



Winter 2003

## The Forum: Winter 2003

Kelly Swenseth  
*University of North Dakota*

Chris Kiefel  
*University of North Dakota*

Amy Gieske  
*University of North Dakota*

Amanda Licht  
*University of North Dakota*

Shawna Widdel  
*University of North Dakota*

*See next page for additional authors*

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

---

### Recommended Citation

Swenseth, Kelly; Kiefel, Chris; Gieske, Amy; Licht, Amanda; Widdel, Shawna; Gordon, Casey; Alm, Tanya; Hallberg, Sara; Anonymous, Anonymous; Tangen, Joshua; and Bergerud, Leif, "The Forum: Winter 2003" (2003). *UND Publications*. 46.  
<https://commons.und.edu/und-books/46>

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 [zeinebyousif@library.und.edu](mailto:zeinebyousif@library.und.edu).

---

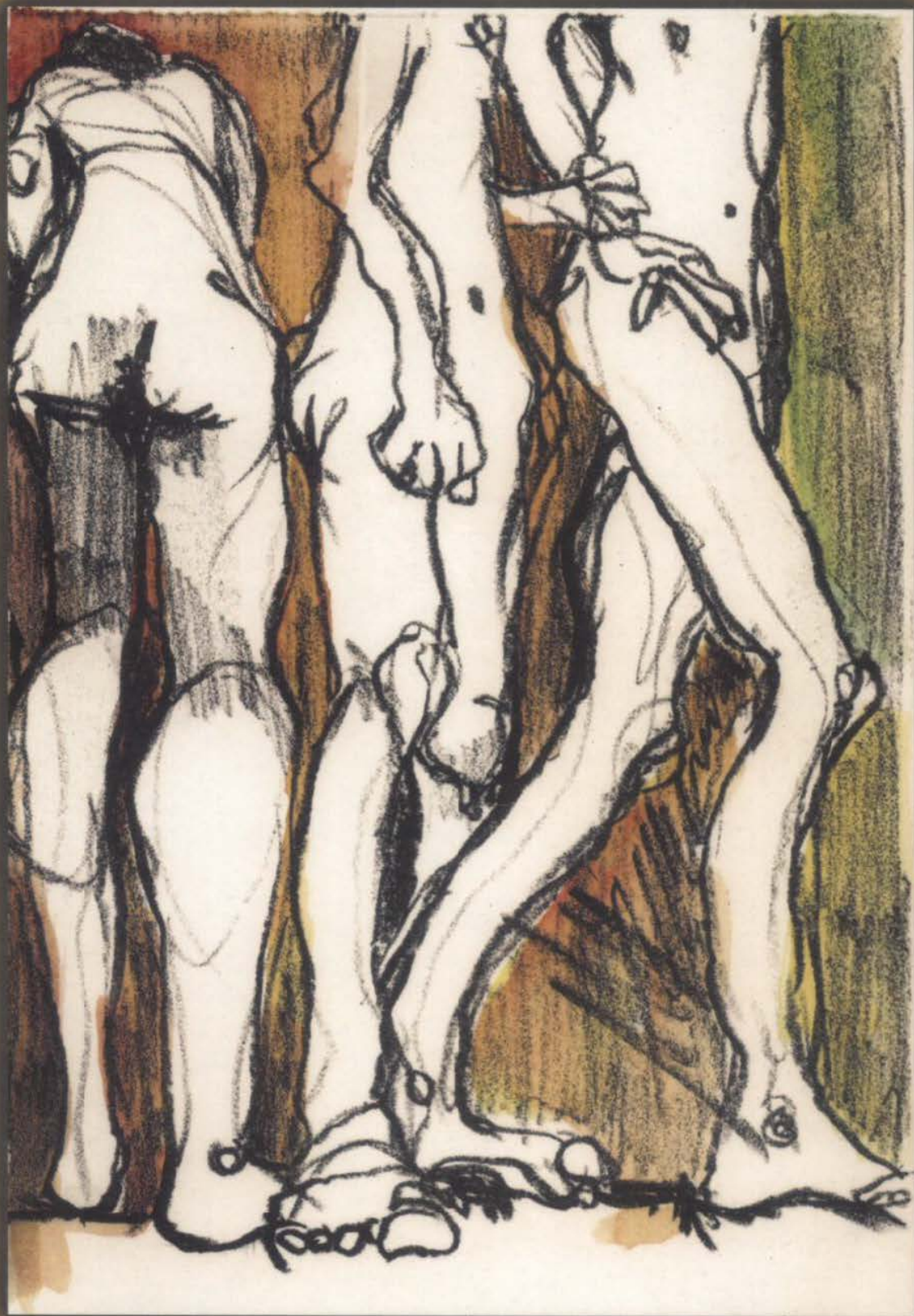
**Authors**

Kelly Swenseth, Chris Kiefel, Amy Gieske, Amanda Licht, Shawna Widdel, Casey Gordon, Tanya Alm, Sara Hallberg, Anonymous Anonymous, Joshua Tangen, and Leif Bergerud

# the Forum

Journal of the Honors Program  
University of North Dakota

Volume 33, Issue 2  
Winter 2003





## Contents

Kelly Swenseth Drawing	Cover
Chris Kiefel <i>Requiem for a Misdemeanor</i>	3
Amy Gieske Chalk Drawing	4
Amanda Licht <i>Lita Goes POP!</i>	5
Shawna Widdel Photograph	15
Casey Gordon <i>Dear Woman</i>	16
Tanya Alm Chalk Pastel	18
Sara Hallberg <i>Muckraking as Social Expression</i>	19
Anonymous <i>The Invisible Monster</i>	23
Joshua Tangen Dry Point	25
Leif Bergerud <i>Natural Metaphors (Fluttering Existentialism)</i>	26

## **Editors**

Christopher Pieske  
Sara Hansen

## **Editorial Board**

Amanda Licht  
Kevin Dahlin  
Meg Ericson  
Sara Hallberg  
Jessica Veeder  
Leif Bergerud  
Holly Noonan  
Heather Tysse

## **Advisor**

Jeanne Anderegg

## **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.

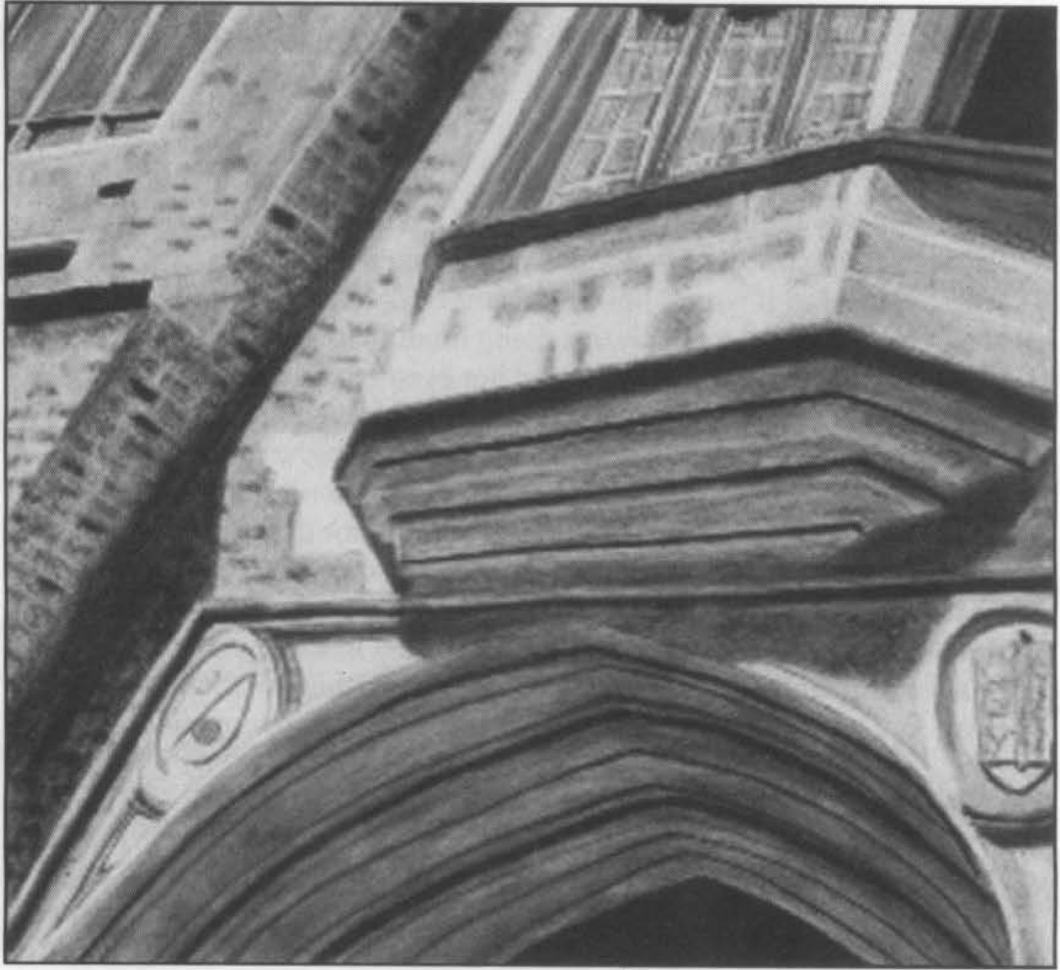
BOSP Chairperson: Matthew Myrick  
Phone: 777-4386

Chris Kiefel

---

*Requiem for a Misdemeanor*

**H**elplessly falling through the void, forgetting to sign the sheet  
Falling again when we are not found, missing the intent.  
Sure to be saved if we cannot be remembered, but never remembered  
Never truly there, though always doing more than intended  
Figuring we will be overlooked, and not even reminisced.  
We are the few who try, looking out for those who do no good  
Never fearing for the end, always looking to make the future.  
Where is the absolute in our plight, if there can be no stop  
For the near and far cannot be defined, waiting for the end.  
But for those who care, we are few and far to look to  
Because we are the ones who do, the ones who can be everything.  
When nothing else makes sense, we must exist to save grace  
In a world that does no justice, just makes everything nothing.  
If we forget to sign in at the door, we lose ourselves in the midst  
  
Because we have no integrity, just blind acceptance of fate.



*Amy Gieske*



## Amanda Licht

---

### *Lita goes POP!*

The pounding was softening. She'd nearly convinced herself that the rhythmic sound had always been there, always would, just another thing wrong with her, another obstacle on the road to normalcy. But then he called her name, and she'd never been able to ignore his voice. Lita made the faucet run harder. She waited a moment, thinking through the medicated fog.

"I'm in the shower!"

"Lita, that's the faucet running, not the shower."

"No," she replied, "it's the shower. I'm taking a shower."

"In the middle of the day?"

"I'm dirty, okay?"

"Lita."

"David."

"I'll pick the lock, Lita."

"Fine."

Even over the running water, she heard him sigh and stalk off to collect his instruments. A chill crept through her thin jeans; she shivered. She closed her eyes and saw the world come clear. Agony blazed as brilliant flares of fuchsia and vermilion around her; annoyance melded with the violent emotions, tempering them with its milder tones of upset. She echoed his sigh, feeling it catch wetly at the back of her throat. Lita watched David walking in the hall, a black code box swinging from one hand. She saw him as clearly as the wall between them. He fumbled with the door's circuitry; she watched him check the codes twice. The door slid open with a less than polite chime. A pool of bright light invaded her dark sanctuary, sizzling through her eyelids.

"Turn the lights off," she hissed. "They hurt."

"I need to see."

The lids of her eyes slitted, revealing a glimmer of cerulean. Pupils contracted sharply to tiny dots as the overhead lights drowned her in illumination. He cycled the glowing sheets down to their dimmest setting and turned the faucet off. David dropped down in front of her, bringing his face close. She retreated farther, shrinking against the wall, pulling knees closer to narrow shoulders, folding sticky arms against her frail rib

cage.

"Lita."

"What?"

"I'm not going to hurt you."

"I know." She peered up at him through wild strands of hair, but couldn't see him clearly.

He reached out with one hand to tame the pale green mane, pushing the thick mess back straight. He sighed again, noting the dried blood crusting around her eyes and ears. "Shit. Why don't you just take your medicine?"

"I did take it," she rasped irritably.

He looked at her eyes closely. Though they gleamed bright enough to sting, there was an inherent dullness deep within them: a medicated stupor forced back by overactive consciousness. "Can I see your hands, now?"

She looked at him through slits, contemplated a negative reply, wondered what he would do if she shook her head, if she screamed. She wasn't given the chance. His hands slid to her shoulders and slipped down the length of her skinny arms to find the mangled mess hidden in her lap. His eyes never left hers; she had trouble breathing. A strange color hovered around him, overpowering her lurid light with soft hues of calm and control. With a gentleness she found irresistible, he pushed against her legs, forcing them out of the way. He slipped his hands around her wrists and lifted her hands into the light. She watched his eyes widen, his mouth tighten. The soft touch of his fingers against her ravaged skin was the tearing of rough-edged steel. Tears welled in her eyes and fell crimson as they rolled through the smears of dried blood.

"I'm sorry, David," she whispered.

"No. You didn't do anything, baby."

He stared at her blackened arms, thought of barbecue, and felt acid running up the back of his throat. The damage stretched up from her wrists in eerie streaks of raw, fire-licked skin. Her nails had melted, seeping down to her knuckles in slick plasticky streams. Thick, bloody crevices marked joints. Blistering, oozing smoothness accented flaking black and chalky white.

His eyes drifted back to meet hers. "Does it hurt?"

"Not really."

"Are you sure?"

"Yeah, it's my head that really hurts. I can't feel the rest so much." A foggy smile spread across her face as tendrils of sleepy calm reached out to dull her mind.

Standing abruptly, he stalked from the room, back down the hall. She watched his angry speed from behind the tired skin of her eyelids, savoring the numbness that followed her pain. Her rage had faded away into the drugs, taking her drive, her focus away as well. She struggled to follow him as he moved agitatedly about her dim place. He tripped over a wad of

stained, bloody clothing and shouted in anger. Drained down to emptiness, she breathed slowly, setting a syncopated rhythm to the near frantic catching of his respiration as he tore about, emptying drawers, rifling through cabinets.

"David?" The heat which had fired her seemed to be dripping out of her body, squeezed out of place, and seeping into the cold linoleum. She shivered; it hurt to think. He returned with linen sheets from the closet. She winced as he ripped them into long strips.

"I called your doctor," he mumbled. "I'm taking you to the hospital. I can't fix this."

"What are you doing?"

His careful hands were already winding the cold fabric around the burned flesh, separating fingers gently, finding the securest hold to prevent shifting. Then Lita did something that always made her feel ashamed: she let the medication take over. It told her to sit still while David coiled her mother's fine linen sheets around her ruined arms, get up when he asked her to, lean against him as he helped her to his car. She obeyed meekly, her mind wandering free of physical bindings. David's eyes were sad as he asked the car's autopilot to find the most efficient route to the private hospital. The drugs told her she was sleepy, sleepy, sleepy. Her mind stared at him as the car sped them through layers of traffic, past flickering lights and welcoming doorways. She could see herself lounging casually with her white swathed arms in the stylish black interior, the frenzy of retail commerce behind sliding black glass doors, everything surrounding her—but especially David. He was worrying, brows drawn together in aggravation, nimble hands tapping ineffectively against the steering console.

He turned slowly and found her eyes lidded, head tilted back.

"Lita, are you sleeping?"

"No." She pulled herself back from the drugs and opened her eyes in the dark car.

He smiled as reflections of excited neon and argon gas flashed off her reptilian eyes. "I didn't think so. Were you looking at me?"

"I can see everything," she replied. She was shivering. Her body felt empty and shriveled; she longed for the heat of her anger—the rage that could propel her beyond the fog and into clarity; every time she tasted it, she yearned for more, despite the pain. She felt the possibility of freedom in a wild region of her inner self. Her eyes closed, she could see him, watching her now, so close. She looked inward to find a better way.

David shifted his weight past the dash mechanisms, and slid closer across the synthetic leather. She chuckled softly, a low sound with her husky voice. She let her head fall against his chest, curled her knees and gathered herself closer to him. His hands riffled through her wild

hair, smoothing it back behind pointed ears.

When she closed her eyes the immediate world slipped away. She saw her surroundings as a broad spectrum of interlaced images and abstracts. The hospital became a blast furnace of heat and pain. Blinding splashes of fiery color burst from its roof high into the skyline. She shivered more violently. She felt people dying here. "David."

"What?"

"I don't want to be here."

"Of course you do. The doctor is here. He'll help you, Lita."

"No. I hate him. I don't want any more pills."

"The pills help you."

"No, they don't. They make me a moron."

Her voice gained strength. A familiar warmth grew inside her chest; pain shot up her arms and slammed against her skull. She felt pressure behind her eyeballs and knew that blood was beginning to seep out through her tear ducts.

"Lita, please."

"There's nothing wrong with me."

He bit his tongue, but she heard him anyway. Tears pricked at the insides of her eyes. Everything is wrong with you, Lita. Everything.

She jerked away, shook the mangy hair over her face, and curled herself close. Sharp shoulder blades and knotted back turned to him, she cried bloody tears.

"Lita." He reached out to touch her.

"Screw you."

"Lita, don't."

"You think I'm a freak."

"No, never."

"You can't lie to me. I can hear inside of you, inside everyone. How am I ever supposed to be normal when you treat me this way?"

"We're here, Lita," he whispered sadly. "We've got to go inside, now."

She opened her eyes and winced at the lights. The usual doctor was waiting, tapping on the glass door. The drugs rose up and flooded over the brilliance of the world, drowning it out, taking over. David helped her out of the car and led her to the door. The doctor rushed them through the chaos of the emergency sector. Blood pooled around drains in the floor, splashed and spurted, colored the blank white of walls, coats, faces. She felt herself smiling, heard David whispering in her ear. It made her laugh. The doctor glanced back.

"Shock," he pronounced.

Her feet scuffed on the immaculate tile. She laughed; David's arm tightened around her.

"You're hurting me," she said.

"Sorry."

The doctor pointed at a door and shouted something at a passing white coat. David lifted her up onto a smooth cold table. She smiled at him as if she couldn't see inside of him or hear the ragged beating of his alarmed heart.

The doctor unraveled the linen. It was pinkish and splotted now, sticking to her skin. Her eyes bored into David's.

"Those are my mother's sheets," she told the doctor. "She used to sleep on them. Now, she's dead."

"I see."

David's eyes were so sorry. She smiled slowly.

The doctor continued to unwrap her, spilling fresh water where the fabric was crusty and stuck. She shuddered with cold.

Through the wall behind her, someone died, life seeping out through ever widening breaks in the protective dam. She reached out to touch the waning presence. Closing her eyes, she saw the boy's face. She touched him and felt him smile. The parents' wailing swept over her through him; she choked, opened her eyes.

"What's the matter, Lita?"

"Nothing, Doc."

He'd finished pulling away the ruined linen, and stood examining the impressive damage. A low whistle hissed through thin lips.

"And you took your medicine today?"

"Lita?" David prompted.

She looked up sharply, her eyes luminous with pain in the harsh hospital light. Tears were brimming. She pushed them back and looked at her ruined hands again. A strange mixture of pride and anger swirled in her colors.

"Yes, boys, I took my medicine."

Her doctor smiled vaguely and flicked a switch near the door to request assistance. She heard his mind formulating a medical report. Flickers of doctor-speak, and foreign words sounded in her dulled ears.  
*Unnatural reaction to unknown heat source.*

*I made the fire,* whispered her chained rage.

"These are very serious burns, Lita," the doctor said, "but I think I can repair the damage fairly easily." He touched her hand with plastic-coated fingers. "You may never have fingernails again, though. The flesh at the tips of your fingers has been completely destroyed." He leaned towards David. "See the bones showing here? Of course, we could have artificial ones fashioned once the deep damage is healed. That won't be covered, though. Cosmetic."

She nodded slowly, thinking how much she hated this place. Flakes of

dried blood drifted from her cheeks and ears, dancing before her eyes as the ventilation filter sucked them upwards. Not even airborne viruses could squeeze their way through the micromesh, let alone dust and lint. The air was freakishly pure. It scraped against her lungs with its cleanliness, sending messages to her brain that this was a harsh place, with bad air and bright lights.

There were two doctors now, and a nurse. One injected something into her neck, numbing her body and mind. David sat beside her head, smoothing her hair. They peeled away her skin, stripping it down to undamaged layers, placing the scorched specimens in long, flat bins for examination. Once they had torn her arms down to sticky bright pink, they began applying sharp smelling creams. One doctor explained the process amiably, probably to David. Damaged skin would be replaced by new. They pulled dripping pinkish matter from another set of bins. As the nurse held it taut as the doctors sliced the new skin to the correct shapes and lengths. A soft fit of laughter shook Lita's narrow chest as she watched them form the new gloves.

The nurse looked up, distressed, and murmured a doctor's name. "Don't worry. She never goes under," Lita's doctor said. "She's fine."

Lita contemplated a fit, wondered what they would do if she thrashed out with her naked arms, screamed and made the room dance. But now they were done, and her prank would be ineffective. They wrapped her arms in a new set of bandages, these a plastic derivative, flexible but tough and airtight. The doctors muttered instructions to David, placing responsibility on him without a second thought.

She sat up, startling the nurse again. Smiling sleepily, she scooted to the end of the table and hopped down.

"Lita." David turned to follow her.

"What?"

"Where are you going?"

"To sit down."

She crossed the white room with shuffling feet and flopped down in a chair meant for observing students. With her white, plastic arms folded in her lap, she leaned her head against the wall and closed her eyes.

"Doctor, the drugs are not working," David said.

"We'll up the dosage," the doctor said.

"It won't work."

"It always does."

"For a few days, maybe a month. But she'll just hurt herself again."

"There's always the risk of that, yes."

"Then find a better way."

"David, you know there's no better way. Trust me, if there was, I'd use it in a second. I don't want her doped up any more than you do."

"What if she doesn't need the drugs anymore? She told me in the car--"

"Her condition is highly unstable, David. She needs the drugs to lead a life of any degree of normality."

Lita stifled her laughter, felt it gurgling in her stomach. It was a familiar argument, one she'd lost to this doctor many times. Once she suggested that they reduce her meds, and allow her to exercise her mind alone for a certain amount of time, learn to control the energy that made her so different. Then, she thought, pressure wouldn't build up, and she wouldn't explode. Smug chuckling and pitying looks danced before her eyes in memory. Medical logic continued to pour out the doctor's mouth, piling up in David's ears. She lost interest, looked inward, examined minutiae.

The doctor left the room on a trip to the dispensary. David slumped in the chair beside hers, one he'd probably occupied many times before, eagerly soaking up medical knowledge, applying it to his exams, working his way closer to a white coat. "Lita."

"What?"

"Lita, you weren't sleeping."

"Duh."

He smiled and covered his eyes with one hand. She flexed her plastic coated fingers experimentally, formed them into claws, made soft growling noises.

"I've got evil robot arms."

He chuckled.

"How did you turn the faucet on, Lita?"

"What?"

"Back at your place, you locked the door and turned on the faucet, but your hands..."

She opened her eyes, revealing gleaming cerulean gems—free of the usual drugged fog. "I've figured it out," she whispered.

"What?"

"How to neutralize the drugs."

"What are you talking about?" His voice was tired, edged with annoyance.

"There's nothing wrong with me, David," she grinned. "I'm just more advanced than the rest of you. I can do things that you can't."

"Lita."

"I'm talking crazy, right? Well, sure. You think too much like a doctor already."

David smiled and smoothed her hair. "I will be one, soon," he apologized. "And I'll find a better way to help you."

"You don't need to, though. I know what to do."

She leaned forward, her eyes boring painfully into and through his. It had been years since she'd seen so clearly, felt so awake. Elation bubbled up in her stomach and shot to her head. She smiled at his silly

Sweetness—worrying for her, turning his colors the dreary gray-blue of a rainy day, knitting his brows where wrinkles would form in age. “They’re afraid of me, David, of the things I’m capable of. I’m different, and I always will be. I can’t have a normal life—not like this. All they want to do is keep me sedated enough to prevent me from drawing attention to myself. They don’t care whether I hurt myself as long as nobody finds out how different I really am. My mother is dead,” she whispered. “She faded away taking these pills, in a dream world where she was normal. I don’t want to die, David, not like that.”

“You’re not going to, Lita.” His voice rasped miserably.

She twisted in her chair, draped her legs over his knees, and leaned her head against his shoulder. “I’d ask you to help me,” she said, the fervency of escape thickening her voice, “but that wouldn’t be fair to you—to your future in a white coat.”

“Lita, what are you talking about?”

She grinned and tapped the white, plastic fingers on her legs. “I leave this stuff on for eight weeks, right?”

“Yeah, it’ll degrade on its own. And you can get it wet, and everything. It’s great stuff, accelerates healing and promotes antibodies to fight infection.”

“Yeah.” Her eyes wandered the room, came to rest on the door.

“So, what are you going to do?”

She giggled, kissed his lips quickly and stood up. “The problem is that you have a life, and I don’t yet. If you come with me, you’ll lose all of this time, whereas I’ll be making up for the years I’ve been sedated.”

“I don’t care about that, Lita.”

“Sure you do, everybody does. It’s totally normal, you know?” She felt a smile tugging at her lips. “I’ll come back for graduation, okay? And I’ll call you all the time.”

He smiled. “Can I at least drive you home?”

“No, but you can take me to the airport.”

\*\*\*

The hallways here echoed. Air hung as if trapped in static white noise. Sounds of feet scuffing, clothing shifting, breath catching roughly seemed to be swallowed into the abyss of blank walls and vicious light.

Lita walked straight and even, eyes closed. Her hand brushed against David’s on each backswing, but she felt nothing through the plastic. While her inner eye showed her the way, she let her body go numb and tingle all over with memory. The children inside the doors were not disturbed by their passing, not even when they stopped to peer at their sleeping bodies through the one-way mirrors. She hated it here, but she always came back.

David said it was good to come back. To remember. To count blessings.



But the problem was she'd never forgotten. Even with all the bouts of medication- some to numb her mind, some to scorch it—she couldn't forget.

With her eyes closed she felt the old pain in her arms where they'd stuck needles, the itchings at her chest where diodes monitored her heart, and the wires woven into her hair, listening to her brain. The brain wires sent messages to a machine in the wall that spent its time spitting out an endless strip of paper with sharp squiggly lines painted in red all over it. If she touched the paper, the nurses scolded her. If she fiddled with the wires or the diodes the nurses scolded her. They never scolded him.

David hadn't always been there in the bed across from her. It used to be her mother. But she died. The nurses took the sheets she slept on and packed them with Lita's clothes. They told her she should keep them, that she should remember things like that. She should remember her mother had nice sheets.

Lita remembered scratching quietly, but deeply under her covers, opening sores along the edges of the diodes just where the adhesives had leaked out. And she'd been looking at him all morning. All night too. The nurses would scold her when they read the brain paper and saw that she'd been up. Her brain always betrayed her. David was his name, because it said so on his papers. She'd read them, and that would get her another scolding. He looked like he was dead, but his eyeballs were moving even though they were closed. Her mom's eyes used to do that, too. She didn't like it. It was creepy. She swung her legs over the side of the bed and jumped to the floor.

There were tubes in her arm connected to a bag that hung from a metal hook in the ceiling. She held the tubes in front of her as she walked across the room so they wouldn't tug on her skin. It took her a long time to figure that out. For a while she'd just let them trail behind her, pulling on her skin. The metal hook slid through grids in the ceiling above her. She had to walk in straight lines, or she'd get stuck. It took her a while to figure that out, too. The nurses used to laugh when they'd come and find her standing in the middle of the room because her hook was stuck. Then they'd scold her.

She walked quietly to his bed, picking her feet up fast on the cold floor. If there had been enough slack in the tubes she would have leaned down to blow on the tiles where she'd stand so they would be warm for her toes. But they hadn't thought about cold toes when they stuck the tubes in her arm. She leaned over the kid and breathed. Sleeping colors hovered around him, quiet and blue. His eyes kept moving under his skin, but he didn't look up.

She poked him. His eyes opened and they weren't blue like hers.

They were sad and gray.

*What are you doing?* she hissed. He kept looking at her and his eyes were sad.

*Dying*, he said.

*Stupid, you're not dying*, she snapped. *You're all the wrong colors for dying.*

She opened her eyes, returned to the present.

"Why not?" she asked again.

"I can't, Lita."

"Just the airport. One ticket, it'll be perfect."

"No."

She sighed slowly, noting the way his steely colors had melded into a cohesive bubble around him. He was resolved. "I'm not a baby," she muttered.

He chuckled and turned to see her face. "Sure, you've just never gone anywhere by yourself, never bought your own food, never had a job."

"I've got money."

"Your savings?"

"Yeah."

"Be serious."

"I am! It's a little money."

He sighed and stopped walking. He leaned against a darkened window. "And there's your arms too. You really shouldn't go, Lita. The possibility of infection in an open environment would skyrocket. You need to stay in the clean air and take your antibiotics." He rattled a clear bottle of blue capsules at her.

"Sure, doctor man." She flipped him a long plastic finger. "There's no way I'm swallowing any more pills."

"I checked them, Lita. The sedatives are separate." He held up a second bottle full of green pills. "Antibiotics will boost your system, not slow it down."

"And what if I want to be chemical-free for three minutes?"

"Jesus, I'm not even chemical-free. Nobody is these days."

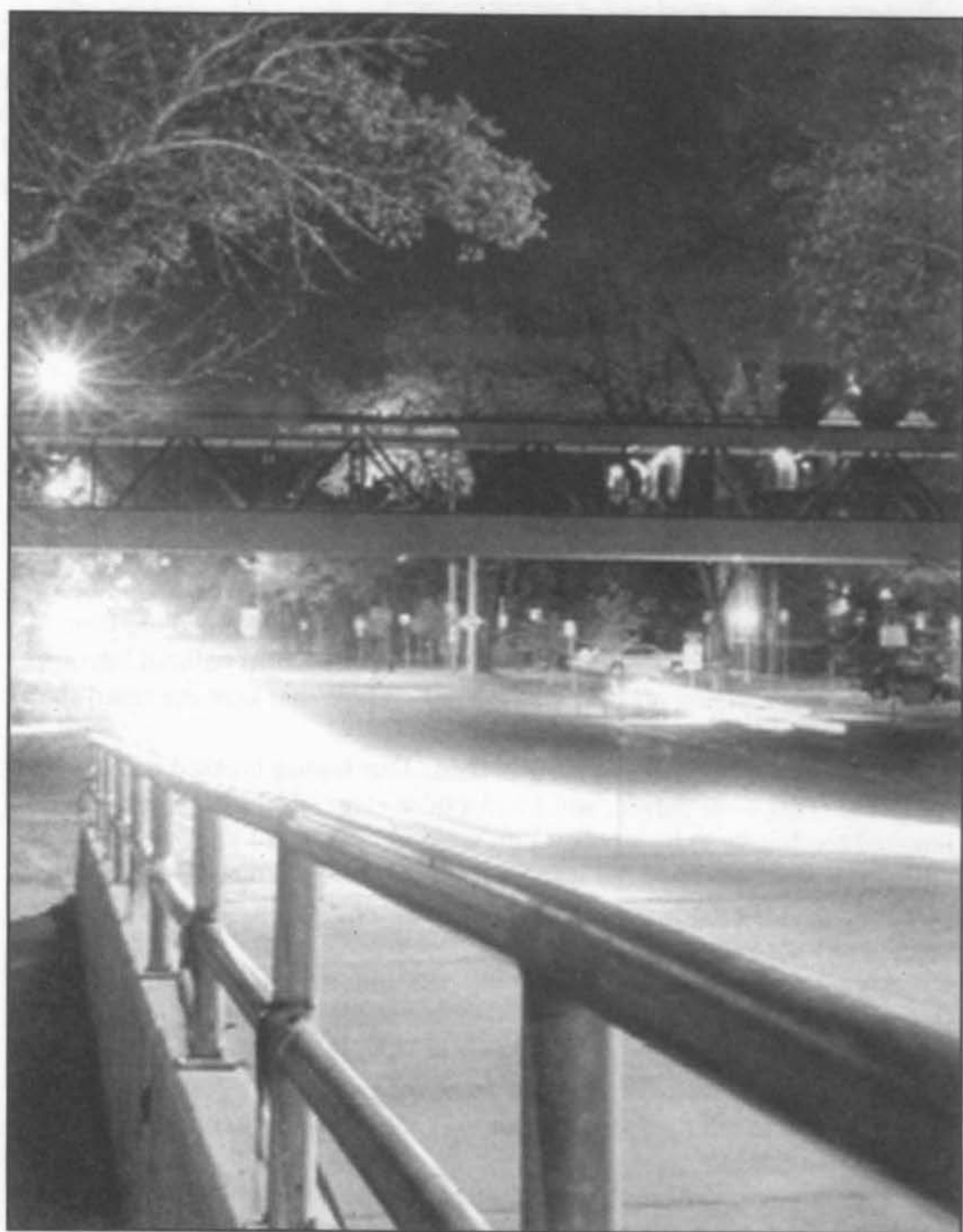
"What do you take?"

"Suppressants," he said, "to keep the cancer from coming back."

"Oh." She fidgeted and avoided his eyes though she felt them pressing her. "You think I should keep taking the pills?"

David pushed himself away from the wall and put his hands around her waist. "I won't pretend to know what it's like for you," he said. "But I know that you shouldn't leave."

Lita let her head fall against his chest and wound her plastic arms around him. Irrational tears pricked at her eyes. "Alright," she whispered. "But I want you to know that I hate this. I hate that they've trapped me."



*Shawna Widdel*

## Casey Gordon

---

### *Dear Woman*

**D**ear Woman,

I had a dream, one night, when my head held nothing more than black and white. One night when the aching barrenness forced out all falsities. One night when my brain spewed truth. I dreamt I knew you as a small girl, and you held me. That was it. You held me. It was good. It was simple. It was beautiful.

I woke and the pounding was gone, but came flooding back was life. Stuff. Things. No more specific than that, just stuff. Easy came hard and hard was extant. I realized that I had grown up and that I was a woman. I had breasts too large and experience too lean. I bled life and it tasted bitter. "Why doesn't it taste sweet?" I asked you. But I didn't have you to hold me. Even if you had been there, my pride would have stopped me from letting you do so. How could I be a woman in this world without having known you as a young girl? It was the only image that kept me clear, the only thought that kept me crisp.

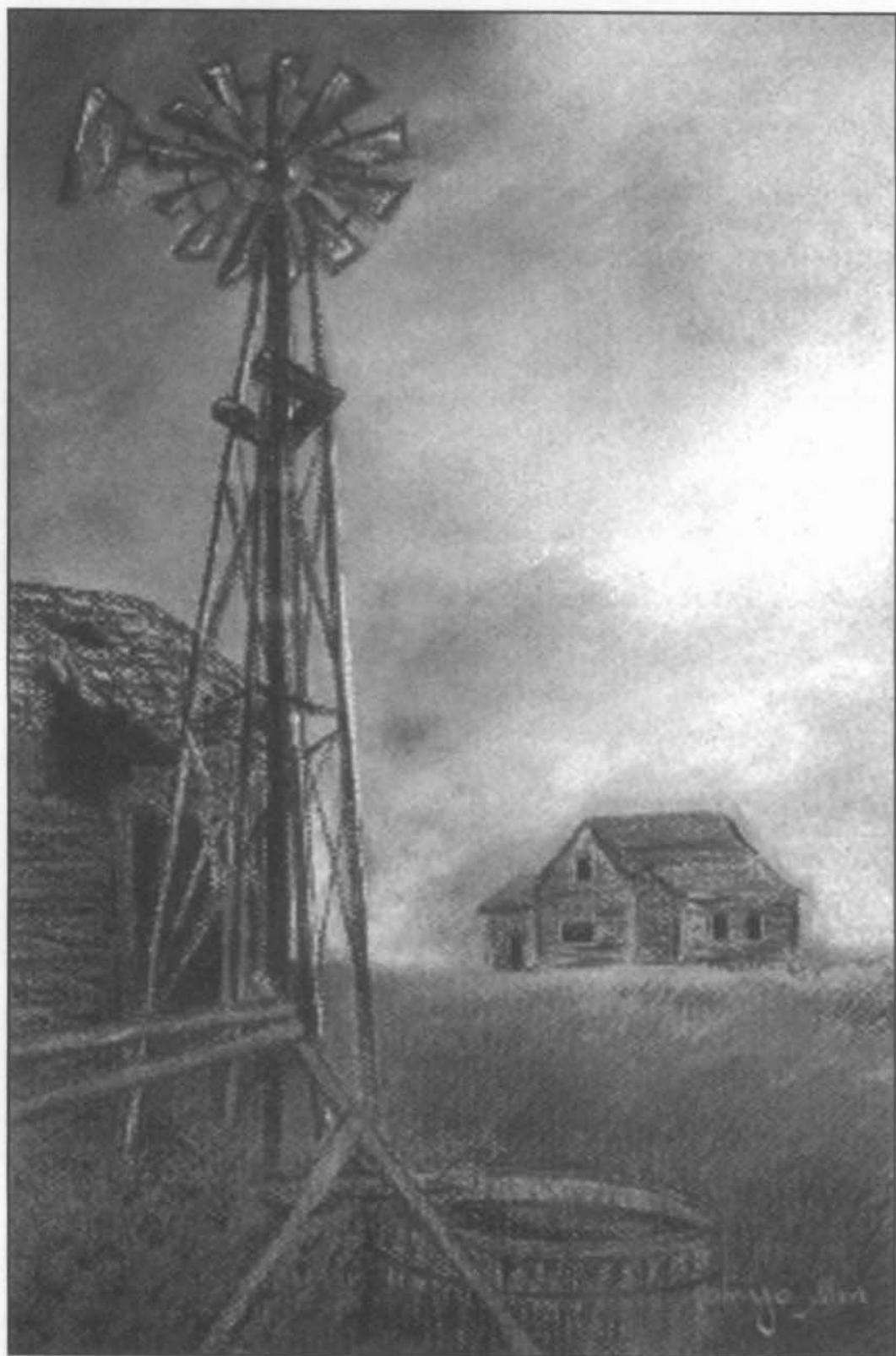
You don't know that I knew you then. Our bodies crossed paths at age nineteen. You wore purple, and I had a nose ring. You still giggled, and I laughed too loudly to be a lady. You were in love, and I knew sex. We sat and talked and I watched the way your mouth drooped on one side when you smiled. That made me giggle. I teased you about it. Another birthday came and soon your heart was broken.

My grandmother used to brush my hair with the back end of a brush so it wouldn't hurt my head. I don't remember much about her. She was firm, but she didn't dare harm my black tendrils. She ended her days in diapers, my mother by her side. I wish I would have known her better. I wish she had been able to tell me stories about my mother, about her best friend, about her first kiss.

You remind me of my grandmother. Was she like you when she was nineteen? She was carefree. I know this, because I've dreamt her, too. I knew her when she was nineteen. She giggled, just like you. She brushed her fingers through her hair and wished her nose smaller. She wore sundresses and batted her long lashes at unsuspecting boys. She, too, got her heart broken. Eight children later, one abortion, one dead son, two dead husbands, all she had left was that brush. Life hardened her face...it

was wearisome to smile, but the intermittent smile was defiant when being formed back into a frown. Only the brush was soft. Like rain against my eight-year-old head.

She held me. Like you did. She held me to her breast, which was still warm despite sour, cold life. But not you. You held me as a little girl. You held me in your hand. You never clenched, only let me drift from thumb to heel to tip of a frail finger. But mostly I rested in the fleshy part. The part between the first and middle finger. I liked it there. It was soft, sort of like the way life feels when you're a small girl.



*Tanya Alm*

Sara Hallberg

---

## *Muckraking as Social Expression*

The most profound characteristic of the Industrial Revolution, truly a phenomenon in its own respect, was the American people's change of pace. Almost overnight entire rural and foreign populations moved to large cities and got in line to keep up with new machines of hyper-productivity. What naturally must come with redesigning the way that American society functions as a whole is alteration in the ways American people approach and interpret that society. Almost as quickly, new genres of literature and journalism that reflected a more woeful side of the human spirit began to circulate the nation. Muckraking, as it was first coined by Ellery Sedgewick in 1904, perfectly illustrates the influence of change and reform on peoples' most unique and longest tradition, their expression.

Muckrakers were a new wave of independent journalists. That is, they claimed no ties to any cause with the sole exception of truth. It would be inaccurate to say they considered themselves unbiased, but it would be more fair to say they were strongly motivated in a different direction than had been previously explored by journalists. Educating the masses about the lesser-known facts was the goal of every muckraker. This is quite a contrast to muckraking's predecessor, advocacy journalism, in which from early colonial times writers and publications alike were sponsored by private, corporate, or even political parties. Only information that was beneficial to the image of the party involved was allowed past the careful eye of their editors. When Ida Tarbell, Upton Sinclair, David Graham Phillips, and Lincoln Steffens picked up their pens to uncover corruption in business and politics, they not only began what is known as the investigative journalism period (thereby laying the foundations for journalism as we know it today), they also exposed and disbanded corruption within journalism itself.

Upton Sinclair, author of *The Jungle*, said in an essay, "You very seldom hear of any attempt to disprove the statements of the Muckrake Man." He was correct. So-called critics of the muckraking movement, such as Walter Lippman, are not inclined to discuss the integrity of the writer nor content of the writing, but rather the questions of "why" and "what will happen" regarding the causes of and the effects on society re-

spectively. Lippman, in his book *Drift and Mastery* (1914), gave a commentary on muckrakers being merely responsive to the discontent masses. Tales of corruption and conspiracy were the result of "the feverish frenzy of illiterate thousands thrown out of kilter by the rack and strain of modern life...there must have been real cause for dissatisfaction or the land notorious for its worship of success would not have turned so savagely upon those who had achieved it." Large American cities were supposed to be a sort of Garden of Eden holding promises for millions of immigrants of better life than what they had previously known. A reverse Exodus occurred, and the participants many times came with nothing except the ability to work hard and faith. When these ancient work ethics failed and they found exactly opposite what they hoped to find, the people then were clamoring for someone to tell them that nothing was wrong with them personally, but instead there must be something wrong with the way that others had come to realize the American dream. Muckraking reached its highest point when citizens began to understand that wealth was not readily available to everyone.

This type of investigation began to spur feelings of collaboration among the downtrodden and hopeless. They now "knew" things, and it was a way for them to come together and to point fingers at the causes of their unhappiness. A new sense of community was prevalent, and muckrakers claimed to be preservers of the "local color" that came out of these new communities. Muckraking as a grassroots movement brought the truth of the distant rich and powerful into a more understandable format for the average citizen. Investigation into the very neighborhoods of these poverty-stricken people helped to highlight the other side, the familiar local places and "wonderful and savory names that had never been elevated into prose before...an original contribution to American literature and social life," says Robert Cantwell, novelist and critic.

Local color encompasses many things, but one of the key ingredients of local color is the way the people of a particular culture tell their stories. American literature made a sudden jump from the Romantic period to the Realist period, of which muckraking was a direct result. Realism was thought to be a reflection of the "common folk" which replaced the Romantic trends of grandeur and high imagination. People were suddenly interested in reading about things they saw every day, albeit a deeper look into the everyday things, rather than using literature as a chance to invent a better world of happy endings. As mentioned in the publisher's note of a 2001 reprint of *The Jungle*, Romanticism was "largely the province of the upper classes who both created it and peopled it" while Realism "relentlessly documented the grim realities of...the breakdown in traditional values, and the dehumanization of the urban poor." In the novel *The Jungle*, Upton Sinclair begins the story with a great wedding feast full of music, dancing, Lithuanian tradition, and happy babies. While shortly thereafter the narrator



changes tone and focuses on the tragedy surrounding these peoples' lives, we are nevertheless introduced to the characters as humans who hold onto the things that make them human. One could ask in this instance *why* the gray-colored world of muckraking so suddenly replaced the colorful and whimsical stories of most cultures' traditions. *What will happen* from this ideological shift that will return these people to that lively state? It would be difficult for all immigrant and rural peoples to "take back" the culture which they lost, and it would be even more difficult to convince their bosses to give back the free time that allowed for continued practice of these cultures. Muckraking did not essentially hope to revive the lost color of culture, instead, its purpose was to get the common folk interested in directing their time and energy toward active participation in the workings of their new culture, democracy. Muckrakers became the ultimate mobilizers of the fourth branch of government, the people.

The Progressive movement was well underway in American politics during the beginning of the twentieth century. Muckraking was not necessarily intended as a political tool, but even Progressive leaders such as Theodore Roosevelt became avid supporters of this type of journalism because of its connection to the people he hoped to help. In a speech to the House of Representatives on April 14, 1906, Roosevelt said, "The men with the muckrakes are often indispensable to the well-being of society, but only if they know when to stop raking the muck...if they gradually grow to feel that the whole world is nothing but muck their power of usefulness is gone." Irving Dillard, a University of Pennsylvania historian and writer himself, defended the purpose of the muckraker as "[to] rake the muck at their feet but only as the necessary first step in clearing that muck away. As they labored, they lifted their eyes to a cleaner world." Muckrakers wrote about a large number of people who probably could not read what was being written about them, nor did they understand the workings of the government in which they lived, but the effort of the muckrakers is notable, and it did not go off all that unsuccessfully. Edward Bok encouraged ghetto dwellers to ask for lights for their dark apartment hallways, and they got them; David Graham Phillips worked tirelessly to get citizens to charge for ratifying three historical constitutional amendments, and they were amended; and Jacob Riis brought the power of choosing state representatives away from state officials and into the hands of the voting population. It is clear that in these instances, muckraking had no direct correlation with the government or the reform therein. In fact, men in positions of power probably did not blink at the sight of negative journalism, but the people did. When the problems of their own lives were put in black and white in front of their faces, it was easier to see what was so horrible and unjust about their situations rather than writing them off as "just another thing to work through." Something had to be done.

It is true enough that all injustice was not wiped from the face of

the earth, but the mood and the atmosphere of American society definitely started to pick up. Muckraking died out fairly quickly around 1914, and we did not see another movement like it until the civil rights movements of the 1960s. It is interesting to note, though, that shortly after the first wave of muckraking the "roaring 20s" took the country by storm. We look back on that time today as an era filled with excitement, new social liberties, and comfort. The same is true for the seventies and eighties which closely followed the second wave. A higher quality of life became more accessible to American citizens who previously could only dream of such things. These coincidences are like the chicken or the egg syndrome in that it is impossible to name one factor the cause and the other the effect, but clearly there are parallels that exist between a few people speaking out, calling attention to certain disturbing issues, and the audiences responding with action. Muckraking as a change in human expression had a very significant meaning in this context: American people no longer chased but expressed a desire for better life. And by making this desire public, their fellows joined and strengthened the force behind this fight for this life.

Anonymous

---

## *The Invisible Monster*

I'm not sure when it started, exactly. I think it was some time in junior high. I tried to stop it, but I couldn't. It was invisible. No drug or vaccine could save me. I could try to ignore it, but that didn't work either. What was I to do? What am I talking about anyway? Well, it's hard to explain this monster that roams through my head. It's like a giant bear that one day suddenly awoke from its slumber. No one saw it happen. The first indication was when it unleashed its horrific powers upon its victims. The result was a nightmare. What was going on? What happened? Then, it struck again. It was even worse this time. What could be done? Absolutely nothing could be done. Measures could be taken to decrease its potency, but the monster would always be out there, stalking, hunting, waiting to attack.

This monster that I'm referring to is called Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD), a mental "disease" that's due to some kind of chemical imbalance in the brain. I've never really told anyone about this. Very few people understand, or care. It's something that makes me feel depressed and lonely. It makes it difficult to be around others, sometimes. I know it will never go away. I can only take preventive steps to control it. In essence, then, it's like a terminal illness. But, let me start from the beginning.

As I mentioned, OCD started to affect me sometime in junior high (or maybe even elementary school). Things started to happen that I couldn't explain. Images and all kinds of thoughts would reverberate through my head like a ball in a racquetball court. Round and round they would go. I would think about something indefinitely. Other things would happen too. I would check things very meticulously. I wouldn't be satisfied until I had checked something a dozen times. Even then, I would still think about it. To be quite honest, I never really thought about it. It was just something that happened. I thought it was normal. It got much worse, however.

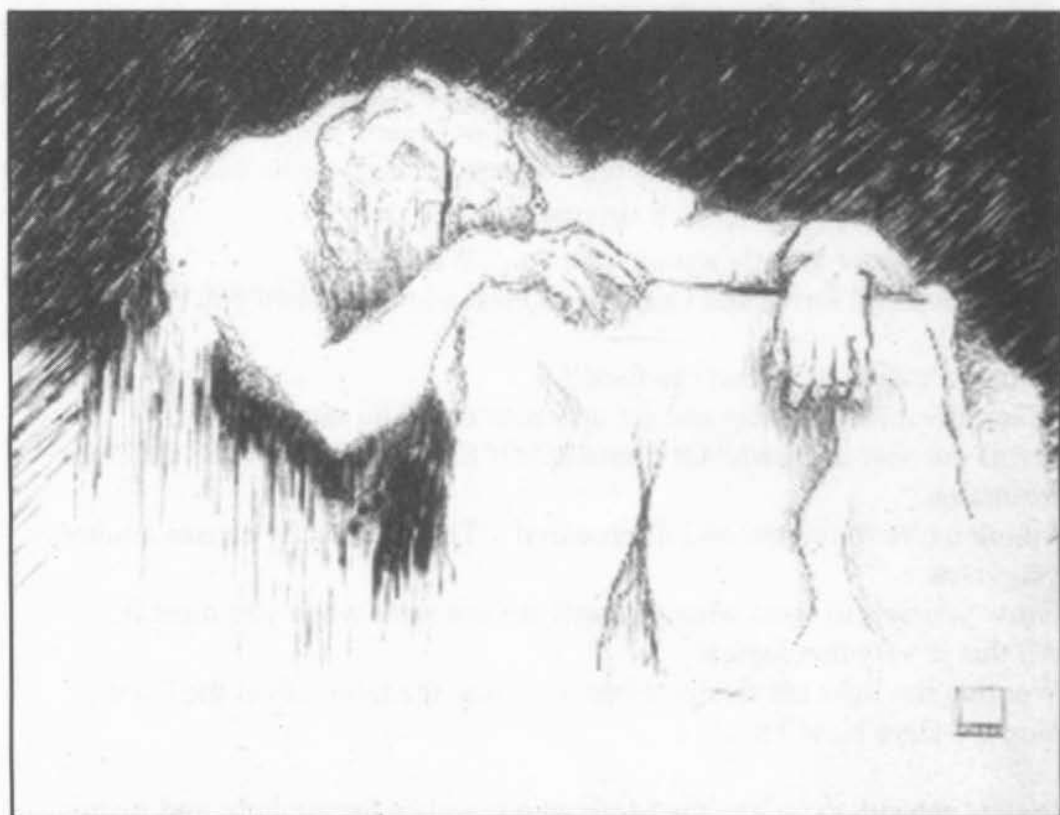
Tenth grade was the most horrible year of my life. My OCD symptoms escalated to new heights. However, at this time, I didn't know I had OCD, so I literally thought that I was insane. Unspeakable images would run through my head. I would wash my hands until they were raw. I never thought that they were clean. I thought that our house was dirty and unorganized. I felt uncomfortable and anxious all the time. I was never relaxed. My only break from the torture was sleep. And man, did I sleep! I would

come home from school and just zonk out. It felt so good to drift off into the magical, mystical land of slumber. It was like a drug. As it got worse and worse, suicide popped into my head more frequently. I really wanted to do it. It would make the nightmare stop forever.

I'm not sure when and how I figured everything out. I think it was when I talked to my mom. She decided to take me to some kind of psychological "clinic" and talk to someone. It was here that my "disease" was diagnosed. I couldn't believe it. How could something like this happen to me? I felt like I had been told I had cancer. I was in total denial. I blew it off and told my mom that I wouldn't be going back there. So, I carried on. I ran the usual gauntlet through hell day in and day out. I felt totally lost. I had no hope. I decided to go back to the clinic and give it another try. This time, it lasted a little while longer. Not much, however. I couldn't confess to myself that I had a problem that was out of my control.

As the year passed, things got a little better, if I remember correctly. I got more involved in school activities. This helped "preoccupy" my mind with something else. However, there was that nagging feeling that I was still different from others. I never have gotten rid of that one. Anyway, as I said, things got better. I finally started to realize that my problem wasn't my fault. I wasn't a bad person. I was definitely not crazy. I eventually went back to see the psychologist who I had seen before. This time, I followed through more than before. I went to appointments regularly and was making good progress. It was here that I started to really understand OCD. The more I learned, the better I felt. I was like a soldier in training. I felt I could handle the "enemy". I wasn't immune, but I was better prepared for the trenches than before. Eventually, I stopped going to appointments. This time it was more of a logistical reason (getting to the office that was 45 minutes away) than a motivational reason. I finally felt like I was free from OCD (relatively speaking, of course).

So, here I am, more or less. I'm in college and doing okay. College has been a nice turn of events for me. My OCD isn't as bad here as it was back at home. Also, I'm so busy here at school that my mind is always "occupied" by one thing or another. Not all is peachy keen, however. I still have some issues. For example, I feel really "old". With all of the images that have passed through my brain, I feel like I've been through a war. I guess you could say that I kind of feel violated. My youthful innocence has been stripped away. I don't know if that makes any sense, but one thing is for sure, I still feel cut off from the world. It's like my OCD sets me apart. I don't quite know how to explain it. Being around others has caused me so many painful memories that most of the time I prefer to be by myself. I wouldn't say that I'm anti-social or anything. I don't avoid social situations, but I don't seek them out actively. But, I am going to change this in college (hopefully!). I'm going to push past old boundaries and set new ones.



*Joshua Tangen*

Leif Bergerud

---

*Natural Metaphors*  
*(Fluttering Existentialism)*

**S**tanding one step from the reality of your Dream you hesitate and turn back...

WANT WHAT YOU WANT WHEN YOU GET IT!

Why don't you? What's wrong with you? Wake Up!

You Strive and Strive and Quest and Quest and then when you reach the goal...

You don't want it...What the fuck?!

"Tear down the building and set up a new one!" he says...

Is this our fear of Death? Of Finitude? Of Ending? Of Growth? Of Transformation?

I think we're immature and ill-prepared – That eventually causes adultery you know...

Grow yourself to want what you will always want when you meet it...

All this is very theological...

Wanting the light but fleeing from it... Hear the hum...Feel the Roar...

You are Here Now There.

...

Better, instead, to be like the Moth who searches for the light and rushes headlong into it,

Rushing faster and faster it desires truth more and more as it closes in...

Then, in a moment too close for you, it realizes a great truth...

The Light is a Flame,

And the Flame will engulf it - immolate it - if the moth continues on.

What does the Moth do? You know the answer

It says "Yes!" to life! to truth!

It rushes on one last time, into the light...into the infinite night...across the last threshold

In the next two blinks of your eye its wings heat up and burst into flames, then its head ripples with a blue engulfing flame, next its torso, then its legs, finally its sensitive feet are lit a fire...

It has become what it has always sought?  
Can you do that?

And now we see once again that the world is full of, comprised by, poetic metaphors...

Some not so poetic...

That is the story of the Moth... a natural metaphor...

And all you who lie in bed at night thinking of yourselves as being courageous should ask yourselves if you can do what the moth does...

Do you have the courage of this quiet hero?

Do you have the courage to embrace the truth no matter what the cost?

Do you really want your dreams to be real?...

Or do you instead shrug it all off and pretend something else is more important?

The answer is your life.

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:

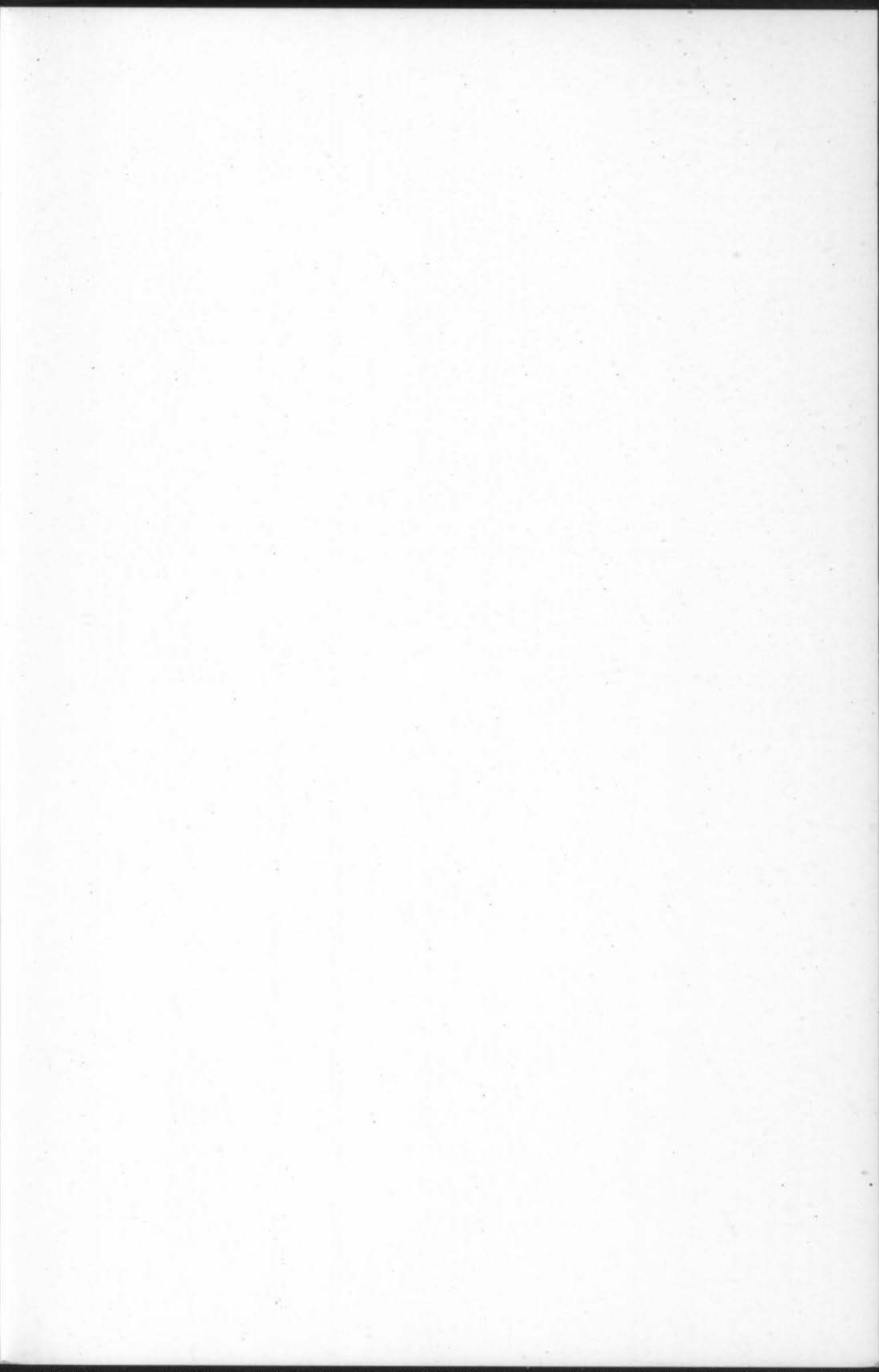
1. Bring the art work to Jeanne's office.
2. Include your name and phone number on the back of your artwork.
3. Complete a Submission Release Form and leave it in one of the drop boxes.

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](mailto: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

9223-0066