

IMPRESSIONS

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ABOUT IMPRESSIONS

Published since 1974, *Impressions* is an annual publication created by and for the students of Maryville College and members of the surrounding eastern Tennessee community. *Impressions* aims to present the best of art, poetry, fiction, creative nonfiction, and other creative works submitted by the Maryville College community and the Appalachian region. Online editions of *Impressions* can be viewed at impressionsmc.org.

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and

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EDITOR'S NOTE

Chloe Hamlett, Editor-in-Chief

Two years after the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, this school year saw the return of many traditions—in-person homecoming festivities, academic awards, dances, student programs, and more. Now more than ever, we understand how important it is to mark these moments, even when they come to us in unexpected forms. Art and writing allow us to capture particular moments in time, and many of us process, understand, and remember our lives through the pieces we create. The *Impressions* staff is committed to promoting creative writing and art on Maryville College's campus and in the surrounding area. We are excited to continue sharing the creative voices of our community. Thank you to everyone who supported our publication this year, and please enjoy the 2021-2022 edition of *Impressions Literary Magazine*.

COVER ARTIST'S NOTE

Chloe Melton, Cover Artist

This is Melba. She is very wise. Unlike most wise creatures, Melba has retained her child-like whimsy. She leaps around huge libraries and usually goes unnoticed. That's how she prefers it. She takes great joy in watching the other creatures banter about things she already knows. Sometimes she leaps on their heads as a sign of disagreement. She quickly leaps away, because she enjoys their bewilderment more than being recognized. She is courageous and confusing. She finds many things unnecessary, but her adoration for creative exploration takes precedent in her thoughts and readings. Particularly, her favorite reading is Rumpel toad's skin.

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*Indicates award winner

Part I

Prose

Amanda Clarke
My Immortal

Her arms were around my neck as she placed her lips against mine. It felt good to be with her like that. My hands fell to her waist. Her skin was warm against my fingertips. Who knew a person's warmth could feel like that? I had known at one time, but that was far from memory. That had been a lifetime ago, maybe more.

"I love you," she said. Her words were empty and her breath fell to a repetitious pant. "Let's stop fighting. It always happens this way. We fight and make up. There's no reason to do something different." I stiffened in her hold. "I don't understand why you're like this. It's not anything new," she said.

She tried to kiss me once more, but I dodged swiftly. "Hah..." She sighed. "I won't touch you if that's not what you want, but I'm not going to fight you." Her arms slipped from me and fell limp at her sides. "You don't want this either, do you?"

I scoffed, shaking my head at the woman. "You're right." There was a dry chuckle at my lips.

A smile pulled at the corners of her mouth as she reached for me. "But there isn't another way," I added. "Not anymore. If I don't end this now it'll go on forever, won't it? You'll keep doing wrong, and I'll keep coming back to you—the same thing until the end of time. I truly wish we could be together again, but I cannot allow you to hurt anyone else."

"Don't you see!" she shouted. Her eyes were almost crazed. "No one else matters." She shook her head vehemently as she snatched my hand and squeezed tight. "As long as we're together what does it matter?" The woman began to cry as she managed a weak smile. "What

does it matter as long as you're safe? If I don't have to lose you again. So long as I can hold you none of it matters. It can be the end this time, I promise. We can finally be together. I won't have to let you go ever again."

"You don't think you've done enough? After everything..." I stared at her indignantly as I loosened her grip from me. "I don't want this. Do you know how much guilt is already riding on my conscience? After so many lifetimes... I've had enough."

There was a soft sound as the knife entered her chest. Barely loud enough for my ears to register. She gasped, her lips falling wide as the hilt of my blade pressed to her bare skin. Once I was sure I had hit her heart, I twisted the blade.

"Darling?" Her eyes turned to the red spot on her chest. The woman's body started to shake as she bled out. "This is what you want?" Her hand clenched my shoulder.

"That's right." I nodded as I took her chin in my hand. "You've lived long enough. I think it's time for you to enjoy the end." Her eyes darkened before the lids started to close. "Goodbye... Darling..." I kissed her forehead and paused before kissing her lips. "I love you."

A warm, wetness started down my cheek as I pulled out the knife and let it clatter to the ground. "I'm sorry, but this had to be done, my immortal."

Connor Cowart

War Torn

Dampness, the unrelenting factor that constantly bites at our skin. The darkness of frostbite creeping onto our legs burned with potency as nightmarish hell surrounded us. Gnarled trees engulfed us in darkness and chilled us from their ever-gloomy shadows. The wind howled with a cold snap that pierced into our bones and sang with the beauty of a grim future. So solemn and soft—just barely heard. Only the fire that danced in front of my wife and I gave warmth to the deathly polar darkness that seemed like it was going to last forever. Life was slipping through our fingers.

It was nights like these that I needed to hold her closer.

We were running out of food, and it was hard to hunt, especially with how cold it had gotten and how we could barely walk from the pain. I'd lost count of how many weeks since we had lost our bearings. We were famished and Death was creeping up on her like his boney hand was just upon her shoulder. Bones protruded from her skin and muscle was barely visible throughout her body, a skeleton wrapped in furs and cloth from the old world which had been left behind in a flash of white. The weakness in her hand coincided with her clammy skin and she whimpered softly into the night as sweat rolled off her forehead.

Never had I felt more helpless than I did staring into her deep green eyes. Her eyes, exploding with color and space that used to shine with a glint, no more did so. Now the long glare into mine only made me think that she might not make it through the night. I would be alone, solitary, and horrified.

Lauren Gaines
He Didn't Listen

He didn't listen. He should have seen it coming, but he didn't listen. Despite the hot August air, his palms remained cold and clammy. He frantically wiped his hands on his thrifted Levi's, silently begging the sensation of death to go away. It may never go away.

"Son, why don't you tell me your name?" the officer asked. She was kind. He hated that she was kind. He didn't deserve kind.

"David," he mumbled.

David went with the officer. He sat in the back-seat of the cruiser, fidgeting and tapping his foot. The sun hid behind a fortress of dark clouds, and thunder rumbled in the distance. As the officer drove, rain began to fall. David silently cursed the sky. Why couldn't the rain have started just a few hours sooner? That would have at least given him an excuse. A scapegoat. David watched as rain-drops rolled down the window of the police cruiser. They almost looked like tears. They were Anna's tears. They were David's tears.

When the car stopped and the kind officer opened David's door, he expected to be at the police station. But with a sigh of relief, his eyes landed on his mother running out of their house into the rain. She had been crying, too. She put a hand on his face and stroked his hair.

"Mom... It's Anna." David stammered. His mother nodded her head as if she already knew what had happened. She pulled him into a hug. She held him close. He felt her shaky breaths as she began to cry once again.

David couldn't tell if the hug was because she was grateful her son was alive, or if it was a pity hug. He hoped

to God it was anything but a pity hug. He didn't deserve anyone's pity. He didn't deserve anyone's tears.

The shower should have washed him clean, but after 45 minutes, David had never felt more dirty in his life. His bed was warm, but his body felt cold. His face felt numb, but his mind was reeling with the events that preceded the shaking of his hands.

He craved sleep. He longed for the moment his eyes would close and his thoughts would turn into nothing but rest. But when he closed his eyes he saw the bright headlights, the tree in front of him, and his white knuckles against the steering wheel. He heard screams. He couldn't tell if they were his own, Anna's, or the sound of tires screeching to a too-late halt.

Anna warned him, but he didn't listen.

"You're going too fast," she said. But he didn't listen.

"David, slow down," she said. But he didn't listen.

"You're scaring me," she said. But he didn't listen.

Would it have been different if he had listened?

Would she be alive if he had listened?

David cried. He cried for the mistakes he had made and the things he didn't mean. He cried for the girl who deserved to live. Who wanted to live. Who begged to live.

He had been angry. It wasn't an excuse but he had been angry. He and Anna had a disagreement, which turned into raised voices which turned into yelling which turned into Anna's body being carted away in a body bag. He wished on every star and prayed to every god that he could take it all back. He wished that he could relive the moments before disaster ensued, hear what Anna was saying, and listen to her.

She had told him to slow down. She had told him the road was windy. She had told him she was scared.

But he didn't listen.

Lauren Gaines
The Writer

The writer has a mind unlike any other artist, any other creator, any other human. Their intricate thoughts are woven in a form that only they can convey—a legible form, a literary masterpiece.

What does their mind have to say today? A story of love? A story of heartbreak or a story of grief or a story of heartache? Perhaps a story of a man they saw once in a train station many years ago who never quite left their mind.

The writer never knows quite where their mind goes, but they let the words guide them on a journey unknown. And with one stroke of a pen, the writer exits this world and enters one of their own imagination.

Chloe Hamlett

Hector

On the day Maya was born, the nurse whisked her away to set her timer before they even got to hold her. Hector and Aubrey had been reassured countless times that it was a simple procedure, no more painful than getting her ears pierced, and they barely had time to be nervous. Within fifteen minutes, a nurse brought the baby back, already wrapped in a pink blanket.

“It’s a girl,” the nurse said. She didn’t smile, and Hector’s stomach dropped.

They knew when Aubrey got pregnant that the baby might not get a lot of time, but it was a distant fear. Hector had been born with forty-three years; Aubrey with forty-five. Neither of them had the type of job that paid in time, but they were better off than a lot of people. They got married six months out of high school, and Aubrey was pregnant within the year. Hector had worried the baby might be time-shortened the same way he worried about cleft lips and Down’s Syndrome.

In Hector’s childhood neighborhood, there had been a boy born with six years and nine months. His mother was an addict, and his father was nowhere to be found. She’d never bothered to name him, but the other kids in the neighborhood called him John. He was never enrolled in school, and none of the adults on the street ever chided him for being too loud or staying outside too late. On the day John’s timer ran out, Hector’s parents wouldn’t let him go out to play. The other parents did the same, but John didn’t seem to mind playing alone. He ran from house to house, playing with the toys other kids had left out and shooting basketball on the hoop they all shared. And then, maybe an hour after Hector came home from school, something in his gut said *look up* and he

glanced out the window just in time to see John—six years old, freckle-faced, missing his front teeth—drop like his strings had been cut.

Maya had twenty-seven months.

Two years, three months, eleven days.

“Give her mine,” Hector said. The words were instinctual, impulsive. Aubrey was crying beside him, finally getting to hold her baby. It hurt to look at Maya’s timer and know there were twenty-three years on his own wrist. “Please.”

The nurse set her jaw and steeled herself. Hector wasn’t the first parent to plead with her.

“You know that’s not how it works,” she said. “If everyone got as much time as they wanted, we’d all starve to death. You wouldn’t have been able to get in the hospital to have that baby with all the geriatrics.”

“This isn’t right,” Hector said. He shook his head. He and Aubrey were good people. They kept their heads down, and they worked hard. Maya would have been the same. “It’s... it’s not...”

“Just enjoy her while you have her,” the nurse said.

Aubrey’s family was waiting when they brought Maya home from the hospital. Her father had run out of time two years ago, but her mother and younger brother Tom were still alive. They cooed over Maya’s hair and her hands and her nose, and they didn’t mention her timer. Once Aubrey and the baby were asleep, Hector and Tom went out on the fire escape to smoke.

“I’m sorry, Hector,” Tom said. He was only eleven months younger than Aubrey, and he still looked like a high school kid. He’d walked Aubrey down the aisle less than a year ago. “Nobody’s actually said it yet, have they?”

“Twenty-seven months,” Hector said. He shook his head and took another drag off the cigarette. “Christ, I

didn't know a kid could die that young."

John had been young enough. Six years old, no real name, never learned to read or ride a bike. *Snip*. The strings were cut; John dropped. Hector couldn't think about Maya dropping like that.

"I want to introduce you to someone," Tom said.

"Tom, I really don't want to meet some dead kid's dad," Hector said. "I know you're trying to help, but—"

"It's not like that," Tom said. He chewed his cigarette and glanced back inside, like he was making sure his mother wasn't sneaking up on them. "He's a bookie."

"A bookie?"

"It's not illegal," Tom said. What Tom was talking about—time fights—finally clicked, and Hector glanced back inside to make sure Aubrey hadn't woken up. "I don't know where the time comes from, but you're not breaking the law."

"How do you know about this?" Hector said.

"I got arrested when I was seventeen," Tom said. "DUI. The court took two years, and I was losing it. Couldn't sleep, couldn't eat. I knew Mom would kill me when she found out, but one of my buddies introduced me to Kent. I wasn't good enough to go very far, but I did alright. Got the two years back."

"And the time I win can go to Maya?"

"I knew a guy who gave his to his wife," Tom said.

Hector chewed his bottom lip. Time salaries could only go to the employee, and there was no way to transfer between two timers. This was the only way he had ever heard of to earn time for someone else.

"You're big," Tom said. "Strong. You'd do well."

"Set it up," Hector said.

Two weeks later, he fought for the first time. He'd met Kent three days before at a bar. The older man had taken one look at him, pronounced him an ugly giant, and agreed that he could take on another fighter. The arrange-

ment was simple: the money went to Kent, and the time went to Hector. Hector knew the bookie was probably screwing him, but the time was all he cared about.

The night of the fight, Hector walked to the address Kent had given him. It was a warehouse three blocks from his apartment, but he'd never paid any attention to it before. It was cold out, and the warehouse already stank of beer and sweat. He found Kent easily, and the older man showed him off to the gamblers for a few minutes before directing him to where the other fighters were warming up.

Most of them were around Hector's age. There were maybe two dozen fighters, only a handful of them women, and they eyed his timer without speaking to him. Most of the others had less than five years left, but Hector wasn't the only one with upwards of a decade. He wondered how many dying wives and children were waiting at home.

The fight itself was jarring. Someone threw a beer on him as he walked out, and he recognized the man he was fighting as someone who had graduated high school two years before him. It was hard to look anywhere but at the six months on his wrist. Hector let the other man get in too many good hits before he thought *Maya* and started swinging back.

The fight didn't stop until the other man—*Peter Tyrell*, Hector remembered distantly, *he played trombone in band*—couldn't get up. His mouth was bleeding, and his nose was broken. Hector had split his knuckles on Peter's teeth. His chest was heaving, and Kent was smiling in the crowd.

"Bring your kid by in the morning, alright?" Kent said. "I'll meet you here. Make sure you get your cut."

"Okay."

"You could do well at this," Kent said. "We'll work on not getting so freaked out."

“I knew him,” Hector said.

“Go home, kid. Hold your baby. I’ll see you tomorrow.”

The next day, Aubrey cried when he brought Maya home with thirty new days on her timer. After that, Hector fought almost every Friday. He won most of them, but they weren’t all as big as the first. Still, Maya turned one and then two and then three, and she didn’t drop. On her fourth birthday, she had four and a half years on her timer, and it felt like a miracle.

Tate Ramsey started showing up at the fights not long after that. Initially, Hector didn’t pay much attention to him. Ramsey was fifteen and had five months left, but he wasn’t the only teenager in the ring. He wasn’t even the youngest. His bookie, Sam, had several teenagers. Hector was good enough that he didn’t have to fight them very often, and he tried not to think about it when he did.

Ramsey was, in Hector’s opinion, the best of Sam’s boys though. He was faster than almost anyone, and he could take a hit better than most of the other guys his age. Ramsey grew six inches in the span of a year, and suddenly he was being scheduled to fight Hector more often. Hector always won, but it was close enough to be exciting for the gamblers. It was screwing Ramsey though. He wasn’t getting any time for losing to Hector, but he couldn’t turn the fights down either. Sam knew Ramsey would die young one way or another, and he was trying to make as much money off him as he could.

Honest to God, Hector liked the kid. They lived two blocks apart, and Ramsey had grown up in his peripheries. Hector had heard the talk when Ramsey lost his parents, when his time was taken, when he got the scholarship to a prep school he would never graduate. The kid put his head down and worked, but they’d hit a standstill. Ramsey couldn’t get more time unless he beat Hector, and Hector couldn’t lose.

Ramsey was seventeen when Hector hit him so hard it bounced his skull off the concrete floor. He was dazed, bleeding from his forehead and mouth. He must have bitten his tongue. Ramsey tried to get up when the makeshift referee started counting, but Hector could see that his eyes weren't focusing right. *Stay down*, Hector thought. He didn't want to hit him again, but he would.

There was a teenage boy in the crowd who Hector had seen hanging around the neighborhood with Ramsey. He didn't look out of place, but he wasn't drinking or placing bets either. Ramsey hit the ground again, looking like he might be sick, and Hector could see the other boy turn toward the door.

It took several minutes for Ramsey to get back to his feet, but Hector waited. When the teenager tried to shake his hand like they usually did after a fight, Hector pulled him in for a hug. Ramsey had grown since he first started showing up at the fights, but he was still a kid.

"You're getting good," Hector said. "I can't wait to see what you do when you're my age."

Ramsey flinched like he'd been hit again, and Hector cringed. That hadn't been his intention. He just wouldn't—couldn't—think about the fact that Ramsey wasn't going to turn eighteen, let alone twenty-eight. No one else seemed to notice. It was the last fight of the night, and people were going home.

That night, Hector scrubbed his hands raw in the kitchen sink before he put them anywhere near Aubrey and Maya.

The next day was Saturday, and Hector took Maya to the park. On the way, they passed Ramsey and his friend from the night before. The two teenagers were in a ditch on the side of the highway, picking up recyclables. Hector tried to pretend he didn't recognize them, but Maya noticed him watching.

"Daddy, what are they doing?"

“They’re picking up bottles and stuff to recycle,” Hector said.

“Oh,” Maya said. She was six now and beautifully smart. “Why?”

“It helps the Earth be healthy,” Hector said.

It wasn’t really a lie. Recycling was good for the planet, but he doubted the boys were in it for the environmentalism. Bringing a kilogram of plastic to the recycling plant got you eight hours. He was sure it took just as long to find that much. The incentive program had made the country’s time-poor very ecofriendly.

The next Friday, Hector got to the warehouse early to get his lineup from Kent. He was fighting doubles, a newcomer first, then Ramsey again.

“That’s three weeks in a row,” Hector said. Kent shrugged. “Sam’s killing him.”

“We’re all killing him,” Kent said. “Sam and I are just making money off it.”

Ramsey was fighting doubles that night too. He was up against the same newcomer, so Hector watched to get an idea what he was dealing with. The new guy was young, maybe twenty, and he went down easy. He was tired when he fought Hector half an hour later and lost even faster.

Twenty minutes later, Hector went back out to fight Ramsey. Last week’s cut had reopened on his forehead, but Hector wouldn’t have been able to guess he was fresh off a concussion. Ramsey had an hour to rest, and Hector could tell that their fight was taking longer than usual. Once, Ramsey got him down to his knees. Hector threw his head forward before the seventeen-year-old could get in another hit, and the sound of Ramsey’s nose breaking made him sick to his stomach. Ramsey stumbled, and Hector got back up.

He might win, Hector thought. For a fraction of a second, it was tempting to let him. Ramsey was down

to three months, the lowest he'd been since the first year he fought, but every second that Hector let him have was time Maya wasn't getting. He thought of her kindergarten picture on the fridge, thought of never having a first grade one, and tackled Ramsey.

It clearly wasn't what the kid had been expecting. He hit the ground hard, and Hector wrapped his hands around the seventeen-year-old's throat. Kent was going to be pissed. There were no real rules in the fights, but the gamblers liked a little dignity. This was dirty.

Ramsey was clawing at Hector's hands as his face got redder and redder. Hector couldn't let him get up, but he knew Ramsey would fight the impulse to tap out. His efforts to knock Hector off were getting weaker though. Hector could feel one of his fingers break when Ramsey twisted it, but he just leaned harder on his throat. There were jeers from the crowd, eager and willing to watch a teenage boy choke to death.

"Come on, Tate," Hector said.

He didn't want to kill him. He didn't want to watch him die. Tate Ramsey deserved better, but so did Maya.

Finally, Ramsey gave a miniscule nod, and Hector let go. Money started to change hands in the crowd immediately. Hector didn't wait to shake Ramsey's hand or hug him. He watched long enough to make sure he got off the floor and then hurried out of the warehouse. No one tried to stop him.

It was cold outside, and Hector's breath steamed in front of him while he walked. Even once he got away from the warehouse, the streets seemed too crowded. It stank like beer and piss, and he was shaking by the time he got into his apartment.

"There you are," Aubrey said. She didn't always wait up for him, but she had tonight. Hector couldn't get a response out, so he nodded instead and went to the kitch-

en sink to wash his hands. “Did you win?”

Hector nodded again. It’d been over a year since he lost a fight.

“That’s good, honey,” Aubrey said. She sounded tired. “I’m glad.”

“I killed him.”

Aubrey didn’t respond, and Hector didn’t look at her. He pumped more soap into his hands and turned the water hotter. He couldn’t get it off—the blood and the sweat and the beer and the piss. He was still in the warehouse. Tate Ramsey was bleeding, his best friend in the crowd watching him die.

“I killed him,” Hector said again. “Tate. And John and Maya and—”

“You didn’t kill anyone,” Aubrey said. He’d had this kind of waking nightmare before. It’d scared her to death the first couple times, but she was calm now.

“You don’t understand. I—”

Hector stopped himself. Even in the midst of his panic, he couldn’t tell his small, kind wife that he’d tackled a seventeen-year-old to the ground and wrapped both hands around his throat for the amusement of a frothing, drunk audience. She’d never be able to look at him again.

“Why don’t I wake up Maya?” Aubrey said. “You can hold her for a little while.”

It usually helped.

“No,” Hector said. “I can’t touch her.”

“Hector,” Aubrey said. The water cut off. Hector reflexively moved to cut it back on, but she kept her hand in the way. “There’s nothing on your hands.”

“I killed him.”

“You didn’t.”

“Say it again.”

“You didn’t kill Tate.”

“The other part.”

“There’s nothing on your hands.”

Alese Hudgins
Chapter 2 of “you”

I used to be known as Viv. But when I got older I was called Vee Greene. Things used to be good back home. I lived in a big house with my siblings and my parents, but I lost myself on my path to adolescence. I was 12 when I met the first snake-eyed man. Tan skinned, taller than me, my friend. He was related to me. Under my parents' noses, he hurt me. In the pool, in the bathroom, in the dining room, in the laundry room. I felt so small. Did he love me? Did he hate me? Did I love him? Did I hate him? I wanted to fix him. I wanted to help. He always said these things were okay because we were family. Family, family, family. Familia, mi familia. I don't know what I was supposed to have done. Every adult in my life had failed me. I can still remember it all like I am there:

Gripping the cold granite counter in my bathroom. And all I can feel is the metal sink on my face. All I can see is him behind me in the mirror. His hands in my hair. I said no. I said no. I cried. What else could I do? I loved him but I didn't want to be near him. I hated him but I wanted to be him. There was nothing I could do and there's nothing I can do now. But I learned then, and I learned fast, I have a gift.

I have a way with men. Ten out of ten, dime piece, never been kissed, never been rejected. I learned then, and quick, to flaunt what I have while I have it. Because once I end up like my mom, men will run, and the well will run dry.

I miss the days I felt worth it. Worth more than someone's word. Romanticizing everything in my life to just keep moving. But that was how to stay sane. It's why I'm alive. And because everyone always asks:

I do love my parents. I do love my father. I just don't see why that's always the question. Just like nobody actually wants to give up their baby or get an abortion, we all wish there were another option, sometimes we choose plan B over righteous indignation. I chose plan B. But there is no question about it. I had dreams.

My dreams were to be a beautiful poet, painter, and singer. But I watched each dream crumple like scary pages out of a 15-year-old's diary. I watched each dream shatter like a mirror into a million pieces, pieces I would look into forever. Forever, I see myself in fragments.

One sided, one dimensional, the damsel leaning on the shoulder of her hero, the Marilyn waving her handkerchief in the wind at the boat that her lover is departing on. The woman cleaning the stove and smoking cigarettes while waiting by the phone, not wondering where she should go next.

When all my dreams were gone, and I decided to kill the girl I used to be, I set my sights on the one-dimensional heroine fragment that I was born to be. All I am good for is this: what's broken was meant for me. I remember buying my first bras. I remember wanting the brightest ones. 13 with pink neon straps at my shoulders peeping out of every top I owned. I loved it. I was such a show-off. That's when I met the first man that broke the mirror. John.

John, there was so much to say. I wanted to be in love. But something about him was so unsettling. John walked through the front door lugging a heavy brown suitcase. He greeted my father like a talk show host. Charming, loving. John.

He set foot into my house and put his sunglasses up his head, my father, shaking his hand. And I was just 3 feet away. I still remember it so clearly because it was the closest to whole that I would ever be again. The smell of coffee, the beach, and cigarettes drifting off him. The smell

was sewn into my silhouette. His perversion imbued my aura. Because I am but a fragment of a girl, a shadow, a one-dimensional flower. He was like the sun the way I grew towards him.

Step by step and he licked his teeth and coming closer and closer and now his hand's out to me and he grabs my hand and says:

“Hello beautiful, how are you?”

The words fell out of his mouth and onto my face like warm rose petals.

oh my god.

All I could've ever wanted in the world was someone like him. John, older than my father, six foot three. He stole my breath with the first words. I only wanted to be there with him. His big shining teeth smiling at me waiting for my answer. He wanted to devour me.

“I'm good. My name's Vivian.”

My parents stood, confused by what I just said. After all, everyone called me Viv. But I needed a change, and this was the last time I would make one for myself. John gripped my hand with the force of a dog then dropped it like he didn't care at all. Making his way to the guest room, across from my room, down the hall. *John, John, John.*

I wish I never met you.

the wolf and red

the wolf and red
soulmates met
and he ate her soul

i hate you
i love you
do you
like me?
do you love me too?
what does he want?
what can i give him?

Impressions

my pretty red hair intertwined with his big hand
and my body crumbled off his other one
like snow
john's voice like
petals on my face
fallen
right off the rose

how many flowers
did you have to eat
to be able to take my soul?

Alese Hudgins
Chapter 3 of “you”

It's 3 AM and John's awake. I hear him in the bathroom. The light is seeping through the crack of my bedroom door. Sink water is rushing and echoing into my dark room. My heart begins to race as I imagine what he might do to me. Do I want him to do anything to me? Does he want to do something to me? I want him. But I'm shy. My heart is racing and my mind is pacing through thoughts I shouldn't have. The bathroom sink turns off. John floats to my room like a ghost and slowly pushes open my door. Standing in the doorway, backlit by the bathroom light, he looks like an angel, or an apparition. I just shut my eyes as tight as I can and hope he doesn't see I'm awake. And that's when I hear it. My floorboards creak under his big feet and heavy step. I take a peek, then shut my eyes again, tight as I can.

One foot—
two steps—
closer to my bed.
no no no
dread on dread on dread
Please don't come closer,
John
I wish you would,
John
And then I hear her.

“John?” My mother calls out to him, “Are you alright? You don't look too good.”

“I just needed to use the restroom. I am going back to bed. Thank you, Jen.”

There's an ocean in my head and my eyes are corks. John, John, John.

What?

Impressions

John left. He just went to bed. The corks start to crumble under the pressure and the saltwater falls down my cheeks. *Why don't you want me? What did I do wrong?*

*John,
do you love me,
or hate me?*

Deep down, I didn't want it to happen. But a hole opens in my belly when he comes around. When his hand is on my shoulder, it means more than my parents can see. Jen and Jack, best of friends, married, til death do they part, lovers to the end. John has a favorite girl, and they'd never know it was their little girl. I know it's wrong, somewhere in me. John knows it too. But I want what he has, and he wants me to give him everything that I can't, don't, and am not allowed to have. I know I am young. I wish I was tall and I wish I had a shape. But I don't, and John, he makes me feel like I do. Every lingering stare, lingering touch, or graze. My parents have no idea. I don't know what I am feeling either, to be honest. I don't love him but I want to. I hate him but I want him. John, John, John.

*Do you love me or do you hate me?
Do I love him or hate him?*

Alese Hudgins

Dandelions

**Impressions* Academic Award Winner: Prose

It's crazy how these days I am just scared to death by everything. The Cuban bakeries and palm trees— Sway, sway, sway, what *am I* supposed to do about it? I was driving home from Laura's house yesterday and I saw yellow wildflowers by the asphalt. I pulled over as fast as I could. Rushing. My heart jumped to my throat and tried to get out. It hurt. Thumping like

Pound-pound,
pound-pound,
pound-pound.

I felt like a drunk about to retch when I swallowed the lump and I swore I could hear my heart splash into my belly. Now swishing and swishing and dissolving, the thumping became a quiet hum. I gripped the car door handle.

god
I am so scared

My feet hit the ground like a bolt of lightning and my legs were so fast they looked like they were spinning and I was going so fast my world was spinning and weeping and crying and sobbing and pounding and hurting and then it all came to a quiet

stop-

god
what am I doing

The grass and flowers at my feet.

Yellow wildflowers.

Staring up at me.

"You don't deserve a single curse in the world"

god
what am I doing

The flowers just kept staring up at me. I want you in my room, in a vase, your bodies wilting, till I come back here, and make you a grave. I wonder if they wonder just as much as I do if I will ever pluck them from their pretty home. The grass is their city and the ants are their citizens. Who am I to take their trees and Cuban bakeries? I am mortal, but to them, I am God. This is getting to be too much for me. I'm just a girl. Under the trees. Staring at grass. Wondering what they must think. Of me.

god
what am I doing

I am thinking too much. It just isn't that deep. But how would I feel if someone rumbled my heart just to steal my trees? Gave me earthquakes, stole all my bakeries. Shut up! Honestly! It doesn't matter at all. They're just wild yellow flowers growing along the road. I want to pluck them and take them home. My car is heating up. The sun is heating me up. The ants are trinkling up my leg and heating me up. God! This life. I am being heated up. It is just a flower, it is just a flower. A yellow, wild, flower. I am taking too long to decide whether to take them home, or leave them alone. So long that all the flowers start to hang their heads. They are disappointed in me. The sun is setting and my car can no longer drive. I ran out of gas and it's 12 AM. I still can see Laura's house from here, but I don't want to bother her because I am so far into the night.

12 AM,
alone,
the wild flowers
and I.

What could I do or say to make this situation better? Just sitting here like it's no big deal— No pulling up any flowers but no going home—

what am I doing with my life.

I stayed out too late. Too late to go home. My car is dead. This tiny city too. All because I just couldn't decide. So I will curl up on the road, and whisper to the hanging heads:

*hello little flowers
Im sorry I've waited so long
And now you've all given up hope
Just gave up and died
I'm sorry
Please understand my plight
Between picking you,
Leaving,
Having just stayed in the car
And drove
Either way you'd all be dying
But maybe I wouldn't feel so horrible
If I could just
Decide.*

Brandon Spurlock
Styx: Into the Black

The light of a star was so different from here. I never thought I'd see it like this. A lifelong dream had finally come true. As best I could, I held onto the long, steel bars attached to the hull to keep myself from floating away. Planet Auris in my peripheral vision gleamed like a ball of swirled teal and white. "One day I'll break atmo," I'd told my friends. My feet would leave planet Auris, and I would take to the stars. Space would be my future. Finally, I had realized that dream.

In the days since I'd purchased my ship, the Charon, this meditation of floating freely in space had become my refuge. It was more serene than I could have imagined. Part of that was the silence. The only sound in the vacuum of space was my own breathing. I couldn't hear the roar of the engine, the hum of life support, or the clanking of metal parts against one another. The spacewalk calmed the anxiety of figuring out where to go now. I pulled myself along the bars back to the hatch of the ship primarily with my left hand to avoid pain from the right wrist. My mother, before I had drawn her ire by being determined to set out for space, had told me stories from the ancient civilizations of Terra. Stories of gods, goddesses, and other myths. The name Charon had come from these. He ferried departed souls to their destination in the afterlife. Truly this ship was my Charon, for my life on Auris had finally ended. This ship would ferry me to a new life.

Space had felt like an elusive fantasy. Every time I had neared my goal, something stopped me. Once, the ship I was in negotiation to purchase was damaged by a tornado blowing through the dealership. Another time, I had loaned my family a significant portion of my savings,

knowing they would likely never repay me. Most recently, my right sleeve had caught as I dismounted my family's combine causing me to fall a dozen feet and break my wrist. I pushed forward despite the injury, completing my cargo pilot licensing while wearing the cast. I was still supposed to be wearing the cast, but it wouldn't fit in the space suit. I had replaced it with a brace. Hopefully that would be enough.

I pulled myself along the bars back to the hatch of the ship primarily with my left hand. My mother, before I had drawn her ire by being determined to set out for space, had told me stories from the ancient civilizations of Terra. Stories of gods, goddesses, and other myths. The name Charon had come from these. He ferried departed souls to their destination in the afterlife. Truly this ship was my Charon, for my life on Auris had finally ended. This ship would ferry me to a new life.

I twisted the locking mechanism on the hatch. Memories bubbled to the surface of the long time this moment had been in the making. I could feel the summer heat as I worked the fields of my neighbors' farms after finishing my own work at home. I could hear the begging of my family as they longed for my savings. "Why don't you get us out of this rat's nest?" they'd ask. I had tried to help them, and they just squandered it and begged for more each time. They wouldn't work for their own betterment. They were happy scraping by unless they could get more without effort.

They didn't understand what I had given up to help them. Space called to me, and I was willing to put in the work. In truth, I obsessed about it. Auris hadn't been my home for a long time. I patted the ship's hull and said to myself, "This is home. This wonderful bucket of rust that will take me from the wheat fields of Auris to the stars." My eyes drifted back to the horizon. I couldn't believe I had finally made it.

I pulled open the hatch and hooked my feet in the ladder, dragging myself into the airlock. As the hatch sealed behind me, a hiss let me know the room was being re-pressurized. I was pulled to the ground gently as the artificial gravity reengaged. It wasn't quite normal gravity, but it was close.

Now what? I was a single male in my mid-30s who owned a cargo ship. I didn't have any work to speak of, nor did I have a plan due to all of the difficulties I'd had along the way. I hadn't planned this far because it seemed every time I got close, catastrophe struck. All I had was the gentle hum of the engines. I had everything I wanted. Now I just had to figure out how to keep it.

My long, brown hair fought with the helmet of my suit as I took it off, trying to get tangled up in the wires and hoses of the suit's life support systems. The suit itself gave up the fight much more easily than the helmet had. I stowed both pieces in the storage compartments in the airlock and stepped out into the tight hallway of the ship. They had built these things for function instead of comfort, that was for sure.
Creak. Shudder. Clank.

The entire ship shuddered around me as the engine slipped. The shaking caused me to stumble. I was able to catch myself on one of the rusting, brown walls with my hands. Pain shot through my injured wrist at the impact. I rubbed the wall with my left hand, "Woah there, sweetheart. Calm yourself," I said to the ship. She needed work, but she was home. And she was mine. The salesman had been happy to haggle with me. It was almost like he was happy to see her go. She was generations old and severely outdated. She hadn't flown in decades when I first walked her cold, narrow halls.

I was stocked with enough food and supplies for a month's journey across the stars. It was enough to get me anywhere. The problem: I didn't know where that was. My

entire adult life had been focused on getting to space with no consideration for what I'd do here.

My wheels started to turn. I had a month, but then what? I would need a resupply and refuel to stay in the sky. I needed to find work. My ship was equipped with systems to help find that. I had a cargo ship, I was likely to be in the business of delivery. Or piracy and smuggling if I felt like butting heads with the law. My imagination ran wild at that thought. Face covered in a bandana with an old-timey flintlock pistol, I would be shaking down locals on these frontier worlds like some old-west bandit. It wasn't a bad analogy, except I don't think I had the chops or desire to be a bad guy.

The most obvious work for me was loading this ship up with supplies that other people needed and carting them across the galaxy. I could make the run across the galaxy dropping things at a dozen different planets along the way. I could make a real difference hauling medical supplies, foodstuffs, or even livestock. Yeah, I was not the bad guy type. I could even drop supplies to Terra, originally Earth, the human homeworld.

Like that I was lost once again in memories of childhood. "Terra is just an old, dried husk of a world!" my mother screamed at me. She hated the idea of me taking to the stars and exploring the known galaxy, of returning to the dying world that she had escaped. My parents had been born on Earth and migrated to the colonies, but I had never seen the human home-world. "The sky is choked with thick, black smoke. The water is undrinkable. Why would you want to go to such a place? The very air will make you sick if you breathe it too long!"

"But how can I not be curious where we're from?" I would ask.

She would simply string off expletives and say things like, "You stupid boy. You don't know what yer gettin' yerself into. Just trust yer mom and stay grounded."

It's better here." In all of my research, I didn't understand what her problems was with the planet. It's not like it was deserted or inhabitable. The only problem is that it would take more than a month of travel to get there. But with support like hers, that was just another reason I wanted to get away from Auris. They had driven me away, at least my mother had. My little sister, only sixteen, I adored. It was going to be hard to leave her.

Now that I had the ability to go, I found myself asking those same questions as my mother. With all of space open to me, why would I go to the most desolate of the habitable rocks? Sentimental value? In childhood it had seemed correct, to see where my family had come from. It was like the stories my mother had told of taking trips to the countries where her parents had been born, I guess. But now I only found myself asking: Why?

I didn't have an answer. Maybe once I was financially stable, but that was not now. A trip to Terra would take an entire month. I'd be out of supplies and money by the time I got there with no way to recoup. Even if I did want to go to Terra, it wasn't a good idea right now.
Creak. Shudder. Clank.

I shuffled down the corridor toward the cockpit. Every step echoed with a clank through the halls as my feet impacted the metal grating. The sound was almost soothing, the sharp and tinny echoes that assaulted my ears. I planted my rear into the pilot's chair, leaping at the touch of cold metal through my clothing. Two things the movies often got wrong were how silent it was in space and how warm it was. Auriwood, and Hollywood before it, had rarely given the impression of just how cold a ship could be. It wasn't life-threatening, but there was an omnipresent chill in the air. Just enough to make a person uncomfortable.

My hands flipped switches and punch buttons, as I'd learned to do over the last year and a half. My train-

ing program had barely ended a few weeks ago. It was thorough. Over the course of 16 months they had trained me to touchdown, liftoff, and everything in between. The instructors had hammered the material home to where it felt like second nature.

The nav systems whirred to life, awakened by the series of buttons and switches I'd activated. A holographic projection of the surrounding star systems appeared before me. Auris was one of the further colonies from Terra. I poked at the air where Auris was located on the projection and a popout appeared with more information about the planet: population, climate, ports of interest. It also showed a list of jobs, but they were all grounder work. There was nothing in the list requiring space travel, not even requests for passage offworld. Auris was a space colony, but more closely resembled a planet-sized 1930s farm.

I poked around to a few more planets. Calorum was just a ball of eternal summer, resorts and the like. Reagum was a manufacturing world, on the road to being choked of life by industry in the same way that Terra had been. Ferrum was just a mining colony, a giant iron ore floating in space waiting to be mined out. Kharem was a shopping world, basically covered in merchant stalls and restaurants.

There. Now that world was interesting. Byralus was a world that had been through crisis over the last few years. Plagues and natural disasters had tried to sink the colony from the first. But it had persisted. A red-texted warning popped up advising against travel to Byralus. "Byralus is a class-1 frontier world. It lacks many modern amenities and/or suffers from unfortunate side effects of terraforming." I smiled at it and swiped it away. The nav system now offered the job listings on the planet that had been posted.

If I were going to live off of space, I suppose I

had to start somewhere. The listings for interplanetary jobs were all the same: they needed supplies. I read aloud, to break the silence of my solitude, “Our food and medical supply chains have been interrupted. Any willing ships that can bring us these shipments from planets Mercy, Reagum, Solace, or Auris please respond. We will place orders for foodstuffs and have them delivered to your ship on any those worlds.” Well, I was already in the area for that last one. As much as I hated to return so soon, I could do this job and help those people.

Creak. Shudder. Clank.

My console buzzed to life as I tapped on the job listing for transport from Auris. I typed in a quick reply notifying the Byralean officials that I was in the area and could grab their supplies for them. It only took moments for a video call to pop up from the Byralean state office. I tapped “Receive” and the face of a gaunt, grey-haired gentleman appeared before me. “Matthew uh... Matthew Marcus?” he questioned.

“Yes, sir,” I replied. Nervousness was creeping in. I had no idea what I was doing.

“Says here in the information banks that you have owned your ship since yesterday. You were only licensed to fly last month. Is this correct?” A significant portion of the population learned to fly small craft. Fewer trained to fly cargo like I had, but it was still a pretty common skill. “Son, are you still with me? You’re a starin’ off into space.” He started chuckling at his own joke.

“Yes. Sorry, sir.” Was there an issue? My palms began to sweat as his eyes scanned back and forth as if he were reading more of my file. “I’m from Auris, sir.” My nervousness peaked. “Seein’ as I’m already here, thought ya could benefit from timely pickup of y’all’s shipments. Is that gonna be an issue?” I could *feel* the frontier accent I tried so hard to hide dripping from my words as my composure crumbled. I guess that part of Auris would always

be with me.

The official visibly relaxed a bit, “No, you’re fine son. Just wantin’ to confirm your identity to make sure you ain’t planning to be off with our supplies to some distant market an’ sell ‘em yourself. I’ll put in the request. The pickup is at Lands’ End. File says that’s your home port anyway, so this all works out good. We look forward to seeing you in a week or so.”

“Absolutely, sir!” I replied.

“I’ll send you all of the confirmation details you’ll need to get the shipment. Should have ‘em by the time you get to Lands’ End.”

I nodded, smiling now.

Creak. Shudder. Clank.

I spun my chair to the left, a chill running down my spine at the creak that resounded through the ship. I took a long look out of the wide window at the bow of the ship. The yoke, like everything, was cold to the touch. I eased it forward, and the ship lurched to life behind me. I flipped a few switches on the console, tapped a few buttons, and a gentle hum filled the air. The grandlight engine awoke gently and propelled me downward and out of orbit; to planet Auris that I’d only just escaped.

A message popped up on my console from the Byrealean official. “I was told it’ll be a few hours ‘fore they get our supplies ready to load. Thought I’d let you know you’ve got some time to kill. Sorry for the delay.” I nodded, as if he could see me confirm. Realizing I wasn’t communicating face to face, I sent a “thank you” and went back to looking out the window.

Chills rolled up my back once again as I turned the swivel chair to the entrance to the cockpit. I meandered down the hall, taking in once again the echo of each footstep. In the long hallway between the cockpit and the mess hall rested a ladder against the port wall.

I rapped my knuckles on a two-foot by four-

foot metal plate just above the top rung of the ladder and smiled. My left hand wrapped around a metal handle extending from the right side of the panel. With all of my might, I pushed it to the left. It slid smoothly, silently to the side. When it was nearly entirely recessed into the wall, an audible click sounded. With eagerness I couldn't hide, I climbed up the ladder carefully to avoid pressure on my injured wrist.

A light came on automatically as the top of my hair brushed the ceiling. Everything in the tiny room was cold, gray steel. Nothing fancy, nothing *warm*. In the back-left corner of the room rested all of the belongings I'd brought with me. All of it was clothing and other essentials. Beside that pile of boxes and bags was a small desk, with a journal already lying atop it. It was opened to a page for today's date. I'd already written one word, "Free." *Creak. Shudder. Clank.*

The cacophony of the ship's chorus was music to my ears. Inspired by the sounds, I sat down and jotted down a few more words. I closed the journal and smiled. Decades. I had dreamed of this moment for decades.

My hand found a switch on the right side of the desk, and the tabletop swung free. With a mighty tug, the desk rotated to the floor like a pendulum, keeping my journal and belongings safely housed. A bed folded out of the wall overtop of it.

I dug around in the bags until I found it: a quilt decorated with a field of stars. It was a parting gift from my mother, the blanket that I had used as a teen when my dreams of space were just forming. I wrapped the blanket around my shoulders with childlike glee and curled up on the twin-sized bed.

My first sleep in space. How peaceful this would be.

Creak. Shudder. Clank.

Part II

Art



Untitled 1 by Ron Blackburn

Blackburn



Untitled 2 by Ron Blackburn



Untitled 3 by Ron Blackburn



Untitled 4 by Ron Blackburn



Aziz by José Hernández Chávez



Blue Sky Green Mountains by José Hernández Chávez

Impressions



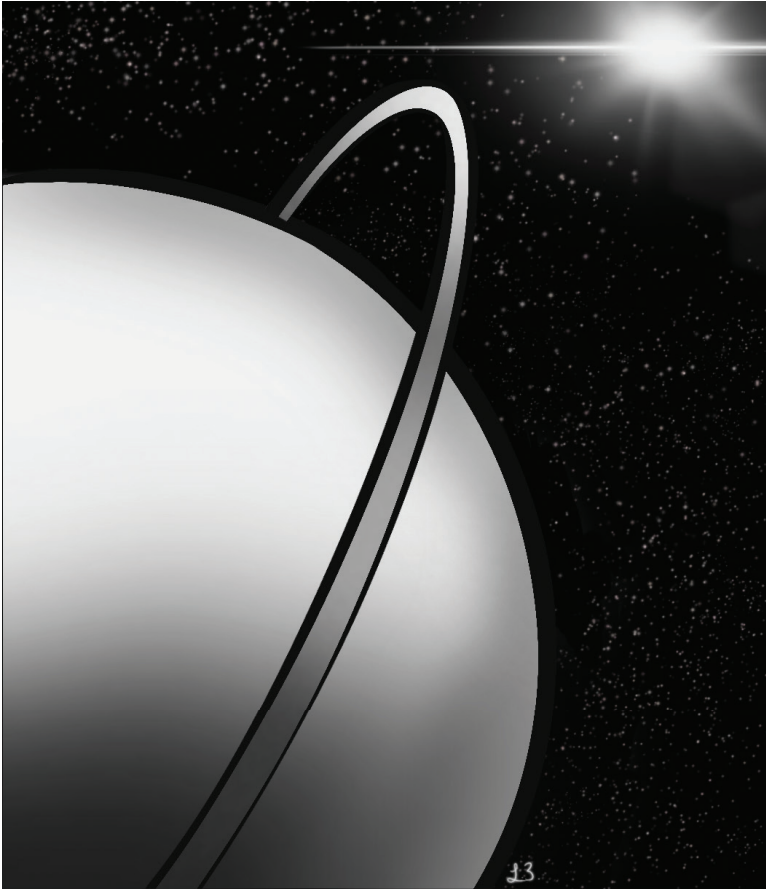
On a Cold Mountain by José Hernández Chávez



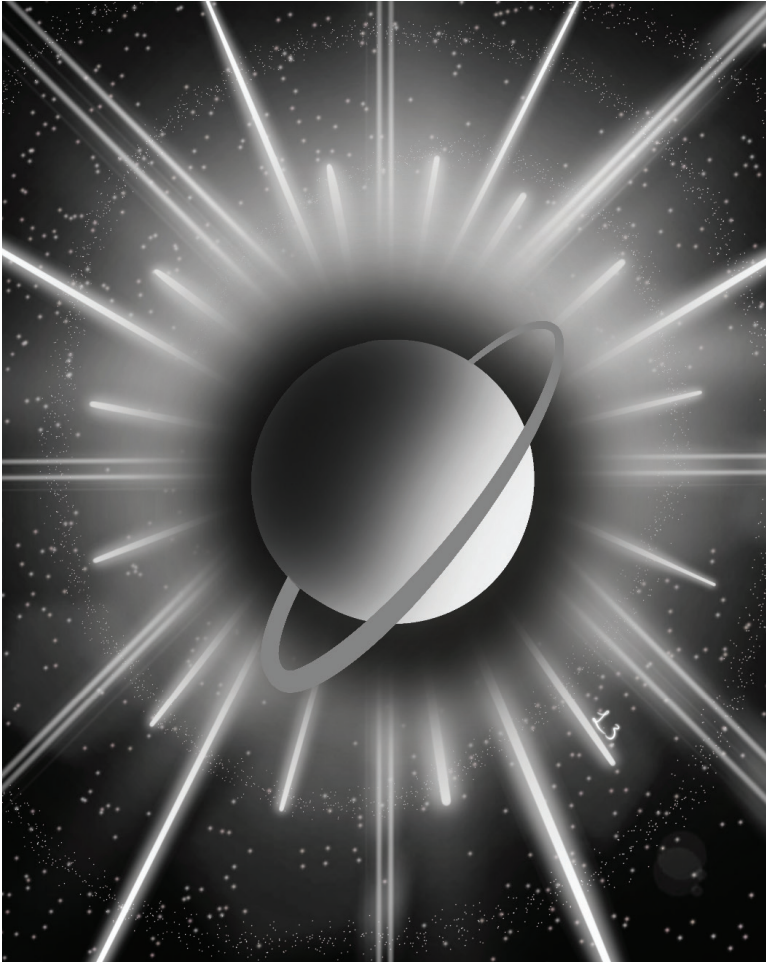
Rocky by José Hernández Chávez



Sunrise, Sunset by José Hernández Chávez



Celestial Asymmetry by Lauren Gaines



Celestial Burst by Lauren Gaines



Celestial Symmetry by Lauren Gaines



Phases in Pink by Lauren Gaines



Grandpa Chuck by Emma Haines



More Than a Woman by Emma Haines
**Impressions* Academic Award Winner: Art



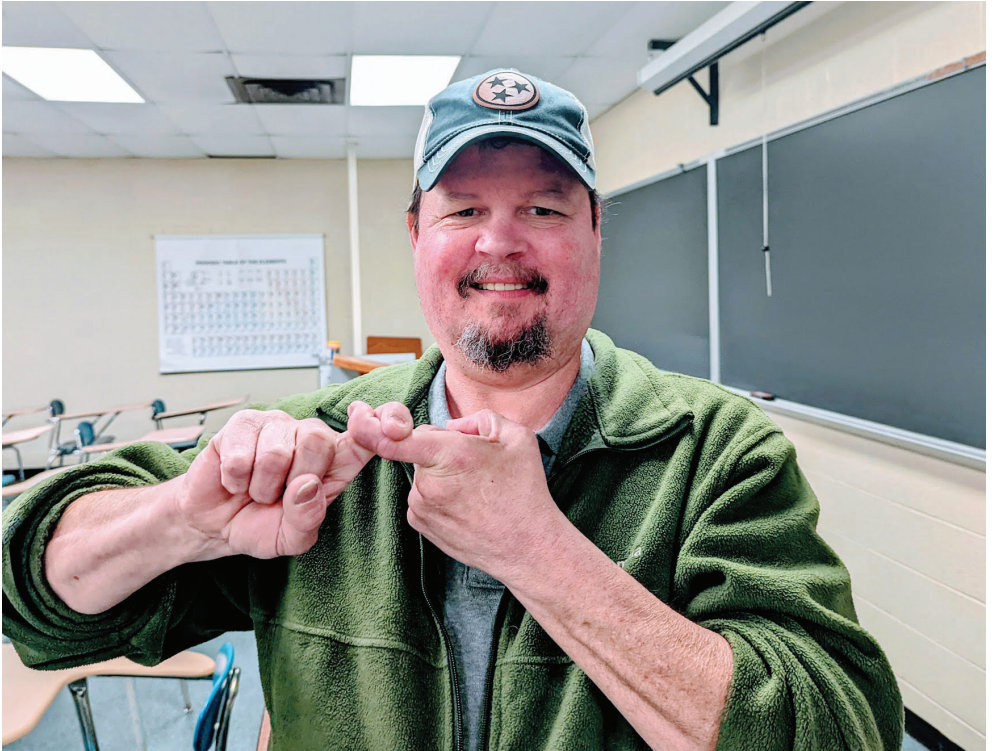
The Pink Collection 1 by Emma Haines



The Pink Collection 2 by Emma Haines



The Pink Collection 3 by Emma Haines



*Anthony, a Deaf man, signing 'friend'
by Alese Hudgins*



Clara and Zöe by Alese Hudgins



*Jordan signing the ASL word for 'friend'
by Alese Hudgins*

Hudgins



Mabel and Ahni by Alese Hudgins

Impressions



MARIO LOPRETE per

dadada beach museum

*Catalogo mostra al Dadada Beach Museum
by Mario Loprete*

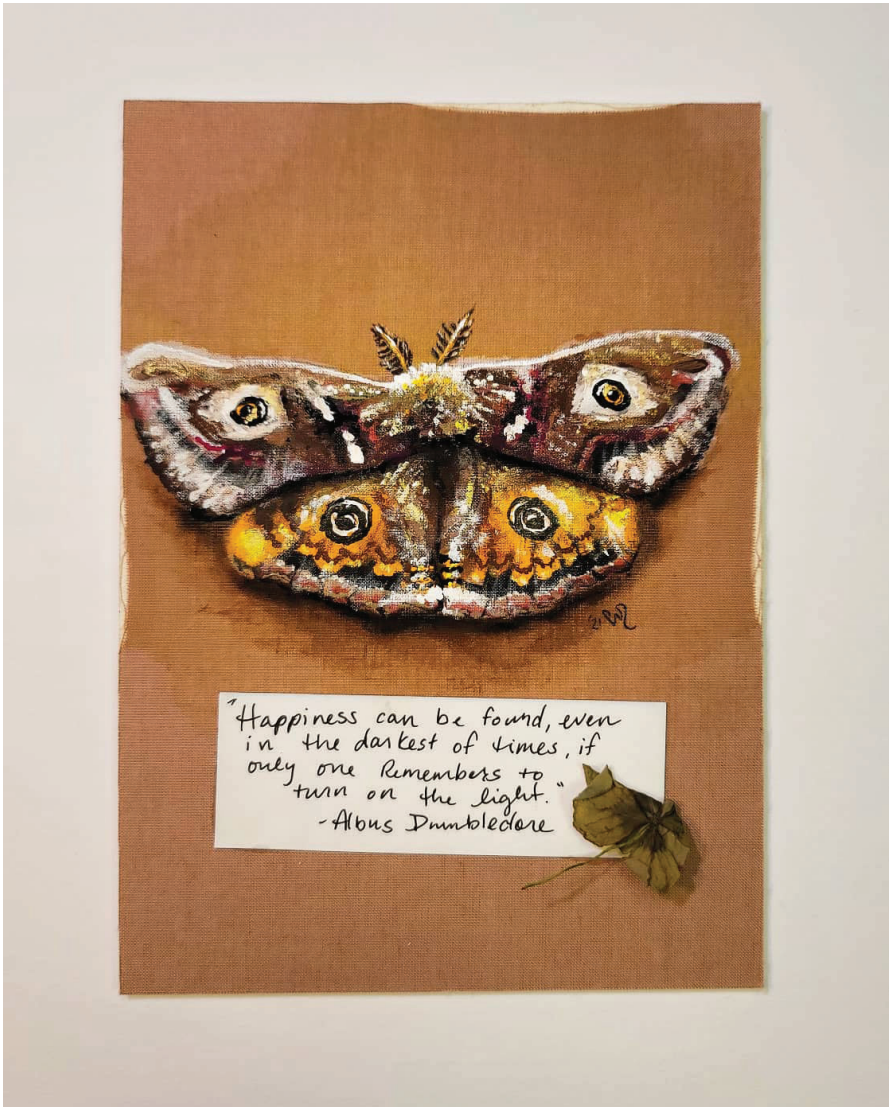
Loprete



Untitled by Mario Loprete



Lighthouse Attack by Yoshua Martinez



Albus the Moth by Chloe Melton

Impressions



the coal miner's canary by Chloe Melton



fall creek falls by Chloe Melton



koi fish study by Chloe Melton



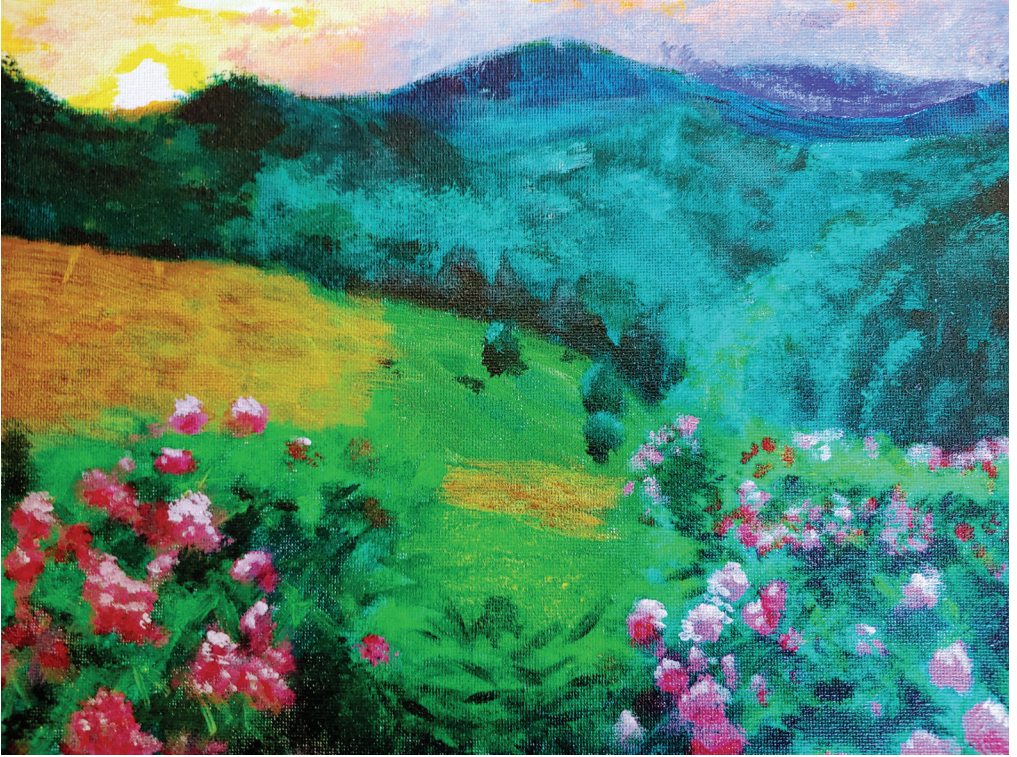
Melba by Chloe Melton
Original piece for cover art)



*Synesthesia dream of Jake Westley Roger's
"Middle of Love" by Chloe Melton*



Three of Swords by Lucy Reddick



Mountain Landscape by Brianna White

White



Pumpkin and Flower with Leaves by Brianna White



Winter Landscape by Brianna White



North Carolina in the Fall by Myndalynn Word

Impressions



Paradise by Myndalynn Word



Small, Medium, Large by Myndalynn Word



Summer Sunset by Myndalynn Word



The Sunflower House in Wilmington
by Myndalynn Word



A Fortune of the Woods by Austin Zettle

Zettle



Decay by Austin Zettle



Delivery from the Past by Austin Zettle

Zettle



The Door to Nowhere by Austin Zettle



Mushroom by Austin Zettle

Zettle



When Life Becomes Overgrown by Austin Zettle

Part III

Poetry

Katlyn Bogle
Daisy

I am a daisy
here to pick and pluck
I'll let you gather me
in a bunch
and tear me apart
singing a charming tune
of hope and want
despite choosing me
out of the other flowers
in the field

you sneak me
into your room
and wonder aloud
"Does she love me,
 Does she love me not?"
while I wilt
and I'm not surprised
when we're done
how quickly you discard me
for the iris calling your name

after all,
you love irises
and I am a daisy
here for picking
and plucking
again

Katlyn Bogle
Junie B. and Me

Here I am,
22 –still young–
wondering what I have learned,
how I was raised
in 17 years,
being taught about the world
and how to work with the people around me.
All that time,
and I'm left with the little lessons:

Don't cheat off others
Don't let others cheat me
Get along with the people I work with
Do all work evenly
Forgive when someone wrongs me
Apologize to others completely free
Don't keep bringing up the past
and never forget the important parts
Don't hold grudges for life
Get paid what I'm due
and pay others fair
Pay off my debts as quick as I can
Never forget when someone helps
and always lend a helping hand
Spend time with family and friends
and make time to teach them too

I see my siblings picking up their first Junie B. Jones,
and I remember when my bright eyes first beheld the
words

and all the things I have learned.

And all the things I have learned.

Alexis Collins
Gambling

This gamble is the most intense I ever played
The high bets made me stressed
This is my last game with the people I have known
The game puts my reputation to the test

Others draw 6's and 7's
Some players are forward to a fault
Some players can be misleading
Some people I can't even tell at all

Someone throws down their ace
Someone slams down their jack
This game is getting really intense
My poker face begins to crack

The dealer beckons my name
It is my turn to play
My wits were not in high spirits
I try to keep my nerves at bay

A that moment, I shuffle to the front
My cards sweating in my hand
I count on my quick rhetoric
I almost forgot what I planned

But I had to shake out any doubt
My heart was pounding with cards I had to pull
Winning this game would not be so hard
To realize my house was full

My own head played me like a Joker
The king was on my side
Maybe it was the pressure from school
I argued my senior debate with pride

Connor Cowart

Genesis

Where would we be without it?
Not here, or there, nor anywhere.
Maybe somewhere,
where our Father may appear.
It falls in gallons upon all things that breathe
And that in which it may flow and thrive.
But what is it that makes it so?
The chemical that we label as combined
H₂O, Aqua, water, or l'eau?
Or the feeling of a drop upon our skin
Only God can understand.
But we see the beauty in things such as this.
That without the rain... nothing can exist.

Lauren Gaines

Butterflies

**Impressions* Academic Award Winner: Poetry

I put a few butterflies
in my pocket from
the last time we talked
and saved them for
when I needed to
feel something

Lauren Gaines
Cup of My Thoughts

I would offer you
A cup of my thoughts,
but they are often too bitter
and wouldn't taste quite right

Lauren Gaines

Ricochet

Seven years.
When you break a mirror
you get seven years of bad luck.
But how many years do you get
for breaking a heart?

Is it more? Is it less?
Is the act of breaking someone's heart
punishment enough not for seven years,
but a lifetime?

Am I now condemned
to an eternity of guilt,
day in and day out
living in regret?

If what goes around comes around,
was my sentence not already complete when
the bullet I shot ricocheted off your heart
and shattered mine in return?

Lauren Gaines

White Noise

Some days my thoughts
are beautiful melodies,
but other days
there is only
white noise

Chloe Hamlett
The Great Wide Nothing

All quiet on the western front--
Except I am not sure which way is west anymore.
The sun set hours ago,

And I am too tired to remember where she rose--
Or is it where she set?
I am too tired to remember.

The world is quiet here.
Quiet and impossibly loud.
Gulls crying, waves breaking.

I hear the ocean,
And it makes me dream that the air conditioner is
 running.
I wish someone would turn it off.

They will drive up the electric bill,
And my mother will cry at the kitchen table
In our cold house.

But when I wake it is not our house
But a raft in the great wide nothing,
Pushing me along,

Toward shores neither kind nor cruel.
The lighthouse is empty,
And no one watches the sea.

Hamlett

No one but Saint Elmo,
Patron Saint of Sailors and Abdominal Pain--
Christ, what a title.

But we claim what saints will claim us,
Only I'm not sure if he will claim me.
A raft is not a ship,

And an ocean does not make a sailor.
I cannot remember how Saint Elmo died.
I hope it was not dehydration.

I see joy on the horizon,
That impossible shimmer
Of either land or death,

But the great wide nothing does not carry me there,
Only on.

Alese Hudgins

Free

I feel so free being so alone
I feel so free
So free
So free

I miss you
It was comfortable
What we had
It was home

But what I found was valuable
And like gold
But I never would've started to dig
If you never left me alone
The things we do for love
And the things I have lost
It wasn't worth it
Because my destiny isn't woven
into the stars that fall down around your head
Like a baby's mobile
just because the stars become a halo
Doesn't mean
That you're an angel

Alese Hudgins
anna's monologue

when i talk everyone listens
and when i dont, everyone watches my hands
to see what they'll say
somehow im the most deaf
when the others are screaming at me
please
please
my hands
look at them

im dying
cant you see my expression
the dead girl in stilettos
pretty woman limping to her grave
what am i to you
look at me
look at my face
see me
because i see you
sewn my mouth closed
and sling my body into my coffin
lower it into my grave
with a smile painted on
lipstick smeared
and
black tears
running down my face

Alese Hudgins
the wolf and red

the wolf and red
soulmates met
and he ate her soul

i hate you
i love you
do you
like me?
do you love me too?
what does he want?
what can i give him?

my pretty red hair intertwined with his big hand
and my body crumbled off his other one

like snow
john's voice like
petals on my face
fallen
right off the rose
how many flowers
did you have to eat
to be able to take my soul?

Elisabeth Jackson
Eyes (Demo)

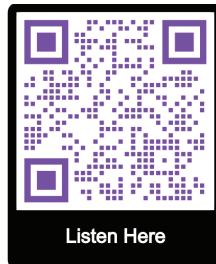
*Editor's Note: *Eyes* is the lyrics to a song written by Elisabeth Jackson. To listen to the song while reading, please scan the QR Code at the bottom of the page!

Verse 1

Blue skies
Silent dreams
A fiery touch that ignites me
And your honey-colored eyes speak words
to me
Things I don't know babe you're so hard to read

Chorus

And now I'm lost in your mind
Behind the clouds in your eyes
The storm only gets worse
When you set my world on fire
So how am I supposed to know
If you are the one for me, you know?
When I'm lost in how to say goodbye
Or how to say hello?
I cannot read you
It's like I'm blind
Like fog over my eyes
I've lost sight of everything



Impressions

Verse 2

Cloudy skies

Vibrant dreams

It's your eyes that stand out to me

And honey it's like fire meets the sea

And when it comes to you

It's only you that I see

In this mind of mine

Are you on the other side?

Bridge

And now I am blinded by the light

And so, I will no longer fight

Cus if You're not on the other side

Did I ever really see your eyes in mine?

So where do I go from here

Should I fight through the smiles and tears?

Elisabeth Jackson
Rose Tinted Glasses

You gave me glasses tinted by roses
I took them from you willingly
But appearances can be deceiving--
everyone knows this
Laughter and what I thought was love
danced across my mind
But when I wanted to take them off
you rained like fire from above
I never understood until I wore your glasses tinted
Little did I know it was something I could never undo
'Cus you hated my heaven burning like hell on you
That's what tinted roses do
c a m o u f l a g e
That is the flaw of jealousy
Over my eyes, roses you painted
It took being blinded to see that you were tainted

Lucy Jones

I Left My Problems On A Mountain

When we passed
Two men
Sitting in a dark car,
On a dark parkway,
I didn't feel fear.

I'd nearly cried three times
In your front seat
On that ride because,

How could I keep this?
The connection,
The sacrifice,
The stars,
If I felt the Arctic in my chest?

But up on that windy mountain,
When you gave me your flannel,
I've never felt more safe

I told you too much
And not enough, yet
Everything needed to be said

"I'm scared," I'd said.
"Me too," you replied,
"Terrified."

Two planners
Going unplanned to
Feel smaller than they
Ever could be.

Up on a mountain,
I crumpled my anxiety
And threw it down the side

I imagined it rolling
Down the mountain
Picking up speed
Until it was out of sight
Out of mind

But I couldn't piss in the woods,
So we left,
Arguing about
The reasons we're good people
All the way back down

We gained a lot tonight
Trust and peace
Calm and quiet
A bruise or two,
But I left something behind.

I left my problems on a mountain

Lucy Jones
Drained to Be Nobody

There's not even enough energy
Left inside of me
To make something pretty
For your eyes to read
There's not enough bitterness
Allowing me to finish
An angry sentence
I'm wallowing
In this dark that's swallowing
All the motivation I hold
This re-run is getting old
My skin is growing cold
It's past time that you know
I've got nothing to show
For the work that I've done
My life hasn't begun
I'm not even worried about the start
I just wanna live on my art
But that means creating

And all I'm doing is faking
It until I can make it
But I cannot escape this
Black hole that's taking me whole
Into its center
I'm left to wither
Until I return to the dust
I do this because I must
Get up each day
And make my way
Down these halls
Grumbled calls
Echo on these walls
Ears red, eyes shed

I'm scared and dead
Stumbling or stalling
I'm not going very fast
Because this truly can't last?
It never gets better
I'm just told to weather
But there's going to be nothing left!
Only it doesn't matter
You're deaf
I've lost control of myself
It's time I hung this on the shelf
Put my ambitions down
And left them to drown
In the swamp of your mess
Then I can be The Best
Shiny and gold
Do as your told
A hand to hold
A smile and I fold

Your clothes
Do the dishes
Making wishes
That it'll get better
But it never does
And I've thrown away my life
Now I'm full of strife
But this knife can't cut these ties
Or through the lies
And there's nothing left
I can't help myself

Lucy Jones
Covered in Hurt and Hurting

It's so funny
I could laugh about it
Until I cry
And then cry some more
For the hell of it
How everytime it hurts
I get more me, me, me
Than I ever was
I only care enough
When I've got no choice
Hurt some more
Cry until empty is better
Than doing it again
I want to hear about your day
Because that's what good friends say
But love,
I don't know if I can keep breathing
Getting out of bed is effort
I'm contemplating a shower
Tomorrow of course
Brushing teeth is about as good as it gets
I didn't eat for 4 hours
Although I was hungry
I can hardly remember what I felt like
To not be in fear
Or have my mind ache
So please,

Forgive me my dear
If I can't ask
I can't engage
I need time to be selfish
Or whatever this is called
I can't tell if I want
To be left alone
Or held

Becca Lesley
south dakota sunsets

i look over at my bedside
there's a picture in a frame that sits there
a picture of the view that was once outside my front door .

a bright orange and pink sunset
exhibits its prominence in the background
as the darkening ponderosa pines
partially frame in my friends and i
laughing as we're sitting on the ledge
legs dangling over the side of our wooden front porch .

so much joy in such a small frame .
a joy i wish i could have for the rest of my days .
that was taken on my last evening watching a south
dakota sunset .

now i exist here .
watching sunsets in a different state
thinking about wide open skies
so dark you can see the milky way at night
over the carving of stone mountains
surrounding us on three sides .

i wasn't meant to stay, i know .
not at the time that it was .
but oh what'd i do to sit on my front porch watching south
dakota sunsets for the rest of my days .

Becca Lesley
the marathons i run in my head

i'm tired, but i haven't gone to bed.
there are too many thoughts running through my head.
i can't figure out how to shut off my brain
because i'm thinking of all the experiences i could gain.

college has been fun, and i'm almost done
but i feel like my story has just begun.
am i off to graduate school now?
or am i ready to start my career somehow?

some nights i feel like i want to write,
but that career choice just doesn't seem right.
i just want to be outdoors,
not locking files in desk drawers.

i always loved hiking in the highlands,
and wanted to visit the virgin islands
i don't know which one i should do first.
the thought of choosing makes my head want to burst.

people backpack on long trails everyday
and it's hard to keep my aspirations for that at bay.
i want to start my trek immediately
but i have school to finish, inconveniently.

my younger friends are settling down,
but honestly i'd rather drown.
there's so much world around to see,
and i just want to explore it alone and carefree.

mom always said i was a visionary, there's no doubt.
look at all the things i've been thinking about.
sometimes i have a hard time living in the present
because thinking of my future is so pleasant.

but my thoughts, they race
and my mind doesn't know how to pace.
my head runs marathons everyday,
and i feel like my brain is about to decay.

Chloe Lewis
biting my fingernails

i'm so tired of the way things are
light in stripes from bent blinds
on my treacherously blue hands

fingertips bleeding from the biting
but the way my teeth rip the shreds apart
a carnivorous selfish infliction

i digress
and let go
and digest myself

Chloe Lewis

i wish i could experience nothing

sometimes i stop to think
 sat on the rocking chair
 in an imaginary kitchen
lemon cookies bake in the oven
 and the scent trails out around me
 like northern lights

nobody cares
they would if they wanted to

my windows are open
 wind comes sweeping through
 blowing cold across my skin
 until
 in every nook and cranny
i am numb

what am i missing

this
 is what i wanted
lemon seeds in the corner of my eyes
 i burn

this won't be the last time, they say
 "get ready
 for a life of loss"
i won't

i will leave the windows open
 until the sun melts me
 like a glacier
 and i gasp

i wish i could experience nothing

Yoshua Martinez
Letters to AmErica

Dear Erica,
I don't want to lose you.
I Know
Things haven't been right between us for a long time.
I know you say that things are better than before,
how you plan on making past mistakes right again,
but I just can't feel things getting better.
From the start,
You Said You'd Accept Me.
No matter how much money I had,
if my family needed help,
despite my past abusive relationship,
You Said You'd Accept Me.
But that's not how you've treated me.
You've acted like you can just dismiss who I am.
My Culture. My Personality. My Existence.
You tell your friends how much you "sympathize" with my
 plight,
but you've never actually helped me, not once, in all of the
 years we've been together.
You'd keep throwing promises,
never to be fulfilled, but
It's No Matter.
No Matter what you've said about me.
No Matter how many times you've ignored me.
No Matter how many times it feels like you hate me.
I still love you.

Without you, I'm terrified.
Who else would have me?
Who else could possibly see my worth?
Who else is supposed to understand the trauma I've
 shared with you?
I know we aren't necessarily the best fit, but
I feel like I still love you.
We've just put in so much effort.
It's just that... things can't go on like this.
The fear of the unknown is starting
to become preferable to the pain and heartache
that it takes to live with you and to love you.
Somedays I wake up and don't know
whether to expect us together, or whether you'll tell me to
 leave.
My parents have told me that love is just like that
 sometimes.
"You have to put in the work and you continue to work
 until things work."
So would it be so bad if we stayed together?
If I pleaded for another couple years again?
If we continue to work then things will work right?
Idk, maybe you'll change your mind.
Or I'll get the courage to change mine.
But until then, the thought of losing you is just too
 terrifying.
So despite it all,
Would you still have me, Erica?

Marissa Nelson
the sound of rain

Last
night, I fell
asleep to the
sound of
Rain.

Drop

Most
nights I
stare at my
ceiling and I
think of you I nod
off to dream of a man
that does not exist. Last
night, It was a good dream.
A place where you didn't hide
your feelings. I knew how you
felt about me and I told you the
same. We sat close by the fire
and without shame, we thought
of baby names.

Drop

I've
always
loved the sound
of rain. I love how it
comforts me, how it's
constant, reliable. Have you
ever noticed how water mutes
and it muffles the sound of my
anxiety. I love the sound of your
voice and How one word gives
me more comfort than any
sound of rain I've heard

Drop

I
Like
you like
I like the rain.
I like how it covers
me in a wet blanket.
Can you wrap your
arms around me like
the rain drops
do?

Beep, Beep, Beep

I'm
pulled
back to my
bed where I
nodded off the
night before. That
same ceiling in the
same place I left it, It
was a good dream. One
that hurt my heart to leave.
Breathing with you felt nice
even if it's not the same
when we wake. I'll hold
on to whatever piece
of you I can take.

Last
night, I fell
asleep to the
sound of
Rain.

Marissa Nelson

Warning:

Cigarettes kill

I have never touched one but the smell pulls me in until
I've become light headed.

Cancer, heart disease, lung disease, stroke, diabetes, and
more

The threats lunge on the cool leather jacket and I breathe it
in like its all lore,

Because this smell has brought me comfort since the age
of four.

The leather jacket holds the smell of the night air between
the stitches.

The jacket tells the story of her journey home.

I breathe out a sigh of relief,

Home,

She made it home, her presence is like methadone.

Buried behind it all I can smell the perfume she sprayed
this morning.

It smells cheap, like alcohol, or is that her breath?

She tells me she only smokes and drinks to calm her
nerves.

I believe her because when her hands stop shaking, I am
there to observe and only then can we get the rest
that we deserve.

What does a snake smell like?

Some things don't have a smell to let you know they're
dangerous.

Snakes can show it through the shape of the head of the
rattle of a tail.

Humans can be just as venomous and I can sense it
through their smell.

I've learned it because of a particular female.

What does your mom smell like?

Mine smells like someone who has been hurt.

Like someone who tries to cover feelings with substance
and substances with cheap perfume.

But, when you spiral too far and it takes you to the graves.

How do you expect me to lie to your babies face and tell
them you're in a better place?

How will I comfort them when I'm hurting too.

So, know better than I

Teach me how to spin your good lie.

Blake Pettibone

Masks

I see these masks worn all around
Some opaque,
And some worn down.
Some with cracks
some reddish brown.

Some are perfect,
Works of art,
Concealing all
but left up on
A pedestal alone.

Some are broken,
Chipped and frail,
From poking, prodding,
Unwelcomed assaulting
Until they fail.

some still are shifting
Changing, shaping, making
What is needed for the play
Or whatever else they must display
For each and every day.

For me most times I pray
I don't adorn
What I abhor
These masks of horror
That must conform.

But yet I know
These prayers and hopes
Are muttered, uttered
From beneath some
Forever shifting
Porcelain contours.

Blake Pettibone

The Past

Hello my old friend,
How nice to see you again!
It's been a long time
Since our last discourse reached end.

I missed you old friend
From such a long time apart,
As i forgot you exist
And the pain you impart.

Oh, Who am I kidding?
I despise your existence
The way you made me
Just to break me,
Again.

You trail me
Like a stalker, unwanted,
That finds my disgust
As some hidden advance.

So do by all means,
Go screw yourself please.
Return to your box
You worthless bollocks.

And mayhaps, in time,
I'll let you back out
If only to beat you
Deep underground

Corey Randolph
crumble

i watch your facade
c r u m b l e
at your feet

and i laugh

the act is over
the jig is up
you're fooling

n o o n e

you played the part of a friend
you made us feel safe
for a while

but now i know
and they do too
that it was all just a game

and we're
no.
longer.
playing.

Corey Randolph
safety

safety is not
a luxury
i'm often granted
but safety is what
i feel the most
with you

safety is you
is the feel of your lips on mine
is the warmth of your arms as you embrace me
is the love in your voice
when you draw me out of nightmares

safety is you
is having someone who,
even though he's seen
all the worst of me,
still doesn't think i'm a villain

Lucy Reddick
The Mitski Fan's Soliloquy

It tastes like something rotten.
Like worm-ridden fruit.

A bloated sweetness -- that pollutes,
Embalming the tongue in rancid wine,
Brimming with maggots
who weave, and writhe, between
decaying thoughts that trickle
Down through the wrinkles in my brain,
As poison does a king's ear, and I can hear
Them buzzin', like God's wrath, and
That swarm stood on
Branches bitten bare, like vultures vying,
Play o'er my head as the devil does
His fiddle: misery decomposing symphony,
And I think my mind may be dying.

1, 2, 3...

1, 2, 3...

My pulse does not agree.
With life is the flesh so besotted,
The eyes still burn, and the cheeks,
Flushed red with wilted roses, are
Stained and sodden; however, my words-
Hollow promises spat on hallowed ground,

coat my tongue as dirt covers a coffin, and
It tastes like something rotten.

Lucy Reddick
Snow in Summer

'Tis the time betwixt dawn's birth and night's fall,
when doves fly and serpents crawl,
whereupon the lonely heed Hades's call.
hearts that only beat at midnight's hour
'Ere they part this life,
with wilted flowers.

Frost-bitten fingers reap
One final spring. the rose's mortality
hath softened and bled, yielding
Its vitality to winter.
Death's frigid kiss bids blistered lips, adieu
and coaxes rotted youth anew.

Thine songs of snow in summer these soul doth sing,
And for them the bells -- they will ring, will ring, will ring.

Lucy Reddick
The Vault

A gentle tickle of grass,
on my finger's edge.
The cool breeze
of a 4 am sojourn
dance across skinned knees.
Sheltering the tears, I can only shed in
solitude.
The static in my mind, halts--
swept away in staggered
breaths that catch in the rocks
and ripple across the creek.
wrapped in my own arms
I can hear the buried thoughts
too honest for me to speak.
morning comes with a dull ache
I want to feel alive
when I'm awake.

Jenni Cate Rhodes
Anagnorisis

She said to me
How can we grow old together when
you're wasting away in front of me now
When my brain says
"You don't deserve to eat"
"You don't deserve to be nourished"
I can now rebut
She deserves a hand to hold

Jenni Cate Rhodes
Baby Don't Hurt Me

If love isn't sacrifice, I do not know what love is.
If I am not a thing to be loved, what am I?
If I not a thing to love you, what am I?
I was built to be a machine to generate love for you
I was built to forsake everything else
To sacrifice
To give
To love
You tell me that's wrong
But that's not what's written in the manual
There is nothing in the repair section
There is nothing on how to change these settings
Instead, that space is used to maximize output
It's for you.
It's all for you.
Why is it not enough?

Jenni Cate Rhodes
Love With Nowhere to Go

Could you please lie to me for one more day?
Not for some romantic date or grand gesture,
But so I could lay next to you and hold you
Make you peppermint tea as you study
So you get smiley when I get grumpy
When you inevitably have to get up to take the dog outside
We can watch your favorite show or movie or whatever
 you want
I can be your personal space heater since it's always too
 cold here
I'll kiss you up your shoulder and bury my head in your
 back as we fall
You'll ask me if I can still breathe

Or maybe scratch all of that
We'll go back to the parkway
We'll relive that first date, my best day
I'll drive you hours and hours
I'll give you flowers and flowers
All you did for me, I'll do for you
But I know that won't make a difference
I want it to

If I get the lie for just one more day
Nothing more
I will lay here holding you well
I'll make your tea warm with honey
We'll laugh together as I hold on to you when you take out
 the dog
Please don't go
We'll watch what you want

Don't worry about the covers you've got me to heat you up
The kisses I give your shoulder; they're the last expression
that you're mine
Maybe I will suffocate this time

Brandon Spurlock
Float Forever

The narrow paths and mountain trails
Of Cades Cove are wearing autumn veils.
“Peak,” before the blustery winds prevail
And cause the leaves to rain like hail.

Two colors stand out above all others.
Orange and Garnet, Maryville’s colors.
If there was ever a question of inspiration
I think it’s simple enough, look up in amazement.

This place in decay remains pristine,
A haven where everything exists wild and free.
Back to a magical place it took me,
A park from my childhood in Kentucky.

Both mountain villages fully preserved,
Lumber mills and traditional methods restored.
But down here the future had left its mark.
They’d installed solar panels to provide the spark.

And just like that I knew the world would adapt,
Like it brought power to this place, unmapped.
Hope doesn’t require a return to the past,
It can be a new script for a different cast.

As peak is gone and the leaves now rain,
This maddening year becomes more sane.
Fall now, orange and garnet, float forever;
Blanket the world for this weary observer.

Spurlock

Brandon Spurlock
Be Heightened

Anderson, Isaac.
Rev'rend,
Enlightened.

He began it all
For us,
Not frightened.

His community:
Diverse,
Not whitened.

Through this:
They rose,
All brightened.

Maryville College

Be heightened.

Brandon Spurlock
Through Adversity

Plain it is to see the added difficulty
Evoked by the present, a time so faulty.
Revoke our hope, make us turn and flee.

Again and again we reach new heights.
Rough ones, with this partisan divide.
Dumb ones with this pandemic in stride.
Unexpected ones as even the immortal die.
Always there seems to be another lie.

At what point do we throw in the towel?
Death; Never give up an inch of this ground.

Among the heights and stars we'll rise,
Leaden hardships we will surprise.
Through thick and thin, we will endure.
Always and forever, no need for more.

Brandon Spurlock
Taken

Before me stands a dark, foreboding rip in space.
It glimmers with a silver lightning core that opens into the abyss.
It beckons me forth, calling me to be comforted, ascendant.
A quaking, thunderous sound drives me, pushes me
Toward the dark, illuminated hole in the world.

I take a step and ponder my correctness now.
Should I step forward again or turn from this frightening fate?
Will I ever again have a chance to find this ascendance?
Will I be lost in the void if I cross that plane?

My hair stands on end.
Lightning tingles, pricks at my skin.
I feel the dread envelope of ascendance.
I ache, long, to be taken into the bosom of the rift.

Before I know it, my left elbow has gone in.
My body calls for the parts that have crossed the threshold to
Return to the world it knows and restore their connection.
I can no longer feel my left arm at all.
Tug as I might
I cannot draw it from its place in the abyss.

I'm drawn into the spinning, crackling surface,
Unable to be free.
My face meets the cold, black, white ascendance ahead.
My mind loses all potential thought as it nears.
I lurch forward,
Resigned to my fate,
Wanting the torturously slow pull to end.

Impressions

A sickening, thundering screech assaults my ears
and is just as suddenly gone.
I land with a thud upon white stone marred by black dirt.
I rise to a chorus of incessant, omnipresent whispering.
It beckons me to assimilate,
To become one,
To bow to their king.

The sky above is black, crackling with familiar, silver streaks.
The barest hints of light appear before me,
illuminating my way.
I will follow this path,
and hopefully emerge on the other side:

Ascendant
1AKEN

Lavarius Thenthirath
Don't Fear the Dark

A shadow is cast—
A light is revealed—
The natural state is seen...
Yet light is active;
Darkness is passive;
So which state is it natural to be?
Seen or unseen?
Darkness or light?
Why do we fear in the face of the natural?

We revel in light—
We cower at night—
We burn life seeming chased by cast shadows.
The unknown is natural;
The hidden has always been;
The light has come in to follow.

Fear not the dark
Whilst enjoying the light
For both meld into tomorrow.

Lavarius Thenthirath
Kind—Not a Slave

I like to volunteer
Don't mistake me for a slave.
I don't need to sell my soul for gold
I know what I need to save.
As much as I like to give,
That doesn't mean to steal and take
My kindness is not weakness
Don't dare make that mistake.

I like to give out, when I can,
To hands that often shake
And let them eat their offered bread
Because they have no cake.
I lend an ear to their fears
Hearing voices crack and quake
Hearing hearts that strain and break
Finding souls caught between diamond and coal
Taking pressure decides their fate

You cannot have me—
No one can—
I am not a thing to have.
I am with me,
And if you are with me,
I could use a steady hand.

I do this not for prize nor pride,
I have nothing here at stake,
But the difference in how we live
Should be the difference we can make.

Lavarius Thenthirath
Seek Help

Caught between roles and identities,
Fighting a battle to be yourself
When you should be able to simply live, but
You're told being who you are is going against who you are,
So the struggle is born, bred, and bloodied within you as it
Churns, tears, and chokes you at your heart and soul as you
Gasp for enough courage to ask for help, blindly, not knowing if
There's anyone to listen,
Anyone who will,
Anyone who will decide to help, nor
Anyone who will be able to help.
You scream.
It's so small; it takes so much; it hurts so much;
It's the best thing to do before everything else gets away from you.

This is why we seek each other and
Remind each other, in ways small or big,
Yet always significant, that we are not alone.
This doesn't have to be the end all.
There's a chance this is the worst it gets from now on.
We'll struggle—
Not you, but we,
And we'll be the better for it.
“**We**” is **You** and **I**, and
I love **You**.

Laila Thompson
Beautiful Soul

I grabbed your hand
Your cold, cold hand
Devoid of any signs you were ever alive
I cried
I cried harder than I've ever cried before
I kissed you forehead
It was so cold and empty

I weeped for weeks afterward
I cursed God for taking away such a beautiful soul
You didn't deserve your fate
You deserved the world
And what you got was death
Cold and rigid death

Laila Thompson
People

As I peer around the room
I see groups of people, all of whom
Have different looks and feelings
Some of which are most appealing

Some are tall with a booming presence
Some are small in adolescence
Some have hair with rainbow colors
Some are copies of the others
Some have smiles wide as the sea
Some look like they disagree

Everyone around, diverse and beautiful
Their uniqueness is indisputable
People from different walks of life
People with their own happiness and strife
A world without diversity is a world of doom
So think twice when you peer around the room

Laila Thompson

You

You're not here
What do I do when you're not here?
I feel like I'm going mad
Every second I'm thinking about you
And every second you still aren't here
I look in the mirror and I see you
I check my phone and I see you
You you you
All I can think about is you
Why aren't you here?

You probably hate me
You can't stand the thought of me
You don't want to be around me
You're sick at the sight of me
You probably aren't even thinking about me
Why can I only think about you?

Because you make me feel special
You warm me up when it's cold outside
You bring me gifts unprompted
You call me beautiful when I feel ugly
You love me
You love me like no one else ever has
You're wonderful and beautiful
You're kind and thoughtful
You're perfect
You're you

Part IV

***Community
Spotlight***

Community Spotlight
Impressions of Home in Appalachia

Danita Dodson, Editor of *Teachers Teaching Nonviolence* and
author of *Trailing the Azimuth*

In *The Power of Place*, Dolores Hayden writes, “Place makes memories cohere in complex ways.” During the fall semester of 2021, the thirteen students in my 12th-grade writing class at Hancock County High School took on the challenge of creating sensory-rich narrative descriptions about how their identities have been shaped by memories anchored in the place where they live. Motivated to creatively capture geographic and ethnographic snapshots of their small rural community of Sneedville in the remote Clinch Mountains, they also interviewed older residents to discover their stories of place, bridging intergenerational divides by sharing in writing these memories of their elders. Immersing themselves in a collaborative project sponsored by the Fit. Green.Happy’s initiative to remind young people that the outdoors is a space for wellbeing, these Hancock High students then shared their writings with the imaginative *Impressions* staff, who created artistic responses in the form of postcards and found poetry, underlining the value of listening to others’ stories. Such collaboration points to a vital truth for humanity: if we could slow down more often, truly recognize, and then share our place on the planet, wherever we live—and if we could listen to the unique stories in oft-forgotten landscapes and then retell them—we might more easily realize that we are all connected in beautiful ways.

Eli Bailey
Memories of the Homes that Helped Raise Me

Memories are the potter who takes the clay of who we are and molds us into what we are today, down to the very way that we operate as individuals spur from our memory. In her book *The Power of Place*, Dolores Hayden writes, "Place makes memories cohere in complex ways." While some may argue that memory has nothing to do with a location, memories do correlate to different areas in our lives--from where we live, to our community, to our original homes.

I live in a valley between two mountain ranges on the very outskirts of Sneedville. While it was once a place of sadness, it has transformed into a sort of sanctuary. When I first moved here, I was reluctant to get comfortable. My life as a young child had been uprooted once again, and I refused to face change once more. When I first moved in, my room was barren and plain. It smelled of musk that only an unused room could produce. I looked at the four-papered walls with disdain, as the speckles of color that flecked the walls taunted me; this place was not my home. As I got older, however, my outlook began to change. I started to truly live in the space and to make it mine. The warm wood of my floors invites me in, as the sight of my soft bed soothes any worries that I may have. The sunlight dances across my room as my plants reach up to greet it in a warm embrace. My room smells of lemon and lavender, and I could not be any happier to call it mine.

While I love my home in the hills, nothing compares to the sense of home that I feel with my friends. My friends are my community; their houses have been my refuge a great many times. Emma lives in a fanciful little neighborhood in the middle of town. The air there always seems to have a warm caress, as the children play out in their yards, and the dogs and cats laze about on their porches. Emma's home is quaint, and it has the coziness of being at your grandparents' house. When you first cross the threshold, you are met by the dining room table where all the day's happenings have collected. The miscellaneous items tell the colorful story of what happened that day. Directly from the

dining room comes the kitchen, where many memories of meals cooked and laughs shared come flooding back. The living room has a long couch along one wall where light comes in from the window. The warm fabric invites you to lie down and soothes you into a sense of calm. The rest of the home goes along a single corridor, at the end of which is Emma's room. The room is a testament to her chaotic personality. It is scattered with half-completed crafts, clothing items, and her boundless collection of stuffed animals. Although it may seem outwardly messy, there is a kind of controlled chaos that is oddly comforting. Her house has always been the stomping grounds of our friend group and will be for years to come.

Sneedville has been my home for many years; however, it is not my original home. In the bay area of Morristown, on a little dead-end street, sits the two-story house where I grew up. My mother and father split shortly after I was born, and my mother and I had nowhere else to go, so naturally my grandparents greeted us with open arms. I can remember as a small child running around the dining room table as my grandfather chased me in a game that only the two of us played. The dining room table was a lovely dark wood where a great many family gatherings were held. The room was always so bright and inviting with the three widows letting in an ample amount of light. I remember creeping up the carpeted stairs at night to snuggle into bed with my Nana and Papaw. As the house grew older, so did my grandparents. While there were updates and repairs made to the house, the same could not be said for my papaw's deteriorating health. His kidney was failing him and he became weaker with the constant treatments. Eventually, the stairs became a liability and my grandparents had to make the hard decision to put the house up for sale. Even after my grandfather's passing, that old house continues to remind me of joyful memories. It also taught me the lesson of impermanence, and to not grieve the loss, but to appreciate the time that you had.

Whether it be good or bad, our memories shape who we are. Although sometimes we have to take a moment to pick up the pieces, our experiences make us more resilient as individuals. We are like coal; when put under enough pressure, we transform into something beautiful and valuable.

Brandon Spurlock

*“Memories Hardened in the Brightest Stone”
Found Poetry from “Memories of the Home that
Helped Raise Me” by Eli Bailey*

Memories are the potter who takes the clay
And molds us into who we are today.
Down to the very way that we operate.

Good or bad, our memories shape who we are.

Sadness transformed into a sort of sanctuary.
Speckles that flecked the walls taunted me.
However, my outlook began to change.
I started to truly live in the space.

The warm wood floors invite me in,
The sight of my soft bed soothes worries I may have
Sunlight dances across my room,
Plants reach up to greet it in a warm embrace.
My room smells of lemon and lavender,
I could not be any happier to call it mine.

I love my home in the hills,
Nothing compares to the sense I feel
With my friends, my community
Their houses have been my refuge a great many.
It is not my original home.

In Morristown, on a little dead-end street
Sits the two-story house, my mother and father split
shortly My mother and I had nowhere else to go.
My grandparents greeted us with open arms.

The room was always so bright;
Three windows letting in an ample amount of light. I remember //

creeping up the carpeted stairs at night.

Good or bad, our memories shape who we are.

Sometimes we have to pick up the pieces,
Our experience, as individuals, makes us more resilient. Like coal: under pressure, we transform.

Skyler Baker
The Greatest Moments

It is a place where people only speak one language which is often considered “too southern to be smart.” That is what Sneedville is mostly described as from surrounding counties. Sneedville, Tennessee, also known as ‘over yonder,’ is the only place I can call home. It has been the only place my family has lived for generations that go back further than I could even recall. The tiny town is four hours from the state capital, Nashville, and with a compact population of 1,486. In her book *The Power of Place*, Dolores Hayes writes, “Place makes memories cohere in complex ways.” This prominent statement caught my attention due to its relevance to my little hometown. I am very thankful that my best memories were able to play out there. Though small, the town leaves everyone who visits in awe of how beautiful and welcoming it is. The most memorable memories I have from this place are at my great-grandmother’s house and in my cousin’s hay-field.

The small white house with a faded red roof, which sits between two big hay-fields, is a place I love more than anything. My great-grandmother, who I called Mamaw, raised her two kids in the 3 bedroom house where eventually my grandmother raised her two children also. Nora Stewart was a very wise, stubborn woman who taught me everything I know today. She wrapped cheap band-aids around my fingers so I could learn to sew the holes in my jeans made from climbing the huge tree next to her house. She showed me the correct way to can salsa, strawberry jam, and green beans, which I do annually now because it brings me joy to do something she loved. I can describe every Easter, Thanksgiving, and Christmas dinner she ever made because she was the best cook. She always had the wooden tables that sat in her dining room topped with the best things: buttery mashed potatoes, sweet honey ham, a large turkey, and everything in between. She knew how much her great-grandchildren loved sweets, so she would make sure to have a whole table of just dessert. She shared her recipe for the best kool-aid with me and only me, which is why everyone loves when I make it. I remember her fussing at me for picking the prettiest, silkiest

flowers out of her flowerbed. I can still feel the heartbreak of when she chopped down her enormous apple tree that stood in her front yard, solely because it had the best shade. Unfortunately, she passed away before we could make more memories, but I will always carry those moments with me. It is that curly-haired, Melungeon woman who I strive to make proud every day.

Traditions have a strong threshold on my family. One tradition is to gather in a field owned by my cousin Travis. He got an idea from an older lady talking about how she would love to make apple butter again, exactly how her family did when she was young. He traveled long hours on the road searching for a kettle that was in pristine shape; eventually, he found one in Pennsylvania. Determined to make her wish come true, he retrieved it and brought it home to surprise her. She glowed with excitement and told everyone the ingredients we would need to have to make the smooth, delicious apple butter. Over an open fire, the kettle sat in the middle of the field, with a hundred people surrounding it. Everyone would take a turn to stir the delicacy with the twelve foot stir stick, made by Rick Stewart. People would drive past and stop to come join the large congregation. The warm feeling of being packed close due to the cold October morning is a feeling I look forward to every year. To me, it isn't about the tasty canned apple butter; it is about being surrounded by the people I love the most.

Moments like the ones I have described are the ones who give me a whole new outlook on life. Memories like these are unmatched in many, many ways. For now, I will cling to the thought of seeing my great-grandmother again, and the excitement of gathering around the large kettle with my loved ones.

Laila Thompson

Found Poetry from “The Greatest Moments”

by Skyler Baker

...women fell in **love** are moving topics to hear about. Some people find it hard to connect with older generations because a lot has changed; however, they still **can teach us** how they were impacted by the development over time; **how to** carry out things that were done when they were young, and how to **be** as **appreciative and respectful** as they were. One of the best things elders have gotten to witness is the development **of** everything all over **the world**. They have seen the production of phones, televisions, **and** computers. Other things **they** have seen are robotic help in factories, causing a lot of men and **good** workers to lose their only source of income. **Things** like cars have gone from super simple machines with no air conditioner, radio, and the lack of cruise control to complex machines like push button start, heated and cooled seats, and flat screens. A big thing elders have gotten to see is the change of people, style, and mindsets. “**We have** got to admit that the wide use of technology is making us...”

Chloe Hamlett

*Postcard response to "The Greatest Moments"
by Skyler Baker*



Joe Ferguson
Memories from Back Home

Hancock County, the place where my ancestors settled and where my family grew. Most people see this place as just another small town in East Tennessee. For many, this place as a town with two red lights and maybe a restaurant or two. I see it as my home, the foundation my character was built upon, and my happiness. In the book *The Power of Place*, Dolores Hayden writes, "Place makes memories cohere in complex ways." After reading that, I realized that if it had not been here, the memories would not be the same. Every lesson and memory I can recall has been associated with my surroundings and family. Every way you turn, there will be someone to give the shirt off their backs for you. Hancock County has something most places do not have, and that is simply happiness. Particularly, my family, is one of the most tightly-knit families you will ever meet. The memories and the bonds that we have with one another are priceless.

There is no other feeling than working in hay for hours upon hours at a time and taking a break to see my nana there with ice cold sweet tea waiting on me. After one gulp of the tea with a hint of lemon, the thirst forced by the hot weather was instantly quenched. Heading back to work we would go, cutting the moist grass for it to be parched later on. After the sunsets, we would go to Nanna's for supper all dirty and smudged to find the biggest feast you could imagine. Filling the pots were mashed potatoes, green beans, and collard greens. On the table we could find the crispiest and crunchiest fried chicken you had ever seen. And the fried okra.... Well, you would just have to be there for that. The conversations that flowed over the food were filled with jokes and arguments about who worked the hardest. At that time, in the middle of every summer, I realize that I would rather be nowhere else in the world but right there. In the fall, the ridges over my family farm turned brown and red from the trees leaves that were slowly switching to autumn colors. On the hill my Great Grandfather and I sat, enjoying the fall essence as we watched my father and uncle fence the hillside. The 92-year-old wore a John Deere hat, along with a rugged flannel, and

uniform pants; I admired him as if he was above the world. He whistled a tune that seemed to roll over the rigid mountains for miles. I sat, listening to the stories he had waited many years to share to someone who had not heard them. Being young, I did not understand the wise words that left his mouth. Deep down, I remember the stories he used to ramble on about; understanding what they mean now has me wishing I could go back and conversate with him one more time. Every time I look upon the old, weathered hill with paths from animals engraved in the dirt, I reminisce on the lessons he taught me and the stories he told. He knew one day I would understand what he told me as a 6-year-old boy. Every day the words and the lessons become more substantial to me and render my decisions day-to-day.

“It’s the most wonderful time of the year” rings through the house as the cold, dark night slips into the morning. When the naked turkey is being dressed in the perfect seasonings as the rolls bake to a golden brown in the oven, I know it’s Christmas. As all my family gather around the tree to spend time together, all I can think about is the ambition to tear open the presents. The essence of the home-cooked meal being prepared is overwhelming. As my family comes to spend another Christmas night together, the feeling of love is almost like a wave throughout the room. When the time comes to open presents, I realized that the kids were overloaded with gifts; the adults only received one or two things. I later concluded that they were not worried about gifts, they were excited to spend precious time with the family. It occurred to me that family is more important than the materialistic things in life. The love and memories with my family are everlasting; those memories and lessons have formed me into the person I am today.

As a young boy, I had no idea that this place would have such an impact in my life. No matter how far I stray away from my home in life, there will be something that engraves its presence in my mind. As the place where I have made so many memories with my family and friends, I would never be the same without growing up here the way that I did. Place does make memories cohere in different and odd ways; if it was not for the place, the memories would not be the same. No matter how far life may drag me away from Hancock County, this will always be my home.

Katlyn Bogle

Found Poetry from “Memories from Back Home”
by Joe Ferguson

Memories from Back Home

By Joe Ferguson

my ancestors see red lights

built upon memories

After Every lesson

Every way you turn,

there will be

simply happiness

the bonds working

waiting

After the sun sets

to find the biggest table

you had ever seen.

Lauren Gaines

*Postcard response to "Memories from Back Home"
by Joe Ferguson*



Addison Fleenor *Grandpa's Hands*

Before their joints became stiff and they began to draw social security, the people of the older generation paved the way for the ones who follow them. The young often forget that their predecessors made their current lifestyles possible. It is difficult for younger members of society to admit that their lives would not be the same if it was not for the labor efforts their grandfathers and grandmothers made for their families. Although the members of the rising generation believe they are living a better life, they can learn to live well from their elders by listening to the hard lessons they had to learn, studying the work ethic that helped them build their lives, and loving the people they meet along the way.

First and foremost, the early generation, like us, faced many troubles and were forced to learn hard lessons as they made their way through the world. For example, when my grandfather, Ronald "Larry" Stapleton, was born in 1948, he was welcomed into a world of continuous change. During the years to come, he saw the civil rights movement erupt, the war in Vietnam begin, and social leaders such as President John F. Kennedy assassinated. All these major events affected the way he viewed the world. Because of these incidents, people of the time, including my grandfather, learned that they had to let the changes occurring affect them to move forward. Young Larry Stapleton was forced to learn how to change his mindset, or he would be left behind. Along with the struggle of the times, this group had to face the unfortunate truth that the ways they were taught were wrong. They learned to embrace the hard truths to push them forward instead of relying on ignorance to foster comfort. Instead of following this example, we allow ourselves to settle into the belief that the world will not change if we do not want it to. We settle into a comfortable bubble that makes us oblivious to the problems of the world. Like the older generation, we should not allow contentment into our lives; we should embrace discomfort to press on and accept change.

Because of their strengths gained from overcoming adversi-

ties and hard truths in life, the so-called “Baby Boomers” had one trait that is difficult to spot in a person born in subsequent generations: a strong work ethic. Overall, the people born between 1946 and 1964 are hardworking individuals. I recall my grandfather, to whom we affectionately refer as “Big Pa,” listing the multiple and continuous flow of jobs he had spanning from his youth until retirement in his late sixties. Big Pa’s main goal in life was to provide for his family and ensure them a better life. I remember a discussion we had one time about his retirement; he stated, “Addi, I have worked hard my entire life. I retired and I’m resting as much as I can.” Everything he said was true. Without thinking too much, I can remember a handful of jobs he has had over the years; he worked for the Hancock County Rescue Squad, was a maintenance man at the old Hancock County Hospital, became a milkman in Cosby, Tennessee, operated machinery at a coal mine, and retired from Morristown-Hamblen Hospital in Morristown, Tennessee as the head of maintenance. That is not even half of the jobs he has held. On top of that, he would come home in the evenings and farm tobacco with his family. Many young people now are not willing to get their hands dirty to make a living. They lack the drive that their grandparents had to take care of themselves. Work was not always guaranteed, but every time a job ended, my grandfather found another one to replace it. Larry Stapleton, like many others in his generation, became multi-skilled and worked hard at everything he did; he never found an excuse not to provide for his family. Slothfulness was not permitted in the lives of Baby Boomers. If this trait were common in the rising generation, there would be a big difference in the quality of life they hold.

Alongside his ability to persevere and desire to work hard, when I think of my grandfather, I think of love; his love is strong for his family, his neighbors, and his many friends. As a little girl, I always asked my mom to tell me the story of how Big Pa and my “Nannie” started to date. It always started, “Nannie was beautiful, and Big Pa was lucky.” Although it was humorous, my grandfather always stood by the fact that he was lucky he had his wife. As my mother says, she kept him motivated. A love like that is not easy to find, and they were willing to work together to make their commitment last. In today’s world, settling a divorce is more common than planning a 50th wedding anniversary

party. In the article “Things We Can Learn From The Older Generation,” Amina Moustapha states, “Probably, the word divorce is a foreign one to the older generation’s dictionary.” Divorce was something that never crossed their minds when times got tough because, for them, times were always tough. Their relationship was built on commitment and a desire to make it work. Their appreciation and respect for one another helped their love grow into a model for their children and grandchildren to follow. One thing I think Nannie loved about Big Pa is the way he establishes friendships everywhere he travels. Whenever I meet someone from our hometown of Sneedville, Tennessee, and they ask me who I am, I always tell them that my grandpa is Larry Stapleton. The familiarity of his name makes them smile and provokes conversations. His caring heart and his ability to talk to anyone welcomes people in and provides them with comfort. If young people would allow themselves to take the time to slow down, embrace the uniqueness of everyone around them, and offer unconditional love to people they do not know, the world would be a happier place and they would see their own significance.

In my grandfather’s kitchen, a white refrigerator is covered in magnets from all over the country; this includes a Mount Rushmore monument from South Dakota, a cowboy from Montana, a peach from Georgia, and many other miniature relics. Before they reached the age of retirement, Big Pa and Nannie traveled the United States with my great-grandmother following behind. My mother told me that at the time, she did not understand why they were traveling to those different places. Why not wait? Looking back, I understand why they did not postpone going. If they would have saved those trips until they retired, Big Pa would have been left alone without the memories of the fun times him and my grandmothers had together. Whenever Big Pa and I talk about Nannie, there is always a sadness in his voice, but when we talk about the different landmarks they visited and memories they made along the way, his eyes light up and he gets excited. They lived life together in a way that when my Nannie passed away, there was not a question of whether she lived the best years of her life. It was evident that they were both happy in the smiling tourist pictures that always accompanied the rubber magnets stowed away in her purse. That is the

biggest lesson I have ever learned from my grandfather; do not wait to live.

After studying the different circumstances to which two generations have been subjected, it can be determined that members of the rising generation can learn various things from their elders that will enrich their lives. Elders provide multiple footpaths of wisdom that can be followed in hard times to lead others out of distress, worry, and trouble. Today's young people lack the intensity and desire that their predecessors had to create a life that they would live well. If they studied the hard lessons the Baby Boomers had to learn, the work ethic they exhibited, and the love they showed to their fellow man, the young would be one step closer to living a life with more substance. Life is not a race that can be won; it is an everyday walk on the beach. The weather is unpredictable, the sand irritates the soles of feet, and the sun burns unprotected skin, but the view of the waves crashing the shore and the sunset at the end of the day make the inconveniences worth every moment. We should use all of the tools the past generation provided to make life enjoyable.

Chloe Hamlett
Found Poetry from "Grandpa's Hands"
by Addison Fleenor

Grandpa's Hands
By Addison Fleenor

+ Chloe Hamlett

a better life,
continuous change.
they had to move forward.
or be left behind
push forward
press on
hands dirt

I think of love;
lucky lucky love
embrace unconditional love
do not wait to live
footpaths to live well.
love every fellow man
Like Big Pa



Emma Greene

Places that Can Make a Memory Last

During our lives we come across many places that will always have a home in our hearts for the rest of our time on this earth. Sometimes these places, which can make or break who a person becomes in the future, can be as simple as a small gas station, or as important as a hometown church where they found Christ. The feeling that overcomes people when they think about the special places that made them who they are can even be sensed when smelling a certain scent, or hearing a certain sound. Life takes everyone to at least one place where they can make memories which will stick to them like a silly song sticks to one's brain during an exam. Most people can say that they have a memory that has stuck with them and will never go away. This is further shown by Dolores Hayden in her book *The Power of Place*, when she says "place makes memories cohere in complex ways."

When thinking about the places that have made me who I am, it can be difficult to choose sometimes. For example, some of my special places are my childhood home, and my grandparents house. The brick, two bed, two-bath home that I was raised in brings me peace with every step I take inside--from the smell of my late father's cologne that lingers in the air, to the smell of the wood inside of the cabinets in the white painted kitchen. One of the things that helped make me who I am today is my father's gun room that sits towards the back of the house. There has always been a safe and calming feeling in that small green carpeted room. With walls of cedar, taxidermied deer, and woodsy, tin signs surrounding the two large safes, the room emanates how much the designer loved everything about the outdoors and what it provides for people. As a young child, I would sit on the floor and play with my Barbie dolls while my dad would reload shells for his family friends. Every time I was upset over something, I would be carried into that room so I could look around and "pet" the soft deer that were so proudly hung around me. Those small actions of playing and watching the things around me have allowed my more matured self to appreciate the things around me when with the people that I love. The way that I show my love for people

and things has been greatly affected by the actions that have taken place in the small wooden room that smells as if someone has just stepped into a freshly-cut forest.

Another one of the places where I learned the lessons of kindness, compassion, empathy, and respect is my grandparent's house. The homey little three-bedroom house has never made me feel anything other than a sense of love or happiness. I could almost bet that anyone that has ever walked into the house would tell you the same thing if they were asked. When thinking back on my memories from their house, all I feel is the endless amount of love and smiles that I've had there over my entire life. Every time I think about my grandparent's house, I can almost hear and picture my mamaw walking down the hall singing a gospel song while picking at the rollers in her hair, or I can almost feel the coolness from the toy sprinklers that were turned on when the heat of summer became almost too much to handle. The sound of *Sanford and Son* constantly playing in the background of every family gathering also stays fresh in my mind. Whether my kind-souled mamaw is expecting company or not, she always has food on her table or in the fridge ready to offer to any person that stops by. The love and compassion I'm able to give people today have come from her, and I had never realised that simple fact until I began writing this paper. While I sit here and reminisce about how wonderful that warm and cozy scented house is, I can't seem to put the beauty of every childhood summer into words that give justice to just how utterly magnificent they were.

After only choosing two places that have helped make me who I am today, I've been able to see just how many there can be. I could sit here for at least three days just thinking about all the people and places that have given me the perspective on life that I have now. Going back to Dolores Hayden in her book *The Power of Place*, "place makes memories cohere in complex ways," and I fully believe that more now than I ever have. Luckily, I've been blessed with tons of times and places to reminisce on. During the rest of my life, I hope to come across many more people and places that will make a new home in my heart and mind.

Alese Hudgins

Found Poetry from "Places that Can Make A Memory" Last by Emma Greene



Tori Holt
A Beauty Within a Place

Delores Hayden's quote "Place makes memories cohere in complex ways" is an accurate statement in the most miraculous ways. While it is true that we are our own person, what are the explanations and reasonings behind being a unique individual? Place often reflects our memory by the exposure of different things including sound, smell, sight, and touch. When referring to the word "place," our memories may reflect over much pain and more happiness that shapes us into the person we are today. The atmosphere, establishments, and relationships within a place help create and build our identities in significant ways.

While life throws us many milestones and uncertain circumstances, the atmosphere that dwells around us is important. For example, surrounding ourselves in an atmosphere filled with hate and anger can leave us in the same place, thus, hating the world. In contrast, surrounding ourselves in a positive environment stimulates us to become content and happier within. From a personal perspective, my environment mostly consists of my living space, my workplace, and my school life. These places where I spend much of my time has transitioned me into the person that I am today and to the person that I want to become.

Home has always been my go-to place; it makes me happy, relaxed, and relieved. For the most part, my homelife is in good condition. Home contains and provides many of my favorite things in life such as family, relaxation, and privacy. Some of my greatest memories come from home.

For instance, one sunny morning in mid-fall, I remember waking up to the bright sun that was shining through the windowpane, beaming down upon my face. It was Halloween—my favorite holiday, and my parents were going to let me throw my first Halloween party as a teenager. The aroma of pumpkin-scented candles, and the baking of sweet treats flowed through the air. I was excited to see a collective few family members and close friends come through the door expressing themselves through their creative costumes like Pennywise, Edward Scissorhands, and Bob Ross. We spent hours dancing and singing to the

loud music that roared throughout the neighborhood. When the party was winding down, I realized that it is the simple things like carving pumpkins at home, sitting around a fire, and enjoying each other's company that became some of the best memories created. It really is the little things that has built me.

My favorite thing about home is my family, of course. When I come home from church on Sundays, I always smell my mother's home-cooked meal she has prepared for us. Whether it be chicken casserole, broccoli casserole, chicken and dumplings, or whatever it may be, it is all delicious to me. My family and I are always together, having a great time. After dinner, we often hang in the living room, communicating about things like future plans. My nephews and niece are the ones who light up the room and keep us on our toes. While taking naps are my thing that I love the most, Sunday naps after church hit differently. Normally, my mother and I always take naps on Sunday afternoons. This, one can say, is our quality time together.

Afterwards, feeling refreshed, we take the kids out to do some outdoor activities. Sometimes we spend hours at the pond, feeling the cool breeze through the strong, green trees and smelling the fresh air around us, with the scent of pine trees. Sometimes we even make a hot, relaxing fire at night. There's just something about seeing my family sitting around a campfire, enjoying smores and hotdogs while smelling the fire and listening to the wood crackle. Little things, like spending time with my family and choosing what I do in my spare time in my own little environment, help create my own personality and identity.

Although the relationship in which I share with my family has brought many memories, the relationships I have with others including my friends have been a tremendous help throughout my life. Although my friends and I create the happiest memories, they are always there through the worst of my memories, too. When thinking of the word "memory," one often thinks of all the good times. However, a memory can also be about the hard, difficult times.

For example, I remember a particular day when I first started my job at Pizza Plus. There seemed to be much drama surrounding that little brick building. I could feel the pressure in the room when we all worked together. It felt cold and bitter. We all felt like we had to

walk on eggshells around one another. There were some unkind things said, and work was beginning to become a miserable place. Finally, we all decided to act like civil adults and get things handled. I remember having a conversation with my assistant manager and easing everything that seemed to be getting in the way. We have not had one problem with each other since then. She has become a pleasure to work with and one who I can call a friend. This memory goes hand in hand with my work environment and the relationships that I have developed. This memory has taught me the skills of communication and the importance of friendships.

Even though my friends have helped me create outstanding memories throughout life, another example of memory includes my church. The church I attend has helped me tremendously throughout my life. Whether I am having a bad day or feeling discouraged, my church replenishes my mind, body, and soul. I am grateful to say that I have an awesome church family that has helped me create many friendships and unforgettable memories.

Each year, we have youth week dedicated only toward the youth and young adults of the church. Every year it is the same activity, but the best part is the new memories we keep creating along the way. Some activities include cleaning up our community, visiting the elderly in the nursing home, cooking for the elders of the church, going to exciting amusement parks, bicycling through thrilling, rugged trails in the Appalachian Mountains, or camping by the peaceful, flowing river.

A memory from youth week that has stood out the most to me has to be the time my church family and I explored the bike trail of Damascus, Virginia. While peddling our peddles with our tired, anxious feet, we came across many gorgeous sceneries. We witnessed beautiful waterfalls that flowed and crashed between the smooth, ginormous rocks. We came across small, cute cafes that smelled like delicious burgers and milkshakes. We saw incredible animals such as snakes and deer. When our tired bodies reached the end, we were relieved with excitement. It was definitely an experience to remember.

The Power of Place represents a perfect analogy between remembrance of memories and a place that builds our identities that we share with the world. Our identities are formed through all walks of life

Impressions

from our family, culture, interests, and environment. A recollection of memories floods my mind when thinking of that place I call home, the place that built me into the person that I am today. Memories within place have taught me communication skills, responsibility, time/money management, leadership skills, and most of all, love. The remembrance of memories that I have made throughout my eighteen years serves as a foundation, adventuring into the person I wish to become.

Lauren Gaines

Found Poetry from "A Beauty Within a Place"
by Tori Holt

Pumpkin-scented candles,
The baking of sweet treats
It really is the little things
That has built me.

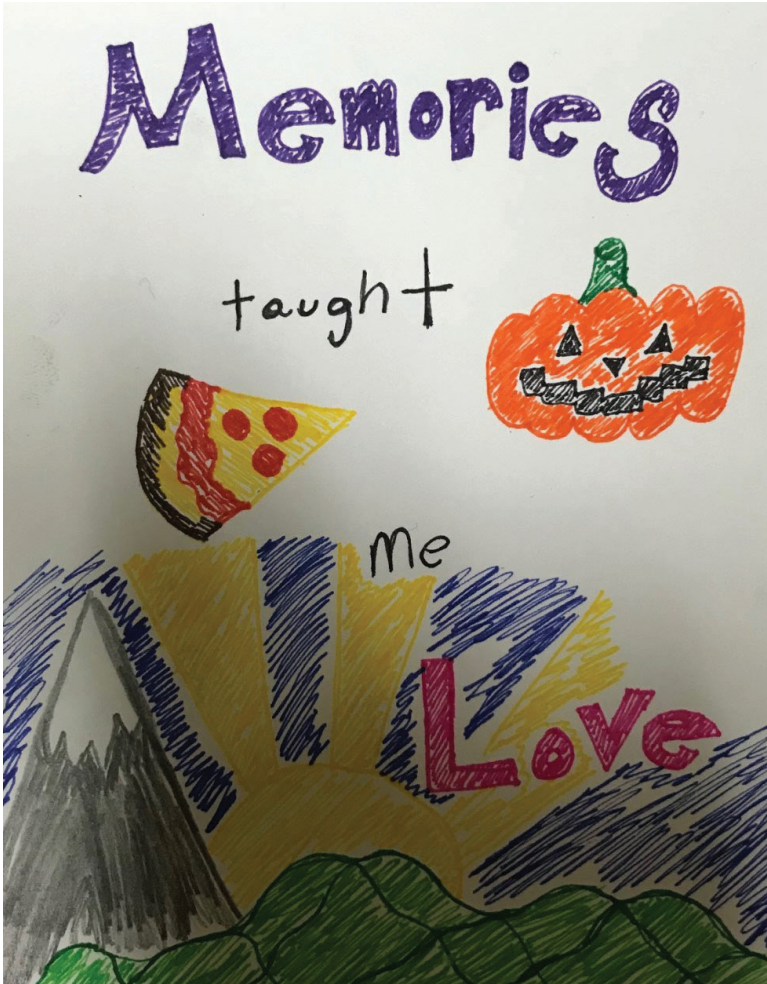
Crackle, crackle, pop,
The campfire sings
While my family surrounds it
Enjoying the little things.

The pond has a cool breeze,
Fresh air and pine trees.
Sometimes we spend hours
Enjoying the little things.

Quality time with Mom,
Sunday afternoon brings.
We fill our afternoon with naps,
Enjoying the little things.

Ambrose Shetlon

*Postcard response to "A Beauty Within a Place"
by Tori Holt*



Zachary Johnson
Memories of Home: Do They Shape Us?

Dolores Hayden's statement "Place makes memories cohere in complex ways," is utterly an anchor to help explain how our memories are framed from the place where we live, home. My home is a place where I grew up that gave me the very memories which I possess to this very day. Whether it be good memories where I would play outside with my friends/siblings, or where I would fall to the ground throwing fists and feet, these memories will be with me forever. Even though there are many different places that have helped form my memories, home is the place where I have formed a lifelong bond with my pets, learned how to behave when guests arrive, and built love and happiness with my family and the nature around my very home.

To begin with, a memory from home that will stay with me forever is the ones I have with my pets. My pets take up a lot of space with the love that I carry. I have had many pets to come and go, and I feel that each and every one of them has brought me lessons and responsibilities. My pets have helped me understand what responsibility actually is. There is so much to go over when it comes to the memories of my pets; whether it be walking with my dog, Otis, or watching my Guinea Pig, Tut, consume an entire stock of celery, these memories will last a lifetime. I prefer to walk alone, but I could not deny going on a walk with Otis. Otis and I were walking buddies, and we had a routine of walking every day when I returned home from school. I would usually just spend the whole time dragging him out of someone's yard/garden. If you had ever met Otis then you probably remember his smell. I could give him a bath daily, and he would always carry this signature smell. I believe Tut was an Elvish version of the Caviidae family. Tut was roughly eight years of age when I gave him to another family that owned Guinea Pigs, and I gave him to the family so he would not be lonely for the remainder of his life. I believe he brought the most responsibility when it came to taking care of others, and this will help me remember that I am there to help others in need.

Taking care of animals was not the only lesson or responsibility

that I learned at home. As a child, I never did appreciate when guests would come over because I knew that I would have to behave appropriately. It would agitate me knowing that I could not hear the roaring sound of the *Spongebob Squarepants* theme song on the television with the volume exceeding a reasonable level; however, when I look upon these memories, I now realize that they have helped me out with many things. I remember when my mother's best friend came over for a visit, and I learned how to behave when we had guests over. This was not easy for me to adjust to, but this did teach me valuable lessons that assist me in my everyday life. Thanks to these memories, I know how to behave appropriately in front of others, and this will help me when I am meeting new people and even future managers or coworkers.

Learning how to behave in front of new people was just a fracture of the memories I cherish most. The memories that I appreciate more than others are the ones with my family at home. My family has always been there for me further than I can remember. With my family, I always remember being the troublemaker, but with their help, I have been able to learn from my previous mistakes and use them in my everyday life. As the baby, I was always the one to start the drama. I knew agitating my sisters would lead to my doom; however, I would come to realize that my actions have consequences. Never mistake fancy fingernail polish for a cool pen. It will save one from great suffering.

My family is not the only part that has affected me, but the astonishing environment around my home has actually been a place for comfort. When I was and am troubled, my go-to place is the road next to my house. Walking on that road and seeing all the beautiful plants, loud insects, and adorable animals has helped me realize the true beauty of this Earth. The first thing I hear when leaving the house is the sound of the screaming insects. It seems that loud insects annoy people, but to me the noise they make compliments nature. It is hard to explain the beauty of the plants and animals that exist on this Earth. Whether it be the large trees or the baby squirrels, everything in nature will surely present beauty in one way or another. This has helped me overcome so many obstacles in my life by just simply enjoying Mother Nature right outside of my house.

My home has not only been a place to live but a place that

has formed memories to last a lifetime. The pets that I have brought to my home have made memories that taught me the meaning of helping others. The home that I welcomed people into has trained me to act appropriately in the presence of newcomers. Where I have fought with my family has educated me to create peace, not violence. Without the beauty of Mother Nature itself, I would have never been able to find the happiness that I am blessed with at this very moment. A home is a place that has gifted me with memories that have turned into lessons that I can use for the remainder of my time being.

Christina Seymour

“astonishing environment“

*Found Poetry from “Memories of Home: Do They
Shape Us?” by Zachary Johnson*

astonishing environment

Memories cohere:

dog, Otis,

Guinea Pig, Tut,

entire stock of celery.

animals

have to behave appropriately,

behave appropriately,

a fracture of the memories.

cherish

being the troublemaker,

the drama,

agitating my sisters,

my doom;

Never mistake fancy fingernail polish for a cool pen.

Community Spotlight

beautiful plants, loud insects,

the screaming insects,

compliment nature.

exists on this earth,

large trees,

baby squirrels,

present beauty,

presence of newcomers, peace, not violence, my time being.

Christina Seymour

Postcard response to "Memories of Home: Do They Shape Us?" by Zachary Johnson



Emalee Jones
The Power of a Home

When people often think of a place of special, significant memories, home typically comes to mind. There are endless quotes, such as “home is where the heart is” and “home sweet home,” suggesting that home is often the most memorable place. While that can be true for most people (even somewhat for myself), I find that a lot of the memories I have made come from other places. In the book *The Power of Place*, a wise woman named Dolores Hayden concluded that “Place makes memories cohere in complex ways” (Hayden). Hayden’s words fall nothing short of true. This quote causes people to think of places where momentous occasions and memorable situations happened. When I hear this quote, I think of two certain places. Some of my most memorable moments were made on a road trip and at my aunt’s house.

To begin with, some of my most memorable moments were made on a road trip. The location is a tad unconventional, but I have such a strong admiration for road trips and the memories made on them. The most exhilarating and peaceful moments I have ever felt on a road trip was during my family’s summer trip; there truly was nothing like that expedition. I was able to see the beauty of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park. The mountains felt as if they were a million feet tall with their gigantic, broad trees. The air was cool from the early-day rain that had fallen, and I tried my hardest to take the smell and feeling of it into remembrance. It settled well into my lungs; it was an ethereal feeling. Not even the craziness of the highway could take away the serene beauty I saw in the Smoky Mountains. That trip left me with a feeling of peace that I have only felt a few times in my life. It also taught me that memories can be made anywhere and that nature is an amazing, beautiful place. This place may not be my home, but the memories and ambience make it feel like a home.

In addition to the memories made on a road trip, some of my most memorable moments have been made at my aunt’s house. My aunt is almost like the glue of our family; she keeps us all together. For as

long as I can remember, she would have dinner at her house every one or two Sundays. We would always go after church, and she would make many different types of dishes. Nearly everyone from my church would come; her house seemed almost packed with people at times. When it came time to eat, the conversations started to flow like a leaf in the wind. I have always heard that food brings people together, and these Sunday evenings caused me to see the accuracy in this statement. These times were so genuine, for I could feel the happiness radiate throughout her house. Everyone typically ate until they were stuffed; then, it was time for relaxation and lounging. The kids typically played in the yard while the adults socialized on the porch. Some would even continue the tradition of cleaning the dishes as a “thank you” to my aunt’s hospitality. As a kid, I remember the multiple games we played throughout the afternoon. On occasion, we would play football, baseball, or badminton. Our absolute favorite game was *Red Rover*. It was a game in which two sides would make a human chain with each other’s arms; then, one side would send a person to run and break the other team’s chain. That person would then take one player to join his or her team. Regardless of the blistering heat or bitter cold, we always wanted to play this game. It was the highlight of my week, and it is still very dear to my heart. My aunt still continues to have dinner every few weekends. Her house holds many cherishing memories; therefore, it feels as though it is my second home. In my life, this home represents the importance and value of family.

In conclusion, the quote “Place makes memories cohere in complex ways” remains utterly accurate (Hayden). When hearing or reading this quote, people often ponder on memories and where they take place. When I hear this quote, two locations come to mind: a road trip and at my aunt’s house. The road trip piqued my interest in the beauty of nature, and it taught me that memories can be made anywhere. My aunt’s house, on the other hand, holds many heartwarming memories. To me, it represents the significance and value of loved ones. These two memories brought me to experience a revelation; no matter the location, home can be anywhere. Home is a place where loved ones and beloved memories reside.

Katlyn Bogle

Postcard response to “The Power of a Home”
by Emalee Jones

Memories from Back Home

By Joe Ferguson

my ancestors see red lights

built upon memories

After Every lesson

Every way you turn,

there will be

simply happiness

the bonds working

waiting

After the sun sets

to find the biggest table

you had ever seen.

Katlyn Bogle

Alexis Linden
What I Consider Home

Home is where the heart is, or that is what individuals say. A person's heart, or customized personality, is built through collected moments made at home. In her book *The Power of Place*, Dolores Hayden writes, "Place makes memories cohere in complex ways." This statement defines how home is perceived so differently. I know events of my lifetime have shaped who I am and what I am connected with; others may have different regards. My memories have influenced my character. Items in the setting of memorable occurrences have become an attachment of my own, just as well as the attachment of my relationship with other people. Varied memories connected to the place where I live, and the influences of others in my life, have shaped my unique identity, making me the person I am today.

When the thought of home first comes to my mind, I think of hot summer days sitting on my front porch. I can imagine myself swinging on our family's porch swing, feeling the stir of a gentle breeze that is just enough to cool one down. I can instinctively feel the sun's beaming rays on my skin and its reflection off the dark objects around me. Not only is it affecting my state of being, it is assisting the surrounding plants to grow. The sun itself gives me a natural sense of happiness, which reflects my feelings of home. I enjoy the sight of buttercup yellow flowers and forest green trees all around. Specifically, I admire my cactus plant, which I have dedicated much time to take care of. This is dear to my heart because it was given to me as a souvenir gift from Arizona. It is just a simple, slender cactus, but it means a lot to me. It stands around a foot tall, growing with hourglass-like curves, each divit grown during the winter season, and too many prickles to count. If touched, tiny shocks of pain would enter the body. If I am not paying attention to the details of my cactus, I am noticing features of the tiger lillies my mother replants each year because they are her favorite type of flower. The tiger lillies have sturdy, towering stems that make up its foundation. It can withstand the summer atmosphere and pesky creatures. Its edged leaves and pleasing orange petals give it a bold look. The flower itself is a

beautiful unit, keen yet simple. Both plants have influential characteristics.

The physical features of items around my home have influenced my personality. It may seem crazy that I have taken life advice from plants, but with an imagination others can too. I have learned a lot through studying the aliveness of my cactus plant and mother's tiger lilies. Both have taught me to stand upright. Doing this gives me good posture, making me feel ambitious. Feeling like I can conquer the world helps me from caving in when cold seasons of life hit. I have learned to guard myself with tactics that protect me emotionally as well as physically. Whether it be from tiny positive thoughts or broad coverings, I have gotten the idea of how to protect myself. Surrounding myself with defense has formed my security. From the flower, I have acquired an example of charm. Each bulb, petal, and leaf has its own delightful appeal. The complexity of the plant build does not take away from its simplicity; there is beauty in simplicity. The naturalness of the flower is alluring. Its simple characteristics have influenced my genuine personality. It has taught me to stay true to myself. One can acquire so much from observing plants.

Not only do I consider my physical house home, I also consider my relationships with people home. My mother is home. She comforts me in times of sadness. There have been many days or nights I have lain in her welcoming arms to feel a state of physical ease. Being embraced in her protection and security of love is calming. She desires to support me in the endeavours I aspire to accomplish. From sitting in the stands at every sporting event, to speaking words of persistence toward my academic goal, she is always there to help me bear the weight of my life. My friends are also home. Each individual one holds a special place in my heart. From trusting one to give me life advice, to depending on another to go adventuring with, I know they will be by my side. Knowing that there are people who will surround me with laughter and bring joyous moments at all times is indescribable. I am extremely grateful for what people have brought into my life.

My acquaintances with others have influenced my character. Most likely because I have spent countless days with my mother, my personality is almost a spitting image of hers. Like my mother, I am a

comforter, but I am not as good with words as she is. I am a welcoming person; I do not like for others to feel like they do not belong. I am often told that I am very friendly. I believe it is important to spend time with people to get to know them or to make them feel special. It is important to reach out. I am a supporter; I would rather celebrate others' success than my own. My friends have encouraged my love of laughter; I normally laugh no matter what circumstance. I try to transform every moment into a happy time. These influences have impacted my personality.

My consideration of home is abnormal, but it is a good kind of difference. Home is the feeling of relaxation on my front porch during mid-summer. It is the sight of my cactus and mother's tiger lilies. Home is my mother. It is my relationship with friends. My home has shaped me into the person I am today. I would not have the character traits I have now if it was not for observing plants and others around me. I have taken guidance from plants, and enlightenment from multiple people. I am extremely grateful for where I grew up and who I grew up with. Without assorted memories of home, I would not possess the unique identity I have today. This is what I consider home.

Blake Pettibone

“Place makes memories cohere in complex way”

Found Poetry from “What I Consider Home”

by Alexis Linden

Home is where the heart is,
Through collected moments made
Defines how I perceive events.
My life shaped who I am.
What I am.
My memories,
In the setting
Of occurrences
Become attachment.
Varied, connected,
The influence of others in my life.
Unique.
Making me the person I am today.

Austin Zettle

Postcard response to "What I Consider Home"
by Alexis Linden



Emily Madinger
Home: Where the Heart Is

In the book *The Power of Place*, Dolores Hayden writes, “Place makes memories cohere in complex ways.” This, I can argue, is true. A place can hold both good and bad memories of one’s lifetime, simply by memorizing the moment or recalling the specific circumstances that happened during the creation of that memory. Memories can and will attach to any home, city, time, or even connect to the senses we experience and the mistakes we make that will become a lesson for the future.

Whether it is something that happens randomly, or if it happens when effort is put into them to recall them, memories are always going to be associated with something. A song that reminds a person of those memories, a picture one can admire and reel those memories in with, or a smell that makes an individual close his or her eyes and remember the good times. These are all examples of how memories can be tied to things that one can keep in the present and possible future, and that memories can hardly ever be forgotten.

Where I used to live was one of the few places I can remember the smells, sights, and even the people I spent my childhood growing up with. The beauty of the pine trees created a natural fence around my home, the sap would perfume the air when the wind blew just right, and the cooling shade the trees would cast onto the front yard. My brothers and I would work hard to rake up all the brown needle-like leaves the pine trees would drop during the fall, the process filled with laughter and fun and the occasional toss of pinecones. After a good chunk of work, we’d take breaks inside our home, drink warm drinks and eat warm snacks just to get the bitter chill of the fall weather out of us. Our home stood out from the rest of the block, often called the “Gingerbread house” by my family, as it had a pale yellow color and burgundy trim, as well as a door with a rounded top.

Afterwards, we’d head next door to our grandparents’ house, raking up the leaves that fell from the trees they had, the magnolia and gumball tree. We used to think it would be fun to jump onto the piles of leaves, or the black lawn and leaf bags that we filled them with. We

would all take turns launching ourselves onto the piles or bags, or my older brother would gently toss us into the pile. Unfortunately for me, being reckless and asking to be tossed into a pile both my brothers and I knew was too shallow, I broke my arm. That was the day I had learned that it's never too late to be prepared for something, and that raking is my least favorite chore to do outside.

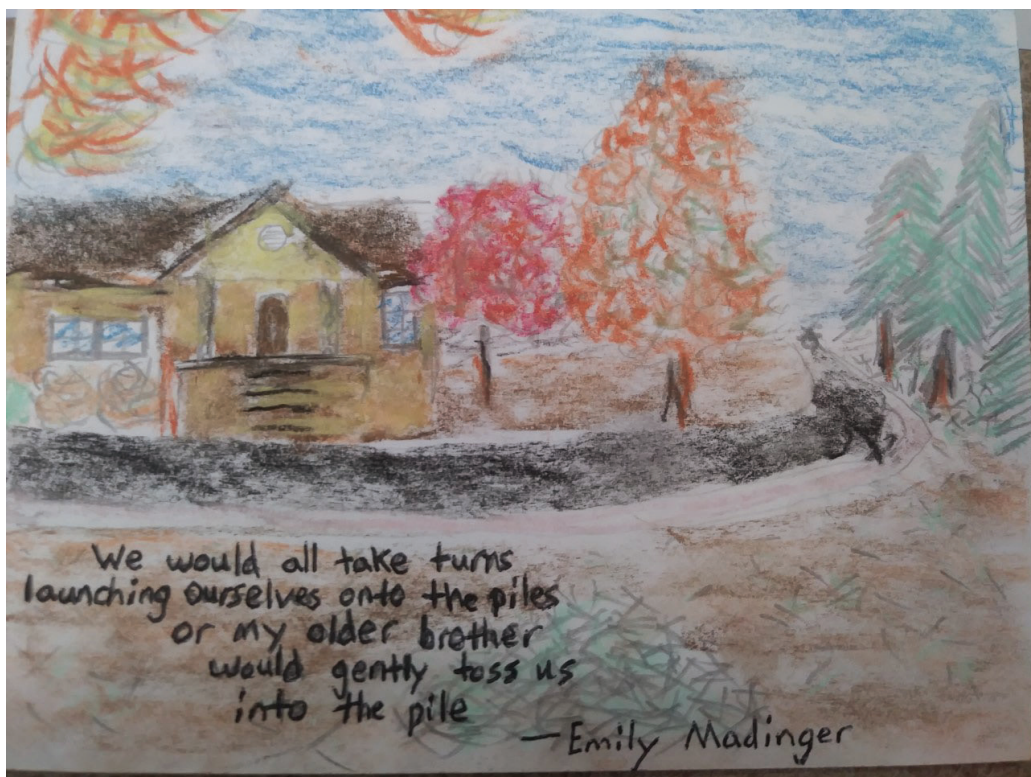
I can remember that, since that day that the cast had been put on my arm, I have always been cautious of everything, often being called a worrywart by my friends and family when I always took extra precautions on fun activities, which is still something I do today. However, there is nothing wrong with being over prepared, because anything can happen, and it's good to be ready for it.

Most of my fond and unforgettable memories are what has shaped me today, teaching me things such as being patient and thinking before doing, or that I need to make the good things last. When I think back on these experiences, memories and lessons that I had the mistake of encountering when I was younger, I think on how I, as a person, am supposed to embrace my mistakes and learn from them and accept them as the past, no matter how embarrassing they might have been. Memories are what make one a person. There is nothing an individual can do to change that.

Jonathan Stewart

Postcard response to "Home: Where the Heart Is"

by Emily Madinger



Brendon Stewart
Memories and How They Affect Us

What can you remember about your homeplace? Most of the time, locations help to develop memories and can make them easier to remember. Some memories, good or bad, can affect peoples' personalities in ways that can benefit or harm them. Dolores Hayden's says, "Place makes memories cohere in complex ways." This is a valid statement because different places can make memories more vivid and can change the identity of the person who holds them.

To begin with, different places can help to form memories and make them more vivid. For example, living on a farm with no close neighbors may offer more vivid memories than a small, cramped house in a large neighborhood. I know this because I have lived in both of those places. When I lived in a large neighborhood, I saw the same thing every day. People only got out of their houses to go to school or work; it was redundant and boring. I could see the interstate from my backyard although it was not close to my house. The noise of traffic from that interstate was still loud, and when it was crowded the noises could be heard throughout the house. The house itself was cozy and welcoming; however, there were six people living there at the same time, and it only had three bedrooms. This meant that my family and I barely had enough room to move around the house, and privacy was non-existent.

When the two places are compared, living on a farm is much different than where I lived before. Where I live now, I have more freedom, and something different happens every day. We also have more animals to take care of, such as cows. Most of the land that we own is covered in trees, but we have some fields scattered around the woods. If I stand in my front yard, I can see a few of our fields that the cattle graze in. Panther Creek runs through one of these fields, and the cattle usually stay around that area. The house that I currently live in is almost double the size of my old one, and there are four bedrooms instead of three. Before the house was built, me and my father hiked through the woods to find and decide the spot where our house would be built; he finally

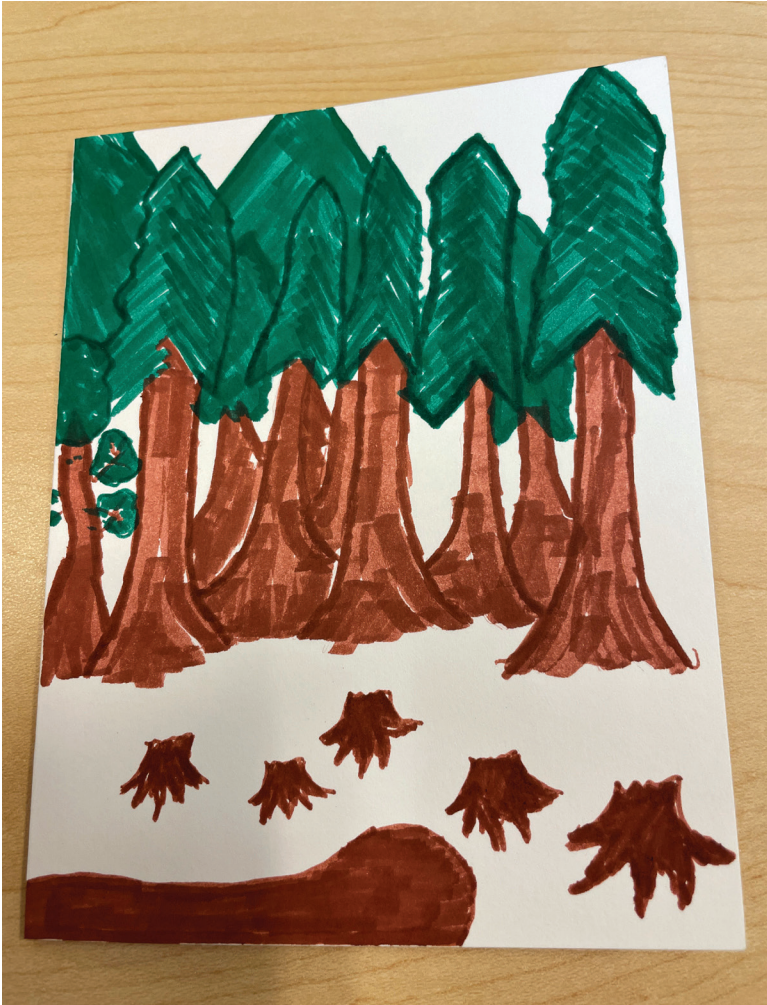
made his decision after what seemed like an hour of walking in circles. When we came back again, all the trees were cut down in that area, and they were making a driveway to the place where our house would be built. While the house was in the process of being built, my family and I would drive there every weekend to see what progress they were making. This place has given me an abundance of good memories to look back on for decades.

In addition to making memories vivid and memorable, different places can also change the identity of the person who holds them. For example, someone who lived on a farm most likely had chores, which means they had responsibilities. Someone who lived in the suburbs probably did not have any responsibilities of their own, and if they did, it did not require much work. In other words, the person with more responsibilities may be more independent and hardworking than the other person. Another example is a road trip or vacation; if someone went on a lot of trips to different areas, they may have more memories than someone who stayed home most of the time. This may possibly lead to one of them being more outgoing and more expressive, and the other may be more shy and less expressive.

Places help to form memories by making them more detailed and easier to remember. If the place was boring, the memories from that place will most likely be boring and more difficult to remember due to their lack of significance. The places can also affect the identity of the person. People in different places will have different experiences and living conditions, and some of them may be more memorable than others. Everyone should have the opportunity to make great memories, and they should be able to cherish them for as long as they can.

Brandon Spurlock

Postcard response to "Memories and How They Affect Us" by Brendon Stewart



In that clearing,
I watched it grow.
With each return,
A brand new show.
The spot we chose
Began to glow,
Not just a house,
This was a home.

To Brandon,

The image of rediscovering
the clearing your home was
being built in with each
subsequent visit has really
stuck with me. It must
have been so magical to
watch that take shape.
That is truly a significant
set of memories.

-Brandon

P.S. I can't draw to save my
life.

Molly Shockley
Over the Ridge

Some say memories have nothing to do with the place they occur, but most revolve around that one simple fact. In the book *The Power of Place*, Dolores Hayden writes, "Place makes memories cohere in complex ways." Looking back, almost all my memories are attached to my surroundings: what I was doing, who was there, and what the atmosphere felt like. When I was a young girl, I spent most of my days "over the ridge," as most people call it here in Sneedville, Tennessee. On a map, it is known as Mulberry Gap, Tennessee. It is an astonishing place blanketed in soft, green fields and livestock. My mother would tell stories about the land and people who had shaped her. Much of my family had lived off the land for many years. My sweet Granny was the heart of the family, and I remember visiting her often.

During the warm months, my mother would take my brother and me to Mulberry every week. Spring was an especially gorgeous time. The mountains were a bright green, and the old roads were lined with flowers. I can remember running around in the fields picking flowers for anyone who came to mind. My mother would take us down back roads and let us dig up wildflowers, which we would plant in our flower beds at home. There were beautiful purples, bright yellows, and baby blues spread out along the edge of the mysterious woods. I can still smell the sweet aroma they left behind wherever I would place them.

If I was not picking flowers, I was in the creeks hunting all sorts of creatures that lay beneath the cool water. My brother and I were professional crawdad hunters. He had to do all the catching, as I was afraid of their sharp, little pincers. Make no mistake, I had an important job too; I oversaw finding these fast critters. My favorite part about this adventure was the anticipation that came with turning over the biggest rocks in the creek. As any crawdad hunter would know, the biggest crawdads were always under the large, heavy rocks. I would turn them over, being extremely cautious of my feet, and we would wait for the cloudy water to clear. Those few moments felt like days. Soon the big crawdad would become visible, and my brother would snatch him up

right away. My brother fished in the creek after we finished hunting. I always wanted to swim but getting pierced with a sharp, little hook was not my ideal way to end the day.

After a wearisome day in the grassy creek, we would ride down the valley with the windows down to dry off. I can remember feeling so carefree as I stuck my arm out the window, and the warm air blew over me. As we rode, we sang the words to “Fat Bottomed Girls,” which I knew by heart. My mom would point out the land where my ancestors grew up. Each home had a story, many of them that had been passed down to my mom from her grandmother. I remember fondly a story my mother told regarding an old Indian burial ground that was marked by a middle-sized hump that lay beneath the grass in a wide field. As a young girl, my mom hunted arrowheads on her family’s farm. She would show me the fields where she helped her stern father cut tobacco after long, tiresome days at school.

If there was a man who knew the land, it was my papaw. He was a tough man, who had grown softer with age. I was his baby doll, and he was one of my greatest heroes. I remember when he took me up to the top of the ridge. He showed me a large, ragged rock that was covered in indentations, many in the shape of seashells. He told me they were left behind from the great flood God had sent many decades ago. He had farmed much of Mulberry his whole life. He left to join the Army for several years, but he always knew Mulberry was home.

After a long day, we would take a trip to my Granny Southern’s house. It was made of red brick, just off the side of the main road. For me, it was one of the happiest places on earth. I can remember watching her sit down to play a tune on her old, wooden piano. She always let me join her, even though I could not play a single song. There was nothing better than the smell of her homemade chicken and dumplings floating throughout the house. She made them for us often because she knew they were our favorite. The dumplings felt as if I was biting into a big, fluffy cloud and they tasted better with every bite.

Although my Granny Southern passed away within several years of my lifetime, she made such a significant impact on me. My mother learned almost everything from her. My grandmother taught her how to cook, work, garden, and, most importantly, love the Lord.

Granny was the type of woman you do not see much of nowadays; she was a true lady. She loved her husband, children, and grandchildren with such fierceness. She was kind to everyone she met. I heard many stories of the way she took in small animals and nursed them back to health. I like to believe I inherited that same trait from her. I believe everyone on Mulberry knew my Granny, and I doubt they could say one harsh word about her.

As a young girl, I had no idea how this place and the people in it were shaping me into the person I am today. Simple things, such as dipping my feet into a cool spring or picking a bouquet of wildflowers, still make me feel like a child. Over the years, I have gotten to teach my young cousins the joys that are found in a small creek. One day, I will get to take my children through the valley and tell them the same stories my mother told me. My first memory of smell came from my Granny's kitchen. Anytime my mom makes chicken and dumplings I am taken back to that little, red house. I was taught to slow down and take everything in with each curve we turned in a backroad. Mulberry taught me to love the simple things in life. It is a place of comfort and calm that I return to often when life gets overwhelming. I certainly would not be the person I am today without my memories from "over the ridge."

Found Poetry from "Over the Ridge"
by Molly Shockley

Old roads, haunted by memories, blanketed in soft green. I pick flowers
for any who come to mind, Still smell the sweet aroma they left behind.
Moments that felt like days, grown softer with age, lay in those fields,
rooted within,
to capture truth.
watch the birds and you will hear it.
His voice gentle, firm as his spirit:

"Oft is wisdom hid within each gray
hair, but in simple things is my love planted, and I shall be stood there."

José Hernández Chávez
Postcard response to “Over the Ridge”
by Molly Shockley



Kristen Welsh
What the Trees Are Telling Us

I breathe in the smell of fresh rainfall. I close my eyes and stand there for a moment, taking in the pure serenity of the woods. When I open my eyes, I see trees growing tall, reaching into the sky as if to touch the clouds floating overhead. For a moment, it's as if the forest itself is alive, breathing steadily as I do, and yet, it never stops reaching into the sky. A rustle in the trees breaks my focus, and I look up just in time to see my cousin running at me, slapping my shoulder and screaming, "Tag, you're it!" I sigh and look up again, thinking about the trees, before taking off after my cousins and my brother. In her book *The Power of Place*, Delores Hayden states, "Place makes memories cohere in complex ways." These woods have been here for many years, and have seen times of war, peace, sorrow, and happiness. But through everything, they last. They keep standing tall, reaching to touch the clouds and stars as the world turns. As I looked at the trees doing exactly that, I realized that I myself was in awe of their perseverance and strength. They clearly are never giving up, even though they will never see their dream of touching the sky come true. This made me pause again, thinking about my own dreams. Would I be able to withstand all the challenges coming my way as the trees have? Would I reach for every opportunity and chance to move towards my dream? Or would the fear of getting struck by lightning scare me away? At that moment, I decided that I would try my best to be like the trees. And in the coming days I tried to comprehend what that really meant. Now, I know that I saw what I was missing. The trees had confidence, strength, and a sense of family through everything they had gone through, and then I knew that I wanted that too.

Every tree starts out small. Maybe no one knows how it got there. Maybe it started from a nut or a seed being carried by the wind. Maybe someone planted it, possibly in honor of someone he or she lost. Trees can come from many different places, and there are many different types of them. This is almost like another type of living thing, us. Everyone has a different life story, and everyone starts and ends in different

places. For instance, take my small town of Sneedville, Tennessee. There you will see people from all walks of life, even in this tiny place with under 1,500 citizens. I know people who never have to worry about anything, people who worry about everything, people who are going to college, and people who are going straight to work or to the military. I know people who only think of getting out of here, people who want to live here forever, and people who are not sure but are soaking up everything they can while they are still here. And from looking at the trees, humans are not the only ones that have those differences. Trees might be in one place forever, and some might be moved. Some might be taken care of, while others will be neglected. Some might be used for shade in the hot sun of summer, and some might be used for shelter from the rain of spring. Some trees might be home to woodland creatures, and some might grow alone. No matter what their story though, I have realized that the trees always stand tall. They reach for their dreams even if they face challenges and have to take risks. We can all learn from this.

We can give up so easily, if there is even a chance we could face defeat. Instead, we should stand firm. The lesson here is to be confident, and be the good in the world, on whatever level possible. Do not let anyone hold back growth and achievement. Everyone says confidence is key, but to have true confidence, it takes believing in yourself first, no matter what a person's story has started from; where it has taken him or her; and where he or she is going. Believing that accomplishing goals is possible is more powerful than most know. With this comes a sense that the sky is the limit. This is why the trees keep reaching, every branch jutting sharply, begging to just graze the clouds above. Confidence makes almost anything attainable. As Audrey Hepburn once said, "Nothing is impossible. The word itself says 'I'm possible.'" After all, the trees keep reaching for the seemingly impossible. So why not us?

Another key trait that goes along with confidence that trees have is strength. I have wondered what a tree has been through many times. Has it been struck by lightning and survived the shock? Was barbed wire strung around it to use it as just another fence post? Did it ever face being cut down to make room? Was it planted in memory of someone? Every tree I have seen is unique in its own way, and this uniqueness does not come on its own. Looking at a tree, focusing on it,

it is easy to find bare spots from fallen bark, holes in leaves from worms and birds, and even holes through the tree trunk from going through a lightning storm. These are the tree's battle scars.

Throughout time, people have seen a tree as a symbol for wisdom, perseverance, and stability. Just as we start out at different places in life, under different circumstances, we are put through different challenges. Each challenge, in my mind, is meant to make us stronger. Yet, many times, people let the hardships they face rip them apart. If everyone looked at the trees, they might realize that they never seem to give up, even though they face so much, even daily. Weather is to trees what our trials are to us - simply a way of testing us to see if we are ready for more and more growth. A lot of the time, growth comes because of what we endure. Think about what one tree goes through in a day: extreme heat, extreme cold, rain, hail, wind, lightning, and even the possibility of being destroyed in a hurricane or tornado. What I have noticed when these storms come through is that some trees may fall, but others stay standing. Just like people, every tree has its time. Leaves will eventually fall off, lying in lush piles at the tree's roots. Even though these leaves are dying, there is beauty in the process. As leaves age and turn the deep shades of red, orange, yellow, and brown, they are getting weaker. Yet, they do not let their weakness keep them from leaving an alluring impact. The leaves express their time on the tree as they die, showing that even if they went through every storm, and could have very easily been lost in the wind, they persevered.

As trees have been considered a symbol of strength, they also are used as a symbol of something other than this factor of individuality. The trees represent a larger system of people, specifically a family. Each leaf, shred of bark, and root growing deep into the ground represents the generations of a family. First, the tree must have roots. Sometimes these are seen, and sometimes they are hidden under dirt and fallen leaves. This shows that every family has its beginnings although many are not known. The roots ground the tree and provide it with the nourishment it needs to flourish. Next comes the trunk, and the bark which covers it, shielding its contents. This acts as a protective barrier that connects the roots to the leaves, symbolizing the connection between family ties. And finally, the leaves, the most expressive part of the tree.

Throughout the seasons of life, people change, just as the leaves do. We are young, we grow up, and then we are old. The leaves which were once shades of green slowly turn to become a vibrant sunset of red, orange, yellow, and brown. These leaves, having lived their lives through, then fall. From looking at the trees, we can learn that although the end can be heartbreaking and devastating, it can also be beautiful. The leaves never stop showing their uniqueness, and they continue to even as they flutter to the ground on a cool fall breeze.

The life of a leaf can compare to the life of a person. Each leaf is seemingly never alone because they are surrounded by other leaves. However, they all go through different things, and they all fall off the tree in different ways. Some might not have made it through the storms that faced their homes, some might have been picked off a low branch by a deer or a curious child, and others may have stayed on the tree the entire time, waiting for the day when they would show their signs of age. In the end, the leaves show their true colors, turning their tree into a kaleidoscope of enchanting beauty. It is at this point where the leaf realizes how much joy it has brought. It sees people passing by, smiling up at the vivid fall hues. It sees the inspiration it has caused. It is inevitable that everyone will eventually pass, and the manners of which they do are just as varied as the leaves. Each tree loses leaves along the way, just as each family will lose loved ones along the way. But at the end of our lives, we will look back and see the impact we had. Who did we inspire? Who looked up to us? Who did our help save? The most awe striking thing about the trees, and the leaves specifically, is that the trees do not stay bare for long. As one generation passes, it makes a way for the next. The cycle then repeats, as the new leaves grow and learn from their family tree, and the leaves which came before them.

I laugh as my cousins jump into the immense pile of raked leaves. The impact causes the leaves to jump, landing in the surrounding area. I look around at the forest, trees dotted with the colors of the sun, and close my eyes again. The unwavering confidence, extraordinary strength, and beautiful sense of family that the trees portray has influenced my view of the world. Looking deeper into the true meanings behind things we tend to regard as simple has led to my personal growth and the establishment of my feelings towards life, including its

warm summer days and cold winter nights. Like the trees, I will persevere through whatever comes my way, and I will strive to live my life to the fullest everyday. When I was little, I was not very confident. As I went into high school, I gained the feeling that I can do whatever I put my mind to, and I will regret not taking opportunities when they present themselves. I reached for the sky. When I was little, I constantly felt weak, comparing myself and my struggles to others. I quickly learned that everyone has hardships, and every tough time requires a different solution. So instead of pitying myself, I learned to be strong and find the solutions. I stood tall. When I was little, I was not quite sure what family meant. Now, I know that it means everyone, related by blood or not, that is there for me and that I am there for. Family is the people who will always be in my corner to support me, and will be the ones that teach me lessons I might have never thought I needed to learn. I found my family tree. As I walk through the forest, looking at the glimmers of dew on the leaves, I pause. The crisp fog lingers, slowly lifting into the sky where the same trees would then reach to retrieve their lost clouds, and I watch as a gentle breeze blows through the serene site, whisking away a few brightly colored leaves, making them land lightly at my feet on the dirt floor.

Brandon Spurlock

“Like the Trees”

Found Poetry from “What the Trees Are Telling Us”

by Kristen Welch

I close my eyes
In the pure serenity
Of the woods.

The forest is alive
Breathing, yet
Never stops reaching

Reaching to touch
The clouds and stars
As the world turns

Never giving up,
Though they will never
Touch the sky

My own dreams...

Would I withstand
The challenges,
As the trees have?

Confidence.
Strength.

I want that too.
I will try to be

Like the trees.

CONTRIBUTORS' NOTES

Eli Bailey

Eli Bailey is a senior at Hancock County High in Sneedville, Tennessee. He plans on continuing his pursuit of knowledge at Walter State and finishing up at a four-year college. In his free time, Eli likes to listen to his records and knit. As an old man, he hopes to retire to his cozy home and write many books.

Skyler Baker

Skyler Baker is a proud senior at Hancock County High School in Sneedville. She will be attending Johnson University in the fall of '22 and furthering her education in either psychology or elementary education. In her free time, she enjoys working, painting, and being with her favorite people.

Ron Blackburn

I like taking pictures of overlooked parts of the area that we live in. When not being your friendly neighborhood photographer of old things, you can usually find me hanging out with my wife and daughter.

Katlyn Bogle

Katlyn Bogle is a senior at Maryville College and is majoring in Writing/Communications and minoring in Design. She is the Production Manager for *Impressions* and is looking forward to traveling after graduating. She enjoys reading and writing in her free time and spending time with her family and friends.

José Hernández Chávez

José is a senior Business Analytics major studying at Maryville College.

Amanda Clarke

Amanda Clarke is a writing communications major at

Maryville College. They are originally from Britton, Michigan, and have been living in Tennessee for a little over two years. In their free time, they enjoy expressing themselves creatively through art and writing.

Alexis Collins

Alexis Collins is a senior from Memphis.

Connor Cowart

Connor Cowart is a Junior Vocal Music Education Major and is extremely honored to have been published in this year's *Impressions* magazine. He is often heard and seen in the Clayton Center for the arts singing in all of the vocal ensembles. He enjoys a good movie and book, and most of all a nice mountain hike or drive. Connor hopes to pursue being a music conductor in a collegiate setting after his degree at Maryville College.

Joe Ferguson

Joe Ferguson is a senior at Hancock County High in Sneedville. He plans to continue studying at Walters State Community College for a degree in business.

Addison Fleenor

Addison Fleenor is a senior at Hancock County High School in Sneedville. She plans to continue her studies at East Tennessee State University to pursue a career in medicine. In her spare time, she enjoys being with her family and going on adventures with her friends.

Lauren Gaines

Lauren Gaines is a sophomore Writing Communications and Design Double Major. She is an MC Playhouse Scholar as well as a member of the Maryville College Chapter of the Alpha Psi Omega Theatre Honor Society and an *Impressions* Staff Member. In her free time she likes to read, write, and draw. One day, she hopes to become a published author and work in publishing.

Emma Greene

Emma Greene is an 18-year-old Senior at Hancock County High School in Sneedville Tennessee. After growing up in Sneedville and being surrounded by amazing family and friends, she has decided to major in Psychology at Johnson University. In her free time, she enjoys finding new crafts to explore, spending time with the people she loves, and learning new ways to make people smile.

Emma Haines

My name is Emma and I am 18. I was born in California, moved to Oak Ridge Tennessee. Art has been a big part all my life since birth, I have won awards throughout Elementary School to High School. I started off my art by doing dogs since I grew up in a home that always had lots of dogs. I still continue to do dogs, mostly my service dog Carlos, who you can meet on campus. My most recent infatuation has been bodies. I take lots of commissions and it is nice to make people feel beautiful. So that has become my mission with my work.

Chloe Hamlett

Chloe Hamlett is a senior at Maryville College majoring in Writing Communication with minors in Marketing and Design. She is the Editor in Chief of *Impressions*, a marketing team member on SPB, and an editorial assistant at *Failbetter Literary Journal*. In addition to these activities, she enjoys reading, writing, bullet journaling, makeup, and true crime.

Torri Holt

Torri Holt is a senior at Hancock County High School in Sneedville. She enjoys reading, listening to music, and hanging with friends. Her future plans include completing her requisites at Walters State. Later, she plans on transferring to ETSU to participate in their dental hygiene program in order to fulfill her dream as a dental hygienist.

Alese Hudgins

Alese Hudgins is an ambitious 19-year-old majoring in

American Sign Language - Deaf studies, and minoring in psychology and writing communications. Her hobbies are playing the piano and guitar, singing, writing, reading, and learning languages. She self-published her first poetry book at 17 years old and continues to write and make music now. Alesé's career goals are to be a singer, author, and Deaf advocate. The pieces shared in this book are from her new upcoming book.

“By putting pen to paper I have been able to make a world of my own that accurately reflects how I see every experience. With my writing, I want to invite people to see the world, drenched in melancholy and filled with fire, just like I do.”

Elisabeth Jackson

Elisabeth Jackson is a senior instrumental music education major. She plans on pursuing a career in music education, performance, and composition.

Zachary G. Johnson

Zachary G. Johnson is a senior at Hancock County High School in Sneedville, Tennessee. Zachary plans to attend the Tickle College of Engineering at the University of Tennessee to major in Aerospace Engineering. In his spare time, he enjoys hiking and learning the history of this great, majestic world.

Emalee Jones

Emalee Jones is a senior at Hancock County High School and President of the Student Council. She intends to further her education at Carson-Newman University where she will pursue a degree in Elementary Education. In her spare time, she enjoys watching Disney movies and reading.

Lucy Jones

I am a Writing Communications major here at Maryville College, and this is my first year here. I am an aspiring author, and hope to one day publish a book of poetry.

Becca Lesley

Becca Lesley is an MC alumnus currently finishing up her bachelor's degree in English and Creative Writing at Southern New Hampshire University's online program. She currently resides in Springdale, Utah.

Chloe Lewis

Chloe Lewis is a sophomore Writing Communications major here at Maryville College. Her favorite creative writing genre is poetry, which she uses to explore anxiety, complex emotions, and the nature of relationships. Her pieces, "biting my fingernails" and "i wish i could experience nothing" give a piece of insight into the mind of someone with all too much to process. She hopes her writing speaks to fellow poets and emotional people.

Alexis "Lexi" Linden

Alexis "Lexi" Linden is a senior at Hancock County High School. After graduation, she plans on attending Walters State Community College to obtain a degree in Respiratory Care. In her spare time, she enjoys adventuring outdoors while spending quality time with her friends and family.

Mario Loprete , Catanzaro 1968

Graduate at Accademia of Belle Arti , Catanzaro (ITALY)
Painting for me is my first love. An important, pure love. Creating a painting, starting from the spasmodic research of a concept with which I want to transmit my message this is the foundation of painting for me. The sculpture is my lover, my artistic betrayal to the painting that voluptuous and sensual lover that inspires different emotions which strike prohibited chords.

For my concrete sculptures, I use my personal clothing. Through my artistic process in which I use plaster, resin and cement, I transform these articles of clothing into artworks to hang. The intended effect is that my DNA and my memory remain inside the concrete, so that the person who looks at these sculptures is transformed into a type of postmodern archeologist, studying my work as urban artifacts.

I like to think that those who look at my sculptures created in 2020 will be able to perceive the anguish, the vulnerability, the fear that each of us has felt in front of a planetary problem that was covid 19. Under a layer of cement there are my clothes with which I lived this nefarious period. Clothes that survived covid 19, very similar to what survived after the 2,000-year-old catastrophic eruption of Pompeii, capable of recounting man's inability to face the tragedy of broken lives and destroyed economies.

Emily Madinger

Emily Madinger is a senior at Hancock County High School. After graduation, she plans to go to college to either become an artist or veterinarian. Emily loves to draw and play video games, especially games where she can interact with creatures. As many of her favorite hobbies take place inside, she loves the excuse of using rain to stay inside, feeling there's something calming about the gentle pitter-patter of rain while she is doodling, writing, or reading.

Chloe Melton

Chloe Melton is a 21-year-old artist. She created Clover Fine Arts as a way to share her work. She creates most often in her Knoxville studio space. Her art has been displayed in the Knoxville Museum of Art, the nation's Capitol, and various other galleries and competitions. She recently graduated from Maryville College with a concentration in studio art and ceramics. She also received a minor in Psychology. Her studies in psychology have widened her interest in understanding the many perspectives of others. She is currently learning to blow glass at Pretentious Glass Company and is excited to see the parallels between glass and 2-d art. Creating has always been a part of Chloe, and she hopes to make a meaningful impact through her work.

"I love that I can use art to inspire others. It allows me to show viewers a perspective they may not have otherwise considered. In a world where everyone is seeking change, I believe the pivotal role of the artist is to be a messenger of the many perspectives around us."

Yoshua Martinez

My name is Yoshua “Yoshi” Rafael Martinez Gomez. I’m a Human Resource Management Major with minors in Spanish and Sociology, an MC Ambassador, an SGA Commuter Senator, and an ECE Scholar. Above all, I inspire to express myself creatively with any possible medium at my disposal.

Marissa Nelson

Marissa is a Junior Writing Communications major and a Psychology minor at Maryville College. She is twenty-one years old and enjoys advocating for Children’s Rights, writing, and being creative!

Blake Pettibone

Blake Pettibone is a Freshman at Maryville College majoring in counseling psychology. He had always enjoyed reading and got into creative writing for prose and poetry in high school. Now his hobbies consist of reading, writing, gaming, spending time with friends, and wandering.

Corey Randolph

Corey Randolph is a freshman at Maryville College. Although he is a counseling psychology major, writing has always been his greatest passion. He has been writing since childhood, and his writing has varied from comics, poetry and prose. In his free time, he can usually be found reading, writing, spending time with friends, or wandering through the woods

Lucy Reddick

Lucy Reddick is a junior at Maryville College and currently pursuing a Bachelor’s in Writing Communications. She hopes to go into Narrative Design, and spends her free time writing, drawing, and reading. She enjoys employing darker elements in an artistic manner into all of her work, both written and drawn, hoping to show the beauty lurking in the shadows.

Jenni Cate Rhodes

Jenni Cate Rhodes is a sophomore from Hartselle, Alabama. She is a Theatre with Performance Track and Deaf Studies double major. Her poems somehow made it from her notes app to an actual page.

Brandon Spurlock

Brandon Spurlock is a senior Writing and Communications major at Maryville College. He is the current poetry editor of *Impressions*, and also wrote a senior thesis in mostly poetic verse. Feel free to visit his blog at <https://brandonspurlockcom.wordpress.com/> where he talks about video games, posts prose and poetry, and may eventually get a little political as elections come around.

Molly Shockley

Molly Shockley is a senior at Hancock County High School in Sneedville. She enjoys spending time with her family and her dog, Mr. Beans. She plans to continue her studies at Walters State Community College. One day, Molly hopes to open her own vet clinic in which she can provide care to animals who would not receive it otherwise.

Brendon Stewart

Brendon Stewart is a senior at Hancock County High School. Though still undecided about his course of study after high school, he plans to continue his work with his father on their family trade, coopering, that has been passed down for six generations. The great-grandson of Alex Stewart, whose work is featured in the Museum of Appalachia and the Smithsonian, Brendon received a grant in 2019 from the Tennessee Arts Commission for the Traditional Arts Apprenticeship Program to learn the trade that some people call a “dying art.”

Lavarius Thenthirath

Lavarius Edward Da Bontay Thenthirath (He/Him/It)
Counseling Psychology Major

My father is an Asian immigrant who came to Massachusetts at a young age and met my Black mother. At random moments of inspiration or prompts I found had potential, I wrote poems; these three are the ones I presented for the Poetry Night held by BSA, only “Kind-Not a Slave” being for that event specifically. Yes, I wrote these—AND I’D DO IT AGAIN!!!

Laila Thompson

Hi, I’m Laila Thompson! I am a freshman writing communications major and religion minor from Greeneville, Tennessee. I am a member of *Impressions* staff, as well as the community choir. In my free time I enjoy playing games with friends and taking long naps!

Kristen Welch

Kristen Welch is a senior at Hancock County High School. After graduating, she plans to earn a bachelor’s degree in Public History and eventually work in a museum setting. She enjoys being outdoors, reading, acting, and modeling. She also loves traveling to places both familiar and new to her. Kristen hopes to one day inspire others to learn from and about history and to realize that life is a gift to be lived slowly, not always in a rush. As her favorite actress and role model, Audrey Hepburn, would say, “Pick the day, enjoy it—to the hilt.”

Brianna White

Brianna White is a 20 year old artist living in Knoxville, TN. She is studying for an Art Major with a focus in painting and drawing at Maryville College. She has enjoyed creating art since childhood, and her passion for it has only grown over time. Her favorite things to draw are cartoons and her favorite things to paint are landscapes. When she isn’t making art, she’s reading mystery novels, writing, or spending time with her chihuahua Phoebe.

Myndalynn Word

Myndalynn is a Maryville College Alumni, currently working on her master's in English at SNHU. She spends her days working as a tutor at Roane State Community College and at an elementary school as an after-school activities instructor. In her free time, she enjoys reading, traveling, and writing for her blog.

Austin Zettle

My name is Austin Zettle. I'm a sophomore at Maryville College. I'm a Design Major with a minor in Writing Communications. I have a love for photography and poetry. In my spare time I go outside and enjoy taking pictures of various landscapes, and nature. I love spending time with my family and friends when I'm not crazy busy doing college things! I hope one day I can move to a big city and show more people my skills and what I have to offer the world :)

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