



# SPARK

A REVIEW OF NSCC STUDENT LITERARY & ARTISTIC EXPRESSION



SPARK 2018 **volume 10**

*sparked* by inspiration

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

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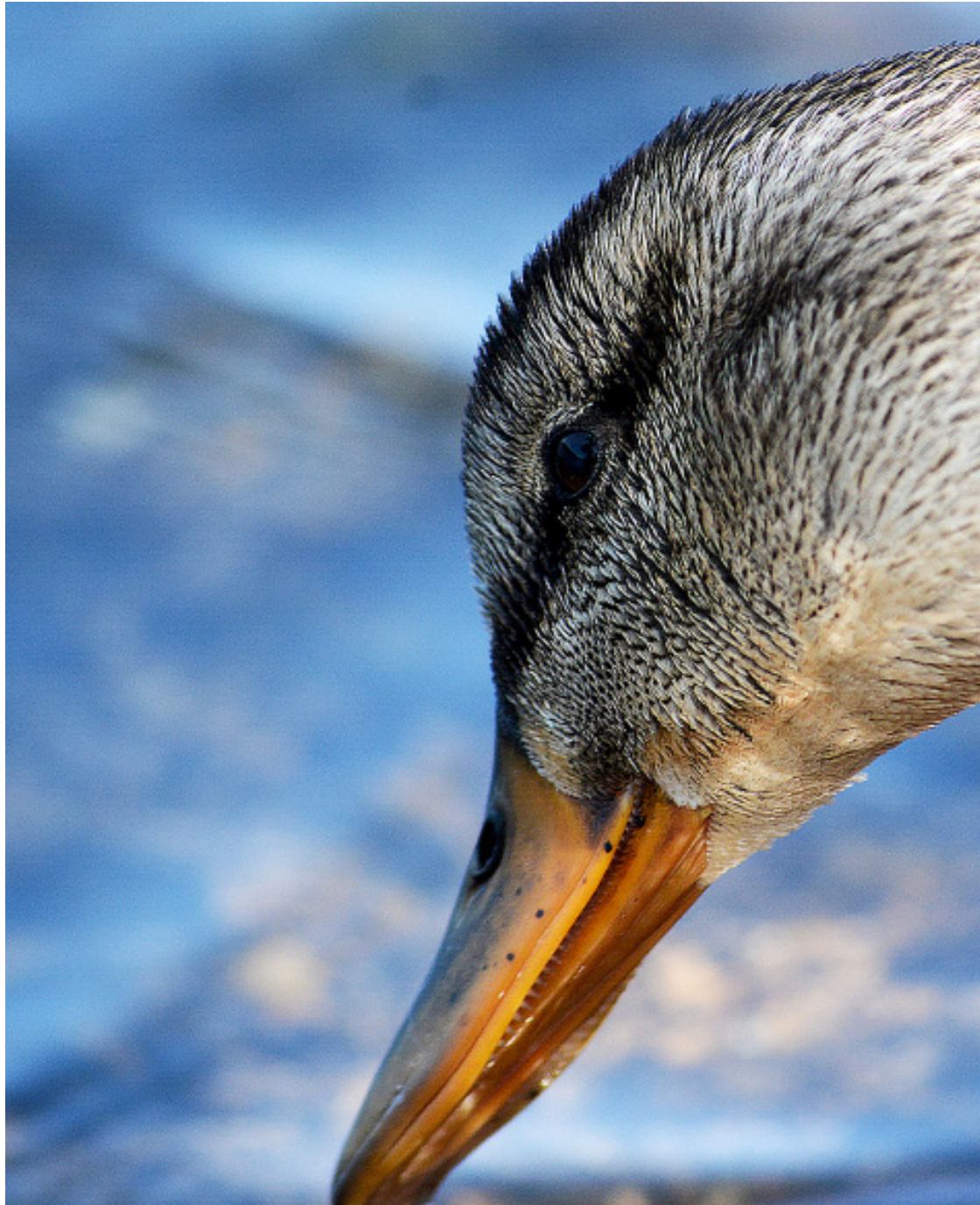
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[www.northshore.edu/spark](http://www.northshore.edu/spark)

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on the cover:

Colby Farm | *Jillian Stanton*



VikaDesigns Photography | *Victoria Marshall*



Mt. Washington Hotel | *Jillian Stanton*

## Sinful Lovers

By **Anna Shahbazyn**

Forgive me Father for I have sinned.  
Our tryst hath revealed me  
for the heathen I am.

She had no god.  
Entranced by her sweet, seductive aroma,  
I succumbed to those unforgiving lips.

Her impure intentions weakened my knees  
as she whispered unholy words into my virgin ears.  
My soul slowly turned to ashes.

She purified and filtered my holy water  
until there was nothing left of me,  
but remnants of a once-alive mortal being.

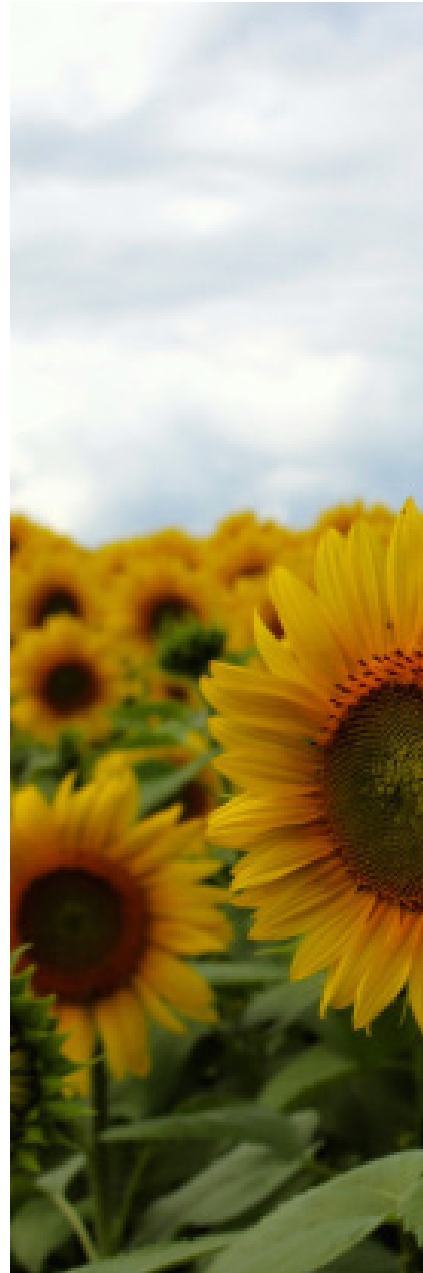


Seagull | *Jillian Stanton*

## a tragedy

By **Sophia Kerrins**

we are in love  
with our bloodstained hands intertwined  
anchoring us through the storm  
our pounding hearts beating like a battle cry  
one that sounds like our names  
as we make the love stories  
we were told  
when we were still innocent  
look like the tragedy  
we are desperately trying not to become





Colby Farm | *Jillian Stanton*

# Lights

By Marc Nickerson

Fifty-four perspiring recruits sat cross-legged on the concrete floor inside the barracks of the First Recruit Training Battalion. The place reeked of tightly packed bodies and aftershave.

“Backs straight! Eyes forward! Now scream, ‘Aye sir,’” bellowed our temporary guardian.

“Aye sir!” yelled fifty-four timid voices.

“I said SCREAM!”

“AYE SIR!” Fifty-four recruits screamed with double the volume. We were about to meet the Drill Instructors that we would spend every waking moment with for the next thirteen weeks.

A giant marched in, flanked by three assistant Drill Instructors. They were dressed uniformly in immaculate tan and green service uniforms adorned with a plethora of colorful campaign ribbons. The distinctive Smokey Bear hats, denoting their legendary status as Drill Instructors, were perched menacingly on their heads like birds of prey. These men were dangerous. I fought my instinct to gawk at the sight as he came to a stop directly in front of where I sat: two massive coniferous trunks for legs disappeared above my head into the canopy.

“Sit up straight, and look at me RIGHT NOW!” the massive man boomed in a deep voice, his bass struck our chest like the concussion of a firework.

“AYE SIR!” replied fifty four

recruits, trying and failing to cumulatively match his volume. His piercing blue eyes did nothing to soften his appearance.

“MY NAME is Gunnery Sergeant Schmitz, and I am YOUR Senior Drill Instructor!”

He gave a well rehearsed and motivated speech, and outlined what was expected of us. He explained how physical abuse and stealing would not be tolerated, amongst other common military rules and regulations. He then detailed some of his personal standard operating procedures. “If I flash the lights on and off in a rapid manner, you will immediately stop moving and scream ‘Freeze Recruits, Freeze!’ at the top of your lungs, do you understand?”

“Yes SIR!” we all replied.

We sat through his speech, slowly comprehended his words, and built a picture of what the next three months would look like.

We marched in a formation past aged brick office buildings and even older wood frame storage warehouses. Spanish moss hung off of the trees, blocking some of the fading rays of light coming from the west. Sand fleas were a constant bother when in any proximity to ground foliage, as they bit arms and tested one’s discipline.

“Lo-right left right lo-righty leeft,” sang our Senior Drill Instructor in a melodious voice, as our feet drummed the pavement in a rhythmic pace.

It was hot and humid, as Summer

always is in South Carolina. Parris Island was a marshy peninsula, disconnected from the real world by a broad river, a lone guarded bridge spreading the gap. We approached our barracks, pristine three level brick buildings that stood in perfect formation with one another, a testament to their military purpose. Gunnery Sergeant Schmitz barked an order for us to sprint upstairs to the second deck, our home away from home. Our next task was to clean our rifles after a day of crawling, climbing, and sprinting through mock assault courses, clearing obstacles and bayoneting fake enemies.

Cleaning weapons was one of my favorite daily routines. It meant we were allowed to sit in relative quiet and focus on an individual task. It was a break from the normal grind of running, screaming, and attempting to work as a team under intense stress for 16 hours a day. As we set up our footlockers to use as tables and prepare to clean our rifles, I took the initiative and went to turn on the lights so that we could see while we scrubbed every crack and crevice of our rifles. There were several light switches to match the several different sets of lights going down the long room. I tried two sets of switches before I found the third and correct set of lights, illuminating the middle down the corridor.

“Freeze Recruits, freeze!” screamed fifty three recruits.

I had accidently imitated



the Senior Drill Instructor's command. A door cracked sharply off of a wall as Gunnery Sergeant Schmitz bursted into the room. "WHO TOUCHED MY LIGHTS!" I could almost feel the breath from his lungs hit me, 100 feet away.

"I'm in trouble." I thought.

I spent an hour alternating between push-ups, sit-ups, sprints, jumping jacks, and other intensive exercises in fast forward. Sweat burned my eyes, and mixed with the sand caked on my body from the day in the woods.

"GET ON YOUR FACE AND PUSH!" the Senior Drill Instructor instructed, the spit from his mouth added to the accumulated moisture on my face. "AYE SIR! AYE SIR!" I yelled until blue in the face.

I screamed until I lost my voice. That day, I was the one being made an example of. The Drill Instructors would rotate and take turns attempting to kill me. Every 10 minutes or so I had a fresh face screaming at me with his freshly thought up punishments.

"Okay, now hold your rifle at arms length and scrub it!" barked a Drill Instructor I didn't recognize. An eight pound rifle, made of blued steel, black painted aluminum, and sleek polymer gets very heavy when being held straight out in front of the body.

The platoon left to eat dinner, and I remained behind to scrub the urinal troughs. The scent of antiseptic and urine was a reprieve. They returned, and one

of the recruits handed me a white styrofoam container. No matter how much the Drill Instructors hated me, they still had to feed me. I opened the container and found a mountain of cottage cheese and four containers of orange Jell-O.

Dinner was served. ■



Troy | Fanny Cai



Monarch | *Jillian Stanton*

# Afro Hair

By Germany De La Cruz

My hair, my crown  
My hair, my protection  
My hair, my happiness  
My hair, my experiences  
My hair, me.

If my hair,  
Is my crown,  
Why would they admonish it so hard?

If my hair,  
Is my protection,  
Why do they want me to get rid of it?

If my hair,  
Is my happiness,  
How can it make them so angry?

If my hair,  
Is my experiences  
Why is it so invalidated?

If my hair,  
Is me,  
Why would they want to change it?

How can they,  
See my hair,  
As grotesque and unkempt,  
If it is how Mother Earth birthed me?

That's when I realize,  
We live in two different worlds.  
What is ethereal to me,  
Is atrocious to them.



Self Portait | Chris Toppin

# My Dad

By John Trombley

The table is set, and my parents and I are ready to eat dinner. My step-father sits to the right of me at the head of our table, Mom sets a hot pan of meatloaf and a bowl of rice onto the table with cloth potholders. She sits across from me and we all scoop portions onto our plates. Cutting into my meatloaf and dousing it with catsup, I think of my biological father, and of all the great things that he has missed in my life. The opportunity to have a loving family, and a stable life. I remember back to when I was seven, and the last time I saw him.

\*\*\*

My dad received permission from his probation officer that he could see me, as long as my Mom was with me. We met him at the local park in my hometown of Fitchburg. It was 4pm, and the sun had just begun to fall behind the pine trees. It was mid-summer, and all of us except for my dad wore shorts, he wore blue jeans, and a grey tee-shirt.

We sat at a picnic table, greyed from age and exposure to the harsh Massachusetts weather; it was

offset in a little area placed not too far from the jogging track. Which, wrapped around the entire outskirts of the park, and within close proximity of the metal playset that dominated the center of the “kids” section of the park. The rest of the park separated by a line of young pines was open field, with two soccer goals, and no lines to mark the play area. Fitchburg was not a rich town, but they did their best.

My dad held a cigarette with a plastic extender in his left hand, and his right arm was in a sling. He told us that he had hurt it at work, but my Mom knew he was lying through his teeth. Later on in life I realized too that he had been lying. I had caught him doing pull-ups a month before, almost a week or two after hurting himself. He had a thing for stringing lies together to get his way.

The exact words and phrases went over my head as a child but I assumed they were talking about child support and visitation rights. My Mom had up to that point, had been fighting my dad in the courts. My Mom thought she was winning, but in the end he was just using her leniency.

The two or three times my Mom brought my

dad to court, he ended up in jail for a couple of nights. For each of those two or three times, my Mom would lower the child support in hopes that he would stay out of the prison to be with me. Her method did work, but only for a couple of weeks.

Each time his child support payments were lowered, the more money he had to spend on drugs, and the cycle would continue until my Mom finally gave up. I don't blame her for believing that she could change him. My Mother always told he was once a good man, and the memory of who he used to be lived on to her, but the father that was real, is dead to my world. They finished their conversation, and turned to me. I talked with my dad, but I don't remember what it was about. We must have talked about what I was doing in 1st grade or what I was going to do that weekend. I didn't want to talk about school, or about my weekend. I didn't even want to talk to my dad. I wanted to go and play.

After a few minutes of conversation, my parents finally released me to play. When we got to the playground the sun was out above the trees, we had been at the picnic table for just

over an hour, but when I began to climb the metal tower to the top of the slide, the sun was falling behind the trees. Golden rays illuminated the playset, the light still hot, and the air still thick.

I sat myself down at the top of the slide and shouted “look at me.” My dad glanced for a moment, and turned away. My Mom watched me as I pushed myself down the slide. My shorts provided a perfect frictionless surface for me to achieve maximum speed. I flew down the slide, and when I reached the flat bottom my Mom excitedly said “Good job”.

I threw my legs over the front of the slide, and the back of my thighs exposed by my shorts being pulled up from the slide, touched the searing hot metal. “Ouch!”, and dismounted as quickly as possible. I was sure I’d cook on the hot metal if I stayed long enough.

I kept going down the slide, despite the fear of cooking on the metal. Each slide down I discovered that the metal became cooler and cooler. I was disappointed that the metal was no longer hot. I am unsure if it was sadism or just fascination in the power of the sun.

When my parents had fin-

ished, and had come to collect me so we could say our goodbyes, the sun had fallen completely behind the pines. The last few slides I had made were on cool metal. My Mom took me by the hand, and we walked across the street to the parking lot. My mom's gunmetal Nissan Sentra sat, still in the light of the resting sun. I looked back and I saw my dad standing near the table where our final meeting took place. He did not wave, or smile, he just watched as I left.

I opened the doors, and the hot air that escaped the cabin stung my arms, we entered anyways, and rolled down the old crank windows. I peered through the golden streaked windshield to find that my dad was nowhere to be found, the park was dark, little to no light made it past the trees.

\*\*\*

I find myself playing with my meatloaf on my plate. I look up at my stepfather, and I smile. He gives me a quick smile back, and continues to demolish what's on his plate. I don't miss my biological dad, because I have a real father. ■

# advice to a younger me

By Sophia Kerrins

falling in love  
is like drinking poison  
straight from the bottle  
because you will  
feel it burn  
its way down  
your throat  
and spread  
through your veins  
like a wildfire  
you will never  
have felt so alive  
as it creeps  
to your heart  
and kills you



Choice of Color | *Tim Ferrera*



Wisdom from the Wizard Man | *Megan Brenneck*

## a storm

By Sophia Kerrins

I didn't want to leave the house  
for a week after you were gone,  
but my body is a home that I can not  
escape. The day you left, drops of rain, baptized  
this home, this skin, in anger. I wished the rain  
would have turned into fire, one that could  
have scorched my bones, melting its very foundation  
to ash. I would have taken an eternity  
without mercy rather than a reality  
without love. I want to write a poem  
Entitled "A Storm," one that laughs like  
lightning and scratches like razor blades  
or the thorns of roses, a poem that  
sounds the way it feels to be trapped  
in a decaying body, while death awaits  
my last aching breath. People bade goodbye  
all the time, sometimes with tears and maybe  
a dry mouth, but no one ever says "I won't  
see you anymore," without a good reason.  
My home, my body, used to be quiet  
and pure, but now you can hear the murmur  
of what used to be. Are you listening?  
Can you hear it hum? It is everywhere.

# Words Are Everything.

By Anna Shahbazyn

I sit in a quiet room next to you, but we might as well be strangers in opposite corners. Oh how desperately I want to break the silence and tell you my darkest secrets and greatest fears. My mind races as I think of good conversation starters. “What are you doing over break?” No, it’s way too early, break is two weeks away. “Funny story! Yesterday I...” No, you wouldn’t care. “I love your blouse, it really brings out your eyes.” That comment would have you out of the room in an instant. Instead, I clear my throat and hope you suddenly think of something to say to me. Out of the corner of my eye, I see you busily typing away, completely unbothered by my presence. I wait ten minutes, the longest ten minutes of my life, until you stand up and declare that you have to leave. I faintly smile and bid you adieu, but my heart sinks like an anchor. I curse myself for not having the courage to talk to you and make myself cry.

A week later you asked me, “What do words mean to you?” Struggling to come up with a legitimate

answer, I hastily answered “Everything.” After pondering my answer for days, I came to the conclusion that it was in fact, correct. Words mean everything to me.

Words can personify love, send a man to his deathbed, make a person rich, heal internal wounds, and in my case, give me voice when I cannot speak. Occasionally, my brain and mouth refuse to work together in order to form coherent, spoken sentences. Whenever this happens, I wish I could write an essay instead. That day I was silently sitting in your classroom, I wish you knew how desperately I wanted to say something profound and beautiful, but couldn’t out of fear. In a world where every word one says is scrutinized, I hesitate to quickly construct a perfect phrase. Instead, I write. I scribble poetry into journals and type out my thoughts to make up for my silence. So whenever you see me, sitting with a thoughtful look on my face and appear as if words could spill from my brain, please ask me to write you a poem. ■





Love of Chiaroscuro | *Andrew Reynolds*



Lynn Woods | *Nicole McLellan*



Ripple | *Margaret Leahy*



Dream House | *Margaret Leahy*

## Spoken Ballet

by **Elizabeth Johnston**

You ask, “where are you from?”  
I hear, ‘are you like me?’

You ask, “what do you do?”  
I hear, ‘how successful are you?’

You ask, “where do you live?”  
I hear, ‘how nice is your house?’

The cold yardstick of friendships to be  
I pray for warmth that might comfort me

You ask, “what are your interests?”  
I hear, ‘I am interested in you.’

You ask, “what are you passionate about?”  
I hear, ‘tell me what moves your soul.’

You ask, “when can we meet again?”  
I hear, ‘we are friends.’

Finding like heart instead of mind  
This is dear and precious find

\*I wrote this to speak to the current divisive political climate. If we look in each other’s hearts, we will find we are just asking the wrong questions.



Simplistic Beauty | *Alexander Sirois*



Crawford Notch | *Jillian Stanton*

# My Best Day

By Clint Rhoden

I could say my best day was the day I finally learned how to ride a bike. The bike had a purple frame, black banana seat, and chrome gorilla handlebars. It was a hot summer day and I was in the large parking lot of the apartment building I lived in and decided to take the training wheels off and give it a shot to ride like a big boy. My best friend Jason already knew how and he was teasing me about having the training wheels on. So with the utmost determination, it took a couple hours and some blood on my knees, but I figured it out and I was very proud. Jason and I went on a long ride around my small hometown of Upton, Ma. We came across a new development being built at this spot that was a large field where we would play quite often. It bothered us that they were building these new homes in our spot. So like the saying “Boys will be boys” we decided to be mischievous and break some stuff. Windows, sheetrock walls, cabinet doors, whatever we could break we did. Long story short, the police came and at age seven I was arrested for the first time charged with

malicious destruction of property. I could say my best day was the day I got an award at an annual art show that my middle school had every year. I created a shimmering knight riding a steed out of aluminum foil. My teacher and mother were so proud they entered me into the art show which I ended up winning 2nd prize. Then after the show, as I was holding my prize winning figurine talking with Jason, this older kid who picked on me quite often pushed me into the lockers crushing my prized art piece.

I could say the best day was a hot summer day in 1991 when a group of friends and I went to Lollapalooza, a large concert festival created by Perry Farrell the lead singer of Jane’s Addiction. We all took LSD and moshed all day (This is the act of the thrashing of limbs in the mosh pit that accumulates at center stage of these performances). I met some really cool people. The weather was perfect. The music was excellent and the crowd was the most eclectic group of misfits I had ever seen. Then when I got home around 2 am and walked into my bedroom I saw my phone, stereo, and TV were all gone. I was grounded for a month for not being home by midnight.

I could say that my best day was

when I was anxious to get my driver’s license. My mother and father got divorced when I was a baby. My father was a cross country trucker so he wasn’t around most of the time but he did his best to make occasional phone calls. My mother planned to match what I saved myself for a car and told me I should ask my father to do the same as her. I asked him and he obliged. I bought a sweet custom job Buick Regal (Stock version of Buick’s Grand National). The car had chrome all over the engine which was a multi-horse powered beast, riding on alloy mag wheels with tinted windows. I was a pimp with the ladies that summer. Then just before my junior year of highschool I received a phone call that my Father had jack knifed his truck on the interstate and was killed. My car lost it’s luster after that.

I could say my best period of time being when I finally graduated high school. My mother was so proud. She didn’t get any further than 8th grade herself and was determined to see me with a diploma. At the time my mother was very sick with cancer of the intestines. I was proud myself that I had received my diploma and caused my mother such pride when she was so ill. Then a few months later when I was still trying

to decide on going to college, she passed away. This ended up being one of the two worst days of my life.

I could say the best period of days was when I quit my job of 15 years at a restaurant in Middleton called Angelica's, which I had become sick of working at, to move with a cousin out to Colorado. My cousin needed help building a horse barn and starting a life out there. The Rockies are beautiful, the land our ranch was on was all open pasture and big sky. Things were great until I slowly realized how often my cousin drank. Whiskey caused her to become violent and slowly the grand scale and beauty of the environment I was in became a nightmare. Alcoholism is a very ugly thing.

I could say my best days was when I moved back from Colorado and lived up the street from my brother. After our mother passed away I disappeared from most of my family. I made annual holiday visits but that's about it. At this time living so close to my brother allowed us to reconnect. He and I became very close. I realized that trust between two men is at its strongest when brothers become close. For a few years my brother Mike and I were best friends and did everything together. Then seventeen years after our mother

passed, at 4am, my brother suffered a massive asthma attack and died suddenly. This was the second worst day of my life.

I could say that I have had days I consider to be my best. Crazy acts that gave me street cred with friends, female conquests, becoming a manager and finally having a non-hourly salary making good money. My first day at college after not being in a classroom for almost twenty years. All these things are great and have molded me into who I am today, but I don't think any of these days are truly my best day. I don't think my best day has happened yet.

I could say that my best days are the days where nothing goes wrong. My best days are the ones where my first cup of coffee is just right. My best days are the ones where my bills are paid. My best days are the ones where the breeze is in my face and the sun is warm. But honestly those days are mediocre really.

My best day is the promise of another day.

My best day is tomorrow.

My best day is tomorrow. ■



Kicks | *Timothy Ferrera*

# Motion

By Jaclyn Canillas

She stands  
in upbeat disarray,  
Heels spiking hot concrete,  
Hair pulled up,  
Hand rolled cigarette down,  
Staring straight ahead.

3..  
2..  
1..  
Walk.  
Glance at the time,  
Take a sip of bitter coffee,  
Look..into his eyes?  
Make shallow conversation,  
Laugh at the mundane,  
Leave.

....leave.  
Glue to the suspension.  
lose to magnetism,  
Internal self punches.  
Endorsement of inner longing,  
Condonement of self loathing.  
Snap back,  
Kick forward.  
Go to work,  
Mix numbing cosmopolitan,  
Pour Guinness.  
Console a gentleman's heartbreak.

Clock out,  
Escape the traipsing crowd,  
Break elastic band,  
Abandon hair to the rain.  
..Lose control in soaked shoes.

Breathe.

Look up,  
Shelter under his umbrella.  
Take him in again,  
Feel the pits of my stomach.  
Believably smile and turn.

3..  
2..  
1..  
Walk.  
Unlock the chipping door,  
Throw off slippery shoes,  
wipe sullen face,  
feed Eleanor the fluffy,  
feed robotic consumed self,  
Attempt to shut down  
mind..  
Overthink.

Dream in roaring colors  
Red,  
Yellow,  
Green.

..And Repeat.



Thread | *Margaret Leahy*



# Tell Me

By Samantha Machado

I sit here listening to anything to block out the pain  
You come in after hearing me scream and I'm on the floor  
Begging you when you open the door  
To tell me I'm wrong  
To tell me that I don't love him  
To tell me that he wasn't the one  
To tell me that I didn't make a big mistake  
I walk down the street hoping no one notices  
I see them looking  
Is it all in my head or am I living my worst fear  
I run home and blare our song  
It's the only thing that will help  
I tell myself it's just a dream  
I turn on the shower to help relieve the pain  
I feel dirty I feel disgusting  
When will someone tell me I'm wrong  
When will someone tell me that I don't love him  
When will someone tell me that I don't love him  
When will someone tell me that I don't love him  
I rock back and forth choking it down swallowing my feelings to slap on a  
fake smile long  
enough to make a living  
You come home everyday and see me like this

How long until you leave me?  
But you sit there with me and you tell me that I'm wrong  
Tell me that I don't love him  
Tell me that he wasn't the one  
Tell me that I didn't make a big mistake  
I still hold in my heart his name  
I still somehow want to play his game

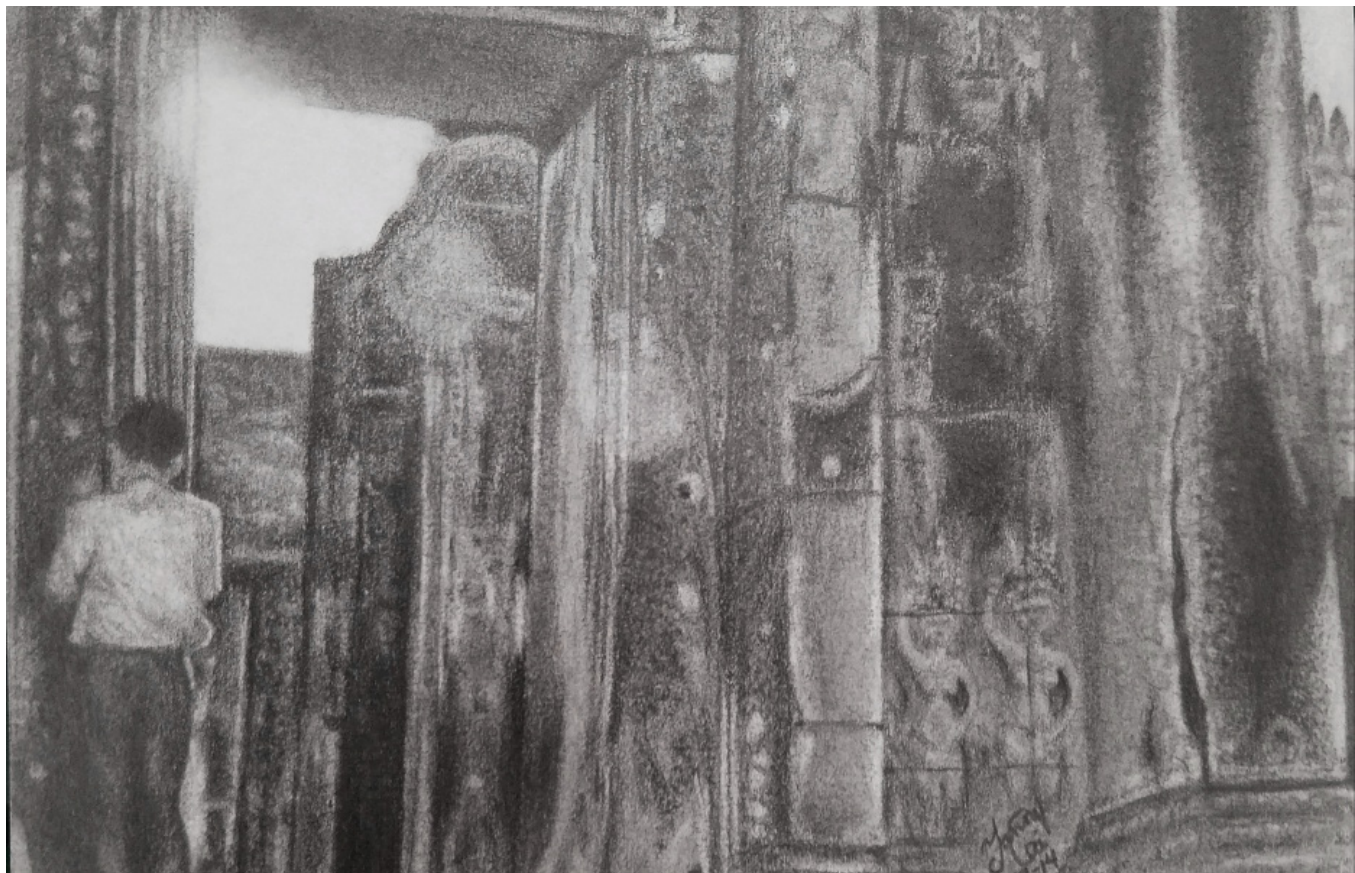
(haiku)

By Elizabeth Johnston

somber chill of heart  
our lives forever apart  
gone our work of art



Praying Warrior | *Mbuaya Kalemba*



Angkor Wat Final Scene | *Fanny Cai*

## Dog

By Mildred Portillo

Saw a yellow haired child  
Walking his dog one day  
Climbed on top of a rock

The child master  
The dog the slave  
The child pretending  
The dog astray

What a funny sight  
All life wrapped up  
With this yellow haired child  
Walking his dog this sunny this sunny day

# Last Words Wished

By Jacob Jackson

If today were that fateful day  
That fateful day I met my demise  
I would wish to say only one phrase

I tried

I tried to make peace  
I tried to forgive  
I tried to forget  
I tried to everything  
Yet it all felt like nothing

And the everything I did  
Was with the best clarity of intentions I  
had  
And still, it never felt like enough

I was the dis-pleaser  
I was the disappointer  
I was the one who was mocked  
I was the one who could not love  
enough  
Yet I felt like it was never seen

I played victim  
When I was at fault  
Only to notice too late  
My own pitiful ignorance

And with all this being said  
I've noticed all that I feel  
Isn't quite unique  
I outwardly display symptoms  
Because I have now succumbed  
To my blatant unspoken condition  
My diagnosis

The human experience



Drive with the Mance | *Liz Scott Amero*

# The Awakening

By Antonio Cali

I see you in the distance  
I try to get to you before it is too late  
You do not look like you are going to survive  
The darkness is surrounding you

I was running forever  
My feet started to leave the ground  
Doing anything, I can't get to you  
I can barely see you

I can hear your cries rattle the trees  
Your tears become crystals before they hit the floor  
The darkness envelops you  
No one besides me has noticed you

The frozen tundra makes it hard for me to move  
You are almost gone  
The trees notice your sorrow  
However, they choose to stay planted in their roots

I lose you to the darkness  
My world begins to shatter  
I become like the others around you  
I let the darkness take me next

I finally find you  
You look broken and beaten  
The tears stream down harder than before  
I hold you

You are not alone anymore  
Finally, someone will see you  
I can finally see you  
You will never be alone again

I can see your smile  
The rarest sight of them all  
The darkness withers away to nothing  
You have finally awoken.

# Roo-Roo

By Jessica Cook

The christmas cookies look like snowballs  
to everyone but my grandmother  
who raised her babies in New Orleans  
and never knew.

In the kitchen there's a little television  
that plays the news in black and white  
to keep Roo-Roo and her chew toys company  
while my family decks the halls and  
eats pretzels with my dying grandfather.

We chase her in circles but she doesn't chase back  
—Let her be, let her be.

The airline lost my luggage so now's my chance  
to buy a tank-top with stitches of daisies  
and a glittering chain wallet that I can hitch  
to my pants because I'm growing  
breasts and hips and hair in my pits  
and no one can stop me now.

When I'm twenty-two a man on  
the subway will slide his entire hand  
down the backside of my jeans  
as I sit silently and watch my reflection  
screaming internally in a foreign wail.  
Later I will vomit in agony because  
I didn't chew off his arm or at least bark into  
the blankness of his face—no.  
A bitch is just a female dog, you know.

I like these pretzels the most when  
the crystals of salt cut my tongue and make  
my voice sound dark and rich and worn.

In the heat of the southern winter I  
foolishly croak please please please  
to anyone who will look at me.

Next spring my grandfather will die in the bathtub  
and I won't remember what happened to Roo-Roo  
or how she left this world. I will only think of  
how she spurned me and that I had a right to  
cry for her and pull on her tail.

## Writing With Chalk on Saturn's Rings

By Francisco "Dany" Acosta

Love reads best under moonlight  
Did my Letters flutter starlight?  
Cozy cold nights, reminisce  
Episodes echo, passion...kiss  
Winked at me, while sipping tea  
Hummed "meant to be" melodies, in two cups and a string  
Coral pink dew, baptized harmonies  
Endless bliss, kissed me oh poetry  
Kissed me, kissed me...kissed me counter clockwise  
Venturing souls, unabbreviated lifetimes  
Irresistible gasp, irrevocable sight  
Angelic iris dress, gleamed charming chimes  
Half way to the moon, gazed little blue  
Moonlit blue, meteor shower hues  
Elegant kites, splashed cavernous dreams  
Patter galactic ripples, liberated vanishings  
Shadows hushed, embraced eloquence  
Thunders blushed, lush silver mist  
Held my hand, through daunting lows  
Weak on weekdays, never mourned  
hope facets sparkle, supernova prism bays  
Unpredicted haze...soulmates gaze  
Contrite heart, renewed in your presence  
Dawn broke tears, passages glisten  
Murky mysteries, whispering facades  
Chaotic valleys, envying mirage  
Dearly missed contours, fade away sweet dance  
Sleepless farewell, breathe bitter last  
Miss me...miss me...never let go  
Absent you, absent love, unbearable,  
Have you moved on?  
Will you hold on?  
Held fingers amidst water, slip away, away  
"I love you darling," whispers away.

# untitled

By Rhiannon Surels

My sister Meghyn is nearly 11 years older than I am; she's the youngest child of my father's first marriage. All I can remember of growing up with Meghyn begins around the time I was 5, and she was 16. She was always a hurricane of spinning stories and a whirlwind of personality changes- I've never met the same Meghyn twice. She was constantly changing her mind about who to live with, bopping back and forth between her mother's house and our dad's. Equally as often, Meghyn changed the spelling of her name- unofficially, but all over her textbooks and spiral bound notebooks. Her friends were never the same, rotating through the house, sometimes sprawled across the lawn, dangling from branches of the tree in our front yard. Other times they were raucous and loud in my sisters' shared basement bedroom, leaving shortly after arriving, tires squealing through our normally quiet neighborhood of dogs with invisible fences and backyards with above ground pools. Whether by her own design or just her natural proclivities, every piece of Meghyn's life was a bead in a kaleidoscope, changing the entire

image with a tiny shift.

When Meghyn's ever changing-self bent her easily over the line of "recreational" drug experimentation and into the territory of addiction, I was finishing up elementary school. My friends who had "bad" older siblings had brothers in detention, and sisters who broke curfew while hanging out with boys. My sister was misusing drugs that treated ailments, disorders and pains I didn't even know could exist. I was so young when my sister began losing who she was to her addiction, that I witnessed a lot of her damage before finding out why. I saw slurred speech and bloodshot eyes before I took the MCAS. I heard conversations about rehab and jail time before I heard about the birds and the bees.

It was summer between seventh and eighth grade when Meghyn showed me what an addiction can make a person do. I was home alone, sitting at the computer tucked into an alcove in my parents' bedroom. Behind the computer was a window that overlooked the back deck. It was through that window I heard a strange noise while the song was changing. I peeked out the window and there was Meghyn, who, like usual, had gone weeks without stopping by or calling. I shouted down to her, and she asked to be let in, explaining she didn't have

a key.

Immediately, I could tell something was different about her. She was on edge, nervous and grilling me with questions. Why wasn't I in school? (It was July.) Where was everyone else? (Working.) Why wasn't I with this friend? (She was in Florida.) Finally, Meg convinced me I should get some friends, and walk downtown to get some pizza and ice cream. Satisfied I was going to enjoy the beautiful summer day, Meghyn went back downstairs, telling me she'd be taking some of her clothes out of storage to take to her mother's house. I began firing messages off to my friends on AIM. We agreed on a time, and I sat around at the computer, killing time until I had to leave. While I was waiting, I heard another noise, this time inside the room with me. I leaned past the wall separating me from the rest of my parents' room and saw Meghyn milling around my mother's dresser on the other side of the room. "Coming to say goodbye?" I asked, seeing her jump and turn around to meet my eyes. "I didn't know you were still home! I thought you were meeting up with Leeann! I was coming to say goodbye." It was sloppy when it came from her mouth all at once, like the air rushing out of a balloon. "You thought I left so you came up



to say goodbye?” I laughed at her, not clever enough to really call her out for her poor lie or notice how flustered she was. “Yeah. Have fun!” She shuffled sideways and gracelessly out of my view and was gone.

I don’t even remember if I met up with my friends this day, but I must not have. I just remember walking past my mother’s dresser and noticing the empty gap. “What had been there?” I thought. Those ordinary things you see in your house everyday are the hardest to see differences in. When it did arrive, the realization slapped me in the face with a cold hand. My heart and stomach sank, my brain turned to static, like a snowy television screen. Full of real and fake pieces alike, some valued for their price tag and others for their sentimentality, my mother’s entire jewelry box was missing. I knew it was Meghyn. I knew she had taken it right when I saw it was gone. It was nearly time for my mother to be home, so I waited, with my thumping heart and shaking hands to keep me company. She pulled in and I met her in the driveway. “Where’s your jewelry box?” I asked her. “What?” “You didn’t take it to work? To get it fixed, or something?” My mother works in HR and had no idea why I thought she’d take her jewelry box to work. “Rhian-

non, what are you talking about?” And I finally began crying. I don’t know how I got it out, or how she understood anything through my blubbering. Perhaps she just put two and two together, but finally my mother understood her jewelry was missing and was probably being pawned for drug money as we spoke.

The flying into action isn’t the part I remember. I know we did go to the cops, to pawn shops, to Meghyn’s mother’s house, but I don’t remember it. What I do remember is sitting in the backseat, numb and not even able to cry anymore. My brain was adjusting to the fact that the girl I saw as my sister, no longer recognized the importance of that title anymore. She was more concerned with getting more pain pills and she didn’t care how she had to do it. I realized all the times I had thought what she was saying was ridiculous, far fetched, or just flat out bullshit, it really was. She wasn’t the exciting, popular girl I had been taught to see in her, and she wasn’t living this adventurous life she projected. In reality, she was doing whatever she could to get high and stay high. I was as important to her as the cab driver who brought her there. She was excited I was home to let her in so she wouldn’t have to break a window, not because she wanted to see

her sister. Everything she had been through and had then put her body through left her the way she was now.

I’ve almost always been equally disgusted and intrigued by her, trusting and fearful of her words and actions. Even now, after seeing her break her own arm to get more pills, after watching her get pleasure from doing things to hurt us or her daughter, simply because she is bored, after receiving the most insane, meandering, belligerent text messages, pockmarking months or years of no contact, I can find a way to hate her and love her at once. The last time I saw the world as a kid with rose tinted glasses was before I realized she had stolen from us. The first time I realized that family and love don’t always also mean respect and consideration, was when it hit me that Meghyn didn’t even think twice, knowing what she was doing and how it would hurt all of us. Or perhaps not knowing, because she didn’t care enough to think about it. Meghyn decided what’s anyone else’s is hers, and when that didn’t work she took it. Meghyn lost her innocence many years before she tried to trick me out of the house, but she made sure to steal mine that day too. ■

# Static

By Harrison Davis

As a young boy, I lived and breathed television. I remember waking up early on Saturday mornings, digging my hands into the carpet with excitement when the irresistible theme song of *Spongebob Squarepants* rang in my tiny eardrums. I remember sleeping over my grandparents' house and politely asking for the chocolate wafers that were in the cupboard while I snuggled under the sofa blankets watching *NCIS*. Even though the show terrified me, I was addicted, and couldn't wait to watch whenever I spent the night. When I was older and could establish reality from fantasy, I began to wonder what it was like behind those beautifully-crafted scenes. Those creepy rotting corpses and underwater sponges were fake, but who made them, and how? I wanted to meet the thinkers, the creators, the writers, and the show-runners beyond the screen. I wanted to meet a star - an actor or actress, main or ensemble, alive or dead. Curiosity and wonder crossed my mind while switching channels, examining each and every different genre. I was baffled, fascinated, de-

termined to envelop myself into the static of my television and breathe in the waft of real Hollywood creativity. Eventually, I did.

I had visited the colorful streets of Los Angeles, California once before in July of 2016, and was mesmerized by the art, fashion, and fast-moving lifestyle of the city. I had run my hand through the air out of the backseat window of our Honda Accord rental, feeling the hot July air on my skin and people-watching. "I hope we see a star," my grinning, wavy-haired mother said to me in the rearview mirror. But were unsuccessful during this first trip to Hollywood. Our goal had been to witness someone famous any way we could, even if we had to sneak on to a set in the midst of the action. It was a dream dripping with neon excitement.

The following July, in our grey Nissan Altima, I could still taste the double-double with cheese on our way back from In-n-Out Burger in Glendale, California, the pickles and Thousand-Island dressing sitting on my tongue. I obsessively refreshed social media until I found an address: North Orange Grove Avenue, Los Angeles. I looked up at my mother and, with a mixture

of glee and nervousness, said, "I found the address." She just smiled. It felt like fifteen grueling hours as we drove on, each speed bump making me feel more nauseous and gullible. I almost began hallucinating unspecified famous people all around us, clogging the rental windows, shattering the windshield, digging their thousand dollar painted nails into the leather back seat.

My eyes shot open like a lighted firecracker as the car finally came to a halt next to a quiet liquor store in downtown Hollywood. It was ten o'clock, and the street was buzzing. Office buildings, costume shops, and fast food chains were lit by headlights. Our sneakers clattered as we marched down the pavement, took a left, and were greeted with trailer trucks, food catering vehicles and a police officer sitting in a green lawn chair. He had graying hair, a strong face, and a smile as he conversed with another junior officer patrolling the sidewalk. I was speechless, partly because my living idols were fifty feet away behind those large oak trees and even larger trucks, and partly because there was a police officer standing in the way with a loaded pistol

sitting comfortably in his black belt. In the back of my pulsing brain, I knew he would never shoot me, but, in the sweating heat of the moment, anything seemed possible. My mother, anxious to take a look at the set of our favorite horror television series, confidently strolled over and I followed like a human duckling.

We truthfully told the officer that I was an aspiring film student visiting Los Angeles, determined to grasp hold of the artform and watch it dance through my fingers. "I am sure they will let you in, if you ask politely," he whispered. The officer mumbled into his walkie talkie. We were then greeted by a woman in her twenties dressed in black with a serious look on her tanned complexion. "Follow me," she said, and, suddenly, I felt as though we were running through thick water up to our waists. Behind the barricade, we came face to face with bright blue and red lights: police cars, part of the scene. Fake snow dripped on the cement in the 80 degree weather as I examined the suburban set as fast as I could, snapping a mental picture in my rushing mind. My mom grasped my right arm, clutching my skin as we saw them. Four of

them. One in a leather jacket, one in a white sweater, one in an orange coat, and one in a tank top and boxers covered in fake blood.

I felt as if I would pass out but at the same time run a thirty-mile marathon in twenty minutes without even sweating. My hazel eyes teared up with happiness and, before my brain could register it, the night stroll was over. A mere "thank you" was all I could mumble to our guide. I looked back and heard a director yell, "Quiet on set!" We backed away slowly, and once out of sight, my mother and I cheered silently. On a side street, we jumped up and down and up and down until I could feel that cheeseburger sail up my throat. I felt like I was going to throw up, but I was still grinning ear to ear. We had accomplished our dream.

We walked in a loop back to the front of the street, and leaned on a close building, watching the same scene filmed for over an hour and a half. I was up past 3 am that night, staring at the white popcorn ceiling of our Magic Castle hotel room, rewinding and fast-forwarding my experience over and over again. I felt different - like something inside me had clicked - elec-

tric Hollywood inspiration flowing through my veins. Something about the city that night had brought this werewolf out of my skin and, suddenly, I could sit down on that set and binge watch for the rest of my life. I felt like that five-year-old again, mesmerized by these moving pictures and sound, surrounded by the soft hum of the TV screen static. I will be this five-year-old forever. ■

# Bacon, Lettuce, and Love

by Ryan Duggan

There's something about a sandwich  
made by mom

that peanut butter jelly  
goin' in your belly.  
triangle pieces or cut in half,  
from the one who'll always make you laugh

a bond so rich and creamy  
as warm as toasted bread  
She'll make that lunch for you to munch  
The good stuff, fluff  
oozing out the crust

Satisfyingly sweet and hands down heavenly  
every  
    single  
        time

An argument here, an attitude there,  
at the end of the day, She'll never care

No matter your age, no matter the day  
She'll hand you the bag, you'll be on your way

There's something about a sandwich  
made by someone you love.



Anatomy of Type | Tim Ferrera

# Black Bird

By Jacob Jackson

Black bird upon silver water  
Ripples and waves upon eastern shores  
This vessel although thin  
Carries you far  
The winds may whisper and mock  
The waves may whiten and roar  
But your course will carry you onwards and further  
So hold your oar  
Dip it into the waters below  
Not now but surely soon  
Your oar will guide you closer  
To a white veil upon golden sands  
Only you may see and feel it  
But I beckon you, it is real  
And it is worn just in the distance  
Black bird upon silver water

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