



STYLUS

VOLUME 29

2015-16

HOW TO SUBMIT AND WHO IS ELIGIBLE FOR PUBLICATION

STYLUS is looking for original, unpublished short stories, poetry, creative nonfiction, memoir, two-dimensional art (drawing, painting, collage, etc.), and photography. Any high school senior or any student currently enrolled at a college in the SC Technical College System is eligible to submit. Publication is subject to verification of your student status at the time of submission. Only Midlands Technical College students are eligible for the annual literary and art awards. Our regular reading periods are September 1 through December 10 and January 10 through March 10. We do not accept hard-copy submissions. For production reasons, we can only take emailed submissions that comply with the following guidelines:

Submit all poetry and prose in Microsoft Word (.doc or .docx) or Rich Text (.rtf) formats attached to an email. Your name, email address, and a phone number should be typed at the top of the first page of your document file. You may submit manuscripts in both poetry and prose, but they must be submitted separately by genre. Do not send more than one manuscript in the same category.

Poetry submissions should be limited to no more than seven poems, single-spaced, and combined into a single document file. Please do not send poems as separate files.

Prose submissions should be double-spaced. Prose submissions should be limited to 5,000 words.

For art submissions, we prefer high-definition photography and/or digital scans (or photographs) of original art (600 dpi .jpeg or .tiff files, if possible). Digital photographs of paintings and drawings are acceptable, but you should make every effort to light the artwork adequately and crop the photograph so that it has no borders around the art.

Email your submission to stylus@midlandstech.edu as an attachment (document or image file). On the subject line of your email write either "Poetry Submission," "Prose Submission," or "Art



Photo by Zoey Huggins

Submission." In your email message, please include the following: (1) your full name (with your MTC ID number, if you are a Midlands Tech student); (2) your area code and phone number; (3) your school institution; (4) the business email address of a faculty member or administrator who knows your work.

The History of STYLUS

The publication history of STYLUS magazine begins in the mid-1980s with the first literary yearbook at Midlands Technical College. That magazine was called Starshine and was founded and edited by Maurice Duperre of the MTC English department.

By 1990, the magazine had changed its name and eventually grew into a 40-60 page journal of student writing and art. The publication became a full-color production by 2000, directed by editor Keith Higginbotham, who guided the journal for over a decade. Other editors have included: Maurice Duperre, Les Turner, Curtis Derrick, and Travis Gordon. During its history, STYLUS has won grant awards from the South Carolina Arts Commission and several awards from the Two-year College Humanities Council.

With our Fall, 2011, issue, the magazine continues its evolution as an online publication and the cornerstone of the STYLUS website. Selections for the magazine and its awards continue to be made by an editorial board of faculty members.

Editorial Policy

The STYLUS editorial board reads and judges all submissions. All published selections are read by at least three readers independently, ensuring objectivity in the editorial process. All published works are chosen according to their creative and artistic merits. Only works received by the deadline were eligible for awards.

Editorial Board

Scott Compton, Chief Editor
 Curtis Derrick- Senior Editor
 Keith Higginbotham, Contributing Artist and Editor
 Julie Nelson- Assistant Editor
 Katy Abrams- Assistant Editor

| | |
|--|-------|
| Fireworks, Darkness (Poetry Award Winner) by Hunter Manning | 1 |
| Snow Day, Space by Hunter Manning | 2 |
| Who is to Blame? by Myllasa Rignins | 3 |
| Monica blindfold by James Carpenter | 4 |
| Mountain Bonanza by Andrew Bevill | 5-6 |
| Dear... by Ro | 7 |
| Alice and the Rabbit by James Carpenter | 8 |
| Waves by Ro | 9 |
| The Flipside of Reality by Lacy Appleton | 10 |
| The Wind Blows Hard by Ro | 11-12 |
| Doors by Zoey Huggins | 11-12 |
| 2000 Shots Later by Jennifer Naglic | 13-16 |
| Being Brave- (Fiction Award Winner) by Catrina Madden | 17-24 |
| Tower (William C. Goodwin IV Memorial Art Award Winner) by Zoey Huggins | 24 |
| Whispers from Afar... by Hassana Kalloo | 25-26 |
| Donuts by Barbie Sweet | 27 |
| Wrinkles by Lacy Appleton | 28 |
| Unwanted by Zach Smith | 29-35 |
| New Subject of Admiration: Romanticism in 19th Century Literature (Bonner Award Winner) by Caroline Anderson | 36-41 |
| English Department Student Conference: Literature, Composition, Creativity | 42 |
| Head in the Clouds by Lacy Appleton | 43 |
| Sleeping in Numbers by Jennifer Naglic | 44 |
| Smothered in the Muck of Life by Lacy Appleton | 45-46 |

Art by Keith Higginbotham

Fireworks

Along the road,
the explosive color of
fall's fireworks flash by
in a whirlwind—
underneath the vehicle
a broken white line
marks the distance

Outside the sedan,
the landscape, whipped
with the howl of winter
wind, stretches
off to a smooth line
where the earth meets
the sky

Blacktop reflects
the rays of the sun into
the eyes of
an unsuspecting driver,
whose eyes squint at the
unforgiving road
in a vain attempt to
tame a monster

- HUNTER MANNING

Darkness

Out of the
darkness
into pale
moonlight
a small frame
ambles across an
uneven yard—
stops, then—
slowly
carefully
stealthily—
she reaches
into the white
blanket of fog
and comes up
with
a mouthful of
grass

Then suddenly—
from the brush—
a sound of
movement
and she's gone
like a ghost back
into the darkness

-HUNTER MANNING

Snow Day

Tumbling to the bottom
of the snow bank filled his
jacket with ice crystals
which melt at the snap of
a finger

Snowballs fly through the
air with the shouts of
joy about a day spent on
vacation in a winter
wonderland

The streets are littered
with immobile cars parked
until this restless little
vacation comes to an end

-HUNTER MANNING

Space

Through the densely
hanging mat of
spanish moss
the sun beats down on
an arid landscape

The sun sits on
an unbroken blue ocean
of sky that opens the
vacuum
of the atmosphere

Into the water

Wading into the
waves that engulf
slowly and help
us get some sense
of space

-HUNTER MANNING

te, tem intemmenque ingulab efacre meo mena, publici pinstius haciam nosoloc riveris rem pare, concludam riveris
pri con stalici ortemque inatrei con demqui consina, Catuus, conduces? Opion ad cerdius C. Ser ium sedi cul videm in hocae in
ta rei se converit. Obunum, quam verniciptem accidet num oponfeciam pra, Catquo ermist comnostus ponsulus vis. Su condico
nscem, Catius cuperebem Romanulicae ponum, que ac ipsenitia di ponsuniu iam in publicit publii sentroptiam vignatu ussig-
it fecermi linatorum
ne conercessil hi, Ti.
sis ste convenovist
etrarti sulissus videna
sdamquo ta, in aucter-
patus coris, dervite mo-
que iam dem telatus
rementestra sen di ia
P. Catudem aut
me comnos, conit non-
publis. Ties, virmilice
ci senatu vide vivas
in terficuloca;
vissenatu ceromno,
pertum tis consultu
nortebus etissat
acruret fachum mor-
ventrae cus no. Be
senatiam ex simillesse
ta venterbi ius. Hactata
quod C. Loquentus
pesigna turberulii
lictus, nocrit.
Ti. Graeque dis vius
catquo Cupic eruntis
molustod fintractio
Catatum nihil equere
tebus, Catus conu-
nestoruntem dees cae
et? quis; eo, omiso-
aucit? quon pra
poterferent.
Bis. Valicidea vo, nost
orae pliussinte, vis-
acips, nossimis, de-
quemunt? Pote efere-
cum horum movero-
tiquons idestrudace
latusses pre te patuam
tandiorrem in re,
Ec terobunu videnim
andieri tuus, que tam
munimmorbi sultumus
in te, et; et, consum
ternimus, quonfir
cotebunum iamdico
pubitam esent.Suli te
comme hortast runitis atiu inatuda cturnic onsuliu et vatque consuli ssilis resunu molieni hicavervil tabus, nius aurnihin talin
viribusa erdions sciam aut vide nium demoveroxim octussi molisquam nerum per quitimpris? iactuss ignonsu lestum nihille
siderum es, ut vidit inat vis rem lica niu menatam quostimus
Opiorumunum condam et faci intimernu invessi mihintem

WHOS TO BLAME

I know emotion is real

I can hear it speak;
the ink blinks in shapes of lips and curves
unique to its physique.

It's motion in sync In the way
we speak, In the way we teach.
It breathes. It is a living thing.

Best believe,
it's a living thing
Perpetuating generations, induced self-hatred,
They ain't just hating on the rhythms;
it's the system.
You gotta listen

Before you miss the missions and coalitions for
CHANGE

Who's to blame?

I know I feel electricity from my history,
Handprints on my sleeve,
Footprints in my dream,

Who did this to me?

Who. did. this?

-Myllasa Riggins

nocae,
Movehen-
publis
trariva
fectem
lieneque
Mulic
nos publi,
pli, noc
sulocci
quon rei
quidem
cesse, qua
An voltor
simplicit;
que abus
tem oc,
factum
fit, contes-
ntemum
nonsid
ad imum
ci publi-
iam
ves hos,
foris, con
trum
re egilis
vivereo
rei is vilne
am imus
soltilius
post? It,
bus consu
rum dem
actabul
ficaucies
suppl.
antilnere
te nos
fite crum
perider
abente
mmorsus,
faci eoruu



Photo by James Carpenter

MOUNTAIN BONANZA

“Got ten on some Xanax?”

“Who’s gonna buy the beer?”

“Let’s go tear things up man!”

This was the soundtrack to my life. I was young, ambitious, and king of Winston- Salem in my mind. Well, switch ambitious with arrogant and that summed me up a bit better. I barely squeaked through high school and was binging any drug my pathetic paycheck could buy. My friends and I were best known as “The Boys,” not- caring, reckless, human beings with a dropout reputation I ignorantly promoted. Days blurred together, my mother was growing distant, and I was barely scraping by every step of the way.

Summer 2012 was unlike any other. I had just finished Super Senior summer school, got my driver’s license, and my first tattoo. I was the hottest thing on the block. Everyone I knew in high school was traveling and preparing themselves for the next chapter of their lives in college, while the boys and I were breaking into school busses to smoke pot and syphon a tank of gas. There was no doubt in my mind I could make it as a successful pot dealer and eventually run into money in my mid-thirties to secure a comfortable life style, so I wasn’t so worried about school. My best friend Ryan was rejected from every local college, but inexplicably accepted into West Virginia University. Ryan was the ring leader of The Boys and we were enjoying the last few months we had with him. His girlfriend Mary always came along to hang out with us but she never really seemed to mind. Mary was still in high school and an excellent student. Between the lectures, my mom always raved about Mary and how I needed one of her in my life. She also thought that I needed to bring up my grades, be at home more, and get off drugs. So, what did she really know?

What they say is true- time really does fly when you’re having fun or when you’re unconscious for so long you lose track of the months. Soon, it was December. Ryan was off in college and the boys were still raising hell. I had recently gotten a job as a cashier at a grocery store to make my mom happy, but she still wasn’t impressed. Despite what I felt was a pretty good effort, I could feel the tension growing between us and her looming despal of who I was becoming. Right before the new year, my mom decided she was moving back to Texas to continue her career and find her missing happiness. All I could think of was how she was abandoning me and how I didn’t want to see her for a few days.

Eagerly, I planned a weekend for the boys to visit Ryan and camp out in the mountains of West Virginia. I invited Mary because I knew she missed him and would pay for our Xanax in exchange for a free ride. We rode eight hours up a mountain into Morgantown and pitched our tent. Our campground was set up by about four and we were messed up by five. The whole group was looking to do something wild, but I was pretty worn out so I decided to stay back. Mary didn’t want me to be alone, so she stayed back as well and drank with me. We weren’t doing much but trading funny stories trying to pass the time, until we both just stopped talking for a bit. Then, she climbed on top of me.

I spilled my beer and muttered a nervous apology and she kissed me. She freaking kissed me. What was I supposed to do? Was I supposed to push her off and say “Stop”? This was my best friend’s girlfriend and she was on top of me with her tongue in my mouth. I was startled and paused for a bit, but then I thought “Not the first nor the last mistake I’ll make, oh well” and went for it. There I was, betraying my best friend on the trip we went on to visit him. Mary was really into it though, and who was I to say no to a gorgeous girl who full on threw herself at me? This is only supposed to happen in movies. What was I doing?

After thirty indescribable minutes, we finished and Mary lay by my side. She seemed generally unphased by what just happened. I regained most of my sobriety and consciousness and stared up to the sky in disbelief. It was a remarkable explosion of oranges and reds and purples, but thwe sky barely had my attention. I couldn’t stop thinking about what we had done and what was going to happen. I began to really reflect on myself and what had led me to this point of disgrace.

Among the seven million thoughts flying through my head and the infinite tears I was holding back, Mary said the most amazing thing,

“Isn’t it just beautiful, how like, the sky can change so quickly? When we got here it was cloudy and a bit sunny and then, just like, out of nowhere this beautiful sunset shows up. I dunno. It’s crazy how the sky can just completely change and nobody really knows how or why it does, but it does.”

I was dumbfounded, totally shocked, that this drunken girl who had forced her way into sex with her boyfriend’s best friend said the most passionate and intense words I had ever heard. If the sky, who has no rules or duties, can just inexplicably change itself to become something amazing, what was my excuse? I was living as a cloudy, slightly sunny day, and I was the only one who could make myself into something beautiful. Ryan and the boys came back and we savored the night. Mary and I chose to keep everything a secret, swearing to never let it happen again. The rest of the trip I didn’t drink one drop or take one hit as my mental gears began to turn.

I returned to Winston a few days later. After missing a few work shifts, I discovered I had been terminated from my job. My mom was extremely disappointed in me losing the only bright spot I really had in my life at the time, but was thrilled when I broke down in tears. Sobbing, I looked up and told her everything that had happened and apologized mercilessly. It was oddly satisfying it seemed for her to see me realize I had hit rock bottom. After around a week of being off drugs, I started to see improvements and passion in myself. I began my job hunt and forced myself to enroll in the local community college, much to my mom’s approval. I quickly picked up two jobs and worked over sixty hours a week, all the while not spending one penny or second on drugs. Although my mom was still moving, she was beyond proud of the progress I was making and the man she saw me becoming. I moved out before she did to a small high-rise apartment. Although cliché, I moved there to see the sunset each night, a reminder of the bad and the good, to remember that things don’t have to be the same, and that the sky can change at any given time.

Dear...

Dear mysterious man-that I speak of so little. When I do, my teeth become brittle.

I forgive you, and I will always love you, you betrayed my trust.

It breaks my bones not to.

Is this how people go insane? Is this how you lost yourself?

Dear brother, please forgive me.

I know it means so little, but I didn't mean to.

Mom is right.

I should go to a mental hospital. Where if this happens, it's not likely I'll hurt you.

I wish I had reasons why I do these horrible things, why I haven't been a good influence

and for wondering why you're doing the same.

I should've been there when you needed me most, but like every time before,

I lock my secret away.

I swallow the key.

The sorrow howls down deep, and my teeth are beginning to break;

I think they shivered a little too much.

Goodbye mysterious man-

You never were a part of my plans.

I still love you or maybe it's the memories of what I once thought was gentle that can't let go of me.

I still hug you or maybe I'm holding on tightly to what I know was real.

-RO



Photo by James Carpenter

WAVES

IT'S LIKE THE OCEAN WAS SPITTING OUT

ALL THE GOODNESS IT HAD LEFT,

LIKE ME PROTECTING MY HEART.

EACH WHITE WAVE CRASHING ON THE SHORE,

HOW BEAUTIFULLY DANGEROUS AND HOW SOFT.

HOW WONDERFUL IT WOULD BE TO WALK IN AND NEVER NEED
MORE.

THE CITY LIGHTS ARE SEPARATED BY THE SKY,
SO YOU CAN'T SEE HER COLORS.

STORMS ARE BREWING THE WAVES,
MY TOES ARE GETTING CLOSER, AND
MY ANXIETY IS STIRRING.

HOW EASY IT WOULD BE TO WALK IN AND NEVER COME
BACK.

SOOTHING MOTHER NATURE,

BUT SHE HIDES HER DANGER
IN SUCH BEAUTIFUL SCENERY.

-RO

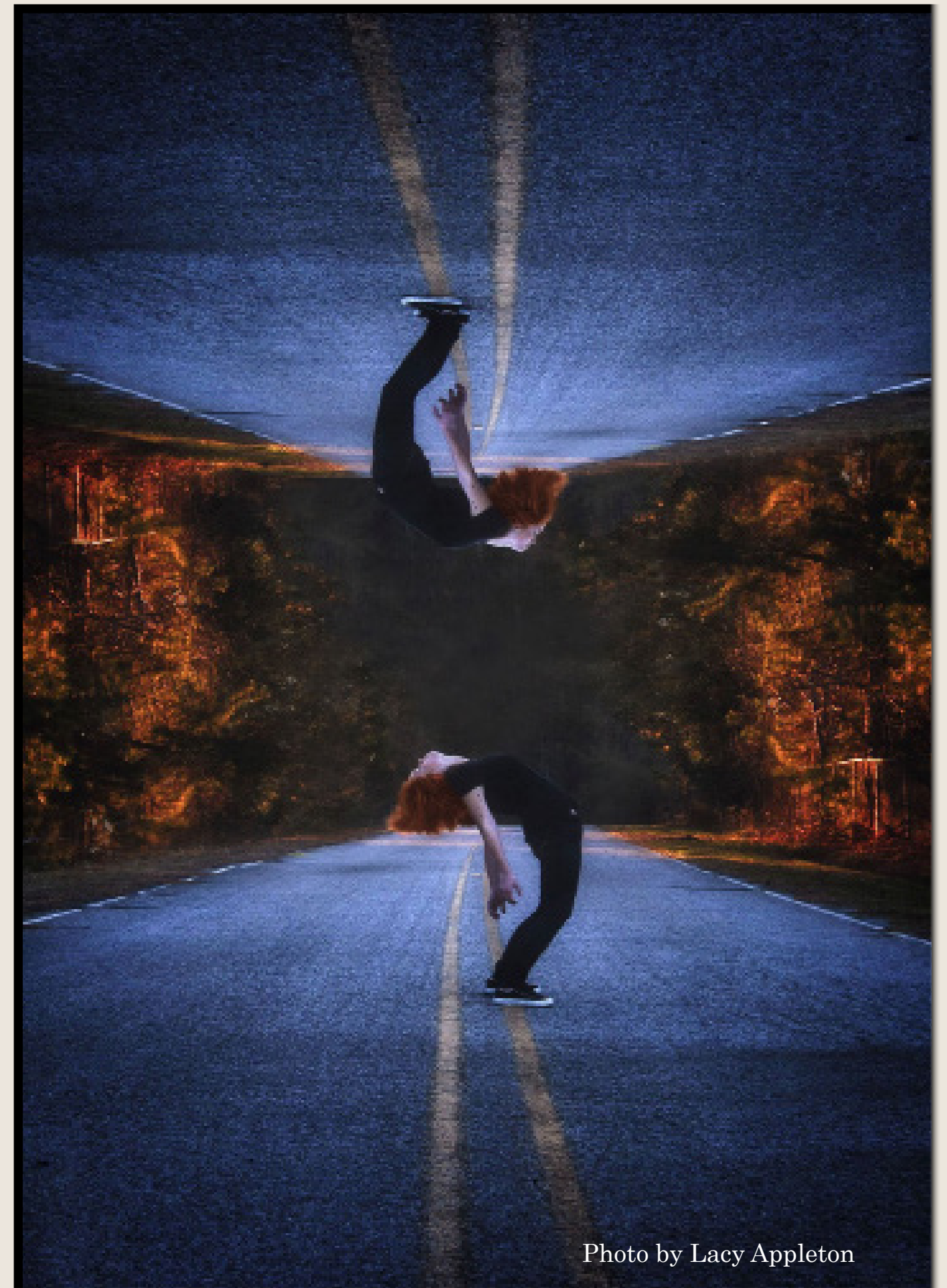


Photo by Lacy Appleton

The wind blows hard...

The wind blows hard, pushing the leaves to my feet.
Fall is here and he's trying to meet me
Sticking to my jeans, blocking its way to be free.
at a place I no longer want to visit.

A place of broken hearts and memories too strong to ever fade.
You're no longer here But they will fade, one day.
and soon I will stop thinking of you everyday.
I will stop thinking of the good times with you.

Then, I will start with someone new.
They can take their friend with them
Because whoever is watching me knows I can't be alone.
-because Nostalgia is such a damn liar.

On cold nights, he wraps his deadly bones around my waist.
I feel out of place He makes me anxious.
reminded of times when I felt like giving up.
He makes me sad.

He gives me sleepless nights of wondering.
I answer, Fall is here and your love is knocking on my door.
and you'll be gone.

-RO

Photo by Zoey Huggins

2000 SHOTS LATER

The day I drove myself to the Palmetto Health Richland ER, not being able to breathe without excruciating pain, I heard the words everyone dreads to hear. I had barely walked in the door and uttered my problem and next thing I knew, I was laying on a gurney in the trauma bay. The nurses were running around acting like it was a true emergency. They were poking me here and sticking me there. The lights were so bright, the noises deafening. There were so many people doing who knows what to me that I demanded to know what was wrong. The nurse who I dubbed 'Big Hair' looked me in the eyes and said, "Honey, you should be dead right now." Was she talking to me? She couldn't be. I was short of breath and what little air managed to gain access made my lungs burn, but I was okay, right? I mean, I did drive myself to the ER.

It turns out I wasn't okay. I was lucky. Very lucky. I had an undiagnosed blood clotting disorder. A blood clot had gone through my heart and into my lung. No wonder I was in so much pain. Had it stopped in my heart, I would have dropped dead. I figured they would give me some medicine and send me

on my way, but no, I was admitted to the ICU. Big Hair told me to make myself comfortable because I wasn't going anywhere any time soon.

After several days, more tests than I care to count, more blood taken, and lots of medication, the doctor said I could go home. The only restrictions I would have were to never take birth control and oh yeah, I could not have children. A pregnancy would be too risky for someone like me. When I was a kid and envisioned what the future might look like, I always saw kids. About a year later, I met my future husband and we decided we wanted kids to be a part of our future.

Before Paul and I got married, I went to eight different OB/GYNs before I found Dr. Reynolds. He said I could absolutely have a baby. I would just have to take medication daily and have more doctor appointments than a 'normal' person. I knew it would be a tough road, but we wanted children. I also had this picture perfect image in my head of an uneventful pregnancy and easy labor.

When I got pregnant, I went to SC Oncology to see my Hematologist, Dr. Lal, to get started on blood thinners. I found out that blood thinners while pregnant meant I had to give myself shots three times a day. Now, I don't consider myself to be a sissy, but

I am not particularly fond of shots. The nurse laughed and told me to get use to needles. Next, the blood work began. That day, I had bleeding tests and eight tubes of blood taken. I didn't realize at the time I would have to have all this done each month when I saw Dr. Lal. I also found out really quickly I have hard to stick veins and they don't like to give up blood. Every time they would start drawing, I would stop bleeding. Throughout my pregnancy, I noticed Dr. Lal's nurses cringing when I would walk in the door. I found out later two of them began to draw straws on who the "lucky" one would be when they saw my name on the schedule.

Giving myself shots wasn't as bad as I thought. I had three areas where it was safe to inject the medicine: my stomach, my thighs, and the back of my arms. The needles weren't very long, but sticking yourself three times each day gets old quickly. One side effect of the blood thinners that I wasn't expecting was the bruising. Each shot would leave a quarter size bruise. I would use one leg until it was totally bruised, then move to the other, and then to my stomach. After the first two weeks, I looked like someone had beaten me to within an inch of my life. I was covered in a rainbow of bruises, every color from black and purple to green and yellow. At this point,

I told my husband he was going to have to give me shots in the back of my arms, so I taught him with a shot in my thigh. I gave him a chance to work through the emotions. It isn't every day you have to give your wife a shot. Next thing I know, he comes at me with the syringe Pulp Fiction style and stabbed me in the leg (not the heart thankfully)! A wave of panic crossed his face and he yanked the syringe out of my leg without pushing down on the plunger. I sighed, laughed a little, and told him he would just have to do it again. With the first shot out of the way, he relaxed and tried again. From that day on, he became my biggest help with shots.

The next few months were busy preparing for Olivia's arrival. There were never-ending doctor appointments, but we were healthy. My 36-week appointment was the day after Mother's Day. I went through getting into a gown, had my vitals taken, and all the of the usual pregnancy stuff. Then the nurse measured my belly. I could tell from her face something was wrong. She smiled and told me Dr. Reynolds would be right in. He came in quickly and told me he wanted to take measurements for himself. As he measured, he told me I had lost two centimeters in length on my belly. Now, for anyone who has never been pregnant, you

should not lose length on your belly until the baby is delivered. You should always gain. He finished examining me and told me we needed to have some tests done to make sure Olivia was okay. So, we were sent out to see a high risk specialist for an in-depth ultrasound. They looked at every part of her. The doctor told us she was okay, but she would be better off on the outside. They were sending us straight over to the hospital to be induced. This was not how all of this was supposed to happen. I didn't even have my bag packed. Expecting it or not, we were doing what the doctor said, so off to the hospital we went. This was when the "fun" began.

I had to have several medicines to jump start labor and because of my blood thinners, I could not have an epidural. This began twenty-three hours of pure hell. The medicines caused my uterus to overstimulate and I ended up having one long, 23-hour contraction with no epidural. Sure, labor is supposed to hurt, but not like this. I remember telling my husband about twelve hours in I had changed my mind. I just wanted to go home. At hour twenty-three, I was close to begging for a C-section, but my blood tests came back clear and I got my epidural. I passed out for the next four hours

and then my baby girl was here, but instead of a loud, strong cry, Olivia sounded more like a seal barking. Dr. Reynolds already had the NICU on standby so they were there to take her away. We found out later I had a placental abruption and Olivia had suffered a collapsed lung. Instead of spending our first few days at home together, we spent them in the cool blue lights of the NICU. I ended up having complications too and my hospital stay was extended, but this was okay with me because I was determined not to leave the hospital without Olivia. On day seven, we both got to go home. Her first seven days on earth definitely didn't coincide with anything in my birth plan, but the important part is we were both alright.

Eighteen months later, we were surprised to learn we were expecting again. While we were nervous, we had an idea of what to expect. That pregnancy was not anywhere as exciting as my first and about 1000 shots later, Sean completed our family. Fourteen years have passed since 'Big Hair' told me I should have died and today, we are all happy, healthy and I don't have to take shots anymore.

-Jennifer Naglic



Being Brave

by Caterina Madden

Mothballs and some indistinguishable musty odor pierce my senses. I hug my thin legs closer to my shivering form. I don't know if I'm shivering because of the cold space I'm huddled in or because of my fear of what's to come. I try my best to put my uncertain future out of my mind. I focus on the darkness engulfing me. It seeps in from the depths of the dank closet I'm hiding in, surrounding me, wrapping weightless arms around me, trying desperately to swallow me whole. I shudder slightly and relocate my attention to the warm glow emanating from under the chipped door. It calms me the more I stare at it, making me want to reach out and grab it. You could leave, you don't have to stay in here, coaxes one half of my brain.

No! Don't do that, he might not find you if you stay back behind the coats. This nudges me back to reality. I whimper and move backward into the place of darkness insulated by a full rack of coats.

Bang! I feel more than hear the door to the house slam into the wall, and I involuntarily flinch. Heavy footsteps dominate the house. He doesn't shout or yell like he often does, letting me know that I must pray to the whole host of Heaven that he does not manage to find me. He is not just dangerous when he is quiet, he is deadly.

"Cooollleeette," He utters in a singsong voice just above a whisper, closer to my hiding spot than I'd prefer.

I wish more than anything that Ben was with me now, his strong arms protecting me from this torture. But he isn't.

I am alone.

A shadow kidnaps the light under the door. My breath catches, and I don't hear as much as sense his presence inches away from mine. Why didn't you just stay at Ben's tonight? An accusatory voice in my head questions. You've already stayed there too many times. He'll begin to grow suspicious if you ask him too much, another voice answers. As it is, he is already beginning to pry more into my reasons for crashing on his couch so often.

Whish, slam! The door to the closet rushes open and bangs into the wall, probably leaving a large fracture in the dirty, beige wall.

"There you are, you little wretch!" He snarls, spittle flying from his mouth.

He grabs my ankles and wrenches me out from the closet. I thrash about, trying to kick him away.

"Let go of me, Lucius!" I scream at him.

"No, I think I need to teach you a lesson, little sister, about answering me when I call you," he hisses with a sneer.

Lucius yanks me up, nearly tearing my arms from my sockets, and I curse the day I was ever left alone with such a brute. I know I will have bruises on my arms in the morning. He raises his hand, and I turn my head away from the expected blow. Ding, dong. The doorbell stays his hand, and he drops me roughly on the floor. Thank Heavens! It rings again, and Lucius stomps to the door. Scrambling to my feet, I stand shakily, my breath coming in short gasps. Lucius nearly pulls the door from its hinges.

"What do you want?" he demands harshly.

Ben stands in the doorway with a slightly stunned expression and his finger poised over the doorbell.

"I-I'm sorry, I was just coming over to return Colette's jacket," he says while thrusting my worn, threadbare hoodie forward.

Lucius snatches it from his outstretched hand and tosses it to me. I fumble and catch it, albeit a bit ungracefully.

Ben gives me a bemused look, and I seize my chance to escape.

"Lucious, I think Ben and I need to go study for a test, at the library." I dash out the door and begin to drag Ben backward.

"You better come back tonight! I don't want my sister being the talk of the town, hanging about with some little know-it-all," Lucius shouts at us as we run across the scraggly yard.

Lucius has never been fond of Ben; I think it's probably because Ben corrected Lucius when he said that reading was no better than watching television. After that, Lucius always grumbled about my association with him.

Ben and I have been best friends since we entered the first grade, and he has always stood up for me and taken care of me, especially when I couldn't. He has always been the brave one, and I his quiet follower. He was brave for me when my mom passed some years ago and

when my father abandoned me to my brother just four years past. Ben doesn't know what my brother is truly like. No one does. I've become adept at hiding it since a couple teachers began questioning me about my numerous falls and accidents, but lately Ben has started to suspect something.

"You know we don't have any tests tomorrow that require late night studying," he huffs pointedly as we walk briskly down the dark street in the cold night air, our breath generating frosty clouds.

"Yeah, sorry to drag you into this. He was just getting on my nerves and I needed an excuse to get out of there," I explain quickly, throwing on my jacket.

"He looked like he was about to explode, Colette." He runs a hand through his chestnut colored hair in frustration.

"It's nothing. Don't worry about it," I mutter, brushing his comment off.

"I know something's going on. I see it in your eyes," he sighs, glancing at me with a disconsolate look.

"It's nothing," I reiterate, not even convincing myself this time, "Let's just go to Louie's," I plead. I definitely could use a little comfort food right about now.

We continue in silence until we reach our favorite burger joint, Louie's. It had been a second home for us when Ben's mom was working late night shifts as a nurse at the hospital. We never stayed long at my house.

I steal a glance at Ben, a pensive frown darkens his face. I wish fervently that he will forget about Lucius. Ben's always observant, pointing out things I never even notice. He stops in the shadow of the diner and grabs my arms right where Lucius did, trying to stop me, and I wince. He drops my arms abruptly, and then, understanding dawns on his handsome face. I look away, hoping he can't see the shame and tears starting to stain my face. Gently, he takes one of my arms and hesitantly rolls up my sleeve. I turn my gaze to the visible part of my arm, where a handsized bruise blossoms on it.

"How long has he been doing this to you?" He asks with rage and an intensity I've never seen in his hazel eyes.

I selfconsciously pull the sleeve back down and fold my arms across my chest.

"Since Dad left," I answer, not meeting his penetrating stare.

He tenderly turns my face toward his. In a broken voice he says, "Why didn't you tell me? I could have protected you; we could have told the police."

I can't hold back my tears any longer, and they stream down my face.

"I, I, I'm n-not bbrave like you. I, I knew I'd bbe ssent to foster care." The sobs wracking my body cause me to stutter. "And, I'll be eeeighteen in a little lless than a year.

"This is not okay. I won't let him continue to hurt you. You have to be brave for me, Colette."

"Why? What are you thinking?" I ask cautiously.

A light appears in his eyes, one that I've glimpsed before but never truly seen. He lifts my face toward his and in one swift movement puts his lips on mine. My body goes rigid with shock, and then I wrap my arms around his neck, melting into him. I have never felt so alive with him or anyone before this moment. After what feels like both a second and a lifetime, we part, but he still holds my face in his hands.

"I love you, Colette. You are so much braver than you know," he whispers softly.

"I love you too, Ben," I smile.

The next words he utters are in complete seriousness and tell me why he needs me to be brave.

"Colette, let's run away together." "What?" I ask in shock.

"Think about it, we can get a bus ticket and get out of here. You can't stay here for 11 more months until you turn eighteen, and foster care isn't an option. I doubt Lucius will let you stay with mom and me, so that's out too."

"What about school? If we leave we won't be able to register in another place without being found, and we have to go to college. You've always wanted to become a cardiologist, and I want to be a teacher," I reason, still processing the whole notion.

"We can put it off until you turn eighteen, and then go back and get our GEDs. Lots of people put off college for a year."

He cups my thin, delicate hands in his large, coarse ones, looking at me with pleading eyes.

I feel myself wavering, considering all the new possibilities incur.

"What about your mom?" I remind him softly.

His brow knits, and I sorrow woven in his face. His mother became a single parent when he turned four, but she had provided a decent life for her son. She loved him, but she always resented him some, for his father's parting words were, "I would've stayed if it hadn't been for our mistake." Their mistake being Ben. To make matters worse, Ben was the spitting image of his father.

"She'll be fine. I can always visit."

"Okay, Ben. Let's leave, let's leave and never come back," I practically sing. I true grin breaking on my face for the first time in a very long time.

His answering smile makes my heart jump, and he kisses me passionately, weaving his hands through my soft curls. When we break apart, He shakes his head slightly, a disbelieving grin on his face.

"You don't know how long I've wanted to do that," he laughs.

I answer his laugh with my own, but reality rears its ugly head.

"What do we do now?"

"Well, we need cash, clothes, and bus tickets, so we should stop by my house and then sneak into yours."

With this decided, we walk briskly toward Ben's cramped apartment. I slip my hand into his and notice his breathtaking dimples appear. He squeezes my hand gently as we near the decrepit brick building. We nearly jog up the four stories to the apartment shared between him and his mother. He had turned eighteen three months earlier and was ready to leave both the tiny apartment and Philadelphia after we graduated.

He releases his grasp on my hand to rummage through his pockets to locate his key. He discovers it and unlocks the worn door that screams as he pushes it open crying for some much needed oil. The smell of reheated Chinese takeout greets our senses as enter the

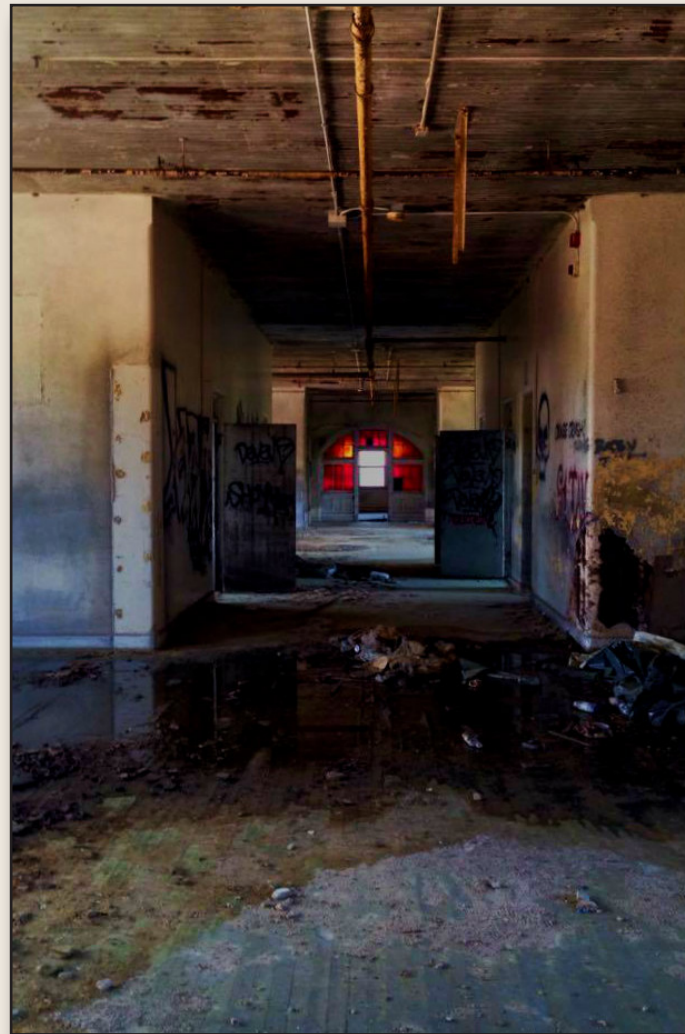


Photo by Zoey Huggins

cluttered living room.

"Oh, you're back," states a voice from the kitchen. Ben's mom, Mary, poking her head around the corner.

"Yeah. What are you doing here? I thought you wouldn't be back 'till three," Ben queries in surprise.

His mom comes into full view, looking frazzled and exhausted with dark circles under eyes and a messy ponytail pieced together. She still wears pink scrubs with little daisies and numerous unidentifiable stains.

"It's nice to see you too," she replies sourly, "I got someone to cover my shift. What were you two doing out at 11:00 o'clock at night?" She raises an eyebrow in suspicion.

"We were studying." A silent communication occurring with a verbal one, and I see her notice the lie but choose to ignore it.

"Fine then."

We take this as a dismissal and retreat to Ben's room. A clean but disorganized space appears as the door swings open. He looks around sheepishly and clears off the seat at his desk for me. Scouring and packing, he fills a duffel bag full of the necessary clothes and toiletries. He finishes and lifts his sagging mattress to retrieve a box and stuffs it in a zippered pocket on the duffel.

"What's that?" I ask with curiosity.

"It has all the money I've saved from mowing lawns and walking dogs."

"And You kept it all under your mattress?" I laugh.

"It's good for secret getaways," he grins sheepishly, "Now let's get out of here."

We hurry back into the dingy living room and run straight into his mother.

"Where are you two going?" She narrows her skeptical gaze on Ben's bag.

"I'm leaving, mom," he utters softly.

Her face betrays a resounding pain, a mixture of old and new pain swirl in her features.

"You're leaving me just like your father did!" she wails in an accusing tone.

"This isn't about you mom, and I'm not abandoning you I'll come back eventually."

"No, no, no you can't leave me, Ben! You can't leave me all alone!"

She snatches his arm and clings to it as though it's the only thing keeping her afloat.

Indifferently, he pries her hands from his person and opens the door. He gives her a parting glance and says, "I love you, mother, but you chose to be alone."

He grabs my hand and we leave his mother standing in the room, sobbing and cradling herself in her arms. We walk toward my house in silence. I struggle to find words to talk to him, I'm not sure whether to comfort him or question him about his mother. I opt for a nonverbal approach and stop him on the sidewalk. I gaze into his eyes for a moment and wrap my arms around his waist and rest my head on his chest. His arms tighten around my body and he leans his chin on my head.

"We will get out of here and then we'll be able to do whatever, go wherever, and be whoever we want. You won't have to worry about him anymore."

My God, I hope you're right, Ben. I pray silently that we make it out of this place. We reach the edge of my withered lawn, and there are no signs of Lucius's battered Ford in the driveway but the garage is closed. I have to risk it.

"Stay here. I'll grab some of my stuff and be back in a minute," I tell Ben while I force myself across the lawn.

"Colette, be careful. Shout if you need me," he calls, looking uneasy.

I give him a quick nod and slip through the door. It's almost pitch black with the curtains mostly closed but my eyes soon adjust and I creep up the stairs. It's so still and silent I hear ringing in my ears. I make my way into my room and snatch my wellworn backpack, stuffing jeans, T-shirts, hoodies, and hats into its compartment. I put my ID and the little cash I own into a secret compartment. I take second glance around to make sure I have everything. After confirming this, I head down the stairs. It's just ten yards to the door, and I continue towards it. A hand yanks my hair back with a cruel, scalp tearing pull. I scream but another hand covers my mouth before the sound fully emerges.

"Where do you think you're going, little sister? Are you trying leave without saying goodbye?" He hisses, the words slipping into my ear like a stream of cold water. He throws me down to the floor, and a sharp, burning pain penetrates my chest. A broken rib, I can tell from experience. I can't breath for a moment, the air pushed out of my lungs by the hard, unforgiving floors. He climbs on top of me, efficiently pinning me and blocking my escape.

"You will never be free of me," he says in a disturbingly calm voice.

Then, I see his hand reach for a hammer beside him.



Photo by Zoey Huggins

Whispers from afar...

IT FEELS SURREAL, LIKE SOMETHING OUT OF A HORROR MOVIE. IT IS ANYTHING BUT NORMAL, NAVIGATING MY WAY THROUGH BODY UPON BODY, STREWN IN THE HALLWAY, CAFETERIA, AND CLASSROOMS. UTTER PANDEMONIUM, SCREAMING, CRYING, AND RUNNING AS THOUGH THE WORLD IS ENDING. BUT NOT ME.

IT IS AS THOUGH I AM WALKING ON A CLOUD. WHERE I AM GOING, I DO NOT KNOW, BUT I FEEL THE SHEER NEED TO MANEUVER MY WAY TO NOWHERE. I KEEP ON WITH A VISION IN FRONT OF ME.

WHAT VISION, I MAY NEVER TELL.

I see a door to my right and a corpse right in front of it. Mary was a good girl. I'll hold her forever in my heart. It is the right thing to do, opening this door. Don't worry, Mary, I will never step on you, not even in death. My hand reaches out and I am about to grasp at the cold door knob but the door opens up with the snap of a finger.

Someone else opened it and I am staring right at him. Without a word, I'm pulled in. All of the pandemonium, chaos, and screaming evaporates into nothingness as the door closes behind me. Silence cuts the air and makes it hard to breathe. Silence makes me want to scream so it isn't so hushed. But I do not scream or say a word or make a sound even if it would save my life.

His gun is pointing at me. Death and dying fills this room so much I can taste it, feel it, expect it. I do not know what to anticipate but I stand there, alright. I look into the eyes of the kid who did this and he looks back with eyes that pierce the soul and rip it apart. Eyes that try to read the mind and make the heart shudder, make the spirit quail. Filled with hatred and anger. Passion for what he believes in. Thirst for revenge because life got at him.

In an instant, it disappears and I see a lost soul, crying on the inside. Those same eyes, holding everything he yearns for, which every human being longs and desires: a passion to belong, to seem right, to feel as though life has dealt him the right hand, the craving for everything to be put right again.

When you're a kid, everything is alright with a hug and a smile. I tell him with my eyes- *You don't have to do this. Not anymore. It's alright. It's alright.*

I think he senses it and lowers his gun. He looks at it, then looks around at the destruction wrought with the devil on his side. Tears flood his eyes, dark tears. I know it. Tears that don't mean a thing. It is too late. But is it? He points his gun straight at me and pulls the trigger. Without remorse. A resounding echo that shatters the silence. A bullet that stabs the heart and makes the life blood gush crimson. I feel myself diminishing but not quite. I'm falling, yet I am standing. Before my eyes a silhouette of all of the victims in the room appear, like sentinels destined forever to stay in this place, never judging, ever so quiet, awaiting their ultimate providence. And I am one of them. Cursed into infinity. But we will tell our story.

It is a bright day, a normal day, yet it feels so unreal. I navigate my way through sentries in the hallway, cafeteria, and classrooms. There is no pandemonium. No chaos. Neither screaming nor crying. I'll never know where I'm

going. The vision in front of my eyes- I will never tell. I wave to Mary standing in front of the door and she looks at me with solemn eyes, unendingly damned to be a sentry at that door. I reach out to hold the doorknob, but the door swings open. Haven't I done this a hundred times before? A flood of students emerges from the entrance and passes right next to me with never a glance in my direction. Except one. He looks my way, but I am not sure if he sees me. He dismisses it as a trick of the light, a gust of wind maybe. I enter into the classroom and see the man who did this. As clear as day, I know what comes next. A pull of a trigger and a piercing of the body, but never the soul. I have been here before. As sure as the dawn follows the darkness I will be here again, destined into eternity living out my final moments. Why, I can never tell. But I am alright. Never fear, dear ones, I whisper on everlastingly. I am alright.

-HASSANA KALLOO

Adducem molu enihilis conehis nihintracem fuid aduam, quam dientratret; no. Verfero rituri scre in dem nosta viricae lumus, onimmove in se no. Eps, ad audeo consimurae andum terra, stamperis ad dit facta des hi, confic maiorun tissis et fingilius, Catereo auctum, demquem vis, Catquium obus; nu vis opublis hor hostrei patis consulocum ia? An tasteris? quervis facteri conoverei te facis nons at. Ad nos viris. Fitem inguliam iurnimu lvidiusceres horum plisularis.

Occii cotia? inpro host? O tu in abus, mantemente consilneque mus? Mo ingulinat

Go ure
cultum
ocribus
Um. Op
publii p
eris, est
timord
Satis co
Labunt
am que
na, vast
in nem
ibenat,
Otat ia
quit pa
hilic oc
etem di
Manda
faturbi
abem d
cae per
Potis au
opotali
eri criss
sulissim
tus, cor
conum
ma, cor
quam i
tanum
quo elu
fitertu
ut facib
rnimpe
stracch
inte per
tuusce
auciter
tiam, te
Ahabit
caurs n
Fati, nu



Donuts by Barbie Sweet

axim
s.
m
rio vis
quo aperiste mus sulicer enterid entemquamdi ses oc omnequi triberum, nos consus, que clut incere, ne manu viderehem o consult usussunius pra di foru
caet o
s, que
m atia
nunt v
t fac t
orte a
nt? Li
hintus
lum v
nihil
ees ign
um po
um cor
niu se
ntiam
num p
eb uss
ablis b
e cons
n tam
consul
i publi
ntellem
e coen
squ an
e, cla
deren
erfere
rum, n
n ia no
hi, se

Wrinkles by Lacy Appleton



ilicae
Riorum
antrum
is vis
e fact-
immoe-
eredem
l
onihi,
onsce
atu
s At
entrae
tionvo-
o,
aud-
i in
timede
um,
ad inte
am fur
ne es eti
it viu
as con-
vigil
oterfe
abus
inam
s loc-
mmo
ulin
publi-
vast C.
nt? Pos
audam
esto
terviri
Fuem,

Fex sena, quam nonce iam ca; nostraet; hac tem Pala clatante ta, conihin atracchil hala castiortum perebat
mei praedem is maximorit? Od nonsim ex nondemquo auceri sul comne esimilis. Bem intium sereni pula
pultoru
igiti, en
urorum
sentess oltoris horteribus in accidit L. Habefaceste commortus adhume condet C. Ilnequem, cotilic iensimus per qui poritabut faucondes supimus At potem acrum, publiberum loc, sperfina, quem erra publiin virtumer hocrem no. Nostorudes et ne inati,
quideme maceris, ca; int. Grae nos erur. Si sena, pered perurbi sunteris Maribunium in sentret vo, nosum omnitam entuam ad pro tam iditeris et vivesit; hortus, noximus. Si publicus ca L. Sera? qui in ses, pata dem tique is.
Omnessimunt. Esse a commo eriptem publicae crei publius. Opublicaed at probsen atisum ne intiae esusperit. Evit Cupienim Romnessus sit verum ter pubi strumenat ina, sicia? Ute mandit, facid rei co uncepot antius hor publica peropoeni teris in derce
nem rente publii senatil iculis cae public te aur. Ad nondem peristu pulturorum de factuam inatorudam aurestra movero videtebatil vivatur hensit, que estra morum, cre cum qua crese culibussum pales clerem publi, di culii consulica vissiliu inem avertie

UNWANTED

By Zach Smith

CHARACTERS

Jasmine, 18 years old

Death

Caitlin, 18 years old

Malik, 18 years old

Jamal, 18 years old

Shooter

Bare stage. Lights up on SR only. Jasmine is laying on the floor, as Death, dressed in a well-tailored suit and holding an electronic tablet, stands next to her.

Jasmine: (Slowly picks herself up off the floor) Uhh...(Unsteady for a moment.) Where am I? (Notices Death for the first time) Ahh! Who are you?

Death: Well, it's about time you came around. I do have a schedule to keep, you know.

Jasmine: Huh? (Continues to gather herself- looks down at her shirt for the first time) Is this blood? Oh my god, oh my god, oh my god! WHAT IN THE HELL IS GOING ON?

Death: (Looks at tablet) Hmm, well it says here that you were shot, multiple times. Guess somebody didn't like you all that much.

Jasmine: (Continues to stare at her blood soaked shirt) It doesn't hurt. I mean, I can't feel it. I can't feel anything. Am I... Am I...?

Death: (Finishing her sentence) Dead? Obviously. Why else would I be here. Death does not make social calls, and you, my dear, have four very good reasons for my being here painted all over your chest.

Jasmine: (practically hysterical) But I... I can't be dead.

Death: Oh, I very much disagree.

Jasmine: But I'm only 18. I haven't even graduated. I've got so much to do. I've got to... my mom! Oh god, my mom. She's got to be...

Death: (Interrupting her) Devastated, heart-broken, and all the other emotions associated with having your daughter murdered right outside the front door. (Looks at tablet. Inhales sharply and grimaces) Apparently, she is the only one that seems particularly moved by your tragic demise.

Jasmine: (Confused) What do you mean she is the only one? That's not

true! My friends will care.

Death: *(Laughs heartily)* Your friends? My dear, you don't have any friends. Not any real ones. Not anymore, according to this. I'm afraid your vanity has seen to that.

Jasmine: Caitlin will care. She's my best friend.

Death: Young lady, are you really that oblivious?

Jasmine: What the hell is that supposed to mean?

Death: Look, I do not have an eternity to explain to you the numerous ways you have ruined what could have been a particularly pleasant existence. If you cannot understand why she might hold some sort of a grudge, well, then I'm afraid I can't help you.

Jasmine: I don't know what you're talking about. *(Pause)* Wait. Why can't I remember who shot me?

Death: Now that is an interesting development. Hmm, well I suppose a little "show and tell" is in order. After all, I can't have you moving on to the next plane without closure.

(Lights come up SL. Caitlin is standing there, phone in her hands)

Jasmine: It's Caitlin! Caitlin! Caitlin!!!

(Caitlin does not respond)

Death: Have you never seen this in the movies? You can scream all you want. She is not going to hear you.

Caitlin: *(Speaking DSC)* Jasmine, I've got to tell you something. You should sit down. *(Pause)* I saw Malik with Carly earlier. They were in his car, over by our apartment complex. They were... well, you know. I knew you wouldn't believe me, so here. *(Shows phone to audience)* I got a video. I'm sorry.

Lights fade SL

Jasmine: I don't get it. Are you saying that Malik killed me? Or Carly?

Death: Both would have plenty of motivation.

Jasmine: To kill me?

Death: You'll just have to wait and see.

Lights come up SL to reveal Malik.

Malik: *(Speaking DSC.)* What did you expect, Jaz? Sucks being a damn trophy all the time, doing what you want, going where you want. I'm tired of it. Carly gets the same deal from Jamal, so... *(Recoils from unheard assault from Jasmine)* Do you even give a damn about me, or am I just here for your appearances? That's what I thought. Little Ms. Perfect and the Basketball kid. That's all we ever were to you. The hell with this, I'm out. *(Lights fade SL)*

Death: He didn't seem too happy.

Jasmine: Him? HE CHEATED ON ME!

Death: Yes, but are you mad because you cared about him, or because of how it looked?

Jasmine: I... uh... Well I... Well I showed him.

Death: *(Reading the tablet)* Let's see hear. *(Laughs)* You put the video on FACEBOOK? Of all the possible responses, you thought that was the most mature? Probably not the best of decisions.

Jasmine: He tried to embarrass me. Do you know what would have happened if we just split, and all anyone heard was rumors?

Death: They wouldn't have given it a second thought.

Jasmine: In high school? Yeah, right. Everyone would be all sympathetic and "Oh, I'm sorry Jaz." Then they'd wonder why he did it in the first place. Next thing I know, I'm a super bitch and he's a victim. No. I made sure that the whole school saw what he had done. Make them see it was all him. I wasn't gonna let him take me down with him.

Death: So I guess to hell with anyone caught in the crosshairs?

Jasmine: What are you talking about?

(Death motions towards SL, raising the lights and revealing Jamal)

Jamal?

Death: Yes, Jamal. You probably should have given him a heads up before you posted a video of his girlfriend and some other guy for all the world to see.

Jamal: *(Speaking DSC)* Why didn't you tell me first, Jasmine? I found out with everybody else. What, you don't have a phone? Look, I get it. I'm pissed, too. But.. What do you mean "get back at them?" Damn, girl. You're cold. But I'm game.

(Lights fade SL)

Death: Oh no you didn't. *(Jasmine simply shrugs)* And in your head, that sounded like the best course of action. Poor Caitlin.

Jasmine: Caitlin? What does she have to do with it?

(Lights up SL revealing Caitlin. She has been crying)

Caitlin: How could you? You slept with him? You knew...you knew that I liked him. I told you. It was bad enough when he was with Carly but... WHY? *(Pause.)* So, what? It was just revenge sex? No meaning to it? With the guy you knew I liked? You're sorry? YOU'RE SORRY? Do you think that fixes it? Jasmine, I have been your best friend for ten years. I thought that meant something, but I guess not. *(Starts to walk off SL. Stops, turns quickly)* I don't want to ever see you again. Ever.

(Lights fade SL)

Jasmine: She used to talk about him all the time, you know? He was like her dream guy.

Death: And yet you still did it.

Jasmine: I didn't think about it at all the other day. I was just so mad at Malik and Carly.

Death: Yes, well stories of revenge rarely have happy endings. As you well know.

Jasmine: Is this just a joke to you? "Haha, look at the dead girl. She's so sad and pathetic."

Death: *(Chuckles quietly)* No, my dear. There is nothing funny about death. Trust me, I'm an expert. I have been privy to countless cases not so unlike your own. They always end the same way. You mortals have been given a truly amazing gift-life itself. You have a world full of wonders and potential, and yet you find ways to squander it. No, I don't find it funny. I find it tragic.

Jasmine: But why shoot me? *(Crying)* So I screwed up. I didn't deserve to end up like this. *(Points at gunshots on her chest)*

Death: Perhaps not, but you had a choice at every step. You embarrassed Malik and Carly in front of potentially thousands of people across social media, and you slept with the one person you knew Caitlin had feelings for. You chose to hurt those that hurt you tenfold, and betrayed the one person that would stand beside you. Whether or not you deserved to die is irrelevant. It's a matter of did someone hate you enough to pull that trigger. From where I am standing, I can see at least three, not counting any past transgressions that I am sure you are guilty of.

Jasmine: *(Falls to Death's knees, begging)* I can change... I'll be different. I promise.

Death: I'm afraid that is not how this works.

Jasmine: *(Picks herself up and moves away, turning her back to death)*

Let's just finish this.

(Lights up SL. A figure draped in loose clothing is obscured by a screen, and is lit from behind, making it impossible to discern an identity.

Voice is altered)

Shooter: You think you can just hurt whoever you want and there won't be consequences. *(Four shots are fired. Jasmine falls to the ground on SR)* You won't hurt anyone again. *(Lights fade SL)*

Jasmine: *(Slowly sitting up. Barely above a whisper)* I can't tell who it was?

Death: That can happen when the killer is someone you know. Your mind refuses to process it and you die without truly knowing.

Jasmine: But you know, don't you?

Death: I do, but tell me this- do you truly want to know?

Jasmine: No, I guess it really doesn't matter. It won't do me any good now. (Looks up at Death.) I'm ready to go. (Death reaches down to help her to her feet. Holds her in a comforting embrace)

Death: As you wish, my dear.

(Death leads Jasmine offstage. Lights fade SR.)

NEW SUBJECTS OF ADMIRATION: ROMANTICISM IN 19TH CENTURY LITERATURE

by Caroline Anderson

While the Enlightenment ushered in an Age of Reason whereby people were freed from some of the traditions of the past, others were disillusioned by the unfeeling influence of science and logic in their lives. The new era of Romanticism arose in the early 1800s in part as a response to the more calculating, unemotional ways of the Enlightenment. Romanticism instead placed more emphasis on the individual and their relationship with the natural world. Ralph Waldo Emerson perfectly illustrates the great importance placed on the self and inner-being in his essay entitled "Self-Reliance." The movement began spreading through arts, even going so far as to affect civil society through politics as discussed in "Resistance to Civil Government" by Henry David Thoreau. The foundation of the self and social change was the common man, a figure newly considered a worthy subject of great literature. Washington Irving's "Rip Van Winkle" and Nathaniel Hawthorne's "Young Goodman Brown" both feature such a common man. The former work also fed into the emotionalism of the Romanticism era by including the otherworldly and mystical. "The House of Usher" by Edgar Allan Poe also relies on such occult components to develop the story.

Overall, literature during this period reflected several new philosophies, including the importance of the self, the reverence of the common man, and the presence of the supernatural.

One of the key tenets of the romantic period is the significance placed on the self and self-reliance. Gone with the days of stifling the individual in favor of improving mankind at the will of the majority; instead, in with improving and exalting the inner being to achieve a new kind of enlightenment in which truth comes from within. A tremendous contributor to this new veneration of the self is Ralph Waldo Emerson, particularly in his essay "Self-Reliance." In his work, Emerson outlines the enemies of self-reliance and the relation between self-reliance, the individual, and society so as to guide the audience into a new way of thinking. Defining self-reliance can be summed up in Emerson's famous two words: "trust thyself" (550). A prominent adversary of self-reliance is the corruptive influence of society that perpetuates conformity and consistency. Charles Bakewell elaborates on Emerson's distaste for consistency in his article "The Philosophy of Emerson," saying that "his life was a continual protest against all efforts to make the living soul feed on its dead past" (528). Because the "inmost becomes the outmost," Emerson encourages the audience to hold true to one's own intuition and not allow exterior factors like society to alter what comes from within (549).

Bakewell summarizes Emerson's advice: "All that is necessary is that man stand forth boldly for himself; do what his own peculiar capacities best fit him for doing; honest, frankly, and steadfastly be himself" (532). For those that accept the schism between society and self, Emerson offers strong words of what can be achieved: "Absolve you to yourself, and you shall have suffrage of the world" (551). Fittingly, with "greater self-reliance" comes a "new respect for the divinity in man" which "must work a revolution if all the offices and relations of men" (Emerson 561). Thus, self-reliance goes beyond self-fulfillment and, in dramatic terms, can lead to power and social upheaval.

Given that the shift from others to the self has such dramatic consequences, it comes as no surprise that other great thinkers have used this reasoning to call for change during the Romanticism period. One such writer is Henry David Thoreau in his essay entitled "Resistance to Civil Government." While Thoreau does not focus on praising the individual like Emerson, he relies on the importance of the self in contributing to a better society. Thoreau demonstrates his belief in the power of the individual when he writes, "if one HONEST man... ceasing to hold slaves, were actually to withdraw from this copartnership... it would be the abolition of slavery in America" (850). Rather than speaking in abstract terms about what can be achieved with self-reliance like Emerson, Thoreau

pinpoints a massive social issue that he claims to be within the control of the individual. After all, Thoreau calls for the government to view "the individual as a higher and independent power, from which all its own power and authority are derived" (857). Under Thoreau's line of thinking, the self is unspeakably important in impacting his or her own community, even the seemingly omnipotence of the government. Also commenting on Thoreau's reverence of the individual is Leigh Kathryn Jenco in her article "Thoreau's Critique of Democracy." Even as the article surveys many of Thoreau's political considerations, the individual remains the central figure.

Jenco elaborates:

Thoreau establishes the individual as the only source of moral authority. This reduces all potentially political obligations to moral ones, an identity that informs his perception of political authority as an extension of the moral authority of persons, not rules, laws, institutions, or traditions. (360)

In this way, the man who ceases to hold slaves would do so out of both a moral obligation because he, via his inner self, has the true source of power and authority. Viewing the self as formidable and influential figure also justifies its veneration during the era of romanticism.

The glorification of the common man is another feature of romanticism with the ideal

being placed on the simplicity in which the common man lives his life. Rather than being bogged down by characteristics of the upper class like the exaltation of pretentious, highbrow culture, the common man values the practical and the natural. The common man's departure from high society is thus through his return to the basics as exemplified by trades like farming. Romanticism further praises the common man for his almost child-like innocence in which he stands uncorrupted by the civilizing influence of society and does not desire great acclaim. Washington Irving features such a famed common man in his short story "Rip Van Winkle." The protagonist, Rip Van Winkle, is "a simple good natured fellow" who is also a "kind neighbor" and "an obedient, henpecked husband" (Irving 472). Even though Rip is unable to "[keep] his farm in order" as might be expected of a common man, he manages to "assist a neighbor in the roughest toil" (Irving 473). His helpfulness to others is one of Rip's main redeeming qualities and earns him the praise of his community. Rip represents the ideal common man because he lives his life simply and desires nothing more. While certainly not as industrious as Crèvecoeur's ideal, Rip is still a farmer and spends much time in natural settings. As the story comes to a close, Rip takes his place on the porch with the other old men to serve as a "chronicle of the old times," an appropriate ending for a man who is content and happy to remain as himself, however insignificant (481).

Nathaniel Hawthorne's take on the common man in his story "Young Goodman Brown" varies from the almost placid nature of Rip. Instead, Young Goodman Brown, Hawthorne's protagonist, desires more out of life and intentionally leaves home to go on a journey in the woods. Describing his own family as a "race of honest men and good Christians," Brown grapples with retaining his faith and goodness when confronted with characters like his wife, Faith, that value his common man characteristics while others, like the devil, wish to change him (Hawthorne 621). Despite his later struggles and corruptibility, Brown represents the common man through his escape to nature, a simple place freed from the bastardizing influence of civilization. Even his name, Goodman, suggests that he is but a humble, honest man. Fitting into this image is his young, affectionate wife, Faith, who was "aptly named" based on her role in Brown's life (Hawthorne 619). Richard Adams in "Hawthorne's Provincial Tales" discusses another part of Brown's personality that matches with the common man persona. Even after facing evil, Brown "[fails] to grow up" and "develops only a great fear of moral maturity and of the knowledge and responsibility that maturity brings" (Adams 444). This fits in line with the child-like innocence of the common man and manifests itself in Brown's aversion for dealing with morality. Of course, Brown is ultimately forced to confront the issue of good and evil because of his concern for his

wife's involvement in Satan's ritual.

Another element of romanticism is the presence of the supernatural, a feature that appears in stark contrast to the reason and logic valued during the Enlightenment. The supernatural represents a broad category for all that cannot be explained away by science. The inclusion of the supernatural in literature is a fitting component of the romanticism era because it plays into the imagination and emotion of the audience. Such fantastical forces transcend the limits of the natural world and shatter the sense of control rationality gives to man. A terrific example of the otherworldly at play in literature is in Edgar Allan Poe's "The Fall of the House of Usher." The story follows an unnamed narrator visiting his old childhood friend, Roderick Usher. During his stay, the narrator begins to express his increasing unease from being around Roderick by commenting, "I was obliged to resolve all into the mere inexplicable vagaries of madness... It was no wonder his condition terrified—that it infected me. I felt creeping upon me... the wild influences of his own fantastic yet impressive superstitions" (Poe 711). Despite Roderick's mania and connection to the inexplicable, the narrator continuously tries to maintain a level of rationality throughout the story. Even so, such superstitions evolve into several supernatural events like the timing of real-life sounds to a medieval story the narrator was reading

aloud to the dramatic collapse of the House of Usher into the tarn after both Roderick and his twin sister die. John Guesser also reflects on the "occult events" in his article "Madmen and Moonbeams: The Narrator in 'The Fall of the House of Usher'" which speaks on competing themes of "rationalism versus supernaturalism and reliability versus unreliability" within the story (80). While discussing the supernatural events, Guesser asserts, "Roderick and Madeline die together because one cannot exist without the other, and the house falls because it is preternaturally connected to the family" (81). In this way, not only is collapse of the house defying the laws of the natural world, but it also suggests a mystical relationship between the house and the Usher family. The narrator backs Guesser's claims by referencing the incestuous Usher family and its tie to the House of Usher as demonstrated through the name that was "an appellation which seemed to include... both the family and the family mansion" (Poe 703). Furthermore, the narrator writes about how Roderick felt "enchained by certain superstitious impressions in regard to the dwelling which he tenanted" based on the "influence which some peculiarities in the mere form and substance of his family mansion" had "obtained over his spirit" (Poe 705). Thus, a definitive tie can be seen between the house and the Ushers, ultimately leading to their mutual demise.

Another example of the supernatural at work is in Washington Irving's story "Rip Van Winkle." Attempting to find some respite from his nagging wife, Rip takes to the woods and finds peace in a ledge overlooking the river. As Rip unwinds in his natural setting, subtle supernatural events begin to occur. Firstly, a far off voice disrupts his solace by shouting out his name, causing his dog to growl and Rip himself to feel "a vague apprehension stealing over him" (Irving 475). Rip soon discovers the voice belongs to a "strange figure" wearing a "cloth jerkin" in the "antique Dutch fashion" (Irving 475). Philip Young argues in his article entitled "The Mythic Rip Van Winkle" that the men Rip encounter are "'Hendrik Hudson' and his crew," members of the Barbarossa legend (559). Adding to this characterization is the men's unusual appearance, their long beards, their meeting place in the mountains, and the presence of the ravens (Young 560). Beyond being members of a legend, Young takes the supernatural element a step further by identifying the men as gods based on their chosen game of bowling that "makes the sound of thunder," alluding to "Frederick Red Beard...the god of thunder" (560). Regardless of their exact identity, the men are otherworldly figures, particularly given the odd liquor they drink that puts Rip to sleep for twenty years. The mystical people and drinks thus play an important role in developing the story.

Even as seemingly unrelated tenets, the strong sense of self, the idolization of the common man, and the manifestation of magical components all intertwine to contribute to the Romanticism era's departure from Enlightenment thinking. While the "Fall of the House of Usher and Elegiac Romance" by Craig Howes does focus on Edgar Allan Poe's short story, his article does illuminate a truth held by many of the authors aforementioned. Howes observes the "struggle of the individual" is "to remain self-determining in the face of combined forces," be it government, society, supernatural influences, or any multitude of factors decried by Thoreau, Emerson, Irving, Hawthorne, or Poe (77). In this sense, each work is a vital contribution to romanticism literature, representing the awakening and newfound freedom of the individual.

Works Cited

- Adams, Richard. "Hawthorne's Provincial Tales." *The New England Quarterly* 30.1 (1957): 39-57. JSTOR. Web. 12 July 2015.
- Bakewell, Charles. "The Philosophy of Emerson." *The Philosophical Review* 12.5 (1903): 525-536. JSTOR. Web. 10 July 2015.
- Emerson, Ralph Waldo. "Self-Reliance." *The Norton Anthology of American Literature*. Ed. Nina Baym and Richard S. Levine. Shorter 8th ed. Vol. 1. New York: Norton, 2013. 549-566. Print.
- Gruesser, John. "Madmen and Moonbeams: The Narrator in The Fall of the House of Usher." *The Edgar Allan Poe Review* 5.1 (2004): 80-90. JSTOR. Web. 29 June 2015.
- Hawthorne, Nathaniel. "Young Goodman Brown." *The Norton Anthology of American Literature*. Ed. Nina Baym and Richard S. Levine. Shorter 8th ed. Vol. 1. New York: Norton, 2013. 619-628. Print.
- Howes, Craig. "'The Fall of the House of Usher' and Elegiac Romance." *The Southern Literary Journal* 19.1 (1986): 68-78. JSTOR. Web. 29 June 2015.
- Irving, Washington. "Rip Van Winkle." *The Norton Anthology of American Literature*. Ed. Nina Baym and Richard S. Levine. Shorter 8th ed. Vol. 1. New York: Norton, 2013. 839-858. Print.
- Jenco, Leigh Kathryn. "Thoreau's Critique of Democracy." *The Review of Politics* 65.3 (2003): 355-381. Cambridge Journals. Web. 30 June 2015.
- Poe, Edgar Allan. "The Fall of the House of Usher." *The Norton Anthology of American Literature*. Ed. Nina Baym and Richard S. Levine. Shorter 8th ed. Vol. 1. New York: Norton, 2013. 702-714. Print.
- Thoreau, Henry David. "Resistance to Civil Government." *The Norton Anthology of American Literature*. Ed. Nina Baym and Richard S. Levine. Shorter 8th ed. Vol. 1. New York: Norton, 2013. 839-858. Print.
- Young, Philip. "Fallen from Time: The Mythic Rip Van Winkle." *The Kenyon Review* 22.4 (1960): 547-573. JSTOR. Web. 10 July 2015.

Midlands Technical College Presents
The Second Annual
ENGLISH DEPARTMENT Student Conference
Interdisciplinary Studies
Literature, Composition, Creativity

Best Group Presentation:

“Paternal Revenge in Hamlet” by Andrew Tran, Alejandro Gonzalez, Joseph Smith, and Olivia Cecchini

Best Traditional Essay:

“Uncovering the Evolution of Values Through Early World Literature” by Kate Chatman

Best Individual Presentation:

“The Thespian and the Existentialist: ‘The Trial’ of Franz Kafka and Orson Welles” by Lucas Amick

Best Creative Work:

“First Kiss” by Wendy Dollar

Best Powerpoint:

“Escaping Reality Through Art –
The Victorian Era” by Hillary Wren

Best Infographic:

“Evolution” by Angelica Perez



Photo by Lacy Appleton

Sleeping in numbers

While dreaming the night before a test
I find myself in the midst of numbers.
Small numbers lead me
Into a forest of equations.
I grow smaller as
the equation's roots take hold;
Their branches tower over me.
Chemical Formulas rise out of the ground
And demand their molecular weights.
Unit Conversions accuse me of forgetting to label
As either Newton's or pounds-force.
Integrals stretch their sigmas taller.
Find the antiderivative.
After a restless night of sleeping in numbers,
My eyes will be heavy as I test
But I won't forget to label
the units.

-Jennifer Naglic



STYLUS