



SPARK

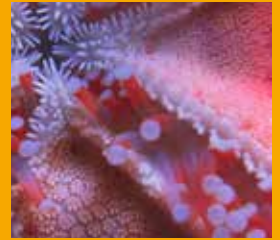
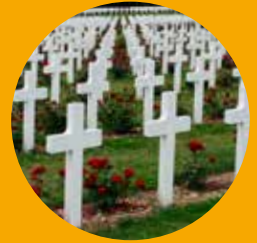
A REVIEW OF NSCC STUDENT LITERARY & ARTISTIC EXPRESSION



SPARK 2016 **volume 8**

sparked by inspiration

Through poetry and stories, photographs and drawings, *Spark* showcases the talent and spirit of students at North Shore Community College. This eighth issue of *Spark* is dedicated to the persistence of vision, forward movement, and the knowledge that creativity is its own reward. **Enjoy.**



spark on the inside

2. Heartache | *Vernon Carmack*
2. 33 Swoons Poster | *Susan Kane*
2. Tulip | *Susan Kane*
3. Jubilee | *Michael Konstansky*
3. Dear Daddy | *Dawn Forgione*
3. Cranberries | *Pavlo Grekov*
4. For Dad | *Maeve Healy*
4. Anatomy | *Hillary Mercedes*
5. Self Portrait | *Manila Roemum*
5. Pug Parakeet | *Susan Kane*
6. Hurricane Earl, 2010 | *Hayes DeMeule*
7. Cat | *Megan Moulton*
8. Hidden Dragon | *Wendy Davison*
8. Bees | *Pavlo Grekov*
9. Honey Bee | *Jillian Stanton*
10. I Wish | *Hillary Mercedes*
11. Boston Skyline, Night | *Louis Spagnola*
11. View of Chelsea | *Trevor Andreozzi*
12. One Moment Please | *Diane Stitt*
12. Anchor | *Jillian Stanton*
12. Starfish | *Jillian Stanton*
13. Venice | *Gina Mercurio*
13. Farmer Returning Home, Crossing Lake Atitlan,
Guatemala | *Elsira Ramirez*
14. Lake Sunset | *Jillian Stanton*
14. Night Shift | *Jason Grant*
15. Hope | *Megan Moulton*
16. Pollination in Process | *Cole Kraus*
16. Graffiti | *Megan Moulton*
16. Sunset on the Trail | *Wendy Davison*
17. Untitled | *Chandler Kennedy*
17. Roman Pigeons | *Michael Konstansky*
17. The Break of Dawn | *Cole Kraus*
18. In Transit | *Madison Capezzuto*
19. Mother's Birthday | *Pavlo Grekov*
20. Florence Duomo | *Gina Mercurio*
21. Mechanical Flight | *Hilary Hebert*
22. Released | *Diane Stitt*
22. Amberlynn | *Emily Kinne*
23. Drip | *Cole Kraus*
23. Untitled | *Chandler Kennedy*
24. Be Fruitful and Multiply | *Julio Angeles*
24. When Nature Meets Fall | *Julio Angeles*
25. Sunflower | *Susan Kane*
25. Spring Blossom | *Pavlo Grekov*
26. Snooze Button Abuse | *Meghan Wojtowicz*
26. American Graveyard (Belgium) | *Jacqueline Zaccaria*
27. Waiting | *Cole Kraus*
28. Synanthropy | *Trevor Andreozzi*
30. The Beat Our Spirit Dances To | *Hillary Mercedes*
30. The King | *Maeve Healy*
31. Lightbox | *Trevor Andreozzi*
32. The Heart Sings | *Jason Grant*
32. The Mysteries of Life | *Diane Stitt*
32. Untitled | *Donald Jackson*
32. Self Portrait | *Gina Mercurio*

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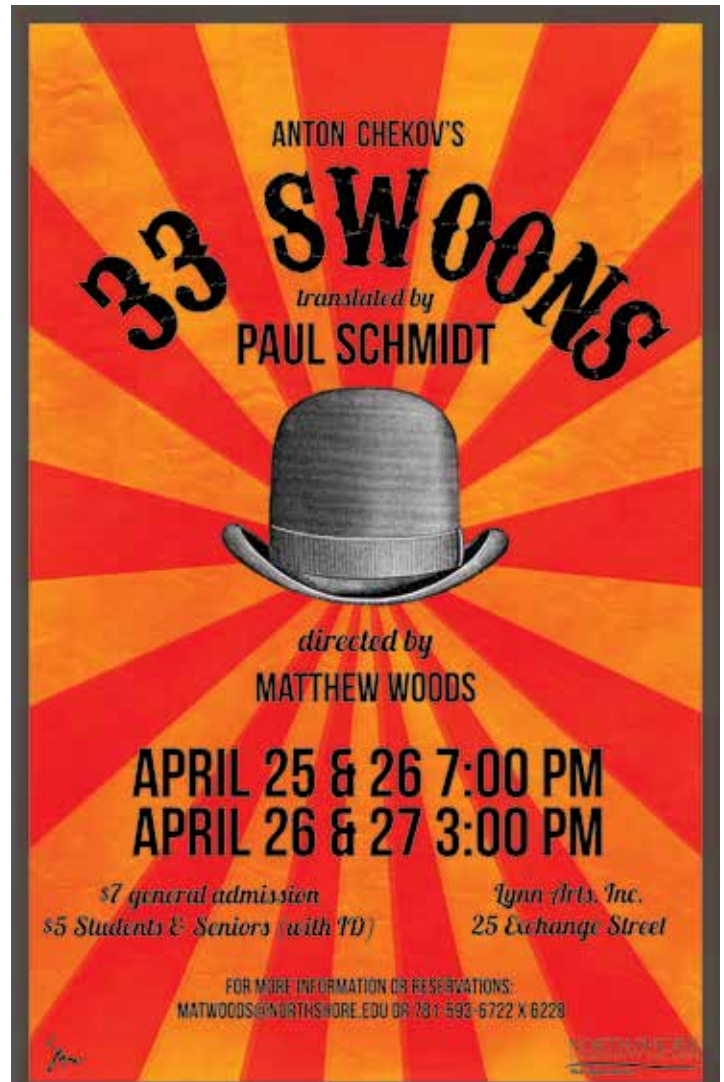
on the cover:

Cooking Chestnuts | *Michael Konstansky*

Heartache

By **Vernon Carmack**

My home is one of heartache
A place of steel and stone
A barren cell
A man-made hell
And here I dwell alone.
For one small crime,
I pay with time
As lights glare night and day.
I hear the fling of metal rings
The keys in metal locks
The scrape of feet upon concrete
As guards patrol the blocks.
They came today and took away
The man who lived next door
To end his strife,
He took his life
He couldn't take no more
It's quiet here upon my tier
Since death has claimed its toll
Each of us is wondering
who'll be next
Hope it ain't me Bro'
But if something fatal
Should come my way,
Should someone take my life,
My one desire before I retire
That no one cry for me.
Just take my wife and family
And let them know that I
Am glad for what we had
And all they done for me. ■





Dear Daddy

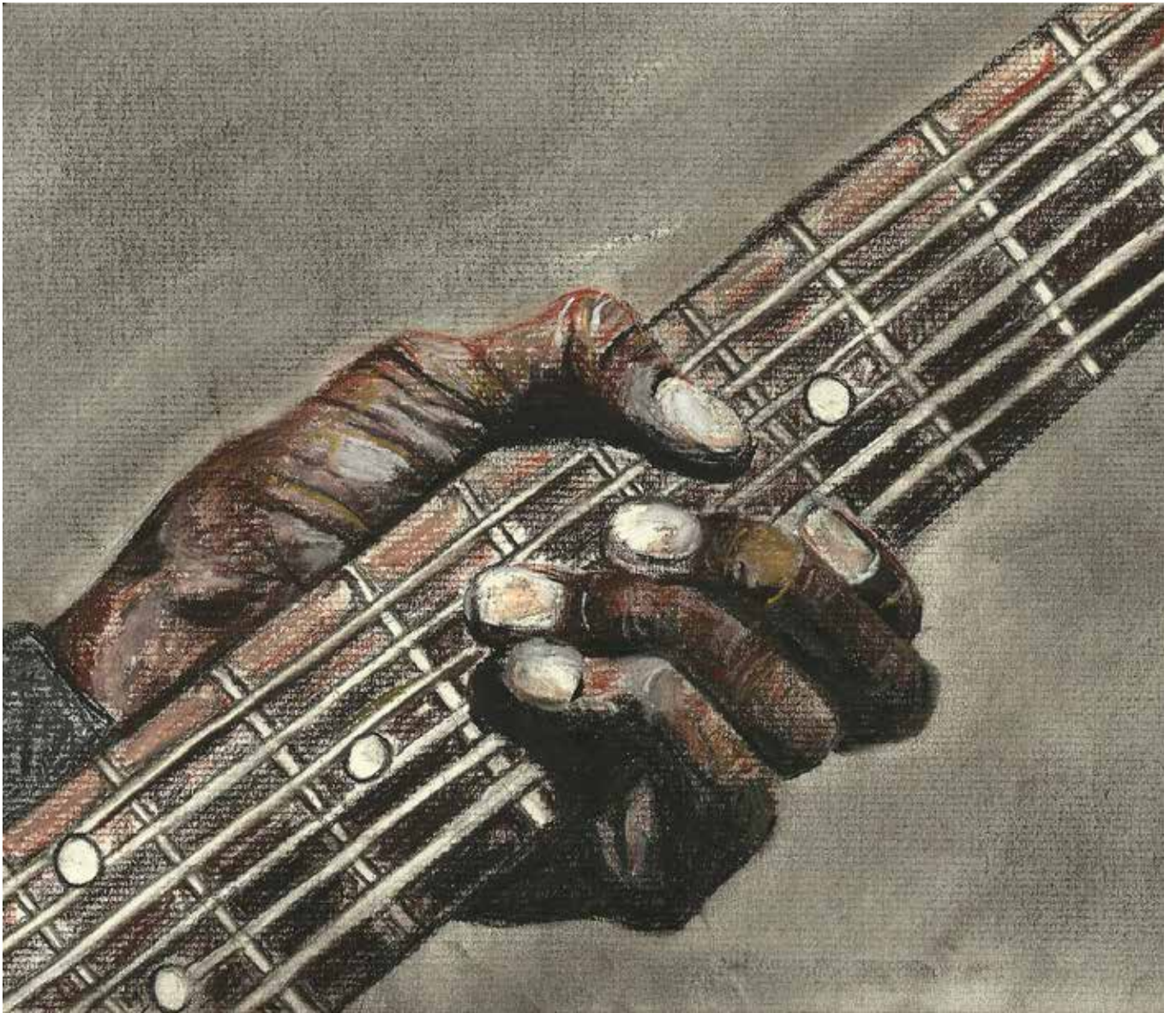
by Dawn Forgione

Dear Daddy,

"...IED in Northern Baghdad..."
When are you coming home?
"Suit up! We're leaving at 06:00"
We all miss you very much...
Mommy acts okay with it...
Buckles snap as helmets are secured.
Magazines slam as M4s are loaded.
...but me and my sister know she's not.
Boots in the distance, marching in formation.
When she thinks we're asleep in our beds...
Engines roar. Strykers, loaded with men, set off.
...we can hear her crying through the walls.
Tires crunch over rocks, the ride is bumpy
The convoy stops. Bodies file out into the quiet.
She said she'd be around to help until you came home.
Bone chilling cracks send men diving for cover.
Sun beating down, sweat pouring over men's faces.
I told her you said "Happy Birthday."
Erratic bullets fly, piercing flesh and bone.
Auntie is staying with us now...
Annie's birthday was yesterday.
We all miss you.
A body hits the ground.
Are you coming home soon? ■



clockwise (from top left):
33 Swoons Poster | Susan Kane
Jubilee | Michael Konstansky
Cranberries | Pavlo Grekov
Tulip | Susan Kane



For Dad | *Maeve Healy*

ANATOMY

By **Hillary Mercedes**

A letter I wrote to my lover...

For the moments I have spent
with you
I cherish
Within the repetition

I'll continue to say it until
it soaks in
It might even get tiresome
I just want you to feel
everything
as of the deep breaths you take

when you seem to look up
and breathe in because
life seems great at the moment
because all it is really
is being with someone that gives
you that spark



Self Portrait | *Manila Roem*



Pug Parakeet | *Susan Kane*

that always seem to drag to make
fire
throughout our darkest nights
You remind me that I can do
anything if I go for it
You're my every wind that

creates the water to move
to create such beautiful waves
You truly are special
You are my Sun as I'm your
Moon Always ■

HURRICANE EARL, 2010

By Hayes DeMeule

I moved to the Outer Banks of North Carolina when I was 29. The motto of Bodie Island was life on a sandbar. Good weather and a few tropical storms were a natural occurrence that you accepted with a smile. I really enjoyed the beach life there and sometimes even felt like I was living on vacation. That is, until I faced a hurricane. I faced one hurricane every year that I lived on the Outer Banks and each got more powerful. 2010's Hurricane Earl was the worst.

It was September 2 and my boyfriend, Joel, woke me up and said, "Hurricane Earl is coming right towards us. Should we stay or go?" We'd already been through two. Joel was from South Carolina and hadn't seen a lot of natural disasters so I could tell he was nervous, as was I. Earl was a category three and progressing. I called his mom who told me that locals stay on the island until hurricanes become category fives and she had yet to see one. I trusted her. I hung up the phone looking at Joel, his green eyes searching for resolve, "Locals stay until it's a five, so we're staying." Joel and I always joked about living like locals and we weren't

going to let this storm change that.

I looked out the window and down the culdesac where our yellow house stood. I saw some of our neighbors outside boarding up windows. I asked Joel to go talk to them, in his polite southern accent, and see if he could muster up some boards for our windows. He, of course, returned with plenty of 1/2" thick boards and safety tips. We were told to write our social security numbers on our foreheads in case we were found unconscious. Scary as that was, we did it, with permanent marker.

I took the boards and spray paint that I found and sprayed, "Go to Hell, Earl" on one and

“Go to Hell, Earl”

smiley faces on the rest. We had eight windows to cover and our house, luckily, had a wraparound porch so no ladder was necessary. We were beginning to feel ready for this storm. The wind was getting stronger and pulsing outside. It became very clear that we wouldn't be going anywhere for a while so I took my dog out for her last walk of the day.

'BREAKING NEWS!' came on TV. Earl progressed into a

category four, bringing flooding and extremely high winds. Our house sat on pilings that were eleven feet above sea level. I didn't fear for flooding. I feared the wind and losing the roof. How could we make it through a category four with no roof?? The odds of us finding a hotel off the island with five animals seemed very low. Besides, locals stay. We looked like locals with our surfer hair and tan bodies, might as well act like locals.

'BREAKING NEWS!'

Mandatory evacuation of guests and suggested evacuation of residents! We stayed grounded. We took all necessary precautions; water in the tub, candles, canned foods, and important documents in ziplock bags. We might make it. By one, the house was boarded up. By three, we had our first drink and second guessed our decision to stay. By five, the wind was so outrageous that it sounded like howling coyotes. The house rocked like a boat at sea while the walls shook with fear that Earl might peek through. The roof sounded like it was being torn off, time and time again. The electricity danced like a strobe light till it was lost all together; no music, no light, no news. Candles in every room made the darkness not seem so angry, so enveloping. My animals stayed close by, guarded, aware that

“...looking closely at each other, memorizing each other's social security #'s, and holding back the fear.”

turmoil lurked right outside their door, while we played card games, looking closely at each other, memorizing each other's social security #'s, and holding back the fear.

It was almost 11, we had been enduring the storm for nearly 12 hours and I was exhausted. I never thought I would fall asleep. I swore I'd be up all night, praying to a god I had denounced, to leave our house intact. We heard angry waves

crashing on the shore, garbage cans being thrown like bowling balls, dogs barking at whatever raged out there, and the house creaking. I felt like the end of days was near and I almost regretted staying. I don't remember falling asleep, or even if I dreamt, but I do remember waking up.

I heard a bird chirping so loud and furiously that I had to smile. I thought, this is it, a new day! That melodic sound of a bird, happy to be alive, mimicked my own

feelings. Joel and I walked our culdesac wonderstruck. Seaweed and ocean water, far from its home, laced the street. Boats were grounded, bumpers missing, hulls up on the sand, and cleats hanging off docks. Not all were lucky but we were alive. Power was out all over the island for five days and reentry was prohibited for three days. I would rather be stuck at home than stuck trying to get home.

Looking back, I'm glad we stayed on the island. Joel and I worked hard, together, to protect each other and our little family. We stayed strong, never gave up, never admitted defeat, and I will always remember how close I felt to him that day and night. I have heard, and read, that natural disasters bring out the best in people and I believe it. I am stronger today because I know, that when faced with an almost impossible positive resolution, I will not falter. Joel, will not falter. Our family will endure because we are strong. I will stand my ground, as I always have, and Joel will stand his. We are both survivors. I will say this though, I do not want to meet a category five hurricane EVER in my life, category four was plenty. ■



Cat | Megan Moulton



Hidden Dragon | *Wendy Davison*



Bees | *Pavlo Grekov*



Honey Bee | *Jillian Stanton*

I Wish

By **Hillary Mercedes**

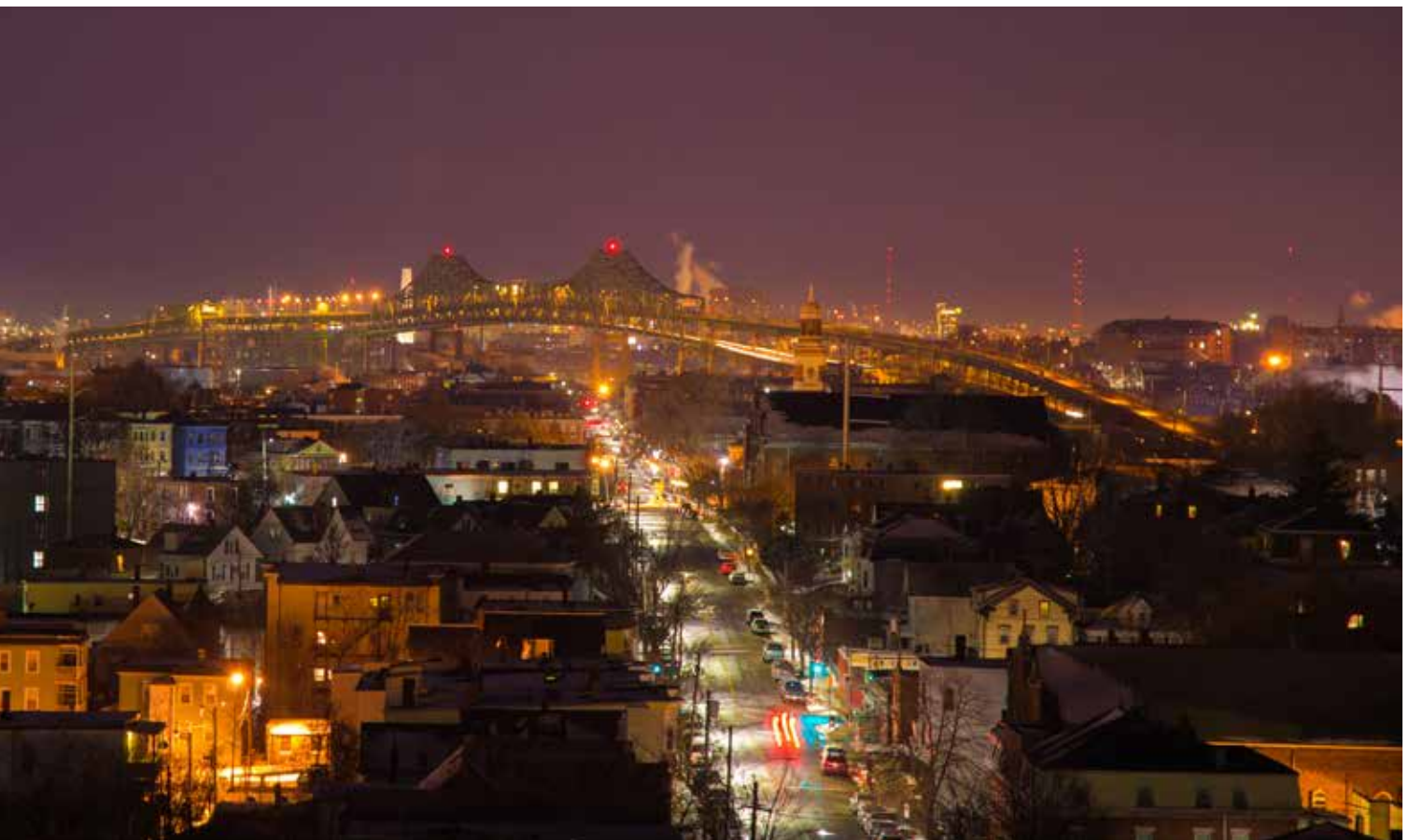
Things will get better
I whispered to myself
& I still wait
Until
That day it will
But you see
You are missing everything
That passes you by
Because you won't stop
Thinking about that day
You wish would come
you keep thinking & thinking
About life getting better & wanting more
That you forget to
Look at the things you have already
& you have to remind yourself
Things are the best it could be
At the moment
Because there are those
Who have it worse
And the things you wait for
May not come
But you will receive other
Things that not everyone has
Things that you didn't wish for
Things that get you through
Without you realizing it
& that's what everyone seems ■

Boston Skyline, Night | *Louis Spagnola*



View of Chelsea | *Trevor Andreozzi*





One Moment Please

By Diane Stitt

Street lights and bricks race
as clapping shoes
applaud my show.
Sifting through
selfish desires and thrown away dreams
my bowl enclosing them.
Sunken eyes and all I despise
Dance through your fumbled brain.
Pigeon crumbs
and plastic lie in my heart
Numb.
Empty plates and jagged glass see
what sits between the crevice.
Near.
Secrets coated with scraggly hair
amongst aromatic old beer.
Below the drainage pipe awaits,
unspoken lies drowned in watery snakes.
Not once you stopped your pace to think
or spared a glare but not the blink.
Never could you have given me,
Just one moment please. ■



clockwise (from top left):

Anchor | *Jillian Stanton*

Venice | *Gina Mercurio*

Farmer Returning Home, Crossing Lake

Atitlan, Guatemala | *Elsira Ramirez*

Starfish | *Jillian Stanton*





Lake Sunset | *Jillian Stanton*

Night Shift

by **Jason Grant**

Under a starry night, my better half sleeps peacefully
But mine eyes are bright and open like the full moon
Its moon beams contrast and give shape to the
omnipresent shades in my iris
They bring mystery and wonder as slumber's inviting
touch greet a heavy eyelid
The cognizance of my "waking" dream.... ■



Hope | *Megan Moulton*

clockwise (from bottom left):
Pollination in Process | Cole Kraus
Graffiti | Megan Moulton
Sunset on the Trail | Wendy Davison
Untitled | Chandler Kennedy
Roman Pigeons | Michael Konstansky
The Break of Dawn | Cole Kraus





In Transit

By Madison Capezzuto

“I really hope he is not allergic to peanut butter.”

February 24, 2014. 10:14 pm. North Station, during one of the coldest winters Boston has ever seen. Dozens of disappointed, disheartened, die-hard sports fans, clad in black and yellow and sniffing their reddish, runny noses flood the station's lowest level, hoping to catch the next outbound train. The Bruins have just lost to Vancouver. There are seventeen minutes before the next train rolls in. I think, for a minute, that I should try out that new game I have just downloaded onto my phone, maybe reach for my boyfriend's hand as we wait, but the thought of removing my gloves to do either makes me shiver. The little boy next to me brushes up by the side of my coat. I do not see many smiles among the sea of people, just little clouds of white fog as people exhale and stuff their hands further into their coat pockets.

It is not until we have finally gotten onto the train – after sidestepping members of the crowd and futilely scanning for an open seat – that I see him. He is in the corner, taking up all of three seats, his hunched torso on two and his ankles resting on the third. Admittedly, my initial thoughts are not very kind. Can he not see there is about as much room on this train car as there is in the sock drawer of someone who runs every day and likes the look of Nike, the feel of Puma,

and the colors of Reebok?

Can he not see the four children present, none of who appear tall enough to reach the plastic grips? I lean against the nearest metal rail. There are too many people between us to bother making any kind of gesture beckoning for change.

The train makes two stops. Three, four. A few people clear out at each. The man has not moved. By the fifth stop, all four children are gone. By the fifth stop, I am more eager than ever to head home to my warm bed with the yellow and the blue comforters, because I just could not choose between the two a few weeks prior. By the fifth stop, I get a better look at the man in the corner, the man who has three seats all to himself. His blue jeans are not very blue. They are worn and tattered. His puffy winter coat is half zipped, and there is a bottle of red Powerade hanging out of its right pocket. On his head is a baseball cap, covered by a hood, and topped with the kind of ski hat you might find on a small child at the bottom of a snowy hill on a day off from school. There is dirt underneath his fingernails. He is sleeping, and as I watch his chest rise and fall and rise and fall and rise and fall, suddenly it dawns on me why he is taking up three seats.

A pang of guilt hits me squarely in the chest. It drops to the pit of my stomach, and a lump forms in my throat, sprouting from the bitter seed of remorse I have for thinking those presumptuous, ugly thoughts about this man who is not very likely leaving this train car any time soon. There is not much time before the remaining six passengers, myself included, will come to our stop. My mind starts racing.

Perhaps if I hadn't bought that slice of pizza at the game, I think, irritated at myself, I'd have some cash to leave for this sleeping traveler.

Something deep inside is silently compelling me to do something - anything - to help, even if only a little. I rifle through my bag and find the only thing I have to offer: a small package of Keebler peanut butter crackers my boyfriend had bought for me before the game. I was hungry, but I had brushed them off because I “just wasn’t in the mood for them.” Part of me wants to assure you it was said politely, with harmless intent. Part of me knows, by the time the train screeches slowly to my stop, that regardless, it was also very ignorant.

I do not want to wake the man, so I eye the space between the back of the second seat and his outstretched legs. I’ll leave the crackers there. That way, he will see them when he wakes up, but they’ll be hidden from other passengers, should there be any at this time of night. I stand and walk to the other side of the car, focusing on the space, expecting to see the funky patterned fabric of the seat, when I see a box of cigarettes and two five-dollar bills, surely left by others who had the same idea. I place the crackers down, exiting the train in tears, as a powerful surge of emotions encompass my body.

There is anger, frustration. Why couldn’t I have done more? There is guilt. Not for being fortunate, but for not always appreciating the fact that I am. And there is also hope. Hope for humanity, as fulfilled to me in a matter of no more than three seconds by a package of cigarettes and two five-dollar bills. Hope that in a city of infamously “cheap, rude, fast-driving, misspeaking assholes,” there exists a relentless spirit of compassion and generosity that, without fail, always comes knocking at the doors of those who need it most. There is also hope, a sincere, genuine hope, from the very bottom of my heart and for the sake of this man, that he is not allergic to peanut butter. ■



Mother’s Birthday | *Pavlo Grekov*





Florence Duomo | *Gina Mercurio*



Mechanical Flight | *Hilary Hebert*

Released

By Diane Stitt

Trapped
with bars mapped
bind my yellow wings that can't ever
perform their show. Never
will my song release what's in my soul.

I
watch your eye
as you open my cage to feed me.
Forever will I be
entertainment for your sad self.
You
watch me through
the foggy window that blinds your life.
Your bliss equals my strife.
You have a false sense of eye-sight.

But
you didn't shut
the window inviting me
to fly free.
Could it really be that easy?

A
gift today
I'm given from the vigorous air
to leave this cage I bare
to fly and sing with no constraints.
Now
knowing how
transfixed you are on cleaning my cage
flapping my wings with rage
I seize the moment leaving you. ■



clockwise (from left):
Amberlynn | *Emily Kinne*
Drip | *Cole Kraus*
Untitled | *Chandler Kennedy*





Be Fruitful and Multiply | *Julio Angeles*



When Nature Meets Fall | *Julio Angeles*



Sunflower | *Susan Kane*



Spring Blossom | *Pavlo Grekov*

Snooze Button Abuse

By Meghan Wojtowicz

Ambitious thoughts of early
rising deflated,
shower time record breaking,
frantic laundry basket shuffle
produces nothing better
than saggy ass old lady jeans
a cat hair covered cardigan
two bags and two lumps in the
to-go cup,
burner's on high,
toaster timer ticking
hopping back towards the
bathroom,
struggle to put on mismatch
socks

At a running pace,
backpack slung over shoulder,
head towards the door.
Juggling a plate of toast,
spill my tea while putting on
sneakers,
mad dash for paper towels,
hands on the clock mocking me,
half-assed spot cleaning job,
lock the door behind me
Into the driver's seat,
ignition on,
my backpack,
is in the fucking house. ■





American Graveyard (Belgium) | *Jacqueline Zaccaria*

Waiting

By Cole Kraus

By the shore a woman narrowed her gaze,
looking far out from the bay
where her husband went away
not to return until today.

He was gone for quite some time,
pills were the only things to keep him off her
mind.

She prayed for him at every Sunday's Mass,
she paced until every hour and minute had
passed.

In these times of weakness fear will rule,
running rampant like a fool.

Half her bed is cold and dark,
the other side is cold and darker.

Finally her country has won, but she has not,
her world desolate and distraught

The sun will always rise and set again,
but to her there will be no brightness or Zen.

So many ways to kill, but only one to
survive,

he was the enemy in the enemy's eye
She always prayed this day would come,
but she hoped it would be with him,
his tags,
and his gun.

Never like this.

Red, white and blue covered his casket ■





Synanthropy | Trevor Andreozzi

The beat our Spirit dances to

By **Hillary Mercedes**

Lets talk Art
Lets paint pretty things and engrave letters
To the most beautiful pieces ever made
Let our spirit dance to music of the wind
Let the stars align itself and
Create a speechless look
Throughout the dark blue sky
Let it sink in to the deepest parts and
Fill our emptiness with light
As hearts beat in unison
To create the sweet song of untapped emotions
Granting the world the blessings of bloomed thoughts
That were planted within our souls by our past ■

The King | *Maeve Healy*





Lightbox | *Trevor Andreozzi*

The Heart Sings

by Jason Grant

They say birds of a feather flock together,
Yet, I see you from my branch,
In what looks to be a cage
Are you content in that place?
Dare I dance, sing and ruffle my feathers,
Only to wonder if such allure works?
I have a hundred songs,
But only one special to you, my sweet
I call it, "robbin' the heart!" ■

The Mysteries Of Life

By Diane Stitt

At all the sunsets that have come and passed,
I've wondered if my life has gone by too fast.
Sparkling, the blue sea is a sapphire. My eyes
are in a trance as I admire,
as if the sea holds something we don't know;
All of life's secrets are way down below.
No one has the key to these mysteries.
All we have is our thoughts and memories.
Some of them we hold so dear to our hearts,
some tear our soul and may rip us apart.
Yet the ocean still sparkles and is blue,
while wind releases dreams we could pursue.
What happens in life comes for a reason,
as fireflies glow at a time of season.
Life will always have its ups and its downs,
putting a smile on us or a frown.
Either one will eventually come our way,
causing us to learn something everyday.
As the clock keeps on ticking and time turns,
I look at my life and what I have learned. ■

Untitled

By Donald Jackson

I'll rise from my bed
and pine to the moon
and after I've gotten dressed
drift down to the well
beneath the yew
surrounded by baby's breath
I'll pluck out mine eyes
and cast them down
that I might see in death
I'll rise from my bed
and pine to the moon
and after my courage I've found
drift down to the woods
plant there a tree
and lay there a compass round
I'll sweep in the souls
and stitch up their mouths
that you might hear this sound
Searching through the shifting spirits
follow my voice, o closely hark
tethered to this world by grief
and things we learn from the dark ■

Self Portrait | *Gina Mercurio*



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and make

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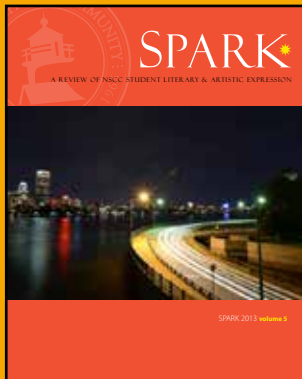
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