that was intended to end the conversation. Harold Haroldson—he had almost spit out his coffee when he first heard the man's name—was a shark from Chicago who had killed his neighbor and had almost killed his wife. Mrs. Haroldson—Penny—told Emerson that she had started to fear her husband's temper. She had hired the neighbor, a strong ex-cop, to keep watch of Haroldson's deeds. Apparently, it had worked for a month or two. Unfortunately, the streak of luck had ended when the neighbor had turned up dead and Haroldson beat his wife half to death.

The case was under wraps, as per Mrs. Haroldson's request. Harold Haroldson had a lot of cash—most gained in decidedly illegal ways—and had a lot of tough-looking followers. He was a large man, himself. Mrs. Haroldson—Penny—was his opposite. She looked tired, in the hospital, and she looked small. She looked sharp, though, pretty even beneath the bruises and the bloatings. Her lips were orange and puffy, and her eyes were clear as she told him her story. Emerson pitied her, and the life she led. He imagined when she was younger. She had white, soft skin.

Annie was shaking her head now, looking disgusted. "How can anyone kill?"

He felt a little amusement at this sentiment. "I don't know. It happens, from time to time."

"Do you want some help?"

"Don't you have some filing to do?" he asked.

"Yes, but I can do that anytime. What sort of intern am I supposed to be, if I can't help?"

"Why don't you ask your Uncle to assign you to something else?"

"Gerald—Mr. Alton—he doesn't want me to refer to him as that," she said. "Not while I'm here."

"Alton should accept the responsibility of having hired you," Emerson said. He leaned back in his chair and smiled at her. She smiled back. Nothing ever ruffled her.

"He's always said I'd do well to follow you. To help you. That's why he gave me to you."

He didn't comment on her odd terminology. "And you're doing fine," he said. "Now leave me alone so I can work."

"I never do."

"I know it." He hadn't gotten as much done in the evenings, due to her appearances. She was a distraction. She stayed later and later every day.

"You're my supervisor," she said. "Aren't you supposed to be making me help you?"

"Fine, then," he said grouchy. "Sit." He had expected the boy. Ben, or whatever his name was. Not a girl. Not a distraction.

"I could help you relax," she said.

Everyday she talked to him, and every day he heard something and his mind twisted it. Again, his eyes snapped to hers. She was twirling her hair, now, the pile of papers on her lap. Was he imagining it? Did she look a little red? Did her gaze just falter? He shook his head, and wished that he had the boy. What was his name? Burl? No, that name would be too old for him. He was freshly graduated, and far too young. Bobby, maybe. But he thought it was one syllable. Maybe it *was* Ben.

He was imagining it.

He was the age of her father. Maybe a bit younger. He allowed himself a point of vanity. He could have been her father, but he would have been young.

It was ridiculous. He put the pen down.

"Are you going to write something down?"

She was too comfortable around him. It made him uncomfortable. "Maybe you should go file those papers. That might be more help."

"I'm not going to learn much if all I'm doing is filing."

He tried to reply. He wished he had the boy, instead. Especially since the boy had no relation to his boss, unlike the girl. Especially since the girl was a distraction.

"Go file," he said. He chanced a glance at her. She was looking the other direction again, rubbing her neck, shifting the top of her shirt around.

Someone knocked, and the boy leaned in. He was an attractive youth. He looked golden. Sunned, blonde, solid and strong, he reminded Emerson of images he had seen of Apollo. Annie smiled at him sweetly, and Emerson became aware of a cold feeling in the pit of his stomach. He glanced at the boy, and frowned. The feeling in his stomach turned cold as he saw her smile at the boy.

"Hey Annie," he said, "Your uncle wants you."

"Tell him I'll be there in a second," she said.

The boy grinned at her, his face glowing from his own tan, and he ducked out again.

"You should go now," Emerson said. "We both should, in fact. Tomorrow looks to be a long day."

"But it's early, yet," she said. She stood up again, and her skirt swirled around her knees. "I don't want to run you out of here."

"I won't be able to get anything else done tonight," he said. She walked out the door.

He waited a few minutes before he stood and followed her path out the door. It was early yet, but he knew he wouldn't accomplish much that night. He was too distracted. He said goodbye to the boy who was tarrying around the halls outside his office, and left.

That night, he had lasagna which his housekeeper had made. After dinner, he checked the large wooden grandfather clock in his den, which he liked to do himself and never allowed the housekeeper to touch. He sat down in his office and looked through some papers he had brought home from the office. The housekeeper bade him goodnight and left at 8:03; he sat and stared at his papers.

At 10:30, he pulled out the Haroldson case, again. He thought

about Mrs. Haroldson as he looked over the case. She cried as she told her story to him. She wept. He envisioned the scene again. Mrs. Haroldson was wearing a pant suit, or maybe a dress. The neighbor came, reported the doings of Mr. Haroldson. She got upset, and so he left her. She was shining in her green dress (maybe it was blue).

Enter Mr. Haroldson. He killed the neighbor. He came in. He saw her. She said hello. He swung. He cursed. He yelled and screamed so loudly that passing strangers heard and called for help. His blood ran cold. He had killed before. He was dangerous.

When the police came, Mrs. Haroldson was unconscious, broken, and bruised. She was white, pale from loss of blood. Her hair was the color of Annie's.

For a moment, Emerson forgot that he was over twenty years older than his intern, and working for her uncle. He imagined, just for a moment, that she came into his office now. Her shirt dipped low in front and her skirt was frighteningly short—a mini-skirt as from his youth—and he was a young man, too. She was so palely luminescent that she glowed like a moon in the night.

He was beginning to doze, and his mind was going in directions that it might not have, had he been more awake. Soon, she wasn't wearing clothes at all. She was wearing a robe, and nothing underneath. She smiled at him.

"I can help you relax," she said, and she pulled off the tie and dropped it to the floor. It lay in a fuzzy heap as she emerged from it. Her whole body was firm and white and smooth. She stood as a statue, immortal, untouched, and he stared at her. He imagined she was Justice, bearing balances of silver.

He woke the next morning in his den, in his chair, with the pages of the Haroldson case in front of him. He swore slightly, a chaste blandishment. He changed and brushed his teeth and washed his face. Feeling refreshed, he went to his kitchen, where his housekeeper had already let herself in to make him breakfast.

"Sleep well, Mr. Fredericks?" she asked. She had a naturally red and cheerful face, and her name was Hildy. She was the only woman Emerson had ever met who had a name like that.

"It was fine," he said.

"You got sand in your eyes," Hildy said. "You didn't sleep all the Sandman's powder off." She placed a mug of coffee in front of him on the

counter. "You work hard, Mr. Fredericks. And late."

"I can help you relax," Annie had said, her skin glowing.

"Thank you, Hildy," he said, barely noting what he was thanking her for.

At the office, Annie was wearing a red sweater that clung to her curves just right. She wore a gray skirt that looked soft and clingy. "My uncle called me out of your office last night to ask me if I knew anything about his precious trophy. He lost it again."

This was not new. Gerald Alton lost his "precious trophy" all the time. He won it in a golf tournament. It was probably three inches tall, and two inches wide. Gerald Alton was not a golfer, but he had won his trophy, and he loved it. He moved it every week, and panicked the day after.

"Where did he find it?"

"He had set it under his desk, in preparation of moving it."

Emerson shook his head, and smirked.

"Did you get anything done on the Haroldson case last night?" she asked.

He shook his head. "I'll have to go over it again, now. Why don't you go file something?" he said.

She looked at him again. "Alright," she said. She brushed his shoulder as she walked out.

He thought about her, dressed as Justice. Not dressed.

He had to ignore the thoughts. He shook his head, and drank some more coffee from his cup.

Mrs. Haroldson had contacted him herself. She had no family left in the world, she had said, except for a cousin on vacation in Paris. She had sent her a new dress for her birthday, which she wore the day her husband almost beat her to death. He had made such a racket, though, that anyone passing by could hear. She said he had just walked in and started yelling and beating.

"That doesn't sound like his usual way of..." Emerson trailed off.

"Yes, I know," she said. She had a slight accent, a slow voice.

"When he killed...killed..."

"Parry Siems, your neighbor." He was not a gentle person, and he said this name matter-of-factly, but she did not wince.

"Yes." Her eyes looked red and tired. "It was the same. Loud. But he shot him. He *shot* him."

"You heard the shot?"

"I heard him brag."

Emerson patted her arm, and said, "Justice will prevail." He liked the cliché. He had said it before, many times. He was a good lawyer. "We will fix this together." He knew what he was doing. He knew how to comfort, and how to win. It was all part of the job.

She smiled. "That's why I called you."

Annie entered the room again, and grabbed some more files. He watched her. "Don't worry, I'll be out of here in an instant," she said.

He didn't reply, but watched her move around the room. She pushed her sleeves up her white arms. His mind tripped back to the image he had made of her. This time, he approached the untouched skin and tried to claim all of her, rubbing his hands up and down her bare arms, pulling her toward him, feeling skin on skin. He continued to think of her after she left.

At 10:15, he decided to get himself a cup of coffee, to stretch his legs and refill his glass. He walked out of his office and down the hallway.

"I can do that for you, Mr. Fredericks," his secretary chirped.

"Are you getting coffee?"

"I am, but no, thanks," he said, "I'll just do it myself." He rarely walked down to get his own coffee. He was usually, as Annie said, busy. He thought perhaps, sometime, he should listen to her. He should try to relax.

As he did not blush, he did not need to worry when he began to think of Annie. To think of replying to Annie, "Yes, please," if she offered again to help him relax. To think of what she would do after.

A voice called out to him. "Fredericks." He stopped in front of Alton's office.

"Yes, Alton?" The trophy was small and dull, but it sat, for now, in a prominent place on a table between the two leather chairs in front of his desk that faced him.

"Have you been working on the Haroldson case?"

"I have been examining it, yes. Open and shut case, I'd say. Spousal abuse, murder."

"I'd like to see you work more with Annie on it. More practice."

"Yes, sir." He wasn't sure how he felt about this. "I'll tell her when she comes back from filing."

"Oh, yes," Alton said, and he chuckled. "Filing." His phone rang, and he excused himself. "I'll be right there," Emerson heard him say.

Emerson continued down the hall. He felt confused. He wondered what Alton knew.

He filled his coffee and turned to return when, further down the hall, he heard a laugh, and the sound of Annie's voice floated out into the hall. He couldn't hear her, but he smiled. Then he heard a deeper laugh, and he frowned. He hurried down the hall, and peered in through a glass-paned door.

His Annie was with the boy. The boy, whose name he did not even know, was with her. He was looking at her. He was watching her. Emerson knew what was in his gaze.

Unbidden, Justice—Annie—came to his mind. He rubbed her skin, harder, rougher, till she cried out. The boy came; he took Annie away. She clung to him, and together they stared at Emerson, gleaming.

Gleaming. He stopped. Since he had seen the two of them together, he had felt a ringing in his ears. Now, the ringing sounded louder than before. He was in front of Alton's office. He was evidently not there. The lights were off. The door, however, was ajar. He pushed it open. There, gleaming, was Alton's trophy.

He pulled his hands up into his sleeves and wrapped the cloth of his shirt around the cup. Then he carried it back with him. He took it to the place where the boy kept his things. He slipped it into the boy's coat pocket. It bulged outward, but the boy would not think much of it, at first. Alton, however, would, if he were asked.

He accidentally dropped the jacket on the floor, and stepped on it. It was leather. He accidentally spilled coffee on the jacket, too, as he bent to pick it up. The roaring in his ears was louder. He kicked the jacket, accidentally hitting the trophy, accidentally hitting the wall, and he quickly hung the coat back up.

What if he were asked? He would tell the truth. Why, the boy? He had seemed nice enough. Emerson had seen him walk down the hall, furious, carrying something. Almost *furtively* carrying something. (Adjectives were useful.) What? Did he know what the boy was carrying? No, he didn't know what it was. Such a shame.

As he went back to his office, he passed his secretary and told her he was going home. He wasn't able to stay the rest of the day. Please cancel all appointments.

He arrived at home at 11:10, by his watch. He dismissed his housekeeper for the day, locked himself into his den, and sat in his chair.

In his mind, he saw Mrs. Haroldson. This time, she was wearing a red dress. He saw her with her neighbor, sitting together on a couch, and the ringing noise in his ears screamed at him. He had a friend. He went to his house, got a gun, and returned. The neighbor was afraid of him. He didn't hear a thing. He shot him five times, though he was dead after three. Mrs. Haroldson was unaware of his return. She looked. She screamed at him, but he couldn't hear. He squeezed his eyes shut. He could see it. He could feel it. White, smooth skin, and this time, it was cold.

Justice.



Steps to Serenity
Jessica Ulrich
Photograph

Kara Kovarik

She felt like a child who always heard no.
Sending her hopes high, then forced to let go.
Conditioned to conceal and silently respond.
She thought life was like this-always, from there upon.
Then the stars above danced and her emotions swelled.
He kissed her lips and her heart he held.
Oh worthy embrace could you be too late.
For whom was this angel-this phantom of fate.
A shaman with spirit her sorrow he could smite
But her body was bruised it had already lost the fight
Beaten from wars, battered and marred with distain
But he stood bracing her arms, inhaling her pain
He unwrapped her eyes and patched that hole.
He made her feel right, he completed her soul.
He unpretended her air, she could breath again.
He became her lover, he became her best friend.
Now she knows in her heart and believes in her mind.
This is what she wants, its right leaving sadness behind.
She is ready for tomorrow and days that come after.
As long as she always hears his warming laughter,
And can turn her head and look into his eyes.
For they hold that love, she knows never dies.
In the end he knows who he is, unequivocally she does too.
Together they will love and their future pursue.
Because she wrote this for him, a secret saga to say:
I love you and I can list how, in each and every way.
Now forever etched here, these words she whispers of.
Is the beginning of what is, their faith, their love.

Bernie Thomas

June

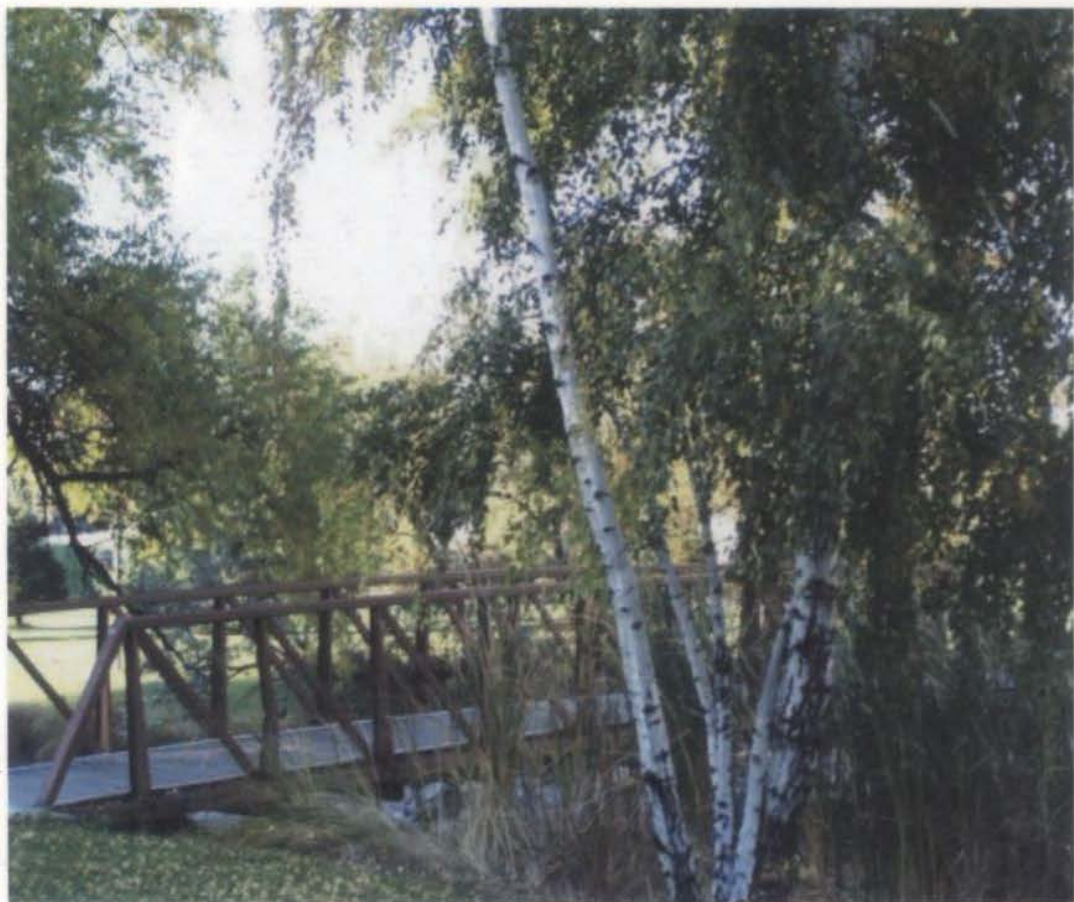
Grass between the heel of my foot
And the toes of another
Circles what lie between
Two souls in thought

Leaves land in jewel-shaped piles
Along your yellow dress
Tumbling past your brown feet
In formations shaped by curious toes

It's going to rain soon,
Let's run together, but not toward home.
I think of what can happen when two souls make peace,
Withhold the night, suspend the tide.

You blink and release the grass,
Breathe as the wind carries it,
Exhaling past your eyes,
Swirling into the future.

I hear piano keys and whistling clouds.
You blink and stare at a dandelion.
"It's going to rain," you say.
"I know." And take your hand.



Over the River to Johnstone
Jessica Ulrich
Photograph



Fireflower
Jan Sher
Photograph

Amanda Unruh

Alice

Who could have thought
Alice, hero of nonsense and fancy
would find herself trapped
In a No-Nonsense place such as this?

When earnestly, she explained her Reality
To those questioning faces
Their only response were whispers of
"Poor girl needs help."

So help they sought to give her
"Rehab," they called it, and shipped her away to this place
Where trained and caring therapists
Confuse her more than Momeraths

In this place, eating the mushroom
Because the caterpillar told her to
Is not an acceptable excuse.
Slowly they beat her down with words and group meetings

She did not realize that her Wonderland,
Although evocative for a child
Even praised just years ago
Was not acceptable for an adult of her age.

Dear Forum Readers,

We hope you have enjoyed this issue of the Forum. Our goal is to encourage good writing and creative expression among Honors students. Share your talent by having your work published in the Forum. Just follow these simple steps when submitting written work or photographs:

1. Print a hard copy of your work.
2. Save it to disk as a text (.txt) file.
3. Complete a Submission Release Form.
4. Drop the above three items in a submission drop box found either in the Honors lounge or in the mailboxes.

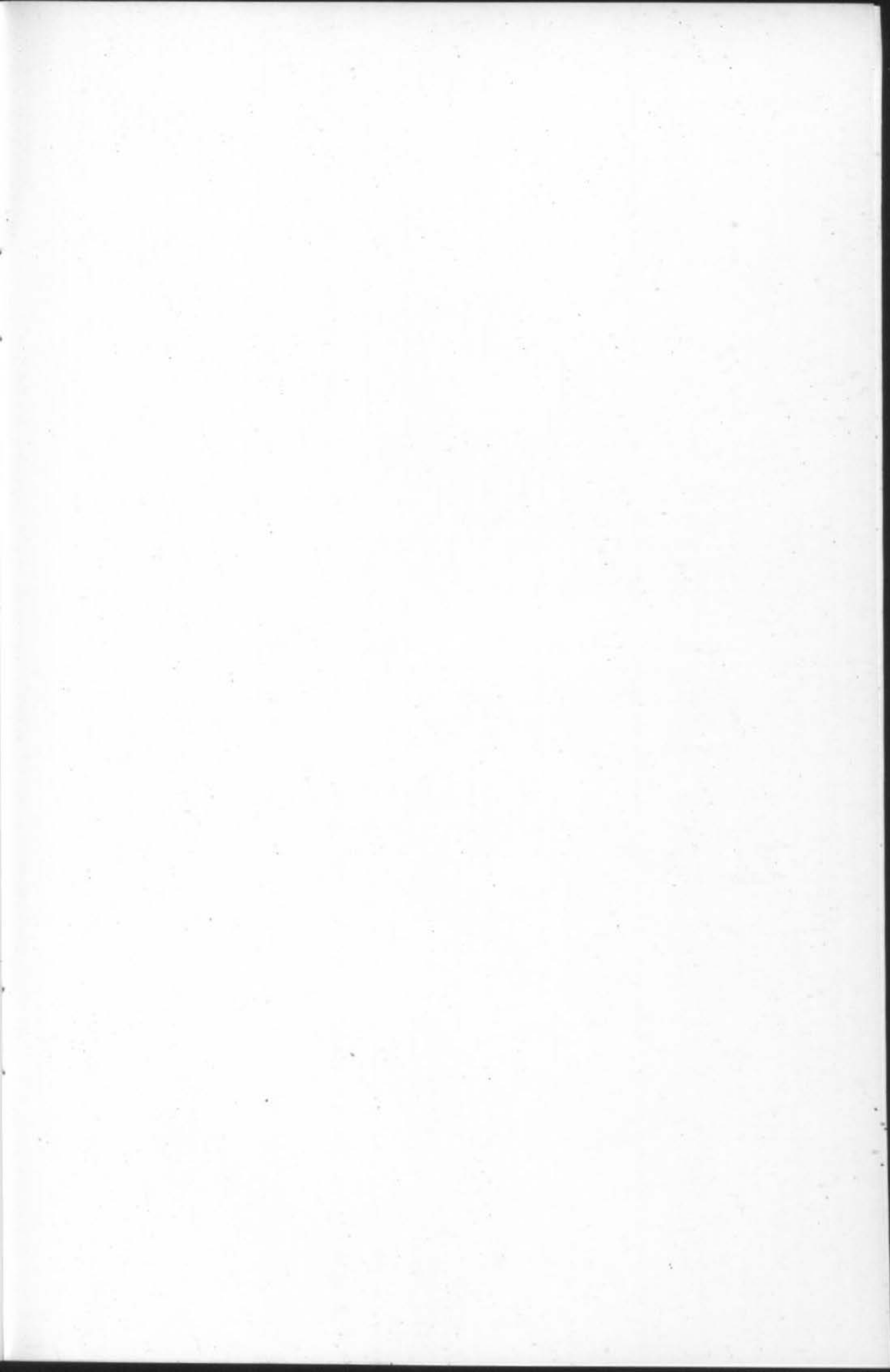
To submit artwork, please follow these steps:

1. Bring the art work to the Honors office.
2. Include your name and phone number with your artwork.
3. Complete a Submission Release Form and leave it in one of the drop boxes.

You can also submit work via e-mail. Please submit documents as attachments in text format (.txt) and images in tiff format (.tif). Send submissions to honorsforum@yahoo.com. You will also need to complete a Submission Release Form.

Thank you,

the Forum Editorial Board



the Forum

University of North Dakota
Honors Program
Robertson-Sayre Hall
Box 7187
Grand Forks, ND 58202-7187

Address Service Requested
82819 - 5140