

INKWELL

a creative showcase

SPRING 2017

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A NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

A famous haiku by the great Japanese poet Matsuo Bashō is translated this way by Robert Hass:

*Even in Kyoto—
 hearing the cuckoo's cry—
 I long for Kyoto.*

The first time I read this, I was in my bedroom attic in downtown Mankato near windows open for the first time in the spring season. At eye-level was a tree that had erupted into pink blossoms. The street was black with rain, so each passing car made loud sticking sounds as rubber rolled over wet pavement. I knew, instinctively, what Bashō meant. I knew it was possible to be in a place and long for that place simultaneously, the way it's possible to be with someone and miss them at the same time, possible to read a book regretting the end you know is coming.

Scholar and writer Irvin D. Yalom once listed four “givens” of human experience, that is, four existential tensions we all face—freedom versus responsibility, isolation versus connection, meaning versus meaninglessness, and fear of death, whether literal or metaphorical. For me, Bashō’s poem focuses at that last one—the certainty that here on earth, things end. We long for them, as though in anticipation of or in resistance to our eventual separation from them. In that Mankato attic, I longed for the attic, each dusty corner, each creaking floorboard. I even longed for Mankato, the stink of soybean, and the way in winter, houses exhale heat in great billows of steam.

The pieces in this Inkwell are, too, full of longing. Del Lonquist longs for the open road and his now absent companion. A boy longs for his brother away at war. Robert Barr longs for the worlds he builds in his

mind, while another narrator longs for the sounds her apartment neighbors make. Alongside this longing are love letters of a sort—to rice, to candles, to Shamrock Shakes. The power of an image is its ability to hold things—emotions, ideas, tensions. Longing here is captured in rich, textured images. As Lydia Lonquist writes of a particular scent, “Just one sniff ...and I am transported to a memory within an instant.”

One of the things that excites me most about this issue is the variety of its genres, its subjects, and its writers. We have work from both alumni and current students. We’re featuring more genres than ever seen in a single issue of *Inkwell*—translation, playwriting, poetry, profile, personal essay, and short fiction. Our artwork includes paintings, photography, and graphic art. This diversity is exciting, especially as *Inkwell* moves forward in exploring and showcasing the full range of what the Bethany community is producing.

My deepest thanks go to Karee Henrich, Hannah Bockoven, and Eleonore Mumme for their dedication and hard work in producing this issue. Thank you also to everyone who submitted work to this year’s issue.

Lissa Horneber
Inkwell Faculty Adviser

WRITTEN

STILL YOUNG, STILL RIDING

"I love the motorcycle, and I love the feeling of euphoria. When you're out on the highway not sitting in a box traveling through the environment, you're part of the environment," explains Del Lonnquist, an 82 year old motorcyclist. "It's a feeling of euphoria that's very difficult for a rider to explain to a non-rider who has never experienced it."

Del rides a midnight blue Honda VTX 1300c with a Velorex Sidecar that pulls a Mini Mate Tent Trailer where he spends his nights when not saying with family. Often seen decked out in a thick leather riding jacket with patches from various motorcycle associations, he walks a little bow-legged in his jeans and thick black motorcycle boots. Rare is the day when Del isn't wearing a smile that stretches from ear-to-ear, accompanied by a handshake to strangers or a side-hug to relatives. These bone crushing forms of affection don't seem like something most eighty year old grandpas would have the strength for, but this grandpa is nothing but the near perfect picture of vitality (even after his multiple open heart surgeries). Although he doesn't have very much white hair left on his head, he still carries around a small black comb to set what's left back in place after he's taken off his helmet.

While he's ridden motorcycles for years, it's only recently that it's become such a prominent part of Del's daily life. For about three years, Alzheimer's was part of the life of not only his belated wife, Lois Lonnquist, but also the whole family's. "Our children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren all traveled that same path with us." The Lord called her home on March 27th, 2014. Her memorial service was in early June, and three weeks later, Del decided it was time to hit the road. Of course, the entire family was a little more than concerned about this ("What if he gets in an accident while he's riding and nobody is able to reach one of us?!" voiced of the

grandchildren), but also supported him with excitement. ("Yeah, but he loves it," I replied, "and how many people can say their grandpa rides motorcycle across the US? That's so cool!")

Del's motorcycle journey first began with the Saddle Sore 1000-1, also known as the Iron Butt Challenge, hosted by the Iron Butt Association. "This is an organization that promotes safe long-distance motorcycle riding. The only way to become a member of the Iron Butt Association is to ride one-thousand miles in twenty-four hours or less. First you have to have a start witness who signs your starting form at the time that you're leaving. Then you have to save the computer generated gas receipts from every stop you make for gas so the credentials committee can compare how long it took you to get between your various gas stops. If you speed for any extended length of time, you're very likely going to be disqualified."

On September 27th, 2014 at 4AM Mountain Daylight Time, Del met with Barry Reddick, an owner of Collision Pro Auto Body in Helena. Reddick is a certified Iron Butt Rider, and was Del's Start Point Witness. Reddick signed a statement that noted the time, date, and starting point. Both of the men waited for the phone call from the Iron Butt Association that would tell them if Del had complied with the rules and regulations set up to take the challenge. The phone rang, Del had the okay, and off he went on his journey.

The morning started with rain and a cold wind for the first sixty miles. Del felt elated for a while, until he reached the base of Bozeman Pass. The weather threw all it had at the elderly motorcyclist with the young heart. The wind had picked up in all directions. Rain fell harder, turned into a misty fog half way up the pass, and then pelted him with hard ice crystals. He reached the top where the weather died down, and saw a patch of sun off in the distance. The weather became more cooperative, but Del's mileage had not been very good so far. Thanks to strong head winds, he had been stopping every 75 miles to fill his gas tank. With time fighting against him, the heavy traffic late at night when he reached Minnesota wasn't helpful either.

**THE WEATHER
THREW ALL IT HAD
AT THE ELDERLY
MOTORCYCLIST WITH
THE YOUNG HEART.**

Despite these difficulties, Del pulled into the Holiday gas station in Monticello at 1:50AM the next morning. He

had traveled over 1,000 miles in about 21 and a half hours, completing his Iron Butt Ride. "At the completion I wasn't tired, I was elated! I now have a license plate cover on my motorcycle that says 'Iron Butt Association: World's Toughest Riders'. It was a wonderful experience. We all have to push ourselves a little bit. We must constantly reach out and see if we can go just a little bit further." Del celebrates, encouraging others to do something crazy, something that they absolutely love to do, something that makes them feel free.

Now that the challenge was finished, the next part of his journey was soon underway: to visit family. On such visits he would usually go out to eat with the family members, see some sites while he was there, and of course give them a motorcycle ride. The family would get to hear stories about his travels and catch up on other family members as well, learning about how and what they were doing while Del had visited. With a large family so spread out around the United States, it's difficult to keep in touch with everyone. But Del made it work while he attempted to visit everyone he could. "I rode first to Minneapolis, Minnesota, where I visited my twin brother and younger sister. And from there I went to Mankato, Minnesota to visit my granddaughter, Lydia." The list goes on – Iowa, Indiana, Illinois, Ohio, all across to Baltimore, Maryland, to Florida, to Houston, to San Jose. "I spent a couple of weeks visiting there, then traveled around the state of California riding Highway 1 down through the Big Sur and San Luis Obispo. There I rode all the way back across the country to Florida once again. And there I stayed for another couple of weeks with our daughter Diana and her family. And then I was getting ready to head back to Montana. So I went first to Denver, Colorado and visited with more grandkids there. And then heading north down I-25 I went up through Billings, and finally back home." Del's ride is called "a coast-to-coast-to-coast ride" by the Iron Butt Association. He traveled from the Atlantic, to the Pacific, and back to the Atlantic. Once weather in Montana was done for the winter, he traveled back to Helena, where he is now currently at home.

However, while he was still out on the road, family members were a little concerned by him being alone. So, he had set up a Facebook group called, "Where in the World is Grandpa?" At least two or three times a day, I would pull into a McDonald's restaurant and make use of their great Wi-Fi service so that I can update this page, and I can just tell the kids, here's

where I am, what time it is, and here's where I'm going." Del would also post pictures of the family members he was visiting, and all of the cool sites he was getting to see on his trip. It was a perfect way to stay in touch with Del and also travel with him through the mountains of Montana, along roads past the Atlantic Ocean, and even some touristy spots like Crazy Horse, South Dakota.

Del had also set up a blog, "RightLaneAmerica.com." This is where I kept a travel log of my sixteen thousand mile ride around the United States. It was a place where I could tell longer stories, and I had hundreds of members from the Iron Butt Association, The United Side Car Association, and my AARP friends throughout Montana." Right Lane America not only told longer stories about each of Del's stops, but also delved deeper into the traveler's thoughts. Readers got to meet the friendly, and sometimes bizarre, strangers that Del encountered. With his use of descriptive language, he painted scenes and stories for the readers to imagine, much like the story of how he began his Iron Butt challenge.

"Right Lane America' is turning into a book," he says now. "The book is going to be called, 'The Longest Ride: Reimagining Life After Alzheimer's.' The book is coming together pretty good. It's going to be an e-book on Kindle where we'll be able to feature videos and audio cut-ins. And that's going to be coming up in the next couple of months."

Del uses the word 'we' often in his everyday vernacular, but it's not always completely clear what he means by it. Sometimes he is talking about 'we' as a collective, all of humanity together as one. But at other times it can mean 'we' as in how some people say, "Well, we'll be seeing you," when the person is just talking about his/herself singularly. However, I wonder if sometimes he means my grandma. Even after all these years, he still has a love song that's played in his heart ever since the first day he met her. For a few years, Lois' urn rode beside him in his sidecar, until he finally placed her in her niche in Helena, Montana. But he still uses 'we'. Maybe he had just gotten so used to saying it after years that he hasn't thought to change it to 'I,' but there's a swing ring to it whenever he says it such that I hope he never changes his 'we.'

Although Del is finished with his coast-to-coast-to-coast ride to visit family and become an Iron Butt Association member, he still hasn't finished yet. "In June, I'll be attending the United Side Car Association rally

in Sturgis, South Dakota. We have many rides planned including a possible ride to Anchorage, Alaska to visit another grand-daughter, Megan. And then in September, we're planning on going back to Florida and doing the same thing we did this year, spending some time in Orlando, Florida with daughter Diana and her family, traveling around the state of Florida, including another trip to Key West. And then we're also planning to cross the country to go back to Houston, and San Jose, and visit kids and grandkids again.

"Why do we do it? Because riding a motorcycle on the highway is an absolutely fun time. We really enjoy the traveling on the open road, so the old guy is just going to keep on riding."

PRIVILEGE SENT FROM MY IPHONE

It's the first thing I look at in the morning
It's the last thing I look at at night
It's a white, rose-gold elongated rectangle
Which holds all my secrets and pleasures and attention
A smartphone that rules over not just I,
But the masses

I can afford to scroll
and
scroll
and
scroll
and
scroll
I have time to waste and I do this
By gluing a screen to my face

I feel connected but what I am is
Distanced
From my life, my problems
Closet full of clothes
Nothing to wear
Disconnected
From myself, everyone else

In my bubble, on my phone
Check into a location on Facebook while checking out of actuality
I wonder if I use my phone, or if my phone uses me
By giving me a false, tailored sense of reality
This iPhone is the latest addition
To my Apple tree

I read about people dying,
Children crying,
People trying to get by
Famine in Africa
Civil war in Syria

I scan with my eye
And am shocked to see
My phone is down to 20 percent battery.

ODE TO RICE

The East
gave
to me
a bushel
of Rice.
That grain
of life
and small granule
can save
an entire country
from hunger.
From the paddies
those caretakers tend
to the bags
of hope
they send.
In many
forms
does rice
come,
but
most common is
that simple bowl
of plain
white rice
steamed
to perfection
in a

cauldron.
Deciding
what to put
on top
plagues
my mind.
Sauce of Soy
or plain
white rice?
Raw Egg
or plain
white rice?
Top with Curry
or plain
white rice?
The fields
of white
and hot steam
call to me:
"Come
and enjoy
that simple
taste of
good old
White Rice."

LES PÈRES

Les pères sont ces êtres extraordinaires
Qui nous aiment dès la première fois qu'il nous repère
Ceux la qui nous aide à rester sur le droit chemin lorsqu'on se perd
Ô Mon père, homme fort, travailleur et exemplaire.
De son amour infini, je suis né
Lorsqu'il sourit, je ressens sa fierté
Dans sous regard j'ai grandi, dans ses bras je m'enlaçais
Dans ses bras attendris, je pleurais
Pour moi il a tout gravit, pour lui je pourrai tout surmonter
Dans son amour je fut épanouit, pour toujours il aura mon respect
Toi qui m'a donné vie, à jamais je t'aimerai.

FATHERS

Fathers are extraordinary beings
Who love us at our first appearing
Who help us return to the right path if we are wandering
Oh my Father, strong man, hard worker, a role model
By his infinite love I was born
When he smiles, I feel he is proud
He has watched me grow, by his arms I am wrapped 'round
When I was in his arms, I felt safe enough to cry
He has done so much for me, for him I'll overcome all I try,
I was nourished by his love, he forever has my respect
To you, the one who gave me life, I will forever love you

THE BUTTERFLY POEM

Patience you have learned
In the beginning the skill overcame you
The time you took to spin and swirl
This home you've made and slept inside
And the waiting, oh, the waiting
You have grown and formed
Shaped and become
You emerge as another
Look at you now
Vast and beautiful
You yearn for flight
Your wings so delicate, so light
Take to the trees, to the flowers, to beyond
But the patience you must keep
Patience you have learned
And patience you must keep

AIRPLANES

"There!" Josiah yelled, pointing at the horizon. He spun around but couldn't see his older brother. "Chris, where are you?"

"Sorry, kiddo." Chris threw Josiah over his shoulder. "I'm a little slower going up this hill than you are. I'm not seven anymore." He set Josiah down on the ground. Josiah loved his older brother. They were far apart in age, but Chris always went out of his way for him. Josiah was the reason Chris joined the army. Just like their dad, Chris wanted to be able to say that he was protecting his family. Before Chris would leave for his deployment that day, Josiah had set out to spend as much time with his older brother as possible.

"So, what am I looking at?" Chris asked.

"There!" Josiah pointed. "Right there! That's where you're going!"

Chris didn't see anything, except some houses and clouds. Chris looked down at Josiah. His eyes were filled with hope and wonder. He was imagining something. Chris just didn't see it.

"How did you know?" Chris played along. "I'm surprised you can see it from this hill."

"You can see anything from up here!" Josiah beamed. "Even that place where you're going." There was about a minute of silence. Then, Josiah asked, "You're coming back, right? Mommy always cries when you leave and I can hear her praying to God. She's always praying that you'll come back home."

Chris was taken aback by his brother's question. He smiled, though, and said, "I'll always come back to you and Mom." A plane flew overhead, which gave Chris an idea. "Look, Josiah. Just watch the planes. One day, I'll be on one of those and come back. Let's go home, little man. I have an airport to get to." Chris picked up his brother again, carrying him down the hill and all

the way back home.

The car ride to the airport was silent. Their mother didn't want to say a word. She didn't want to cry while driving. Josiah looked out the window at the airplanes. He came up with places the planes were heading. Most of those places were made up. He imagined a prince headed to a kingdom made of candy and a giraffe going to the zoo to visit his brother. Chris was stuck in his own head, thinking about his fellow soldiers.

**THE RIDE HOME WAS
JUST AS SILENT AS THE
RIDE TO THE AIRPORT.
JOSIAH WATCHED
THE AIRPLANES,
WONDERING WHICH
ONE HIS BROTHER
COULD BE IN.**

Later, Josiah wouldn't remember much about the airport visit. He'd remember hugging his brother tightly, his mother crying, and Chris grabbing his bag and going through security. There was a wave and Chris disappeared behind a wall. In his head, Josiah would remember it as though Chris immediately stepped onto a plane.

The ride home was just as silent as the ride to the airport. Josiah watched the airplanes, wondering which one his brother could be in.

Every day after Chris had left, Josiah went to the hill and watched the airplanes. None of them seemed to land where he was sure Chris had gone. He still looked at the planes, though. One was sure to have his brother on it. When the days started to get colder, Josiah wasn't allowed to go to the hill anymore. He had to watch the planes from his room. He couldn't see them as well and couldn't see where they would land.

Chris would send letters home, updating his mother and brother on the different situations. The letters took weeks to arrive. They were always dated almost a month before Josiah and his mother read them. He was never specific, as he was not allowed to be, but he did call the territory "hot and lonely."

"Where is Hot and Lonely?" Josiah asked his mother, "He says he's always in Hot and Lonely and I can't find it on our map." Josiah set the large

world atlas on the kitchen table.

"Honey, why are you carrying this around?" his mother asked.

"I'm trying to find Chris. Whoever took these pictures did not do a good job. I can't see anyone." Josiah climbed onto his mother's lap. He pointed to the picture of his home state, "I think Chris is still here. He just got tired of us."

His mother laughed. "No, honey, he's on the other side of the world." She turned to the picture of Asia and pointed to a picture of the war-torn country.

"Why is he way over there? That is not ok!" Josiah yelled. It was in that moment that Josiah realized that Chris was far past the horizon. The sun didn't mark the end of the world like he always thought.

A year later, Chris still wasn't home. Josiah was almost eight and he kept telling his mother that all he wanted for his birthday was Chris. His mother wanted to fulfill the birthday wish, but knew it was impossible. Josiah refused to believe her when she said that couldn't give him that. As it warmed up again, Josiah spent more time on the hill watching the planes. He was sure one had to have his brother in it. There was a part of him that knew they didn't, but he wasn't eight yet. He didn't have to listen to that part of his mind yet.

Josiah's birthday came and went, and Chris wasn't home yet.. Every day that passed hurt more than expected.

On a rainy day in August, Josiah was sitting on the hill in a raincoat and yellow rain boots. He could only hear the planes. They were hidden from his sight by the gray clouds. The thunder fought with the sound of airplanes. He was startled out of his daydream when his mother started calling for him.

Josiah ran down the hill, his boots hitting large puddles. His clothes were drenched and his curly red hair was flat on his head. He ran into the house, dripping water and mud on the floor. A tall man dressed up like Chris was standing in the dining room. Josiah's mom was sitting at the table, crying over a yellow piece of paper.

"Mommy, what's wrong?" Josiah leaned in close to his mother and whispered in her ear.

WHILE THEY ALL LOOKED AWAY

Josiah's mother pulled him onto her lap and mustered up enough strength to say, "Chris is with Jesus in Heaven." That was the only way she could figure how to tell Josiah. Josiah's little blue eyes started to darken.

"I thought he would come home," Josiah said. "Why did he lie? I've been watching the planes."

She stared blankly ahead of her, not quite at the glass, but not quite through it. Noise surrounded her: voices all whispering, complaining, yelling, crying; buzzers and doors moving open and shut. She looked at the glass now took in her faint reflection. The dark circles under her eyes were the first she (and surely anyone else) saw. Her blond hair was limp and escaping its binding. She sighed and looked around her. Pairs of people talked into their phones on either side of the glass; some were angry, some were sad, some were trying to be strong, most had given up hope. She imagined herself in the latter category.

Her attention was drawn back to the glass when the man on the other side tapped it impatiently. His dark eyebrows were raised expectantly, the phone held to his ear even though she had yet to pick up hers. She stared at him without emotion. Everything about her felt heavy: her hands, her eyelids, the invisible weight crushing her shoulders, her head. She couldn't honestly say how she was still holding herself up. Ever since the arrest four weeks ago, she had barely slept. Nothing she tried helped. Her diet had become sparse as well. She could feel her prominent ribs as she wrapped her arms around herself for protection.

Another, more insistent, tap prompted her to finally reach forward and remove the phone from its cradle. She brought the leaden instrument to her ear, but said nothing. She merely stared at the man across from her. He stared back, though expectantly. She still did not say anything, although she could not tell if it because she couldn't or she wouldn't. She studied his face instead. She examined the hard jaw line, traced with stubble. She perused the dark eyebrows, knit in expectation. She looked to the freckles, the tiny scars, the nostrils, the hair, the mouth; anywhere but the eyes. She could not look at the eyes.

"It's good to finally see you again." He finally broke the silence. "I've thought about you a lot."

Her eyes darted to the side before she replaced their focus on a spot on his forehead. "You're the one who wanted this," she muttered.

He smirked. "But you didn't have to come."

She looked down, at a loss for words. He was right. She didn't have to agree to this meeting. After all, she had the right and the capacity to say, "no." Yet, here she was.

She could feel his eyes looking her over. "That's a nice color on you." She could clearly hear the derision that laced his tone.

"Shut up; it's an ugly color." She hugged herself tighter with her unused arm.

He sighed loudly. "Look," he began, then hesitated. "I'm sorry that you have to be in here."

She looked at him in contempt. "Are you really? I mean, that's why you wanted to see me, right? To gloat?"

He had the decency to look affronted. "Gloat? About what, that I hurt you?"

She scoffed. "Of course, you're going to act sorry now. Yes, you hurt me; you betrayed me. But, you're not sorry. I know you're not. You don't feel anything at all. And now, thanks to you, I'm here and I'm miserable."

He knit his brows again, but this time in an expression of hurt. "I am sorry that I hurt you, but I really don't think it's fair of you to blame all your misery on me. I'm not entirely to blame."

She stared at him still, shocked. The phone felt as though it was growing heavier. The noises around her blurred and mused together,

.....
THE PHONE FELT AS THOUGH IT WAS GROWING HEAVIER. THE NOISES AROUND HER BLURRED AND MUSHED TOGETHER, FORMING AN INDISTINCT CONGLOMERATION OF FOREIGN SOUNDS.

forming an indistinct conglomeration of foreign sounds. Maybe he was right. Maybe some of this was her fault. If she had dressed differently or if she hadn't been quite so friendly, maybe this wouldn't have happened. He was her boyfriend, though, so she hadn't really thought anything of it. But then it did happen, and he said it was because she looked so good in that dress. It was her favorite dress. She wore it when she wanted to feel confident and attractive.

She burned that dress.

Suddenly everything snapped back to normal; every buzzer and door and voice became distinct once more. He was looking at her expectantly, waiting for an answer. Her face hardened. She finally looked at his eyes. They were where she could see the lie. "I am not to blame for your actions."

His face changed. All traces of hurt or friendliness faded away, only to be taken over by the lie in his eyes. His features became sinister and threatening. He lowered his head, staring at her from under his brow. She saw his hand curl into a tight fist. "You and I both know that's not true." His voice had dropped a few octaves since he had last spoken and he spoke quietly.

She felt the tears finally fill her eyes. She hated herself for crying, but she could not help it. "Maybe not, but everyone else does, because, you know what? You're the one in a prison."

He smirked at her again. "I don't think I'm the only one." He hung up the phone and stood up. The guard behind him stepped forward, checked the handcuffs on his prisoner's wrists, and led him out of the room to his cell.

She watched him go without really seeing him and she continued to stare at the spot he had been even after he was gone. The tears streamed down her face unimpeded.

WE ARE BUT THE WHOLE GALAXY

Who are we, but a speck of sand,
Battered and intolerant in this harsh land.
Descripted and entangled;
In a web of our human minds.
Lies, Memories, Heartbreak, Happiness,
This machine of mine defines.

Who am I, but a lonely girl,
Alone and curious to wonder the world.
Painted and encaptured;
In the trap of our human expectations.
Worry, Rebellion, Regret, Impulsion,
This willpower that underlines limitations.

Who are you, but an incomplete boy,
Unaccompanied and willing to search for joy.
Detailed and ensnared;
In the cage of our human emotions.
Anger, Fear, Patience, Unsatisfaction,
This search for endless devotions.

Who are we, but the whole universe,
Complete and confident with all converse.
Sketched and enlightened;
In the home of our human hearts.
Warmth, Safety, Enjoyment, Laughter,
This journey is where is all starts.

EVERGREEN TREE

A lone tree beside a playground. Kids everywhere—in the gravel area on swings, the open field, the tether ball courts and the baseball diamonds, and a few up the stairs on the hill with basketballs and jump ropes. None are near that tree. Except for one. A lone boy. For five years, the boy has been seen at each recess for forty-five minutes a day at the roots of that tall evergreen tree. What is he doing? He's just walking in circles back and forth around the roots of the tree. What could he be thinking? He's escaping the reality that he has found himself in. Why?

I remember that boy clearly, but then I don't quite recognize him. Thinking of him feels like looking into a mirror and not understanding that what I see is my reflection. I know the details—the hair, the mouth—but I cannot seem to understand that I see myself. I know what he thought and how he carried himself, but I did not fully understand what he was doing or why until much later. Not until I learned why he escaped reality and why he ran away into his own thoughts did I understand the reason why that lone evergreen was a double of escape and safety.

Preschool, four-years-old. The boy is new. He finds a friend immediately upon entering the school building. Another boy he could call his best friend, Kyle. At school, the boy did everything with Kyle. Kyle was charismatic, liked by everyone. The boy was yet another pulled into that charisma. He'd go with Kyle during recess and play with the other kids. Kyle was the boy's gate to the other children.

In first grade, after four years of having Kyle as his only source of community with others, Kyle left school to be homeschooled. The boy was left behind. The bridge to the other children broken. No one to play with.

So, he started to walk, walk around a lone evergreen tree in the middle of the playground.

Years later, as he is entering his sophomore year in high school, his parents will tell him he was bullied during the time he spent with Kyle. They mention it during a meeting with a guidance counselor. The news slowly settles in him. He doesn't remember it, except a few small instances that push through his repressed memories of the time.

He thinks now it must mean something, must mean his emotional growth was stunted. Must explain something about the evergreen tree, the way he'd circle it and circle it. He was five at the time and at the age where the concept of bullying was not one he understood. But it happened. He wonders what he could have done. He wonders if he missed some chance to act differently, be different. He remembers telling himself that he needed to grow up and to stop crying about little things. For a child to make a conscious decision to grow up isn't normal, shouldn't be. I wish to tell him that everything will be fine and not look at it from one view. I wish I could tell him that he is blinding himself with his own self-ridicule.

His father is deployed to Iraq in the early 2000s.

So, things go wrong. Without his mentor, the boy can't grow up like he tells himself to. He depended on his father to show him how he should be, how to deal with others. When something bad would happen, he had been there for the boy. But he is gone. So things go wrong. Simple things, like when the seating arrangement at school is changed and he gets so emotional and angry about it that the P.E. teacher of the school is called and has to forcibly remove him from the classroom. To him, it feels like everyone is out to get him.

It comes to a point that the boy is required to go to guidance counseling at a hospital. He goes through four guidance counselors in total. For the first three, the boy never talks about anything. Earlier in life he was told that if a problem arose he should walk away, and that is what he does. He shuts himself in, never letting anyone else enter. Anytime his emotions go wild, in he goes and away he walks. Away from reality, to circle that ever-present lone evergreen tree in the middle of the playground. There, in his mind, he leaves this world behind for a different one, one where he is more

important, where he matters to people. In this other world, he helps people. But he's a wanderer, always helping but never staying. He's learned how to leave.

He doesn't see he is still important to those around him.

For all the times that someone said he was unimportant and did not matter, there were those that loved him and gave him a place to be. He can't see that yet.

He will. He will learn from pastors. In those meetings, he will open from his shell, finally allow others to come in, to follow him where he goes in his mind.

The past has a way of sticking with you. There are those times when the urge to walk in a circle and go into his mind takes him. He tells stories to himself, creates worlds where he is at the center. His imagination constructs and shapes different realities.

It's changed now. With the encouragement of his parents, he no longer goes to that tree as his escape, but as a place for inspiration and creativity. That evergreen tree. It's been a place with so many negative emotions wrapped around its trunk, but lately it's become kind of a center for peace of mind. Always that evergreen tree.

It's still in my head as I walk in circles in this small dorm room and write down all that comes to me. Here, even here, it's as though I can feel the unevenness of roots beneath my feet. It's as though if I reach out my hand, I'll be able to skim my fingers across bark. I feel that I could look up and see the broken rays of the sun through the pine needles. It's the feeling of safety, the feeling of peace, the feeling of escape.

TO CIRCLE THAT EVER-PRESENT LONE EVERGREEN TREE

THE SINKING SHIP SAILOR

“Aye! Ahoy! but never Avast!” The sinking ship sailor would call.
From port to port and ship to ship his feet would step from deck to deck
to ride the waves and raise the mast and set the sails on many a vessel.
But never upon a brig with speed,
Never a schooner that caught a breeze.
Never a barque that sailed with ease.
Nay!

The ships he chose were filled with holes, the sails were limp, the oars were
rot.
The hulls were holed so water flowed and filled the hold
and so the ships were slowed ...
at best.
Not all was bust, I must confess! The anchors worked! Or so I jest.

Always in a state of sinking, whatever was this sailor thinking?
Did he find it cause to gloat to sail on ships that barely float?
Or did he find it better yet to walk in trousers always wet?
If he sought to sail unseen, he could have sailed a submarine.
Always in a state of sinking, whatever was this sailor thinking?

“Aye! Ahoy! but never Avast!” The sinking ship sailor would call.
To run aground or slowly sink he’d choose a ship as if a plank
to walk. And not just one, nay always more, he’d hop across a whole armada.
But always upon a failing fleet,
Always flotillas that wet his feet.
Always a navy too easily beat.
Aye!

His shanghaied self was far from help, the self-slaved whelp, the soggy salt.
The galley slave of volunteer was without fear,
Or so it would appear...
to most.
He was not brave, I would object! He was a fool! So I suspect.

Always in a state of sinking, whatever was this sailor thinking?
Did he aim to be a captain saving ships whose death was certain?
Or did he find a great adventure serving ships of wet indenture?
If he sought to lead a crew, a proven ship would surely do.
Always in a state of sinking, whatever was this sailor thinking?

“Aye! Ahoy! but never Avast!” The sinking ship sailor would call.
Every ship the swab would pick was moments from a deathly quick,
and every choice, non-buoyant hunks of Chinese junk that were not fit for
cargo.

But maybe he wasn’t just a knave.
Maybe there’s cause for time he gave.
Maybe he found them ships to save.
Maybe?

Some ships he chose were treasures still, the sails had soul, their pasts were
rich.
The ships were bold when tales were told of legends old
and so the ships were gold ...
to some.
There’s no logic, I would conclude! To his in drench’ed servitude! Or so I
shrug.
Until he’d find one long at last
whose glory wasn’t in the past;
Until one day he’d climb a mast
and for the first time shout, ‘Avast!’

MIDWEST STREET THE DAY AFTER CHRISTMAS

I stood shivering on the corner under a streetlamp. The snow fell in thick sheets, drifting by the lights. I had called a cab to pick me up. A friend of mine from work brought me to this diner we both like for supper. Unfortunately, he received a call and said there was a problem at home he needed to fix right away. He offered me a ride back to my car, but I told him I'd call a cab. As he left, I stepped outside and the cooks closed the restaurant behind me right at five o'clock. It was the day after Christmas after all.

I gazed at the heavens above. Black shadows of buildings rose up like jagged teeth against the dark navy blue sky. Snow materialized right above the lampposts, flakes invisible until the light struck each one. The snow created a perfect white blanket across the streets and sidewalk, unbroken by any tire or shoe save for right at my feet. I kicked my heels together, moving and shaking to keep warm in the frigid air. *I called fifteen minutes ago. I wonder how far away this cab is.*

I hunched my shoulders against the searching breeze. So far today, I'd kept busy enough to forget about Christmas as a holiday. Succeeded at forgetting about what I wanted the most for Christmas for the whole work day. But, standing alone on a street corner in the silent, snowy night left me little else to ponder. If I could have gone to my nothing box, I would. I checked my phone for the time.

5:20.

Two beams of light appeared on the street, illuminating a million snowflakes like falling stars. I turned to my right. There, a car finished its left turn at the intersection and parked along the street opposite the restaurant.

I scurried across the road and shoved my phone into my pocket. The

cab was an old 1990s Chevy with the Quality Cab company logo on the driver's door. I clambered into the warm backseat and shut out the chill winter air.

"460 Midwest Street, please."

The cabby looked in his rearview mirror at me. His wrinkled brow furrowed as he squinted at me over his glasses. He wore an old cabby hat and thin white hair. "Do I know you from somewhere?" he said.

"I don't think so, why?"

"You seem familiar, that's all. That'll be a dollar fifty."

I paid the fare and settled back in my seat. The cabby steered away from the curb and drove along the placid street. The tires gave off a low rumble as the fresh snow crunched beneath our weight.

"So, what do you do at 460 Midwest Street?" he asked.

"I work there."

"O-oh, how's that working out for ya?"

"It's . . . It's a job."

"Hmm. Got any family around here?"

"No. No family."

"You traveling anywhere for Christmas?"

"No, I'm staying here."

"That's a shame, not having any family around for Christmas."

"What about you?"

He laughed. "I have family all over the country. Brothers, sisters, aunts, uncles, cousins, nieces, nephews, the whole nine yards. Used to celebrate Christmas with my wife 'til she died a few years ago."

"I'm sorry to hear that."

"So, do you have any friends to celebrate Christmas with?"

"No, I don't."

"That's a real pity. 460 Midwest, right?" He looked up into the mirror, eyes locking with mine.

“That’s right.”

He turned his gaze back to the road. The car slowed down as we approached a red light. The snow continued coating the city in pure white.

“What cities have you driven cabs in?”

“I’ve driven everywhere from New York, Los Angeles, Chicago, Dallas, Boston, you name it. Even did a stint up in Montreal once for a few months. I’ve seen every type of person who ever stumbled into a cab. The famous, the ordinary, the drunk, and the lost.”

“How long have you been a cabby?”

“Twenty-five years, in two months. Got my start driving cabs in Norfolk, Virginia. Kinda hopped around from city to city ever since then. It’s been kinda nice these past few years to be in a smaller town, one where whole streets can be deserted of cars.”

We sat in silence for the next few minutes. Every so often the cabby would use the wipers to clear the windshield of fresh snowflakes. As we drove along, I wondered what way the cabby was taking me. *We should have been there by now.*

I thought to ask him to stop when he pulled into a parking spot next to the riverside cemetery. It lay between an old stone church and the river bank. Thousands of large stones made up the bank on both sides of the river. The river ran from north to south and we faced west, looking out across it. To the left about fifty feet away, a long roadway bridge spanned the river. The four lamps on the bridge provided the only light nearby besides the streetlights far away on the far side of the river.

“Why did you bring me here? This isn’t 460 Midwest?”

“Don’t worry about it, you’ll get there. But you need to go here first.”

“Why? Who are you?”

“Just get out of the car and go look. You’ll understand.”

“So you can dump me and take off with my cash?”

He turned around in his seat, giving me a stink eye. “Why would I run off with a dollar fifty when you can call my company and give them my license plate number? I’ll get you back in plenty of time for bed. It’s not even

six o’clock yet.” He turned back to face the river.

I gave his words a moment of thought. He was right. Why would anyone do such a thing? *At the worst, I suppose I could be mugged.* But, maybe ... maybe there was a reason for this.

The cold air felt more chilly than I remembered when I stepped out. The cabby nodded at me from behind his window as I walked by.

I shrugged and strolled down to the cemetery. Snow covered the tombstones, but I remembered this site well. The only grave here I knew was my uncle’s. I stopped in front of it, knelt down, and dusted it off.

*George Jeremiah Carroll
Sincerely loved in the arms of his Savior
1959–2007*

Quite unexpectedly, I felt the sadness return as if he had died only a week or month ago; sadness which I thought I left far behind. I wished that he could have seen me now. As it was, he seemed taken right in the primetime of all our lives. He never saw myself or my siblings graduate high school, much less what we’d grown into now. The milestone events of our lives, which he’d never have opportunity to grace with his presence.

As solemn as this moment felt, I still wondered why the cabby brought me here. I stood and looked back to him. I couldn’t see the cab in the dark, but I could hear the engine running. I turned away, facing the river. The snow fell all around and the wind created gentle waves on the river.

Something colorful drew my eye on the bridge. There, by the second lamppost, stood someone wearing a red coat, looking out over the river. Curiosity won out and I half walked, half jogged over to and up the bridge. Upon closer view, I recognized the person and my confusion grew.

“Rachael?”

She turned to look at me. Wearing a lovely red coat, white scarf, and green stocking hat, she looked like a beautiful elf. Her gorgeous face and eyes stopped me short. She also looked confused, and surprised, when she recognized me.

“Nathaniel?”

“What are you doing here?”

"I think I should be the one asking, what are you doing here?"

"Well, this cabby didn't take me back to my car. He dropped me here and ..."

Ridiculously silly, you idiot. How did he know? Why else did he bring me here. First my uncle, now this?

"You're not making any sense," she said. "What cabby? Why would he not take you where you told him to go?"

"You ... are absolutely right. It doesn't make any sense. I don't know why I am here. Do you know why you're here?"

"Of course," she said turning back to the water, "I came here to think."

"Oh. Difficult thoughts?"

"Family problems. The war. Where God is in this mess. You should know as well as any of us."

"Perhaps."

"It wasn't easy on us. We cared about you. Then, there were reports that all American forces at Snowpeak were killed or missing. We all thought we'd lost you."

"I'm sure you did. But there wasn't much I could do about that."

"I know. That's not the point. You worried everyone sick when the reports detailed more violence last spring, in the region you went to."

"I'm sorry. I lost people there."

"Yes. I ... I'm sorry." She turned to face me. "It's just that you've never been the same since you left. Nothing has been. When you came back, you were different."

"I suppose I must have changed. Honestly, I haven't noticed my changes much. It's everyone else who feels like they've changed."

"We're the same Nathaniel; or at least as much the same as worried friends can be. Why do you shut us out so often?"

I sighed. "Because, it's how I've been. All my life, shutting people out is easier than dealing with them. And when you lose someone you care about, for whom you were responsible, it's easy to turn emotions aside. I simply

want to lessen the pain."

We stood in silence for a few minutes.

"What are you doing between Christmas and New Year's?" she asked.

"I wasn't doing anything before, but if I can make anything up to you, I know a great coffee shop not far from here. Care to join me?"

She smiled. "I guess so, if you don't have anything else planned."

"I think I could rearrange even if I did." We walked over to the parking spot. To my horror, the cab was gone. My own car sat there instead.

"I thought you said a cabby brought you here," she said with a laugh.

All I did was whistle and say, "I guess miracles do happen every day."

AN ODE TO THE SHAMROCK SHAKE

In the car
With friends
We made a choice
To end
Your journey

From a
Cow
The canes of sugar
Minty leaves

The factory
Binding you
Into one delicious
Mix

The store
Collecting your
Cold
Green composition
Into a cup
Adorning you
With whipped cream
A cherry
As if you were dressed up

The car
Barreling
Down the drive-thru
Shortening our distance
Ending our time apart

Finally
You were with me
In my hands
Fulfilling
Your purpose
I can't say
I was sad to see
You go
You were good
And satisfying

Your life
Was
Not in vain

RIPPLE ON WATER

Ripple on water
Dances over the surface,
Rushing down the stream.
Changing, shifting, swirling through
Endless metamorphoses.

DEFENSE OF NOISE

The walls of my apartment building are thin. They let in the neighbors' faucet turning on, turning off. I hear blocks of frozen vegetables pounded against a kitchen counter, and sweet murmurs of *how was your day? Me too.*

Should I be embarrassed to assume others must also hear my noise? They must hear me sing to Handel's *Messiah*. They must hear when I watch Gene Kelly musicals. I should feel exposed.

Do they hear weeping? Every quiet sigh?

I heard Minneapolis is home to the quietest room in the world. The Orfield Laboratories have an anechoic chamber inside steel and concrete walls. The mesh floor and fiberglass acoustic wedges on the walls have created a space with negative nine decibel noise-levels. Even a library is usually thirty decibels.

I heard that with such an absence of sound, your body becomes the loudest thing in the room. You hear your stomach gently flexing. Breath might as well be wind as it enters and exits your body. Your heart is a metronome. The very blood of your veins rushes.

**BREATH MIGHT AS
WELL BE WIND AS IT
ENTERS AND EXITS
YOUR BODY**

You hear your aliveness.

I've heard people emerge alarmed. Some try to push the record for staying in the room the longest, but few last beyond twenty minutes. It's as though such an awareness of one's body becomes terrifying. As though mortality itself can be heard. I imagine loneliness tears in then, sharp in the nerves.

I cannot bring myself to go there, though the Laboratories are a brief drive away.

Instead I am cross-legged on my couch, computer across my lap. Lately my neighbor sends golf balls across the hardwood distance of his apartment to pass the winter. They come to me as groans. I hear a knocking at my back, from the other side of the wall, someone knocking my stiff soil loose. I resist an urge to tap my knuckles against the paint in response.

I cannot be alone in this—surely I'm not the only one to calm at the sound my neighbors make. In this building, we make a cacophony of music, video game effects, guitar riffs, golf balls, all as a dirge. Something in us longs for each other, or for the understanding that these walls are not thin as in fragile, but thin meaning porous.

This is what my heart and blood and lungs sound like—faucet on, faucet off, shouting sometimes, slamming doors sometimes. I like to think our stomachs are singing to each other quietly, even when the news tells me otherwise, tells me hunger has become a din, and violence has become more efficient than ever.

I'd prefer to assume there's no chance my something quieter could be unheard. I'm necessary to someone else's feeling of home—the sound of my living fills and props up their walls, makes them stronger somehow, safer. Surely (I tell myself) this is part of survival now.

PRESERVED IN DEATH

bared and slashed
preserved in death.
there he stands
twelve tall.
killed in a flash
to be saved
for an age.

king of the stumps,
and a limbless tree.
he once took root so
he might be
stripped and charred
striped and marred
a spiraling spire
of twisted grain
elevated to stand
under strain
humbly
for a ten-decade reign.

scattered through woods
are sainted trees,
epitaphs,
their names engraved
on binded leaves.
in ashen stumps
their bodies saved
when rush of wind
and tongues of fire
enlightened them

engulfed, inspired.

they wait
asleep
they pine
they pray
for a day
when they
will wake,
will shine.

the fire
that killed him
saved them
purified them
petrified them
hardened them
immortalized them

agony:
a blaze of pain.
irony:
eternal gain.

forbears and offsprings
who died of old age,
died not in the blaze:
they fell naturally,
crashed gracefully:
but they are decayed,
returned to the dust
consumed by the earth
in which they lay

to rot.

but not

those baptized in fire
who stood their ground
to bow their crowns

not those lost
to flame inflictors

the fire
that killed him
saved them
purified them
petrified them
hardened them
immortalized them

in his loss
they became victors.

bared and slashed
preserved in death.
there he stands
twelve tall.
killed in a flash
to save
an age.

ODE TO CANDLES

1.
Just one sniff of your scent
and I am transported to a memory
within an instant.
2.
I catch a thread on fire
and find myself at my aunt and uncle's home;
roasting marshmallows over a warm bonfire,
lighting logs ablaze,
laughing and letting the unfurling smoke
seep into my jacket.
3.
I light a different wick
and go to a guest bedroom at home,
the room that my sister and I used to sleep in.
I'm enjoying a good book,
working hard at own my own stories,
taking a short nap in the afternoon sun.
4.
One more wax jar I'll visit
and relax in the shade of my grove.
Potent lilacs bounce overhead in the breeze,
mulberries tumble down from branches,
fresh country air filters through my lungs
filling me with content.
5.
Just one sniff of your scent
and I am transported to a memory
within an instant.

DEFINE REALITY

(JANE stands center stage holding a ball, while JOHN stands facing upstage behind JANE. JANE addresses the audience.)

JANE: Reality: the world or state of things as they actually exist, as opposed to an idealistic or notional idea of them – the state or quality of having existence or substance.

(JOHN steps out from behind JANE and addresses the audience.)

JOHN: Existence: the fact or state of living or having objective reality.

JANE: Objective reality: how things truly are.

JOHN: Truth: in one sense, it is what one experiences to be real in the moment...

JANE: ... while in another sense, it is what one can physically sense and know possesses existence.

(JANE and JOHN stop addressing the audience and begin to address one another – they start playing catch.)

JANE: Two opposing viewpoints, but are they mutually exclusive or is it possible for them to exist simultaneously?

JOHN: I would choose to argue for the latter.

JANE: And why is that?

JOHN: Let's take a dream, for example. Picture this: You and a loved one are riding in a vehicle when, all of a sudden, it drives off the road out of your control. You manage to clamber out of the wreckage only to discover that your loved one is still trapped beneath the weight of the car. You are utterly powerless. All you can do is watch as the life slowly leaves them and the

light fades from their eyes. And then they are gone. Grief slams into you like a wave and the floodgates are opened. You awaken suddenly to your own sobbing in physical reality, because, to you, your loved one actually died in front of your eyes, even though it was only a dream. But your grief is real. Your tears are real. The emotions you feel are real. It was a truth shared on two planes of reality. It was both what you experienced in that moment and what you physically sensed at the same time. Therefore, both our viewpoints are shown to exist simultaneously.

JANE: Your argument is strong... But I have an argument of my own.

JOHN: Let's hear it.

JANE: Take our interaction, for example. I speak, you answer. You speak, I answer. I throw this ball to you, you catch it, and vice-versa. We both exist. This ball exists. The reason we are able to interact as we do is because we exist. Correct?

JOHN: So far, yes.

JANE: But now I am imagining a third person. To me, she is real, because I can see her. I know what she looks like and I can talk to her. But if I throw this ball to her...

(JANE throws the ball to the "third person" standing between JANE and JOHN.)

JANE: ... she will not catch it, because she does not exist in physical reality. She only exists to me. If someone or something only exists to a single person, do they really exist at all? If the only person that can make her real is me, then she does not exist to anyone else. In your argument, there was physical proof that truth existed in both dimensions of reality, but there is no physical proof here. Since that is the case, then that makes it impossible for both viewpoints to exist together. One dimension of your reality was not a true reality, even though truth existed in both. The only true reality is the one we live in now.

JOHN: Ah, so now we are debating not whether both scenarios can exist simultaneously, but rather if one viewpoint may not be true at all?

JANE: Yes, I suppose that is what I am trying to get at.

JOHN: In that case, you would throw my argument straight out the window?

JANE: Yes, I would.

JOHN: Explain.

JANE: Well, I agree that my emotions would be real, along with the fact that I am physically shedding tears, but my loved one did not actually die. The "reality" they died in was not real reality. The truth is that my loved one died in a dream, which is a contrived reality, and I woke up crying in what is actual reality.

JOHN: So truth is not what one experiences to be real in the moment?

JANE: No, not if that truth happens in a reality that is not the true reality.

JOHN: And what if I were to tell you right now that I do not exist? Would you believe me? Because if I do not truly exist in the reality you call the "real" reality, we would not be able to do what we are doing right now.

JANE: Of course I wouldn't believe you. I would call you crazy, because you clearly do exist. I can see you and talk to you and throw this ball to you, which you in turn throw back to me. I have said it before that the reason we can do this is because we exist, which means that this is the real reality.

JOHN: But you also said that you could see and talk to that other girl.

JANE: Yes, but she could not catch this ball or throw it back to me, which you can do.

JOHN: But the fact that you could see her meant that you were living briefly in two planes of reality, does it not?

JANE: No. Yes? No... The reality she existed in was not real reality, so I was still only living in one reality: the true reality.

(There is a pause. JOHN can tell that JANE is now grasping at straws.)

JOHN: What if you are making up this entire scenario, but you are unable to admit it to yourself? That would make your argument that reality is only what can be physically sensed invalid.

JANE: You're right, that would make my argument invalid. But I know that you are real.

JOHN: How can you be so sure?

JANE: The same way I know that I am real. As Descartes once said, "I think, therefore I am". No one is doing my thinking for me.

JOHN: And how do you know that I think? If you were in fact making this whole thing up, it would be you doing the thinking, and not I. And if you

were the one doing all the thinking, that would mean you share both your viewpoint and my own. So you would really think that truth has multiple dimensions.

JANE: You are infuriating... But also correct. If I were making all this up, that would be true. But I know that you are real, even though I cannot prove that you are. Just as I cannot prove that I am real, and how I cannot prove that anything else is real. At this point it is left up to trust, which cannot be explained.

JOHN: So now we have reached what logic cannot explain.

JANE: Yes, we have.

JOHN: But if logic cannot explain it, does that make it real?

JANE: Yes, there are some things that are real that logic cannot explain.

JOHN: Such as?

JANE: Like I said before, logic cannot explain existence. It also cannot explain emotion, but emotion does truly exist.

JOHN: Can you prove it?

JANE: Well, when I feel emotions, I know I am feeling them. Emotion exists in true reality.

JOHN: But if emotions are completely subjective, meaning that no one else can feel your emotions for you, doesn't that explain exactly what you were saying before? If something exists only to a single person, does it really exist at all?

JANE: No, this is different. It's true that no one else can feel my emotions, but they have emotions of their own, whether they can be explained or not. Emotions exist to everyone, but you can only ever feel your own emotions. They are universal, and yet totally exclusive.

JOHN: Okay, I agree. But how is talking about emotions helping you prove your point that truth is only what one can physically sense and know possesses existence?

JANE: I was getting to that.

(JANE gets shy as she is about to make her next point.)

JANE: This is also going to prove that you exist.

JOHN: Oh, is it now? And how are you going to do that?

JANE: So, we have already agreed that emotions exist in the real reality, right?

JOHN: Right.

JANE: Since emotions exist in the real reality, feeling emotions for someone would put that person in real reality, as well. Emotions lead to actions, and if one acts upon her emotions in a way that can be physically sensed, then that means the object of her action must exist in the real reality.

JOHN: What are you—?

(JANE cuts JOHN off with a kiss. JOHN is momentarily surprised, but shakes it off and returns to the discussion.)

JOHN: That doesn't prove anything.

JANE: What? How can you say that? What just happened was physically real. My emotions for you are real. That means that you are 100% real.

JOHN: No, it doesn't. Like I said, you could be making this whole thing up, but you just don't want to admit it. You can invent whatever reality you choose for yourself and you'd never know if it was the real reality or a fake one, because you can make it as real as you believe you need it to be. But if this is indeed a fake reality, isn't it real to you? And wouldn't that make truth being what one experiences to be real in the moment correct?

(JANE is exasperated at this point.)

JANE: No! I can't let you tell me that this is all a lie. And truth is *not* what one experiences to be real in the moment. Truth is what physically exists. It is what I can touch and see and taste and smell and hear.

JOHN: And how do you know that you can trust your senses?

(JANE, out of arguments, stares at JOHN in dismay.)

JANE: I can't prove anything, can I?

JOHN: No, you can't.

(JANE pauses again.)

ARIADNE

JANE: I know that this is real! If something does not exist to everyone, then it does not exist at all! That is the reality of truth!

(JOHN disappears as JANE throws the ball at where JOHN was previously standing. The ball bounces and rolls across the ground until it is finally still. JANE stares at the ball for a moment, then turns to face the audience.)

JANE: But who am I to define reality?

When you found me
I was burdened and laden
With secrets and responsibilities:
There was a maze and labyrinth
And a monster on my mind.
You, a thinker,
You dared to surmount this maze,
This labyrinth that no man
Dared attempt before
With any laurels.
And I let you.

I guided you through the maze,
I led you through the labyrinth:
Through its depths and intricacies,
Through things that
No one else could understand.
No one else could understand
Except you and me.
And I let you.

I brought you to the monster,
The raging horror that
Showed me my insignificance,
That kept me tethered
And afraid.
But you seemed so unafraid,
So determined to keep me safe

From this thing
That could tear me apart
And break me to pieces.
You said you wanted to protect me.
And I let you.

You and I came out of the maze,
Understanding it
And one another.
We made our escape
And I felt lighter than air.
The ocean waves we traveled across
Were nothing.
I did not fear wind nor wave nor element
Because I had you.

When we made our rest on the island
Things changed.
I strayed from your side,
But a moment it seemed,
And you were gone.
The will of the gods?
It matters not,
Because, at the end of it all,
You left me.
I came back,
But you were already gone.

I saw the ship sailing away.
It seemed so close,
But you were beyond my reach.
And I am left on the beach,
Wondering what I did;
Replaying moments in time
Over
And
Over again.
I pray

To anyone and anything,
That you made a mistake;
That you will turn around
And welcome me back aboard.

But I am left,
Watching your black-sailed ship
Disappear on the horizon.
Why does it move so slow?

I am left
To carry on, remembering
When you were with me.
Everything I see reminds me
Of you:
Of what you said,
What you did,
And what you meant to me.
Everything reminds me
Of what I thought I meant to you.

I thought I was the princess;
I thought I was the girl with the magic thread
Who could lead you through the dark.
But I am not.
I am not her.
I did not lead you through a maze.

I led you through
The most intricate parts
Of me.
And now I am
Mortified
(*Terrified*)
That I thought you understood;
That I thought I understood.
And as much as I want to hope
I remind myself

FILTERED LIGHT

The last leaf hangs
Caught on the icy twig
In the winter solstice, the last light comes early
A single ray to find that leaf
And through the leaf, thin light filters
Hinted with glitter
It may be one ray, one sparkle in the quick dark
But that ending ray of light is the light I saw
In your eyes
Every time you smiled

(I know)
That you chose to leave me.
And I let you.
-M.L.

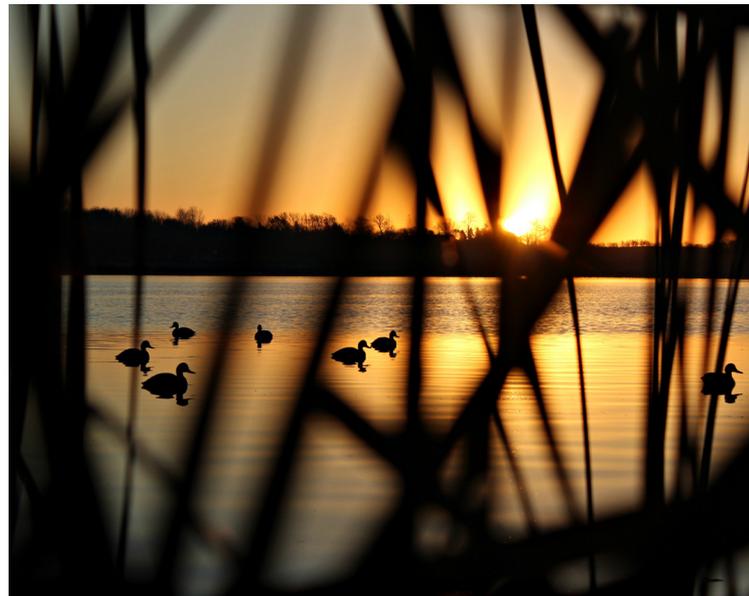
VISUAL



ALICE



THE DUOMO



THROUGH THE REEDS



ROAD TRIP



NOSTALGIA



HOW MERMAIDS SEE THE WORLD

BEHIND THE WORK

Ella Andreasen is a Communication major and Business minor at Bethany. She loves coordinating events, spending time outdoors, and arts and crafts. She started an Etsy shop to give her a creative outlet photographing and describing vintage items, while putting her business skills to use.

Robert Barr is a freshman at Bethany Lutheran College. He is majoring in Media Arts and potentially minoring in English.

Hans Bloedel is a sophomore at Bethany Lutheran College, studying Theatre. Hans has been active in recent shows such as *Leveling Up*, and *Tell It To the Wind*. While he is not on the stage, he enjoys appreciating seasonal shakes.

Nathan Evans is a senior at Bethany Lutheran College, studying History, Legal Studies, and Military Science. Most of his time is spent studying for classes during the day, researching projects for the Blue Earth County Historical Society, or fulfilling his duties as an ROTC cadet. When not doing academic or physical work, he attempts to write engaging fiction while pondering the moral questions raised in those stories.

Kylia Irwin is a Studio Art Major, with a minor in business. In the future, she hopes to run a gallery and promote art in her community.

Emily Kjeer is a freshman at Bethany and plans to major in Communications or English. She is currently on the Debate Team, works in the cafeteria, and plans to be involved with *Inkwell* next semester. She was also in Bethany's production of *The Music Man* and was the dance captain for *Tell It To The Wind*. She hopes to continue to be a part of future theatre productions.

Alicia Kranz is a Studio Art major with Secondary Licensure. Born and raised in small town Minnesota, it is no surprise that she finds beauty in the rich farm land, natural green pastures and the open water of the Northern lakes. Capturing her favorite places and images that reflect where she's from is often portrayed through her work.

Lydia Lonquist is double majoring in English and Theatre, and minoring in Communications. She is involved in choir and theatre.

Eliezer Lubiba is a freshman at Bethany and is majoring in Chemistry. He is in World Club, and assists in building the sets for the Theater department. He is from Congo, speaks three languages and understands four, and loves to dance.

Allie Lyo is an international student from China. After working for six years, she took a sabbath year off and came to Bethany to learn more about the Bible and art.

Hannah Marquardt is a junior at Bethany and is working on completing her major in Business Cultural Marketing. She spends her time involved in Bethany's World Club and hopes to create a Cultural awareness project for Bethany's students. Hannah wants to use her degree to bridge communication gaps between countries, and also impact the world of orphan ministry.

Beret Ouren is a Music and Theatre double major with a Psychology minor at Bethany. Her passion is music composition and sound design, but she also loves to act, perform, and write.

Kaci Schneidawind is a freshman in the Multimedia Writing track of the English major and plans to minor in Spanish. She is involved with both *Scroll* (newspaper) and *Fidelis* (yearbook). She's interested in writing, editing, and publishing and is open to any opportunities the future brings! Like so many other writers, she sighs at having to write but smiles at having written

John Schroeder is a 2007 graduate of BLC. He stays creatively active in his community of Grand Rapids, MN with his wife Stephanie (Heidorn, BLC '07) and their new son Gilbert.

Alyssa Shields was born in Singapore and has lived in Illinois, Florida, Washington State, and South Carolina. She currently calls Columbia, South Carolina her home, but she spends most of her time in Mankato, Minnesota. Her older brother inspired her to write when they were in grade school and she's been writing ever since. She is a Communication major with an emphasis in film at Bethany Lutheran College. She has hopes of being able to tell stories in movies and novels. She dreams about moving back to Florida to live near the water.

Erin Strom is a junior majoring in English. Erin recently has been studying abroad, but still finds time to create and appreciate literature.

Maren Thompson is a hopeless romantic. She grew up as a homeschooler reading as many pieces of literature as she could get her hands on. She now hopes to create some decent literature of her own. She is double majoring in Theatre and Literary Studies at Bethany Lutheran College.

Sophia Weisensel is an English and Art double major at Bethany. Her focus is mainly on painting and photography, but she also enjoys writing, poetry, and acting.

Benjamin Wessel is a Liberal Arts major with a Philosophy Concentration, with plans to study theology in graduate school. He loves reading, studying foreign languages, and nature. When he's not reading theology books in German, he enjoys writing poetry and fantasy.

MEET THE STAFF



Elizabeth (Lissa) Horneber is an assistant professor in English at Bethany Lutheran College and the faculty adviser of Inkwell.



Karee Henrich is the Design Editor for Inkwell. Karee is a sophomore at Bethany and will be majoring in Graphic Design with a Studio Arts minor.



Eleonore (Ellie) Mumme is the Managing Editor for Inkwell. Ellie is a senior at Bethany- majoring in English.



Hannah Bockoven is the Programs Editor for Inkwell. Hannah is a freshman at Bethany and will be majoring in English.

Thank you to all of those who submitted to this year's Inkwell and to all of those who helped shape it into the issue that it has become. Please know that your hard work is appreciated and has not gone unnoticed.

If you are interested in being published in Inkwell or through our blog, The Well, contact inkwell@blc.edu.

