
Spring 5-2018

Satori 2018

Winona State University

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Recommended Citation

Winona State University; Cavanaugh, Emma Lee; Larson, Walker; Leith, Eric; Wakeham, Sara; Williams-Belter, Rachel; Bowman, Claire; Douglas, Cassie; Eberhard, Danielle; Garofalo, Dahlia; Hughes, Grace; Kent, Katelin; McCrary, Ben; McGeorge, Breanna; Oh, Hyewon; Petrashek, Sanja; Schmidt, Remington; Seo, Jiwon; Smith, Kristine; Tham, Kenneth; Tompos, Nicole; Vang, Melody; Wefel, Megan; Whitmore, Melanie; and Wichman, Audrianna, "Satori 2018" (2018). *Satori Literary Magazine*. 14.
<https://openriver.winona.edu/satori/14>

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SATORI
the unknown

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Editor's Note

Every human experiences the unknown; it is just as much a part of us as it is a part of life. The unknown seamlessly shape-shifts throughout our lives like smoke or a river running through rocks. Though the works within these pages were created by students of varying backgrounds and experiences, there is a clear narrative that forms organically among them: we are all wading in water, pushing forward into the unknown, grasping at smoke.

-- Sajda Omar

Contents

Winona Prize Winners

Emma Lee Cavanaugh	28	“Cal Fremling” Winner in Poetry
Walker Larson	30	“The Unexpected Catch” Winner in Nonfiction
Eric Leith	64	“The Plan” Winner in Fiction
Sara Wakeham	44	“When the water speaks” Second Place Winner in Fiction
Rachel Williams-Belter	62	“Bill--at the Black Horse Bar and Grill” Second Place Winner in Poetry
Claire Bowman	22	“Trio”
	58	“Long Distance”
Cassie Douglas	77	“Take me Back to the Place I Found Creatures in the Ocean”
Danielle Eberhard	12	“Rupture”
	38	“My Sun in Pisces”
	76	“Selling My House”
Dahlia Garofalo	56	“My Shaved Head”
	79	“River of a Thousand Islands”
Grace Hughes	23	“Mountain”
	39	“Galaxy”
Katelin Kent	41	“Desperate Revolution”
	79	“Sunken Village”
Ben McCrary	59	“At the End of the Day”
	74	“Male Study”
Breanna McGeorge	75	“A Good Night”
	82	“Window”
Hyewon Oh	83	“The Clerk”
Sanja Petrashek	55	“Papyrus”
	81	“Devour”
Remington Schmidt	26	“A Verse to the Infinite”
Jiwon Seo	10	“The Things”
Kristine Smith	24	“Moon in Hand”
	25	“8”
Kenneth Tham	29	“Encounter I&II”

Nicole Tompos	.....40.....	“Color 604”
Melody Vang	.....11.....	“She Torched Her Demons”
	.....53.....	“Wanderlust”
	.....57.....	“Disposition”
	.....61.....	“Constantly Waiting”
Megan Wefel	.....42.....	“I have to touch”
	.....63.....	“Entwining Vines of Snow”
	.....63.....	“Walking at Night”
Melanie Whitmore	.....27.....	“Alone”
	.....37.....	“Nature’s Beauty”
Audrianna Wichman	.....60.....	“Maybe he changed his mind”
Rachel Williams-Belter	.....54.....	“Ode to Washing My Hands”

Mission Statement

In Zen Buddhism, “satori” is the Japanese word for enlightenment, seeing into one’s own true nature. Since 1970, *Satori* has provided a forum for Winona State University students to express and share their own true nature and their creations with the university community.

“Anyone in pursuit of art is responding to a desire to make visible that which is not, to offer the unknown self to others.”

-- Hettie Jones

The Things

by Jiwon Seo

There is the darkness.

I am unknown

What is there until I step forward.

There is a candy wrapped by fancy paper.

I am unknown

What flavor it is until I taste it.

There is a person who came from Korea to the USA.

I am unknown

How my actions will look to Americans
until I hang out with them.

There are many choices in one situation.

We are unknown

What is the right answer.

Today, I put my choice, my future and my probability

To the unknown again,

Although I am unknown.

Those are our lives.

We don't know anything until we try.



She Torched Her Demons

By Melody Vang

Rupture

By Danielle Eberhard

At night nothing looked the same. The houses down the block, once friendly and familiar, were giant, standing shadows in the damp, summer heat. I stuffed my hands into the front of my sweatshirt and hurried through the cramped roads that ran between the cross-streets of Winona. The faint glow of the streetlamps guided me as I searched beneath porches, bushes, and cars.

“Mia!” I called out into the silence. My voice reverberated off of the old, lopsided garages and settled into the weeded yards. Only the soft cadence of frogs and bugs echoed my call. I sighed. The websites I had looked at earlier told me to be diligent, that a lost dog wouldn’t come home to idle owners. I had searched for nearly an hour during the day, but I didn’t find anything. It was as if she had walked out of the back door and dispensed into the thick fog that had hung, heavy and low as I biked home this morning. I had spent the night at Macy’s – listening, swallowing her words as she told me what it was like to have sex. What it was like to kiss a boy with tongue and to feel him push apart her legs and finally give her something to talk about. I had pretended to know the words well and that we were the same.

We both knew we weren’t.

The next morning, I had opened the back door to find the dog bed empty and the house asleep. My mother had already left for work, and the

rest of my family was still curled in their beds. No one remembered letting Mia outside. After frantically searching the house, I went outside to ask the neighbors if they had seen anything, but there was nothing. I figured it was Jackson, or perhaps one of my parents, too consumed with their disgusting divorce, who had let her outside during the night. Now she was gone. There were no paw prints – no dog treat Hansel and Gretel trail in the alley behind our house that lead to Mia. She no longer existed, and nobody could account for her disappearance.

I wrung my hands tightly together under my shirt as I continued through the softly lit alley ways. I kept seeing her black and white body smashed, dismembered, torn across Highway 43. I saw her floating in the Mississippi, water-logged and small. I saw her trapped, decaying under someone's porch, fear pressed deep into her permanently open eyes. When I pictured my dog, I could only see her dead.

Something rustled behind a low fence. I stopped moving and peered over the wooden post. A rabbit. It sat, unmoving in the yard, with its body gleaming in the yellow light of late August. I glared at it. There were only rabbits at midnight. People, dogs – nothing else existed when the town fell asleep. There was a quiet lull between the streetlights and houses. A few were still lit with the faint hum of glowing televisions, but most places were dead. I was in a parallel universe – a universe between 9pm and 6am – and I was walking through it, my hands twisting in my pockets. I turned away from the rabbit and moved down the street. My feet were leading me back home. I hoped my own house was dead, that my parents were asleep in their separate corners of the house, and that I could sneak through the porch and up into my room on the second floor unnoticed. I didn't feel like explaining my midnight rendezvous to either of them.

The muted light on the porch welcomed me home. I passed the silver water dish near the steps – it was still full and untouched. My mouth turned into my chin. She wasn't here. Mia's blanket was stretched across the railing of the porch. At one point it had been a soft, baby blue but now it was faded and covered in her dark, black fur. I reached out a hand and ran my fingers over the rough fabric. I hope she could smell it. The websites had told me to leave something with her scent outside and to leave a dish with fresh water. They thoroughly advised me not leave food outside unless I wanted raccoons and opossums making homes under our porch, but it looked like nothing living had even been here. I left a handprint on her blanket and walked up onto the porch. Careful not to wake my parents, I opened the door, made one last hopeful glance over my shoulder, and went inside.

“I don't remember you asking if you could go somewhere.”

I shot my mother a scathing glare. She was standing against the counter, a hand on her hip. Her hair was wrapped against her head in a disheveled bun, and she was still dressed business casual. She looked tired. We stared at each other as I stood, sweating, in the kitchen.

“That’s because I didn’t.”

Her face hardened behind me as I walked toward the stairs.

“I don’t have patience for the whole moody teenager thing, Elouise.”

“I didn’t have patience for the whole divorce thing but looks like you did it anyway.” I knew that stung her, but I didn’t care. I left my mother in the kitchen and went upstairs to my room. My mother sure as hell didn’t seem to care when she broke my father’s heart and decided she had enough of us. I pulled off my sweatshirt and climbed into bed. I hated my mother. I hated what she did to our family and I hated her for making me feel like this – like there was tar in my lungs and it was suffocating me alive.

And the thing was – she wasn’t even the one who told us. It was my dad, crying at the dinner table, who told us that they were getting a divorce. My mother just sat there with a scowl twisted over her face. She was mad at him for making her the bad guy, but what else would she be? It was her decision. She was the one who wanted it to end. She was the one who didn’t even want to try. I hated her for it and I still hate her for it.

Jackson got over the divorce pretty quickly once he realized he got two Thanksgivings, two Christmases, and two birthdays. Summer was told over the phone and when she came back home from her first year at college in the Twin Cities she was so different that I don’t even know if she cared to begin with. She only shrugged her shoulders and muttered something about how it was bound to happen anyway. I didn’t know what she was talking about. I never thought our parents would get divorced. I never thought it would happen to me.

I pulled the blankets up to my chin and turned on the box fan that sat next to my bed. I wasn’t that tired but there was nothing left to do. I couldn’t search for Mia – not without a lead. The only thing I could do was wait, but I was tired of waiting.

“Mia!”

“Mia!” Macy echoed my call as we rode down Fifth Street on our bikes. We both were wearing sweatshirts zipped up to our chins. The morning air was cool, still unheated from the golden, beating sun. I knew in a couple hours I would be drenched in sweat and covered in gnats but right now it felt good to be outside. I had checked the back porch as soon as the morning light peeked through my window, but the water bowl was still untouched. Mia hadn’t been home.

Macy wanted to hang out, but I told her the only thing I wanted to do was to search for my dog. I could tell she'd rather do something else – watch Netflix or go the pool – but she showed up at my front door, her brown hair in a ponytail, and bike in hand.

“What do you think happened?” Macy asked, drawing her bike to stop.

“I don't know. I came home after your place the other morning and she was gone.”

“Do you think your dad did it?”

I steadied my bike between my legs and stared ahead of me, “I don't know. Why?”

“Well, to be fair Elle, he hasn't really been here. You know, here. In this universe. At least the last few times I've seen him.”

I snorted, “Can you blame him?”

“Do you think it was your mom?”

“Might as well have been.”

Macy didn't respond. She zipped her sweatshirt tighter over her neck and fixed her gaze ahead of us. I hadn't told her about my parents' divorce until a week after it happened. She was nice about it, of course, but I could tell she wanted to ask questions. She wanted to know why it happened. But I didn't have any answers.

“We'll find her.” She finally said, pushing her bike off of the pavement.

I shrugged my shoulders, “I hope so.”

We rode around the east end of Winona until our sweatshirts were tied around our waists and our arms were bare. The sun rose above us, blinding and hot.

“Can we take a break?” Macy asked, her forehead beaded with sweat.

I nodded, my own mouth parted and dry. We biked to Lake Winona and locked our bikes next to the park. I followed Macy as we made our way over to the swings. We weren't children anymore but it was tradition. When Macy broke up with her first boyfriend in ninth grade, I had biked to her house after midnight, and we had found ourselves here, sitting on the swings in the dark, night air. We used to come here after school as children and play intricate games of tag and house. It was comforting to return to something that was always the same. We picked two swings on the end of the set and pulled ourselves into the hot, black seats. It burned against my bare legs. Macy toed the woodchips with the edge of her sneakers, her gaze drawn towards her lap.

“Is your mom going to move out?”

I tightened my grip around the chains of the swing, “She wants to.”

“Do you think she’s sleeping with other guys?” I didn’t respond.

“Sorry.” She quickly replied, “We just – You haven’t told me anything.”

A few kids ran across the playground. It looked like they were playing Magic, an old game we used to play in elementary school. One kid had to close their eyes, while the rest of us would move across the playground as quietly as possible. If someone was on the woodchips and the person who was “it” heard them, they would yell, “Magic” and the caught person now had to be the one who was “it.” I remembered what it felt like to get caught. I would twist my nose and scowl, but I wasn’t ever that mad. I kind of liked being “it.” I liked wandering, blind, across the playground and into the unknown, but that was a game and going into the unknown in real life sucked.

“I don’t know.” I responded.

The water was still untouched. A few drowned bugs and a leaf floated in the now stale, murky bowl. I kicked it over on its side and watched as it trickled tiny rivers through the gravel. I picked up the dish and went into the house. My dad was sitting at the dinner table. He was reading the newspaper.

“Hey, honey.” He glanced up from the paper.

“Hi, Dad.” I walked toward the sink and filled up the dish with water.

“Any luck?”

I turned off the water and set the bowl on the counter, “No.”

“I called Animal Control today and the Humane Society.”

“And?”

“They haven’t seen anything, but they told us they would call as soon as they do.”

I sighed, “I guess that’s good.”

“She’ll turn up. She’s a good dog. She knows her home.”

My dad went back to the paper. He looked so much older than he did three months ago. His face was hollow and thin and his hair was starting to grey. I never thought of my dad as an old man, but he was suddenly older than I remembered. I sat down at the table beside him, leaving the water bowl on the counter. I stared at my hands. My family was never the talking kind. We never shared our feelings or had group hugs, and I never really understood families that did. Some of my friends told their parents everything and it was such a foreign concept to me. I couldn’t even imagine talking to my mom or dad about school crushes, or still being a virgin, or how the divorce still sat in my teeth.

But I wanted to ask my dad if he was ok. He never looked happy anymore and sometimes, the few moments when my parents were in the same room, I would catch him looking at my mom and I wanted to cry. He had to take a leave of absence from work, and I only ever saw him reading the newspaper or watching TV. He wasn't the same. His smile never reached his eyes when he talked to me. I wanted to ask him a lot of things. But instead I went outside and put the fresh bowl of water next to the porch.

I slowly walked up the stairs and moved toward my room at the end of the hall. The beige carpet shone from the faint glow of the moon through the window. It was late and Mia was still more of an image and less of a dog. The streets of Winona had been abandoned and I was its lone traveler without a map. I stopped at the frame of my door, resting my hand against the wood pane.

"Were you drinking?"

I dropped my hand from the frame of my door and glanced over my shoulder. Summer peered out of her room across the hall in the moonlight. Her long blonde hair fell around her face like a curtain. She was wearing a pink nightgown. I had almost forgotten what it was like to have her home.

"No."

"What were you doing?" She pushed her door open wider and stood cross-armed in the door frame. I turned to face her and leaned against the wall. I stared at her. Summer was taller than me, prettier than me, and an-all-over better person than me. She looked so goddamn regal. She won the luck of the draw and looked more like my dad. She had his grey eyes and tan skin and walked on stilt legs. I was short and had my mom's hips and brown eyes. It sucked knowing I could have looked like her.

"I was out looking for Mia." I hissed through my teeth.

Summer twisted her face into a scowl, "You don't have to be a brat about it."

"I'm being a brat?" My voice was loud in the quiet hum of the house. We heard our mother move in her bed at the end of the hall. I gave Summer an angry look and stomped into her bedroom and shut the door behind me.

"How am I being a brat?" I demanded. Summer sat on her bed, her body propped up on her hands.

"Ever since Mom and Dad and the whole divorce thing, you've been kind of a bitch."

"And I'm just supposed to forgive her?"

Summer groaned, arching the pale sheet of her neck toward the ceiling, and let herself fall onto her back, "You're being so highschool right now."

"What the fuck is that supposed to mean?"

“It’s a divorce, Elouise.”

“At least I feel something. You guys pretend it never happened.”

Summer sighed, “Everyone gets divorced. Get over it.”

I swallowed the burning lump in my throat and returned to my own room. I didn’t know why nobody else cared. I didn’t know why it mattered so much to me. I crawled into bed and pulled the covers over my head and started to cry.

I opened the door to the porch. Mia’s blanket was wet with dew and the water bowl near the steps was tipped on its side. I hurried over to the bowl and looked for signs of life. There were small footprints leading under the porch. The prints were small and had no claw marks. I peered under the porch. A wide faced tabby stared back at me. It opened its mouth and hissed. I pulled the corner of my lip into my teeth and left the cat alone. There were no signs of Mia.

I went back into the house.

“Good morning.” My mother murmured from the kitchen table. She drew a cup of coffee to her lips and stared down at her phone. I ignored her and went into the living room where Jackson was playing a handheld video game on the couch.

“Did you find Mia?” He asked.

“No.”

Jackson didn’t respond. I don’t even know if he heard my answer. He was too absorbed in his video game to notice. I shook my head and opened the door to the basement at the end of the room. The TV was on downstairs, and I knew my dad was sprawled across the couch. I walked down the stairs and watched him from the edge of the carpet. He looked at me, tired.

“Do you think we can go search the west end of town?” I said. I didn’t feel like biking and I didn’t have my driver’s license. I also wanted to spend time with my dad. He picked up the remote and muted the TV.

“Has she been spotted down there?”

“No...” I trailed off, “But we haven’t see her anywhere on the east end and I’m starting to get worried.”

“Summer told me she put up posters around town.”

“She did?” I tried to mask the surprise in my voice. I didn’t think anyone else cared that she was gone. My dad turned off the TV and got up from the couch.

“We can still look anyway.”

We drove in silence. I drummed my fingers against the window of his truck as I looked for Mia between the houses and cars. Outside the

clouds were overcast and heavy. Small droplets of rain were starting to form on the windshield of the truck. My dad hunched over the wheel while his hand moved back and forth over the clutch. He seemed nervous. He kept glancing between me and the road and my stomach started to sink. He wanted to tell me something.

“I found a house in Rollingstone.”

“What?” I looked at him and I knew he didn’t want to tell me.

“Elouise -” he started.

“Why are you moving out! Why isn’t she moving out! She’s the one that did this.” My mouth moved without me, “She doesn’t get to stay in the house. You do. You didn’t do anything.”

My dad moved the clutch into neutral and rolled the truck to a stop in the middle of fifth street. We were the only car in the road.

“That’s not true.”

“Yes, it is. Yes, it is.”

“Elouise.” My dad reached out to touch me, but I opened the door to the truck and jumped out onto the pavement. It was my mother. It was always my mother with her scathing words and remarks about my hair and how I didn’t wear makeup like Summer and that I only wore sweatshirts and that I wouldn’t have acne if I just washed my face. It was always my mother with her late-night meetings where she probably fucked other guys and lied to us through business dinners and work trips to Chicago as I ran down the street with my hands twisting back and forth under my sweatshirt and I had to run because I didn’t want to stop and think.

I ran until my sides started to hurt and I no longer recognized where I was. I knew I was on the far west end of town, but my surroundings were faintly familiar. I slowed my pace and drew to a halt. Something was dead at the end of the sidewalk. My mouth was sticky and dry. I walked toward it. It was a rabbit stretched on its side. Its flank peeled across its belly and its insides were pulled across the sidewalk. I covered my mouth with my hand. The air stung with a rancid, retching odor and I noticed one of its eyes bulged out of its head. I stepped backwards, my eyes trained on the corpse. I started to cry. I didn’t want to be here. I didn’t want to be in this town and I didn’t want to be at home. I turned away from the rabbit and stared back at where I had come from and thought about how there was nowhere else for me to run.

The porch light glared in the evening sun. I stood at the end of the alley. I didn’t want to go back inside. I knew my parents were inside waiting for me. I stared at the empty water dish, the damp blanket, and I went inside. The house was dark and quiet. I left my wet shoes next to the door

and walked up the stairs and into my room. My phone was blinking on top of the dresser. I turned on the screen. There were text messages from both of my parents asking me where I was. They were out looking for me. I lowered myself onto my bed and stared at the texts. I set my phone on the floor and crawled into bed. I didn't care.

I woke up to the faint feeling of a hand on the back of my calf. I lifted my head. My mother was sitting on the middle of my bed in a red bathrobe. She looked tired. I let my hair fall like a shield around my face and stared down at my arms. I could feel her looking at me.

"Good morning." She spoke softly.

I refused to move. I felt too numb to open my mouth, to think, even.

"Elouise. I just want to talk."

"About what?" The words cut into my lips.

"You can't keep acting like this. You can't run away from us and lock yourself up in your room. Your father and I are worried sick." She looked like she was going to cry.

"Don't act like you and Dad are on the same page."

"Is this still about the divorce, honey-"

"Don't say that to me – don't talk to me like that." I shrunk into my bed. I wanted to run. I wanted to bolt out of bed and go down the stairs and out of the house and into the alley and I wanted to run. My mother leaned toward me, her arms outstretched, and I wanted to run – I wanted to run – and she pulled me into her arms and held my face against her chest and wrapped her hands in my hair.

"Mom." My voice was weak and I started to cry.

She shushed me as I sobbed into her arms.

"Why are you leaving us?" The words shook between sobs.

"No, honey, no." She murmured into my hair.

"Why don't you want to be with us anymore?"

And that was it. That was what I was scared of. I was scared that our family was being torn apart. That Summer would go back to college and forget about me again. That my father would move into his new house and I wouldn't see him as much and it wouldn't be the same. That my mother would be too busy with her new boyfriends and her life to even think about her second daughter and I was scared that I was going to be alone.

My mother lifted my head from her chest and held it in her hands, "I'm not leaving you. I'm not leaving you. It's going to be different. But I'm not leaving you." My mother pulled me deeper into her arms and we sat in my bed for a long time, just being in each other's warmth.

The sun was sinking into the bluffs when I opened the back door and walked out onto the porch. I half expected Mia to emerge from behind the house next door now that I had finally talked to my mom. But I was wrong. Her water bowl remained untouched and her blanket still sat on the railing, but the air inside the house felt warmer. I knew it was something she would want to come back to. I moved out onto the sidewalk and cupped my mouth in my hands,

“Mia!”

Nothing.

Clouds of gnats hovered over me in the damp and humid air. I pressed my hand against my brow and wiped the sweat against my jeans. It was starting to get dark and the streetlamps were flickering on and off. I paused. There was something at the end of the block. A large black lump curled on its side. My heart caved into my knees and I started to run. I knew it was Mia and that she was dead and there was nothing I could do. She was stretched on her side, her black and white fur deflated and flat against her limp body. I lowered myself onto my knees and reached out a shaking hand, my eyes already wet with tears, and I knew her body would be cold. I brought my hand up to my mouth and let myself convulse into sobs. I knew when time had passed my parents would open the door and come looking for me. I knew they would find me at the end of the block and that we would stand around her and cry and we would be together in that moment; I knew when we got back home and we returned to our rooms that nothing would ever be the same.



Trio

by Claire Bowman

1.

There is so much potential
in the light breaking through a
morning window.

As the sun creeps over
the bluffs' tops to say, "hello,"
I find my fire within.

2.

Each day in the valley closes
with a cotton candy sky, wispy clouds
pirouetting across the horizon.

Two sister lakes hang out below
taking snapshots of the sky
and displaying them on their water's reflection.

3.

Night saunters into the Mississippi valley
like an old boyfriend
entering your hometown bar.

You feel his presence first,
a slow, cryptic pull,
then a blanket of familiar shadow.



Mountain

By Grace Hughes

Moon in Hand

by Kristine Smith

There are nights where I wonder
If I will ever kiss the moon
It is unlikely the stars will cradle me
In an embrace
But I crave so hungrily to be
Swaddled in the warm arms of a sky
That sings me lullabies while my
Mind slowly sinks into slumber

Counting sheep

Then asking questions

*What if
Can I
Will I
Should I have*

Go to sleep
The dark whispers softly into my ear
There is use in wondering,
But nothing to find when wandering
In the unknown
The sun will visit you come dawn
Provide you with a blank sheet of paper
And a pen

But please return it
For the night has a story of its own to write
As well



8
By Kristine Smith

A Verse to the Infinite

by Remington Schmidt

A tree of glass stood with crystal leaves,
Swirling iridescent branches and delicate buds.
As the sun set each day the tree emitted pale beams.

Surrounding the tree was a forest of disease,
Thorns tipped with blood created the floor,
mangled twisting branches lined the ceiling.

A single winding path cut its way through the din,
Evading tendrils of blackened vines,
And curving past poisoned gurgling streams.

Wind snarled and the cold was biting.
Danger lurked in every corner and at every turn,
The darkness numbed the mind and erased all feeling.

Eventually the path became overgrown
the tree was lost from memory,
And the forest zipped shut, sealing at the seams.



Alone

By Melanie Whitmore

Winona Prize in Poetry

Cal Fremling

by Emma Lee Cavanaugh

The river feels like industrial Winona, but she's not dirty when I see her in the shining morning from the boat so high above the brown waters, it's romantic, the story of a race.

The first to hit is yellow noise, the machinery with chipped paint molds the river, we are innovative enough to feel red plastic, litter-green nun buoys: we need direction.

Barges are too heavy to sit properly on the water, no matter how I scold them, they reveal the nation built below the mud, below the isle heaped by well-meaning human beings.

Up the bank goes the train too full of itself to be shrill, but moaning deeply mournful of loss, and down the river glides the towboat, taking in the greenery and reflecting more on us.

The cold wind whips around the riverbend pinking my cheeks and sandaled toes, stiff fingers scribble: I am unsure if I came today to see the river who changed us, or the river we changed.



Encounter I

By Kenneth Tham



Encounter II

By Kenneth Tham

The Unexpected Catch

By Walker Larson

The Winona Prize Winner in Creative Nonfiction

When I was about twelve years old, my father owned a dilapidated old fishing rod. It sported a nondescript brown color with a green grip. It bent at the end, and it wobbled, and it felt heavy and clumsy. I had the impression that it had wearied of the world and only reluctantly performed its function—but it was a fly rod, and that made it special, and I later discovered that fish can come to even the sorriest of rods. My father had acquired the rod several years before when he developed an interest in fly fishing, but he had never yet tried it out, largely because he has a tendency to pursue too many interests at once (a trait that I have inherited from him). His interests extend to a large number of topics, especially if the subject is a bit out of the mainstream, a bit unusual or distinct. I imagine that fly fishing appealed to him partly for that reason—it is an unconventional way to fish. Fly fishing is the poet's form of fishing. It constitutes a pure and intimate encounter between the angler and the natural world. There are no boats, no fish-finders, no overly expensive equipment, no loud motors—not even any heavy tackle boxes. Most fly fishermen wear a vest that holds everything they need while they fish. Oftentimes, the angler actually stands in the same water that his quarry inhabits. I think this mystique appealed to my father, and, eventually, to me. That spring, I had been looking through my dad's books on fly fishing and my curiosity sparked. When he saw my interest, he agreed

to finally give fly fishing a try. Armed with the tired old rod and these books, our fly fishing journey began.

My dad and I spent many hours reading up on the art of angling. We worked ourselves into a very excited state, dreaming up fantasies of what fly fishing would be like. Watching *A River Runs Through It* only served to heighten and magnify our excitement and fly fishing vision. I could picture myself casting out long, swooping arcs of fly line, just like Brad Pitt, as though I were writing secret words in the sky in a flowing script, before bringing a fish, dancing and flashing amid sparks of water, to the shore.

The first time we went out fishing, however, our fishing adventure didn't turn out quite like I had anticipated. Looking back, I feel genuine sympathy for my twelve-year-old self, whose high hopes were suddenly checked by reality. The reality was this: absolute and utter failure.

Upon first wading into the water of Garvin Brook in Farmer's Park near Winona, Minnesota, I promptly managed to hook my dad in the finger. It was ghastly. The muscles of his face constricted with pain, and we had to work together so that he could remove the hook. I couldn't make any sudden move with my rod because it was attached to his hand. I had to hold it very still while he performed the tricky operation of getting the hook out. Needless to say, this adventure didn't constitute a promising beginning. Far from landing a large trout, I had instead caught my own father, much to his chagrin. We no doubt looked ridiculous and demonstrated our inexperience, my father issuing instructions to me through gritted teeth, myself feeling rather afraid and guilty for having been so clumsy as to hook him. Fortunately, it didn't take long to remove the hook, and my fears of a trip to the hospital proved to be unfounded.

We pressed on, but the outing did not get any better. We contributed greatly to the native population of lost flies along Garvin Brook: if we didn't catch a branch on the backcast, we caught a weed on the forecast. Our flies landed everywhere except the surface area of the stream where we wanted them to. The stream was heavily wooded, and we felt hemmed in on all sides, as though someone had raised a forbidding net all around the precious creek. Worse still, we could *see* trout, but we couldn't catch them. I know now that, nine times out of ten, if you can see the trout, they can see you, and so you've already lost your chance. I'm sure we scared many fish that day, for trout are incredibly skittish and cautious creatures. A shadow, an odd color, a vibration in the streambed—any of these, along with a host of other slight disturbances, is enough to send them shooting through the water to the nearest cover.

Finally, near the end of the day, and in a state of mild desperation and extreme frustration, I tried a technique whereby the angler hides in the bushes along the stream and simply sets his fly directly in front of the nose of a trout—no casting involved. This meant I didn't have to worry about getting my fly hung up in the branches. It cost me a lot of trouble to climb into position for this, and the results were nil. The trout, which I could actually see, if memory serves, cared nothing at all for my fly. He rudely acted as though it weren't even there. At last, defeated, we left. Part of me wanted to enjoy the experience, given all the build-up and anticipation, but part of me had just plain hated it. It was a frustrating outing, and not at all like what my books had portrayed. I believe my father felt similarly, although I think his age, experience, and character tempered his disappointment.

People often call my dad a melancholic or a pessimist, even. When he writes music, the songs are often heartbreakingly sad. He is thoughtful—a poet and a writer. And it's true that he does feel things deeply and intensely. But he is no pessimist. Somehow, in spite of his ability to sense and even sometimes dwell on the great tragic potential in life, he is also able to dwell on the great potential for joy and beauty in the world. He is often surprisingly optimistic about a given project or idea. He refuses to assume that something won't work out unless there's good reason for it. And so I think he probably knew that the fly fishing journey wasn't over. Something might come of it yet. We just had to keep trying.

At any rate, I think even then, in that first frustrating outing, my father and I must have sensed something of the magic of fly-fishing—a magic that ran deeper and truer than the glossy, glamorous photos in books and clips of Brad Pitt in *A River Runs Through It*. There was something there, some hidden potential, though we had not yet fully tapped into it. That world couldn't be won easily, couldn't be won by simple skill. Like some fantasy kingdom, it had to be approached with humility, and access would be granted only as gift, not a right.

We kept at it. All through that first summer we hunted for new streams and tried new tactics. Most of the streams were overgrown or too small or too big or too dirty, and most of the new tactics we tried didn't work. My wobbly rod made casting especially difficult. It was all I could do to land a fly on the water, let alone do it delicately and carefully and accurately, without the fish perceiving my presence. And I really had no idea if the flies I used were even the right ones. I do not exaggerate when I say that we probably went out close to a dozen times in search of the elusive water spirits, the trout, without either of us catching a single one. We failed time after time. It seemed that I gained nothing by all this. But in reality, I gained

much. I had to practice perseverance and patience, and in more ways than I realized. Without even knowing it, I was laying the foundations not only of a lifetime of fishing, but also of a lifelong friendship with my father.

One day, near midsummer, my dad went out fishing alone. At the time, my family was hosting a reunion with our relatives, and I busied myself hanging out with cousins, so he ventured out early one morning to the mist-shrouded stream in solitude. He left well before I woke up, but I met him in the garage when he returned and, almost as a mere formality, I asked, “Did you catch any?”

I sensed something unusual in his manner, even before he responded. He carried himself lightly yet soberly, like someone who has had a profound experience, and a glint hovered in his eyes and a soft smile on his lips.

“Three,” he responded.

I was astounded. Neither of us experienced more than one or two strikes—let alone a fish—all summer. How had he accomplished this? He proceeded to describe the outing to me, about how he had found a certain pool in Garvin Brook, lying secretly enclosed deep in the wood, and there he had caught not one, but *three* trout, one after the other. I will be honest: selfishly, I was dismayed at his success. After all of our outings together, our repeated failures, the one time he went out on his own, he had enormous success. I felt somehow vaguely betrayed—not by my father, necessarily, because I felt no great anger toward him and no resentment, but by my circumstances. Circumstances had not been in my favor. Dad had beat me to it in a competitive sense, but worse, he had had the experience all on his own. I hadn’t been there to share it with him, even after all of the trials we had gone through together. And catching a fish did sound magical, the way he described it.

Yet, these negative feelings notwithstanding, this event provided just the motivation I needed to keep trying. We returned to Garvin Brook not long afterwards, and I had determined to have a success of my own. My dad walked with my grandpa at a slower pace on this occasion, and so I forged ahead and reached the special pool on my own—my father had generously encouraged me to take the first shot at it. And so I did.

A long, fairly narrow pool with a sandbar along one edge and a smooth surface lay before me. The morning beamed around me, and a lovely hush and quiet enwrapped everything. The water shone as clear and cold as ever—I could see it braiding and unbraiding and tumbling and breaking and reforming all around the little rocks that made up the riffle on the near end of the pool. The bottom of the stream appeared shimmering and in detail, only slightly morphed and bent by the motion of the water over it. I began feeding

out line and false casting. Because it was a sunny morning, bars of sunlight slanted in between the trees to cast their glow on the water. I stayed still and quiet, save for my casting arm, and focused on getting the fly where I wanted it: over that deep spot along the sandbar where I knew the fish were holding. I probably laid two or three casts over the spot without anything happening. I focused so intently on the task, that to this day I can't tell you whether I tried for a minute or twenty minutes before the strike came.

It was sudden and violent. One moment my fly floated peacefully toward me, the next, a great ripping and splashing at the surface had replaced it. A fish had struck it. In fly fishing, the angler has only a few microseconds to set the hook because trout are clever fish, and they quickly realize that the artificial fly that they have just swallowed is not, in fact, a living thing, and so they spit it out. I knew this, so the instant I saw the strike (or perhaps a few milliseconds later, after the shock had passed), I lifted my rod tip wildly in an attempt to set the hook...

And miracle of miracles...

I felt a weight. Something hung on the end of my line.

I don't remember if the fish fought much or how long it took me to bring it in, but I do remember holding it for the first time. The trout is and always will be a thing of immense beauty. Unlike most fish, trout have skin, not scales, so that they are smooth and not slimy to the touch. Their bodies are long and narrow and aerodynamic, so that they can glide effortlessly through the creeks and rivers. They have beautiful mottled patterns on their backs, made up of exquisitely interconnected dots of red and brown and black. And their eyes are large and round. It is difficult for me to describe the feeling of holding this living, breathing, wild creature, that is at the same time an elegant work of engineering and a stunning work of art. It just lay there, gasping in my hand, without fighting or struggling much. And very quickly I realized that I had not even hooked it in the mouth. Somehow, in the commotion of the fish striking the fly and my setting of the hook, the fly had pierced the skin on the underside of the fish—I had hooked it in the belly, and not even very deeply. This meant that as I reeled it in, it had come toward me horizontally, leaving a long wake in the water. I removed the hook, and eventually let the fish go. I felt all aglow with the excitement and joy of the moment.

I could hardly believe what had happened. As I think back on it now, catching that fish was an immense reward not only because it came as a result of many hours of trying, but also because it marked the moment when I once again joined my father, so to speak. He had had his trout experience, and now I had had mine. We were no longer separated by that occurrence.

I discovered a truth in my first summer of fly fishing, a truth that applies to nearly every area of life. I discovered this: often, we have to labor without success for a very long time, without really making any progress, until suddenly, impossibly, the reward we hoped for for so long is granted to us, freely, abruptly, independent of our efforts—maybe in spite of them. You just barely win the treasure, by a narrow margin, as if by a miracle—your hook, by chance, catches the skin of the fish—so that it hardly seems that you accomplished it at all. And indeed, you may not have. It is as if some higher power has tested you with failure to determine how badly you want the prize, and when you have suffered enough, then it is suddenly given to you in spite of yourself. The pattern held true for a fly fishing instructor I later met: he didn't even catch his first trout on a fly. He caught it on a piece of Velveeta cheese. A hook through the belly. Velveeta cheese. These approaches shouldn't work. And maybe they don't. Maybe the best things, like the bonding between father and son, really can't be won by skill. They can only be won by trying and hoping and casting out into the dark, throwing a feather on a thread into the unknown, and being rewarded with far more than you could have hoped. They happen invisibly and mysteriously, in excess of our efforts.

The next summer, our fishing success grew exponentially. We caught *many* fish, partly because of a fly fishing class we took, partly because we got better rods, and partly because of magic. Better still, in the years following, we added countless memories of quiet evenings spent together on the streams, sharing the otherworldly peace of the Minnesota bluff-country valleys. Those fishing trips provided many opportunities for conversations between us, some of which were deeply important to my development into adulthood. There is something about being outside, in nature, without the distractions and disturbances of engines and electronics, that facilitates dialogue in a special way. I could ask my dad about things that troubled me; we could talk freely. Our conversations ranged from the humorous to the profound, on such topics as art, philosophy, morality, and just being a man. Oftentimes, after an outing, we would sit together by the truck, and I would drink a root beer and he a beer, and we would just be together. These memories were just one more level of unexpected reward, of a good thing that seems to flow disproportionately out of our feeble efforts—the unexpected catch. It's not that I wasn't close to my dad before fly fishing, but our pursuit of fly fishing marked the first time that we had a strong shared interest and ample opportunity for talking and just spending time together. But none of it would have happened if we hadn't trudged through the difficulties and failures of that first summer. We didn't give up. We kept going.

My dad and I still go out fishing, although we have both become busier since then. We have held many trout in our hands before gently slipping them back into the water. But fly fishing also served as the beginning and prototype of our friendship, which has since grown into a deep bond, and extended into many more areas than just fishing. These days, chances are that if one of us becomes interested in a topic or idea, the other one will soon be as well. My dad edited a book I wrote, and we've recently started a band together, to name just a few examples. Neither of us grew up with a brother, which is a loss, but it allowed for us to form a friendship that I believe is rare between a father and son. We can tell each other almost anything, and that's an unexpected treasure. I think that's part of the beauty of fishing and of life: when you throw that hook out there, you never know what you might reel in. It's often far more than you expected.





Nature's Beauty
By Melanie Whitmore

My Sun in Pisces

by Danielle Eberhard

When I was little my grandma
told me I was a water baby
A pseudonym plucked out of the
stars and I wore it on my forehead –

In like a lion and out like a lamb
I used to tell my classmates each
March when the ground grew hot
and the wind hollered in the middle
of the thick slotted slush that muddied
the streets –

My mouth parted, I clasped my hands
each year and waited for Mother Earth
to turn the dial and wish me
Happy Birthday



Galaxy
By Grace Hughes

Color 604

by Nicole Tompos

Lips like black satin have captured my gaze.
Every curve they form mesmerizing me,
The words they bring forth further enticing me.
My own tongue grows heavy and dumb like lead,
Mind fearful that my lips won't be stained dark as well.

What flows from those lips refuses to be dammed.
"Consequences be damned," she whispers.
Those black satin lips bloom into a smile;
I am still lost but have finally found some light.



Desperate Revolution
By Katelin Kent

I Have to Touch

by Megan Wefel

I have to touch
when she's near
her smooth skin
warm to remind me
I'm real

I thought it was a hair
above her elbow
one long and pale
curiosity moved my hand

I have to touch
her smooth skin
pull it off
I thought it was a hair
she pulled back

I thought it was a hair
three rows of thin hairs
my heart hurt

I have to touch
my heart hurt
the room grew heavy
it piled on

I'm sorry
we both said it



She is You

By Melody Vang

When the Water Speaks

By Sara Wakeham

The Winona Prize Second Place Winner in Fiction

It was a hot summer. Many of the lakes were drying up. The river nearby still ran strong, but that was only because of the snow from the mountains, at least that was what my professor told me. He said it snowed up there a lot.

I liked to climb to the top of the bell tower in town when Mama was too engrossed in the book carts to notice if I disappeared for a moment or two. From the top, I could see the vaguest smudge of mountains on the horizon line. It looked like the edge of the world.

All I wanted was to go to those mountains. I wanted to climb them, to touch snow. We had heard about it from some northern kids, how cold it was, how crisp it tasted, and while everyone else was turned off by it, I wanted to at least know what it felt like.

I mentioned this to my parents the first chance I got. They didn't like traveling much. My mama liked to stay within the walls of our home and Dad liked to stay with her.

We were just sitting down for our evening meal when I told them about the mountains I could see and the snow I had heard about. They both smiled. I asked if we could go there, and my dad hesitated, his smile disappearing. He looked back at his food and then glanced sidelong at my mama.

“Chasten, between you and the twins,” he began, nodding towards my younger siblings. “I mean, the distance alone to get that far north. They’re only five, you’re only eight-”

“Nine,” my mother corrected.

“There’s Uncle Cam’s health to consider. It’s no vacation, it would just be a lot of work. Not at all worth it.”

I thought it was worth it. But, I mumbled, “Okay,” and picked up my fork.

“We’ll think about it, it’s really not a horrible idea,” Mama said.

I slumped into my chair and picked at my food, I knew it would never happen. Mama rarely won these arguments.

After dinner, I snuck outside before someone could make me take a bath. I ran through the gardens, dodging rude vines by the light of dispersed and flickering lanterns. The moon was delightfully bright, so exploring was no trouble when I reached the forest and left the gardens far behind.

My favorite place was the frog pond. It was not secret, but it was secluded and the best place for catching frogs. A year ago, the gardeners gave me the job of frog catcher. I was supposed to catch frogs and bring them to the garden ponds, but by the end of the summer there were too many frogs. I didn’t mind, but the gardeners were annoyed. It was entertaining to hear people scream when a frog jumped into their path. The twins and I used to sit with our lunches on the benches and wait for it to happen. The frogs didn’t like being bothered, obviously, but they didn’t attack people like the garden cats.

The pond was shrouded in shadows, but there were a few spots that reflected bright white from the moonlight. I walked around the edges, careful not to step in the deeper muck. I swore then, despite the darkness, that the water was starting to swirl. It seemed to swell when I leaned over to get a better look, so I quickly leaned back. A small wave rose and fell, splashing onto my boots. I jumped back, up onto the mossy rocks and stared at the water.

It rippled. I waited, expecting a frog or snake to surface, maybe even a soaked squirrel. Something. But nothing did. I stood there until my feet ached from being perched at odd angles among the rocks.

I ventured again, stepping slowly, quietly, down to the water’s edge. It didn’t seem to react. I reached my hand out and the water sunk back.

I gasped and scrambled back up the rocks, slipping and falling in the muck. My left foot was sucked into the mud. It took all the energy I had left to wrench it free. I ran home, shouting for mama the second I stepped onto the garden terrace.

I crawled onto the bricks in front of the fire, careful not to lean too heavily on my knee. It hurt and was already bruising.

Mama walked in as I was brushing dried mud off my pants. Her eyebrows remained knitted together as she looked at me. "What's going on? Where were you?"

"I went outside and was playing and-"

"Are you hurt?"

"I fell at the edge of the frog pond," I said, gritting my teeth as I accidentally pressed against my bruise. Her eyes widened.

"So that's where you disappeared to. What were you doing out there?"

"Trying to reach the water," I grumbled. "I hurt my knee."

She rolled up my pant leg to see the bruise better and gingerly traced her finger around the edge.

"This will last a while, love." She chuckled and asked, "The frogs didn't feel like playing today, huh?"

I pulled my leg back and rolled my pant leg back down. "No, it was the water."

Her dark eyes locked onto mine. "What do you mean?"

I kicked my legs against the brick, trying to picture how it happened earlier. "The water kept moving odd," I said.

She shook her head. "It's full of jumpy frogs, I'm sure it was no different than any other day."

Her eyes were convincing. They wanted me to agree with her and normally I would have.

"No, Mama, it moved from my hand and ... and it followed me before that."

She moved my hair out of my eyes. "Water can't do that."

"But it did! It moved towards me and then away from me and it splashed onto me and there were no frogs."

"No more of this," she said sternly. "You'll confuse your siblings. Let's go find some scissors and give your hair a trim."

"No, Mama, I don't want a trim. The water, you have to see it. Let's go. I can show you."

"Chasten, it's just a frog pond. Ask your professor if you must, but he'll tell you the same." She got up and walked to the door. "Stay here and I'll be back."

"But-"

"No more of it," she said and hastily left, shutting the door behind her.

"But it was moving away from me."

A log on the fire popped. I leaned against the warm bricks. I'd find a way to show her. If she saw it herself, she would understand. The twins would certainly believe me. I should show them first.

I realized I hadn't seen the twins since dinner and wasn't sure who they were with. I hopped off the hearth, ignoring the twinge in my knee, and ran for the door. The idea of being around them was suddenly much more important than following Mama's command.

My boots echoed on the stone floor. It was lonely and quiet in this part of the house. Our rooms weren't far, just down the hall. The twins shared one still, they even still shared a bed. They were barely big enough to fill a whole bed anyway. My brother often slept curled up in a ball, pressed close to our sister, even though she liked to stretch out and have her space. I woke up many mornings to find my brother in my bed with his blanket. He would curl into my side, pressing his cold hands against my shoulder.

I opened the door and saw Father reading something to them by candle light. The twins were tucked into their bed, covered in Grandma's woven quilt. Both of the twins were struggling to keep their eyes open. The heavy velvet curtains were drawn over the windows. It was dark, but warm, and Father's steady voice as he read was calming. I wanted to crawl into bed with them.

The door squeaked as I shut it. Father stopped reading and turned around. He slammed the book shut and stood up. I backed into the door.

"Where have you been? We were very worried!" I opened my mouth to answer, but Father immediately stopped me. "Never mind, go to bed. Now."

I almost said goodnight to the twins, but thought better of it. I locked eyes with each of them. They looked upset, but I hoped it was only because I had interrupted, so I decided to leave and reached for the doorknob.

I went directly to my room, slamming the door shut. As I pulled on my night shirt, I fought back angry, hot tears. Sometimes I hated him. Sometimes he was only nice when Mama was around.

A few days later, I snuck out to the frog pond before lunch. I stared at the water for a long time, trying to see frogs through the murky depths. Once I was convinced there were none, certainly not any big enough to pull so much water away from me, I reached my hand out, one finger poised to break the surface. It never touched. The water kept moving out of my way. Instead, my finger squished into the muck at the bottom of the pond. I turned and ran back to the gardens, back to the dining square where they were setting up lunch.

Both of my parents stood up, seemingly startled.

“What happened? Why are you all muddy?” Mama asked. I was too busy trying to get enough air to answer.

“Why are you running so hard? Is something chasing you?” my father looked over me, back towards the forests. He motioned to one of my uncles and Uncle Kal started walking down the small steps.

I shook my head quickly, almost violently. Mama told them to come back, that I was just excited.

I held up my muddy finger to her, grinning between breaths, as if that would explain everything. She leaned away from my hand and asked a maid to fetch me a small bucket to wash my hands.

“No, no, Mama, I couldn’t touch the water. I only touched the bottom of the pond.”

Her eyes calmed, she grabbed my face, kneeling in front of me. “My love, I thought you were in danger of something.”

“But this is proof,” I said, thrusting my muck covered finger towards her. She twisted away again, grimacing this time.

“Of course, it is. Now let’s wash your hands and have a nice lunch.”

I looked at Father, but he was already talking with his brothers again. There would be no help from him. Then I noticed my professor sitting by the twins. He was scratching his grey beard and looking at me.

Mama took my hand and washed it in the water. I waited for the water to act differently, to move away or surge towards me. I kept wiggling my fingers. But nothing happened.

I ate the food they put in front of me, even when the twins started throwing theirs for the dogs. I nudged my sister, telling her to stop. She threw a carrot at me. I pushed both of their plates away from them. Mama looked then, realizing what had been done.

She looked at the twins sternly, “Listen to your brother.”

I glanced again at my professor. He was reading some dusty looking book with an ancient creature carved into the cover. It had a long, curled tail. It looked dangerous. The book suddenly shut and he was looking at me again. I quickly looked back at my plate.

“How old are you now?” he asked.

“Me?” I dropped my fork.

“Yes, you.”

I glanced at Mama, she smiled at me and nodded.

“Nine,” I said, loudly, trying to compete with Uncle Kal’s laughter. The twins repeated “nine” nearly just as loudly. I tried telling them to stop again, but they dove towards the ground and disappeared under the table.

Then they were running towards the rose garden, laughing as Mama chased them.

Professor faced me again. I expected him to ask how my math problems were going or if I had read through the book of adventure stories he had given me a week ago.

Instead, he said, "Tell me about the frog pond."

I glanced between him and Mama, but she was talking to Uncle Cam. One of the maids was pushing the twins inside. I scooted my chair closer to Professor's, so that neither of my parents would be able to hear, and told him everything.

I was tying my sister's hair up on top of her head when Father burst through the door to our family room. He slammed it shut and kicked it hard with his heavy, black boot. I pulled my sister back, away from his anger. I hauled her to my room and tucked her behind my bed. I peeked around my door and saw my father pacing back and forth in front of the fireplace. He was staring at a stack of books on the table. I hadn't seen those books before. He suddenly grabbed one and chucked it into the fire. Ashes flew up. Father started turning around so I quickly closed the door.

We waited for Mama to come get us. I don't know how long it was but, by the time she came and pulled us out of my room, my stomach was growling. My sister had fallen asleep. Mama had my brother in tow.

She stroked my hair and lifted my sister from her sleeping place. I followed her out to the family room and saw the fire was blazing. I felt the heat from it, even from across the room. I saw small flecks of white floating out from the flames. Mama directed me towards the chairs, laying my sister down on the couch. She sat me down and kissed my forehead. She smelled of the forest, wild and breezy. But, she looked exhausted. Her eyes and nose were red. She kept kissing my head.

"Can we eat soon?" I asked, touching my parched throat. "I'm thirsty."

"Of course, my love. Of course." She knelt before me and held my gaze. "I'm sorry your father scared you. He didn't mean to, he was just upset."

"Why?"

"Uncle Cam is sick, and your father and Uncle Kal, aren't getting along very well."

"Why?"

"It's very complicated, my love. I'll try and explain it all another day."

We sat in the quiet for a while, until my brother started snoring.

"What's in the fire?" I asked.

"It's complicated. Don't worry about it."

“Books?” I asked. I knew, but I still asked.

“Sort of.”

“Did Father write them?”

“No, these were mean books. Horrible books.”

“Oh.”

My stomach growled. I asked Mama for food again. She left for the kitchens. My sister went close to the fire and picked up one of the larger pieces of paper that had not been completely burned.

“Be careful, it can be hot still,” I told her, hoping she would come sit on the couch beside me rather than start playing with fire. Professor tutored an older boy who liked to play with fire, and he was scary. He had glared at me in the hall the other day. He had glared and Professor encouraged me to say hello to him anyway, apparently not noticing the glare. I had just shaken my head and tugged my brother along.

It was not that surprising to realize the boy liked to play with fire. I had caught him staring at the fireplaces. I heard he threw things into the flames, even one of Mama’s scarves. He kept asking if he could help the cooks in the kitchen, but I was sure that was just because he wanted to get to the large stoves beneath the floors.

My sister handed me a piece of crisp paper that fell apart in my hand. Nevertheless, on the little pieces I could see the remnants of ink writing. The words were long lost.

I crushed it in my fist when Mama opened the door. She had a large plate of bread and fruit. My sister and I stood up, both eager to eat something.

Later, when the twins were both asleep, I looked at Mama and wondered if I could tell her, if she’d be mad. She was staring at the fireplace, but she didn’t look like she was looking at anything particular.

“Mama,” I began.

She seemed to wake and looked over at me. “Yes, little one?”

Normally I would have corrected her. I was not little, not little like the twins.

“My professor believes me.”

“About what?” She kept glancing between me and the fireplace.

“About the water,” I said. I felt her tense up. She kept her eyes trained on the flames.

“That it ... moves oddly?” she asked.

“Yes.”

She pressed her lips together. She pushed her palms into the couch cushions and breathed out heavily. “I can’t believe he would encourage that

nonsense. The water in little frog ponds doesn't do anything magical."

"It's not magic, Mama...he said it was because of me."

She laughed, shortly, and stood up. "What is this ridiculousness?"

"It's true."

She turned to me sharply, "No, it's not. You must be exhausted or maybe you ate something kind of poisonous."

"No, I haven't." I had seen a kid die from poison berries, I knew not to eat strange fruits in the forest.

"It's okay," she said. Mama pulled me close to her, pressing her face into my hair. "We will figure this out. Maybe find a doctor."

I pushed her away. "I don't need a doctor!"

She stepped back, startled. The twins were suddenly awake. I side stepped them all and ran out into the hall, down the main staircase and out the main doors. I ran until I was deep in the forest, maybe even past the frog pond, I wasn't sure.

When I slowed to a walk, I realized it was a much cooler night than the previous ones and that it was very dark out.

"Hey."

I spun around, leaning back so I could run. But, it was only the professor.

"What are you doing out here?" he asked.

"What are you doing out here?" I asked.

He gestured to his basket and hooded jacket.

"Can't you tell? I'm running away." He started laughing, low and breathy. His beard appeared silver in the faint light.

I relaxed a little. Was I running away too? I hadn't really thought about it.

"No, but actually I'm going to visit my mother. She has a small home in town." He tilted his head a little, looking at me fully. "Why are you running out here? Isn't it bedtime?"

"Mama doesn't like that you believe me," I blurted.

The smile left his face. "Some people won't understand it, at first."

"Will she ever?" I asked. I was shaking, and felt like crying. I didn't want Mama to be upset with me.

"Of course, I'll see to it especially. We'll figure it out. It'll take time, but we'll figure it out." He looked down the trail, away from home, and then back towards the house. "I should walk you home."

I didn't argue. He led the way.

"Why does only the frog pond water react to me?"

"I don't know."

"Will I be really good at swimming?"

“I think you could be regardless.”

“Do you know about these things because of that book?”

He laughed, “I have a lot of books. Which one specifically?”

“The one with the ancient, dangerous, creature on the cover.”

“Oh,” he stopped walking and reached into the basket. He pulled out the same worn, dusty looking book and offered it to me. It was hard to see the etched in creature because the moonlight wasn’t as bright as other nights.

“This one?”

“Yes,” I said, reaching for it. He jerked it back.

“You have to be very careful with this book. It doesn’t have all the answers, but it is still very important.”

I nodded and he let me take it. It was solid and heavy in my hands. I tucked it under my arm and we started walking again. I felt taller.

I looked up at him. “Have you ever touched the snow from the mountains?”





Wanderlust
By Melody Vang

Ode to Washing My Hands

by Rachel Williams-Belter

“Buy some anti-bacterial soap” a text from my mom reads after hearing that the flu is spreading like anti-vaccination platforms since 45 came into office. The tap-water burns my albino skin but I keep scrubbing, enjoying the discomfort of my restored cleanliness. Careful to wash the tips of my thumbs, I notice the prominent lines imprinted throughout my palms are beginning to mirror my mother’s. “You can tell how old someone is by their hands” she always says while examining her own, which bear a distinct resemblance to her mother’s hands— the same cold hands I held as she lay in her mahogany coffin in

the back of the church—the hands my mom carefully crossed over her dead mother’s chest 13 years after she performed the same ritual for her husband—the act I’ll eventually perform for my mom, carefully taking her hands in mine, unwilling to let go.



Papyrus

By Sanja Petrashek

My Shaved Head

by Dahlia Garofalo

I remember when you asked me to the Christian dance at the drinking fountain and we swayed back and forth making room for the Holy Spirit as I blushed at the floor and when you bought me a gold heart with our birthstones, and I remember the hours we spend studying Physics, the way you put your arm around my waist, wafting your scent of cinnamon and oranges, and I remember our first kiss by the basketball trophies when I asked you if you had kissed a girl before and you stared at the floor, and then when you saw my seizures for the first time and I cried and told you not to look at me but you held me in your cinnamon embrace, and I remember when we used to sit on the bleachers, sharing a greasy bag of popcorn and you braided my hair. Then when I told you my dream was to be a writer and you patted my head and when you hid that tennis ball in your pants and made me dig it out in front of all your friends, and I remember when your daddy, who was our school pastor, interviewed me and asked me if I was a virgin because only the purest would do for his son, and then when you stopped looking at me during your basketball games, then stopped hugging me after, and when you said it was better that I didn't come at all, and I remember when you stopped kissing me and when I told you I loved you, you changed the subject and when I touched you, you shuddered; and I remember when we went to Shenanigans I wanted to take your picture and you refused, played laser tag for hours with that girl in the tie dye pants, and left me sitting at the bar eating nachos and wondering why I couldn't be what you want; and then that day I asked you what you liked about me and you said my hair and I was afraid to ask what else, but there was nothing else anymore, so one day I shaved my head.



Disposition

By Melody Vang

Long Distance

by Claire Bowman

You are home again
but now there's

a half drunk bottle
of Deschutes on my nightstand
half-torched green in
the pipe a plane ticket
from Seattle glass tray crusted
with salmon skin on
the stovetop no tee-shirts to
cling inhale every last drop
of your soft linen and musk
my sheets a disarray
in the shape of you



At the End of the Day

By Ben McCrary

Maybe he changed his mind

by Audrianna Wichman

and reached for the hotel phone, urging a body (no longer his own)
further and further and further and
crumpling, phone in hand (probably
knocking it off the table)
and maybe he screamed into the receiver
that he needs help because he changed his mind
or maybe he stumbled into the hallway
and screamed at the locked doors
that it hurt and he changed his mind
and only a few more steps (or crawls)
until he can reverse the clock

or maybe he peeled back the covers
of the (lumpy, yet strangely comfortable)
hotel bed and nestled inside,
securing the sheets about
his lagging chest and closing his eyes
as who knows what welcomed him,
never thinking twice



Constantly Waiting
By Melody Vang

Bill—at The Black Horse Bar and Grill—6/5/17 11:34pm

by Rachel Williams-Belter

In the illumination of one out of four functioning light bulbs glowing in the sconce above me, I rub the eight-dollar Maybelline mascara from my eyelashes, hold the lukewarm lavender washcloth over my mouth and grieve into the damp fabric— the woman’s plea “Come on Bill” reiterates in my mind— the sobs of the annoying bitch across from me whining on her phone, because Raisin Kane stopped playing and a decent human being did what I couldn’t and scolded her for snap-chatting the scene to her friend— the din of ribs cracking as CPR is performed— the sight of paramedics injecting the stranger’s heart with pure adrenaline and then yelling for everyone to clear the room— the car ride home with my roommate’s intoxicated parents and my friend complaining about a hot guy he didn’t get to meet tonight—

*fuck, what does it matter,
what does any of it matter—*

I’ve convinced myself that Bill died, right there on the wooden floor of The Black Horse, that his family witnessed it all— that the bitch crying into her phone somehow made it worse— that the paramedics were too late— that my friends don’t care or choose not to— and now I’m standing in my grimy bathroom, staring at my dim reflection, wondering why I can’t cope, why I’m sobbing and choosing to seclude myself—

*because Bill did die— right there— five-feet in
front of me— on the sticky bar floor of The Black Horse.*

Walking at Night

by Megan Wefel

the streetlights
turn to amber
the glitter fall
of snow
curtains
my eyelashes
it is too beautiful
not to be alone



Entwining Vines of Snow

By Megan Wefel

The Plan

By Eric Leith

The Winona Prize Winner in Fiction

Marcus snuck over to the living room window, searching inside for a sleeping man. Marcus' eyes immediately went to the weathered blue couch, a torn-up relic of the 80's. He found who he was looking for. The man's hand drooped down to the mountain of empty bottles. Marcus slinked to the back door, carefully moving the weathered clay pot with hydrangeas that hadn't been alive for months. As he grabbed the key, he steeled himself and unlocked the door. Marcus opened the door, took his shoes off, and stepped inside.

Normally he knew better than to be here during the day, risking his life while the man slept. He just needed to grab his jacket - his science teacher said it was going to be cold tonight. He held his breath through the kitchen to fight off the nausea brought on by rotting garbage. He could occasionally hear mutterings of the man, fragmented thoughts in nightmares of his past conflicts. The bruises on his back began to ache as he recalled an unsuccessful attempt days before. With every careful step the floorboards screamed, like they were trying to get the man's attention. Marcus had to stop after a few steps and listen for a change in breathing. It was difficult to hear the man's snoring over the sounds of his own heartbeat, so he waited. When nothing stirred and his heart calmed down, Marcus continued forward. After

his fourth pause, he tripped over a loose bottle. Marcus lay frozen on the ground, listening for a change in the man's breathing. After what felt like hours of silence, Marcus snuck up the stairs.

He made it upstairs into a bedroom. Scanning its contents, he spent a moment reminiscing on fond memories. Marcus and his dad used to spend hours playing video games together or sorting through whichever collectible cards were in season. As soon as he caught sight of his jacket, Marcus came back to his senses. He took his time removing it from the hanger. After putting the jacket on, he looked around to see if he missed any extra money he could use. He knew he grabbed all he had the first time, but believing there might be more money somewhere let him fantasize about eating that night.

Just then, Marcus' fears materialized: he heard movement downstairs. A cold sweat came over him, as he realized he was trapped in the bedroom. This was the first time he'd found himself in this situation, so he didn't know how to proceed. He scanned the room, looking for a miracle he knew didn't exist. He moved to the window, but knew that if he jumped he'd probably break a bone.

"Watch the right flank, boot! I hear tangos crawling all over us!" echoed from downstairs. Marcus had to hurry; it was happening again, and the man could come up here at any moment. He tore off his bedsheets and tied them to the bedpost, hoping it would hold for long enough to get out. He opened the window and threw out the makeshift rope, immediately following it out the window. There was no time to try to cover his tracks. He made contact with the ground, and kept running until he was out of breath. He occasionally looked back to make sure no one was chasing him, but was pretty confident the man was too caught up in his hallucinations to follow him. His body stopped him once he reached the pharmacy several blocks down. He collapsed against the wall, struggling to catch his breath. He moved to a nearby alley shortly after, out of sight from anyone else so he could collect himself. Marcus sat. He felt scared, then uncertain; angry, then sad. Eventually, he couldn't hold back his tears. He knew things had gotten bad, but just couldn't make sense of it. A long time ago his dad said that a real man never has a reason to cry, because he's too busy solving his problem to be upset. He collected himself. Marcus moved further into the city, trying to come up with a plan.

Marcus sat inside the bus stop and pulled his hat farther down his head. An older man sat down next to him, and scanned him from top to bottom a few times. Marcus tried to look unassuming, but the man's curiosity overcame him.

“Where you headed, young man?”

Marcus wanted to blow the guy off, but didn't know how to without making a scene or leaving the stop.

“Meeting up with my dad.” The curt reply only seemed to stoke the man's curiosity, but Marcus was too exhausted to pretend the way he needed to.

“Shouldn't you be at school? I didn't think schools let kids out this early.”

“We have the day off.”

“You should have your parents get you, it's not safe for a young man to be walking through this city alone.”

“They say I'll be fine as long as I'm on the main streets.”

The man fidgeted, obviously trying to think of another question to ask, but luckily the bus pulled up to the curb. Marcus jumped through the doors, fidgeting with his pockets to find the change he needed.

“You can drop the change when you get off.” The bus driver shooed him on with a sad smile. Marcus nodded and headed further in. The driver had been generous to him before, and Marcus felt like he owed him something. He could hear his dad's voice in his head again.

“Don't let people do favors for you. Makes you look like you can't handle your own business, and then you end up owing them. Believe me, you don't want to owe people anything.”

He picked the last seat towards the front, next to a sleeping woman who wouldn't ask him any questions. Marcus felt anxious on the bus. He'd only been on it a few times now, and it felt like a foreign world despite the bus driver's kindness. An off-putting scent hung over it, but it smelled better than the dishes back home. He always felt like somebody was looking at him, curious about what he was doing on the bus all by himself. He always forgot how loud it was. Usually, the bus made it hard for Marcus to hear himself think. Not today. Today's thoughts were louder than the bus. This could all go on for a while. He felt weak.

Turning to face the window, Marcus noticed the families out together on Main Street, enjoying the decorations that adorned the stores. The fake spider webs and carved pumpkins reminded him of how much fun he'd had last year, filling his pillowcase with as many caramels as he could get. The feelings from the pharmacy started coming up again. He brought his knees up to his chest in the seat and tucked his head in, hoping to drown them out with the belching of the engine and the old blues song on the radio. Several stops had come and gone by this point, and the man from before moved up and took a seat next to Marcus.

“You feeling ok, buddy? You like mints? It’s not really candy, but it’s refreshing.”

Marcus winced. His dad used to call him buddy, but he hadn’t heard it in a long time. This stranger had no right to be calling him that. He ignored the man and continued trying to distract himself.

“Why don’t we get off at the next stop and call your folks at the pay-phone? You don’t seem to be doing too well; they should get you back home.”

“The boy’s just fine, he always gets off a few stops from here. No way in hell I’ll let him get off with some random guy,” the bus driver said over his shoulder.

“Excuse me? The kid looks like he’s not feeling well. I just want to make sure his parents know. It’s thoughtless of them to make him take the bus on his own in such a big city. What if someone tries to do something when he’s all by himself?”

“How do I know *you’re* not that someone? Besides, who’d be dumb enough to try to kidnap anybody around here, with all the people out and about? Look, if there’s a problem I can get somebody to take care of it. It’s none of your business.”

An awkward silence filled the air. The bus came to the concerned man’s stop. Marcus still had his face buried in his knees. He was doing his best to keep his heart from leaping right out of his mouth and screaming at both men.

“You’ve got some nerve, your supervisor’s going to be hearing about this!”

“Knock yourself out, we’ll laugh about it later.”

The man stormed out of the bus. Marcus looked up to make sure the man was gone. The driver gave him that same smile as when he got on the bus, but Marcus quickly put his head right back to where it was. The only people left on the bus now were Marcus, the driver, and another man in the back, engrossed in the music playing through his headphones. The driver took another look back at Marcus before continuing his route.

“Hard to deal with those self-righteous people. Think they’re God’s gift to mankind and can do no wrong. What kind of nut-job tries to get off the bus with somebody else’s kid?”

Marcus didn’t respond. He still felt slightly shaken from being the center of an argument between two strangers. “You’re ok, right? My name’s Dave, I just want to make sure I don’t need to call somebody for you before I get too far into the city.”

“I’m fine.”

“Well that’s good. Just wanted to make sure. Where you trying to get

to today? I can tell you when we're at the closest stop." Marcus didn't respond. The engine and Robert Johnson filled the silence.

"If you're worried about the fare, don't sweat it. I hit a big winner in pull tabs the other night, so I can be a little generous." Robert Johnson continued singing. It was obvious to Marcus that Dave didn't really know what to say, and he hoped he'd quit trying. Marcus wasn't very familiar with this kind of music. He thought the man's words and music seemed somewhat boring, but strangely comforting.

"You ever heard of Robert Johnson? One of the greatest blues men to ever live. You like the blues? It's not something I think young folks would be into, but once you acquire the taste for it, it's one of the best things you can listen to. People say that he sold his soul for blues fame because of his music, but I think that's just people looking for an excuse to deny that he was just that damn good at what he did. Sorry, shouldn't curse like that, I'm not too elegant I guess."

Robert Johnson finished his song, and Muddy Waters came in to take his place. The bus came to another stop. The man in headphones departed, and Marcus and Dave were alone. Marcus wasn't paying much attention to Dave. He was trying to figure out how to handle the night, and the days to follow. He thought he could maybe spend a couple nights with his friend Anthony, since he was talking about his parents leaving him with just his older sister for the weekend. But then Marcus remembered that sister didn't like him. He debated bringing it up to his science teacher, but dismissed the thought almost immediately. He was really smart, but Marcus couldn't risk bringing more attention to himself.

A couple of empty bus stops passed by. Several minutes passed. "Can I level with you? I think I've been in a situation like yours before. I'm not sure exactly what the trouble is, but you can't go home right? Something nasty's waiting for you?"

Marcus' thoughts stopped for a second. It scared him that the bus driver was able to identify him so easily. He didn't want to waste time. He thought he could look into the homeless shelter he heard about, but didn't know much about what went on there. He decided to wait on that until he could learn more. He considered staying late at the school, but no kid stayed later than five. Considering how nosey the fifth and sixth grade math teachers were, he ruled staying that late out, but he could at least stay until five if he kept himself out of sight.

A woman got on the bus. She sat a few seats down from Marcus. She looked in her bag. Two stops later, she got off. Then it was just Marcus and Dave again.

“I guess it’s not really any of my business, but when I was a kid my dad would beat on me. He had a dead-end job, and could only ever mellow out when he was smoking reefer. You know what reefer is? Just do yourself a favor and never smoke anything. It’s all bad for you, no matter what anybody else says. Anyways, it got so bad that I never wanted to go home, so I stayed at my friend’s house a lot. His parents were great people. Made me feel like a member of their family. I felt bad putting them out so much, so I tried to make it up to them by cleaning the place one day. I’ll never forget how angry his mother got with me, yelling ‘You are a guest of this house, child, not the damn maid!’ It was hard for me to accept that. It felt like they saved my life.

Eventually, my dad figured out what was going on and came to the house, threatening that woman in all kinds of ways, but she didn’t back down. She looked him dead in the eye and told him, ‘David’s been through enough, and he’s a bigger man than you’ll ever be!’ Eventually, cops finally took the deadbeat away and my mom was able to raise me with help from her parents.”

“What happened to your dad?”

Dave looked back in surprise, and saw Marcus’ eyes locked on him. Then he remembered he was driving a bus and shifted back.

“Passed away in prison. Sorry, not a happy thought. I don’t know, maybe it’s in guys’ genes that they just suck, and people become great people because they grew up through hard times. I hope my kids don’t think of me that way.”

Marcus began sniffing, doing his best to hide it. Dave turned down the music slightly and started driving a little bit slower, so he knew that he wasn’t hiding it well enough. This only made his frustration grow.

“Sorry, I don’t really know what to say in these sorts of situations. You want me to hang out at the next stop for a few minutes?”

“I’m fine,” Marcus responded during snuffles, “my dad told me real men are too busy solving their problems to cry.”

“That’s kind of brutal. I cry sometimes, and I think I turned out alright. Shoot, I cried two weekends ago when my wife made me take her to one of those sad dog movies. Right in the middle of the whole theater. I was wailing and wailing, and nobody said anything bad about me. Except for my wife I guess. Didn’t like that I was making a scene. I think everybody needs a good cry every now and then. That, and somebody to help us through the hard times.”

The bus pulled over to the curb slowly. Marcus noticed the tissue outstretched to him, and shamefully removed it from Dave’s hand. Marcus now noticed Dave sitting opposite him, reaching into his bag. He didn’t really

notice before, but Dave reminded him of one of his relatives he'd met years ago. He was an older man, older than his dad, but didn't carry as serious of an expression. His uniform looked old. He must have been doing this for a long time. Marcus tried to wonder about the kind of people he must have seen to distract himself, as Dave pulled out a granola bar and held it out to Marcus.

"You want a bite before I dive in? Chocolate and peanut butter. It's good stuff." Marcus shook his head and continued trying to regain his composure.

"Nobody has to be perfect. We all make mistakes, and we all need people to help us from time to time. I think your dad is just trying to make sure you can fend for yourself, but I don't think I could have made it to where I am today without my old friend and his mother, and my own mother and grandparents. It might not be my place to give you advice, but just try to be a little easier on yourself, kiddo. I don't think we can do anything right on our own."

"Marcus. My name's Marcus." Marcus surprised himself with his response. Dave looked surprised too, but then he laughed. Marcus' expression seemed to lighten up a bit.

"Well Marcus, I take much longer on this break and I'll *actually* get in trouble with my super. What's say we keep going? You've been on this bus for a while now, were you supposed to be meeting with somebody? I'm sure they're probably worried about you."

"I was just trying to be busy, I guess. I'll just get off back at the stop you picked me up at."

"Over on Buckthorn? It'll take me awhile to get back there, you sure that's ok?"

"Yeah, that's ok." With that, Marcus rode back to his where his journey began. He looked out the window at the families again, trying to parse everything that he heard today. The bus engine continued to roar along, and that unwanted odor continued to hang in the air. He wondered if things were really going to get better. He tried to let the music distract him as the bus continued along. He didn't have a full plan yet, but he was making progress.

The bus reached Marcus' destination. Marcus got off, waved goodbye to Dave, and watched as the bus headed back into the city. It was colder than it had been before, and Marcus was glad he had his jacket. Marcus walked several blocks back towards his house, passing the pharmacy where he had stopped earlier. He finally realized that he hadn't eaten anything for several hours, and the growling of his stomach felt like it was trying to compete with

the bus. He was absorbed in trying to figure out what he could scrounge up for a meal when he came upon his house. There was a car in the driveway. The car looked familiar. It was an old blue station wagon with a dented rear fender. After a second, he realized it was his grandparents' car, and confusion came over him. It wasn't Thanksgiving, so there's no reason for them to have shown up here. Marcus' grandmother came out. She looked exhausted.

"There you are, Marcus. We've been wondering when you were going to show up. Your grandpa was about have the whole police force looking for you."

"Sorry, Grandma. Why are you and Grandpa here?"

She paused for a second, struggling with the answer to that question. "Come inside first, it's freezing out there. We need to talk to you about something."

Marcus followed her inside. The house looked different than it had the past few weeks. All the empty bottles were cleaned up, and so were the dishes that were giving the house a terrible smell. It looked more like the house that Marcus was familiar with, once it was clean. He noticed his grandpa in the living room, sitting across from the man from earlier on the old couch. The man had his head in his hands. Marcus was motioned by his grandpa to come sit down, and the confusion Marcus felt earlier had intensified. There was a deafening silence. It reminded Marcus of the bus.

"Hey buddy," the man said with tears in his eyes, "I hear it's pretty cold outside. I'm glad you had your jacket."

"What's going on? Why aren't you at work? Why are you crying?"

The man spoke slowly. "I'm taking some time off. I'm sick, bud, and I need to go somewhere that can help me get better. The VA recommended a hospital for me to spend some time at. I still can't get ahold of your mom, so your grandma and grandpa are going to take care of you for a while. I know you've had a rough couple of weeks, and I just wanted to see you again before I head over there."

"You're sick? What're you sick with?"

"It's...something I picked up when I was overseas. Don't worry, you can't catch it."

"Is work going to let you take a bunch of time off? How are you going to make any money?"

"You let me worry about money, ok? You're too young for that."

"Where's this hospital? When am I going to be able to visit? What's the plan?" Marcus felt like he was breaking. His dad always had a plan, but Marcus didn't see one. His grandparents didn't often interact with them, so he couldn't see how they'd be able to take care of him. He knew his mom

wouldn't be back anytime soon. He hadn't seen her in years anyways. This was all too sudden.

"We'll figure out a plan. Your grandpa and grandma will be able to take you to visit me. It's all going to work out. I'm so sorry, buddy." Marcus began sobbing. He ran to his dad. He didn't want him to leave, Marcus realized. The two of them wept together on the old couch. "I love you so much. We're going to get through this, I owe you that much."

Several minutes passed. Grandpa motioned for Marcus' dad. His grandmother put his dad's bag into the back seat. His dad sat in the car with his head in his hands. He couldn't seem to look at Marcus again. Marcus stood in the doorway, paralyzed, unaware of the goosebumps blanketing him. Watching them leave, Marcus' thoughts came to a standstill. This was never a part of the plan. Everything was changing. His dad was gone.

"Come inside, you're going to freeze. Let's head upstairs and get some of your stuff together for tonight. We can come back tomorrow to get more." Marcus looked down the road, then went inside.

Marcus stared at a festive wreath hanging on the door. Marcus opened the door and headed to the reception desk. Ruth was working there again. She gave him a smile and a wave. He headed to his dad's room. He couldn't quite get used to the smell of the ward. It still smelled worse to him than the bus. He finally reached 107 and knocked on the door.

"Yeah?" Marcus opened the door. "Hey, Dad." His dad smiled, and Marcus took his usual seat on the bed.

"How's school been going?"

"Good. Got an A on my poster about the solar system."

"Nice job! I hope I'm getting an A on *my* report card."

Marcus didn't react. His dad was about to explain the joke, but decided to move on. "How's the rest of the week looking?"

"Good. Tuesday I'm staying late to help my science teacher set up tomorrow's experiment for extra credit. After that, I'll eat dinner and finish my book report. On Wednesday, I need to study for my math test, and later I'm meeting up with Anthony and his friend Tim to go check out the Christmas parade. Thursday is the math test, and I'll come here after school."

"Well, seems like you got it all figured out. Are Grandma and Grandpa out in the car?"

"Yeah." Marcus looked away.

"Well, it's not nice to keep them waiting too long, but they're retired so they can spare a little time. How about I get the deck of cards?"

"Sure."

They played cards for a half hour, then his dad sent Marcus on his way. The ward had short visiting hours, so he could never stay long. But staying long wasn't important anymore. As he passed the reception desk, he looked towards Ruth's candy bowl. It was empty. Marcus turned around, went out the door, and began the long walk home.





Male Study
By Ben McCrary

A Good Night*by Breanna McGeorge*

I don't know the owners of this house—
not that I can see much of it anyway.
My friend, who brought me here, is playing cards,
So I pretend to find the floor incredibly interesting
Which to its credit has some intriguing stains
Especially when illuminated by the strobe light.
I'd look at my phone but I'm not wearing my glasses
Because Haley said I look better without them,
And that appears to be true as there's a boy
Who keeps staring at me—or rather
The blurry shape of his face keeps turning my direction.
Then a girl stumbles into me and asks if her makeup smudged.
I say, "It looks great to me!" even though
She's an indistinguishable mass of face-paint.
Sami and Haley find me—I start to drink.
The boy tells me to chug, and I do
And then I lean too far
But the boy catches me.
I kiss him so I can wear his hat. He tastes like death.
Haley pukes somewhere.
It's cold when we make it outside,
But the stars are clear.

Selling my House

by Danielle Eberhard

There were constellations on my ceiling,
luminescent glow in the dark stars pinned
to the dry wall and now they are missing;
An empty space that used to be Ursa
Major gaped in the darkness of my room.
They took my stars and ocean sea foam walls
and turned them into something that wasn't
mine. The bright pink carpet that covered my
floors was ripped out for the strangers in the hall,
their words drowning out the nebulas that were
born between the pillars of my big, blue
house. My name was etched into the cement
under the floorboards and they covered it
with dust and took my stars and threw them out.

Take Me Back to the Place I Found Creatures in the Ocean

by Cassie Douglas

Sand – powdered like ash, but white –
and it heats up, doesn't cool down;
it burns feet
that run quickly across it.
Flecked with pebbles and sticks
and shiny, hard empty homes.

The turquoise water meets the
ash, pushing up and pulling back
like a blanket;
under the blanket is a
whole secret world.

Fish – darting in groups.
Shells – some hollow and empty,
others still housing a friend.
Starfish – lazy and prickly,
yet soft at the same time.

Still so much left untouched and unseen.



Sunken Village
By Katelin Kent

River of a Thousand Islands

by Dahlia Garofalo

I lean against the boat railing
 The wind whipping past straining ears
 “This place on the Mississippi
 is called the river of a thousand islands”
 It’s because of the sand
 dragged up from the river bottom
 I lean farther over the railing
 until the bars dig into my stomach
 I stare into the black water
 that wants so badly to be shallow
but the barges need safe passage
 I think about my piece of the Mississippi
 back home
 I’m walking the sandy shore
 The water’s murky fingers
 clawing at my toes
 Seagulls nibble at bits
 Of severed fish
 Their eyes stare up in horror
 “It’s because of oil”
 my father says
 pointing to the shimmering poison
 scaling the inlet
 The fish bob on the surface until
 the birds take them
 and eat the poison too
 I look out at the dam as I listen
 watching the gates sever and spread
but the boats need safe passage
 I’m back, leaning against the railing
 And now I look to the Minnesota shore
 At the milk jug trucks and mysterious machinery
 Streaked with rusty tears
 I drive home over the river

and see a deer
battered over and over again
its belly so swollen its legs stick up
And I look to the small swamp
and the highway that cuts through
and how the deer just want to cross
But I need safe passage



Devour

By Sanja Petrashek

Window

by Breanna McGeorge

Two sets of triplet panes
With a crow's view above
The hushed, dying courtyard
Where things are rarely still

Third floor of the building
So sturdy the wind shakes
The stretching trees but not
Their industrial counterpart

Something breaks due to time
A flood of bright clothes
Colors and forms burst
From seemingly miniature doors

And people scurry along
Unaware of my gaze

