

Steal the gift!

You say to me
that writing poetry
is not your gift.

If that be the case—

Steal it!
Fight for it!
Maim for it!

Break the laws of
the Almighty himself
to get a hold of it.

Trust me,
He won't mind.

-Ryan McGinty, junior

FIRETHORNE

FALL 2008

FIRETHORNE SUBMISSION POLICY

Firethorne is Gustavus Adolphus College's student-run literary magazine comprised solely of student work. Firethorne is published twice a year, with a supplemental in the fall and a full-length publication in the spring.

Students may submit their work by emailing firethorne@gustavus.edu. Emails must attach prose and poetry in Microsoft Word format in a standard font without color (Times New Roman, 12 pt.), while artwork and photography must be sent as a JPEG file with reasonable file compression (300-600 dpi). Drawings that are being submitted may either be scanned and then emailed, or can be a high quality copy. Copies can be submitted through the Gustavus Adolphus post office and sent to Professor Baker Lawley. Students may submit as many pieces as they desire; however, a greater number of submissions does not guarantee publication. Firethorne will not publish anonymous work or materials submitted from a non-Gustavus email address.

The Managing Editor will systematically code all submitted work and turn over the submitted work, without attribution, for the editors' scrutiny. Firethorne staff will admit submissions for creativity, originality and artistic value.

For prose, submissions should be 2500 words or less. Artwork and photography can be color and up to any size, however please take note that color may be cost prohibitive depending on available funds. In this event, Firethorne staff will convert artwork to grayscale with the submitter's consent.

Submissions marked for publication will appear in their original submitted form except for technical aspects such as font, size, page placement and corrections of obvious grammatical errors. Stylistic changes (i.e. word substitutions, changes in length of the work, word omissions, etc.) recommended by the editors will be made only with the submitter's consent. If recommended changes are not approved by the submitter, they will not be made; however the publication of the work will then be determined by the Firethorne staff as it reflects our artistic mission for the publication as a whole. It is against Firethorne policy to publish works that do not reflect the submitter's artistic integrity.

Firethorne recompensates its staff members by allowing them to publish either one prose piece or two poems per issue. Staff members' works will undergo the editing process like all other submissions.

The views and/or opinions expressed in the publication are not to be taken as those of Firethorne staff or its associated bodies. Materials deemed to place the publication at risk for liability with regard to obscenity or profanity in connection with hate speech, slander or other illegal forms of speech will be removed at the staff's discretion. Work found to be fraudulent in nature or plagiarized will be disqualified upon confirmation.

Inquiries into Firethorne can be made by contacting:

Baker Lawley, Assistant Professor of English, Firethorne Advisor
Gustavus Adolphus College
800 West College Avenue
St. Peter, MN 56082

or

blawley@gustavus.edu
507-933-7402

This policy was revised August 2006. Firethorne, MMVI all rights reserved.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS FROM THE STAFF

The Fall 2008 Firethorne staff would like to thank the following people who have been an invaluable part of this publication:

The production team from Beaver's Pond Press,

The Gustavus English Department and the Gustavus Student Senate,

All of the talented students who submitted their work,

Jenny Tollefson,

And Baker Lawley, our faculty advisor.

Without all of these people, this publication would have flopped. Badly.

—The Firethorne Staff

Cover art, *A Bronco with Bounce*,
by Christopher Elveru (Gunter Heidrich), junior

LETTER FROM THE EDITORS

Dearest Reader,

That's right. It's back.

Firethorne, Gustavus' own student-produced literary magazine, has come out of hibernation to grace the world with its presence once again. Despite its one-year absence, the overwhelming amount of submissions for this year's fall issue made it clear that Firethorne's flame had, indeed, not gone out. Friends, the fire continues to burn.

You might notice that Firethorne got a make-over this year. In search for inspiration, we journeyed down to the basement of the library and unearthed a number of long-forgotten Firethorne issues from years past. We were struck by the artistry and creativity found in these issues, and have tried our best to recreate the inventiveness of past issues while simultaneously putting our own fingerprints on this publication.

We would especially like to thank our incredible staff. With their enthusiasm and work ethic, they truly helped to bring Firethorne back from the ashes. We owe them our sanity.

We hope you enjoy the Fall 2008 Firethorne. We sure do.

Happy Reading,

Katie Anderson
Managing Editor

Molly Kolpin
Organizational Manager

FIRETHORNE STAFF

MANAGING EDITOR	Katie Anderson
ORGANIZATIONAL MANAGER	Molly Kolpin
POETRY EDITORS	Marlene Kvitrud Bethany Ringdal
POETRY ASSISTANT EDITORS	Matt Heider Laura Ofstad Melanie Rasch
PROSE EDITORS	Abby Travis Ryan McGinty
PROSE ASSISTANT EDITORS	Samantha Maranell Aaron Hiltner Amanda Schreiner Susan Kranz
ART EDITOR	Abbie Hitzemann
ART ASSISTANT EDITOR	Susan Kranz
GRAPHIC DESIGNER	Laura Groenjes

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Steal the Gift!	-Ryan McGinty	1
Convergent Dock	-Whitney Langenfeld	11
Dead Humor	-Lynn Olson	12
Addiction	-Kristine Robertson	13
Frog Hunting	-Hannah Twiton	14
Idealism	-Jenna Chapman	15
Invisible	-Heather Rusk	16
A Sign on the Road of Life	-Colby Citrowske	17
El Cielo de los Angeles	-Joelle Paulson	19
Her Laugh is like Watermelons	-Maggie Sotos	20
Mara	-Whitney Langenfeld	21
A Bucolic Hegemony	-Aaron Hiltner	22
A Picture	-Samantha Stoner	23
Latte-Fueled Musings of a Semi-Conscious Fool	-Jenna Chapman	24
Playing Her Song	-Molly Kolpin	26
Gustavus Adolphus Flora	-LaTisha Franzmeier	31
Silence	-Marlene Kvitrud	32
The Half-Life	-Mary Cooley	33
Portrait of a Drowned Ancestor	-Matt Heider	34
Fire: A burning desire	-Michael Paulson	36
Depiction of an Elegant Woman	-Brett Paulsen	37
Dear Nancy	-Andy Keenan	38
I Confess	-Mary Cooley	39
Vices	-Ryan McGinty	40
Wonderful	-Song Yang	42
The Desert Calls	-Brett Paulsen	43
post-argument	-Lynn Olson	43
Makayla	-Kachar Yang	44
Sarah's Dress	-Elizabeth Faldet	45
Welcome to the world Mr. Well	-Brett Paulsen	46
War List	-Matt Heider	47
Saturation	-Susan Engberg	48
Through Rain	-Samantha Maranell	49
If I Want to Write	-Abby Travis	50
Doorway to the Past	-Amanda Schuelka	52

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Suppose someone came to the door one day	-Chelsea Kramer	53
The Saturday Afternoon	-Maggie Sotos	54
Shore	-Matt Heider	58
Ready or Not	-Samantha Maranell	59
Today is Friday	-Abby Travis	60
The Forest	-Jordan Klitzke	61
Whisper	-Mary Cooley	62
Little Mystery Men	-Chelsea Kramer	63
Olaf	-Elizabeth Faldet	64
Broke Bitch Montage	-Keegan Fraley	65
The Wine God's Wrath	-Jill Fagerstrom	66
The Things I Dream About	-Bethany Ringdal	71
Outpost Home	-Whitney Langenfeld	72
Cairns Rainforest	-Kat Coughlin	73
Incongruous	-Mary Cooley	74
Roll Call	-Lynn Olson	75
Contemplating Parenting	-Jordan Klitzke	76
Hope Is The Best Bait	-Jenna Chapman	77
She Said...	-Bethany Ringdal	78
Urban Sign of Hope	-Amanda Schuelka	79



Convergent Dock, Whitney Langenfeld, senior

Dead Humor

A murdered man
lies dead in
the alley where
the lawman
at his side tells
a corpse joke
at his expense.
A curious boy
shuffles nearer
to hear and
the joker moves
to make room
and in doing so
steps on the hand
which snaps the wrist
cracking the spine
of his punchline
into sobriety.

The dead man's lips twitch.

—Lynn Olson, sophomore

Addiction

Burning acidic liquid
In my throat.
Cold,
Smooth,
Cutting
Sharp.
Like swallowing glass.
And I like it.
It's almost masochistic,
To worship the poison that can clean rust
Off of car batteries.
That can't be good for my stomach.
But it does soothe my head,
And the pain of its absence.

Let's face it.
I need this.

—Kristine Robertson, senior



Frog Hunting, Hannah Twiton, junior

Idealism

The odds are
against two
boys fishing in
a retention pond.
It's difficult to catch
even a bluegill when
you just can't tell
if it'd survive in there
to begin with.
But they don't care or
don't think.

Half the fun's in
casting anyway.
(the other, wishful thinking)

-Jenna Chapman, first-year

Invisible

-Heather Rusk, senior

She stands at the edge. Glancing over her shoulder, she steps down, wearily pushing herself across the street. Headlights beckon to her from a distance. She pauses unconsciously, her figure barely cutting through the light, before shaking her head to clear away the unwelcome thoughts. Beyond her the light merges as if she's not there.

Unsettled, she reaches the other side and stops. Unwilling to continue. At home, she knows what awaits her. A dirty kitchen illuminated by the glaring light overhead. A long walk down the hallway to an empty bedroom, an empty bed unmade from the previous night's attempt at sleep. Nothing living. The coldness used to bother her. Now it's home. Strangely comforting in knowing that nothing can or will ever disturb. Everything exactly as she left it in the glow of the early sun.

No, she would rather just stand. On the edge. More headlights pass by. So close she imagines feeling briefly warmed as each one just misses her.

Another flash of light behind her. She sees warmth burning red through closed eyes. A memory of a sun that once brought laughter. Another flash and an image surfaces before her. A favorite photograph from a happier time. They say she looks like her. The smiles make it obvious. Noses crinkled, eyes sparkling with a long forgotten joke only they knew. Another flash and her memory is torn from her. Nothing left is hers.

16 Her eyes open. Eyes everyone avoids, afraid of finding

themselves reflected in hers. She never notices how heads bow as she walks alone on crowded streets, to avoid confronting the emptiness. How people look past her when they talk to her.

Looking up, the trees rustle their leaves at her, disturbed by the breeze that hid so many secrets. How many times she whispered to the wind all that she wanted to hide from herself and forget. Each word carried off before the next was formed, stringing herself out with all other secrets thrown to the wind. Except the wind didn't let her forget. It was always there. Each caress, each tongue wrapping around her, each tousle of her hair brought her words back to her with the sounds and smells of other lives. The blanket that covered her in the darkness with all she wanted and would never have.

In her stillness she blends in with the night. Even the stars overhead don't see her, masked by clouds that loom ominous above, a silk lining in a coffin as large as her world. Still she remains. The cars behind her trickling off until there is no light and she is hidden. No images before her eyes. No color. Standing visible to all, but none. Accompanied only by a wind that carries away all evidence.

Morning light falls upon an empty curb. A lone, solitary walker passes by, unknowing.

El Cielo de los Ángeles

Swinging perilously around jagged corners and dodging small fallen boulders. I fear for my life. Death is surely imminent. The driver of this archaic bus, now driving with his knees, curses at the hissing radio. “Mierda, Mierda!” A semi is hurtling towards us at a frightening velocity. Dear God, I’m going to die. I close my eyes and see blood spattered bodies and juicy entrails leaking from abdomens and flesh lacerated by glass and brains split open like smashed pumpkins. *Estoy en el infierno!* I am in hell. On a rollercoaster, a hellish rollercoaster. The truck bellows past, blaring its horn. My heart beating faster than a disgruntled bear. Muddy tin huts and bony cows and barefoot children whirl past. Are they even real? Up and up and up we go. The huts and cows and children are dots on a landscape so treacherously beautiful it is difficult to comprehend. There is an explosion of vegetation. Massive trees with umbrella leaves drizzled with sweet sap. Puffs of romantic mist drifting leisurely above the dignified forest. The sun teasingly playing hide and seek behind the cotton clouds and the mountain rocks glimmering with dew, like precious jewels. *Que linda...Que linda.* As we round another corner and my stomach does a somersault with my kidney, I keep my eyes on this landscape, on this heaven, *el cielo de los ángeles.*

—Joelle Paulson, sophomore

Her Laugh is like Watermelons

Your laugh isn't smooth like a silk scarf, but look where that got Isadora Duncan.

Your laugh isn't deep like the Atlantic, but look where that got the Titanic.

Your laugh isn't elegant like champagne, but I hate bubbles.

Your laugh isn't high like some Hollywood actress, but who wants to date Norma Desmond?

I remember a 4th of July picnic at Grandma's. Uncle Roger gave me watermelon and said, "Try this, it's the best fruit on the planet. God gave man women and watermelons." I bite into it. I don't understand, it's all watery. But the juice runs down my chin and tells me, it's OK to be five and happy with sparklers on my bicycle handlebars and chalk on my fingers from the crooked hopscotch I drew. The juice tells me, the ice cream stain will come out of your overalls but the flavor will stay. The juice tells me there's a secret inside of its abundance that I haven't found yet but I will. Inside this universe there's a reason, just like inside your laughter there's a reason.

That's when I found the seeds. Your laugh is like watermelons, because I am in love with something I can't understand.

—Maggie Sotos, senior



Mara, Whitney Langenfeld, senior

A Bucolic Hegemony

We were sitting by the restless iteration of the sea,
Unknowing in regards to its absurd continuation.
I told her about my days in Harmonium.

I had spent only four days there,
Yet it had seemed like life eternal,
Time undulated and pitched without consequence.

Monday was the odor of poorly fermented wine,
It stagnated,
And was crushed like autumn's spent leaves.

Tuesday appeared to be a day of promise,
But was verisimilitude,
Like the false heat of an incandescent winter sun.

Wednesday overtook me;
It was the spine of a primordial spring fish
Flexing and driving pain into the clenched palm.

I couldn't remember Thursday,
Perhaps it was like the flayed bark of a Birch tree;
Maybe it held the fragrance of a summer's divine attar.

—Aaron Hiltner, junior

A Picture

But there they were...

Frozen.

Vulnerably captured, an instant flash.

The glossy veneer paints an image
Of what once was.

Her. Hair perfect in pins;

Dress tousled about sun-kissed skin.

Glowing upwards towards him.

Him. Glowing down at her,

Matched in blue.

Hand on the small of her back, the other on her heart.

Naively dancing amidst a sea of others.

Frozen now.

Caught by a disposable.

Unaware that they, too, could be disposable.

But there they were.

—Samantha Stoner, sophomore

Latte-Fueled Musings of a Semi-Conscious Fool

— Jenna Chapman, first-year

a)

Kimya Dawson is my idol.
She can take
crowded starbucks isolation
and weave a safety
net to catch
my green tea latte
before I vomit
anger at those with less
time on their hands.

The univers
ality of lame made
joyful ditty of forgiveness
for me stabbing rationality
in the back.

I don't need this
caffeine and piped acoustic
but it hides the place of
an empty sofa with our
names on it.

b)

Everything seems shallow
in comparison to the grave
you dug for my
sanity when you declared
me necessary.

c)

Frogs don't live
on lily pads.
There's no satisfaction in
jumping from moment
to moment
with or without long
green legs.

d)
My right ventricle
is nailed to the old
oak tree outside
my house.
Pity is,
when I transplant
there'll still be artery
on a bent nail in Chicago.

e)
This generation
drinks bottled
air.
It's quite stylish,
really. Gets you
respect.
You tend to
run out
pretty quickly though.

f)
I'm not too
sure how pent
up stress gets
released in pen
coffee tea eyes
ears and quiet.

g)
So jealous of
impulse rail
hobos. That's
a job I'd pay
to live.

h)
Catfish
Breakfast?
wishful
thinking
no. that's
me plus you

Playing Her Song

-Molly Kolpin, senior

Two days before it happened I studied legato at my piano lesson. *Legato*—even the word flows effortlessly from the tongue and suggests its smooth, soothing, silky nature. I remember my piano teacher’s fingers gliding across the ivory keys as she demonstrated the technique of creating that sleepy, dreamy sound. She must have eaten an orange before I arrived because the tangy, sweet smell of citrus lingered on her child-sized hands, mixing with the sharp scent of pine needles that was still discernible in the room—even though the Christmas season had already succumbed to January’s dismal chill. In retrospect, I am able to appreciate the irony that I studied legato prior to the most jarring event of my life. The broken, interrupted sound of staccato may have been a more appropriate lesson topic considering what came next; but perhaps legato was meant to be a last moment of calm before my childhood vanished in a storm.

Two days later—on January 29, 1996—the storm hit. With it came endless snowflakes flurrying in frenzied, haphazard paths. I sat on my mother’s lap in a doctor’s office, but the blinds covering the room’s solitary window were stuck together in one spot and allowed for glimpses of the swirling chaos. Inside, the only sound that could be heard was the soft *swish swish* of my legs as they rubbed against each other—swinging back and forth through the dry, winter air. *Swish swish* as my mother and I waited. And waited. A muffled whisper in the room seemed to be telling me that *something* was about to happen—but maybe it was only the continuous *swish swish*. *Swish swish*.

As each minute passed, my mother’s arms squeezed tighter and tighter around my body. I stared at the white strip of gauze

wrapped around my arm and wondered what the blood sample would tell the doctor—and what he, consequently, would tell us when he finally returned. I couldn't ask my mother her thoughts about the subject because she (like me) avoids talking about the things that worry her. So we sat together in silence.

This silent spell that seemed to have been cast over the room was finally broken by the harsh click of the doorknob. Dr. Dey ambled into the room, but he destroyed his calm and easygoing façade by hastily running his fingers through his thinning, gray hair. He quickly turned his expression into a smile as he caught my eye; but a sudden twitch of my mother's arm made it clear the smile hadn't reassured her, either. Dr. Dey maneuvered himself onto the edge of the examination table. He opened the file he had in his hands. He pulled his glasses out of his pocket. Rested his elbows on his knees. Looked up. Stillness hung thick in the air.

“Is there any history of diabetes in the family?” he asked.

It was so sudden. So unexpected. I wanted to tell him to speak softer. The volume of his voice was deafening amidst the room's silence. I felt a sensation similar to being roused from a deep sleep by someone yanking the pillow from under my head rather than adhering to the common courtesy of whispering and gently prodding. Even at nine years old I knew the reason for Dr. Dey's question was simply the result of his need to use the word “diabetes” before actually diagnosing me with it. He apparently had to have that practice round first, because it didn't matter that my mother answered his question by saying no, in fact we didn't have any history of diabetes in the family. I still had it.

I had always assumed that the journey from buoyant childhood to disillusioned adulthood was supposed to be a relatively smooth progression. I thought this “road to reality,” if you will, would be marred only by small bumps and potholes that would gradually lead me into a more realistic perspective of the world—with the wonders of childhood fluttering away one by one over the

course of several years. Maybe a second grader would shout out at recess that Santa Claus isn't real. Then a pet hamster would run away. And finally a carefully carved pumpkin would be smashed by some roguish eleven-year-old boys taking their Halloween costumes as pirates a little too seriously.

Instead, my road to reality didn't consist of these minor bumps and potholes, but rather a five-foot wide rift into which I unwillingly plunged. As I jolted along in the back seat on the way to St. Mary's Hospital, thoughts flashed through my mind over which I had no control—one after the other. I could have tried to focus on a feeling of relief that my journey to reality was complete while my friends were left in the dust, but all I really wanted was for that dust to surround me again and continue disguising and softening life's hard-edged blows. And so it was that I reacted with spiteful bitterness to a nurse's suggestion that I practice giving a shot to one of my brand new stuffed animals sent by a long-forgotten well-wisher. I was indignant that this nurse thought my white, fluffy monkey deserved to have five units of insulin soaked into his left leg. I opted to practice on an orange instead, and tried to shield my monkey's eyes to keep his state of blissful ignorance intact.

I still remember injecting that unfortunate orange. I pushed the needle through its skin and was surprised at how little resistance it offered. A mist of sweet citrus scent squeezed its way out of the orange's center, and I thought back to my piano lesson—my teacher's hands smelling like orange. And I thought about legato. So smooth and sleepy. There was certainly no place for that here.

In the hospital, the dreamy and tranquil calm of legato was replaced by the constant pitter-patter of nurses' feet, the loud boom of doctors' voices, and the blindingly bright light of the hallway that would seep through the crack under my door and keep me awake at night—reminding me where I was. But it was in the children's playroom where feelings reminiscent of calm legato seemed

especially far away. I only went there once. My mother held my hand as we traversed the labyrinth of hallways, trying to listen for children's voices above the loud footsteps we made on the tile floor. Finally, we turned a corner and saw light pouring out from an open door, and the children's voices we had been listening for rang out unmistakably.

My first step inside the room sent shockwaves up my spine. It wasn't from the sight of a young boy pulling his IV stand with him as he shuffled past. It wasn't from hearing the squeal of wheelchair tires racing across the thin carpet. It wasn't even from the unmistakable smell of medicine and sickness that pervaded the room so strongly I could almost taste it. It wasn't any of these things.

It was a *feeling*. The feeling that this seemingly normal playroom was, in fact, not normal at all. And also the shocking, disgusting feeling that I now belonged to this playroom. A playroom quite obviously intended only for those kids that could be labeled as "sick" or "diseased." I felt exposed. Tricked, even. I was afraid my friends would come find me and laugh that I had become part of a circus freak-show.

I wanted to run from the playroom. Race through the muddled web of hallways and escape from the confines of St. Mary's. But I didn't. Some dire need to prove that I could handle it kept me there. So, trying to hide the emotional turmoil churning inside, I gingerly walked towards the arts and crafts table in the back of the room. I hoped to get lost in the world of coloring sheets and Crayola crayons, but was captivated instead by something else. I sat down at the white, plastic-topped table and looked across from me. Another girl was coloring. She looked about the same age as me, and from her withered hands three flowers outlined in black were being infused with pink, green, and yellow. Her coloring sheet depicted a scene in which these flowers were emerging from the cold, dark earth and spreading open their soft petals to the

springtime warmth.

This girl was bald. Clear tubes were coming out of her body as if she were some kind of alien creature being tested in a scientific laboratory. Her emaciated frame was covered with blankets and her eyes were sunk into their sockets. And yet those eyes were filled with such *joy*. A kind of uncontainable joy that made even the flourishing flowers on her coloring sheet appear dull and lifeless in comparison. I looked at this girl—I never found out her name—and wondered if she would even live until spring to see the image she was coloring brought to life.

It was at precisely this moment that I realized I was sitting across from the bravest person I had ever met. Cancer was destroying this girl's body, yet she managed to sit and color a picture with indestructible happiness radiating from every movement of the crayon. Chemotherapy had stolen the hair from her head, but as long as she could remind herself that the flowers would continue to bloom in the springtime, then some missing hair didn't seem to bother her. I looked down at my own coloring sheet and let the wonderful feeling sink in that *this* was the playroom that I belonged to. A fact that now brought me a sense of incredible pride.

At my piano lesson the next week, I had to demonstrate my ability to play legato properly. Smooth, soothing, and silky. I remember feeling impatient. I had no time for sleepy legato. I wanted to play a pompous fanfare. Or maybe a fast-paced concerto. A cancer-stricken girl coloring a picture at St. Mary's Hospital had shown me unmatched bravery and joy, and I wanted to play her song.



Gustavus Adolphus Flora, LaTischa K. Franzmeier, first-year

Silence

The vibrations get

lodged.

In my immobile voice box.

*Yet, thoughts rapidly fire
faster than millisecond messages between synapses,
creating paths and dredging memories.
Engulfed in myself,*

nothing escapes.

—Marlene Kvitrud, junior

The Half-Life

**decay
is in the cracks
between the bathroom tiles
and mold is sprouting on these
hearts
of ours**

—Mary Cooley, first-year

Portrait of a Drowned Ancestor

I.

You drowned when you were 19,
as old as I am now.
Although a strong swimmer,
you were pulled down
you finished out unfinished.
What passed in the hour before?
Did you dream of fish,
the boat,
or a woman?
What did you say as you stood
to change seats?
Something innocuous
the way every death occurs—
as a moment,
one breath that follows another
and then ceases
fog on a window that fades away.

II.

When they pulled you up
were your eyes open?
In your photo they are black, absent.
You are a ghost without eyes,
high cheekbones and wavy hair
but no eyes, just shadows
that threaten to envelop you
and leave no history behind.
No body ever found,
no white flesh glistening and wet—
on the slab, a handsome ghost.

III.

You ended in water, and black.

Black began me,
and my look to you.

I ask only this, grim ancestor.

Remain drowned
as I watch the sun peel across water
that carries my boat to shore.

—Matt Heider, junior



Fire: A burning desire, Michael Paulson, junior

Depiction of an Elegant Woman

No one understood why she had behaved the way that she had; her vented confessions had made a shallow victim or callous villain out of all. The pivoting flames of the candlelight toppled to one side, then another, under the weight of her breath. Her toast had been saved for the end, a conclusion to boast the hostess's great news of engagement at last. Avoided Chocolate Mousse Truffle and single speared spoons lay on the dessert plates at each place – for the chef had not done well to remove the bitterness from the chocolate. She had been too eager to let her thoughts loose and now everyone opened wide a place in their hearts to despise her. The cold cast sculpture that perched at the punch had begun to melt from its ice-swan form. The guests were quick to shy some goodbyes and to collect their young children that played out on the promenade. Above the withered faces, a delicate glistening crystal canopy lightly chimed the only sweetness left in the air.

— Brett Paulsen, sophomore

Dear Nancy,

Hello, ma'am, I'm calling from Sears
It reads on your statement you've been with us for years-
Four hundred washers and dryers and sinks
Italian cleansers to care for your minks
Bedroom sets violated in pinks
And a matching set of Olympic hockey rinks

I'm calling this morning to confirm your order
Thank god, this time, it's a little bit shorter-
10,000 immigrants from the Mexican border
and a silo full of German war mortar

We've got your pallet, age-defied for your eyes
Made from the same shit they've pulled from your thighs
But as long as it maintains your shameless disguise
There is no higher god to idolize

So your daughter can flaunt her A-B and Fitch
And you can drink Starbucks at the turn of a switch
As can your neighbor, that jealous green bitch-
Heaven forbid she shine brighter than you

So please, dear woman, do open your gate
We've brought this material for you to elate
You have a devious love to consummate
With the garbage that floods out your land

From the glorious wealth of your adulterous husband
For whom you've prayed to swiftly die
Yet your façade will never find its subside

We'll see you quite promptly. Good-bye.

—Andy Keenan, junior

I Confess

“it’s true.”
it’s been an old
rag bunched up in my throat -
and this isn’t nice, but the air
tastes sweet.

-Mary Cooley, first-year

Vices

—Ryan McGinty, junior

The cigarette felt good between his lips. The sweet tingle of nicotine invaded his lungs and filled him with satisfaction. It had been a while since his last. He'd been trying to quit, thought he had for a time. The smoke he exhaled assimilated with the visibility of his own breath on the soft, chilly November night. He reached into his pocket and pulled out a silky purple ribbon. There was something magical about the souvenir; it seemed to caress his fingertips instead of the other way around. His surroundings were calm. The tranquility encompassed him, it permeated him, and he was filled with solace.

“About suffering they were never wrong, the old masters.” Auden could not have been more on the mark with this one. Suffering, a term every human must accept, one not at all foreign to Jacob, who pondered this as the embers of his cigarette burned. He'd be damned if this phrase wasn't the model for his entire life thus far.

The tall evergreen trees in his backyard stood solemn, as if guarding his house. Nothing stirred, not even a leaf. “Dead,” Jacob thought, “it's all dead.”

Taking another hit from his heater, he pocketed the ribbon and began to walk down the sidewalk of the quaint neighborhood in which he lived. There was never much going on, but at two in the morning it was a ghost town. He passed house after house, his destination a mystery. Each one looked the same as the last. Had he not lived in the area for the past decade, he would've easily gotten lost.

His cigarette ran its course. After stomping it out he lit up another. “Fuck it,” he thought, “I've already had one.” After blowing out his first plume, he noticed a car approaching, the first he'd seen all night. He didn't pay it much thought until he saw the blue and red lights. Fear was what grabbed him initially, then compo-

The vehicle slowed and rolled down its window. A young man with a skinny face, and a patchy blonde beard stuck his head out.

“Evening sir,” he began with a wave. Jacob did nothing but nod. “May I inquire as to what you’re doing out so late tonight?” patch- face asked.

“Out for a cigarette and a stroll,” Jacob answered, inhaling again.

“No harm in that,” he replied. “I only ask because we’ve had a missing person’s report tonight and as a police officer, I’m required to investigate anyone who looks suspicious.” Jacob could tell he was a rookie.

“Do I come off as suspicious?” Jacob questioned.

“Tell you the truth, you’re the only person I’ve seen all evening. This is really a dead town at night,” the policeman confessed.

“That it is,” Jacob agreed.

“Well, if you see anything suspicious please don’t hesitate to call the authorities,” the rookie said systematically.

“Naturally, but what does this missing person look like? Just in case I happen to come across anyone,” Jacob inquired.

“Oh right. Well, the APB says she’s 17 years old, ’bout 5’ 7”, 120 lbs, with blonde hair done up in a purple ribbon...”

The ribbon felt soft as it caressed Jacob’s fingers in his pocket.

“...last seen wearing blue jeans, and a black hooded sweat-shirt. That’s all the information I’ve got here. Pretty bland if you ask me, I’ll bet from that description you could find yourself a hundred missing girls in this town,” the cop chuckled.

“I’ll be sure to keep an eye peeled,” Jacob assured.

“I sure appreciate that sir, you have a safe evening now,” the officer said as he drove off.

Jacob put out his cigarette and reached into his pocket for another. “Damn!” he cursed, “all gone.” He changed direction and set off for the nearest smoke shop. As he walked, all was peaceful. The wind emanated nothing, not even a whisper.

Wonderful

Done a few terrible things.
That's why I'm livin' here.
Livin' in prison. Wonderful, I know.

May or may have not accidentally killed a man.
Don't matter since I'm servin' life.
My life, gone like a dyin' breath. Wonderful, I know.

But I gotta say, prison ain't that bad.
Bed as soft as my ex-girl's hair, bowl spit-shined clean.
Food looks like food. Wonderful, I know.

Walls are cloudy-day-with-a-hint-of-sunshine gray.
Got good lighting through the small window.
View of autumn trees. Wonderful, I know.

Weekly screenings of Marilyn Monroe movies.
Bar of soap hangs around my neck.
Guards share cigs and booze. Wonderful, I know.

My cellmate, Bill, says he's gonna fly.
Asked me if I wanna fly with him.
Says he knows a way out. Wonderful, I know.

Told him no. Like it here. A lot.
He looks at me. Says I'm crazy.
May or may not be. Wonderful, I know.

—Song Yang, sophomore

The Desert Calls

I hear
the windswept
whispered calls
of voices
beyond the dunes
gathered here
to the settled
stone face
of the rock
at my back.

From a broken rock
the coyote calls
and perched
on the glade
of a beaten
gray grass stem
a sleeping dragonfly
finds the edge
of my campfire's
tender heat.

—Brett Paulsen, sophomore

post-argument

shiver glance slow
dance around you
icy stare no care
look behind me

your wrath I can't bend
now my eyes are spent –
I should scoop them out

gazes can't speak like mouths

—Lynn Olson, sophomore

Makayla,

Young precious one, you are like a white piece of paper in which novels envy. No words, no voice, no memory present only pure innocence and beauty of a sinless life.

Young precious one, write your pages with black ink for it will not fail you, color will make you wary and lead you astray.

Young precious one, write your paper well with words of bold and wise for it will make heads turn rather than mouths run.

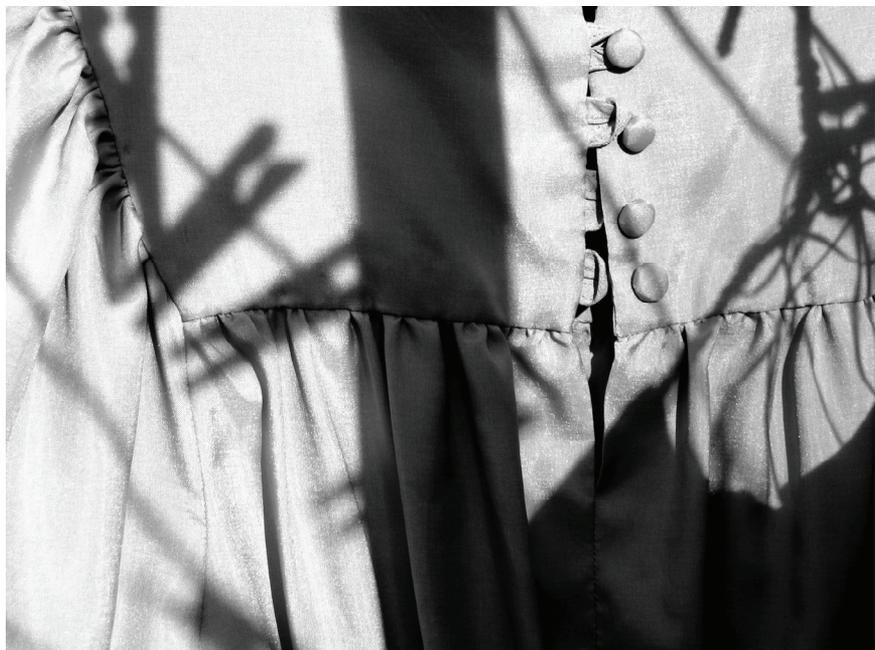
Don't let them mark you red young one, you'll be unsure of yourself one day but don't let them mark you red. Make it a poem, a story, a song, or play but make it yours alone.

Don't use up your lines to fill up with lies and fall like we did.

Don't write and re-write your words for it will only cause insecurity to the self. But write beautiful honest pictures and make them your memory. Make it yours alone.

-Aunt Kab Tsa

—Kachar Yang, junior



Sarah's Dress, Elizabeth Faldet, senior

Welcome to the world Mr. Well

Welcome to the world Mr. Well

who

|
|
|

fell from his flat_____

having gone over his ledge

(or rather jumped for a cat

along the roof on the edge).

As

you

can

tell,

all

did

not

end

very

swell

for

Mr.

Well_____.

—Brett Paulsen, sophomore

War List

this morning I sat in a small indoor café
reading the paper, with its army
of letters on the march eternally
from relevance
to the recycling bin

there was printed, like most days
a war list, small and bordered
those dead and on the march
from Baghdad to wooden box.
It was not long, but these names,
who will not be remembered,
seemed to move.

O's were blown backwards, R's bled into inky puddles,
bits flew from fallen A's, and T's threw up both arms.
Letters were already dead,
leaping to avoid bullets,
or covering their wounds
unable to stop anything now
or help themselves in the slide
across the newspaper, into neighboring stories—
a torn corpse rolls into a celebrity limousine,
mortars shriek into a city park,
explode in a crush of black blood.

I have pinned this list to the wall,
near the desk where I write.
I will not forget you,
when I have so often tried to.

—Matt Heider, junior

Saturation

The days flow by
So precious, yet so
 transient and fleeting
Wasted away mindlessly
By the consumption of the masses
Endlessly, subconsciously
 seeking distraction, diversion
But from what?
From existential despair?
The search for meaning,
 or the subsequent lack thereof?
A constant, ongoing hunger
 for passing images and sounds
To satisfy the senses, the emotions
If only for the present moment
 ~
There it is
Yet another social commentary

—Susan Engberg, senior

Through Rain

Rain bleeds down
the window.
Drops drip
gracefully,
purposefully,
peacefully.
Look past the calm
to the chaos of the night.
Lights, thousands
and millions
of lights.
A semi-truck barrels by,
the driver tired,
but perseveringly
and stubbornly
continuing,
knowing when to pull
over for a little
shut-eye.
Somewhere, an old
man strolls
with an umbrella,
passes one without cover,
this one feeling the life
of the rain,
smiling as the drops
dance on his face.
A streetlamp flickers.
A child screams:
a nightmare.
Somewhere, two lovers
watch the rain
glide down the pane,
one perfectly content,
the other wanting
to frolic in the
freedom.

Light catches
in the drops.
Caught.

—Samantha Maranell, junior

If I Want to Write

—Abby Travis, junior

Every time I read a writing prompt I confront the stack of files in my memory, thumbing through it in hopes of discovering some great idea. This tends to fail miserably. It is getting progressively easier and more habitual to frown on each idea after a mere moment's consideration. Generally, this is because I feel as though it is unoriginal, uninspired, too broad, too yuck. On sitting down to write this evening I found myself glaring at the white screen of my Word document. I swear to you that it was laughing at me, pointing its finger, laughing. "You think you can write?"

I fell against the back of my chair and stared at the ceiling. Unfortunately, that too was white. Eyes back to the bookshelf, full of good books, good ideas, good authors, good poems, good stories, good, good, good. A teal spine caught my eye. *If You Want to Write*, by Brenda Ueland. By God, yes! I do want to write. Why not consult a wise old woman when in need?

Page one. "Everybody is talented, original, and has something important to say." Thanks Brenda, but how do I know you aren't kidding? Paragraph two: "There is an American pass-time known as 'kidding,'—with the result that everyone is ashamed and hang-dog about showing the slightest enthusiasm or passion or sincere feeling about anything." How does the woman do it? Maybe that statement of hers isn't entirely true, but it sent me thinking.

When I consider a writing prompt, I consider it and consider what I am considering considering. It's ridiculous, and the result is that I don't want to write because I feel obligated to do so. You know what Brenda says? "We let dry obligation take [imagination's] place."

I need to come to terms with my over-analytical mind. I was told that the best way to improve my poetry was to be less intellectual. Maybe if my mind got out of the way my imagina-

tion could have a little bit of freedom. Now that I've got a plan, I just have to accomplish it. How does one go about changing that? I could think about it, but I feel like that's rather detrimental. Hmm. Feel. Do I need to feel my way into this new approach? The problem is that my mind is already one step ahead, analyzing what may happen if I do so, how this bit of writing is going to turn out, if it's going to be any good. My gut reaction as to WWBS (What would Brenda Say): It doesn't have to be great. I've just got to do it and not worry about the little things. I just read a paragraph of hers where she talked about how the critics kill imagination. Critics are everywhere, she says. They're friends, they're family, waiting to find each little thing that may be wrong. "As if Shakespeare could spell!" she writes. Cool. She went on to write that if you don't have a friend who just wants to listen to what you have to say, no matter what, who doesn't have the attitude: "Tell me more. Tell me all you can. I want to understand more about everything you feel and know and all the changes inside and out of you. Let more come out.' And if you have no such friend,—and you want to write,—well then you must imagine one."

I'm imagining that I'm sitting at Brenda's house and she's wondering why I think that I can't write. She's also probably wondering why I think it's a problem that now that I'm supposed to be writing memoir and nonfiction that I suddenly have the urge to write a poem.

Well, she just told me that William Blake once tried to stop writing so that he could dedicate his creative powers to engraving and painting. "He stopped it for a month or more. But he found out on comparison that he did more painting when he let out this visionary writing. All of which proves, I think, that the more you use this joyful creative power...the more you have."

I've always been one to cringe and shy away from the sappy inspirational jargon, but tonight it's all that Brenda's got to say, and tonight I'll finally listen. Maybe I'll stop this right here because my mind just jolted and told me that this wasn't where I'd intended, planned, or calculated this piece to go. Maybe I'll go write a poem.



Doorway to the Past, Amanda Schuelka, first-year

Suppose someone came to the door one day

and told you he could take away your pain,
wipe away your sins,
scrub out the dirt,
erase your ugliness,
and all those little things you
hate about yourself
that make you, you.

what if he told you that you would never again
have to bury the ones you love,
or cry at the movies,
or spit out the soup,
because it burned you tongue.
that whatever you did,
you would not fail.

and what if he told you that last christmas,
when you stood at the kitchen sink and
listened to your best friend tell you she was
raped by her father at thirteen

that that never really happened
that it could all have been a bad dream
that all you had to do was open the door

would you let him in?

—Chelsea Kramer, junior

THE SATURDAY AFTERNOON

—Maggie Sotos, senior

*“He said: Is this the return to Oz?
The grass is dead, the gold is brown
and the sky has claws.
There’s a wind-up man walking round and round.
What once was Emerald City’s now a crystal town.”*

‘Return to Oz,’ Scissor Sisters

For Scott Engelman
Here’s Metal More Attractive¹

I. The Football Field

I study French homework in the library, watching
The novembre² sky layer
The windows in gray paint.
Les garçons et les filles³ play outside on the ancient football field,
yellowing
With antiquity, dead grass balding
Like an old man’s head.
Gone are the days of football, Rudy⁴; these new students play “Ultimate Frisbee.”
Boys and girls play it on a field ravaged by the pigskin sport.
Too many games, too many cleats, too much roughhousing.
The greenery could not take it anymore, and so it dies slowly in the cold.

¹ From the tragedy of *Hamlet*, 3.2. The Danish Prince here abandons a seat beside his mother to instead sit by the fair Ophelia.

² French for “November.”

³ French for “The boys and the girls.”

⁴ From the 1993 film *Rudy*, the story of an underdog football player at Notre Dame.

Time has licked the tips of blades and bleached the color
From everything. We used to drink hot chocolate and watch
Our boys play. Maintenant⁵ they are gone or old or dead,
And the field is dying, aussi⁶.

* * *

Even now the boys in Frisbee never pass to the girls.
Never have and never will.
At least one tradition refuses mourir⁷.
In fourth grade I was la fille⁸ who played football at recess.
Always the last picked, and never passed to,
Though I was easily the fastest and the smartest.
Maggie, she's the fastest and the smartest, they'd say.
The Heathcliffs cannot always recognize their Catherines⁹.
But no, those boys never saw the boy in the girl.
I suppose they only saw the pink jacket, not the strong arms inside
of them.

*Garçons! Regardez-moi!
L'essentiel est invisible pour les yeux.
On ne voit bien qu'avec le coeur*¹⁰.

“Stop wasting your time, girls,
You'll never get a chance.”
They can't hear me, they are outside in novembre.
—Besides, there is comfort in inequality—at least it will always be
there.

⁵ French for “now.”

⁶ French for “also.”

⁷ French for “to die.”

⁸ French for “the girl.”

⁹ A reference to Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights*, in which Catherine confesses that she and her foster brother Heathcliff are soul mates: “Heathcliff . . . he's more myself than I am. Whatever our souls are made of, his and mine are the same.”

¹⁰ French for “Boys! Look at me! The essential is invisible to the eyes, one can only see with the heart!” The last sentence is from the children's book by Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, *Le Petit Prince*.

Elizabeth and Susan, Gloria and Betty, Anita and Hillary¹¹.
Artemis, where were you when I wanted to be picked first?
Ares was inside of me, and inside of the other girls.
They now play Ultimate Frisbee.
But the field is dying from la froid¹²,
The girls will never be passed to,
And I chip away on the third floor of the library as l'hiver approche¹³.
*Ah, c'est la vie. Je ne comprends pas, mais c'est la vie*¹⁴.

* * *

Matt Farrell was the head of the football game,
Tall, strong and fast,
Respected for his height and feared for his bite,
For he does not know when to stop a joke, and
Often he will make a big boy cry.
Without his blessing no one can play.
He says you should play four square with Lindsay and Melinda and
Amanda.
But they won't let me play anymore—
I have given the girls bloody noses from rubber balls to the face.
Matt laughs and lets me play but don't expect to get passed to
Because girls can't play as well as boys.

* * *

Frigid third floor.
Winds blow up the hill and shake the windows,
The solitary student baring the northern breeze with gritted teeth.
Alone in the library, facing French with gritted teeth.
Aging books with cracked and crumbling pages the only company
For a girl who gave up playing sports.

11 References to the first wave of feminists such as Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony, Women's Liberation feminists such as Gloria Steinem and Betty Freidan (author of *The Feminine Mystique*), and "third wave feminists" like Anita Hill and Hillary Clinton.

12 French for "the cold."

13 French for "the winter approaches."

14 French for "Ah, that is life. I do not understand, but that is life."

Despair is the fuel of creativity, and self-hatred is the kerosene
Which keeps us warm in this oncoming storm.
Footsteps on the carpet of the third floor.
Someone brought apple cinnamon tea with honey and I can smell
it.
I knew who would bring it so I seek them out.
Up and down the aisles I walk, smelling Christmas in the library.
Every delight and comfort of home is in a mug somewhere close
by.
I found her and cried: “You, with the tea!
“You drank that tea this time last year at finals!
“Are you unhappy now? That is the smell of safety,
“Of an upcoming Thanksgiving, of standing in line for The Sor-
cerer’s Stone,
“The end of a soccer season, the approach of a performance.
“Why do you drink these memories now?
“Has Howie Day¹⁵ broken what he claimed to have melded?
“Don’t blame him; no heat could survive in a frost this cold.
“Not a soul mate—not a sister—and certainly not myself.”

¹⁵ Singer/songwriter Howie Day, known for his ballad “Collide,” in which he claims he and the subject of the song have metaphorically collided and become one person.

Shore

It was a
guzzler of a night
where two hobos
might be noticed
making sweet
in a boxcar bed
 a caught-up night
 where well-kept strangers
 start quiet conversations

no one's just asking questions
just talking in hard letters
open and inviting
some slow interpretation
and those two strangers are us
 stabbing sinners
 skipping steaming stones
 across night's rest

I sit
 and count the ripples in you

—Matt Heider, junior

Ready or Not

Dressed, enveloped in black.
Black clothes in a
black night.
Flashlights tightly gripped.
Run!
Ready or not
here I come!
Squatting, huddled by a tree,
the brother whispered,
“Duck down. Duck down.
Hold your breath!”
The beam of light flashed by.
“Don’t look at him!
He’ll see the glare of your eyes!”
The light passed.
They were up and running
to a new location,
a new safe haven,
on top of a neighbor’s garage,
over the fence and into the
baseball park,
laying flat on the grass
in plain view
covered by shadows.
The smell of the night air
filling their noses.
Hot, muggy, sticky,
peaceful, blissful, ignorant
summer night.
No fears, no cares,
but for the one who bears
The light.
It.

—Samantha Maranell, junior

Today is Friday

So it happened again. There I was in the shower, probably some rose petal smelling soap in my palm and I started thinking. Thinking words and sentences that sounded as though they were being read from a poem. A poem that wasn't written yet. My thoughts were reading another poem that I had to go write. But I couldn't, of course, because I was full of rose petal smelling soap. And I don't even like that smell all that much. In fact, I think it dries out my skin. Maybe I won't use it anymore. But there I am, sudsy beneath the spray, and I was thinking about the different kinds of people I was going to be researching tomorrow at work. Would I find another man who, after graduating from Harvard Divinity School, became a sales associate for Brooks Brothers because he thought he was a failure as a writer, but then suddenly after working for fifteen years on a book of poetry, it finally got published, and not long afterwards found out that the Academy of American Poets called him an "emerging poet" and made a whole page on poets.org all about him? Or would it be more people who had been the editors of this and that, been published in a million literary journals, but somehow never got quite good enough to publish a book? Was I going to be looking at a whole sea of people, each one of them saying, "When I was your age, I did all the same things as you. I, in fact, was better at those things than you. Better at writing, better at thinking. And you see what I've become? Is that what you really want?" And then I realized. Today is Friday. I don't have to go to work until Tuesday. I'll worry about my future then.

—Abby Travis, junior



The Forest, Jordan Klitzke, junior

Whisper

feel it:
the vibrations
of your words, whispered in
cupped hands, quivering across my
soft cheek

—Mary Cooley, first-year

Little Mystery Men

Perched atop the doorway,
crouched beneath the TV,
they hid in shadow
and watched
with invisible eyes.

I still get chills.

Impressions, like paper ghosts,
haunt the dusty corners of my mind.
Once again, I will go to the wardrobe,
slip through ancestral hallways,
in my hand, the secret
garden keys.

Mildew in an old house.
A whiff of perfume
on my mother's dress.
Scrub for eternity,
The smell never comes out.

—Chelsea Kramer, junior



Olaf, Elizabeth Faldet, senior

Broke Bitch Montage

He says:

“even though your soul has gotten uglier, I still love to kiss your jugular”

I spend my time unabiding by ego stroking and mind probing
what you see is what you get with me whether it be a fish fry in riot or an unplanned pregnancy
stipulating mind before matter, madder each moment but living it worthwhile
love defines you and you remind it to tell a story

Except, when

the goup is unscrupulous
aces stacked in his back pocket proving him foolishly dubious and his strategy useless
that's why I told him to play it casually, let insight take over

“I can't, this synthetic emotion mirrors pride as I grow older and older”

I pause, a hint in my eye lights satire on fire and sends it barreling like a suicidal monkey wrench
doing 60 in a 40 with none of that hoity-toity

I can't stop here....however....because....

I live in six trees

quickly taking forbidden fruit

and hoping they don't stiff me richly

it's sickening the way home can glare

so I stare at you trying to keep my ambition from inbreeding

—Keegan Fraley, junior

The Wine God's Wrath

—Jill Fagerstrom, senior

The priest splashed water on his face, resisting the impulse to whistle. It was not dignified for priests to whistle; this had been firmly impressed on him upon entering the order. He did hum a little ditty though, and why not? The weather was perfect, when all week it had been threatening to rain. Today—this most important of days—the sun was shining.

“Thank Dionysus for that!” he said aloud.

“No need. That’s more the province of Helios, anyway.”

The priest whirled. There, sitting calmly behind him and sipping a goblet of wine, was a young man. He had a face like carved marble and everything from his chiton to his sandals was impossibly clean. The priest was too surprised to be affronted. Was he a member of the chorus? A pilgrim, come to see the City Dionysia? He had far too noble a bearing to be a common farmer.

“Who are you?” he asked at last.

The man smiled. “You speak to me every day, yet you do not know my name?”

The priest was nonplussed. Every day? He was certain he’d never even seen him before! As if reading his thoughts, the man said, almost mockingly:

“Come now, you saw me just last week when you were drowning your sorrow over that girl—what was her name?—Ophira. And just after you’d plied her father with some of my finest creations, too.”

Now the priest knew. “Dionysus?” he whispered.

“Correct.”

“You don’t look as I expected you to.” The words were accusatory and came out before he could stop them. The god looked at him ironically.

“Would you perhaps prefer my true form?”

The priest swallowed hard. “N-no, your divinity.” Dionysus’ own mother had requested to see Zeus that way. The god had obliged and struck her dead in the form of a lightning bolt.

“That is well, as I have a request for you and can best deliver it if you are alive.”

“A request? For me?”

“An order, actually, but I prefer the diplomatic ring of request. In any case, you are to stop Thespius before he begins his foolish dramatization today.”

“Stop Thespius! But it was my idea!”

“That is why I am giving you the chance to rectify it.”

“But why? It’s in honor of you! A single man, stepping forward from the chorus to represent a god! The crowd will adore it!” Then, realizing what the problem might be, he said humbly, “I’m sorry. I didn’t realize that it would offend you to have a human impersonator. I only thought—” but the god waved his hand dismissively.

“No one will believe a man in a mask to be a god. I am not so much offended as worried.”

A god, worried? “But of what, your divinity?”

“You touched on it yourself when you said the crowd would love it. Can you not see where this will lead?”

“Well . . . if it goes well we might do it again sometime.”

“And again after that, and again after that. But how long until the people want more, as they now want more than just a chorus? To still their growing hunger, you will soon have more than one man playing the part of a god. And as their appetite increases you will have men playing the part of other men. And these men and gods will talk to each other!”

The priest brightened. “Oh, what a wonderful idea! Thank you very—”

The goblet in the god’s fist shattered as he brought it down. “No! It will not end there! Think, man! If you can have them talking, then you can have them moving as well. Doing things. And if they talk and if they walk, then they can act. Whole stories will take place upon the stage.”

“I still don’t see the problem,” the priest ventured.

The god laughed bitterly. “No, of course you don’t. How can I expect a mortal to, when my fellow gods do not? They didn’t see the harm in Homer, either. ‘Free publicity,’ they called him, and ‘A sweet old man.’ Only Cassandra believed me, and imagine having her on your side.”

“But how can there be danger in a story, even one acted out?”

“Stories are preferable to real life. They’re more exciting,

faster-paced, and above all the bad things that happen to the characters don't happen to you."

The priest continued to look puzzled.

"You still don't see the problem? You don't see what will happen when there's a source of entertainment ready to supplant the problems of day-to-day life?"

The priest thought it sounded like paradise, but had the sense not to say so. Unfortunately, keeping his mouth shut wasn't much help.

"Fool! If stories are preferable to life, then why live life at all? Why not just watch the lives of other people more interesting than you?"

"But there's not enough stories to—"

"Not yet. Demand affects supply."

"But—"

"In the future, they will have box-like machines that import stories to you, even from miles away. The machines will have images, to watch the story as it's being told. These boxes will be so cheap that nearly everyone will be able to buy them, and stories will be so plentiful that the boxes will be employed day and night. People will waste their entire lives in front of them. Children will rot their brains. And, worst of all, it will be a ready source of procrastination."

The priest gasped. "Not procrastination! No, surely not!"

Dionysus nodded solemnly. "It is true. And though it is too late to stop Homer—curse him and his forerunner to the novel—Thespius can yet be stopped. I charge you with this task. Do it however you see fit, so long as it gets done."

"But what if I'm not able to?"

The god smiled again, unpleasantly. "Then you will see my true form." He vanished.

Δ

Knowing full well that no one would believe him if he said he had actually seen a god (he was a very junior priest, after all), he decided to discourage Thespius through less direct means.

"You know," he said as the young man tried on his Dionysus mask and admired himself in the mirror. "There'll be a lot of people watching you today."

"I know!" said Thespius enthusiastically. "Isn't it great?"

"A great many people. What will they think if you mess

up?”

“Oh, I won’t do that.”

“But you might. Better actors than you have messed up before, you know.”

Thespis looked at him blankly. “There’ve been other actors?”

“Erm, I mean to say that it must take very great skill in order to do this properly. Are you sure you have it?”

“Sure I’m sure.” Thespis laid a hand on the priest’s shoulder. “I won’t let you down sir, I promise. The people will adore me.”

Next he tried poison, a simple matter of bribing an unscrupulous physician. He stuck it in a cup of—what else?—wine, trying to ignore his guilty feelings as he did so. It was for the best; after all, it was for humanity’s future. It had nothing at all to do with his own life, he told himself, nothing at all.

Thespis accepted it happily (“Thanks! My throat’s all parched from rehearsing!”), and was about to drink (the priest averted his eyes) when a friend from the chorus came in complaining of the heat. Thespis offered it to him instead, and the man jumped out of the way as the priest, acting in a panic, shot his hand out and knocked it over “by accident.” Smoke rose up where it hit the ground.

“You don’t believe in watering it down, do you?” said Thespis almost admiringly.

After that he tried to hire an assassin. But with his customary bad luck he tried to hire a great personal friend of Thespis’, and not only did the man refuse to do the job but demanded double what he had been offered for the assassination so that he wouldn’t tell anyone.

“What’s the world coming to when an assassin can blackmail a priest?” he muttered to himself as he felt his empty purse.

And then it was time for the ceremony. There was a slight upset when it was realized that one of the priests, the one whose bright idea it was to have a chorus member play the part of the god, was missing. But he was a very junior priest, so no one much cared.

The chorus ran through the usual litany of chants. Then came the one featuring Thespis; there was tense expectation in the audience, for though they did not know what was coming next rumors had said that something would happen.

Thespis stepped forward.

“It is I, Dionysus!” he proclaimed, a goblet raised above his head.

It’s not too late, came the thoughts of the priest, hidden out of sight. Kill him now, and no one will want to do this again. An arrow cocked.

“God of wine and god of plants!”

If they catch me, I’ll tell them that the god didn’t want anyone impersonating him. It’s true enough.

“You see me when you drown your sorrows, you see me when you give thanks in celebration!”

The arrow wavered. Sweat rolled down his face. Do it now. Now, before it’s too late. Look, look, he’s almost done!

“ . . . Arrows must travel great distances but speedily arrive . . . ”

Don’t wait. . . .

“Our rewards and our punishments, though we live afar—”
Now!

“—are the arrows of the gods!”

It was loosed, and it cut through the air above the audience’s heads, striking the raised goblet that Thespis so proudly held aloft, flecking the chorus members behind him with spots of red.

The crowd cheered.

Δ

“That was fantastic!” cried Thespis hours later, when he had finally found the priest, who was staring into a cup of wine and not moving. “I had no idea you were planning to do that, it took me by such surprise! Why, I didn’t even know you could shoot a bow! Bit risky, don’t you think? But it was an amazing touch, everyone loved it.”

The priest grunted.

Even Thespis could sense that he was in no mood to talk, and perhaps wanting to have some fun went off to celebrate with his friends, leaving him to contemplate his very short future in peace.

The gods did not tolerate failure. If they told you to do something, they expected it to be done. He had failed, and the most he could do now was get drunk as one last salute to his patron before the end.

At least, he thought, he would learn Dionysus’ true form. And he downed the blood red liquid in a single gulp.

The Things I Dream About

instability; cows birthing sheep;
three children waking at once;
honesty; television; nuclear disasters;
I find it strange and startling to
wake cold from this florid novel world
where thought slimes into heated thought
so smoothly you would never know,
where secret ally-transactions of wish
and fear pass finger to gloved finger in the
dark; but wake I do, and find the
window open and the wind knocking at
it. my entrails stewed to sweaty snakes,
my eyes open; I cloc my night-bones
down from bed to the horror of electric
lights in the corridor and clean-white
tile, damning my wormy and fascinating
dreams, and so I crawl hand-over-hand
back to sleep, to lost things found and lost again
in the white chill of day-time.

—Bethany Ringdal, sophomore



Outpost Home, Whitney Langenfeld, senior



Cairns Rainforest, Kat Coughlin, senior

Incongruous

Food is swirling on our plates,
Half-digested, slipping down our throats
The flavor's yet unchanged--
It all still feels the same.

I waste my time and wait for you.
Will you wait for me?

I knew it yesterday
But things are going up in smoke--
Up in secrets, not in words
Up in silvery translucent thought bubbles
Ballooning from somewhere behind your brain.

I look; I listen.
Your words, your eyes--
Incongruous.
My words, my eyes--
They're obvious.

—Mary Cooley, first-year

Roll Call

Crossing the cemetery
tonight I met a ghost
kicking his marker.
He tipped his hat to me
and winked one crusted eye
a gentleman to the last.
Nobody can bother him for
nothing bothers the dead
more than themselves.
Above his shallow grave
dust danced up in his wake
as he rode out to the desert
hell's storm at his heels.

—Lynn Olson, sophomore

Contemplating Parenting

Squish the squash

splats W
on A
the L
L

While the older brother

bounces the black
ball

The twin sister

spills her j
blueberry u
i
ce

Across the room

Sits

the mother

Sipping her c

o

f

f

e

e

reading a book ...

on how to tie a n

o

e ? o

s

—Jordan Klitzke, junior

Hope Is The Best Bait

Oh, how loyally I follow!
A camel in the desert
devoted to
master promises of oasis
and respite.

Master is kind, keeps
his promises. Near empty
feed bags, but
just ahead, never a
mirage on the gilded horizon.

My sand-jeweled hooves
plod wanly on
viscous scorching waves.
He claims he took my blinders off,
but paradise flickers like
a Bedouin nightsun
and even a camel runs dry
eventually.

—Jenna Chapman, first-year

She Said...

“Good is a plain word,”
a no-frills blessing of a word,
a rounded and sweet word.
Good is a word I save for real
things; apple cake is good.

You are good.

And so we have this world,
 this hurting world, this world
that we belong in, you and me, and it is good.
And it is a million kinds of
real, like curtains that blow
in at night, like brave
blackberries for breakfast,
like a pile of dirty dishes,
like the good way that
we are tangled into one another.

—Bethany Ringdal, sophomore



Urban Sign of Hope, Amanda Schuelka, first-year

