



Essays, Fiction, Poetry & Artwork

EXPRESSIONS

2022



ALLEGANY
COLLEGE
of
MARYLAND

EXPRESSIONS

2022

Essays, Fiction, Poetry & Artwork



ALLEGANY
COLLEGE
of
MARYLAND

ALLEGANY COLLEGE *of* MARYLAND

12401 Willowbrook Road, SE | Cumberland, MD 21502-2596 | www.allegany.edu

EXPRESSIONS 2022 CONTRIBUTORS

V. Bowser
Meredith Briskey
Zack Crowe
Alexander Currence
Brielle Disque
Allison Dora
Azh Dozart
Melissa Jayne Franks
Robert Gomer
Jonathan Harper
Ethan Hawk
Colt McDonald
Matti McMillen
Faith H. Myers
Reiss Mikula

Donna J. Morgan
Madison Musselman
Sierra Petersheim
Zhynae J. Rogers
Logan Shuck
Rafe Sibley
Faith Steele
Mackenzie Stotler
K.T.
Victoria Timmons
William Toy
Bradley VanHorn
Dawn Varner
Sydney Wilfong
Faye Yañez

FACULTY EDITOR

Dr. Tino Wilfong

ASSISTANT EDITOR FOR POETRY

Heather Greise

STUDENT EDITOR

Donna J. Morgan

ADVISORS

Art/Humanities Faculty
John A. Bone
Prof. Robyn L. Price
Jared Ritchey
Suzanne Stultz

EDITORIAL BOARD

Marsha Clauson,
Gilbert Cochrum,
Rachel Cofield,
Kathy Condor, Levi Feaster,
Sandi Foreman, Josh Getz,
Jim House,
Wendy Knopsnider,
Janna Lee, Kim Mouse,
Alicia Phillips,
Shannon Redman,
Roberta See, Nick Taylor,
Roger Vogel, Justin Warnick,
and Juli Whetstone

GRAPHIC DESIGNER

Shannon Burnside



ARTWORK FEATURED ON FRONT COVER:

“Sunflower Sunset”
by Matti McMillen



ARTWORK FEATURED ON BACK COVER:

“A Warrior’s Iron Will and
Steely Determination”
by Bradley VanHorn

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Student Editor's Introduction	5	The Human Heart Madison Musselman	55
Artwork & Photography		So Monumental Mackenzie Stotler	58
Michael Faith H. Myers	6	Center of Country Club Mall Reiss Mikula	62
Dugout Logan Shuck	12	Momma's Garden Brielle Disque	66
Just Hopping By Donna J. Morgan	19	Forgotten Letters Faith Steele	70
Splash Pattern Azh Dozart	22		
Broken Melody Zhynae J. Rogers	29	Essays, Fiction & Poetry	
Cicada, Fully Emerged Donna J. Morgan	32	The Mount Rushmore of Heavy Metal: A Presidential Analogy	
After the Rain Faith Steele	36	Logan Shuck	7
Full Skies and Empty Clouds Jonathan Harper	37	1 Second in the Golden Nugget Alexander Currence	11
Everett Railroad Dawn Varner	38	The Life and Times of Hector Pedro Sanchez, The Cat	
Scenic Overlook Ethan Hawk	39	William Toye	13
Yellow Flower Ethan Hawk	40	King Warrick Sydney Wilfong	20
The Wrath of Mother Nature Bradley VanHorn	41	The Bridge Rafe Sibley	23
Webbed Time Azh Dozart	42	Submerged K.T.	27
Red Water Meredith Briskey	43	The Shell of My Room Faye Yañez	30
Just Chilling Donna J. Morgan	44	Brighton: Finding the Good Even in Death	
Calm Waters Zack Crowe	45	Sierra Petersheim	33
A Walk Through Nature Mackenzie Stotler	46	Giving Siblings a Chance in Foster Care	
Hot Girl Summer V. Bowser	47	Victoria Timmons	48
Magic of Nature Dawn Varner	51	Not My Responsibility Azh Dozart	52

No Exceptions | Allison Dora 56
Until We See You Again | Robert Gomer 59
Transformation | Melissa Jayne Franks 63
Hearing is Believing | Colt McDonald 67
Inspirations 71

STUDENT EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

As many writers know, sometimes it is hard to channel your thoughts into words. When I was asked to be Student Editor for this edition of Expressions, I felt honored but yet nervous to write this piece. I will admit that finding the right words to say was difficult. I am not a writer like many of the students I read in this journal—I am an amateur photographer who likes to do close-up pictures of insects and plants.

During the draft process, I took my time reading through all of the many stories, poems, and other writings. After finishing each, I paused and thought, “Wow . . . they just poured their thoughts and feelings into this, and they were passionate enough to share it with others.” I congratulate all of those who choose to write and are adventurous enough to do so. Now, if you would ask me to write something and put my deepest and truest thoughts into it, I don't know if I could do it. Some people have a true writing talent, and those people are in this journal.

When taking photographs, I like to capture the beauty of the object in a 'one-of-a-kind' photograph, and the imagery in this book is truly one-of-a-kind. Looking through all of the art in this issue was refreshing to the eye and imagination, and I thoroughly enjoyed seeing the vision and creativity that lies behind each artist. I

would like to personally congratulate everyone who submitted a writing piece and/or imagery. It is a great honor for your work to be selected and recognized throughout the college. While viewing this publication, I encourage the reader to keep in mind all of the hard work and dedication that was put into each writing and piece of imagery. The students who submitted to this magazine are truly amazing and artistic in many ways.

Again, congratulations to all who contributed and those who help to make this journal possible. I will leave you all with this quote that a wise person once said to me: “If people would just stop and take a look around them, they would be amazed at what they see”
—Words of my late grandfather, Irvin T. Morgan.

I proudly present to you, *Expressions 2022*.

Denna J. Morgan
Student Editor



MICHAEL

Acrylic

by Faith H. Myers

THE MOUNT RUSHMORE OF HEAVY METAL: A PRESIDENTIAL ANALOGY

Essay

by Logan Shuck

A question often asked in many categories of entertainment, is “Who is on the ‘Mount Rushmore’ of it?” Sports fans, people in politics, stand-up comedians, and many others all ask this question. It puts a bit of a different spin on the usual “Top 3” and “Top 5” lists that we often see.

Heavy Metal is, of course, no different. Many fans bicker back and forth about which groups comprise the Royalty of Heavy Metal. However, this kind of list isn’t simply a “Top 4.” Deciding which four groups make the list isn’t simply a matter of personal choice. If that were the case, the actual Mount Rushmore would display the faces of four Presidents that were loved most by the chief architect. The superior methodology when creating the “Mount Rushmore” of any topic is to ask, “Who is on the *actual* Mount Rushmore?”

Four presidents who served in very different times and had very different challenges to overcome, is the answer. George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Abraham Lincoln, and Theodore Roosevelt are the four proud faces adorning the mountain face, and all played very different roles in the history of the Union.

George Washington, as the first president of the Union, decided to serve for only two terms, setting the precedent for centuries hence. His presidency, while not too tumultuous, especially when compared to his monument-mate Lincoln, was still notable for setting many precedents, and keeping the Union together under the new Constitution.

Thomas Jefferson, who was elected in 1801, served as the third president of the Union. Like most men who served in the presidency, his tenure was quite eventful. Jefferson faced many issues of foreign policy, and he oversaw quite a lot of legislative work. However, the most pertinent part of his tenure, for our purposes here, was the Louisiana Purchase. This purchase not only doubled the size of the Union, but brought many opportunities for economic, cultural, and urban expansion as well. All of these factors contributed to what would later become the philosophy of Manifest Destiny, which would see the US spread its influence.

Abraham Lincoln was elected in 1861, and his presidency was almost entirely spent fighting the Civil War on behalf of the North. His administration

and executive action kept the Union whole during the bloodiest war to be waged on American soil. His highwater mark when discussing politics, of course, is the Emancipation Proclamation and the liberation of southern slaves; however, the pertinent information here is his ability to ensure that the Union did not fracture.

Theodore Roosevelt served from 1901 until 1909. Though a Republican, he was very progressive for his time, and created numerous different offices and departments, and expanded on public works and nature conservation. These facts of his incumbency are most applicable.

In summation, we have four men with distinct ways in which they significantly impacted the country: Teddy Roosevelt, who expanded our government and ushered in a new era; Abraham Lincoln, who kept the nation whole during a period of great strife; George Washington, the man who started it all, and; Thomas Jefferson, the man who bought the Louisiana Territory, doubling the size of the Union. Now, to make an analogy. Which four groups, in the storied history of Heavy Metal, best fit these descriptions?

Starting at the beginning, is George Washington, the first. Who is the George Washington of Heavy Metal? Of course, pinning down the Genesis of any genre of music is nigh impossible, as many sounds took

several years to congeal, and the many characteristics of the genre make this even more difficult. Punchy drums, distorted guitars, and harsh vocals are found in many different genres of music. John Bonham had very prominent and punchy drums; however, Led Zeppelin was a blues rock group. Foghat used distorted guitars, but of course they weren't heavy metal. This particular conversation could continue on for many a paragraph, until eventually the topic was dropped out of frustration, never to be determined. Thankfully, there is yet an answer to the question.

The first group to put together all of the characteristics of Heavy Metal's classic sound, was none other than Birmingham's own, Black Sabbath. Formed in 1968 by Toni Iommi, Geezer Butler, Bill Ward, and Ozzy Osbourne, Black Sabbath pioneered heavy metal by using heavily distorted guitars, punching drums, and the immediately recognizable vocals of Ozzy Osbourne, which always slices right through the mix, and partly characterized their sound.

Following Washington, chronologically, was Jefferson. The man who served third in line, and doubled the size of the Union. Which metal band early on helped to double the size of the genre? The answer to this question is in fact even more muddled than the initial one. Many different groups fit this description, partially because of the explosion of the

genre in the late 1970s due to the “New Wave of British Heavy Metal.” Many groups came out of other nations in Europe, particularly Germany and Sweden. Teutonic titans such as Accept, The Scorpions, Kreator, and Sodom all saw commercial success. Swedish sluggers Yngwie Malmsteen and Europe also saw great success, and several world tours. However, none saw the success of the Britain’s New Wave. This movement was a blistering barrage of British aggression, spawning a bloodthirsty battalion of thousands of bands, capitalized by groups such as Saxon, Savage, Angelwitch, Avenger, Venom, Raven, Alcatrazz, and plenty more. However, the two jewels in the apex of the British metal crown, were none other than Iron Maiden, and Birmingham bombers, Judas Priest, with the latter edging out a place on the mountain.

Judas Priest, though first formed in 1969, saw their greatest period of commercial success begin in the year 1980, with the release of the now-Classical, *British Steel*. Great tracks such as “Breaking the Law,” “Rapid Fire,” and “Livin’ After Midnight” gave the band great popularity. Further releases through the 1980’s, such as *Screaming for Vengeance*, *Defenders of the Faith*, *Point of Entry*, and *Painkiller*, made them veritable legends. These albums earned them both a spot in Valhalla, and a place on Heavy Metal’s Mount Rushmore.

Next on our list is Abraham Lincoln, the man who

held the Union together during a period of great strife— a description that is surprisingly analogous to Heavy Metal. While the genre boomed in the 1980’s, reaching great commercial success with bands like Firehouse and Europe, the following decade was not as kind to metal. Many bands, such as Judas Priest, Accept, Dokken, and Iron Maiden, either lost members, changed their sound and look entirely to match the time period, or disappeared from popular music. In some cases, a la Judas Priest, all three happened. Rob Halford, the wrought iron pipes behind the microphone on all of their studio releases to that point, left the band in 1992. The group then fizzled until 1996, when soon-to-be legend Tim “Ripper” Owens joined the group, but the music suddenly became much darker.

So which group continued to play true Heavy Metal in the 1990s? Which group kept the genre alive, during this commercial slump? The best argument would be one of the “Big Four” of Thrash Metal bands that skyrocketed in popularity. Metallica, Megadeth, Slayer, and Anthrax all were paramount to Metal’s success throughout the 1990’s and helped spawn many subgenres that would be birthed in the early 2000’s. The one who takes the title though, is Metallica. With their 1991 release of *Metallica*, or more popularly known as *The Black Album*, Metallica kept Metal a household genre, and more importantly,

kept it on the radio. Aided by powerful singles such as “Enter Sandman,” “Sad but True,” and “Wherever I May Roam,” the album debuted at number one in ten countries, and spent 4 weeks on the *Billboard* 200. Metallica undoubtedly deserves this spot on this fictional monument.

The final spot belongs to the group whose career is most akin to that of Theodore Roosevelt. Which group ushered in a New Era, and greatly expanded on the sound of Heavy Metal? The answer lies in one of the genres most successful subgenres, known as “Metalcore.” Metalcore derives its name from a combination of Heavy Metal and Hardcore Punk, another street-level genre born in the 1990’s. This genre took the melody, punch, and song structure of Metal, but added the speed and aggression of Hardcore Punk, and created a distinct sound that has endured with great popularity since its inception into the modern day.

Though there are plenty of excellent examples of the subgenre’s excellence, such as Killswitch Engage, the group often cited as the fathers of Metalcore, D.R.I., and even Slipknot, the best ambassador is the American group, As I Lay Dying. As I Lay Dying, founded in 2000, saw great success early on in their career with their sophomore release, *Frail Words Collapse*, in 2003. An upward trend of both commercial success and musical acumen began with their 2005

effort, *Shadows are Security*. With each subsequent release, the twin-axe assault of guitarists Nick Hipa and Phil Sgroso, coupled with the masterful vocals of Tim Lambesis, catapulted them to Heavy Metal stardom.

And there we have it, the four groups adorning the Heavy Metal Mount Rushmore. Black Sabbath, Judas Priest, Metallica, and As I Lay Dying. Naturally, as with any list such as this, it is a matter of personal opinion, and many of these choices could be changed with another group of equal importance. However, few will argue against these four groups as instrumental in changing not just the genre, but Metal musicianship at large.

1 SECOND IN THE GOLDEN NUGGET

Poem

by Alexander Currence

Seven-hour flight, fifteen-minute drive

. . . Almost there

The desert makes you feel alive

Hopefully lady luck is as fair

You've dreamt about seeing this place

Where Sinatra once showed his face

Where he once crooned

A beautiful tune

Walking down Fremont

The lights flash and glow

The people don't taunt

They shine where the drinks flow

You see the Nugget

The Casino second to none

You get closer to it

As father and son

After all these years, you're finally here

This place you've read so much about

You walk in, but want to shed a tear

Sign says,

"If you're under 21, Get Out!"

And that was that 1 second spent in the Golden Nugget



DUGOUT

Photograph | *by Logan Shuck*

THE LIFE AND TIMES OF HECTOR PEDRO SANCHEZ, THE CAT

Essay

by William Toye

We all have had that one pet that remains in our hearts forever and for my family it was our cat, Hector Pedro Sanchez. First, you are probably wondering why the long name, well, it simply evolved as he was part of the family. You know when your mother is mad at you—because she calls you by your full name: first, middle, and last. Well, that is how every pet we had eventually ended up with three names. The silliest was our dog April; when Mom was mad at her she would call her April May June. Anyhow, this is the story of our beloved Hector Pedro Sanchez, and how special some pets can become.

Hector first arrived when we moved into our new home, and there were undeveloped lots around our new house. One day, a cat showed up at the edge of our yard hiding out in the tall grass in one of the empty lots. We only knew he was there because of all the loud and pitiful meowing he was doing. When we heard him the first time, we all decided to see if we could find him; he hid really well so we gave up that night. But we wanted to help him out, so we left a bowl of food and water on our patio to make sure he was taken

care of and was not hungry.

The next morning, I ran outside to check and sure enough he had taken advantage of the food and water. I was really glad to see he helped himself to our hospitality! But I also was hoping he would learn to trust us, and we would be friends. Mom said not to worry, he seemed like he has been able to take care of himself so far, but if he wanted to be a part of the family, he would let us know. And boy, did he let us know, but that is a bit later in this story.

For a while, maybe a few weeks, we left food and water on the patio and during that time my Mom did one of the strangest things that I can remember. She would sit out on the back patio and talk to the cat, yes, I said talk but not how you think. You see, Hector would show up every night and he would sit at the edge of the yard still hiding in the tall grass and, as I mentioned before, meowing really loud. So, Mom took to sitting on the back patio, meowing back at him. I thought she was crazy, and we all told her so, but she said he is wanting to be reassured he is allowed to be here. So, as we watched her do this every night for about an

hour or so, would you believe that Hector started to come out and sit at the edge of the tall grass so we could see him? Then he gradually would come and sit on the patio and have a conversation with Mom, eat a bit, and run off back into the tall grass.

The first time he was on the patio with Mom was when we actually named him Hector. Mom said she named him after a Greek god, because he looked strong and had a fighting spirit, so the name fit him. He was not a very big cat, but he had what they call green tabby fur, white paws, and the greenest eyes I have ever seen on a cat. They looked like emeralds, and everyone who met Hector would comment on the eyes. One person said that Hector had eyes that could look into your soul. Having been lucky enough to have had him for fourteen years, I think that person was right.

About three weeks after we started feeding him, the weather was starting to get really warm. One night we had the back door open, but the screen door was closed to let the night breeze blow through the house. I remember it well because it was then that Mom said I think Hector has decided we are his family. I said, how do you know? She said look at the screen door. I looked and there was Hector, about three feet up the screen door hanging on and staring in at us. We all laughed, and I ran to open the door and let him in the house. He immediately came in and ran through the whole house

like he was making sure he approved of his new home. Then he came back into the family room and laid down on the floor, looked at Mom, and meowed his approval—and that was it, we were his family.

Now, I am sure the next day he wished he had kept moving on, but with two other cats in the house and adding him, we had to get him checked out by the vet. So, at Hector's first vet visit, he was given the royal treatment which was a checkup, vaccines, and of course the process of neutering. Once we were able to bring him back home from his procedure, we checked him over for ticks and fleas. Since we had two other cats and we planned on having him inside a lot more, we decided to just flea dip him. We all know most cats do not like water, and I thought trying to flea dip Hector ourselves was going to look like we ran through sticker bushes with no shirts on. But the strangest thing happened, and this is how we knew Hector was not your normal everyday cat.

We got a big bucket and filled it with the warm water and the flea treatment. We put it in the tub, then laid out a lot of towels before we got Hector. Once we prepped the bathroom, we got rubber gloves, and then picked up Hector and carried him into the bathroom for his dip. We closed the door so if he scratched us to death and jumped out of the bucket, we would be able to keep him in the room so we can keep trying to

get the treatment on him long enough to kill the fleas. Well, when we lowered him into the bucket, he stood up and put his front paws on the rim and stood there still as could be while we bathed him and combed out the bugs.

Mom said of all the cats she has ever had Hector was very different, that she had never had one act like him during the bath. He was calm; he meowed a bit, but he did not struggle or fight during it at all. After it was finished, we towed him off and wrapped him in a blanket so he could stay warm while he dried out. The vet told us later that he was over a year old but not by much, and that he was not chipped and appeared to be a stray due to his coat's condition. So, the fact that he even let us put him in a bath with no abuse from him was amazing to us. But the things that Hector continued to do that particular day were strange, like he knew how to communicate with humans.

First, during his flea bath one of us must have gotten some of the treatment in his eye by accident, because one of his eyes was getting puffy and had a goopy look to it. Hector was not able to clean it out himself, so he ran over to Mom, stood on his hind legs, and hit her with his paws meowing. Mom looked down and noticed his eye, so she picked him up and wiped his eye clean with a towel. Not so strange, but as his eye recreated the goo, he repeated the process of running to Mom

to get her to wipe his eye clear. This actually repeated itself about three times that day; after each time his eye was cleared, he went back to doing normal cat stuff like sleeping on the couch or looking out the windows.

The second strange thing that happened was on cleaning day in our house, when we all take turns rotating the chores, and it was Mom's day to just do the vacuuming. Now, we do not know if it was the sound of the machine or just the fact that Hector had never seen a vacuum cleaner before, but he did react rather strangely to the situation. Mom started vacuuming in the living room where Hector was laying on the couch. Hector jumped up, ran over to her, and stood up and patted her on the leg. She stopped and checked to see if his eye was needing to be cleaned, but it was not, so she started vacuuming again. This time Hector decided she was not paying attention, so he jumped up on my mother's leg and started climbing up. She says it was a good thing she was wearing blue jeans or those claws would have been a bit more painful. As she reached down and picked him up, he put his front paws around her neck and hung on. My mother was kind of confused by his actions; he seemed to want to be held, but she wanted to get the vacuuming done. So, from that day forward, whenever my Mom vacuumed, she had to have Hector on her hip like a two-year-old.

Just to let you know, Hector only did this to my mother; whenever she was not giving him enough attention, he would just simply start climbing up her leg until she picked him up and held him. Not only did he like to be held on the hip like a child, but he also loved being held like a baby on his back in her arms. That was normally the times when he would reach up and put a paw on your face and look in your eyes.

The last thing that happened that day that we all thought made this cat unique was ordering pizza. It had been a long day and normally on cleaning day we order take out. But since no one wanted to go out get anything, we ordered pizza for delivery. So, when the pizza came, the delivery person came to the front door and rang the doorbell. Hector jumped off the couch, ran to the front door, and stood on his back legs so he could look out the window in the door to see who was there. We opened the door to get the pizza and Hector meowed loudly at the guy until he knelt down to pet him. I guess that was Hector's way of saying thanks to the delivery guy because after he was petted, he walked back into the living room.

As we ate our pizza, Hector jumped up on the back of the couch and walked over behind me to see what I was eating. I suppose he liked the smell and wanted to try some, because he put his paw on my shoulder and every time I took a bite, he would flex his paw, so his

claws poked me just a bit. I wondered why he was doing that, but after so many times of me taking bites and him sticking me with his claws, I offered him some pizza. So, when he was ready for another bite, the process started again, which we started calling the 'paw and claw alert.' As for the pizza place, every time we called, they asked if we were the house with "the cat." I guess Hector was a favorite of the pizza delivery people.

These are all things that happened just on the first day, and there were so many others during his lifetime which I believe were things that made Hector so different and such a big part of my heart. He was the most laid-back cat and I truly think he knew how to speak human. When we had to cut his nails, we would lay him on his back, say "tickle, tickle," and he would spread his toes, and all we had to do was snip the nail off. Hector liked to play ball, so when you tossed a ball across the room, he would run and get it and bring it back, drop it, and wait for you to do it again. If one of the family was on the couch taking a nap, then Hector was there, on his back next to you; you had to wrap your arm around him to hold him close or he would paw at you. When someone cried, he would run to them and insist on being held; he would actually reach up with his paw and touch your tears as they came down your face.

Oh, and I really need to tell how Hector got his three

names, just so you know. One night we were all really tired and someone forgot to put away the bread and butter away properly. So, the next morning we got up and went into the kitchen, and there is Hector on the floor laying on his back with all four feet up in the air. His stomach looks like it had been pumped full of air, like a balloon. I was yelling to Mom that something is wrong with Hector, he is sick. She came running in the kitchen, looked at him, picked him up, and, as he was so limp, called the vet immediately. As she was on the phone with the vet, I saw the open bread bag and the open butter dish. The entire top of the whole loaf of bread was eaten away as well as about one fourth of the butter stick. I got Mom's attention and pointed so she told the vet what we suspected. The vet said he would be fine, just keep an eye on him for a day or two. Mom hung up the phone and looked down and said, "Hector Pedro Sanchez, if you do that again you are going to get a spanking." Hence the mom yelling name anointment, and it stuck. I think he liked it because he seemed to get in trouble more often from that point.

I have heard my parents say that people all have different beliefs about life and death. Some people believe you get one shot at it and it is over. Others believe you have more than one chance to get it right before you go to heaven. Do we have a human life where we forget to do something or cause another

person pain and then have to apologize by coming back as something else to make amends? Or do we start as nonhuman and work our way into human life? Is being human the last step before heaven if there are multiple lives we have to live? I never really thought that much about it until Hector came along. All I know is Hector seemed to be so in step with knowing what we were saying and doing and how to get us to understand him. He knew when you were mad, to stay away, but he also knew when you were hurting and needed those cuddles and hugs. He made us laugh all the time and I never thought there would be a day without him.

For fourteen years, he was always there with us; he liked to be involved in all the family activities we did. Hector was not like most cats that slept all day and did not want to be around; he wanted to be in the garden helping you or watching TV on the couch with you. He liked to go for rides in the car, and like a dog he wanted the window down and his face in the wind. He would wait for you to open a bag of chips and look away, so he could grab one and run off. He liked to lick ice cream until he got a brain freeze, pause, then do it again. If I did not know any better, Hector was really a little person living his bucket list, having a second chance to do all the things they never got to do the first time around.

As time would have it and all things end, my heart literally broke the day we went to the vet and Hector

did not come home. I remember we found him at the bottom of the stairs. He could not stand up, so I grabbed him, wrapped him in a blanket, and we raced to the vet's office. We were told he had a seizure and there was no chance of recovery, so it was best to say our goodbyes. We all were there. Mom said prayers as he closed his eyes and left us, but his last gesture was laying his paw on Mom's hand. It was like he knew what was happening and he was saying one last goodbye.

Now, if the belief is that you have to come back as something else to atone for your wrong doings before you go to heaven, then Hector's job is finished. Hector was more than just a cat, he was our friend. His unique personality left a special paw print on our hearts and everyone that knew him. Hector Pedro Sanchez, you were a good friend and will always be my most special pet. Rest in peace, until we meet again, mi amigo.

JUST HOPPING BY

Photograph

by Donna J. Morgan



KING WARRICK

Essay

by Sydney Wilfong

20

Captain Warrick peered out into the ocean, the gloomy water making it difficult to see beneath its gray surface. His strained yet keen eyes observed the murky waters carefully. There, in what seemed like the middle of the vast ocean, was only one mammal, swimming in languid circles. It was rare to find one by itself, especially one that was so sizable and round. Captain Warrick smiled to himself, revealing his cone-shaped teeth before turning away from the prey. His harpoon was only a few feet from him; he wrapped his flipper around the harpoon as he whirled back around to face the lonely creature. He couldn't help but notice the sense of pride that coursed through the grooves in his thick neck, swelling at the odious thought of what the mammal would look like when it was retching, dying slowly. Warrick aligned the end of the spear with his target; he was precise in aiming the weapon as he would only have one chance to kill it, as it was still swimming, unaware of the harbinger pointed at its bare chest. Captain Warrick pressed the trigger to the harpoon; hissing, the spear soared through the air, and

within seconds it struck—a horrible gushing sound, the gurgling of blood echoed throughout the ocean. With a cheer of triumph, Captain Warrick tugged on the rope, pulling the mammal closer and closer to the boat; it sputtered and spat, the water surrounding it morphed into red wine. He fought with it, as it heaved and jerked, trying its best to break from the rope that pulled it closer to death. Captain Warrick bored his tail into the cold surface of the boat, his tail rubbing against jagged splinters, using all of his strength to dominate. With one brusque wrench, Captain Warrick was able to lift it onto the old boat, and with one swift movement of his knife, Captain Warrick slit its neck. He felt suddenly tranquil, wiping the sweat and remnants of blood from his blubbery skin. Leaning over the body, he seized its two legs, its two arms, and threw it into an empty bag. *The first of today*, thought Captain Warrick. The pride he felt at first seeing the mammal came flooding back when he glanced down at the lifeless body, stained with its own blood. He tied the bag tightly, remembering to leave a note for the crew when they

came to collect the day's catch. Using a marker, Warrick labeled the bag carefully: ONE LARGE HUMAN, READY TO BE SKINNED. Exhaling, Captain Warrick wobbled away on his sore, bruised tail: a pleasant reminder of his victory for the day.



SPLASH PATTERN

Pen and Ink

by Azh Dozart

THE BRIDGE

Essay

by Rafe Sibley

It was the last day of school and Nate was in his last class of the day, a free period before summer began. It was loud in the room with the excited chatter of kids ready to rush out of school. It was also very hot in the class because the air conditioner had been broken all year.

Nate was sitting in his seat, in his own world as usual, but then suddenly, another boy in the class named Raylan placed a note on his desk and walked away. Nate took a second to comprehend that Raylan had left him a message, then he picked up the small piece of paper, just big enough for the little message, that said “Meet me at Lovers Bridge after school.” Nate stood up to walk over to Raylan to ask him about the note, but before he could the bell rang, and he was shoved and bumped by other classmates excited to start their summer. Nate walked into the hallway looking for Raylan, but he couldn’t find him within the sea of classmates. He looked around a little more and even tried to find Raylan’s locker, but they had only ever had one conversation, so he didn’t know much about him. After realizing that he quickly gave up. He left with

the rest of his classmates to walk home.

It was an eight-minute walk from the school to his house, and from his house it was only a small walk away from Lovers Bridge. On Nate’s walk home he wondered why Raylan wanted to meet with him. No one ever seemed to notice Nate this year or the two years before; he just went through school by himself. He never had any friends and, now that he is thinking about it, everyone kind of bullied and shunned Raylan. Maybe that was the reason he wanted to meet.

Nate finally arrived home and walked up to his house, a beautiful house covered in vines. He walked up the stairs to his front door still contemplating why Raylan left him the note. He entered his home, which was filled with natural light from the large bay window at the front of the house. He made his way up to his room and set his notebooks down on his desk, then sat on the edge of his bed thinking if he should bring anything with him to the bridge.

Nate went to the bridge a lot since it was so close to his house. He went there to read, and write, and listen to music, but mainly he went just for some peace. Nate

wondered if Raylan knew that is where he hung out and that's why he wanted to meet there. He decided to bring swimming trunks and his backpack, within which he placed the note, his trunks, and a sketch book. Then he started to make his way to the bridge. On his walk, he felt nervous still wondering what Raylan could want with him.

Nate made it to the bridge, and he took three steps onto it, just enough to set his backpack down. Then, coming from behind, he heard, "Hey, you actually came!" Nate swung his head around and let out a nervous response, "Yeah, of course I came! I probably would come here even if you didn't ask. I come to the bridge a lot." Raylan replied with "Oh, great! I guessed right! I thought you came here a lot, but I wasn't sure." Before Nate could even respond Raylan jumped up on the edge of the bridge. "Woah, be careful up there, you could fall," said Nate. "Oh, it's fine. I won't fall unless I want to" replied Raylan. He then removed his shirt and dropped it onto the bridge. Nate asked what Raylan was doing and Raylan just looked Nate right in his eyes and fell backward off the bridge. In the moment, Nate was in shock and he said to himself "Holy shit, did he just invite me out here so someone could see him die? Oh my God, I have to call the cops." Nate grabbed his backpack, rummaging around for his phone. As he started to dial 911, he heard a faint "Nate ... Nate!"

Nate looked around in shock. "Nate ... Nate, I'm down here, man!" Nate walked over to the bridge and there Raylan was, relaxing and floating on his back. "What are you still doing up there? Get down here," yelled Raylan. "Do I have to jump down? There is a path on the other side of the bridge," Nate replied nervously.

Nate came to the bridge every chance he had to get away from his father. He had thought about jumping off the bridge when his home life felt unescapable, but he had always been too scared. "Aw, come on Nate, it'll be fun, and you'll get down here a lot faster! It's safe. You'll be okay, don't worry so much," said Raylan. Nate stepped out of view and walked over to his backpack nervously and pulled out his light blue swimming trunks. He took a little while to change into his trunks, walked slowly back to the edge of the bridge, and called out, "Alright, I'm ready." "You got this. You're safe, I got you," replied Raylan. Nate got up on the edge, his knees shaking. He took one deep breath and jumped off the bridge.

On the way down, zooming toward the water, everything slowed down. Nate felt like it took an hour for him to finally hit the water, but when he did the time sped back to normal. Nate's adrenaline was through the roof. Raylan swam over to him and asked if he was okay. Nate didn't say anything. He just was so filled with emotion from jumping off the bridge he

had thought of killing himself at, he started to cry. He got out of the water and sat down on a log nearby, tears streaming down his face like the river he had just jumped into. Raylan followed him and sat close to Nate on the log. "Are you okay?" asked Raylan. Nate looked over at Raylan and didn't say a word; he just pulled him close and kissed him. Once again time had slowed down. The kiss felt like it lasted forever. In that moment, Nate finally felt free. Free from all the pain he had endured in his life. It felt as if it were just him and Raylan. The kiss had finally ended, and Raylan look confused and upset. "Hey, I need to get going. I have to help my mom with dinner," said Raylan. "Okay ... will you meet me here tomorrow ... um, if you are free?" asked Nate. "I'll text you later when I get home and let you know." Nate knew Raylan didn't really need to help his mother with dinner, but being so happy from the kiss, he just said "Okay, talk soon!"

Raylan walked away, and Nate stayed on the log on the side of the river for a while. He did not want to leave and go back to home. His house may look beautiful, but deep down it was Nate's living hell. His father was an abusive man, and he would hit Nate's mother. When his mom left his dad, he started hitting Nate. That's why he was always at the bridge, it was his escape.

After staying at the bridge for an hour longer, he

made his way back to his house. He turned the front door handle slowly and cautiously walked inside. His dad was in a bad mood. "You are late for dinner, boy," said Nate's father. "Hey. I know. I'm not hungry anyway, so it's fine," replied Nate. That response made Nate's father visibly angry. "You better watch your tone with me," said his father, threateningly. "I didn't even have a tone. What are you talking about?" That response sent his father over the edge. He rushed toward Nate and slammed him against the wall, screaming, "You have no respect, boy! I paid for this house, I pay for the food we eat, and you still have no respect! I guess I'll have to teach you what happens when you don't know respect." He pulled back his fist and hit Nate in the stomach. Nate dropped to the ground, the wind knocked out of him. His father did not let up and kicked him in the stomach repeatedly. "Are you going to start respecting me?" yelled Nate's father. Nate struggled to make a sound, forcing out a "Yes." His father made him flinch once more and then walked into the living room.

Nate stumbled upstairs into his room and onto his bed. Holding back tears, he grabbed his phone. No new messages to be seen. He was hoping Raylan would message him about meeting the next day; he needed a reason to wake up in the morning. Nate left Raylan a message, which read "I had a great time at the bridge today! Please meet me there ASAP. I need

to leave my house. I can't be here. I'm going there right now. Please text me back." He waited a moment, then grabbed his backpack and headed out to the bridge.

The walk seemed to take longer than usual, but he still made it there within eight minutes. He waited for a message from Raylan. He sat his phone down on the ledge, and he stood there looking down from where he had jumped earlier that day. The longer he looked, the more he moved across the bridge, still looking over the edge. He got up on the ledge over the choppy, fast water. He felt free, just like he did when he was kissing Raylan. He let his body fall from the bridge. Right when Nate slammed into the water, knocking him unconscious, his phone he had left on the ledge of the bridge lit up with a message from Raylan. "I'm sorry, I was having dinner with my family. I had a great time too. I'm sorry I freaked out. I got nervous, but I've had a crush on you all year. I'll meet you there. I'm on my way now and I'll help you through whatever you need."

SUBMERGED

Poem

by K.T.

Be strong.

Believe.

Be great.

They say

Be courageous.

Be amazing.

Don't be fazed.

They say

How?

How?

How do I be brave?

How do I be brave, unfazed, and unafraid?

They don't know I've been torn down by the sound of
my mother's frown.

Because "What good could you amount?"

The sound whispers to remind me.

But others can never define me.

"Stop trying" "Stop trying"

The frown whispers everyday

Every day when they say, "Don't be fazed—It's a
new day!"

The frown is too loud,

So I start to drown.

Her whispers pierce through my ears.

Others watch from the pier.

I sink slowly,

hair floating,

face no longer showing.

I'm fully swallowed now,

wrapped around by the judging sound.

They can't see me anymore.

Murky waters hit the shore.

All that's left is my core

The core they never saw,

never heard

that never thought.

All because I was drowned by the sound of my

mother's frown

BROKEN MELODY

Pencil

by Zhynae J. Rogers



THE SHELL OF MY ROOM

Poem

by Faye Yañez

You asked me to not give in and I listen.
You asked me not to sink into the waterbed that is my pain. Not to cry.
More importantly, not to catch my tears in the glass that I drink from
when the nightmares force me awake in the middle of the night.

Mind be still.
Mind be mine.

30

You used to carve the suffering into furniture.
You took a blade to the dark wood dresser that stood in the middle of your room.
The dresser instead of your face.

What an eccentric taste in fashion. You took to your jeans in red ink.
Writing how much you wanted to live in harmony with your soul.
Writing on the inside of your closet door about the long nights spent waiting for the sun to rise
so you could finally put your thoughts to rest.

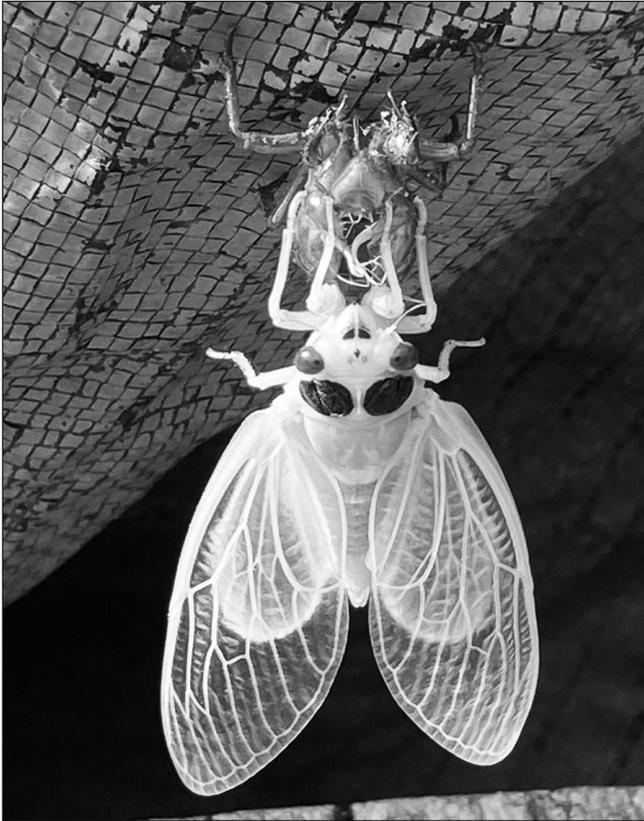
Smearing paint across your room wall.
Remembering a discussion where you stressed the importance of love being present in your life.

The pants since recycled.

The closet once cocooned you from the need to be brash. It's door, a giving tree.

The painted wall, which was once a deep purple, now a creamy beige.

What was once a canvas, now a patched-up excuse of a room.



CICADA, FULLY EMERGED

Photograph

by Donna J. Morgan

BRIGHTON: FINDING THE GOOD EVEN IN DEATH

Essay

by *Sierra Petersheim*

There is something in life that no one can avoid. It affects all humans in one way or another. Its effect may leave some people merely sad, while it completely shatters others. This thing is death. Death often looks different in different situations. It can be slow, drawn out, and expected, or it can be so quick and unexpected that it leaves the ones affected by it gasping for breath. It can be an old man who simply dies of old age, or it can be a young teenager in a freak accident, taken long before their time. Whatever the case, death always hurts. I have always been told that everything happens for a reason and that God has a plan for everything that comes into your life, but I never really understood how that can relate to death. It always seemed so pointless and depressing to me and I couldn't figure out why God would put people through that. Then, I had a heartbreaking experience with death that finally showed me how God can bring good out of every circumstance, even death.

In my family there are seven children. I am the third so there are four younger than me. Growing up it

seemed as though there was always a new baby in the house, and it was wonderful. We all absolutely loved babies and were so excited every time another one joined our family. So, when my mom told us that baby number eight was on the way, we were ecstatic. It was especially exciting for me because I had been wanting another sibling for a long time. I had been dealing with feeling very depressed and down and when she told me that she was pregnant again, all those depressed feelings simply vanished. It felt like my own special gift from God, and it was all we could think or talk about.

That all changed one day when my mom and dad went to a doctor's appointment. At that time our area was in lockdown because of Covid, and we were all doing school from home. This meant that we were all at home eagerly waiting for them to get back. When they finally got home, there were tears in my mom's eyes and she called all of us together.

"I lost the baby," she said. "It was a boy." And with those words, my heart was shattered. I could barely breathe. I felt like someone had just punched me in

the gut. Not only had I wanted a baby, but I had also wanted it to be a boy. We were all heartbroken and everyone broke down in tears.

That was one of the hardest days that my family has ever been through. Some people might not understand why we were so heartbroken, since the baby hadn't even been born yet, but we really were. That baby had already become a full-fledged member of our family and had made his way into all our hearts.

I was so shocked and crushed that everything just seemed to be in a haze. My whole world had just been turned upside down. I had loved that child with all my heart and now he was just gone. I couldn't bear the thought of going on without him because he had become such a huge part of my life. I wanted so badly to be able to hold him, even if it was just one time. When we buried him, I felt as if we were burying my last little bit of joy.

It was hard for the others, but they all bounced back a lot faster than I did. I desperately wanted to be happy again like they were, but I just couldn't figure out how. The littlest reminder of him would cause me to break down. One example was when we were deciding his name. We chose Brighton because of how he had brightened all our lives. It was the perfect name, but it just made me cry because all the joy that he had brought now seemed to be lost forever. I was a mess,

and, as bad as it might seem, I thanked God for Covid because it meant that I didn't have to see anyone. I didn't have to try to act like I was okay and just move on. For weeks the only people that I saw were my family and my best friend.

It took me a long time to get out and see people again. Many times, I would think that I was ready to go out, but when the time came to go, I couldn't. It might sound dramatic to some people, but for me it was very hard. It felt like if I went out and started being with people and having fun again, I would forget about Brighton. I took it very slow and would only go to a few things until it gradually got better and better. After a long time, I finally got to the point where I could think and talk about him without crying, and that was when I finally started healing.

While this whole experience might just look like a sad story with no bright side to it, that's not how I see it today. While I was in the middle of this experience, I couldn't even fathom how something good could come from it. Now, however, I can see how it has changed me and helped me to grow. I have come to realize that before, when people that I know would have a miscarriage or lose a child, I didn't really understand. While I would be very sympathetic and would do my best to console them, I didn't know what they were feeling or what they needed to hear. Basically, I couldn't

relate to them. Now, I know exactly what they are feeling. I can personally understand what all they are going through and I know all the thoughts that are running through their heads. I know much better how to comfort and be there for them in a way that I never could have before Brighton.

I believe that God was preparing me for my future job. I am going to college to become a midwife and, unfortunately, I will most likely have to go through this type of thing again. But since God gave me Brighton, I will now be able to help way more people and be much more effective than I ever could have been before.

No matter how dark and hopeless a situation might seem, there is always something good that can come out of it. If someone would have told me that I would be able to find good in losing a little brother, I would have said that they don't have a clue how attached I am to my family. But I really did. While hard times are never fun, they can be what turns us into better people. These hard times are usually when we grow the most. God pulled me through and showed me that no matter how hard it might be, He would always be there and bring about good, even in death.



AFTER THE RAIN

Photograph | *by Faith Steele*



FULL SKIES AND EMPTY CLOUDS

Photograph | *by Jonathan Harper*



EVERETT RAILROAD

Photograph | *by Dawn Varner*



SCENIC OVERLOOK

Photograph | *by Ethan Hawk*



YELLOW FLOWER

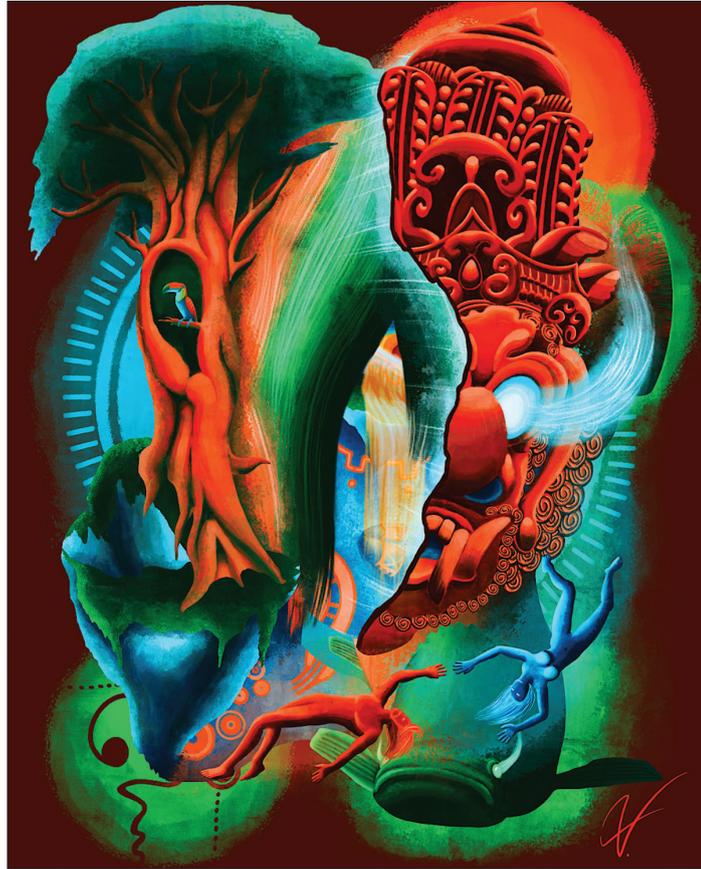
Photograph

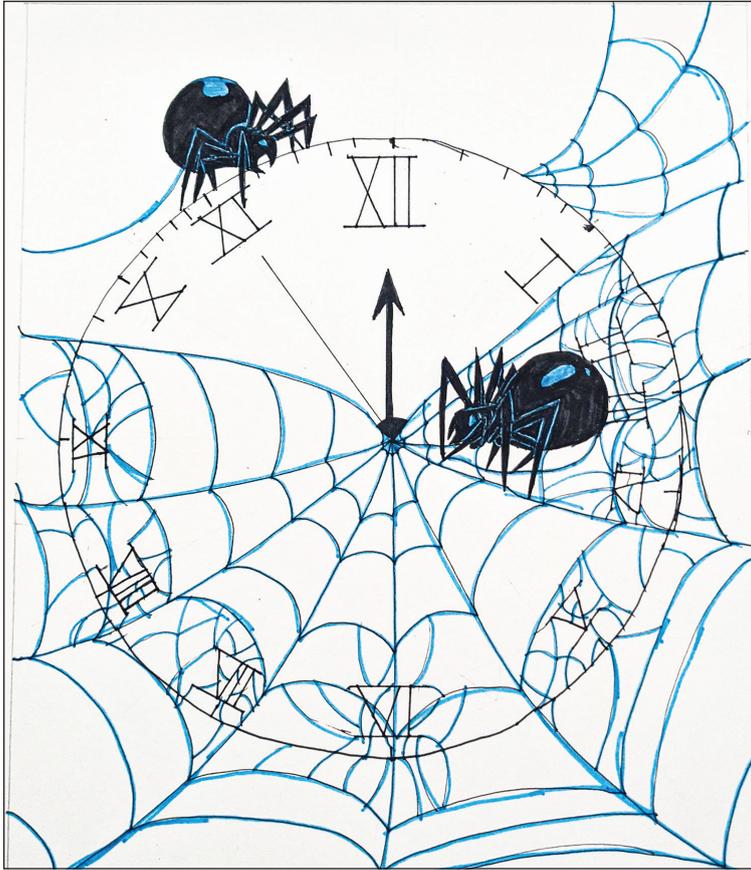
by *Ethan Hawk*

THE WRATH OF MOTHER NATURE

Digital Art

by Bradley VanHorn





WEBBED TIME

Pen and Ink

by Azh Dozart

RED WATER

Pencil

by Meredith Briskey

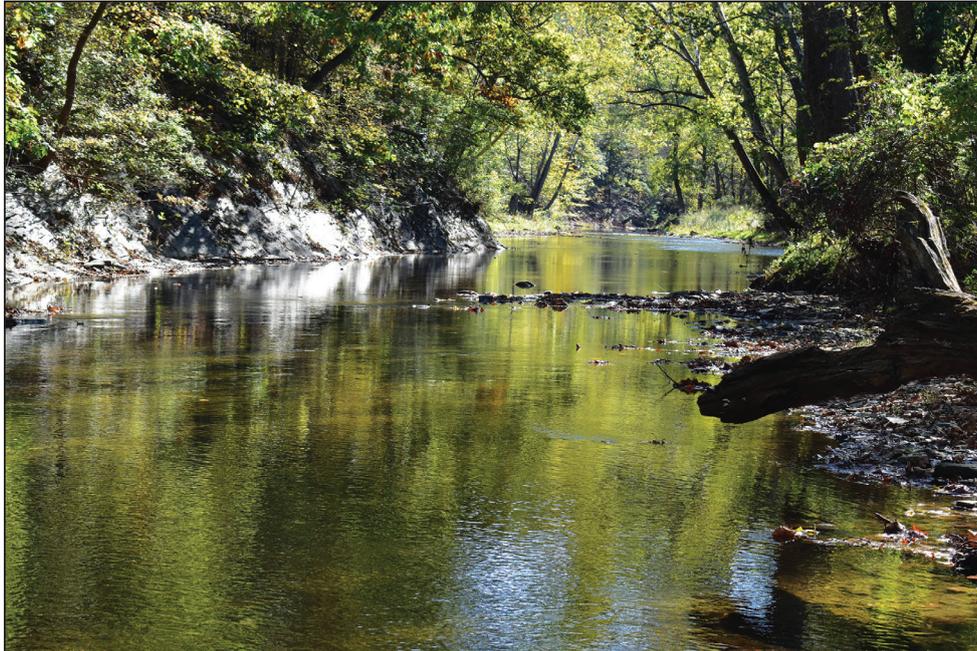




JUST CHILLING

Photograph

by Donna J. Morgan



CALM WATERS

Photograph | *by Zack Crowe*



A WALK THROUGH NATURE

Photograph | *by Mackenzie Stotler*



HOT GIRL SUMMER

Painting | *by V. Bowser*

GIVING SIBLINGS A CHANCE IN FOSTER CARE

Essay

by Victoria Timmons

“Most of the time, it is vital for siblings separated by adoption or divorce not to lose each other.” – Professor of Law, Jill Elaine Hasday

All too frequently in this country, children are placed into the foster care system, whether voluntarily or forcibly. There are many reasons that children are taken or given up by their birth family. Sometimes it is financial, sometimes it is due to abuse, and sometimes it is health related. Regardless of what the reason is, there are tens of thousands of children in the system at any given time. The biggest problem that arises out of these situations is the separation of sibling groups. Although there is a federal mandate that was passed in 2008 called the “Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act” that states in order to receive federal funding, a state must provide “reasonable efforts” to “place siblings removed from their home in the same foster care;” it does not define what those “reasonable efforts” should be. As a result, as high as 75 percent of foster siblings are separated (Staff and Fein), and this leads to emotional and mental

trauma for the siblings.

Siblings create a very specific bond that cannot be duplicated by other relationships in their lives. In an ordinary, healthy family, siblings share many of the same memories, relationships, and emotions. Siblings look to each other for guidance, support, and help at times they wouldn’t even look to their own parents, friends, or guardians. When you add in the trauma of being removed from the biological family, siblings often cling to the only stability they feel they have and that is with one another. Anna Clark, a Family Law lawyer currently working in New York, published a paper entitled “Where’s My Sister? Siblings Should Have a Statutory Right to Be Placed Together in Foster Care” on the importance of keeping sibling groups together, or in lieu of, giving siblings rights to visitation or contact. In her paper she described a sibling bond:

Each time the children moved, the only stable person they had in their lives was their sibling. When they were moved, they were introduced to new schools, new foster parents, and new foster siblings. Even

though everything else around them was new and they were in a new environment, they had each other, and that made it easier for them to deal with all of the transitions that they were facing. They had each other to rely on for support and for comfort when everything else around them was different. This concisely sums up the intricacies and importance of a sibling bond. A sibling bond is one of the most important and stable relationships a child in foster care can have.

Being placed in foster care alone can lead to a host of mental disorders. According to Dr. Susanne Babbel in her article entitled “The Foster Care System and Its Victims Part 3,” these include “depression, anxiety, panic attacks, suicidal tendencies, PTSD, trust issues, and attachment disorder.” When siblings are separated, the likelihood of these mental issues increase.

Unfortunately, in the case of adoption, the results are more dire. Jill Elaine Hasday, a professor of family law at the University of Minnesota, states in her article, “Brotherly (and Sisterly) Love” that “When siblings are adopted out of their biological family by different parents, many states treat the sibling relationship as completely terminated.” As a result, all attempts to contact or reunite the siblings is, through the eyes of the law, severed. Once a child is adopted, the biological family, parents, siblings, and other members, have zero

legal right to know where the child is or even what their new name is. As of the writing of this paper, only nine states offer public adoption records when the adoptee turns 18. All other states seal adoption records and these records can only be unsealed upon court order. Only 37 states have voluntary mutual consent reunion programs. These are very limited in that *both* parties must know about the registry and apply to it. Unfortunately, these are not well advertised programs. In my own research in looking for my sibling during the last 20 years, I have only recently found out about this program through the research for this paper.

There is some hope, however. Thanks to the rise in social media and genealogical curiosity over the last decade, there are many more avenues for reunion, such as DNA testing and matching through sites like *Ancestry*, *23 and Me*, and *My Heritage*. Social media is also helpful as it can easily spread the information and reach a larger audience. Federal and state governments are also seeing the importance of keeping sibling groups in contact or together. Many states are enacting sibling visitation and contact rights. As recently as March of 2020, new legislation entitled “Expressing the Sense of the Congress that State Agencies and Other Providers of Foster Care Services Should Make Every Effort to Ensure Siblings Remain Together in the Foster System” was introduced in Congress

by New Hampshire Representative Ann M. Kuster. This bill seeks to require “that States place siblings removed from their home in the same foster care, kinship guardianship, or adoptive placement, unless the State documents that such a joint placement would be contrary to the safety or well-being of any of the siblings.” It further goes on to state that should a sibling group not be placed together, “the State is to provide for their frequent visitation or interaction.”

There is still a lot of progress to be made. However, there are strides forward every day. In the future, this author hopes that no child will have to go through the heartbreak and emotional trauma I have had to face by being separated from my siblings. With the efforts of people like Professor Hasday, Representative Kuster, and Dr. Babbel, perhaps that day will come sooner rather than later.

Works Cited

- Babbel, Susanne. “The Foster Care System and Its Victims Part 3.” *Psychology Today*, 11 Jan. 2012, www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/somatic-psychology/201201/the-foster-care-system-and-its-victims-part-3.
- Clark, Anna C. “Where’s My Sister? Siblings Should Have a Statutory Right to Be Placed Together in Foster Care.” *Family Law Quarterly*, vol. 51, no. 1, Spring 2017, pp. 117–132. EBSCOhost, search-ebSCOhost-com.acm.idm.oclc.org/login.aspx?direct=true&db=aph&A

[N=129670484&site=eHost-live&scope=site](https://www.congress.gov/bill/112th-congress/house-bill/129670484).

- Hasday, Jill Elaine. “Brotherly (and Sisterly) Love.” *Slate Magazine*, 8 July 2014, slate.com/news-and-politics/2014/07/family-law-should-protect-sibling-relationships.html.
- “H.R.6307 - 110th Congress (2007-2008): Fostering Connections to Success Act.” *Congress.gov*, Library of Congress, 25 June 2008, <https://www.congress.gov/bill/110th-congress/house-bill/6307>.
- Staff, Ilene, and Edith Fein. “Together or Separate: A Study of Siblings in Foster Care.” *Child Welfare*, vol. 71, no. 3, May 1992, pp. 257–70. EBSCOhost, <https://search-ebSCOhost-com.acm.idm.oclc.org/login.aspx?direct=true&db=aph&AN=9205111228&site=eHost-live&scope=site>.
- “Text - H.Con.Res.95 - 116th Congress (2019-2020): Expressing the sense of the Congress that State agencies and other providers of foster care services should make every effort to ensure siblings remain together in the foster system.” *Congress.gov*, Library of Congress, 4 March 2020, <https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/house-concurrent-resolution/95/text>.



MAGIC OF NATURE

Photographs | *by Dawn Varner*

NOT MY RESPONSIBILITY

Essay

by Azh Dozart

Rink was walking along a sidewalk exploring the city she had just wandered into. She lived far outside the city and had been walking for a few hours now, having left her faster source of transportation at home. She was looking down at her feet as a cool midnight breeze blew softly into her face, pinching at her nose. She wasn't really looking for anything, only wanting to take a nice long walk.

Allowing her mind to wander, she thought to herself aloud, "Hm, sometimes I wonder how I got stuck in this situation. Alone, nowhere to be, no friends to speak of. Eh, I have a job at least, a nice place. That's more than I could ask for." Slowly placing her hands into her pockets as the wind picked up with flurries of snow dancing around her, she looked up from her feet to the path ahead of her. "Oh, it's starting to snow already? Guess it really is winter, huh?"

Pulling her scarf closer to her face, she turned to walk back home, just as a strong gust of wind pushed her forward. She almost lost her balance from the sudden push, but was able to keep herself upright and

sighed, "Almost as if the wind wants me to go home." She turned back to face the wind. "Well, the wind can't always get what it wants," she chuckled, walking down the sidewalk with a faster pace.

The cold didn't really bother her; if anything she was starting to enjoy it, laughing to herself as she walked into the wind that was trying to push her back. The trees lining the sidewalk were flowing back in the wind, making a calm sound—when suddenly, she heard a small cry—a faint distant cry, sounding like it was from a small and scared creature. She stopped in her tracks and looked around, trying to see where it was coming from. "There's no one out at this hour," she whispered, while trying to listen as she took large, quick steps toward the sound.

Her fast strides soon turned into a sprint as she spotted a bench with a box beside it. The closer she got, the louder the cries became. She paused for a moment. Just a moment, to think. "Wait . . . it's not my responsibility . . . right.?" She shook her head, "What am I saying? There's no one else here! For all I know,

whatever it is could be hurt!”

Rushing over, she looked at the box covered in snow and opened it, her eyes widening at the sight of its contents. Inside was a small baby flailing its arms, covered by a thin blanket. It was hardly enough to keep the child safe from the lowering temperature. The cold suddenly felt unbearable as the wind let out a deadly howl. Rink quickly removed her scarf and wrapped the child in both it and the thin blanket. The baby was cold to the touch—who knows how long it had been out here by now. She took another glance to her surroundings, despite knowing no one else was out this late, but feeling the need to check, just in case.

“Why would someone leave a kid out here like this?” She asked herself aloud, before unzipping her coat to hold the child closer to her chest for warmth. “Poor kid. No time to sit here and contemplate, I gotta get home as soon as possible.”

She held the child carefully and ran back home, the wind pushing her much harder than before, back to where she came from. The snow started to fall at a much faster pace. The pavement was turning white as the snow stuck to it, making it difficult to run, while the cold air bit at her nose and hands.

The baby was shivering as its cries continued, despite Rink’s best efforts to help it become warmer. Rink zipped her coat back up slightly, to shield the child

from the falling snow and wind as she pressed on, not allowing the snow to slow her down. The journey home felt like it took much longer that it actually had, given the stress of the situation and the need to press on no matter what. It was far past midnight when she slammed open her front door, shutting it with her foot as she rushed inside. The child was still shivering and crying, and Rink was taking in slow deep breaths in an attempt to stay calm and keep a level head. Looking to her heater, she hoped she had forgotten to turn it off; any other day she would be disappointed that she had forgotten again, but, thanking whatever gods above, she sat in front of its steady heat and carefully took off her coat, trying not to get any of the leftover snow on the already freezing child in her arms.

“Come on kid, it’s gonna be all right now, just breathe. You’re in a much safer place,” she said, talking as if the baby could understand. She removed the blanket and scarf, as the cold air and snow had made them useless to the child now. “Geez, why would someone leave a kid outside in the cold like this?”

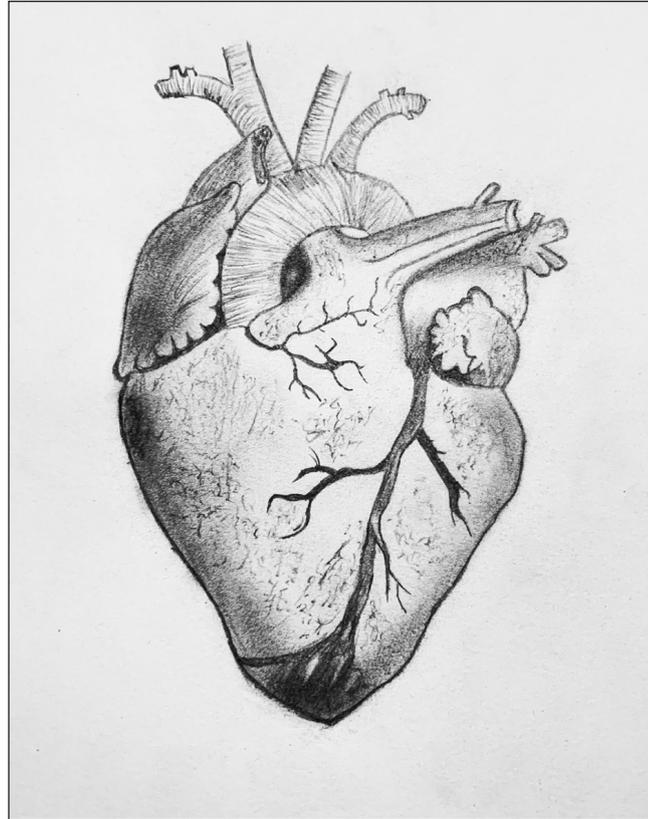
The child sneezed and then stopped crying, the heater slowly making them both feel warmer. Relieved, Rink smiled down at the small child in her arms. She would have to keep the baby here and safe for the night at least, while she waited for the police station to open up, or for mother to wake up so she could call

her for any kind of advice. However, for now, she'd just have to wait and make sure the child was okay. After all, it's her responsibility.

THE HUMAN HEART

Pencil

by Madison Musselman



NO EXCEPTIONS

Essay

by Allison Dora

56

Have you ever been stopped by an older woman while you were grocery shopping with your new baby, for her to express her disgust, saying that you should be ashamed of yourself for your life decisions? This happened to me, and she went on to say my new baby and I would be “doomed to end up in Hell for the rest of our days” because she did not approve of my many tattoos. This was many years ago, but I still remember the discrimination and vowed to raise my kids better. Experiences like this happen to me too often. Stereotypes are just another form of prejudice. Some Americans are prejudiced and sometimes discriminatory to anyone wearing a hijab, as I still hear off color jokes and comments today about the Muslim people. But while prejudice and discrimination do not necessarily have to be about skin color, how deep racism itself can go has become more apparent to me in the last few years, and not just through publicized events, but through my own personal, work, and educational experiences.

I was raised that inequality is outdated and everyone,

no matter what skin color, has the same rights and privileges as everyone else—but unfortunately there came exceptions. When I was a child, my parents made it a point to tell me I was to never go to a certain area of our city, which was a predominately black neighborhood with a high drug and crime rate. It was not until adulthood when I asked who we were avoiding there? They both, showing prejudice, said they did not know any one individual who lived there but knew how “those” people are. Since then, working at the local jails and prisons, I have worked with correction officers and deputy wardens who were from this neighborhood, and I also took care of inmates who were from this very same neighborhood. Does this mean I treated the two groups differently? I would be lying if I said I did not. I was raised to think “those people” are dangerous. Yet, I trusted my life and safety to the officers from the same streets as the inmates. But also, none of the inmates of any color ever harmed me, and most who would see me when they got out thanked me for taking care of them. I had been

prejudiced against them without even knowing them.

In grade school we learned about Jim Crow and the freeing of slaves by Lincoln, but not once had I heard of The Great Migration, during which six million African Americans left the South. I was taught that once the slaves were freed most of them stayed due to a lack of education or the fear of a new life, which was complete bull. African Americans wanted to leave and be free. Instead of being free to pursue the American Dream, they were stuck in a caste system, a closed stratification system where people can do little or nothing to change the social standing of their birth. It was put into place to maintain the economic order of the south and was so archaic that a black person could not play checkers with a white person, and so vicious that thousands of African Americans were lynched in the south for not obeying the bogus Jim Crow laws that were to be perceived as a breach of protocol in the caste system, and when they would try to leave the south, many were shot or punished. I am angry because there is still this kind of treatment today. How can the black community fight so hard through slavery, civil rights, and racism just to be treated like this still?

Anyone can be racist no matter their skin color. I would not want to be a white police officer today. Most police officers are good, and some folks have a tough time believing that. But why would they? The law is

only as good as the bigots enforcing it. For those of us who are blessed, lucky or privileged to be viewed a certain way, we may tend to be blind to those who are not so blessed, lucky, or privileged. Where the system is rigged, where do the people fight it land? The bravery that all African Americans have shown to be where they are today is nothing but extraordinary.

“Treat others how you want to be treated” is a sign that hangs in my family room for my children to read every day. I want to raise my children as I was raised, but with no exceptions.



SO MONUMENTAL

Photograph | *by Mackenzie Stotler*

UNTIL WE SEE YOU AGAIN

Essay

by Robert Gomer

Death is known as part of the circle of life, an end of time for an individual. Is there a reason to fear death or time? As Jean-Luc Picard (as played by Sir Patrick Stewart) stated in *Star Trek Generations*, “Someone once told me that time was a predator that stalked us all our lives. I rather believe that time is a companion who goes with us on the journey and reminds us to cherish every moment, because it will never come again. What we leave behind is not as important as how we’ve lived.” After all Number One, we’re only mortal.

Before the loss of my grandparents, I did not really think about death. I was young and had my whole life ahead of me. But as I’ve lost persons, both family and friends, I’ve come to realize that I have more days behind me than in front of me. My personal thoughts of death seemed to vary from day to day or moment to moment even. When I reflect on the persons I’ve lost, I think are they watching over me or are they guiding me along. The act of dying does not scare me, but in fact the idea of not being here for my loves really

scares me more than I can say. My thoughts became clearer on this with the loss of my wife.

Before I met my wife, I was just in limbo, just living day to day and doing what I needed to survive like work, staying out of trouble, and looking for a day when maybe I might be happy again. Then she came into my life. She was married at the time and her sister and I had been friends since the fourth grade. Never even thought of a possible relationship with her. I held her as a friend. Then one day she called me and said that something had happened, and she asked me to come get her out of the house she was in at the time. We started talking more and hanging out, watching tv, then having dinners, then going to movies ... and before we knew it, we were in love. With our relationship changing, we were married on October 31st, Halloween, and for our honeymoon we got dressed up, went to Cumberland, MD, and the haunted tunnels under the Emmanuel church.

There was my wife, my stepdaughter, and myself. We lived and worked together each day dealing with

life's ups and downs as a team, later adding my youngest daughter to our family. Being with her was a wonderful thing. I looked forward to every morning and felt so alive. I never thought for a moment it would ever end. But as some 14 years passed and time went on, things seemed to change and at one point, she said she wanted a divorce. At that point, we did end up separating and she moved out. We seemed only to spend time then talking about what this new future may end up looking like, how to divide our lives and have the least impact on our daughter and stepdaughter. We only seemed to speak in legal terms, and this went on for some time with me still having no final outlook for what was to happen.

Then one day while I was outside working on her flower garden, I heard the scanner go off and I knew the address. It was where she was staying. I rushed to her and what I found was so real and so frightening to me. As an Emergency Medical Technician (EMT), I was used to seeing people in distress, but to see her on a stretcher scared me beyond anything I had ever faced before. The crew on the ambulance did not want me to go along with them, so I headed to the hospital on my own. When we arrived, they took us to a "grief" room where we waited to hear what had happened. The doctor shortly thereafter walked in and sat on the floor and told us that Robbie had passed. My heart

stopped and I was in disbelief. The doctor and two other employees asked me if I wanted to go back and see her, so I did, and what I saw was so far from what I remember of her. When they asked if I wanted the kids to see her, I said, "no, there is no way they need to remember her like this." I wanted them to remember her with a smile and being full of life and love for them.

After this I was devastated, I now needed to be father and mother to my daughter and still be there for my stepdaughter (even though she was placed back with her father). I was so broken up over everything that had taken place, and I blamed myself, which was causing a rift between myself and my family. It took months until I could hear or speak her name without breaking down.

I raised my daughter as best I could, doing everything I had the power to do for her. I managed to get her past High School and she graduated, making me so proud of her and the choices she was going to be making in her life. I hoped I might get to be part of it, but it was very hard. I think there was resentment in her eyes when she looked at me, and for so long we really grew apart.

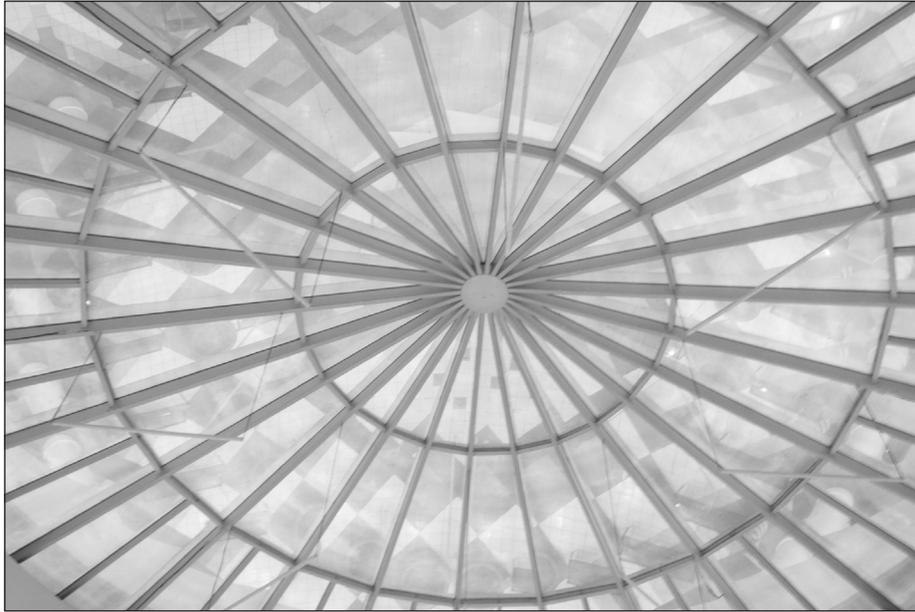
But now in the last year, my life has improved, and I can believe in myself and I'm working on improving my relationships with her, my father, and my new love. My new love has made my days so much better than

I could ever had hoped. After my wife passed, I was never going to marry or have a future past my home or work. But now, in fact, she has given me the drive to get into school and we are looking to be married, which has given me a reason to get out of bed again and do the things that make life worth living again.

I feel that my thoughts on death still scare me, but now it scares me because I never want to leave my loved ones behind. I want to be a part of every happy time and be there for all the times when my loved ones need a hug. I never want anyone to feel the hurt I felt. But I also realized that death is just another part of life, and I hope that we will all reunite in the afterlife and be one immense family for the rest of our days.

So, I guess in looking at my thoughts and outlook on death, I've come to feel that these are my beliefs. This essay is Dedicated to a mother, an EMT, a friend, and a special person who will always be a part of my and my children's lives.

We will never forget you and will see you.



CENTER OF COUNTRY CLUB MALL

Photograph | *by Reiss Mikula*

TRANSFORMATION

Poem

by Melissa Jayne Franks

My journey has not been easy.

Twelve months ago,
There was someone else in the mirror.

Now the face I see staring back
At me
Is someone new.

Someone different.

Twelve months ago,
It was hard to walk
 Hard to breathe
 Hard to just be.

I was depressed.

Felt ashamed

Overwhelmed.

I could talk to others
At length,
 How to be healthy
 What to eat
 How much exercise
 What supplements to take-

But I couldn't follow
My own advice.

Food was comfort
Food was my reward
Food was my friend

Or so I thought.

Food was my addiction.

I had become stuck
In a cycle
Over and over.

Eating made me happy
For a little while
But then I just felt
Miserable.

The weight piled on
And on—

I couldn't stop.

I barely recognized myself.

Even a shower got to be
Too hard.

Diets failed again and
Again.

Nothing ever really worked.

Then one day,

The stars aligned—

God answered my prayers.

Next thing I knew,
I was checking
Into a hospital
Recording a video in case
I didn't make it.

Just in case I never
Woke up.

Some of my friends and family
Disapproved—
Or were just scared
Like me.

But I was more afraid of
Living the same way,
Over and over,
Than I was afraid of
Dying.

A year later—

I am a different person.
I have worked extremely hard.
Fought every step
To become this new me.

I am still learning more about
Her everyday.

She is
Strong
Brave
Beautiful

And this new thing called
Confident.

I am so proud of how far I've come
And can't wait to see
Where I end up.



MOMMA'S GARDEN

Photograph

by Brielle Disque

HEARING IS BELIEVING

Essay

by *Colt McDonald*

As early as I can remember, I have always been in and around the church. I have always been taught that the Lord is my way, that nothing is impossible without Him, and I have always declared that statement to be the truth. Most Christians do this. They go through life listening, but not hearing; doing, but not actually doing. This defines many Christians, and for the better part of my walk with Christ, it defined me.

Once I became a teenager, I thought I knew it all. I had earned my first car and a year later got my first truck. I felt as if I was riding the high road and was looking forward to leaving high school. My plan was simple. I would go to college for an associate in surveying. Not only was surveying an outdoors field, but it also paid well and only required two years of schooling! In the fall of 2018, I attended the Pennsylvania College of Technology and found out that I was spending several thousands of dollars on a degree that I could not stand. To make it worse, I felt like I was trapped in the city of Williamsport and needed a way out.

While in high school I had taken several shop

classes and enjoyed every minute of it. For me, shop was my way to find peace and separate myself from everyone, while at the same time pushing the limits with harder and more complicated builds. So naturally when I felt trapped in Williamsport, I started looking for my next complicated build. Around that time many woodworkers started using chainsaw mills to cut up very large tree slabs to make massive live edge tables. I immediately fell in love with the idea and began pouring tons of time into the novelty of being able to do the same thing myself. Being in college, I lacked one thing which was money, but slowly I saved and built my own apparatuses until I was able to finally bring my first trees back from Greensburg, PA, to my home in Bedford County. The success did not come without massive struggle, however.

After leaving surveying, I began working with the Pennsylvania Game Commission, and my favorite task was to stock pheasants during the fall for the hunters. One day while driving to my next stocking site, I drove past and was introduced to a giant white oak tree that

had been cut down in someone's front yard. Despite that it was twice the size of anything I had ever loaded and milled, I knew that I wanted the chance to get that tree. I stopped by later that evening and asked if the property owner wanted the tree removed, but she told me that it had already been spoken for. Crushed, I still gave her my cell number and walked away thinking the conversation was over. To my surprise she soon called me and said that no one was able to move the tree, and if I wanted to, I was more than welcome to give it a shot. I was thrilled, made plans to get the tree, and with that phone call my struggle began.

I woke up the morning of the big day and determined that I would first try to retrieve the smallest log from the top of the downed tree. The small log was roughly the size of the logs I had been used to loading with my winch. While trying to load the smallest log I experienced several issues, and the next two medium sized logs were not any easier to load. That evening I came back for my fourth and final log. I was exhausted but determined to get the 8,000 lb. log onto my trailer. I was there till dark and continued to encounter problem after problem. Even after using almost every trick I knew, I finally accepted defeat and returned home empty handed. I had reached what I thought was the climax of my awesome story but was unable to complete it.

That night I remembered thinking about how unfair it was, wondering why God would not just give me a little help. It was at that moment that I remembered I had not tried everything, in fact I had not done the simplest, yet most effective thing. I had never asked God to help me, and I had never done it for His glory. The entire time I had been doing it to prove that I could do it and not that I could do it with God's help. I had forgotten that there is nothing impossible with God. I realized that for my entire life I had been listening but not hearing—just wandering through life doing what I thought was right and being determined to show or prove that I was invincible and could do anything without any help. It took God completely breaking me to allow me to heal back into the man I needed to be. I had finally realized that my external conflict was due to my internal one.

The next morning, I set out with new motivation to face my giant again. I prayed to God before leaving and asked him to help me. I told him that it was for His glory and not for my own and that I would use the platform I was building for myself to witness for Him. That morning I experienced a true miracle. The eight-foot diameter log was loaded before eight o'clock in the morning. It was the largest log, but somehow it had been loaded the fastest of any of the previous three logs.

On my way home that day I was questioned by many people as to how I had been able to load such a



massive log by myself without anything more than a winch and some grit. To each person I smiled and said I had help from the Lord. I may not know what long term impact it had on each one of them, but I know from the look on their faces that the idea made them think. My story might follow the common cliché of most Christian stories, where the protagonist has a happy ending, but Christian stories end this way for a reason.

Thinking back to my background, I had always listened, but never actually heard when I was told that nothing is impossible with God. I was so used to the saying that I had failed to acknowledge it was true until I could not get past my giant. My final thought is that maybe what is perceived as a Christian trope is not just another repetitive image. Maybe if God is heard, the story will in fact end for the better.



FORGOTTEN LETTERS

Photograph | *by Faith Steele*

INSPIRATIONS:



V. Bowser

Hot Girl Summer

Last summer we had many mantis visit our porch. Many were females, one of which had laid an ootheca in my potted plant. I painted this during fall semester based on pictures I had taken of momma mantis.

Alexander Currence

1 Second in the Golden Nugget

Ever since I was young, I had always had a fascination and love for the city of Las Vegas. I grew up researching the city's history and coming to know all the resorts and their storied pasts, especially the Golden Nugget Hotel and Casino on Fremont Street which has the world's largest gold nugget and a water slide that goes through a shark tank. I am also a big fan of Frank Sinatra and his music, and the Golden Nugget was one of the last "Rat-Pack" casinos and has tours of Sinatra's dressing room. In 2019, I was lucky enough to finally visit Las Vegas and it is still the best trip I've ever been on in my life. I went with my dad, but unlike the Vegas Strip resorts, the ones on Fremont are stricter about minors walking around on the casino floor. Being under 21 at the time, we were in and out of there as soon as we saw the signs about minors. I was very disappointed but was glad to have at least seen it from outside. In 2021, during an Introduction to Literature class, I wrote this poem as the final test and my teacher loved it; I got a 100% was encouraged to submit it to the journal.

INSPIRATIONS:



72

Brielle Dique

Momma's Garden

My mom religiously grows a beautiful garden, that is always full of blooms. We recently lost my nanny (her mom) who loved butterflies! I think we had a special visitor.

Allison Dora

No Exceptions

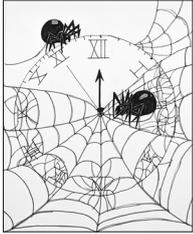
During my Sociology 101 course with Ms. Diane McMahon, she suggested I submit one of my more powerful essays. After this course, I have considered a path in sociology.

Azh Dozart

Not My Responsibility

When writing this short story, I wanted to write something emotionally engaging, but also something that would have the reader invested. A short story is meant to be a nice short read, after all. So I chose to write about the cold and responsibility.

INSPIRATIONS:



Azh Dozart

Webbed Time:

For this piece, I was inspired by looking around my own room, as well as inspired by childhood experiences.

Splash Pattern:

For this piece, I was inspired by what I was watching at the time, which was a lot of Natural Geographic documentaries.

Melissa Jayne Franks

Transformation

I have been on a weight loss journey to become healthy and I have lost over 170 pounds, after having the gastric sleeve. I've struggled with obesity my whole life and now am trying to overcome it. I hope to enjoy my new health and we are hoping to conceive naturally from this journey. My husband and I have been trying to conceive for 4 years. Praying that God will bless us with our miracle.

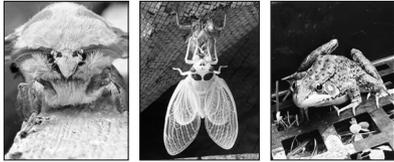
INSPIRATIONS:



Ethan Hawk

Scenic Overlook and Yellow Flower

Just taking a walk leads to some unexpected inspirations

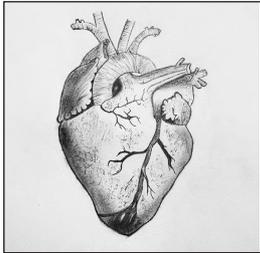


Donna J. Morgan

Just Chilling, Cicada, Fully Emerged, Just Hopping By

If people would just stop and take a look around them, they would be amazed at what they see. -Words of my late Grandfather

74



Madison Musselman

The Human Heart

I started drawing my sophomore year of high school. I quickly realized that I was good at it and enjoyed drawing. I got my drawing skills from my father who used to do tattoos. Drawing relieves my stress and also lets me show my artistic side.

INSPIRATIONS:

Sierra Petersheim

Brighton: Finding the Good Even in Death

This was a very personal story that I never planned on sharing beyond the assignment that it was for. My hope is that this story will help people who may be going through something like this and give them hope.



Zhynae J. Rogers

Broken Melody

I was always told to stare at myself in the mirror. I was insecure and shy back then. It was difficult for me to find anything that I liked about myself. Now looking back on my past, I see how much I have grown over the past few years. I've discovered many talents along the way and now I am starting to love myself.



Logan Shuck

Dugout

I've spent many hours in the Cresaptown Sports Complex. I've always thought there was a sort of romanticism to a rundown park. Like many other neighborhood children, those dugouts and the basketball courts were the birthplace of many happy memories. Public works such as these are very important institutions. It's a crying shame that some go without it.

INSPIRATIONS:

76



Rafe Sibley

The Bridge

I love making stories and had so much fun making this. Thank you Dr. Wilfong for the support and advice.

Mackenzie Stotler

A Walk Through Nature

I went for a walk on part of the C&O Canal with my family. We walked across a small bridge to get to the path and this was the view as we were crossing the bridge.

So Monumental

I was inspired during a field trip to Washington, D.C., while we were walking past the United States Supreme Court Building.

K.T.

Submerged

Do not let other people's negative thoughts or opinions stop you from going for and achieving your goals.

INSPIRATIONS:



Bradley VanHorn

The Wrath of Mother Nature

This piece shows a scene of mother nature being furious toward humanity for being away from her presence for so long knowing that humanity will keep distancing themselves away from her. She uses everything at her disposal to reclaim what was lost.



A Warrior's Iron Will and Steely Determination

This piece depicts an image of the fictional Soaring Skies and Sweeping Fangs tribes, both having bad blood between each other from times past, from the expansion of territories to the claiming of hunting grounds. Both tribes decided to send out their best champions to resolve their disputes and if one admitted defeat, then the opposing tribe would relocate, create a new reservation, and start from the beginning again.



Dawn Varner

Everett Railroad

My timing couldn't have been better. I was on way out of Roaring Spring and had to stop for the train, so I quickly grabbed my DSLR camera from the back of my car and took this photo. I love that it was not planned.

INSPIRATIONS:

78

Sydney Wilfong

King Warrick

This work is inspired by Modest Mouse’s song and music video titled “King Rat.” I was incredibly taken aback by the brutality and intensity of the music video during my first watch. I couldn’t stop thinking about the video for days and began to think of ways of my own to add to this story and give it more detail. I wanted to write a short, in-depth narrative that hopefully recreates the same feelings as the music video did for me.

Faye Yañez

The Shell of My Room

Over the summer, I stayed at one of the houses I lived in growing up. I compared how my old room looked when I resided there and how it is now. It helped me in many ways to have my own space as a teenager. Sometimes my room felt like the only safe space. I was able to freely express myself there.

EXPRESSIONS

2022

Essays, Fiction, Poetry & Artwork



ALLEGANY
COLLEGE
of
MARYLAND



ALLEGANY COLLEGE
of MARYLAND

CUMBERLAND CAMPUS

12401 Willowbrook Road, SE
Cumberland, MD 21502-2596
301-784-5000

BEDFORD COUNTY CAMPUS

18 North River Lane
Everett, PA 15537-1410
814-652-9528

SOMERSET EDUCATION SITE

315 Georgian Place, Suite A
Somerset, PA 15501-1611
814-445-9848

www.allegany.edu/expressions

