



SKETCH

Literary Magazine

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From the Editor

Dear Readers,

The pages you hold in your hands contain imaginative stories, heartfelt poetry, and creative art. But they also hold more than that. They contain the dreams, hopes, and aspirations of everyone who had a part in making this edition of Sketch possible: authors' dreams of becoming published, the editors' and board members' hopes to read inspirational works, my dream of leading a team of motivated people and publishing a literary journal for all to read.

So readers, enjoy this edition of Sketch. I know the board members, editors, authors, and I enjoyed making it for you.

Casey Baumberger

Editor-In-Chief, President of Sketch

Staff Bios

Tiffany Allers - Visual Arts Editor, Media Chair

Tiffany graduated majoring in English with a minor in Communication Studies. Her love of creativity and learning have led her down new paths. Her goal is to continue to explore the world and gain new perspectives.

Jocelyn Simms - Treasurer, Poetry Editor

Jocelyn is an English major who enjoys writing and reading poetry, volunteering at animal shelters, and playing board games. She aspires to become a High School English teacher because of her passion for working with people.

Christine Salek-Hopkins - Nonfiction Editor

Christine Hopkins was an English major once, but the only things she retained from that experience are that Oxford commas are cool and inadvertently collecting books costs a lot of money. She is now studying journalism and enjoys noveling, playing several instruments, and using the knowledge gained from her previous degree in psychology to secretly analyze others.

Zachary Eldridge - Vice President, Fiction Editor

Zachary is a Senior studying English and Technical Communications. He hopes to work as an editor while finishing his own novels.

Contents

Fiction	6
Martin	7
<i>By Kyle Basten</i>	
The Haunting of June House	18
<i>By Wilson Korges</i>	
Number 26	26
<i>By Danielle Wolf</i>	
Nonfiction	29
It's good to be back	30
<i>By Alex Felker</i>	
Successful Twenty-Something Barbie	32
<i>By Annie Seeley</i>	
Poetry	36
Balance	37
<i>By Shawn Robinson</i>	
Grandpa	38
<i>By Shawn Robinson</i>	
Little Brother, Little Sister	39
<i>By Shawn Robinson</i>	
Piston	40
<i>By Shawn Robinson</i>	
The Life of Sydney Carton	41
<i>By Shawn Robinson</i>	
To Write Love on My Arms	42
<i>By Jennifer Low</i>	
Souls	43
<i>By Jennifer Low</i>	

Firefly	44
<i>By Jessica Heintz</i>	
Hayley's Comet	45
<i>By Hayley Benson</i>	
Star	46
<i>By Megan Lutz</i>	
Between the Lines	48
<i>By Hope Sievers</i>	
 Visual Arts	 51
Imagination (2016)	52
Achilles Sculpture (2014)	53
Norm (2016)	54
Nietzsche's Portrait (2016)	55
Flow State (2016)	56
Creation (2016)	57
Emergence (2016)	58
Energy (2016)	59
<i>All Visual Arts by Javid Eid</i>	

Fiction

Martin

By Kyle Basten

Martin woke up to a tongue on his face. “Hen,” he grumbled, “Hen get off.” With a shove, he pushed the yellow lab off his chest and sat up.

Martin was on his sofa in the living room, a bottle of cheap whiskey empty on the floor beside him. He scratched his patchy facial hair and looked around for a clock. He looked at Hen. “You want to go outside, don’t you?”

Hen Wen led Martin to her house before he realized where they were going. As soon as they rounded the block however, Martin halted. “No Hen, we’re not going there.” Hen Wen struggled against the leash. “Let’s go to the park instead.”

Martin watched Hen Wen sniff her way around the dog park. She was obviously getting older. There were patches of gray around her eyes, her run had slowed to a jog, and she became content with just watching cars drive by instead of barking at them.

Martin could remember a time when he would sit at the dog park and scribble down some sentences while Hen Wen played. Back then the words came naturally. It was fun back then.

Back in his apartment, Martin took a cold shower. When he got out it was 10:22. He poured himself a bowl of store brand Cheerios and a glass of water. He poured Hen her bowl of kibble and she started scarfing it down.

Martin left Hen Wen in the apartment and walked to a weekly Writer’s Workshop at the library. Martin figured maybe they might be able to help him out with his rut.

He sat at a table with three old women, one retired English teacher, and a teenage girl who was more interested in her phone than the speaker. The speaker was a poet from the nearest big city, talking about how the way a word sounds can change the way a phrase impacts a reader. This didn’t really interest Martin. He knew how to write. Heck, he thought, I do have six books published. Throughout the workshop, the speaker kept glancing at Martin, trying to recognize him from somewhere.

“Do I know you?” the speaker asked Martin after the workshop had ended.

Martin hated when people recognized him. It was worse

two years ago but it still made him uncomfortable. “Maybe,” Martin said. “My name is Martin Mackenzie.”

The speaker blinked. “Like the Martin Mackenzie? The Tales of Newgona Martin Mackenzie?” Martin gave a sigh and a forced smile. “I can’t believe it,” the speaker answered. “I loved your books. I never was much of a fantasy reader myself but I loved your books.”

“That’s very kind of you... uh...”

“José Molina”

“José.” Martin shifted uncomfortably and flashed another forced smile. They both waited for the other to speak. After a pause, Martin said, “Well it was nice talking to you,” and turned to leave.

“Wait, Mr. Mackenzie,” José cried. “Martin, can we chat? Can I get you a cup of coffee or lunch or something?”

José and Martin sat by a window in the local coffee shop. José got a latte and Martin ordered a basic coffee.

“Now I’m not complaining,” José started, “but why did you come to my Writer’s Workshop? I mean I’m talking about word usage, and your writing is already beautiful. It’s like poetry.”

Martin gave a snort at that. “Thanks,” he sighed. “I don’t know; I guess I came looking for some inspiration.”

“What do you mean?” José responded. “You could have written so many spin-offs from Tales of-”

“No, no,” Martin cut in. “That series is done and I don’t want to keep going with it.”

“Why not?” José asked.

“I guess I was bored with the characters,” Martin answered. “I don’t know. I’ll leave the spin-offs to the internet,” he chuckled.

“So does this mean you have been working on something new?” When José asked this Martin looked out the window, unsure of how to respond.

“Well... at one point I tried writing-“ Martin interrupted himself. “Promise not to laugh at me,” he said. “I tried writing romance novels.”

José shook his head, making sure he heard right. “Romance novels? After you wrote a series about a war between wizards and humans?” Martin took a sip of his coffee. “Wow. That’s different.” José took a drink. “Why?”

“Why did I try romance?” Martin asked. After taking

another sip of coffee to think about his answer he said, "Well, I guess I had inspiration back then."

José studied him. "Who was she?" he finally asked.

Martin woke up to a tongue on his face. "Hen," he chuckled, "Hen get off!" With a push he shifted the yellow lab to the other side of his bed.

Martin sat up. The sun was barely in the sky and just coming through the window. He gave a smile and looked at his dog. "Let's go for a walk."

Martin watched Hen Wen bounce around the dog park. He brought his notebook with him and every once in a while he'd scribble down a word or phrase he wanted to use. He was in the middle of writing "the sun, like drops of golden rain" when he heard, "Oh, hey puppy!"

He looked up to see Hen Wen jumping up on a young woman in a bright yellow sun dress. "Hen! Down!" Hen Wen looked to Martin and ran over to him, tail wagging. Putting Hen Wen on a leash, Martin walked over to the woman.

"I'm so sorry about that. I'll pay for your dress if Hen ruined it," Martin said, eyeing the dirty paw prints on the yellow dress.

"Oh no, it's fine," the woman answered. "This is an old dress anyway." She smiled at him and Martin noticed her white teeth. He noticed her soft pink lips. He noticed her bright hazel eyes, her chestnut hair, her soft, rounded chin. With an easy grace, she brushed off the prints and said, "See. Good as new."

"That's good," Martin responded, looking down at his feet. He was wishing he wasn't wearing flip-flops and running shorts. Looking back up at her he said, "I still wish I could do something for you."

"Well," she answered, drawing it out, "you could buy me some coffee."

"Ok," Rebecca said, "Why'd you name your dog after a chicken?"

The three of them, Rebecca, Martin, and Hen Wen, had walked to the local coffee shop and were now sitting at a table near the back. Hen Wen was laying at Martin's feet while he drank a small coffee and Rebecca had mint tea.

"What?" Martin answered, bewildered. "A chicken?"

“You named her Hen. Hen equals girl chicken,” Rebecca explained. “Do you really like chickens?”

Martin laughed out loud. “Her name’s actually Hen Wen. It’s from a book.” He laughed again. “She’s not a chicken.”

“So you like reading then?” she asked.

“I do,” Martin answered. “Well actually I’m a writer so I have to try to pay attention to what other writers are doing.”

“Have you written anything I’ve heard of?”

“Well,” Martin drew out, trying to create suspense and excitement, “I just published the last book in my series. Have you heard of *The Tales of Newgona*?” He was expecting shock and wonder on her face but instead she shook her head. “Oh, I guess you don’t read much fantasy then.”

“Sorry. It sounds interesting though,” she answered, trying to sound nice.

“Thanks,” Martin said, disheartened. “So what do you do?”

“I own an antique store,” she said. “It’s just off the square.”

“Is today your day off?” Martin asked.

“Actually yes,” she responded. “The shop’s closed on Tuesdays so I can go to the antique auction.” She gave Martin a playful smile. “Or get jumped on by chicken-dogs.”

Martin was about to apologize again until he realized she was joking with him. Instead he rolled his eyes.

Rebecca was still smiling at him when she pulled an antique gold pocket watch out of the folds of her dress. Her eyes grew wide when she checked the time. “Oh my gosh, I’m late!” she exclaimed. “The auction starts in four minutes. It was nice meeting you Martin.” She scribbled something on a napkin, and handing it to him said, “Let’s get dinner sometime.”

Martin watched her walk away, then checked the napkin. She left her number and her name.

Rebecca Lafayette.

Two days later, Martin was watching a YouTube video on how to tie a tie. He’d asked Rebecca to La Fleur, a fancy restaurant he’d never been to. It took three tries to get the knot to look right and with that he headed out.

Her house was only a few blocks away but with the restaurant being in the next town, he was forced to drive. He took his old Dodge Neon to her house, wishing he had a cooler looking car.

When Rebecca opened the door, Martin was taken aback. The woman at the door was a completely different person than the woman in the park. The yellow sundress was replaced by a slim red cocktail dress. Her lips weren't a light pink but a dark red gloss. Her chestnut hair that was held back with bobby pins now draped her face in large curls.

"How do I look?" she asked with a smile.

Martin was speechless so he gave her an awkward thumbs-up and a toothy smile. Rebecca sighed and shook her head. "Let's go," she laughed.

They were sitting in a McDonald's parking lot with chicken nuggets and smoothies. "I still can't believe the size of those entrees. I'm pretty sure this nugget is bigger than my steak," Martin complained.

"And what was up with that waiter?" Rebecca asked. "It looked like he was about to throw up the whole time."

"He was making me sick, honestly," Martin responded.

"And the valet," Rebecca continued. "It's like he would never want to be seen driving anything but a Rolls-Royce." She laughed and said, "Let's never do that again."

After they finished their food, Martin drove her back to her house. He walked her up to the front door.

"Well I had a good time," Rebecca said, taking Martin's hands.

"Yes you did," Martin responded, regretting his response instantly.

"Well," Rebecca hesitated, "I'd better be heading in."

"It is getting kind of late," Martin replied. He was getting nervous.

After some silence, Rebecca drawled, "Well..."

Martin knew she expected a kiss and his heart started thumping like a jackhammer. "Well..." Martin sighed.

She looked him in the eyes and, with a sudden impulse, Martin jerked in for a kiss. It surprised both her and Martin. The impulsiveness surprised Martin so much that he gasped when their lips touched. He compared the kiss to a vacuum cleaner in his mind and pulled away.

He gave an awkward smile and she gave the same right back. "That was bad," Martin said.

"Yeah it was," Rebecca agreed.

“Can I try again?” Martin asked. Rebecca nodded and this time, Martin gave her a good kiss.

Martin was sitting behind the register at the antique store, browsing a Civil War photo collection book. He'd rather be writing but he knew he can't write with distractions around. To write his Newgona series, Martin had to lock himself in the empty spare bedroom with only a pen and notebook for weeks. In the park or coffee house he could write phrases but those places are too distracting for real writing.

The bells on the front door jingled and Martin looked up. Rebecca walked in. “Hey babe,” Martin said.

“Has it been busy?” she asked. Martin responded no and Rebecca said, “I didn't think so.” She sighed, “There wasn't anything good at this auction. It was a complete waste of time.” She looked at Martin's book. “You've been reading?”

“Yeah,” Martin said. “Well it's more of a picture book but yeah, reading.”

“You should get back to writing,” Rebecca said. “You can't live off Newgona forever you know.”

“I know, I just need something to write about.”

“You'll find something,” she answered. “You should try your hand at poetry. I love poetry.”

Martin hated poetry – both reading and writing – but said, “Yeah, maybe.”

Martin had his arm around Rebecca while they watched some romantic comedy featuring Ryan Reynolds. Rebecca was enjoying it but Martin was preoccupied with something else.

Rebecca had been getting on him to write more and Martin had been thinking about it all the time. He decided to try his hand at romantic novels. And his inspiration was curled up next to him.

Martin balled up a piece of paper and threw it at the trash can. It landed by the others on the floor. In the last three hours, Martin managed only a few paragraphs.

The rustle of paper balls behind him made him look up. Rebecca was standing there in a pink dress putting her pearl earrings in. “Jesus, Marty, you're not even getting ready?” she sighed.

Martin froze before remembering their dinner date at the small bistro opening up. “You know how much this means to me,”

Rebecca said. "One of my best friends from high school is opening up a restaurant and you're not ready."

Martin looked down at himself sitting on the floor in his old t-shirt and boxers surrounded only by balls of paper. "I'm sorry, I guess I lost track of time," he tried explaining.

"Hurry up," Rebecca said. "I'll be in the car."

Martin was just noticing his mismatched shoes when Rebecca asked, "Which one do you want Marty?"

He looked up with a blank expression on his face. Rebecca gave an exasperated sigh. "We'll have the Brianna, Henry."

"Great," said Henry with a wink. "Just as long as you don't drink it like your mom's Pinot."

Rebecca laughed, "That was like ten years ago. Don't you think I know my limits now?"

"I don't know..." Henry replied. "All I do know is that it only takes half a bottle until you can't keep your hands to yourself," he said, giving Martin a nudge.

Rebecca gave him a playful slap on the arm. "We don't talk about that," she laughed.

"I'll go get you that Brianna," Henry said, still laughing. "Don't drink too much."

Rebecca laughed and waved him off. She looked back at Martin. "So what do you think of Henry?"

"He's ok," Martin responded. When he didn't say more, Rebecca sighed. They sat for a few minutes in silence until Henry came back with a bottle of wine in an ice bucket. He set it on the table and started pouring it into two glasses.

"So I was thinking about throwing a grand opening party after I close if you guys are interested," Henry asked.

"That sounds like a great time," Rebecca said.

"Yeah, great," Martin echoed.

"Sweet! It's at my place," Henry exclaimed. "I live on the second story of the restaurant."

"We'll be there," Rebecca said.

"Look, I'm glad you're writing again, but I'm tired of doing things on my own." Rebecca was standing in the doorway of the writing room.

"I thought you really wanted to see this movie without me interrupting it. You know how I can't watch a movie in silence."

“You don’t get it! It’s not about the movie. It’s about the people I see it with,” Rebecca snapped.

“Don’t you have other friends? I’m sure Henry would love to spend some time with you.” Martin sighed, “And I just got to the good part of my story...”

Rebecca took a deep breath before responding. “Fine. Keep working and I’ll go see the movie with Henry. Hopefully he’s free tonight.” With that, she turned and stomped out of the apartment.

Hen Wen watched her leave out the window then sauntered over to Martin. She laid next to him, placing her head on his lap. Martin gave her a scratch behind the ears. “Should I have gone with her Hen?” he asked.

Hen looked up at him with her big brown eyes, then put her head back in his lap. “You’re right,” Martin said, lying back on the floor. “You’re always right.”

Martin was waiting for Rebecca on the front steps of her little house. He’d brought a John Green book, trying to figure out what John did so right in his romance that Martin was doing so wrong.

Hen was lying next to him, listening to him read it quietly, watching the few cars that drove down the street. Occasionally a light “ruff” would emanate from the lab.

Martin was through a quarter of the book when Hen Wen got up to watch a car turn into the driveway. Rebecca opened the passenger side door and Hen rushed over, eager for some attention.

“Hey puppy,” Rebecca whispered. “I didn’t expect you here.” When she said this, she looked up at Martin.

Martin stood up and walked towards her. “I’m sorry. I’ve never done this before, any of this, and I’m trying to make my worlds right, both of them. It’s hard to balance both sides of this but I’m figuring it out with-”

Interrupting him, Henry leaned over to the passenger side and said, “I’m going to need to get back. I think I left the oven on.” He handed Rebecca her purse and to Martin said, “The movie was great by the way.”

Martin just blinked at him, trying to understand why he interrupted his beautiful, albeit John-Green-esque, apology. All he could think to say was, “Oh, okay then.”

Martin was done. Ok, he told himself, not quite done since he still hadn't done any real editing, but his rough draft was finished. He decided to call Rebecca.

"I'm sorry, I'd love to go to dinner, but Henry's got concert tickets. I'm sure I told you before," Rebecca replied when Martin offered dinner downtown.

"Yeah, you told me. I remember now," Martin said, unsure if that was true or not.

"How about tomorrow? I'd love to go out with you tomorrow!" Martin agreed to this compromise.

After hanging up, he looked at Hen Wen. "Well," he said, "I guess this'll be like Newgona then." And just like when he finished his rough draft of Newgona, he opened up a moderately priced bottle of whiskey and started watching Lord of the Rings.

In order to surprise Rebecca, Martin had decided to try to edit the whole story in as short a time as possible. He spent days on end in that room, only leaving it when he needed the bathroom, became hungry, or heard Hen Wen pawing at the door. Sometimes Rebecca would stop by and Hen would jump all over her, eager for somebody to play with.

After a long time without shaving, showering, or sleep, Martin had it. He held in his shaking, sleep-deprived hands a copy worthy of submitting to his publisher.

Then, after the mail man took it away, the dread and anxious waiting set in. On the good end, the editors might offer some suggestions or rewrites. On the bad end, they might offer a fireplace to burn it. And all Martin could do is wait for a reply.

He started walking the block. He'd walk along the riverfront and look across to the other side. Hen Wen loved the change of pace. Finally, she was able to explore the new sights, sounds, and smells. Sure he hadn't shaved yet, but at least he was going outside again.

After a few dozen cups of coffee, and a dozen more miles walked, the blessed, evil, hopeful letter he had been expecting had arrived.

He couldn't open it. He didn't want to even look at it. Maybe he'd changed writing styles too much. Maybe the change was too jarring for his publisher. He needed courage, and he needed someone to help him open the letter. He decided to go to Rebecca. After all, this was Rebecca's surprise.

Martin shaved off his patchy beard. He took a long, hot shower using extra shampoo and soap to remove the grime of stress and worry. He combed back his hair so it didn't look too grown out. He donned a sport coat and matching dress shoes, and braced himself.

It was nearing night as Martin walked to Rebecca's house. He was feeling much better. The air was a little humid on this Indian summer day. The grass was freshly mowed. Martin was confident.

He waved to neighbors and cars passing by. He jumped a hopscotch that was chalked in on the sidewalk. He wondered at the street lamps that came to life just as it was getting dark.

Nothing could stand in Martin's way. Now he was absolutely sure his publisher loved his story. It was a change of pace but it felt good, and in a world that grew more cynical and depressing every day, a pretty little romance would help a lot.

He walked up to Rebecca's house, glanced in the front window as he passed by, and went to the door. He stopped. Martin went back to the window. There, on the couch in the living room, Rebecca was locked in the embrace of Henry, clothes strewn across the floor.

Martin's heart stopped, waited, then started pounding like never before. His vision went in and out. His legs felt fuzzy. His hands weren't trembling, they were shaking.

He wanted to scream. He wanted to yell out. He felt the outrage building up.

So he left. He kept quiet and left. Halfway back home he screamed. He yelled. He swore like the words themselves could fix the situation. He kicked over a trash can. He reset it, then kicked it again harder.

He looked down in his fist and saw the crumpled envelope, unopened. He shredded it and threw the scraps deep into the trash can, then kicked it away from him.

Then he cried. He sat down on the curb, next to all the chaos he caused, and as all the people in their houses peeked through their blinds at the lunatic in the streets, he cried.

After a short pause, Martin checked his phone and said, "I really have to go José." He sighed. "I just don't want to talk about it."

José looked at him. “We could talk about something else if you’d like.”

“I’m sorry,” Martin said, getting up. “I really have to go.” Martin started walking away.

“Wait,” José said. He scribbled something on a napkin and handing it to him said, “In case you do want to talk.”

Martin checked the napkin. He left his number and his name.

“Thanks.”

Kyle Basten is a sophomore civil engineering student and hates reading poetry. He likes old war movies, black coffee, and Audrey Hepburn.

The Haunting of June House

By Wilson Korges

June House was haunted. There was no outpouring of blood, no bone-chilling scream, no beautiful and frightening woman in white, no scratching at the door. At midnight, that witching hour, nothing sinister ever happened. The nights were not terror-filled and inhospitable. It was the day that was most haunted, and in the most pleasant way Reginald could have imagined- every time a glass got too near the edge of the table it moved away from danger. Every china cup that toppled from its place refused to shatter. When the weather was hot and the air fetid and listless, the windows would close as if of their own accord, and the whole room would fill with such a chill that Reginald would shiver and light a fire in the midst of spring.

That was not to say nothing ever happened in the night. From time to time, footsteps could be heard, going up and down the stairs, up and down the halls. It was almost comforting to hear them, Reginald thought. Almost.

When he left candles lit after he'd crawled himself into bed, they went out with the sound of a soft exhalation. In the kitchen in the dead of night, by the hearth fire in the winter, a short spout of humming might be heard, and the servants made the best of it by trying to guess the tune. It was rumored Reginald knew it, and it was probably true- the wistful bittersweet smile he wore when he heard those brief snippets of melody seemed enough proof to stand on.

Sometimes, when alone, the tune came to tell him he wasn't. The day of the funeral was one of those moments.

Reginald dressed quickly that morning, buttoning his shirt and cuffs as best and fast he could against the heavy chill. The dew was thick against the windows. He knew once outside even the horizon would be hard to see.

He was bad at this, and it never failed to cause spectral amusement- perhaps a string of laughter, seemingly warped and too far away, would enter the room by his shoulder. But it was harrowing to Reginald's soul to watch himself struggle on this morning of all mornings. When he heard the beginning of a well-meant chuckle break into his field of existence, he called out to it.

"We are burying you today."

He had never spoken to the tapping footsteps that had

gone up and down his hall. He had never needed to- the tune had been enough, had told him all he needed to know. But now he had finally addressed the source of all this noise, the reason why his cups would not break, the cause of his candles extinguishing in the night. The room had a terrible silence. He had never felt so alone before.

He wondered, for a tight-breathed moment, if he had done something terribly wrong. Had some rule been broken? Had some spell been lifted? The fear of a crime against God crawled insidiously into his brain. Sickness took hold of his stomach. The silence was a terror.

Then, gently, the scuff of a non-existent shoe interrupted his fears, drawing his eyes to the source of the sound- no pale apparition, not yet, he cautioned, but his writing desk. He moved towards it dutifully. On a forgotten piece of blotting parchment was a single word- "Where?"

Reginald cleared his throat. Weakly, he stammered. "T-The cemetery. A plot was bought for you. It's- it's got a lovely view." And just like that, the tears came.

He had not wept before now. He had found the body himself- no shrieking maid or fainting footman had come between him and the full horror of the thing. Of course he had found the body, he thought, who else would there have been? Who but him would have recognized that face half-covered in blood?

He had not wept- he had removed what he could from the face with his fingertips, and then stopped, uselessly, and sat down on the floor. That was how they had found them, their eyes both blank and empty.

He had not wept then, but now he wept, not at the graveside, but in front of a more tentative kind of remains.

That was when he felt it. Sitting at his writing desk, the tears coming down in an unbidden flood, the coldest hand he had ever felt closing briefly around his shoulder. Terror gripped his soul, but it was better than grief. He stopped crying. After a long, frigid moment, in which his breath froze in his limbs, he stood quickly, dressed efficiently, and left economically to stand at his place by the grave.

Lilies for the dead. That was what he had brought- he had never felt stupider than when he stood, watching the black box descend into the earth, and thrown the bouquet upon it's top, as though littering the stage of an actor he'd particularly admired.

There wasn't anything dead for the lilies to memorialize, and the cold walk from that spot in the earth they had marked for him seemed unnervingly staged. Reginald did not make his way back to the house too quickly- the contrast from one contradictory fact to the next would have been too much for him to take- instead he wandered about on that dewy field and gave into the first impulse that passed through him. Animated by an idea, feeling like an empty vessel pulled by a taut string, he had paused and made his way into the lonely hillside church alone, trampling sweetly though the dark dew-covered grass.

He entered. He knelt beneath the saints, the red and gold an inverse of the black and silver heavens, candlelight reflecting off the gilding high above him, echoing stars. Saint Sebastian lay above him, a dais high, pierced by his arrows- the martyr's face was fixed in his divine agony, and his look was known to move the weaker-kneed to tears. Reginald had long ago dropped to his knees. He had already fallen and buried his head in his upturned palms. He had wept himself empty. He was waiting for a priest.

A sweet smell- the cloying scent of incense- and small, clicking footsteps heralded a movement that was not his own.

"Father," He called out, and his voice was a calm shadow of his desperation. "Father, have you come to help me?"

"I am here, my son." A figure decked in shadow answered with solemnity.

"I have seen an apparition." He began, turning his knees in the direction of the voice. "Well, I have witnessed it at work. It has inhabited my home for weeks- it tends to my house, it whistles and sits with my servants. I think-" His voice gave for a moment. "I think I know who it is. But I must help him find peace. Father, you must help me to help him."

"How may I aid you, my son?"

"Show me how a soul may find rest." He answered softly. "My knowledge of death is slim."

And with that the figure robed in black approached. He placed his hand upon Reginald's shoulder, and, under the white anguished gaze of St. Sebastian, frozen rolling in his misery, a whisper passed from his lips to Reginald's ear.

There was a heavy moment- the scent of incense suffocated the air, mixed with something else- and then Reginald stood bolt upright, took his coat in both arms, and fled.

He returned home with his tail between his legs. He had already been questioned by all reasonable authorities and left alone, how did he- but it hardly mattered.

The maid gave him a curious look as he threw open the parlor doors, tossed his coat on a nearby couch, and demanded chalk. When she left, he rolled up his shirtsleeves, and when she returned he sent her away.

Then he paced into the entryway. Two broad staircases led up to the second floor, and their stately curves dominated the room. Above them hung a chandelier, heavy and translucent, dazzling even in the low light. He looked up and took a long breath.

Then he ascended the stairs. When he reached the top, he balked. He knew the smooth railing had been dusted, and the floors scrubbed, and the offending rug thrown out, but he had still not walked this route since it had happened. Oddly, it had not been the bottom of the stairs that had made him cold and pale. He stared down that dark hall, and then crouched, and wrote a name on the bare floor. It felt as though he was writing with frozen fingers- in his grasp the chalk felt foreign, and his hands were numb. He turned away from the hall, his back prickling as though under some sinister, malicious gaze.

Slowly, resolutely, he proceeded down the stairs. He had not meant to so solemnly descend. Here was where the body had tumbled. The floor was clean. He bent and wrote the name, but backwards- his mind swam. The scent of blood was thick in the air. There was no great scream. The hall was dark.

"I know you're here." He whispered. There was no faint, distorted laughter. No familiar voice rang out.

"I'm trying." Reginald's voice broke. "I know all this is lunacy- it's all something I read in a book once- the chalk and all. I just wanted to test if I could see you again. Because I know what I have to do now."

There was no apparition at the top of the stairs.

"I'll do it one way or another." He spoke to the emptiness all around him. Then he rose his voice in anger. He shouted, his grief raw in his chest. "Show yourself!"

And the floor went red.

He had not meant it to be this way. But now the scent was thick in his mouth, metallic in the back of his throat, like swallowing lead. Where was his apparition? Nothing but hollow

footsteps.

“For God’s sake.” He whispered. “I just wanted to say it face to face.”

In the empty silence, a dark shadow fell upon the floor and Reginald’s heart leapt into his mouth.

He had never felt so close to death before. He was looking into the eyes of a friend.

“This is it.” He choked out. “You have to go.”

The question leapt to his mind. Why? The answer was there, staring him in the face, if he dared to look down. “You have to leave.”

Silence reigned.

“You can not stay.” He swallowed. “And I can make you go.”

There was a cold dripping noise coming from the bottom of the stairs.

“Please don’t make me make you.”

And still, the sought-after apparition did not walk to some white light and dissolve into the ether; instead, the black shoes that had paced clicking up the staircase darkened sharply as if digging in their corporeal heels. The ghost of a smile took up Reginald’s swimming vision. There could now quite clearly be seen two pale still-gloved hands hanging beside black tailcoats. They were slack, not curled into fists. There was no show of strain or effort. A slick bile rose up in Reginald’s throat.

“You know I did this to you.” Reginald burst. The soft seditious whisper in the church bore rotting fruit. “Why do you stay?”

The tumbling fall. A sickening, torrid struggle- a memory Reginald recoiled from, that could not be him, he would never- and a sinister laying of hands on shoulders. A push that felt like letting go. A series of blackened crunches of bone on polished marble, and the final crack of skull on wood. Like a doll being thrown to the floor by a vengeful child, he shattered loudly, but without so much as an off-color whimper. A kicked dog would have made more noise. He had been too shocked to scream.

Reginald could barely remember a single footstep taken, but he had found himself by the fallen’s side, kneeling by a broken arm, cradling a broken head. Reddish matter sticky on his fingertips, drawing gossamer connecting lines between them. The horror of it all was tangible- a thick presence in the air.

That was how they had found them, stuck in that scene of sickening intimacy- Reginald felt as if he had never moved.

“I sent you to your death.” Reginald’s insides felt empty. “Let me send you somewhere better.”

A warped, high laugh broke out as if behind a closed and heavy curtain. Reginald realized, suddenly, the reason he had stayed.

The air was clouded with a thin film of dust, as soft as milk.

“Go.” Came Reginald’s desperate whisper. “I have admitted my guilt as was instructed. Leave me here in my grief.”

“It’s a curious form of suicide to kill that which serves you.” There was no sound, in fact it felt as though all air had been sucked from the room, and yet the words seemed as clear as daylight to him. “But you can not rid yourself of me so easily.”

If peering in through a keyhole, one could have seen a valet in black tails standing equal with his master, his shoulders squared with a gentle smile, his master with a face as pale as death.

A horrified whisper filled the empty entryway. “I beg you to leave me. I beg you to go.”

But the cold persisted. The shame hit his face in a warm rush- no, it was not shame, it was more than that- it was years he had spent, dismissing and calling to his aid a body that was now shattered by his hand and buried unceremoniously six feet in the ground. It was quiet, peaceable neglect. It was the chilling notion that the correcting hand he had so often requested he no longer could banish away.

The gentle, persistent smile did not alter, but an inch or so away from his face it seemed it’s meaning was now made clear. I had always been there, and now it would not leave.

“Is this my fate?” Reginald asked. There was a terrible, tremulous note in his voice, half strangled. “Is this to be my existence?”

The smile, unwavering, was now crystal clear even in this low light. There was nothing lost to haze, and not a hair out of place. The man that had sought perfection in life had found it in death. All graceful lines of that buried form were sharper now, somehow more pressingly present.

This was to be his lot in life. Reginald swallowed. A sick wonderment- if that were so, when again would he ever glimpse the tall frame that stood before him in black silk with tails? Would

the still white-gloved hands so plain before him now run up and down banisters and correct tipping teacups from behind that untouchable veil, unseen and unheard except for the stray sounds of crisply clicking footsteps and brief, distorted laughter? Reginald peered at the face before him, memorizing each line- there were only a few photographs in which he still existed, and only as a piece of background scenery. He was not scenery now.

But no- there would be more than that even if he now vanished, more than a few useless photographs and some fading footsteps. There was also the tune, burned now so clearly in his memory- an overly generous Christmas present, a too-warm declaration of friendship in which he had been too delighted and forgot his station- concert tickets. White gloved hands had moved with subtle longing over Reginald's first phonograph, and when Reginald asked after the infatuation, meaning to tease, he had found an encyclopedic knowledge of music at his disposal. That Christmas Reginald had handed him a slip of paper with obvious pride and accompanied him to seat worth three weeks of a valet's wages. His smile afterwards had been worth everything, but Reginald's skin still prickled at the memory- how stupid he had been, how utterly moronic, to let himself be seen that way.

He had talked of nothing but the concert for weeks on end! Reginald had never seen anyone so charmed. He had hummed snippets of symphonies while he worked. There had been no escaping any of it, and for a while, he hadn't even wanted to. The brightest star in recent memory- that was how he had described it, and Reginald was helpless but to agree. One refrain from that night stood out in the mind, and it was the one that came back to him faintly down the hall on winter nights, when he'd spent the day locked in his room pouring over papers and writing letters. Now it circled his mind and broke through the heavy veil with soft persistence when he mistakenly thought himself alone.

Reginald remembered the words he had said, before it had all come crashing down, and the body had hit the last step, and the stairwell had filled with red, and wondered why the tune still managed somehow to find him. Perhaps that was the most terrible thing- the kindness. Reginald looked into his eyes and knew he was deserving of far worse. It was indeed the most terrible thing, he decided, the clemency. The gentle smile. He met a dead gaze straight in the eyes and nodded softly. "I understand."

The cups in the house never broke again. Not once from

that fateful day onward did anything shatter, and the house was full of music. The phonograph- a newer model, which Reginald displayed proudly- never had the chance to gather dust. The walls swelled with warm concertos, and the evening cooled the rooms alongside heady, intoxicating nocturnes. Reginald slept peacefully in silence, if only ever interrupted by the only piece of music he never played. The candles were never left burning, and windows shut themselves. The rooms always stayed pleasant in the warmer months. But sometimes, when the wind blew wild and the master raised his voice, some nights you could here something falling, tumbling wildly down the stairs.

Wilson Korges is a senior in History and Political Science who enjoys ghost stories, classical music, and studying dead kings.

Number 26

By Danielle Wolf

“I don’t usually do this,” I said twisting the forkful of spaghetti.

She sipped her wine. “Do what?”

“This.” A small complicated gesture to her and the food. Then I shoved a tangle of spaghetti into my mouth and chewed.

“So you don’t bring all of your dates to Chuck’s Spaghetti Station?” she asked, tearing off a chunk of bread.

For the first time that night I laughed. Which I normally don’t do.

She lowered her voice into a deep Southern twang: “Chuck’s Spaghetti Station. Serving lukewarm spaghetti, awkward small talk, and shitty wine since 1985.” She raised her glass. “It’s like church.”

“If that were true maybe I’d go.”

She shrugged her shoulders.

“Maybe I’d go back.”

I took a small sip of the red wine in my cup and struggled to choke it down. “Where are you headed?”

“Denver,” she said. She combed her hand through her hair, stared down into her food.

“What’s there?”

“A fresh start.”

“I know that feeling. The need to get away. To find something new. Something different.”

She nodded. I moved closer.

“I’m just glad I finally had the courage to leave.”

“You’re here now,” I said and touched her hand. “I’m glad for that much.”

When she looked at me her eyes were odd and vulnerable. Then a little smile eased across her lips.

“Me too.”

I knew I had her then.

An hour passed. The kitchen closed. She led me to her room. On the door handle, a sign: DO NOT DISTURB. A king size bed - mauve sheets, faded from years of use. Long brown curtains blocked the light from the only window in the room. She sat down on the bed, waiting.

“Mind if I use your bathroom?” I asked.

She clicked on the radio and pointed down the hall. “So, Miss Roberts. Is it Barbara, Babs, or just B?”

“Who do you want me to be?” I closed the door. A flicker of fluorescent light, a soft hum. The radio music trailing as if from a tin can. In the mirror my reflection stares back. Dull-eyed and thin-lipped. Hair pulled back into a ponytail. A few blonde strands fray at the ends. A slight turn of the head. The tattoo below my right ear. The shape of a bird wing. A little cuckoo bird, my mother used to say. But that was long ago.

A turn of the handle, then a spray of cloudy water. Cold was the only option. I splashed my face and scrubbed. First, the lips, then the eyes -- left, and then right, like all of the other times. I turned off the faucet and watched the little whirlpool dance around the drain. I didn't bother to look back at the mirror. I always looked the same. Until after.

“Are you coming?” Her words slurred together a little at the ends. Only cheap wine had that wonderful effect.

When I turned the corner she was sprawled across the bed beneath the sheets. Her bare shoulder caught the light. Her tan skin nearly glowed. Bending down, I kissed the skin just above her clavicle. Then another along her neck. Eyes closed, she was a short breath, stunned. With my fingers I removed the stray hair from her face and tucked it behind her ear. She leaned in, waiting. I smelled the sour wine on her breath. Then a gentle kiss on the lips. That soft touch. The beginning of something beautiful. She pulled me into the bed and we started in on one another.

She removed my shirt, pulling it softly over my head. Tugged my jeans off over my feet, even tossed them across the room onto the chair. She pressed small wet kisses up the inside of my thigh. My breath quickened. I swallowed hard. My eyes snapped shut. I felt her hands over my body, as if she wanted to be everywhere at once.

Her eyes were still and wide. There was a small space between her lips, enough for a secret to slip out or a whisper. I called her name and waited. One mississippi, two mississippi, three mississippi... 26 mississippi. But no words came, not so much as a blink. I sat on the edge of the bed, watched the morning clouds drag shadows across the room. I could still smell her perfume. That sharp floral scent stuck beneath my skin. In the shower I used a rough bar of soap to scrape it out.

I dressed in her clothes: yellow sweater dress, long sleeves, floral print, a brown belt around the waist. Boots, ankle high, a scuff along the left toe. I took the watch from her wrist and slipped it on. Earrings: sea shells on brass chains. I bet she thought she could hear the ocean. Tweed purse, black with white stripes. At the bottom: tissues, pain pills, eye drops, and loose change. A black and white photo of Audrey Hepburn stretched along her clutch. I fished out her ID: Makena Lee Cash. March 3, 1983. My Number 26.

Another hour. Down the last of her Pom Super Tea, mindlessly switch her earrings from one ear to the other.

I locked the door behind me and tossed the keycard in the garbage at the bottom of the stairs. I didn't look back, not once. Across the parking lot the bus growled and sputtered and then evened out. An older man was tearing tickets at the front. His hands shook and I thought how it could've been the heat. A little sweat gathered above his lip. He stared down at my ticket before he ripped off the stub.

"Welcome aboard, Miss Cash," he said and smiled.

"Well aren't you the sweetest thang," I said. "Call me Makena."

Danielle Wolf is a graduating senior with a double major in English and Women's and Gender Studies and a minor in Technical Communications. She is also a wine enthusiast and avid baker, much to the appreciation of her classmates.

Nonfiction

It's good to be back

By Alex Felker

I wrote this on a sunny, late afternoon, having spent the day on a cycling trip around campus. It was the first day of moving for Iowa State's Fall 2016 class of Freshmen, and all campus was alive after a summer spent in slumber.

Like a school of pacific salmon journeying home to their birth-stream after gorging themselves on insects, invertebrates and plankton, so to have the students of Iowa State returned to campus after a summer spent doing whatever. And they bring with them their stuff.

Their toaster ovens, their electric fans, their rugs and their televisions. And the dumpsters are brimming with packaging. The sidewalks, the streets, the benches, the tables—all of campus is alive and buzzing. I spot parents looking equal part excited, and equal part wistful. I spot students looking equal part enthusiastic, and equal part annoyed. Lastly, I spot a smattering of university administrators and staff—mostly just looking annoyed.

So it's moving week, and I'm cycling through Union Drive. I see a father, struggling with a large television set. He is lifting it out of the trunk of a car; ambitiously, and independently. As I pass him by I hear a clunk. Then a sigh, and a worried-sounding "what was that?" from somewhere nearby.

I see a pair of grandparents, chatting quietly underneath a shade tree. They're eyeing up a young family across the way. I hear: "If only Anthony would just wash his hands every so once in a while, would it kill him? And Jessica, she could do with a proper haircut." And the old man in reply: "Oh, I agree Joyce. The parking here is wonderfully reasonable. 30 minutes for a nickel. 30 minutes, Joyce."

I see a daughter with her mother, the former looking far less comfortable than the latter. I hear the mother say: "Sunscreen is important, Julie—this is no laughing matter." The daughter is staring into space and almost walks into a pole.

I see a lost-looking young student, holding a cell phone and a campus map. He is spinning in place, presumably trying to figure out which direction is north. Somebody in a red polo passes by in a golf cart and begins to make inquiries. A few moments later, the student walks off in an opposite direction looking less sure of himself than before.

But most of all—I see a new year. A new year, and all those new possibilities which come along with it. All those high school romances which will come to an abrupt, messy end, all those 8 a.m. lectures which will be begrudgingly attended, all those frozen pizzas which'll be carelessly burnt, all those research papers which will be written on reckoning's eve, all those cheap, plastic storage tubs which will see their lives flash before their proverbial eyes when they are loaded with junk past all reason, all those—well, you get the point.

And still I see a bit more. I see a student who will finally find his place in geology club. A student who will represent his university on the track. A student who will do major research with a professor in the forefront of his field. A student who will work harder than he's even worked before, and prove everyone wrong. In short, I see a promising new year.

Yes—it's good to be back.

Alex Felker is a senior at Iowa State studying Urban Planning and Economics. He grew up in Iowa City but is glad he came to Ames where he also writes the Opinion column for the ISU Daily.

Successful Twenty-Something Barbie

By Annie Seeley

One of my biggest childhood role models was born on March 6, 1959. She was tall, beautiful, savvy, and—most importantly to me—successful. With over 130 careers from fashion model to astronaut, what better role model could a little girl find than Barbara Millicent Roberts, more affectionately known worldwide as Barbie?

Unwrapping that not quite shoebox-shaped package on Christmas mornings and at birthday parties gave me another glimpse at what I could be someday. Her big blue eyes would gaze up at me, soft pink lips forming a gentle smile. Her clothing and cardboard background promised that I could be a business owner, an artist, a scientist, and so on.

First, it was US Olympic Gymnast Barbie, clad in a miniature of the full-length leotard Team USA wore at the 1996 Atlanta games. Its gold stars would fade away and peel off with love and years gone by, especially at the places around the doll's extra-flexible joints. My sister and I would use our rulers as balance beams, flipping our Barbies until the red and blue stripes on their extremities became purple blurs. My mom showed us how to make our dolls stick their landings from the makeshift vault made from an upside down Tupperware container and a stapler. I used to jam my poor doll's legs into the ground with as much force as a four year old could muster. I'm surprised her little plastic ankles weathered the storm. She could have been a tiny Kerri Strug, because I know I wouldn't have stopped making her stick landings when one of those ankles finally snapped.

The funniest part is, I don't remember watching the 1996 Olympics at all; I remember flipping and twirling my Barbie in the air for hours, her hair tangling irrevocably, but never watching the actual gymnasts stick landings and swing through uneven bar routines. I also don't remember thinking, "I can do that. I should be a gymnast!" But I definitely don't remember thinking that I couldn't do it. It's not that anyone specifically told me I could be anything I wanted when I grew up. Instead, the thought that I couldn't grow up to be whatever I wanted never crossed my mind. I did take gymnastics classes at that same age, but it was the kiddie

class where they teach summersaults then babysit you while the older kids learn cartwheels. I wasn't heartbroken when we stopped going to class.

Next, it was Ocean Friends Barbie and Baby Keiko the Whale. She had bleach-blonde hair and bright pink earrings that matched her snazzy wetsuit and glittery pink snorkeling gear. She was even posed horizontally in the box, seeming to swim alongside her orca companion. Keiko the whale had a sliding weight so it could dive and emerge from water effortlessly. Barbie's long legs were painted black to extend her wet suit to her ankles, but in warm water the black paint disappeared. It was magical to kindergartener me. I took Barbie and her orca friend Keiko to the bathtub and played for hours (or as long as my mom let me). My sister and I shared Ocean Friends Barbie and Ocean Friends Ken, who came with "his dolphin friend." I'm still trying to figure out why Barbie's orca was named, and Ken's "dolphin friend" was not. Eventually, I decided Barbie could train her marine mammal friends, and that was the first time I told myself, "I could do that. I could be a dolphin trainer!"

It was genius! I liked swimming, I liked making weird noises that kind of sounded like whale songs, and I liked learning about the ocean. Somehow, this idea spiraled into a goal, and somehow the goal went from dolphin trainer to marine biologist. Visits to family in Delaware and Florida became new opportunities to see oceanic wildlife like horseshoe crabs, conch, oysters, and starfish. In grade school, I took my swimming lessons very seriously. After all, if I wanted to work with marine mammals, I should be at least semi amphibious, right? In second grade, I spent my accumulated allowance and a gift card to Barnes & Noble on an outrageously expensive ocean encyclopedia. It was massive. It probably weighed more than I did at the time. I read that thing from cover to cover soaking in knowledge of deep ocean vents, deadly jellyfish, and Caribbean algae tides.

Playing with Ocean Friends Barbie was the first time I thought, why not me? It was the first time I thought realistically about working to achieve something. My work ethic has increased exponentially since then. No one can call me lazy. I set a goal, and I do whatever it takes to reach it, often going above and beyond expectations. Ocean Friends Barbie would not have made many Ocean Friends without hard work and determination.

Next, it was a Generation Girl Barbie that wasn't named

Barbie at all. Each doll in the Generation Girl product line had a different name and personality. I had Tori, a self-described tomboy, rock climber and skateboarder. She wore a crop top and baggy jeans with high top sneakers. Her long blonde hair with streaks of bleaching and crimping was pulled into massive pigtails and she wore minimal makeup. She was so cool! I was in third grade, and just beginning my rebellious phase. I was working on my blue belt in Tae Kwon Do. I watched *Batman: The Animated Series* reruns before school and *Batman Beyond* after. Comic books fascinated me. Tori the street-chic skateboarding Barbie was awesome. She shredded the streets of my imagination, doing kick flips on my kitchen floor, practicing in half-pipes made of bent coloring books, and grinding the rails of my coffee table and antique piano bench (much to my mother's chagrin).

I still had those dreams of becoming a marine biologist, but I also wanted to kick ass. I wanted to learn to drive fast cars and kick people in the face wearing souped-up Batgirl boots. Tori taught me that I could want that and still be successful. Her passion was skateboarding, but she had career aspirations too. The little bio that with Tori said her dream job was a "webmaster who creates cool websites." She was successful and herself. No compromises. That was an idea I could get behind.

I am now twenty-two years old, about to graduate from college, and wading in beat up Barbie dolls in my parent's chilly basement. *I find the faded leotard of my Olympic Gymnast Barbie, but not the doll.* She is lost to the army of Tupperware filled with my childhood toys. Ocean Friends Barbie is clad in another doll's dress. Her legs are scratched, creating tiny runs in her disappearing leggings. I dig Tori out of the bottom of the box, but I barely recognize her. She's in a puffy pink ball gown. I dig for her crop top and jeans to restore my sanity. That's better. Successful and herself. No compromises.

I suddenly remember a commercial entitled "Imagine the possibilities" that popped up on social media a few weeks ago. In it, a young girl of about eight or nine walks into a lecture hall and begins teaching college-age students about the human brain. She is confident and uncompromising even in the face of her students' laughter at her "facts." For example, "a dog's brain can't think as much as the human's brain because there's no high school for the dog." Eventually, the lecture hall fades away to the same girl, seated before a miniature lecture hall of blocks and tissue boxes

dotted with Barbie dolls. She holds one in her hand, bobbing it around before the others as she continues her lecture on the human brain. The screen fades to pink and declares, “When a girl plays with a Barbie, she imagines everything she can become.”

It’s true. I honestly have no idea where I would be without Barbie’s silent guidance. I doubt I would be pursuing a master’s degree a short few weeks from now. I wouldn’t be as confident in my abilities or my hobbies. I wouldn’t be as sure in my career path if I hadn’t imagined myself in so many of Barbie’s.

Barbie will always be a part of my life. I feel her presence when I slip on my sensible business heels to conquer a career fair. She trudges through soil with me in archaeology labs and titrates liquefied food products with me during food chemistry. Her painted eyes sparkle through mine after a luckily good eyeliner application. She pats my back in my successes just as I awed at hers years ago. I only hope that in 56 years, I too am tall, beautiful, savvy, and—most importantly to me—successful.

Annie Seely earned her B.S. in Culinary Science from Iowa State in 2015 and is currently seeking a master’s degree in Food Science and Technology. When she is not hiding in her office, Annie enjoys watching corgi videos, practicing Taekwondo, baking pie, and making lists. She would like to thank her parents for all the Barbies they bought her as well as their continued support and encouragement.

Poetry

Balance

By Shawn Robinson

Maybe you'd love me if I wasn't so ugly
If I rhymed
Or had four lines instead of three

Grandpa

By Shawn Robinson

You're sort of a sad thought I have

I came and went impatiently
Back then next time was tomorrow
When is next time now?

I'm glad I have it

For now
But you're fading

Little Brother, Little Sister

By Shawn Robinson

I am selfish

Sit quietly there now
I will teach you how to play basketball
I will play pretend
I will live for you
And then I won't
I will cut you open when I leave

Sit quietly there now
Bleed for a while, then heal
As you forget about me

Sit quietly there now
I'll be back soon
To cut you open again

I am sorry

Piston

By Shawn Robinson

Push-ups go in ones and twos
And then up
And then down
And so on

A girl with blue hair looks on
Biting her lower lip
In love with what my body does

Her boyfriend looks on
Clenching his fist
In love with what my body does

Push-ups go in ones and twos
As do I for young Miss Blue
And then up
And then down
And so on

The Life of Sydney Carton

By Shawn Robinson

Lessons learned are lessons learned
And so on the sound goes
A crying star that bleeds and burns
So part of our night glows

An isle sighing, breathing, weeping
Watching sunrays gray
An ocean flowing, swaying, seeking
Sailing loves away

Lessons learned are lessons learned
I am no Carton
This is no Lucid Manette dream
Nor no Darnay freeing scheme
Paints repainting painted scenes
The views my muse alone

Shawn is a Junior in English Education who's just happy to be here. He is writing a novel about college. You can see him perform more poetry at the M-Shop on Open Mic Nights.

To Write Love on My Arms

By Jennifer Low

I write your name on the inside
of my thigh with a blade
like a supplication,
carve lines like maps on my arms
and legs
just to see what color I am
on the inside.

Yet, unlike a pressure cooker valve,
this does not bring release,
only the desire to do it
over and over
until I can trace the scar lines
like a fragile spider web.

I cry in the dark
felling like I am always
immersed in blackness,
I cannot love myself,--yet,
my scars are too great,
my life is shattered.

But eventually
I will write love
on my arms.

Souls

By Jennifer Low

The leaves burn
in the quiet fall afternoon,
smelling like death
and longing for home.

Everything is rotted now,
the apples fallen
from the tree,
heaps of broken grasses
brown and dead.

As leaves float
up toward the clear azure sky
you wonder if the dead
are happy today.

The wind stirs through your hair
like a quiet spirit,
and in the orange light of the fire
you see sparks of the past,
the dead are crying out to you,
but you cannot answer.

Jennifer Low is a first year Master's student in the IGS program, focusing on Gerontology. She is looking at aging and disability. She has two bachelor's degrees: one in English, one in Child, Adult and Family Services. Besides writing she loves to read, volunteer and hang with her two black cats.

Firefly

By Jessica Heintz

The lies we tell ourselves cling to our skirts
We fear for what might happen when we let go
So we drag them around as if they are our own
But they are society's children, orphaned and neglected
They beg and plead for scraps, like parasites they destroy us
Until one day they become who we are.

Jessica Heintz is a senior, majoring in Child, Adult, and Family Services with a minor in English. She grew up a city girl in N. St. Paul, MN, but her heart lies in the open space of the country. Jessica is passionate about creative writing, promoting social change, and spending time in nature. She hates wearing shoes or matching her socks.

Hayley's Comet

By Hayley Benson

Gravitational pull
I collided with you
Le soleil et la lune
Show me the galaxies in your eyes
Tell me the constellations in your mind
Fill my void
You are my arcadian altitude
You are my universe now

Hayley Benson is a junior at Iowa State majoring in Psychology and minoring in Sociology and Philosophy. Her hobbies include working out, Netflix, and hanging out with friends. After graduation she plans to go to graduate school in Social Work either in Oregon or Colorado.

Star

By Megan Lutz

Star.

it's cold.
it's freezing.
those days of winter before the coats.
there's a fresh wind even.
the bus stops.
you're free.
walkingwalkingrunningrunningrunning
home.
emptycolddarkalone
up the stairs
I go.
slow
it's just slow.
time stalls and you don't know why.
you see Her,
frail, fragile, frightening,
talkingtalkingtalkingtalking
only a few tears.
then IT happens.
time freezes altogether
you're completely frozen in place.
coughingcoughingcoughingcoughing
you're stuck
you cannot move
what help even are you?
She's gone.
gone.
cryingcryingcryingsobbingsobbingsobbingsobbing
after all you're all alone.
alone.
emptycolddarkalone.
and She'll always be gone.
always.
another Star in heaven.

Megan Lutz is from a small town in southwest Iowa. She's a sophomore in English and journalism, but likes to tell people that she's a words engineer. Her favorite pastimes are rollerblading, collecting things, and writing.

Between the Lines

By Hope Sievers

My friends could be
tall or short
skinny, fat
frail and flimsy
thick, sturdy

some of my friends
are a bit beaten up
scars, scratches mar their face
ink tattoos scrawled on their skin
a cover you shouldn't judge

I notice their smell often
whether clean and fresh
old, musty
sometimes, distinctly dusty

surprising
exciting
new friends
whose stories I've never heard
pages I turn for the first time

same old, same old
old friends
whose words are familiar
been heard over and over

a spine binds each one together
leading to their thoughts inside

my friends
have secrets
are hard to understand
don't say things outright
have lots to say
or

not very much

however
what they do say
is important
always important
forever important

friends
teach lessons
tell of history gone by
explain things
tell the truth
tell lies
bring us down
pull us up
comfort us
confront us

they say
who we spend our time around
is who we'll become

whether you know it
or not
my friends
your friends
change me
change you
they help me understand
not just myself
or you, yourself

they help you see
the world differently

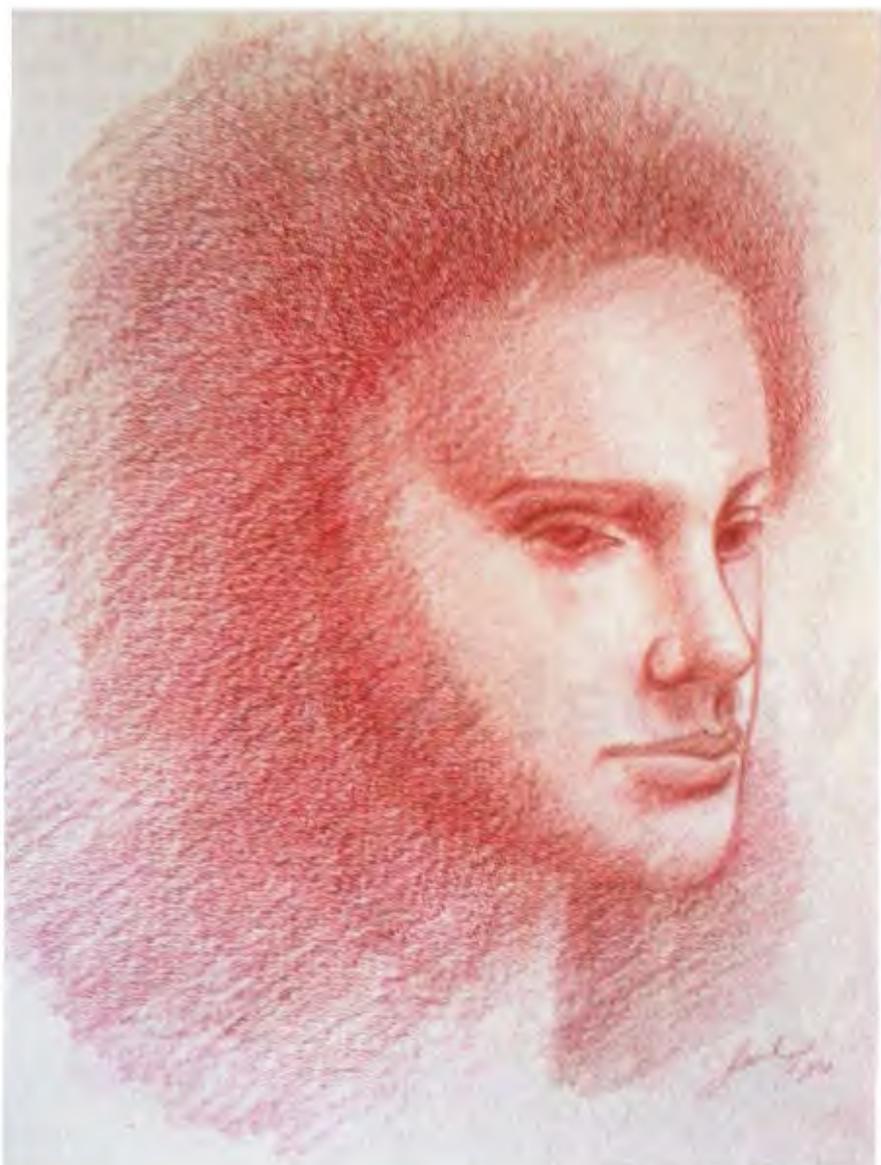
my friends don't breathe
though
I suppose they used to
deep in the forest
where their arms stretched out to seek the sun

where their legs dug deep in the dirt

now they sit on shelves
waiting for their chance
for you to get to know them
and hear what they have to say

Hope Sievers is a junior at Iowa State, majoring in English.

Visual Arts



Imagination (2016)

By Javaid Eid

Pencil color on paper

11 x 15 inches



Achilles Sculpture (2014)

By Javid Eid
Pencil on paper
11 x 15 inch



Norm (2016)

By Javaid Eid

Charcoal on paper

15 x 11 inches



Nietzsche's Portrait (2016)

By Javaid Eid

Pencil on paper

11 x 15 inches



Flow State (2016)

By Javaid Eid

Pencil color on paper

15 x 11 inches



Creation (2016)

By Javaid Eid

Pencil color on paper

15 x 11 inches

SKETCH
Literary Magazine