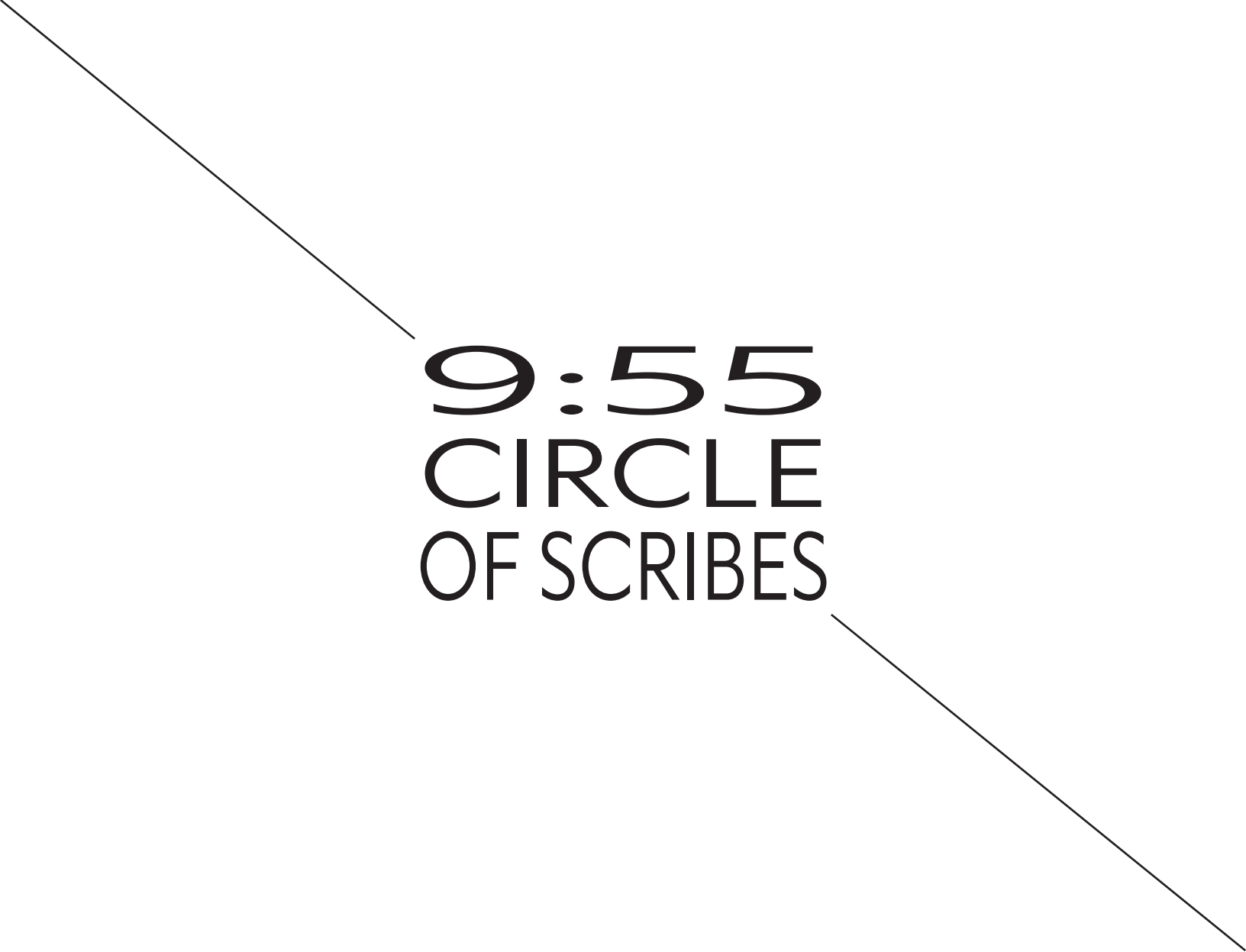


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CIRCLE OF SCRIBES

INTRODUCTION TO CREATIVE WRITING
CLASS ANTHOLOGY
FALL 2023




9:55
CIRCLE
OF SCRIBES

INTRODUCTION TO CREATIVE WRITING
CLASS ANTHOLOGY
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INTRODUCTION

I am always impressed by the talents of the students in my Introduction to Creative Writing classes. Without fail, at more than one point during the semester, I think to myself how “I wish I would have written that” image, line, or story conceit. And this semester was no different.

I believe that the title each class lands upon for their end-of-semester anthology is revealing of their group’s ecosystem, their singular vibe. And here, we have 9:55: Circle of Scribes.

In past classes, our anthology titles have been lighter, often with nods to waiting until the last minute to complete assignments or with playful jabs at my teaching ticks and well-worn turns of phrase. So here, I am struck by the seriousness of this cohort’s title.

To my mind, the chosen title reflects the collective seriousness of the writers whose work is contained within these pages. It reminds: At 9:55 a.m. every Tuesday and Thursday of the Fall 2023 semester, they had a special appointment. They gathered together, circled up together, and did what they came to do together. They read, they wrote, they discussed, and they revised. They read and wrote and discussed and revised more and more and then again some more.

I don’t mean to suggest that the class was without laughs, but rather to emphasize the seriousness and care with which these writers took their task. Each of these writers has something to say. Their poems and stories search after, and reflect upon, the essences and essentials of life—on love and loss, on moments spent in nature and with family and friends, on the importance of self-knowledge and mental and physical health. On violence and pain, but also always on love, love, love.

With the violence and pain of the Israel-Hamas war at the semester’s midpoint, these creative imperatives seemed to become ever more serious. I will never forget crying together with students after class, and then again at home while reading the words they had put to their sadness and fears in story and verse. These writers had something to say about their world. And they became increasingly devoted to learning how to say it as truly and as best as possible, especially when, as Mona Alawie writes here, “The wind becomes stronger / And stronger / Until the sound is / Deafening.”

In these times, she writes, “The roots / They hold on // Racing to each other / Connecting to one another / Holding on.” In the Fall 2023 semester, the students of Introduction to Creative Writing took seriously the power of the written word to help us connect to one another, to hold on, and, as James Whitener writes here, to “heal each other with warmth like binary stars.”

Words I wish I would have written, indeed.

*Stacy Gnall
December 2023*

INSIDE MY FUTURE MIRROR

KARISHA MEHTA

I live in a box and psych up my psyche to go think outside.
Like dandelion fuzz floating in the wind,
Waiting to land somewhere new.
I live on the end of every syllable,
Standing in the zephyr of bodies rushing by.

I live a thousands days in one night's mare
Yet in harmony with people who care, laugh, and play in more than one way.
Like the joy of smashing a ball of clay.
I live in the moment.
I live in the past.
I live in the tense where we don't define 'last'.
In constant motion running on incline
To the top of the ladder that stands ready for my descent.

I think of my Nani at her 60th birthday bash,
Still glowing with the sweat of sticky July.
I live in my Dad's world wondering
How his heart beats in time
With the stage crew, pulling the ropes that let her fly.
Apart from my first love,
In orbit looking down
At the dusty crust and swirling crowns.
Knowing.
Mine is somewhere to be found.

BROKEN ROAD

LILYAN CHOUCAIR

The salty breeze, the rhythmic crash of waves, and the golden sands were my sanctuary. It was my lifelong dream to take a road trip to the coastal town of Seaview. My best friend, Mak, shared the same dream, so we decided to embark on a journey in Mak's old, battered car.

The journey was a literal one, a road trip from our small hometown to the idyllic Seaview. We packed our bags with snacks, chips, chocolate, sour patch, and nuts to snack on. Then we moved down to our playlists which consisted of a mix of Bob Marley, The Beach Boys, and Jack Johnson songs. That was the hardest decision for this trip so far, I mean this was a very important trip that was my life long dream and it had to be perfect from the time we left all the way down to what songs we played and snacks we ate. I made Mak stay up with me through the night listening to song after song, minute after minute until we got a mixture of chill relaxing beachy songs to match Seaview. Lastly we had to bring a sense of adventure and prepare for the embarkation we were about to make. As we prepared ourselves to leave, the car's engine roared to life, and we began our quest to reach the coast.

Through all that preparation that had been made with the snacks and our playlists I hadn't thought of other obstacles we would face which were not physical but financial. Our wallets were thin, and we knew we'd have to rely on thriftiness to continue our trip. As we drove through winding roads and quaint little towns, we discovered the beauty of the unexpected. We explored roadside diners with the best homemade pies, we stumbled upon hidden hiking trails, and met kind hearted strangers who shared tales of their own adventures. On one of the days we had gone into a diner and a couple came to sit with us, they had told us how they met through highschool and stayed together through college and all the hardships they faced. The day after that we had met this guy who spoke to us about his journey as a journalist and all his struggles. Some may be annoyed or disturbed by these stories but it really entertained us through the days and kept us wondering what else there is. Our journey became about more than just reaching Seaview; it was about the unexpected moments along the way.

Although we were enjoying our time we had some issues like Mak's beat up car had endured one mishap after another. Flat tires, overheating engines, and a mysterious rattle in the trunk. These obstacles tested our patience and our resolve, but we eventually learned to laugh in the face of adversity. We might not have had a shiny new car, but we had each other, and that was enough.

With each passing mile, our expectations were constantly thwarted. We had imagined a seamless journey, reaching Seaview swiftly and enjoying the perfect beach vacation. Instead, we found ourselves delayed, stuck on the side of the road, or seeking shelter in roadside mo-

tels. Yet, with each disappointment, we learned to appreciate the little things, the roadside sunsets, the taste of greasy roadside burgers, and the joy of discovering unknown places.

Our relationship started to evolve. We had been best friends for years, but the road brought us even closer. With every disappointment we had to find solutions together, really combining our minds. We had deep conversations under the stars, shared our dreams and fears, and we had discovered that the journey was as much about self discovery as it was about reaching a destination.

As the days turned into weeks, we came to a realization. The coastal town of Seaview had become a distant dream, a goal that had taken a back seat to the journey itself. It was the journey that had changed them, not the destination they had missed.

One evening, as the sun dipped below the horizon and painted the sky in shades of orange and pink, they made a decision. We would not continue the trip to Seaview. Instead, we would turn back and retrace their steps, exploring the places they had missed on the way.

We drove back through the small towns we had passed earlier, revisiting the roadside diners, the quaint antique shops, and the peaceful parks. The road we had once considered dull had now become a canvas of memories and discoveries.

We met locals and heard stories of family traditions, witnessed breathtaking sunrises from a hillside, and even helped a farmer with his stubborn tractor. The journey had ceased to be about the destination, and instead, it was about the people we met and the unexpected adventures we encountered.

We never did make it to Seaview, but that didn't matter. The broken road had taught us that life's true beauty lay in the unexpected detours, the mishaps, and the bonds that formed along the way. We learned that sometimes, it's the journey itself that becomes the destination, and in their hearts, we carry the memories of a road trip that had changed our lives forever.

In the end, as we returned to our small hometown, we realized that Seaview was not just a destination on the map, it was a dream that had led us to discover the world around us and, more importantly, themselves. The broken road had taught us that sometimes, the most valuable treasures are found when we least expect them, and the greatest journeys are the ones that lead us to discover the beauty of the ordinary.

THE ORANGE-FLOWER TREE

JAMES WHITENER

I wish I would have been told,
But recently I'm learning that love comes and goes
Like a wayward breeze on a gentle summer's evening
The less I try to control it, the sweeter it will be

Love was foreign to you,
You kept it away because you knew the damage it could do
Love was too well known to me
Two stiff arrows of Cupid hung in my back like twisted badges

You approached me, as confident as fire
But with an inner world as fragile as snow
And we spent every day with each other
Healing each other with warmth like binary stars

One day as we were walking, we came upon the topic of forgetting
I had known much loyalty in my life, you had known hardly none
A tree with orange flowers reached humbly toward the sky
We stopped, you walked ahead and turned around

You thanked me for spending time with you
I smiled and met your eyes
Next month I would be gone

I wish I would have been told,
But recently I'm learning what matters in the end
No great sum of billions of dollars, no first step on the moon
Can compare to walking by the orange-flower tree with you

WHAT IS LOVE?

EMILY LOPEZ

The feeling that is so incredible

What is love

How do we know what we are feeling

What is the feeling

What is love

Love is an intense feeling

What is the feeling

The feeling of affection

Love is an intense feeling

This intense feeling of different emotions

The feeling of affection

This gentle soft feeling

This intense feeling of different emotions

These emotions that fluctuate like wave lengths

This gentle soft feeling

A soft feeling of another

UNTITLED

MADDIE CLARK

In dawn's soft light, I rise to face the day,
A canvas bare, my life's new masterpiece,
In sleepy haze, I find my chosen way.

With whispered dreams, I lie asleep
I seek the grace of morning's sweet release,

In dawn's soft light, I rise to face the day.

The mirror reflects doubts that come my way,
But deep within, a fire does not decrease

In sleepy haze, I find my chosen way.

With care, I choose the clothes to display,
Each thread, a strand of peace,

In dawn's soft light, I rise to face the day.

My fingers weave a tapestry, I say,
With makeup strokes and styled locks that won't cease,

In sleepy haze, I find my chosen way.

To conquer, slay the doubts that might betray,
With confidence, I find my heart's release,
In dawn's soft light, I rise to face the day,

In sleepy haze, I find my chosen way.

I WISH

MYKA DAVIS

I wish I had the smile that radiated like that of the sunlight peeking through the clouds. I wish I had the looks of a blossoming magnolia tree during the springtime.

I wish I had the eyes that others seen as the beauty of chocolate diamonds.

I wish I had the twinkle in my eye that you see when looking at Orion's belt.

I wish I had the frame of a cello that hadn't been played yet.

I wish I had the voice of a nightingale trying to attract a suiter.

I wish I didn't tower over those like that of an unstable high rise.

I wish I had the mind of an artist who knew what they wanted on a canvas.

I wish I had a mind that rushed like a river after a storm.

I wish my thoughts didn't poison me like a black widow to its prey.

I wish my curiosity extended to what was after the dam.

I wish my laugh was like that of fresh honey being drizzled into chamomile tea.

I wish I had the curls that coiled like that of a ribbon on a birthday present.

I wish I attracted individuals like that of a dandelion to a bumble bee.

I wish I didn't annoy others like a mosquito buzzing around during a summer night bonfire.

I wish my stomach didn't flutter with moths when in public.

I wish my anxiety didn't stunt me like that of a rose planted in the winter.

I wish I could speak the words that flowed through my mouth like that of electricity through the power lines.

I wish I had the strength and power of a lioness.

I wish I had the knowledge that others would envy.

I wish I didn't have the anger inside of me that wanted to break out like that of a person wrongly accused.

I wish my internal monologue didn't degrade me like that of an abusive significant other.

I wish I could genuinely smile like when a mother looks into her child's eyes after being born. I

wish others didn't make fun of me like a clown during a circus act.

I wish I lived on the light side of life instead of the dark.

I wish to be happy like a dog dashing through an empty field with grass.

I wish my emotions didn't constantly differ like Thalia and Melpomene.

I wish I wasn't a nuisance -- like trying to pick up black glitter from the floor.

I wish I didn't feel replaceable like a battery in a children's toy.

I wish to escape the mental prison that I was wrongfully placed into.

I wish I could hug someone without drowning them in my ocean of sorrow.

I wish people could see how broken my glass was -- so they can understand not to smash it into even smaller pieces -- making it harder for me to piece myself back together.

I wish for one day to look in a mirror, and see a beauty, not a beast.

THE MIRROR

LUKE KLINKHAMMER

There is this peculiar man
Who seems as if he has had a rough go
Who has been through the wringer
You can see a whole world has flashed before his eyes

Adventure
Sorrow
Faith
Disappointment

When looking at this man you see the sorrow that he must have endured in his life
It is hard to tell whether the look is of sorrow or of reflection
In life you can only regret so many things
So in times of regret reflection is needed

In the picture you see the dark background which surrounds him
Him against the darkness
You wonder to yourself why is there this darkness
In a world of so much beauty and grace why is there so much hate
When there is light why must there be darkness that follows
With this man he seems to be completely out of the light

When you continue to look at him you realize that at times you must face darkness
Because confronting the darkness is the only way you will be able to move on
In life you can't only see the light
Because if you are you are living in a fantasy

You must be able to confront the dark in order to get to the light
This is what this man should face
When looking into his eyes
You see yourself

THE RUSH OF LIFE

VANESSA WALLACE

At the crack of dawn
We begin the race
Time already gone
Don't be late to the workplace

The coffee brews
Starting in the morning light
To get us through
The day's chaotic fight

Phones ring
Keyboards click
Emails ping
Clocks tick

Never time to lay
Amidst the commotion
Many bills to pay
Forgetting about our lives most meaningful devotions

Through this storm
Grasping for moments of peace
Take off the uniform
For the beautiful moments we must cease

Life, a fast-paced storm
So many wonders to see
Respite from the rush of the norm
And strive for a life filled with glee

THE ERASURE OF ROOTS

MONA ALAWIE

Beautiful olive trees
Oh the way
The way the leaves danced
In the wind
Gliding and swishing
To the beat of the wind

The unripe olives dangling
Holding on
Gripping the branches so tightly
As to yell
Don't leave me

The wind was not the
culprit to worry of
It was the thing that made
the ground shake
Shake like shivers
Down a spine

The wind becomes stronger
And stronger
Until the sound is
Deafening
The roots
They hold on

Racing to each other
Connecting to one another
Holding on
Until they can't

Its claws lift it by its dancing leaves
Pulling and
Pulling and pulling
The fingers of the roots
Holding and Holding and holding

Onto the Palestinian land
To the culture
The traditions
Until it snaps
And a bit of me is
Erased

HENRY

EVAN VARGA

The morning felt abnormal, with every sound muted as if he was deep underwater. Because of this, Henry had a tough time getting up. It's usually the birds' annoying chirping that does it for him. Not today though, today it was all on him.

He picked out jeans and a red hoodie for the day and went to take a shower. Even the shower felt strange, as the water pattering on the tile floor didn't seem to make a noise. He finished getting himself prepared for school and began his way into the kitchen to pack himself a lunch. As he's scouring the fridge for some sliced lunch meat, he can't help but feel like someone's in the room with him. A feeling he quickly discards due to the discomfort it brought into an already awkward morning. While continuing to search, a hand suddenly, but softly, falls onto Henry's shoulder, causing him to jump into himself in a panic. As he turns his head to see what's happening, he sees his mother standing near him, her mouth moving in a frenzy. He gestures for her to stop, and attempts to say, "I can't hear you." While he's speaking, he could feel the tones vibrate in his throat, but he has no way of knowing if what he said sounded correct. Henry looked at his mom's face after he had tried to speak, to gauge whether she had understood him. She nods solemnly and points over to the end kitchen counter, where a made sandwich sits next to a bottle of water and an orange. Henry, realizing this school day is going to be hard, lowers his head, gathers his lunch, and begins his walk to the bus stop. All the while thinking, "I can't wait to get these hearing aids. I can't wait to get back to normal."

Henry had been in an accident, where a severe concussion resulted in hearing loss. The doctor's examination determined that Henry was eligible to get hearing aids, but his hearing would diminish slowly, leaving him deaf. Henry was terrified of this prospect, and of the change.

Henry rode the bus in silence, watching the world through a pane of glass. Once at school, Henry swiftly walked to his classroom, and sat down in his normal seat. The school day began, and the teacher started with math. Henry was good at math, but today, he had a very difficult time following along to the lesson in class. From his perspective, he was looking at a board of equations and simplifications, that he was trying to piece together and logic through himself. After math was science, where the teacher was impossible to follow. Henry had tried to follow along as best he could but didn't stand a chance to the teacher's fast-moving lips and complicated language. Following this was social studies, where he had the same feeling of lostness, and felt a disconnect between himself and his peers. Throughout the first half of the day, Henry struggled to follow along with the lessons, and his ability to follow worsened as his anxiety rose. Lunch time was fast approaching, and the longer the day went on, the more Henry convinced himself that he couldn't sit in his normal spot. He thought about how awkward

he had felt on the bus, and noticed how quiet he had been in class, and decided that he didn't want to sit at his normal table. His normal table has a few of his friends on it, and he didn't want them to look at him any differently.

Lunch finally arrived, and Henry walked into the cafeteria. He looked around for a different place to sit today. While searching for an empty table, he noticed a quiet girl who he had seen, but never talked to. Realizing this is probably his best option, Henry approaches the table and sits down cautiously. She simply smiles and waves to Henry, who is glad she didn't try to speak to him. He smiles and waves back, and they both begin eating. While eating, the girl had signed to Henry "Are you deaf?" To which Henry responded with a confused look. They worked through a conversation with improvised hand signs, and eventually Henry realized that this girl was deaf.

Henry had fun communicating with this girl during lunch. So, when he got home, he immediately started practicing hand signs. His mom had come into his room and asked what he was doing. Henry responded with a great smile while signing "I'm learning ASL," then pointing to the name of the website he found to learn American Sign Language. His mother cracked a smile, gave a sympathetic look, and sat down next to him to start learning, too. Henry handed his mom a note explaining that he didn't want to get the hearing aid anymore. His mom read the note, folded it, and put it in her pocket. She nodded to her son, and they continued learning how to communicate.

COURT SPORT

KARISHA MEHTA

Shifting side to side. Awaiting.
Low in anticipation
Like an alligator about to catch its prey.
Smack. It's coming at me fast,
Floating, hovering, tricking
Until it stings my forearms.
A perfect rainbow.
Falling into her graceful hands, she sets
A perfect rainbow.
Necks crane and feet in plane. Right. Left right. Ground falls
Away and comes back to my hand in the form of air.
Pressure hits. *Smack.* That split second where
The blue and white whirl encircles my
Whole world.
Striving for that angle,
The straight line I draw with my palm down to the floor.
Sneakers sneak and squeak,
As I fall from the peak.
Eyes follow/following? through black lace squares.

Now side by side
We jump, in sync, in the air,
And back down again.
Gravity is my tireless opponent,
Or greatest mate.

A pivot and a squeak, skin burned
Across the waxed wood floors.
Her fingers caress the ball
Protecting it like an egg. Cradle
And launch,
A spring that never rusts.
We must
Make that angle smaller. So
Jump higher. Swing faster.
Hamstrings and springs,
They give us wings.

IMPRESSION, SUNRISE

SIERRA LEE

The man sailed from Le Havre.
In France is where this port lies.

The waves are steady.
The air is damp.
There were no cries.

Only swishes and splashes
that are made from his paddle.

Golden rays of sunlight flashes,
just enough for him to handle.

He is surrounded by hues of orange, red, blues, and greens.
They are so beautiful,
and it never gets old it seems.

Soft ripples move him from
side to side.

As he gets further he glances back
at Le Havre from behind.

It is home,
the port, the land, the water he sails.

He takes it all in.
Impression,
Sunrise.

LISZT: LIEBESTRAUM

JB YOON

You came to me without sound, nor rumours
And fumbled my heart
Like the spring breeze tickling the tip of my nose
Like a petal that veils my vision for a welcome surprise
You came to me without hints, nor intentions
And left behind a tiny ember
Big enough to blush my cheeks
Hot enough to haze me
Like a fever on a summer night
How must I live on with a fire that feasts on my heart?
Yet you left with an open door
The door that opens to regrets, yearning memories and mesmerizing dreams
Yet you know not of my heart
And shine me with that terrible, innocent smile
Pure as a blanket of snow at the morning calm
If only I never saw you
If only we didn't cross
So I could be free from those lingering thoughts
You know not of how that day's value
How it cruelly faded away like a night's brief dream
That soft, indifferently drawn smile
How those brisk curves severes my heart
Your virtuous eyes
That glitters from the pale moonlight
I fear of dreaming of it
For I doubt that I will ever wake myself up
You know not of my blooming worries
Of your touch fading away unnoticeably
I wish to love you
As much as I possibly can
I wish to walk under the willow tree
Hands embracing one another
Watching those swans leaning against each other
While I draw you closer into my arms
I want to see you
Delighted with the lively camellia in your fine hands
So I shall admire you
Adore you even under my grave

SHORT STORY

LUKE KLINKHAMMER

This is an adventure with my family. It is a recurring travel that is truly adventurous while being flat out terrible. The endeavor is something that we have to do at least 3-4 times a year. It is something that can be seen as both exhilarating and exhausting at the same time. It is the trip to Wisconsin.

Background for this story is that we always take a minivan to Wisconsin. I am the oldest of 5 and with a family of 7 people in the car, it can be very cramped. The reason for the trip is because my grandparents live in Wisconsin. With this said, it is an exciting trip for the fact that we get to see our extended family, but also dreadful that we have to spend around 9 hours in the car just to arrive at our destination.

This particular trip started off early. My parents woke my siblings and I up at around 5:30 a.m. It took us a little longer to get up (like every other time) and we finally made it down the stairs by 5:45 a.m. Once we made it downstairs we had to put all of our luggage in the car and eat breakfast. Of course this took a lot longer than it should have. We didn't end up leaving until 6:45 a.m.

Once we are on the road. We don't have the radio on and most of us try to get some shut eye. From 6:45 a.m. to about 8:30 a.m. we stopped at a gas station in Indiana. It had a Starbucks coffee and I got some coffee while everyone else bought a mix of different candies. We head back outside but realize that we have extremely low tire pressure and we are going to have to fill the tires up.

Great timing for this, we all thought. Now, we need to make another stop. We were already in the middle of nowhere so we had to drive about a half hour out to the nearest place to pump our tires. At this point there was a lot of bickering. No one was in a good mood. My dad started the drive but at this point we had already switched so my mom was now at the wheel. Once we got to our destination we filled our tires and everything was all set. We went back on to the expressway, at this point it was 9:30 a.m. With this said, an extra hour was added onto our trip. Wisconsin is an hour behind from Michigan so instead of us getting there at 2:45 p.m. we would now get there around 3:45 p.m.

Once it was around 11:30 a.m. we stopped at the Illinois oasis. We stop there every time we go to our grandparents. It is right off the expressway and it has all the good food options. McDonalds, Wendys, Burger King, etc. We stop there and get some food. Once we were finished it was my turn to take the wheel.

At this point it is around 11:55 a.m. so theoretically we had a little under 4 hours because the time zone change had already taken into effect. Once it was my turn to drive I very much enjoyed it. I get to choose the songs on the radio or talk to whoever is riding shotgun. For this trip most people were either zoning out, sleeping, reading a book, or on their phone, so I decided to just listen to the radio. Normally, when I listen to the radio I have the google maps on but I decided that I didn't really need it. My parents were asleep and my siblings were all doing their own thing, which was fine because I was pretty sure I knew where I was going. We kept driving and then we passed the Iowa state sign.... At this moment I knew I messed up big time.

I woke up my parents and told them we were in Iowa. My dad wasn't too pleased with this. I stopped at the nearest gas station, and we switched. I ended up having to sit in the back while my dad said he was driving the rest of the way. This couldn't get any worse I thought. At this point I felt things kind of fade out. Kind of confused about what was happening... I then heard the sound of my mother's voice saying "Luke wake up" and I awoke. It was my mom telling me I needed to wake up for our trip to Wisconsin.

I REMEMBER

FATIMA OROZCO

I remember my first day of college.

I remember my first-time driving.

I remember taking the freeway for the first time and being scared.

I remember getting in trouble for coming home late in the summer.

I remember going to Canada for my first time and seeing my parents experience it for the first time too and being so happy.

I remember hanging out with my boyfriend when we had just started talking, I had non-stop butterflies.

I remember going to the beach up north, it was beautiful.

I remember visiting my grandma's house when I went to Mexico as a little girl, it was such a touching moment.

ANXIETY'S LOUD SILENCE

MYKA DAVIS

Silence is all that surrounds me. Though
Mixed with the loud banging of
A drummer boy. But where is this
Mysterious drummer boy, I am only alone.
Though, the booming
Evident, the equivalence of a
Repeated sonic boom in my
Head occurs. I search for the sharp thumping in my
Dark bedroom, yet,
A drummer boy is yet to be found. I
Wonder, why when I inhale, the external
Thumping matches with that
Of the beat of my heart. I
Begin to panic and frantically search
For the drummer boy.
The assumption that this mysterious
Being affects me. But --
The being is me. I am
The drummer boy, or better yet --
Figure. The beating is
My heart trying to escape the internal
Mental connection I am having. The
Deafening silence torturing me,
My frantic thinking
Causing the booming of my
Heart. Causing me to
Realize that the repeated drumming
Increases as my breaths
Do. I tell myself, it is okay,
It is okay, even when I know
I am lying to myself.
Hours pass, the thumping from the drummer
Has subsided. My heart is constant.
It is empty, the room is empty,
My mind is empty. 'Til the next
Day, for when I shall be prepared for
The return of the
Vexatious Drummer boy.

COOKING BREAKFAST FOR THE FAMILY

EVAN VARGA

Chirping birds as the sun peers through the kitchen windows.
Quiet steps as a soft figure slides into the warm room.
Light clamoring of kitchenware, rolling drawers, breezy air,
Ticking of the clock in the hall, ticking of the stove in the kitchen.
Stove flames light, and their present excites the pan placed above.
The pan excites the butter, causing it to run, causing it to coat.
Eggs spill into a bowl and the circular whisking matches the eggs to the sun.
The liquid sun is gently poured into the excited pan.
With a smooth, consistent stirring motion, temperature rises, and
Smell rises with it, carried atop the breezy air.

Chirping birds as the sun gleams through the
Bedroom windows. Quick steps as a few figures stumble
Into the warm room. Uncoordinated clamoring
Of kitchen chairs, scraping the ground, sound-filled air,
Ticking of the clock in the hall, talking of the children in the kitchen.
Stove flames extinguished, and this development excites
The hungry, fidgeting across the room. Causing them to
Watch, causing them to cheer. Eggs
Plop onto a plate, jabbing forks mismatch the eggs from
The sun. The solid sun is quickly thrown onto various
plates. With a jagged, chopping motion, food rises,
And mood rises with it, carried atop the home-cooked meal.

C'EST LA VIE

GIULIA VITALE

Louise Francoise would have liked to spend her days reading *Cosmopolitan* and to make carrying a long baguette under her arm look sophisticated. Her name was French, but she absolutely was not. Four months ago, as a coat of snow covered the Eiffel, Louise quietly arrived in Paris. I mean, there was really no choice to arrive loudly, seeing as she was determined to fit in and appease the snobby locals. She came in the night, when the white snow reflected and the sky was a light gray. Louise remembers a particular quietness, either because the snow absorbed sound, or the cold drove people indoors. She thought it was a little odd for such a city to be so still and silent. Where were the people gathered for some pinot noir at the late night jazz clubs? And the people illegally filming the sparkling Eiffel, where were they? Louise murmured a “c’est la vie” and continued pulling her luggages down the cobblestone streets. She smiled at the quickness with which she had said it - she was basically a native already.

She arrived on a Sunday evening and was scheduled to receive the keys to her apartment on that Monday morning. For the evening, she would stay at a bed and breakfast recommended by the landlord of her new apartment. Louise was walking for some time now and had not yet reached the evening’s lodge. She was glad that it was within walking distance from the airport, if you would call 35 minutes walking distance. Either way, she had time to familiarize herself with her new stomping grounds and locate a cafe for her espresso in the morning. After some time, her maps read only three more minutes until arrival. Lost in her thoughts and the swell of a light jazz in her earbud, she had not considered too heavily that she had seen maybe three people within her 35 minute walk. Louise reasoned within herself that it was nearing midnight and most people would be asleep by now; she read that French people typically fall asleep between 10:30 and 11 PM. Her phone pinged to alert her that she had arrived, yet no sign read the name of the bed and breakfast: Tu N’es Pas Le Bienvenu (You Are Not Welcome). In fact, the building had no door knobs or windows either; how odd. She decided she didn’t know what the name meant and resolved to study her French with more vigor. Louise could NOT afford to appear foreign in front of the locals. Well, whenever she would actually see some of them. Aside from her language concerns, she wondered as to how she had arrived on her phone but not in real life.

At first thought, she believed her tired eyes didn’t look hard enough or she had received the incorrect address. A second glance revealed that her navigation was indeed set towards that name and address. “C’est la vie” almost left her lips but she decided she didn’t want to abuse the phrase too early on. Louise’s next idea was to refresh the page and retype the information in the search bar. Upon doing so, she came up with results for what must be the genuine location at only a five minute walking distance. Relieved to see that this bed and breakfast

was real and near, Louise set out again and tried to kill the time by thinking about what beret she would wear tomorrow. She owned several and did not grasp their American nature. To take in the scenery, she elected to have the directions spoken aloud to her and neglected to pay much attention to the street names. She didn't know what they meant anyway and she just wanted to be told left or right. Louise rounded the corner and listened to the robotic voice alert her to the approaching bed and breakfast. She ended up at what looked like a similar - no - the same building as five minutes prior. Louise was growing impatient and attempted to examine the map on her phone after all. Though she didn't care to remember the street names that had taken her here either time, she did notice that a graffiti blurb was missing from the wall parallel to the bed and breakfast. Many buildings appear to look the same in a new, large city, so she still had naive optimism.

Again, she searched the name and address, this time resulting in a two minute walk. The walk was closer to a jog due to her eagerness and impatience. Her head hung low as she arrived and once again did not recognize the roads that brought her to that menacing and mocking building. "Sortez (Get Out)" was written on a small doormat in front of the building, another variant of the original bed and breakfast. Louise felt defeated, both because she couldn't understand the language and because she was in a sort of repetitive purgatory. She could not comprehend how different roads led her to the same building disguised with measly differences. She questioned her own tenacity and soon slumped on the curb. Despite the fact that this was not Paris' only bed and breakfast, her phone battery was low, not a soul was around, and she was clearly directionally challenged. The least she could do with her time and battery was google the night's terms and brush up on some new vocabulary.

PASS, CATCH, & SCORE

LUKE KLINKHAMMER

Friday night lights

The pressure is on

You can feel the atmosphere, the stands filled, the lights glowing, the loud noise

You either win or go home, will there be glory

Or will there be defeat

Being with the teammates

The comradery is there

A sense of togetherness and determination, you can see they are one

The crowd is eccentric

Will we win or will we lose

The noise is loud

The stadium is wild

The adrenaline is pumping

This is a wild ride

You can see all of the fans

You can feel the cold breeze

You can see they are mesmerized by this crazy game

You can see how real and authentic these games are

How only one team will win and the other will lose

The nerves are there, and the fear

The excitement though, overrides these fears

The knowledge that you can be that hero is a possibility

A strong possibility

4th quarter 30 seconds left

The quarterback drops back to throw

The receiver breaks clear in the open

And the quarterback avoids the rush and throws it

The receiver catches it

The receiver scores

And the team wins

Pass Catch and Score

UNTITLED

KARISHA MEHTA

When is your favourite day?
Is it in the spring,
When all the birds come out to play?

A time when night still looks like day.
When kids fly kites with twisted string.
When is your favourite day?

When crops get rolled to hay,
And farmers begin their harvesting,
And all the birds still come and play.

The sun shining its bright rays
On bodies, swim suits cling.
Am I close to your favourite day?

Blue skies turn grey,
Snow falls down as children sing.
And some birds still come out to play.

As the world moves on to May
We know what April showers bring.
So when is your favourite day,
Whenever it is, the birds will still come and play.

TWO SOULS FROZEN IN TIME

SIAH PAWA

Eyes closed, hearts open, souls intertwine,
In each other's arms, they find relief

The two in harmony share an unspoken bond,
Their bodies tell a story, igniting a fire

Psyche's curves of elegance relaxed, at ease,
She lies with vulnerability and surrender

Her delicate hands cradles with tenderness and care,
as if protecting a precious secret

Cupid in hues of love hovers,
Tenderly wrapping his hands around her

His wings, the transcendent nature of love flight,
Here their love's flames soars, reaching high

A passion awakens as lips gently meet,
Suddenly, her spirit revived, bringing forth radiant light

Our eyes transfixed on carved beauty,
Unashamed, they refuse to look at the audience

Leaning in, bodies pressed close,
Their hearts whisper through stone.

SLAMMED BAR & WELL

DEJA SPRUILL

Hard shakes. Cold glasses. With harsh stares
Burning into the back of our asses,
We handled the flood of orders
From our thirsty patrons. Nothing but the sound
Ice melting as we poured hot liquor into cups.
Ten hours down, two more to go.
Ballerinas as we gracefully moved
Flowing, completely in sync
Watching the clock and never losing our spot
Like a dance no one else knew the steps to
A consistent 8 count
A long shift. Off
No sleep. We maneuvered
Around & down
The consistency of skill & precision
Teamwork. Standing, all feet
& hands...in rhythm.
We were transcendent when men
Pulled out their wallets.
Struggling to pull out their card,
Mouths saying words we didn't care for
Offering more money if we had something
Extra to offer.
When it was fight night we doubled
We worked all day, so hard.
Our makeup melted into our face,
We glowed with sweat.

We glowed with glory
Our fingertips counting.
The manager shocked
How much he pulled from the drawer.
Twenty, turned into two hundred,
& two hundred was added to once more.
The flirting. The loud laughing.
All became worth it in passing.
We smiled.
The notion we paid our bills
In one shift. We passed looks
Of comradery, & we knew we were
Gorgeous & good at our jobs.

FOREST POEM

JAMES WHITENER

The sun rises over the treeline
The monarch of fire, light and warmth,
It looks like my mother
So bold and giving, needing only appreciation in return

Rain falls softly
Elixir of life that cleanses and renews
It sounds like my father
Gentle healing that arrives for a parched soul

The cicadas hum
A communal rising, a crest, and falling
It sounds like forest monks
Coming together in patience to chant 'ohm'

The songbirds sing
Happy and free
It sounds like the banter of my friends
Laughing in the mess hall, spirits flying

The eagle cries as she banks a one-eighty
Surveyor of her land and sky
She takes tribute fairly
Protect the seeds so some may bloom

I listened so many years and smiled
This morning I opened my door and sang

SHORT STORY 2

LUKE KLINKHAMMER

There was a young man named Jack who was the son of a local farmer in a small town in Idaho called Sandpoint. He was raised on this farm and had lived there his entire life. He was an only child and lived with his father, mother, grandmother, and grandfather.

Now Jack was a bit of a dreamer. He was always reading anything he could get his hands on. Jack would read all sorts of books; but what he primarily enjoyed reading was adventure novels. Jack had a hard time articulating why he enjoyed reading so much but thought to himself, the real life he lives can be boring so why not imagine a more exciting and fulfilling life through stories.

With Jack being an only child, growing up he did not have a lot of people to talk to in his household. He looked up to his father more than anyone, and respected his father and the farm that he had maintained. It was a family farm that had been passed down for generations.

Even though Jack was more introverted when he was younger he grew out of this when he went to high school. He was seen as rambunctious, but he saw himself as adventurous. He always got himself into trouble at school one way or another but had a lot of friends he felt because of his behavior. His best friend was Liam and his girlfriend was Sally. Even though he was a troublemaker his academics never lacked.

Senior year, for Jack, was seen as the best year of his life. Everything went Jack's way. Jack excelled in school, in his academics, and enjoyed his social life. Jack felt that life was going great and was only going to get better.

As the year progressed everyone started to apply to colleges. Jack was caught off guard because he had never really thought of college before. All of his family members were farmers, and his family meant the world to him. He had always just thought that was what was going to happen in his life, a life of a farmer.

At first Jack thought it was no big deal and kind of shrugged it off. But problems started to arise quickly. First his close friend Liam told him that he had applied to the University of Idaho and had gotten in. Liam had been his next door neighbor. His family also had a farm as well except he was the youngest of 5 kids and his eldest brother was going to take over the farm. This meant Liam had the freedom to do whatever he would want with his life. When sitting down and talking with Jack. Liam said "Jack you should apply to the University of Idaho." Now Jack was kind of stunned by this question. He had never thought of going to college before. Jack just responded and said "Nah I'm okay, my life is here."

This conversation with Liam got Jack to think a little bit. He was upset at Liam for wanting to leave. Sandpoint had always been Jack's home and it had always been Liam's home. "Why would you want to leave home?" Jack thought. Liam being Jack's friend Liam had always looked out for Jack and always told him point blank what he thought. At the end of their conversation Liam told Jack he thought that he should leave Sandpoint. Telling Jack that he had always yearned for adventure, and that the University of Idaho could give him that. In Jack's heart, he felt that he could never. He felt that he could never and would never. He loved Sandpoint, and most importantly the people that he loved were there. His family was there and to Jack that was what mattered.

The year continued on, and everything seemed to be going the same. Jack was still very much enjoying his Senior year with his friends. Then came winter break. Winter break, even though everyone was off of school he still got to see his friends daily because they all lived so close to each other. On Christmas Eve, he went to his girlfriend's house. Everything was very joyful, and enjoyable, but Sally then told Jack something that he did not expect. She told him that she too was going to the University of Idaho. When Jack heard this, he was surprised because Sally had always told him that she always wanted to stay in Sandpoint. After their conversation, Jack left, feeling all alone.

The next couple of weeks were rough for Jack. Jack felt that his two closest friends were bailing on him. Was Jack just gonna be all alone now? Jack did not know what to do, and was upset.

He contemplated bringing this up to his parents but didn't want to be a burden, so he kept to himself. Once the winter break ended. Sally and Liam wanted to talk to Jack but Jack tried to stay rather distant. Jack tried his best at ignoring them for a few days but that did not work. Sally and Liam said to Jack that they think that he should at least apply to the University of Idaho. Jack said no.

At this point Jack really did not know what to do, and started to second guess what he wanted. He had always imagined living in Sandpoint his whole life but he also never imagined losing Liam and Sally. He thought that they were all going to live their life in Sandpoint. At this point Jack thought that maybe he should apply, but stopped himself thinking college was too expensive plus he needed to take over the farm.

January and February had passed, and at this point mostly everyone in his school knew what they were going to do the following year. Jack still had not decided. One day in March, Jack got home and his father wanted to talk with him. Jack's father told him that he knew that Sally and Liam were both going to the University of Idaho and asked Jack how he felt about it. Jack gave him a very vague answer. Jack's father replied and told Jack that he had sensed that Jack seemed to be unfulfilled with his life and was lacking the adventure that he always yearns for. He told him that maybe he should apply to the University of Idaho. Jack's father stated to his son that there was a full scholarship opportunity to the University of Idaho.

Jack was very surprised by this. He asked his father, “what about the farm?” His father replied to him “your happiness is more important than that.” These words were very encouraging to Jack.

Jack spent some time reflecting and in prayer on whether or not he should apply to this scholarship. He came to the conclusion that he should because it wouldn't hurt and it wouldn't mean that he was going to go there.

Jack ended up applying and got a full ride. Jack was astonished and surprised. When he found out the news and told his family and friends, he saw the joy in their eyes. At this moment Jack knew the right decision for himself was to go.

Now, three years later, Jack looks back at this decision and realizes that Jack's dream wasn't to live his life in Sandpoint, but to live his life surrounded by the people he loves and cares about.

WHISPERS IN THE NIGHT

LILYAN CHOUCAIR

In the night, the stars begin to weep,
Their shimmering tears in the dark expanse.
A lonely moon its silent vigil keeps.

As shadows deepen, lost in a trance,
We walk a path where dreams and memories meet.
In the night, the stars begin to weep.

The moon, a guide, a guardian of romance,
Illuminates our journey through the gloom.
A lonely moon its silent vigil keeps.

The world is hushed, devoid of noise or boom,
In whispered words, secrets quietly seep.
In the night, the stars begin to weep.

Time's tapestry unfurls, a silent loom,
Each step we take, a dance, a fleeting chance.
A lonely moon its silent vigil keeps.

The universe, a canvas for our dance,
A symphony of constellations, deep.
In the night, the stars begin to weep.
A lonely moon its silent vigil keeps.

WILDFLOWERS

VANESSA WALLACE

A symphony of wildflowers painted as a tapestry of nature's delight
In a field blades of grass waving like green ribbons in the air
Their harmonious colors shine amidst the kiss of the sun's warm light

Petals like soft whispers in the hush of night
Standing in a meadow with an enchanting beauty only they bare
A symphony of wildflowers painted as a tapestry of nature's delight

A painter's dream with every shade cast bright
Stretched as a dazzling rainbow after a shower for all to stare
Their harmonious colors shine amidst the kiss of the sun's warm light

Filling the air with a sweet fragrant pure as white
Blooms bursting with splendor beyond compare
A symphony of wildflowers painted as a tapestry of nature's delight

In the gentle breeze where all is right
Are the fragile petals flowing like fine threads of hair
Their harmonious colors shine amidst the kiss of the sun's warm light

The elegant tranquility of this breathtaking sight
Resides under the blue sky for all to share
A symphony of wildflowers painted as a tapestry of nature's delight
Their harmonious colors shine amidst the kiss of the sun's warm light

UNTITLED

MADDIE CLARK

When the world's asleep, and the stars are down,
I lace my shoes and step outside,
Into the silence, where peace does reside.

Just me and nature.

The air is crisp, with a hint of the night,
The trees stand tall, their branches sway,

The birds, join in, with sweet melodies,
With every stride, I leave behind,
The worries, the stress, leave the cluttered mind.
I'm free as the wind, in this moment of time,

Running outside, in this peaceful place.

The world awakens as the sun paints the sky with its golden light.
The dew-kissed grass beneath my feet,

Nature's carpet, so cool and sweet.

I run past meadows, where flowers bloom,
I run through woods, where shadows play,
The river nearby glistens like glass,
Reflecting the beauty of moments that pass.
I stop for a breath, to look at the view,

As I run outside when it's quiet and still,
I find a connection, a sense of calm.
With each step I take, with each breath I take,

As I run outside and let my spirit thrive.

Running in silence, finding your place.

CAR ACCIDENT

MADDIE CLARK

I remember the dark clouds in the sky,
A night with light wind

I remember the car's endless roar,
It sounds like lightning struck the shore.
I remember the fire roaring hot temperature,
Burning bright, through the metal of the car.
I remember the wind's whispered song,
A lullaby where dreams belong.
I remember the bright lightening bolt of red and blue,
A car moving so fast in the blink of an eye.
I remember my back being as stiff as a board,
Tears of sadness roared down my cheeks.
I remember the droopy look in my dads eyes ,
Eyes of heartbreak being something was wrong.
I remember the dark room, no color in sight
In the dark room, no gleaming light.
I remember this time,
So grateful to be alive and sound.
I remember these moments, vivid and true,
A tapestry of memories, woven anew.

ACCEPTING HURT

MYKA DAVIS

I watched your lips move,
To tell me you care.
Oh, how I have heard the same.
I watched the memories leave,
Streams dragging down my face--
Though, I blamed it on the dust in the air.

I think of the times you kissed my face.
I never wanted you to leave.
But -- you clearly didn't feel the same.
My thoughts would move
Negatively. I wondered if my energy exuded in the air,
And if it did, did you even notice or care?

But why did you leave?
Why couldn't we have just stayed the same?
Like that of my thoughts, my heart would also move
Negatively. I watched my insecurities form in the air.
I told myself; he doesn't care.
The pain, written all over my face.

People asked me if I cared – as they felt the tension in the air.
No, of course I don't care,
As I lie to keep the façade the same.
Why did your love for me move?
I knew the answer, as disinterest was visible on your face.
Though, the question still remains – But why did you leave?

You are all the same.
The same ones that leave,
Leave me with nothing but the air
That, by default, does care.
The air is now the only one that kisses my face.
It is now my turn for my love to move.

I realize, I'm glad you felt the need to leave.
As I am starting to not care.

I ran, I ran with my curls being brushed by the air
While a slight smile crossed my face.
I can now move.
It finally felt different – it finally wasn't the same.

My heart will always stay the same...
Therefore, you and anyone can leave.
Because I now, do not care.

MUSIC

ASHA GEORGE

You haven't heard real music until you've played it yourself.
It's true.
You have to pick up a bass if you really want to know the blues.
You want a real concerto?
Go find a bow.
Any 4-stringed beauty will do.

Anyone within earshot is lucky
To hear it's soft or loud plucking.
The vibration of the strings
Is the most beautiful thing
Vibrato if you dare
And the note will fill the air
For much longer than the bow lingers
As long as you keep up the shake of your finger.

Remember the feeling as you play the piece's last note.
There's nothing like it, nothing comes close.
Applause will fill the room and you won't believe it's all for you.
But it is, so take a bow and bid the crowd adieu.

As you walk backstage
Put your 4-stringed friend in its case.
Look down at your hands, and thank them, be polite.
Because of them, now you know music
And you know it right.

ANGEL

DEJA SPRUILL

Confirmation kindness is a person
In your actions you announce to the world
I love you so much. With a megaphone in hand, I love you so much more.
I do. I do. I do. I do.

In your actions you announce to the world
I would look good in white, a ring you could from a distance,
I do. I do. I do. I do.
Joy is the perfect word to describe how you make me feel.

You think I would look good in white, a ring you could see from a distance,
A future with you feels too good to be true.
Joy is the perfect word to describe how you make me feel.
Being in your presence feels like heaven.

A future with you feels too good to be true.
When you're around it's hard to put it in words.
Being in your presence feels like heaven.
Every time I look in your eyes, it is

When you're around it's hard to put it in words.
I love you so much. With a megaphone in hand, I love you so much more.
Every time I look in your eyes, it is
Confirmation kindness is a person.

HOUSE PARTY

GIULIA VITALE

The foundation of the home
thumps to the beat of a rap song.
Walls are wet with the respiration of 100 bodies,
each of them 97 degrees of heat.
Adolescent minds stir
trying to hear their own thoughts
over the commotion and chatter.
Hearts beat in unison
with the pulse of the vibrating home.
As if the home itself has come to life;
only a structure, but seemingly breathing,
stirring with its inhabitants.
Strobe lights slice through the air,
creating a kaleidoscope of colors.
Each teen in the crowd painted a color of the rainbow.
The disco ball
 dangling
 from the ceiling
 spins with fervor, as if it too is alive.
It transforms the scene into a galaxy,
with little silver specks
mimicking the stars.
 In the middle of this scene,
a boy stands on the top of the staircase,
hoping to be seen.
The crowd oohs and ahhs as he takes a leap of faith
aimed toward the couch below him.
The couch remains untouched,
a glass table falling victim to the weight of his body.
An ear-piercing shrill reverberates through the home
 as the glass gives way
and collides with the floor.

For a moment
there is silence.

The music plays at the same volume as before,
but yet now it is undetectable

Murmurs begin floating through the air
and the once all-consuming music is realized again.

The perpetrator collects himself off of the floor
and gives a war cry followed by a hysterical laugh.

The sea of teens roars with amusement
and offers pats on the back
as if he were a hero returning from war.

No one seems to care
that the house which had been given life
was now injured..

The next track bangs a familiar beat
and the teens turn their gaze once more
to the colors and stars
of their faux galaxy.

In this breathing house,
in this world of their own,
they yield only to the laws of fun.



DETROIT MERCY
ENGLISH

READ. WRITE. THINK. DO.