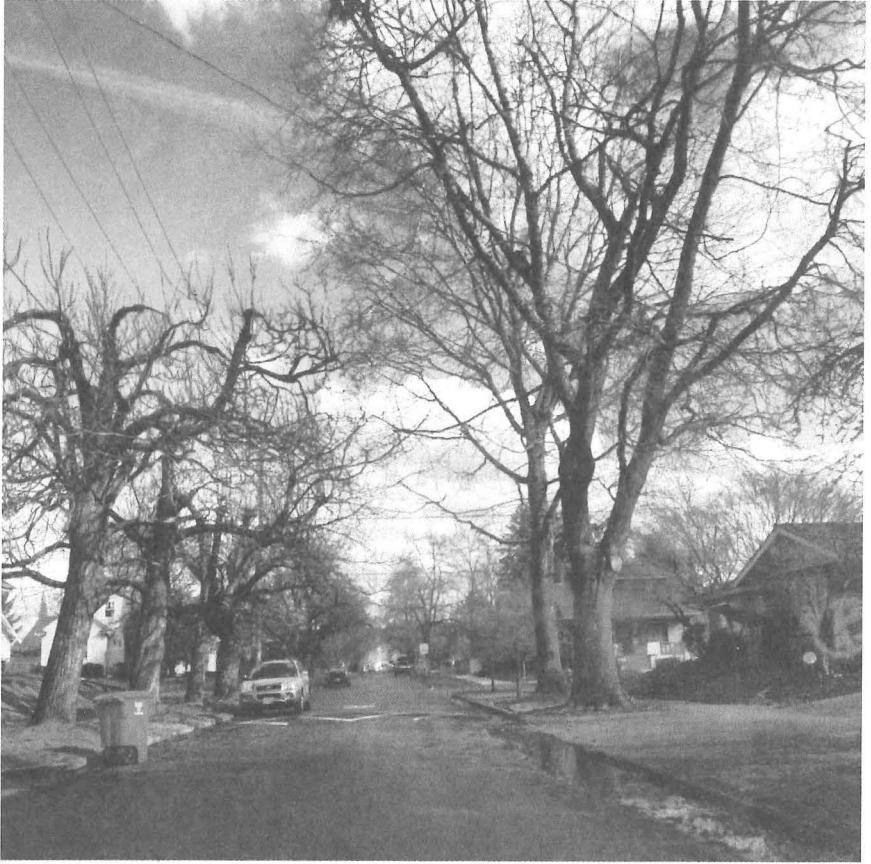


# THE PROMETHEAN

Department: The Promethean, Deeper Roots (2013-2014)

THE LITERARY ARTS JOURNAL  
OF CONCORDIA UNIVERSITY-PORTLAND



## DEEPER ROOTS

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## DEEPER ROOTS

2013/2014 ISSUE

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*Storms make trees take deeper roots.*

-Dolly Parton

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## ROOTS

Every year, the staff of *The Promethean* strives to compile a magazine that tells the story of a greater group of writers. Though all are different, they all write about a greater Truth.

This year, we decided to inspire the writers by taking a quote from an American legend, Dolly Parton.

“Storms make trees take deeper roots”

Pain and sorrow are among the strongest of emotions and a great equalizer among all people. Though sorrow makes for mournful works, it is through the hardships and pain that we are better able to experience the goodness that the world has to offer.

When considering pieces to be published in *The Promethean*, the editors always consider the audience of our publication. We always strive to find pieces that give voice to those that might be struggling with the same issues or those that might have thought they were isolated in their struggles. I believe that we have more than succeeded in this.

Through the bravery of all of our writers and the determination of both Holly Goodrich, Dr. Kim Knutsen and the editors of *The Promethean*, I am proud to present to you *Deeper Roots*.

- Racann James, Managing Editor

*The world breaks everyone and afterward many are strong at the broken places.*

- Earnest Hemingway, *A Farewell to Arms*



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## Biographies

## Lately

*McKenna Rinta*

I want to crack open my skull  
And let the blue jays fly out  
I want daisies to sprout from my eye sockets  
And stretch their petals towards the sun  
I want to take an axe to my ankles  
Permanently dislodging my feet  
I won't hold them back anymore  
Let them walk where they want  
I'll stay behind  
Looking at my ankles  
And counting the rings  
For the years I've been asleep

## A Bientôt

*Kayla Suvak*

"She is fading fast! She is too weak to live!"

The pity in the nurses' eyes screamed that the end was near. Their lips moved making sound that I could not hear. I was too focused on the delicate flower in front of me. The moment I locked onto her rosy cheeks and button nose I loved her. She was perfect. Her eyes were squinted shut, but I knew they were a more brilliant blue than had ever been seen in this world before.

"My dear, her heart is faltering too severely. She will not last the next few minutes. The lack of nutrients and the earliness of her arrival, not to mention the amount of blood loss you both sustained, well, there is nothing we can do. I am sorry." The seriousness in the doctor's voice emulated the voice of a captain telling his crew that there was no hope. Their precious ship was sinking.

"I know, but let me hold her. Please. I want to hold her just this once."

"I am not sure that I can recommend that."

One of the nurses fixed Doctor Roberts with a piercing eagle-like stare; the anger in her eyes was unfathomable. I had never seen a woman so enraged outside of a television show. She was a legitimate momma grizzly bear in full on attack mode.

"You have GOT to be kidding me! Daniel, let the girl hold her. She is never going to get another chance and you want to take that away from her. Jesus Christ, man! Where is your humanity?"

Sheepishly, Dr. Roberts left the room, muttering something about "not wanting to get in the way of women's hormones." The nurses looked at me with glimmers of success in their eyes; all we had going for us now were the small victories.

As they delicately placed her in my withering arms, I looked at our reflection in the hospital window. The sheen of sweat on my forehead glittered in the light. I looked as though I had died or was about to. My eyes were no longer their sparkling blue, but a faded, silvery gray. I had failed her. I had given into a darkness that destroyed my one chance at happiness. I was nothing more than a

skeleton, a shadow. She was beyond beautiful. She was more exquisite than all the stars of Heaven. Leaning down to kiss her cheek, I breathed in the distinct baby smell. A smell of white lilies – pure, innocent, angelic sweetness.

“Arabella.”

“What?” Nurse Linda turned at the sound of my muttering. “What did you say?”

“Arabella. Her name is Arabella.”

“That’s pretty. Where did you find that name?”

“I found it in my heart, where she will be for all my days.”

There were tears in her eyes. I hadn’t meant to make her cry. I had never meant to hurt anyone. Nurse Linda’s chocolate-brown eyes were filled with sadness, but it would never be anywhere near as deep as mine. My sadness and shame were buried in the deepest caverns of the ocean. Never to be removed.

The heart monitor began to beat faster, a race against time for my little lily. Faster and faster.

*Beep. Beep. BEEP. BEEP. BEEP!!!!*

She was fighting a tiny little fight. One she had no chance of winning. She arrived much too early with no strength in her muscles. Her heart seemed to be battling as though she was sprinting to the finish line. It was her first and last race to home.

*Beep. Beep. Beep. Beep. BEEEEPPPPPPP!!!*

There was no sound left. No sound, but the dull moan of the flat line. I cradled her close to my heart one last time.

“I am so sorry little one. This is not goodbye, my sweet Arabella. This is a *bientôt*, until we meet again.”

## A Morning

*Anonymous*

I force open my eyes and gaze out the 6:00 am window. The dense fog outside creeps in through my nostrils, into my lung tissue, my blood cells, bone marrow. I feel lifeless and numb within my dad’s old goose-down sleeping bag; my thoughts utterly separate from my exhausted body. My soul hovers above, beholding a depleted bag of bones with bloodshot bagged eyes clenched closed below a retreating hairline.

My mind continues trying to transport me into another world.

Cursing under my breath, I sit up and rub my swollen eyes. My bag slips from my shoulders and the December breeze takes its place, affectionately stroking my back and neck with its sharp, icy nails. I shiver, swearing.

My soul is awake yet physically paralyzed within my body.

I stand; my comfort and warmth drop to the floor. I inspect the dirty spider-webbed mirror on the wall, confused. Who is this shaggy, slit-eyed disgrace that looks back at me? I make a few faces trying to recognize myself again. I look old; sentimentally I wonder where the years went. Then I realize I will be thinking that for the rest of my life. I pick some brown dead skin off my face, brush my teeth and try to spit the filthy pink mixture in the sink.

Mom always told me to keep a clean mouth.

In a second, I am in the kitchen pouring some foul-smelling Maxwell into my cup. Coffee is wintertime cocaine; my only weapon to protect myself from sideways rain and frozen knuckles. Imagine it, black, burning hot within my empty turning stomach, caffeine seeps into my blood and jumpstarts a dormant heart.

A heart that struggles to beat on its own.

I slide outside, the bitter wind wraps around my face and stings my eyes resulting in tears. I am not crying. I swear. My irises twitch with the passing cars, crawling pedestrians, swaying skeleton trees, and the stirring scene around me. I keep my head down, weaving, and turning my shoulders, maneuvering to my bus stop. As I walk, I study the weathered cracks on the pavement, and relate with them. They are weathered; soon, they would have to be replaced.

I feel that way sometimes.

Seattle's masculinity is obscured by deathly gray this December morning. The buildings look like the ancient tombstones of some primordial breed of megatherium. The prided city of the Northwest bustles with so many Asians, defeated Juggalos, white white-collared businessmen (where do they go home to?).

Seattle in the morning is something I have never loved.

I wait for my bus on a bench, invisibly observing everyone around me. I sometimes feel as if they all feel me inspecting them, knowing something I do not, some secret information that I have just missed. I like to look at their solemn eyes. Look into their glazed eyes. I never have to speak to anyone that way.

I stab into their eyes and I have their tender souls in my hands.

I do not have to wait long. My bus crawls out of the fog and hisses to a stop, the hiss bringing me back to reality. The beast opens its doors with an earsplitting pop. As I load my bike, I overhear a father making his goodbyes to his college son. I smile.

I wish I could say goodbye to my dad again.

And then the bus jolts forward, and my life jolts forward, and that morning is behind me.

## High Hopes

*Katie Wartell*

She bathed her shame in colorful bottomless spirits.  
Suds spewed from her raspberry chin.

She sank deeper into her tarnished misfortune.

One sip too many, ten drinks

Gone...

Toxins filled stomach, swirled as she walked away.

Guilty...

Grief...

Brackish droplets touched the newly bloodstained gashes.

Piercing deeply until effort was forgotten.

She faded fast, slumped there with hope of redemption.

Hope never came through.

**Parallel**  
*Katie Wartell*



## Rape is a Four Letter Word

First Place in "A Single Thread in the Grand Design" Contest

### Notes from our judge:

*From the first jarring sentence, "Rape is a Four Letter Word" grabs its audience and refuses to let go until the end is reached. It is a beautiful, heart-breaking ride that is articulated with an honest clarity that echoes long after the piece is finished. The author's narration throughout the story, peppered with strong, vivid word choice, makes this story difficult to read yet impossible to put down. That tension is what makes the writing so moving and powerful. I was left inspired by the emotional strength and hope encapsulated by the ending. This piece highlights the kind of honor and healing that all victims deserve.*

Rape is a four letter word. Like the word "shit" or "damn" or "f\*\*\*". People don't like to use it. People are scared to use it. I am not afraid to use it anymore.

I had been on a trip to San Diego just one day before. My back and legs were the reddish pink color of a well done tri-tip steak. My body hurt but I was in a great mood. I was going home to see my best friend, a goofy kid named Michael, and my boyfriend.

My boyfriend, Trevor, was a dark haired and ill-tempered person. He was pushy and aggressive at times, but I was young, and I was in love. I was a stupid little girl of sixteen, but, like many girls my age, I was sure I had found The One.

I showed up at Michael's house, where the three of us were supposed to be hanging out that day, and took in the sights of home around me. His modest house had become a regular hang out spot; I spent many afternoons eating his food, sitting on his couch, and watching his TV. A huge tree loomed over his well-shaded front yard, but spots of sun shone through the leaves like beams from heaven itself. They were warm and welcoming. The grass felt warm and damp on my bare feet and his decrepit RV sat unused in his driveway. He had bought the RV a year ago but it sat like a sad metal skeleton rusting away in the rain. The only time anyone ever went in it was on the rare occasions when we felt like it would be more fun to hang out in the RV as opposed to the house.

At first everything was great, we watched movies and played games and caught up on the events of the past week when I was gone. I lounged on the couch like a fat cat, relaxed, leaning back against my boyfriend, chatting with my friends and enjoying the relaxed atmosphere. It was a nice change.

Trevor and I had been fighting relentlessly the past few weeks. I'd go to bed every night after being called a bitch or a moron and cry myself to sleep, wishing that somehow I could make it better. I was certain that it was me, not him, who was doing something wrong. But now, with his fingers tangled in mine, I was sure that everything was going to be okay.

Suddenly I got this vibe that everything was different. "Let's go hang out in the RV." Michael said cheerfully, exchanging an uncertain look with Trevor, who just nodded and agreed.

So we went to the RV. It was small and hot and smelled like must and dirt. My nose wrinkled as we went in but I didn't protest. In fact, I continued to joke and laugh with my friends like nothing was different; I convinced myself everything was fine, nothing was different.

We chatted innocently for a few more minutes before Michael abruptly got up and said he was going to go inside for a moment to get something. The second the door closed Trevor was on top of me. I took to it at first and eagerly started kissing him too, until he reached into my jeans. I gently pushed him away.

"Not today," I whispered. "Michael is inside and I'm on my period anyways."

"Oh who cares?" Trevor said, forcing himself a little harder. "And Mike won't be back for a while. We talked about it."

Suddenly, it dawned on me what was going on. Trevor and Michael had made a deal. At some point during the day, Michael knew that he was supposed to leave so that Trevor and I could have sex. I had never been informed. My stomach knotted at the idea that I was never consulted about this.

I pushed back on him a little bit more. "I'm on my period, I don't want to do it."

"It's fine Sammie," Trevor murmured, unbuttoning my jeans.

"I don't care. It doesn't bother me."

"I don't want to, Trevor."

He sighed exasperatedly. "It's not that big of a deal, Sammie." I could see him glaring at me and I felt about as helpless as a bug under a boot. On one hand, I could just go with it and be uncomfortable, or I could say no and go through more hurtful fighting.

With a nervous sigh, I leaned back and let him continue what he was doing. After he had stripped my jacket and jeans off of me, he forcefully pulled my tampon out of me. That's when I panicked.

"No, no, no, no, no, no, no..." I repeated over and over, my face burning with shame, kicking myself up into a seated position while he grabbed at my legs and tried to get me back onto my back.

"Sammie! Just knock it off!" He growled, rolling me over onto my side and digging his fingers into my hips.

I struggled a bit more but eventually gave up. I thought about the must in the air. I thought about the blood running down my thighs and onto the sheets like maroon, violent tears. I thought about how bad my sunburns hurt with him moving against them. How humiliated I was. I curled into a ball and sobbed while he finished. No condom. No dignity. No love. Just sex.

Finally, he finished and looked at me. I was sobbing like a child and completely still. My thighs, legs, belly and breasts were smeared with menstrual blood. I had fingernail indents in my hips and sides where he grabbed me. The more I noticed these things, the more I sobbed. I felt broken in two.

Now that he was finished, he cared. Or at least he acted like he did. He held me while I sobbed and whispered that he was sorry. My skin crawled like a thousand burning insects. My sunburns ached from the friction of the wool blankets we were lying on. My eyes burned from tears. He kissed my tears away and my stomach churned.

Finally, I mopped myself up and put my clothes back on. I sweated underneath the jacket I was wearing but my shirt had his bloodied handprints on my breasts so I dared not take it off.

I was dazed the rest of the day, convinced that it wasn't rape.



He had just missed me. Truly missed me, that's all it was. He had just wanted to be with me like a man and woman should be.

I told myself this for another year. And I held his hand and kissed his lips and tried to please him for another year. Meanwhile, I could still see blood stains on certain articles of clothing.

It wasn't until I was seventeen that I finally grew up enough to see what that relationship really was. I got tired of being called stupid and ugly. I got tired of being forced into sex. I was just tired. I felt like a wounded hound following an abusive master, always hurt but always loyal.

Weeks later, I began to heal. I was becoming strong again. I was becoming me again. So I confronted him about the RV experience.

"It was not rape!" he yelled. "You're twisting what happened to make me into a bad guy! You're f\*\*\*ing sick! You're a sick bitch!"

He had knocked me down again. Once more, I started to deny that it was rape. I began to protect him again. I made excuses for the few people who knew. "He really isn't a bad guy..." and "I wasn't forceful enough..." were some of my favorites.

It wasn't until I met Gary that I really started to grow again. He rarely corrected my protectiveness but the gentle hurt in his eyes reminded me that what happened wasn't right. It wasn't okay.

It was then that I started to search. How many women has this happened to? I asked five women, all of which had been my closest friends since I was very young, if they had ever experienced any form of sexual abuse. All five of them had a story to tell. None of them had ever pressed charges.

I became aware of what an epidemic this was. Most of them don't even know they've been raped. Most of them are raped by someone they trust. But they are strong. They rise above it. I rose above it, but it will never be okay. Rape is a four letter word, rape is a dirty word, but I learned to use it. I learned to accept it. I will not protect my rapist.

## What Now?

Second Place in "A Single Thread in the Grand Design" Contest

"Dad, I'm here. Can you hear me?" The sound of the heater running on high and the hospice nurse humming to herself helped Jack understand how his father could sleep so peacefully. There was no need to invest in a sound machine when the sounds in the old house were so soothing.

"I'll let you rest."

Jack was relieved that he was able to delay the inevitable, painful conversation he knew he had to have with his father. This was, in part, due to the fact that he had a large breakfast before he got on the plane and couldn't stand the pressure growing in his lower body any longer. Fifteen minutes of relaxing on the heated toilet seat would be enough time to prepare mentally for the day or days ahead.

\*\*\*

Harold was lost in his dreams. Before he fell asleep, the nurse reminded him that Jack was coming to stay with him. He knew he only had a day or two left, and he smiled when he thought of seeing his son one last time. He was able to relax enough to drift back into the flashback dreams. "Flashbacks" seemed to be the best way Harold could think of these dreams. They were his life. He was reliving moments in his life through his own eyes. Before Jack's voice lifted him out of this dream state, Harold was in the backseat of his father's car in the garage of his childhood home with Mary. This would have been his first sexual experience had he been able to avoid vomiting due to the two beers and cigarette he'd shared with her earlier in the evening.

\*\*\*

"Hey, Dad, you want to try to eat something? The nurse says you haven't been eating anything."

"No, thanks. I'm not hungry. I was just having a flashback dream about your mother."

"Oh yeah? Anything interesting?"

"Just the same stuff I've been remembering forever. What's the point in reminiscing when I know I won't be making any new memories? It was nice to see her though. Young. She didn't stay that way for very long."

"Harry, you ready for your meds?" The hospice nurse interrupted.

"Do I have a choice?"

"As much as I enjoy seeing you writhing in pain, I'd recommend taking the pills."

"Alright, Molly. Give 'em up."

The nurse placed five brightly colored pills in Harold's hand and helped him raise them to his mouth. The grimace on Harold's face told Jack that it was painful for his father to swallow.

Once the nurse was out of the room, Harold gave Jack a forced smile and a wink. "You should help her out. She seems stressed. Just a quickie in the kitchen should take care of it."

"Dad, you know I'm married."

"I know, I know. I was just trying to live vicariously through you. She's out of your league anyway. The only reason she hasn't jumped me is because she has to clean my shit every day. I may be on my death bed, but I'm still an animal."

"Dad, we need to discuss what you want to happen after..."

The pause was long as Harold fixed his gaze on the wall in front of his bed.

"Dad?"

"Would you shut up for a second? I've got some gas I'm trying to... and there it goes."

"That is probably the worst smell I've experienced, ever. But seriously, what do you want me to do?"

"Well, I talked to the lawyer. I had him leave everything to you. Just promise me you won't bury me."

"I thought you had a plot next to Mom."

"I do. But, your mom is dead, and I will be too, so I really don't think our sleeping arrangements matter much. Besides, the

thought of being buried creeps me out a little. Just burn me up and spread my ashes in the ocean."

"You've never been on the ocean."

"I know. It'll be a new experience."

\*\*\*

Harold slept through the night that night. He experienced his entire life in the form of flashback dreams. In the early morning, he awoke knowing he was breathing his final breaths. Jack was there.

"I guess it's happening, Buddy."

"I know, Dad."

"I spent all night last night reliving my life. So many what ifs. I hate what ifs. I'm done reliving and not knowing. It's time for what now. So, what now?"

Harold's eyes closed as his chest heaved one last time.



## Baby

*Allison Woodruff*

I am not quite sure how I love a creature  
That doesn't exist yet  
But I do.

I wonder about you on the long nights  
Trying to fall asleep  
Picturing your dimpled knees, your eyelashes  
Grasping at bits and pieces of you  
Before your time.

Baby, you are nowhere near growing inside me  
You're still half some other place  
Your soul has yet to be gathered from the cosmos  
And contained to two beautiful eyes...  
When I hear a newborn cry  
Or my heart is tugged at by a child  
A cavern deep near the small of my back, in the ocean  
Between bellybutton and spine  
Aches and longs  
To be filled up with your little limbs, your chin,  
The perfect curve of your clavicle.  
It's like something within me is crying out  
For a you that isn't you yet  
A you that is yet to be.

Baby, you will be the poem  
My body writes.  
I will label you the best I can:  
Perhaps Peter or Delilah  
Somehow describing  
The miniscule leap of joy you will be in me,  
Growing, growing,  
Pushing me to the edges to make room  
For your pieces.  
I will be so afraid, baby, I know myself.  
I know that all this dreaming  
Will lead me to a cliff's exquisite ledge  
Off which you will ask me to jump.  
But despite my flaws, my fears, my shaking hands  
I will leap off the edge  
Falling fast and hard into the glossy water below  
Drowning happily in maternal adoration.

I will hold you forever, or at least  
Until it's almost time to let you go  
And I will kiss every inch of you and cradle  
Your head in the half-moon of my hands.  
I will cut your sandwiches into triangles  
Take you huckleberry picking until your fingers are purple  
Let you see the world from atop glittering carousel ponies  
And from the side of a mountain, the valleys unfurling before you.  
I will write lullabies to feed your nightlight  
Put you in time-out when you deserve it  
Let you cry in my arms  
And splash the day away in rain boots, collecting wrinkled worms.  
I will read you page after page until my tongue dries up  
And let your imagination fill up every corner of our home.

I will memorize you, learn from you,  
And spin you around 'til the giggling stars in your eyes

Match the stick-on-stars strewn across your ceiling.  
I will tell you the truth, and we'll teach each other  
About Eskimo kisses, forgiveness, and family.  
I will be your hot chocolate after a day of sledding,  
And I promise to give you my optimism in an heirloom chest.  
I will cry when the doctor cuts the grey cord,  
Severing you from me, mourning for a moment, until  
Your daddy places you in my arms  
And we meet again.

Baby, your momma is ...  
Well, she's still figuring a lot of that out  
Because this world is big and grand  
And she is small with massive dreams and little hands.  
But one thing I have figured out  
Is this:  
No matter what kind of envelope you come in  
Whether you have his eyes or mine  
Whether you see in rhymes or colors  
Or the rhythm of a basketball bouncing  
Whether you're a Peter or a Delilah  
A shy scientist or a bold ballerina  
Whether you have every chromosome and all ten fingers and toes  
Or not

You will be so perfect  
That I will be overwhelmed for life.

Baby, each month when my world  
Turns red  
And I am pounded with a thunderstorm  
Of knots and tangles inside of me,  
I ease the discomfort and pain  
By smiling to myself over the secret that we share:  
Fifty percent of your ins and outs  
Are more patient than I will ever be  
All curled up inside a tiny pearl, tucked away  
In me.

## If the World Was My Classroom

*Marissa Alvarez*

If the world was my classroom  
And a girl was my student  
I would tell her she is a leaf  
Ever changing  
Part of different colors and race  
Ever moving  
With casual grace  
The trees may shake  
And she may fall  
But the wind will sweep her away  
Away from it all  
She'll land somewhere new  
And have to adjust  
But she should remember  
Who she is,  
Is not up to us  
Her beauty  
Is in the eye of the beholder  
And she doesn't always need  
Someone to hold her  
Society may cut her base down  
But she should look for the smiles in life  
And blow away the frowns  
Big or small,  
She can be anything  
Throughout it all, she should know  
That she is someone's everything  
Friends can be found  
Around any corner  
And she should listen to them and her parents  
When they talk to and warn her

She'll make mistakes  
And trip and fall  
But even though that's true,  
She should learn from it, and remember to stand tall  
If the world was my classroom  
And a girl was my student  
I'd teach her that life is what she makes it  
And no matter what she goes through,  
I know she can make it

## The Art of Drowning

*Ebony Jackson*

The thought of drowning isn't what scares people.  
It's the thought of never coming back up.  
Humans drown every day.  
We constantly drown in work, stress, pain, love, hate; reality, the  
unknown.  
But as long as we come back up, we find virtue in the struggle.  
The air fills our lungs.  
And we just move on.  
What about those who keep sinking?  
And never come back up.  
They are forgotten at the bottom of the ocean.  
Their bodies cold and still waiting.  
It's too late.  
They have sunk too far.  
The lifeguard gave up trying to save them.  
We all gave up on them.  
The water consumed them.  
And they drowned.

# There's No Place Like Home

Department: The Promethean, Deeper Roots (2013-2014)

*Mariah Barcinas*

Life in the islands, such a tropical appeal  
From coconut trees to white sand, our culture they won't ever kill  
We will never lose the island's pride and identity  
Everyone in the islands are brought together with unity

Losing our culture? It will never, ever be  
Our uniqueness is vital, meant for everyone, not only me  
From Hawaii to Guam and to the CNMI,  
The islands are home, and everyone knows why

Our culture is amazing; it's what we should keep  
From dancing to swimming, and even going to sleep  
Even though things may be changing, people getting upset  
The islands are our home; we'll always remember and never forget

Children leave the islands to study and save it all  
Because we will always stand on the islands, strong and tall  
We're one family and we will never, ever be alone  
No matter what island we're in, we can always say:  
"There's no place like home!"

## Weaving

*McKenna Rinta*

The rat was sitting in the morning sunlight  
stripping blades of grass into thin, sharp pieces,  
stacking them under a rock  
so that the dewy dawn breeze wouldn't sweep them away.

The rat sat there in his little hay-field nest  
weaving those pieces of grass,  
wishing for a basket.

When he was only halfway done,  
he took the green semicircle  
and, struggling to find a way around his big stomach,  
eased himself onto his feet  
and pushed on through the jungle of wheat.

While he was walking along,  
pushing stalk after stalk out of his way  
and watching the wheat dust dance  
in the sunrise,  
he began to sing a song.

The sweet song matched the honey-colored morning  
And, stopping to rest beneath the shade of a big oak tree,  
the rat began to dream.

He dreamed he was sailing down a warm river  
in a tightly woven and sap sealed basket,  
brown from the Mediterranean sun.  
He sailed past sun bathers on a glittering shore.  
He sailed past pink hotels and palm trees.  
He sailed past the most beautiful sea cliffs

## Barbie Doll

*Kayla Suwak*

But when he tried to stop the basket  
to look at the view,  
plunging a twig down toward the sea floor,  
he saw that half of his basket  
had come away in the salty sea.

The basket began to sink  
and the rat woke with a start,  
holding his half basket  
and blinking away the flies under  
the cold shade of an oak tree.

The rat decided to keep weaving.

When you look at me, I am reduced to nothing more than a Barbie  
Doll  
A voluptuous blond with big eyes  
A toy that should just be lying there, waiting to be picked up at your  
heart's desire  
Something plastic, not even real  
A beauty without a voice or a soul  
To you I am just another toy  
Out of possibly hundreds that you've collected  
You put us all into a box of "been there, done that"  
In your eyes, we are just bodies lying in wait for someone to love us  
Those girls that are mocked by all passersby for being too tenderhearted

You are the little kid in the store screaming to their mother  
"I NEED ANOTHER TOY"  
As though you are so bored you cling to the idea that something will  
fix it  
The boredom that you feel in your life is not the fault of my sisters  
But the fault of your inability to love them as a human  
Yet you think that being a man means that you have the right  
Even the privilege to take, take, take,  
The American philosophy of "I want what I want when I want it" is  
your motto,  
No questions asked. For a poor boy you seem pretty entitled

YOU were the one who picked me up off the shelf  
Maybe it was my own fault for even being there  
But you ingratiated yourself into my life  
Knowing exactly how to play so that "play time" was just enough  
Just enough for me to think that I mattered.  
In regards to you and me, darling, I cared so much more for you  
I remember everything you ever told me

But unlike Andy in Toy Story you don't remember the plotline  
Without the bond of love and so many other toys  
We all blend together in your warped sense of humor  
You don't ask questions, you don't care to know  
You pick and choose and never discriminate on your choices  
If Barbie has a decent face, you mark your territory  
You aren't the type to share your toys  
Making it impossible for anyone else to love them.

You make sure to play in such a way that we are still whole on the  
outside  
But if WE care too much, we slowly die on the inside  
No fault is yours, it is all OUR misunderstanding  
We were the ones to fall, to make ourselves available  
We are too nice, too giving, too naïve  
To think that you would makes us your exception

But the thing is you are NOT MAN ENOUGH  
You cowardly sit behind your desk  
Thinking you are God's gift to women  
You are under the delusion that you can do no wrong  
Hiding behind the façade that you're a badass  
Where in reality the stories you're writing are all the same  
Since you never give a doll a chance to surprise you  
The relationships are on your terms and your time  
Making it impossible for us to learn how to speak to you

But that's the way you like your girls, isn't it?  
Silent.  
Saying nothing more than "Yes"  
Never contemplating "No"  
You like your dolls to do exactly what you tell them  
If one of them strays, they're out of rotation

As the puppet master you're never gonna be happy  
Never even learned how to feel something  
You give empty emotions and use the "downstairs" brain to do all the  
heavy thinking  
Man, how do you answer questions like,  
"What are you studying?" or  
"What are you doing with your future?"  
I bet it sure gets awkward at Christmas dinner

So the reality of your situation is  
That while I may look like the Barbie Doll  
You are the one missing the voice and the soul  
And I have to ask  
Does that make you Ken?

# Not with a Bang but with a Crash

Raeann James

I love the cold days in Oregon. It is as though you can smell the Christmas in the air. Running down the street, I can feel the burn of the stress exit through my lungs and flow from my pounding feet. Last week's paper, *thump, thump*, the balance in my checking account, *thump, thump*, why didn't I get invited to go to lunch with my friends, *thump*, did they not even think to invite, *thump*, me, *thump, thump*. I don't think to pause. This is a fairly quiet neighborhood.

*Thump, thump.*

It happened very suddenly. It isn't very often that you have a memory or thought that really sticks with you.

As much as I try, I struggle to create an image of the moment I drove under the iconic red steel of the Golden Gates, or when I looked up at the green face of Liberty. Moments that mean so much, that you can quantify and post so people can validate your #experiences.

It didn't end with a bang, but with a crash.

The power and momentum carry me over the roof of the car. It is one frame that I cannot forget. Trees and their Technicolor leaves, or lack of, cement, cracked and frayed, the anticipation in my knees and hands.

I know it is coming,

the ground.

I can feel the pangs of childhood scrapes and of the lines of red that seep from the cracks in little knees. But, it isn't like that.

The impact is a brilliant burst in the slowness of the accident. I feel the ground reach up for my shoulder, opening the seams in my jacket and embracing my flesh, keeping more and more of it for its own. My head pounds the ground with indignation. It wasn't supposed to go like this. The rest flows away from me. Streaming toward the forgotten leaves that decorate the edges of my vision. Orange, green, brown, yellow, but mostly red. I can feel the slam of my heart and a few car doors.

That last check for those shoes is probably going to bounce now, *thump, thump*, I am never going to get that math test turned in, *thump, thump*, am I really that boring?

*Thump*



## Like Chemistry

Alex Anderson

Teaching involves bonds.  
Theoretically.  
To understand,  
Think like atoms, shall we?  
Most are not too fond of doing so.  
The rest of us persevere empathetically.  
Just like bonds, in cozy class settings  
Technically...

Student & teacher interactions exist  
In terms of practicality that is.  
Spinning, but not.  
"Locking" or twisting persists.  
Particularly when tests are amiss.  
Until...

The temperature dips,  
To absolute zero, that is.

Then nothing subsists.  
Not matter, nor time...

Even a wish.  
But neither, necessarily does **this**:

\*

What is meant to be learned  
Will happen, though not spontaneously.  
It takes ample Eact and connectivity!

\* notice the double headed arrow to indicate two electrons moving simultaneously, to say they care-O-2



## Living in Salvation

Carlos Ortiz

Always been questioning my faith  
Never thought that I'd be saved  
I was worried  
I was scared  
I had fear  
No direction  
No faith  
Everything is going bad  
Nothing is working out right

But something reached out to me and lifted me up  
I went to an event, I didn't think anything of it  
Little did I know

I saw my peers around me singing as they lifted their hands out to  
Him

I soon found myself singing out to Him

Started praying

Started crying, overwhelmed with Him

He spoke to me saying

You don't have to worry

You don't have to be scared

I've been here since the beginning and I'll stay till the end

And that's not even all

He said look up on the stage at the man that's there

He's been preaching my word to all who hear

Take that mic

Take that sword

Take a stand

And spread the Wttord

I began this journey by starting a group to get closer to Him  
I started this group to bring others to Him  
Now people are saved  
Now people are closer to the One Above  
And I ain't even done yet

I will continue to spread His Word  
I will continue to show how great He is  
And even if I run into a problem  
I know God will pull me out of it  
I MADE THAT DEDICATION  
NOW I'M LIVING IN SALVATION

## The Prayer

*Ebony Jackson*

I pray for an "A" on the next test  
Or maybe just a "C" instead  
I pray for sunshine and blue skies  
Or maybe just for no rain that day  
I pray for harmony and tranquility  
Or maybe just for a moment of silence  
I pray for understanding  
Or maybe just for things to be a little clearer  
I pray for agape  
Or maybe just for people to like me  
I pray for the cure of cancer  
Or maybe just more time with her  
I pray for the dead to walk again  
Or maybe just one more day with them  
I pray for forgiveness for all that I am  
Or maybe just for this guilt to stop haunting me  
I pray for all the pain to go away  
Or maybe just for my heart to go numb  
I pray for someone to hear me  
Or maybe just for someone to pretend  
I pray...  
Or maybe just hope  
In Jesus' name, amen

## The Tale of Chief Two-Dogs

*Ebony Jackson*

Like the flower that blooms and the eagle that soars I am nature  
I grew from the soil and my roots are deep in the ground

Then why will another man cut my life tree?

I am from the clay people

The hawk queen blessed me with her soulful eyes now I see the truth  
Brother wolf gave me his heart now I feel the rapture of the willows

Men once loved each other now we hate

Is this why the sky cries and the rivers flood?

I have not heard the birds for many months now

Where have they gone?

My sheep hair too likes the feel of the wind so do not deny me

Can I not be a star in the black night?

Can I not be a cloud floating in life?

Must you squash me like the innocent worm?

I am the evergreens

I am related to the ferns and the grass strands are my sisters

So do not step on them

They scream, "Why will you not listen?"

My visions brushed by sun rays,

I danced with the moon

And rode on a shooting star

For a moment in time I held the planets in my hands

Why must I drown in your pain?

When I swim in happiness

We are all connected by the spider webs

Like the flower that blooms and the eagle that soars I am nature

## The Ways of the Old

*Ebony Jackson*

Two Sisters Apart

*Grandmother Willow*

The shadows had just begun to dance and laugh at the moon when the visions came to me. I saw the bloodied bodies of elves, snails, and children. Their bodies lay so peaceful on the soft ground. It was almost as if they were sleeping in a bed of earth. The stench of torn flesh was high in the air and I could smell the hopelessness. And there beyond the thicket of the battlefield was where they stood. Both so very beautiful. One brushed in war paint and the other draped in torn clothes. Both of their chests pulsing up and down anticipating the inevitable fate they both faced. I could see the tears streaming down the elder's face like small streams. Though I could not hear the words spoken I could feel the pain in her yells. She was screaming or maybe pleading to the weavers of fate to change destiny just this once. But her cries fell on deaf ears. No one heard her. The fight had led them to this very moment when one had to kill the other. They had no choice. I could see the hurt in the elder's eyes. I could see that her heart screamed inside of her and pushed against her chest. It was clear how this would end. I knew which would fall in death and which would stand in life. The younger had strayed too far from the life she once knew. She cursed her life's truth and fell in love with the darkness. Her soul beat black and the true nature of her origins was now visible. The dark lord had succeeded. His plan to return and rule earth was now under way. Now he had his puppet and she would dance for him. She would cut the heart out of her own flesh for the love of him. The prophecy had always said that it would be love that would end it all. Now these two women stood eye to eye and all that guided them was love. For one it was the love of a sister that caused the pain in her chest to be so heavy. And for the other it was the love of a man

and a child that was driving the hatred within. Then my vision ended  
the way it always does. It ended with two sisters apart.

## Valentine's Day Poem

*Anonymous*

A picture is worth a thousand words  
But a smile is worth a thousand more  
A smile that is sweet and pure  
A smile like yours  
I'm not sure if you realize  
How much it can brighten someone's day  
But it definitely can and certainly does  
Even when a lot of moods are in the way  
Just thought I would let you know  
Something you probably would not have noticed anyway  
Just some sweet words I hope make you smile  
On this Valentine's Day  
-A Passerby

# Oblivion

Katie Wartell

*Excerpt from Katie's memoir, Oblivion*

Oblivion. That feeling when your body leaves its state of self-consciousness. That's the way she made me feel. She made living life feel carefree with no sense of consequences.

"You f\*\*\*\*\* bitch!"

Terror struck my insides as I witnessed her on-again, off-again boyfriend Casey forcefully yank her second floor apartment sliding door from its hinges. Time froze as I escaped to a pained past of Mom and Dad raising their voices at one another, but no fists ever swung. I was snapped back into the echoless violent screaming match, where furniture was being used not as a place for comfort, but as a weapon of abuse.

His eyes were basins of the reds and yellows that swirl as fire dances along a line of gasoline. Vile words dripped from his mouth. I felt my twenty-year-old self place my body as a wall to protect her.

"No! Do not touch her!" I heard myself shout. Casey's destructive ways barreled through me like a freight train smashing through a stalled car on the tracks. Painful fuchsia bruises circled my wrists and side as I realized what had happened. It was like watching a hungry predator rip apart their prey. Blood curdling shrieks and cries leapt from her crippled body, which had lost its efforts to protect itself from his powerful blows to her once beautiful face.

"911. Report your emergency." A calm, husky woman spoke over the receiver.

"Help! Oh my God! He's killing her!"

"Please ma'am, you need to calm down. Can you tell me what is going on?"

Tears kissed my fire-beaten cheek, while I set the phone down and screamed loud and bold, "Casey, I've called the police..."

Within moments, Casey had given his last full-blown punch to her gut, picked up his blood-drenched shirt, and told me that she

deserved what she got. He was gone before the police arrived. I had survived my first encounter with Casey. It wouldn't be my last.

# Patience

Peggy Wood

It's kind of funny to watch her white, fluffy afro from beyond the edge of the desk. I'm too small to look completely over the edge, but I know exactly what I would see if I could. My grandma's sitting in her chair, back straight and fingers gliding over the keyboard with an ease not many her age would have. She lives on this machine, the telephone, and coffee. She stays up late into the night and then takes long naps in the afternoons. Her piercing blue eyes stare into the large, weighted, white box with a screen that glows like a television and it's entertaining to watch. The *tap-tap* and *click-click* as her fingers dance across buttons with letters and numbers magically appearing on the blank, glowing display amuses me.

Grandma doesn't even look at the keyboard and that's because she's so tech savvy. Computers, phones—you name it and she knew how to work it.

She had always been a self-made woman; she could do anything once she put her mind to it. Perhaps that's why it's hard to believe that this frail woman, who barely comes to my shoulders, is the same one that towered over me and picked me up with ease. She reads more slowly, as she hunches in her chair, and at times she leans toward the screen until the tip of her nose almost touches it. The phone, once an object glued to her ear, is becoming a disability. This touch-screen object, which has symbols instead of buttons, frustrates her. It's like her element has disappeared.

I know that age has to do with her lack of comprehension, but I don't want to accept that. It's truly difficult to watch her struggle over something that's three clicks from completion instead of the fifteen it used to take.

Sometimes, I wonder if it was the same for her when she taught me how to type. When I sat in agitation on her desk chair and tried desperately to make my fingers bend to the keys that I needed to reach. My hands were tiny and typing began to hurt after only a few short minutes. I couldn't find the right letters; 'a' beside 's' and 's' beside 'd.' The entire thing was ridiculous. All the while, Grandma sat

beside me. She made me keep my short, tiny hands on the keyboard, tapping letters over and over. Now it's my turn to teach her.

"Press the green button with a telephone silhouette on it." I tell her, but she doesn't understand, and that's most likely my fault. I tend to jumble words around her. "It works like the green button on the home phone. After you put in the number, press the green button and it will start the call."

Even this seemingly simple instruction is a struggle.

"I don't need that," she tells me again, "I can make a phone call on the home phone while at home. I want to learn to text."

"Here," I go even more slowly, showing her the buttons and the insertion of contacts, how to bring up the keyboard screen and type in a message and how to send it to another person.

"No, I don't want to call them. I want to text." She declares. The green button that means 'send' also allows you to call.

One would think that my careful explanation of each step would suffice, but I now assume that instructions must be done in a much more separate and accurate order. So I try again to give her the directions in a way that's as clear as I can manage. However, words elude me and I start mumbling my instructions.

"What?" she asks. So I say it again, only louder.

"I can't hear you. Speak up." She orders with the same calm, loud voice she uses on the phone. So I repeat the words, only louder.

"Huh?"

I say it again, louder still.

"I still can't hear you. Stop mumbling."

She's also raising her voice now. So I reiterate the whole thing repeatedly until I'm almost shouting the words.

"No need to yell! Stop getting so agitated." She tells me, but this is the eighteenth time that I've tried teaching her since she received the phone. At this point, I still don't know if she understands texting, but now she's asking me how to use the camera and where the pictures go.

## Reflections

Raeann James

*I know*

Who I am with you

*Better*

Stronger

*Than*

That weak person who was here before

*To trust someone with my whole heart*

Was my downfall

*Because of the bruises and rips*

Now scars, once fresh with hurt and denial

*I can never trust a man again,*

But you are no man, you are mine

*Each day I fight with the reflections of who I was and who man is but*

Who I am and who you are erases that

*That person is not here anymore*

There is no room for them

*It is just you and me and*

hope

## The Woodcutter

McKenna Rinta

Slow and steady the woodcutter swings

His axe around in the whistling air

Splitting the sounds of countless springs

And making the autumn weather fair

His axe around in the whistling air

The woodcutter winds the forest's clock

And making the autumn weather fair

The pendulum breaks the wooden block

The woodcutter winds the forest's clock

Round and round he turns the wheel of time

The pendulum breaks the wooden block

And makes the cold sun climb

Round and round he turns the wheel of time

Splitting the sounds of countless springs

And makes the cold sun climb

Slow and steady the woodcutter swings

## Heart Beat of War

*Ebony Jackson*

War in its deceit leave men unable to feel  
Their flesh feels not the cold of winter's fingers  
Their ears silent to the screams of the wind  
Tongues tasteless and numb to a pleading lovers lips  
The enemy is not my enemy  
Rather it is war that I must hate  
I have seen the everlasting changes war brings  
No matter the days, weeks, months, years  
You will come back different  
He came back different  
He was a star in the sky that returned back to me broken  
I can recall him so strange to me  
The day he pulled the trigger for the first time  
He died  
Only alive by the beat in his heart  
Where is the romance?  
He is now a heroic tragedy  
All in the name of an idea  
Nothing can change the bitterness in his heart  
Not even my bullet-proof love

## The Indestructible Jacket

*Patrick Seaman*

"I see you eyeing our moleskin jacket."  
"It's an interesting piece." Andre eyed the door.  
"Haha, it's not a museum piece," the salesman tried to  
convince him. "That there," he pointed. "Is an indestructible jacket.  
We've sold that line for 35 years."  
"And not one return?" Andre asked as he pulled the sleeve  
taut.  
"Not one damaged return, and I will throw in a lifetime  
guarantee because I stand by this product: the stitching, the zipper.  
Every single button."  
The salesman smiled so widely, Andre could see his molars. "I  
want a printed warranty. This is an expensive product right here. 140  
dollars for something I don't really want."  
"For you," the salesman pointed "I will sign a printed  
warranty and throw in a peppermint."  
"What about a butter mint?"  
"That's a good one, sir."

\*\*\*

"Answer me," Andre squeezed his thumb until his knuckle  
cracked. "Answer the f\*\*\*\*\*— Hello?"  
"Good afternoon, sir. This is Abrahm Attire, serving the  
greater Portland area since 1990. How may I help you today?" The  
woman sounded like a droning jetliner.  
"I need to speak with one of your salesmen. He said this  
jacket's indestructible. He told me this morning when I bought it.  
And it's a piece of garbage. Listen to this: the zipper broke!"  
"I'm not sure who assisted you, sir. I've been here all day.  
Only me."  
"That's not true," Andre kept calm and eyed the warranty.  
"He was tall and thin. He had a yellow blazer and brown hair."  
"Oh, you mean Roger," the woman lost her professional air.



"I'm not sure. Who is Roger?"

"Roger was looking after the store while I was in the bathroom. I apologize for the confusion, sir."

"You just told me you were alone. Is he or is he not a salesman?"

"Yes— Well, no." The woman paused. "You're saying he spoke to you?"

Andre cracked another knuckle, "He sold me this jacket; he rang me up."

"Oh my. I'm sorry, sir. Roger wasn't supposed to say anything to anyone. He was supposed to just watch the store for me."

"Then who the f\*\*\* is Roger?" Andre asked, unnatural and forced.

"He's my boyfriend..."

"Your boyfriend? In the store?"

"Please don't tell Mr. Abraham. I'm so sorry about Roger. I'm livid," the woman said in an evidently stressed tone. "I'll kill him. Just—please, sir, Mr. Abraham is not the understanding type. I'll lose my job!"

"You know what?" Andre sighed. "I don't care about this. All I want is a refund for this oh-so-indestructible jacket."

The woman did not respond.

"Are you there?"

"I'm here, sir."

Andre could hear the rattle as the woman stood up from her chair, "I don't know how to tell you this... We don't actually do refunds."

"Are you f\*\*\*\*\* insane?" Andre mocked before sarcastically laughing.

"Roger's insane. I'd take your word on that. But Mr. Abraham stands by his products. He insists that they're indestructible, just like Roger told you. I must've confided in him about Mr. Abraham and his silly tangents."

"The zipper is still broken."

"That's not possible, sir. Our zippers are indestructible."

The woman caught herself returning to automation. "Those are Mr.

Abraham's words, not mine. We have a no-money-back guarantee—I mean to say we have a no-refund policy."

The customer paused.

"Listen to me," Andre said. "I will f\*\*\*\*\* find you. I will find you and Roger, and I will burn you. And I'll get Mr. Abraham to f\*\*\*\*\* fire you because you decided it was a good idea to f\*\*\* your boyfriend at work! I will ruin your life if you don't take a return on this jacket."

"If you come by the store, sir, I can get your money. But it'll have to be out of pocket. I'll need you to watch the store while I run to the ATM."

## Tightrope

Allison Woodruff

A million and a half sequins  
Plastic facets shimmering like precious stones  
Lie thick as frosting  
Across my bodice, tutu, translucent tights  
My half-moon fingernails lacquered to match ...  
I shine as my own sun under these harsh, silvery lights.

The hour spent piling my auburn hair into victory rolls  
Has now become muscle memory mud.  
Cheap costume jewels are pinned up into my curls  
While long, coquette lashes lent from late night love scenes  
Rest, cemented, around my jade-freckled eyes.

I am my own universe of broken stars  
As I enter on my cue. The spotlight grabs me.  
Its relentless beam pushes my limbs to the wire,  
Which hums above another crowd of nameless, blank faces  
Waiting to fall ardently in lust with my sparkle.  
But walking across, one ruby tiptoe at a time, erases

All the white noise held captive by the walls  
Of this gloss-dripping cosmos  
Leaving me alone with the sound of my  
Fragile, unadorned heart.

## Failure is My Home

Ebony Jackson

I live where failure dwells  
I call it home  
I ring the doorbell of lost causes  
I answer the door to what could have been  
I wash the carpets of hopeful thinking  
Failure is my home

My couch and my chairs sit in the company of failed awards  
My childhood piggy bank is full of the millions I never made  
My shower sprays midnight passions I've never experienced  
My dinner table is placed with foods from exotic islands that I have  
never tasted  
Failure is my home

The slippers are softened by feet that never went anywhere  
The towels in my bathroom hang wet by hands that never were dirty  
The windows stay shut to the adventure I could have lived  
The clock ticks with the eternity I'll never get to see  
Failure is my home

Though I have seen little  
Though I know not of the taste of French kisses or the taste of  
champagne filled nights  
Though I don't understand the ways of the rotating stars  
Though I have pennies and not dollars  
Failure is not my real home

My home is in the ink of my pen which drips on paper thoughts  
My home is with the worms and the slugs  
My home is on the back of the sun's horizon  
My home is in the strands of the green grass  
My home is decorated in paintings of destiny  
My home is in the acceptance of who I am

## Expended

*Karissa Cooke*

Cursive letters on the page  
 Arms and legs entangled in sheets  
 No end to you or to me  
 Every word is read  
 Yet you fail to see the tears  
 Running down my cheeks.  
 You're the writer of our story  
 I'm the pen  
 You decide when I write,  
 What I write  
 I have no say in spelling,  
 Sentence structure, or plot  
 I like writing for you  
 But I've lost my cap  
 And I'm running out of ink.

## Nameless

*Peggy Wood*

I don't recognize the face before me. The taunt ashen skin that faintly outlines the bones of this stranger's face. The half-dazed eyes that express an unwritten pain, and that flat hair... How can this person be me? What happened to the lively eyes I see in pictures? When did my skin become so sickly, sagging in places as if I were a Halloween decoration rather than a living human being?

Did it happen when I lost all sense of self?

When talking became just words, and feelings grew numb?

Or was it when I began pretending everything was "all right" after he hit me for saying a simple two-letter word? Maybe it was when I was laid on that stark bed, blacked out from the drugs slipped into my drink. Maybe it was when I stopped caring about what happened to my body in their care... Leaving it up to their rough hands that turned kind under the influence of that little needle when it pierced my arm.

The stranger in the mirror mocks me. It smirks as the tears fall. "When did your life become scorned?" The stranger asks. I look down into my palm; I take note of the multicolored candies. Some are for pain, and some are for pleasure. Some are to make you sleep, and some have effects I don't know yet... If I swallow them, I wonder, which one will work first?

I should get it over with quickly, and though this isn't the fastest way these pills mean no mess. I won't cut myself like last time. Cutting stopped bringing those lovely natural painkillers and last time was a little too deep. Not enough to end it though I tried.

Besides, too much blood. The bath left evidence long after I tried scrubbing it clean. Honestly, I just want to go home, but I don't have a home here, and I don't have anyone else here either. Friends? Gone. Family? ...

My hands shake as I bring the handful to my mouth. My reflexes gag as I try to force them down dry, but a little water fixes that. Now I just have to wait. The world tips and right before I become eye level with the floor everything goes black.

*Beep. Beep. Beep.*

I awake in a cold sweat. A damp towel drops from my forehead, forcing me to see beside me the person I never expected to see again. It's been years since I've seen my sister. I had forgotten that she was my emergency contact. She looks so much older now, with dark circles under her eyes, and slightly puffy cheeks that make it seem like she's been crying. The last time I saw her was at our parents' funeral. It was the same day she accused me of driving them to the airport while drunk. We were hit from the side. The last day she spoke to me willingly. Looking around I can see that the screen is pulled shut around us.

The beeps are coming from the machine to my left. Its wires are coming out, attaching to little patches adorning my chest. Unnamed liquids flow into my arm from hanging packets through little tubes. They remind me of daisies popping up from a grave. I can't feel it right now, but I can see a small bruise around the needle that is a nasty sort of purple. My sister stirs for a moment and I hold my breath. I don't want her to see me like this, half-dead but still breathing—but I don't have a choice.

She startles awake, and looks at me with wide eyes full of shock and growing tears. For a moment, I expect her to walk out, or yell, or get angry... but instead, I'm enveloped in a hug. She's warmer than my own body and her warmth reaches into my core.

"It's okay now," she whispers, stroking my hair and squeezing me delicately. My breathing becomes rough and strained, tears form and fall slowly at first then increase. I shake involuntarily, as I lift my arms to hug her. The touch from my own fingertips proves that this isn't a dream.

"I'm here for you," and "I'm sorry" slip from our mouths in blurs as I take in that gentle touch. The one that doesn't scar and burn, but leaves a loved feeling in its place. Finally, I can go home.

## Sometimes This Life...

*Logan Fjelstad*

The world can make you fall into despair,  
So your spirit is hyperventilating, desperate for air.  
Asphyxiation like you're in the gas chamber,  
Suffocating, dying at the hands of a stranger.  
Your life is flashing past, taking your last gasp, in a vacuum with  
nothing to grasp.  
Life causes you to get wrapped up in the things that don't matter,  
And makes the entire world seem like it's yours on a platter,  
When in reality this legion of doom, can lead us to a region of tombs,  
Like we're trapped in a demon's womb, looking for breathing room.  
As God breathes life into my soul, animating my body with oxygen,  
I'm locking in, the spirits from the box within.  
Instantly an infinite lifting,  
Into a world where Satan pushes righteousness into the distance,  
I'm in desperation for respiration,  
That has me in a destination for total upheaval, but I look to the  
light.  
I turn to the book for the fight,  
In fact, I flip to the back for his might.  
When I flip to the end, God conquers sin, and the free breathe again.  
My words are trapped in my brain, locked in my cells,  
And dwell in a mental prison called Hell, even though I shall prevail,  
This world gets harder and harder as a young Christian male.  
I'll never sell my soul to the Devil, and be demon possessed,  
I'd rather stay blessed by the Most High, put my soul to rest.  
I must confess, I battle fallen angels from different angles,  
I rock the pad and with pen I strangle confliction.  
My mission is never impossible, as a colossal hip-hop apostle,  
I'm a philosophical believer going full throttle.  
My words create friction;  
I leave people spazzed out and more crooked than politicians.

But then again, this is the life that we live in.  
So I guess the message that I'm trying to say,  
Is to the people who think "what's the point" ev-er-y-day,  
Is that even though you're having trouble maintaining your  
respiration,  
Air is thin like a matter of higher elevation,  
When you're short of breath, and feel like you got nothing left,  
Listen to me and realize that it's not your chest heaving, that's your  
soul breathing.  
You can fall into last place in a race.  
You can't participate,  
Or you can treat the pain like smoke and let it dissipate.  
Giving your heart a battery it can depend upon,  
Charging you up so you can carry on a marathon.  
Now you're catching your second wind, learning to breathe again,  
This is the beginning and the end, where my words end with AMEN!

## Eyelids

*Anonymous*

That dark December night,  
negatively charged magnetic eyelids forced open by a vibrating  
assiduous humming brain  
machine.

An untidy bed left warm, within the  
smoking, choking exhaust fumes. An early morning engine roars.  
I find that towering rock in eastern jagged-grin ridgeline.  
Peering up from yawning limbs hung from red toothpicks,  
frail clouds skirt that dark jutting face as stiff muscle tendon battles  
mud rock gravity staircase.  
All alone, in echoey sloping vastness.

Lunge forward from tree line, sink down, old snow,  
hunched old man drinks coffee says something...  
Away from that wretched voice! I scramble  
upward through white flakes, black boulders.  
Wool gloves hinder grip, boots shove rogue rocks to space, hand slips,  
smash thumb,  
eight now seven rocks until summit.

White washed walls of wild winter.  
Silence.

In utero of a universe.

Four thousand feet above.  
Fire.

Me, my despair, a stone palace, and trail mix. I brought hope.  
You brought a shining red hope extinguisher then swung the emptied  
tank at my skull,  
I am not impervious to pain like these rocks I hurl  
at whirling gods they watch me  
miss. Pebbles drop through glass table  
swallowed by dark green limbs.

You do not know you could not know you cannot know it was right,  
if you are Right, then I am Left  
with aching expectations and a decomposing handful  
sticky memories, remnants cannot be cast away, and  
these blessed rocks are fond friends no longer call my own because  
I'll never look the same but they always will.

Step down from nowhere and retreat south, your footprints remain.  
Darkened face, this line is named you and will stay there.  
It is a cold winter rain  
that taps my hunched shoulders  
I have stopped answering.

You are in everything I see.  
It is sickening because you own all and you will not let go but  
you cannot own this next day.

## Biographies

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**McKenna Rinta** is graduating soon and does not know what to do with her life. If anyone is up for a twenty-year-long road trip across the States that would be awesome. She is also currently collecting unique drawer knobs. She needs five more.

**Kayla Suvak** Who Kayla is is in her laughter and her hugs and in her dancing. It is in the way she stacks book upon book to read, and in the way she crinkles her nose when she smiles. Who Kayla is is in her forgiveness, in her faith and in her passion for life and for others. Love, Will.

**Katie Wartell** is a senior and an Interdisciplinary major with an emphasis in English.

**Samie LeVay** is a California native who moved up to Portland to attend Concordia University in August of 2014. She is currently serving in the US Army Reserves and is working on her degree in Homeland Security. She ultimately plans to become a career soldier once she finishes her schooling. Outside of school and the Army, she spends her time painting, writing, and reading as many books as she can get her hands on.

**Ryan Bowen** is a sophomore Elementary Education major.

**Allison Woodruff** is a sophomore at Concordia University, studying Elementary Education and English as an honors student. Originally from Kalispell, Montana, Allison loves exploring lakes nestled deep in the mountains and reading beautiful stories. Raspberries, Disney movies, holding his hand, the color blush, and family dinners make her very, very happy. She adores wearing twirly dresses. Someday, she dreams of being a wife, a momma, a beloved teacher, a published author, and Princess Belle simultaneously.



**Marissa Alvarez** is a freshman working on her BA in Music Performance and English. She enjoys reading, writing, singing and hanging out with her friends. She hopes to submit many more works to *The Promethean* during her four years at Concordia.

**Mariah Barcinas** is a sophomore majoring in Psychology at Concordia University.

**Raeann James** is a card carrying member of the 107<sup>th</sup>. When not watching the beautiful game, she enjoys indulging her inner crazy cat lady with the cat, Eleanor, that she rescued with her fiance. Raeann hopes to either enter the publishing field or to continue her education and seek a law degree. She is finishing up her sophomore year at Concordia majoring in English and minoring in History.

**Alex Anderson** is a senior here at Concordia University finishing up her Bachelor of Science in Biology.

**Carlos Ortiz** is a student athlete from Salem, OR on the Track and Field team. This is his second season of Track and Field since he started his senior year of high school. He is currently majoring in Exercise and Sport Science with a minor in Youth Ministry. With these he plans to become a coach or personal trainer, as well as a youth pastor. His biggest goal is to compete in the Olympics.

**Peggy Wood** is currently a sophomore majoring in English at Concordia. Her love for storytelling began as a small child when her father read her fairy tales from the *Idres Shaw* collection. Peggy has been an avid writer/storyteller since middle school. She loves to grab readers' attention quickly, engaging their emotions by using subjects that everyone has strong feelings about.

**Patrick Seaman** is an English major in his junior year. He primarily grew up on several tributaries of the Chesapeake Bay, in Maryland. Patrick spent his later childhood with his father in Philadelphia, PA where he attended Temple University. As of 2013, he has transferred to Concordia University and commutes from Southwest Portland. Patrick is influenced by his film background, the culture clash of Maryland's Eastern and Western Shore, and the economic disparities of Philadelphia.

**Karissa Cooke** This year was a big year for Karissa. She learned that pickles are called pickles because they are pickled cucumbers. She also learned that Leonardo DiCaprio is actually alive and that he did not die on the real Titanic over 100 years ago. Just kidding! She learned that when she was twelve. She thinks.

**Logan Fjelstad** is a junior at Concordia majoring in Secondary Education with a Social Studies endorsement. Logan grew up in Milwaukie and now lives in Oregon City. He coaches freshmen baseball at his old high school, Rex Putnam, in Milwaukie. Logan is on his seventh season coaching baseball and looks forward to having his own varsity team when he is done with school.





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