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The Purple Patch

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Letter from the Editor

As this year's Editor of *The Purple Patch*, I have viewed all of the great student works that make up our college. I have been able to truly see the diverse student backgrounds through each and every submission to *The Purple Patch*. As you read through this year's *Purple Patch*, I hope you are able to see that diversity through these chosen works. This year it was very difficult to choose what to include because there were so many great works submitted. Whether it be a photo, a poem, or story, each is a clear representation of the Missouri Valley College student population and everything they have to offer.

I want to take a moment to thank my dedicated associate editor, Christina Bautista. We both worked very hard, and this year's *Purple Patch* wouldn't be the same without her dedication. I would also like to thank Dr. Eimers, our sponsor, as she has been very helpful through this entire year as well. You were there every step of the way and contributed your guidance and knowledge when we needed it. I would also like to thank all of the students who submitted to *The Purple Patch* this year. Each and every submission helped to better this issue. We appreciate everyone's support with this issue of *The Purple Patch*.

I am so thankful to have had the opportunity to work on this issue and am very appreciative to be your editor.

Sincerely,

Macey Embrey

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Waltz

by Emma Crabb

Dancing through the night;

into the morn.

We lose ourselves in each other's

eyes.

Finding what we've been

searching for.

You say you have to leave,

and you never came back.

I never gave up



by Chantal Petterson

Ascension

by Stephen Bilkey

The last thing I remember is a chill running down my spine and wind whipping across my face. It's bitterly cold outside and my frozen fingertips are painful to touch. The wind stings my cheeks, bright red and burnt. That's the last thing I remember, when I open my eyes, it's different. The discomfort I was feeling has given way to peacefulness; I'm comfortable and warm, light. Before me I see a lush forest filled with brilliant flowers. Everywhere I look the forest is alive. I hear the subtle sounds of a babbling brook. It must be nearby, but I don't see it. Was I dreaming? Why was I so cold?

Looking back, I see the frozen ground covered with snow. I see the small A-frame house, worn curtains through the window. There's smoke billowing up from the chimney. Why was I cold if there's a fire burning? I can see it all before me, but I can't touch it. Am I dreaming still? It's like watching a movie, I see it, but it isn't real. But it is real, that's my house and it is winter. How can the forest be alive with life?

I hear something and turn around; again I'm presented with the wonder of the forest. I see two rabbits running playfully and I'm drawn to the sound of the water. I don't recall those stairs. They weren't there a moment ago. I must be dreaming. Where do they lead? I'm drawn to them but I'm afraid to start up. I can't tell what I'll be walking into. Yet, for some reason I begin to move, step by step I creep closer to them. I take one final look back, take in a deep breath, exhale, and begin.

I'm calm now, no longer consumed by worry. I'm peaceful as I make my way slowly up the stairs. I pause for a moment looking back and my forest cottage is gone, now I see the house I grew up in. I have so many wonderful memories there; falling asleep in the closet under the stairs trying to catch a peek at Santa, playing catch with my grandpa on the front lawn, building a fort in the tree in the back yard with Nate, a hundred pictures in front of the fireplace with Sarah before Junior Prom, the smell of apple pie baking when my mom wanted to celebrate my first college acceptance letter arriving in the mail. A lifetime lived in those four walls and it was only the beginning. Strange that I would

think of those things now, but it feels good to go down that path as I make my way slowly up the stairs.

I look back again. I see the dorm room Nate and I shared our sophomore year in college. We went to different schools freshman year, but when a spot opened up in the engineering program at State, I made the switch. We had been best friends since grade school. In high school we both tried out for and made the basketball team. He played point guard and I was a center. A perfect match in some sense, we had always clicked and it showed on and off the court. We hung out all the time and were inseparable. So when we moved in together at State it was just like old times. Our dorm walls filled with posters of bands, players, and girls in bikinis. We had video games and a mini fridge stocked with Mountain Dew, I felt like I was in high school again spending a day at his house. Things seemed perfect at that moment.

This time when I turn around, I'm in that crummy office at Aerospace, my first office. It didn't have any windows and I had to pass through three security zones just to get there. But I loved it. It was my office and my first job out of college – my chance to

make a mark on the world. I wanted to design prosthetic limbs that were smarter. I wanted them to cause the user no pain and function as if it were human flesh and bone. My grandpa, who had served in Vietnam, lost his leg from the knee down in the war and used a prosthetic leg. He was a brave man who served his country proudly.

He always had a persistent pain from his prosthetic leg. He never let it get to him or stop him from playing with me. Every day after school, when my homework was finished, we'd play catch. He'd squat down to receive my pitches and give advice from behind the makeshift home plate. I can still hear him saying, "Get your leg up higher!" If I didn't do what he said, he'd yell. "Don't forget to follow through!" "You're releasing the ball too soon." "Be patient." What I wouldn't give to hear his voice right now.

My grandpa was my inspiration. His moves were awkward, and he struggled getting up and down. I didn't want the pain he felt to be something that kept another grandpa from playing catch with his grandson.

I hear bells in the distance, I look and I can see my wedding day. We were in Hawaii, it was so beautiful there. We were surrounded by our friends and family. I can see them. What a magical day. The locals prepared the most amazing ceremony and feast to honor our nuptials. Penny looked radiant. She had colorful flowers in her hair just over her right ear, and she was barefoot – she never did like wearing shoes. As she walked toward me on the beach, the white fabric of Penny’s sundress fell just above her knees and danced around her in the warm breeze. I don’t think I’ve ever been as happy as I was in that moment.

I take a deep breath, and I see myself six months later. I’m weeping over a hospital bed, my best friend Nate has just been in an accident and lost part of his leg. He was hit by another car, his car flipped and he went through the windshield on one of its rotations. The other driver walked away, he had been drinking that night. Standing there, I was angry that a drunk driver could walk away with a few scratches and here’s my friend, missing part of his leg.

As the shock of the accident wore off, I remembered my work. My entire career had been spent focusing on developing a new type of prosthesis. It's lightweight, virtually indestructible and provides more natural movement that's pain-free to wear. It wasn't quite ready yet, but if Nate was willing to give it a try, be my guinea pig.... maybe we'd find time again to play basketball in the park on Saturday mornings like we used to.

His recovery started slowly because he was overwhelmed by the loss of his leg. There was anguish written all over his face every time I saw him. Over time, though, he regained his strength and began seeing a future. As he improved so did my prototype and when it was ready, I wanted him to be the first one to wear it. We were set to test when we found out his insurance company refused to cover the experimental treatment.

It would be another fourteen months before his insurance finally approved a prosthetic leg. If we could just get back that time, a year, maybe he could have stayed positive. Instead he began to question our friendship; he resented me and my work. He couldn't understand why we needed insurance approval. Why I

couldn't just give him the prosthetic. By the time the approval came, he'd lost the entire leg and stopped speaking to me. I missed him. I miss him still.

I feel a tear running down my face and realize I'm standing on a step, one step on this stairway and I'm beginning to understand, this is no ordinary stairway... it's my stairway to heaven. I think I must've died in my cabin, it's the only explanation. And now, as I'm moving to what's next –what is next? – I am being given the gift of my memories. It was a good life and I'm proud of who I am. I was a devoted husband, loving father and loyal friend. At least that's who I tried to be. My regret? Letting myself believe I was not enough. Though now I see, I could never have changed the outcome. This weight that I've carried around all of these years was a weight I gave myself. I see now, I just need to forgive myself.

All those years I had thought it was my fault he had lost his entire leg. I didn't give up on him, he gave up on him. I made the prosthetic leg, tested it and was ready to give it to him – the insurance company prevented him from having it. That's when he

lost his will and wouldn't accept mine. My will would've been enough for both of us. He grew so angry and I let myself believe it was my fault because he blamed me. Then I blamed me. That's when my marriage started to fail. Penny and I had been married for almost twelve years by then. Things weren't the same as they once were. We fought all the time. She constantly took our daughter and stayed at her mother's house. I missed my little angel, too. Amanda, Mandy, with her bright blue eyes, light brown hair and freckles peppered across her nose, was always smiling. She loved when I would make silly faces. Her giggles were contagious and no matter how rough my day had been, I'd laugh too. When she wasn't there anymore, I lost my reason to smile. It was years before Penny and I would mend our relationship, but we did. Eventually I stopped trying to fix the problems between Nate and me. He wasn't the boy I grew up with anymore. He'd grown into an unhappy man who didn't want to get better. Penny and I watched Mandy grow into a beautiful young woman and it wasn't long before she grew-up, finished school and moved to

Europe. She'd studied Art History and accepted a position at University.

As I near the top of the stairs I take a deep breath and as I exhale, find myself wondering where did the time go? I hope I did everything I was meant to do. But as I ascend into heaven, I do know this, I lived.

I Could Hear...

by Ana Clara Amorim Soares

I could hear her breaking my heart;

And I saw it falling apart.

After all, she didn't look back;

Now, I still live in the past.

The storm is the same color as her eyes;

My heart still paying the price.

Letting none get inside;

And, for four years I've cried.

Simple Rose

by Fanny Bertalan



Origami Rose

by Alexander Kotanone

All the love you've given me,
I've been saving all this time.

I took a crumpled handful
and I spread it out last night.

As our love was unwrinkled,
Found feelings I can't deny.

Folded them into a rose,
And left it where you once lied.

Wove in it our memories,
In each crease a laugh and tear.

Even after you're long gone,
It will still feel like you're here.

But if you never read this,
If you leave before goodbyes.
Your love would've been enough;
For paper roses, never die.

Chapter 1- The Inquisition

by Silence Dogood

Elisa's head rolled to my feet and my knees gave out from under me as I saw my reflection in her eyes. It took every bit of restraint to not scream with rage and charge the execution block. Not yet, not yet, not yet, I told myself. Her body was so little, but there was blood, so much, spurt after spurt. And like water rolling off a duck's feathers, blood rolled across the dusty dirt toward me. My father always told me the earth rejects innocent blood, blood spilled unnaturally. This was certainly both. I fell back on my haunches to keep it from seeping around my fingers as two guards dragged Elisa's body away by her ankles. The bottom of her pretty blue dress turned inside out over her shoulders.

It was always in this fashion that Lord Larbeigh conducted his inquisitions. So many horrible stories surrounded the man that it's hard to separate truth from legend. But it's definitely a fact that before me stood a man with such imposing stature that everyone in the crowd looked to their feet. They all closed their eyes and cowered like children under their blankets who try and

wish the monster away; however, this monster was quite real. He stood nearly two heads taller than any man I've seen. His shoulders were as broad as an ox's. And the axe he held is rumored to be so heavy he is the only man who can wield it. He's been wielding it all afternoon.

Every person in the small farming community of Loctan was herded to the town square for questioning. It was a simple question, and it was one I knew the answer to. The answer was one word, and it tears me apart as I stand here silently. Larbiegh extends his axe and slowly spins as he chooses his next target; held breaths of terror as the axe's sharp tip pointed to a man or woman, and relieved whooshes of released air as it passed. It passed me this time, but stops on the man to my left. A man who palms a dagger as two guards grab his arms and escort him to the chopping block. It's ironic. The man Larbiegh is looking for used to be a simple man, a nobody who wanted nothing more than to live out his life in peace. He was looking for me.

It all started with a misused protection payment by one of Larbiegh's men. They routinely collected money from the local merchants, and as long as the money was paid on time, everything was fine. However, if a payment was late, then Larbiegh took it as a sign of rebellion and his retribution was always swift and personal. Ornell Wanton, the head guard of Locton, was known to gamble the money he collected. If he won, he would collect, but if he lost he would pull back his bet and move on. Honestly, who was going to muscle the right hand of Larbiegh? I had an affinity for bad timing and this day was no exception. Ornell was conducting business as usual, but the stranger he played proved to be exceptionally lucky. The guard had been losing for hours, so after each roll of the dice he became quieter, his face became more red, and his stare became more deadly. Suddenly Ornell grabbed the money he had lost and threw the dice across the room.

“You're a cheat!” Ornell accused as he stood.

The stranger sat silently.

“And you're also lucky that I have more work to do or I would punish you for it.”

With that, Ornell began to walk to the door.

“You’re as ignorant as your play suggests if you think I’m going to let you walk through that door without paying up,” boomed the gentleman. He slowly, purposefully stood.

Cackling with laughter Ornell replied, “Well, I have no intention to pay you, so take it up with our Lord if you think it will help you get your money.”

“My problem is with you, not your excuse of a master, and we will resolve it here and now,” he challenged, “either draw your blade or give me what you owe.” And to punctuate his challenge the man quickly drew his sword and brought it against the bewildered soldier. Sensing the worst, the bar’s patrons began paying their tabs.

Stepping back, Ornell pulled his own blade in disbelief and erupted. “If you honestly believe you have the fortitude to cross steel with the Captain of the Lord’s Guard, you mustn’t know much of the land you’re in. I’ve made a lot of widows in my time, so take this as your last chance to lower your blade and leave with empty pockets, bruised honor, and your life.”

His voice rang with undoubting confidence and any man would have backed down. I had known Ornell my entire life and he was a pile of ox shit. Since I had known him that long I could tell something was different. In hindsight it was a subtle weakness in his eyes and uneasiness in his feet that suggested he was really hoping to end this fight with reputation alone.

The stranger leaned with his right shoulder against a wooden support beam. He smiled, licked his lips, and with small chuckles replied, “I am a gambler. I read people for a living and your body betrays you. Dissemble no longer and pay what you owe, or forfeit your life.”

All the chairs grew cold, and unfinished drinks stood orphaned from their owners as silenced filled the room. Frilo’s Niche, the most popular tavern in town, now stood empty except three. I, while helping myself to the unguarded tap, watched the scene unfold from behind the bar, fixated on the two standing before me. I still don’t know why I didn’t leave. Was it curiosity, was it fate? Or was it simply the fact that the inn’s owner left the taps unguarded?

The two danced about one another as Ornell considered the ramifications of his choices. If he lost the money he was a dead man. It was certain in his mind that this man's sword held nowhere near the fear of Larbiegh's axe. In fact the last captain of the guard was publicly castrated and banished after he had the collection purse stolen by a whore while he slept. Fear of that axe spurred Ornell to make the first move. He sprang forward and hacked at the stranger's torso with a diagonal swing. But there was an audible clang as his sword was blocked by the gamblers. Then with a swift sidestep the stranger batted the captain's sword right, spun around, and then smashed the left side of Ornell's face with the flat of his sword.

The guard's face instantly began to swell but fear rallied him and the pain intensified his wrath, so he quickly regained composure. Licking his parched lips, Ornell fantasized about the torture Larbeigh would insist upon this fool. A jab to the stomach was met with a swift parry as the guard almost lost grip of his weapon. Minutes stretched by and still Ornell's every attempt to bring his sword to mark was gainsaid by this mystery man.

Frustration and panic slowly set in, as he wasn't accustomed to meeting opponents he could not best. Hoping to discern exhaustion in his opponent's features—his spirit crumpled. Not even sweat formed upon this stranger's brow, so in desperation Ornell rushed forward to lock the fight in a clinch and remove all elements of finesse to create a battle of strength. They stood sweat dripping nose to sweat dripping nose, sword grating against sword. Time sped forward in slow motion for the combatants as each struggled for advantage.

I couldn't see, but I could hear a crunching of chainmail, and the two men, as suddenly as it began, stopped fighting. Ornell stepped back, a sweet, post orgasmic look washed over his face as he fell to his knees. Dropping his sword, he clutched the hilt of a dagger sticking in his stomach and with blood bubbles popping from his lips he whispered, "You cheated." With that he fell.

I was well hidden behind a barrel of dark ale as I watched the man roll the guard with his right foot and unceremoniously rip the dagger and a money pouch from the guard's body. He sheathed the blade and without turning to me said, "Well now, it seems we

have ourselves a situation. I have just killed one of Larbiegh's men, and you saw me do it. Half this gold is yours if you can get me out of town and keep silent to what you saw. Besides it's in your best interest never to speak of this. I've heard stories of this Larbiegh and he would say you should have come to the guard's aid, and kill you for your inaction. You may call me, Atheos. What may I call you?"

"William," I managed to stammer.

"Good, we are practically friends now."

Just then, the silliest question popped into my head. "I've never seen Ornell have such a run of bad luck. At dice I mean, of course I've never seen him die. What's your strategy?"

"My strategy?" He laughed a genuine laugh. "My good friend, I cheated."

Wondering Eyes

by Elijah Ogan

I don't know why, but staring at her has become a
fascination of mine.

It is how me and her first met you know.

Even though we did not talk or stand next to each other.

We spoke to each other through our eyes.

It's like we were introducing ourselves.

Luckily, I got the courage to finally speak to her.

But, the staring never stopped.

I would always like to keep my eyes on her.

Then I would think to myself about whatever I was feeling
for her.

Is she feeling this for me too?

Many days go by, but my eyes never moved or blinked.

These eyes used to wonder, but not anymore.

Because these eyes are focused on where they're supposed

to be

The Middle of The World (Mitad del mundo)

by Germán Camilo Castañeda Chala



Longhorn

by Leonardo De Souza Padua



Keep Moving

by Christina Bautista

It is the feeling of my stomach aching, crying to have something to eat that almost breaks me. I look at it and hold it as agony fills my body. I have just a few more hours until I can consume what my body desires.

My mouth is dry and I crave just a sip of water, but I know I can't afford it. I can almost taste the sweet moisture damping my mouth, easing the pain. All I want is to curl up and die in the darkness instead of feel this hell. My body is drained and I fight to keep myself moving. All I need is to keep myself moving.

Moving... Can I still move?

I know that this hell I live is enough punishment to get me to heaven. What God would not pity a wrestler who has lived a starving and painful life without giving any pity? None, I know.

I look around me and see everyone just as tired, just as hungry as I am. We all have that bond, that connection and understanding of each other's pain. But that's what makes us so strong; to be dead but still living. We still fight, even when we are

too tired to keep on fighting. Perhaps we are the gladiators of today.

I cry, but I don't let it out. There is no weakness shown here, or it'll cost me my life. No one pities the weak, but I guess that's what makes us tough. My body aches with each motion, yet I tell myself *Keep moving*. If I stop, I will never start again.

It's the moment we all wait for and I move to the scale. I strip my clothes, hoping and praying I'm okay. One foot after another, I breathe out, feeling lighter than before. I open my eyes and see the numbers I needed and stumble off in relief. All I had to do was keep moving.

Make Me A Tree

by Donna M. Monnig

Make me a tree, give me branches so high,

A towering sentry that'll reach to the sky.

With lush green leaves adorning as hair,

Make me a tree so strong, sturdy, and fair.

When my soul departs and my body dies,

Do something special with the place that it lies.

Take not just a rib, but all bones and skin,

Grow from it a tree, if Thou'est can.

If out of the ashes the phoenix dost rise,

Why not a tree from the body that dies?

Make me a tree, that is what I crave,

What better tombstone to have for one's grave?

Unknown

by Chantal Petterson



My Deepest, Deepest Pain

by Charles Ezi Wonders

My brother, the person I use to know, the person I used to
blame,

The person I want to show, my deepest, deepest Pain.

I was nine when I left him; he lives with my mother,

It may be hard to win, but I can't lose my brother.

It's a hard way to go, it runs from chain to chain,

The boat I must row, through my deepest, deepest pain.

It's like a dream that cannot stop, a vision that can't be seen,

And when the bubble starts to pop, you set yourself free.

As the tears roll down my face, I look at myself in shame,

I must go through the place of my deepest, deepest pain.

So as I go through the jungle, searching for what I had lost,

My heart begins to tremble, for the pain sticks like frost.

And so my friend... "Life is never swell,"

"Nothing seems the same,"

Tears that have filled the well, of my deepest, deepest pain.

Never Again

by Lindsey McMillan

*“Baby’s in the playpen,
wailing away.
Watching her momma get beat,
just another day.
Daddy shakes baby
shutup, shutup I say.”*

I loved him, I really did. Maybe that’s why I knew what I had to do. This was not the kind of love for everyday ordinary folks. This was deep, passionate, feel it in your bones type of love. Our love, my love for him and his love for me...mine and his was not the kind for the cowardly or the faint of heart, but the kind of love that is buried so far down in the trenches of one’s body that you almost become soulless when not gazing into each other’s eyes. Never had I felt anything remotely close to this with past lovers and never do I want to feel this love again.

“Hey Jayde, call me later and let me know what you decide.” Amanda called out to me as we were both leaving work.

“I will, I promise!” I yelled back, running to my car before the rain started coming down harder. We were making plans for the weekend to have a play date for our babies. My little bundle of joy was not so little anymore though, having just turned one a month ago. Gosh, it is so hard to believe I have a one year old!

Driving home, I tried to concentrate on the white line on my right hand side since the rain was now pouring to the point where I could barely make out the car in front of me. “Ring, ring”, my phone was blaring at me from my purse. Oh damn, really, it’s raining like crazy and who knows who that is. What if it’s the sitter and my sweet baby Mazy is sick or something had happened, or even worse what if it’s Michael, my boyfriend and Mazy’s father. Michael should be at work and not calling me, keeping tabs on me like he did. Calling me nonstop to find out where I am at every second of the day is not really even the worst of it. Showing up at my job last week, almost getting me fired because he didn’t know where I was or why I didn’t call him to let him know I was still at work was not only embarrassing, but totally uncalled for. Going through my purse, barricading me into our bedroom,

and worst of all hitting me when I did not do as he said, always outweighed a phone call.

“Ring, ring.” Geez Michael, really! I pulled over to answer the phone, since the rain had not let up and I was not going to risk my life answering my phone while driving. I looked at the caller ID and it was not Michael, but an unknown number. If I pulled over in this rain to answer a call from a telemarketer, I was going to be pissed.

“Hello?” I said.

“Is this Jayde?” the mystery caller, a female, asked.

“Yes, this is she. Who is this?” I replied.

“Oh, honey don’t you worry about who this is. What you need to worry about is staying away from my man,” the voice replied in a nasty tone.

“I’m sorry, but I don’t know what you’re talking about,” I said. In the back of my mind, I thought, oh no, this again. Michael was not only hitting me, but was cheating on me once again and had this crazy girl call me. Why did I not have any worth in

myself? Why was I putting up with this, knowing baby Mazy and I deserved better?

“Listen, you know exactly what I’m talking about. You are trying to get with my man Michael, and if I hear again that you won’t leave him alone, I will personally find you and come beat your ass,” the female caller shouted before hanging up on me.

I tossed my phone aside and wanted to cry but I couldn’t. How many times am I going to allow myself to be called “the other woman” when it is Michael who lives in my apartment, eats my food, and sleeps in my bed. How many times will I be made a fool of? Furious, I felt my face get hot, this time I was not going to cry. I couldn’t take it anymore. The cheating, the lying, stealing my money, and finally escalating to him trying to control me and hitting me. The last time he hit me, it was in front of our daughter and I knew if I continued to allow this abuse to go on, my daughter would allow the same abuse in her life when she was a grown woman.

I had had it. I knew what I had to do. I could leave, but I knew he would never leave me alone. I had threatened to leave

before and the look on his face said it all. He would find me and he would kill me. So, I had to strike first.

*“Baby’s in the playpen,
wailing away,
Watching her momma get beat,
just another day.
Daddy shakes baby
shutup, shutup I say.”*

I found myself lying there on the living room floor, bloodied and bruised. Blurry eyed, with my head spinning, I felt his weight on top on me. He was straddling me and cursing at me.

“You stupid fucking bitch! I told you not to bother me at work!” Trying to remember why I called him at work...oh yeah, I wanted to know if he would be home for dinner that night. I was happy when the response was no, since I needed time to prepare for what the evening would bring.

Before Michael would be home, I made dinner for myself and Mazy, then gave her a bath and finished my other nightly duties. After putting Mazy to bed, I went into my bedroom where I stashed the pistol I had stolen from my dad’s dresser drawer before picking up the baby from the sitter. After getting that phone

call, I sat in my car on the side of the road for a while, pondering. I could not think of a better way to get out of this relationship. I could not take anymore and I had to do what was best for Mazy and me.

When Michael barged in the door, it was still raining outside. The door flung open and there he was standing in the doorway, wet and angry, looking much bigger than his 5'10" frame. With rage behind him, he looked to be about seven foot. Deep inside of me, I was scared, but on the surface I showed no signs of anything but blissfulness. Michael stormed into the living room, like he was the thunder to the storm outside, and grabbed me by my arm shaking me.

"I told you never to bother me at work, Jayde! I've told you how many times and you never listen! Guess you didn't like that phone call you received today, huh?" he said starting to laugh.

I didn't say anything, I just smiled and took the pistol out of the back of my jeans. I raised it towards him and shot. I stumbled back into the wall, losing my grip on the gun as it went crashing to the floor. Stunned, I sat against the wall for a second

with my knees pulled close to my chest. Then I saw Michael get up off the floor and crawl on his hands and knees towards me, trickles of blood dripping from his shoulder onto the cream colored carpet in our living room. That's when I felt the blow to my temple. Over and over again, he hit me in the face with a closed fist. I started kicking him in the stomach and tried my best to cover my face from the angry fists. I turned over onto my stomach and kicked Michael hard in the face with the back of my heel. Just then, I reached for the gun. Bang! It went off for a second time.

It was so bright; I could barely stand to open my eyes. I have never seen so much white. What hospital was I in? There was only one hospital in town and I didn't recognize this room and I had been in plenty of rooms before at St. Mary's when my grandmother was sick and then again when giving birth to Mazy. Oh my gosh, Mazy! Where was she? Was she ok? What was going on? I was ready to scream for a nurse when the door opened and there stood a very ancient and wrinkled black lady about four feet tall and as round as could be walked in. She smiled at me saying, "Well, well look who finally decided to wake

up. I'm glad to see your eyes are opened, baby." She reminded me of my neighbor from when I was 9. Now looking at her up close, as she came and sat on a stool by my bed, she looked strangely like my neighbor, Ms. Bailey. She even smelled like her. Ms. Bailey was always baking something for the neighborhood kids and she always smelled faintly of oranges. I never realized how much comfort that smell gave me until now. Having this nurse so close to me, reminding me so much of Ms. Bailey, made me feel so comfortable and I felt as though I were a child again, sitting on her front porch eating blueberry muffins.

"So, sugar pie, how you feeling?" she asked.

I looked away and said, "I'm fine, but where is my baby?"

"Oh, honey, well she's right over there." the nurse nodded her head to a window overlooking the small nursery beside my room. I looked in the direction the nurse was pointing, and there she was, my sweet baby. Through the window I could see Mazy asleep in the next room in a beautiful white crib. Through the slats in the crib, I could see she was okay and looked so peaceful.

“My boyfriend, Michael, is he here?” I asked the nurse, hesitantly.

“Oh now baby doll, don’t you worry about him now. He ain’t here and he won’t ever be able to hurt you no more,” she replied. So, that was it, he was in a different hospital. He must have beaten me worse than ever before. I must be in the University hospital in the city.

“But, I shot him,” I said.

“Why, yes you did,” the nurse said, not giving me the information I wanted without having to ask.

“If he’s not here in the hospital, then I didn’t kill him?” I asked.

“Oh no, sugar,” she said softly, smiling down at me. “He killed you.”

We Wonder

by Alexander Kotanone

As our minds lay down,
In their place to rest.
We wonder,
What could have been?
We could have enjoyed so much.
We could have been so much.
But what was,
Is all that is.

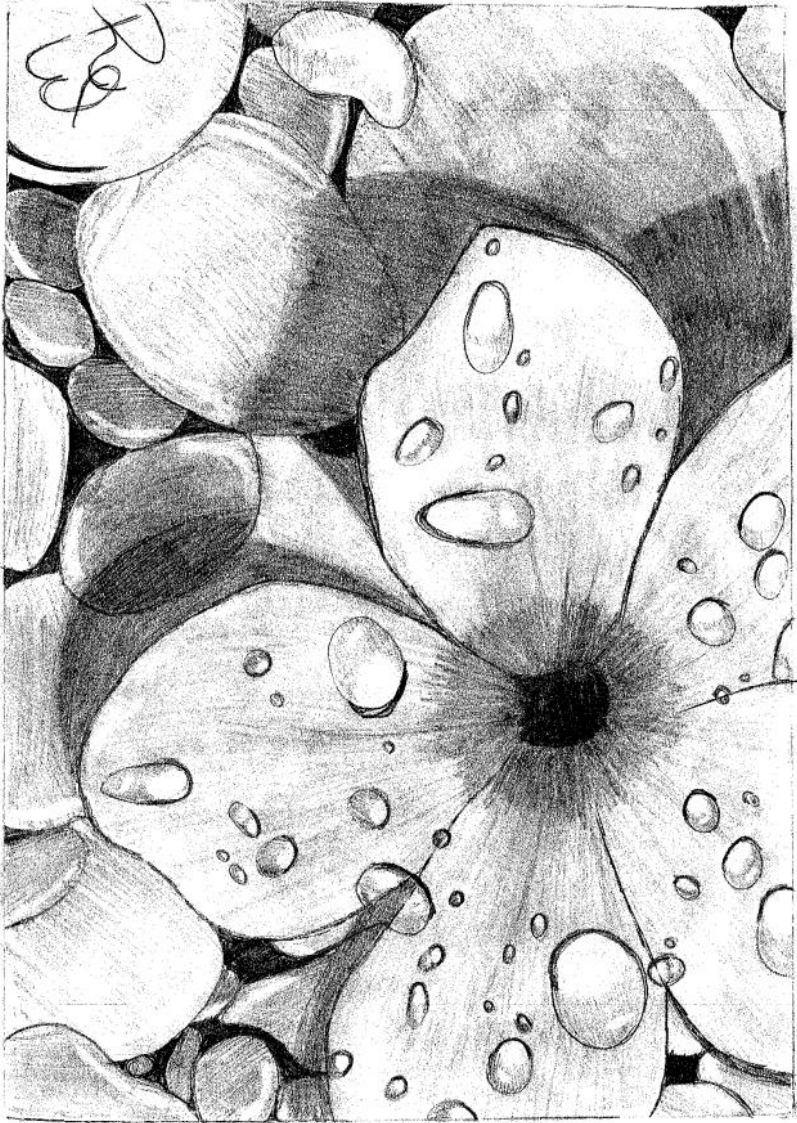
A step in the dark,
Blind as the next.
We wonder,
Where are we?
We can look so strong.
We can be so strong.
But when we can't see our hand,
We can't see the floor.

A moment approaches,
Seeing past is impossible.
We wonder,
What will we become?
We could be so great.
We could live so great.
But what we are,
Is all we were.

Through certainty and possibility,
I wonder:
Why do I fear?
I can be so much.
I can be so strong.
I can be so great.
But still,
We wonder.

Flower

by Rebekah Walker



Flower

by Nancy Hedrick

Imagine the flower garden,
Each flower identical,
The same in their perfection,
Only one color,
One size,
One narrow
Path
of
Conformity.

She

by Macey Embrey

She haunts me day and night

It feels there is no light

She digs her way inside my head

Maybe I'd be better off dead

She whispers she agrees as well

It will be up to time for us to tell

She reminds me of all my mistakes

She will never let me forget

It's as if she has put on the brakes

It seems as though she has me in a dungeon

She haunts me day and night

It feels there is no light

She resides inside my head

She is *Me*.

Houses of the Unknown

by Hali Niceswander



What Writers Can Do

by Donna M. Monnig

A writer can do anything,
anything they want,
anything at all.

A writer can create a world
or destroy one.

A writer can enlighten the truth
or blind the world
with lies.

A writer can build people up
or break people down.

A writer can memorialize one's
success or eternalize
one's shame.

They can start a war, or end one.
They can all but never die.

A writer's words can live forever,
on printed pages, speaking
volumes, in books.

A writer can possess one's mind
and consume one's thoughts.

A writer can be a millionaire,
a hero, and a bad guy,
all at one time.

A writer can travel through time,
living in the past or future.

They can change history, create the
future, and erase the present,
with nothing but a pen.

A writer has absolute power to do
anything. They're dangerous.

A writer can put people in a book,
(people that annoy them)
And kill them.

Writers can murder people ...
and get paid for it.

(They can kill
with the flick
of a quill.)

Why would anyone risk,
a writer's wrath?

Taking the Field

by Jiaqi Hu



America for an International Student

by Fanny Bertalan

- Cowboys

It is real! When I first came in the USA, I realized MVC has a Rodeo team, and I thought it was funny. I thought it was only a fantasy from Texas Rangers and Chuck Norris until I came here. I then realized how serious and proud the Americans were about rodeo.

- Big trucks, big parking lots and roads

The cars everywhere are huge; there are no small practical cars. I later understood that there was no need for smaller cars as America's roads are very wide, parking lots are much wider, and outside of the cities, the territories are very spread out and far from each other. Highways are constituted of two lanes most of the times unless you arrive in the city and people can pass each other from both sides. Back home passing a car is allowed only on the left side, for security matters.

- Healthcare

Healthcare isn't an accessible service in America. It isn't free and you can clearly realize that without money you fall into debt very quickly. Prices are astronomical: it became scary for me to get any medical treatment or just go see a doctor because it implies a lot of paperwork for my insurance to fill, in order to get the payment covered.

- Return policy

Back home we can't return food, and if we have to return an item, we better have a good reason to do so. Here we can return anything just saying we have a remorse. The best thing is to get a refund like you want to: we often still don't have the choice of how to get a refund back home. We usually get coupons. In the USA everything seems possible!

- Coffee

The obsession with coffee is impressive. It seems to me that everybody holds a cup of coffee in their car, or walks around with it like a must have. I often think “Oh it is a trend and it looks cool!”

- The 24/7 hours open policy (Walmart, McDonald)

Never have I expected a shop to be open 24/7 especially a grocery shop like Walmart: how can people work all night long while having customers over? Sunday also is a typical rest day and family day to me.

- Working age

People work very late in their career and usually keep working even after they can retire.

Professors can still teach even after their retirement, and I have seen many fast food employees over the age of 50, which is surprising to me.

- The gas station

The gas filled up automatically in cars versus at home we have to stay and hold it next to our car. There is also only one way to come through the gas station, nobody comes through both ways and parks the car depending on which side they are; you have to choose your lane in advance.

- Unlimited soda refill

In restaurants or Fast Food, America gives an empty cup to the customers to fill up. Meaning we can refill our drinks as many times as we want, or get a refill any time we need to. While back home fast food filled our cup only once. Only water is unlimited.

- Serving size

Here fast foods often list 4 different sizes: mini, small, medium, and large. A mini milkshake here equals a small size back home, and we offer only small or large fries. The plates ordered at a restaurant like Applebee's are enormous, and it seems impossible to eat it all. Another surprising fact, but logic, we can ask for a box to bring back the food we couldn't eat to our home. And this is awesome.

- Everything is too much in the USA:

During my first year in America, Valentine's Day was since early January promoted in stores selling all kinds of goodies. Wal-Mart and other stores were crowded with all sorts of pink and red items, tons of stuffed animals, giant love cards, flowers, etc. The same applies for Easter, Halloween and then Christmas, decorations are set up as soon as possible.

- Credit option

Everything here in America can be paid with a type of credit. Credit cards are offered in stores, and almost every single shop offers a credit payment. It is very accessible to anybody in the country.

- Commercials that compare two brands

It shocks me to watch commercials and ads compare two products or brands. It isn't allowed in France.

- The U.S. Flag and national anthem

It is amazing how the U.S. flag is everywhere in the country; on porches, at schools, in athletics stadium, the flag is up. Also the national anthem is sung at the beginning of each sports game. There is a huge pride about America. Like many of my American friends would say: this is "Merica!"

- Walking into a store

Americans welcome you everywhere you go; they are much more friendly and cordial. Back home the standard is to salute, but after that we feel oppressed if anybody follows us, or asks us how we are doing.

- The American culture

Americans sounds less cultivated and a lot more self-centered on their country, history and culture. I had students asking if France has a King or a President once... Also I've never heard of French toast, French Fries, and so on. These are normally called toast or fries, and a lot of Americans ignore that the appellation only means the way the food is sliced, rather than originates from France.

- Price indicator

The original price never includes taxes and it is tricky.

- The differences within the Americans

American citizens are very different from one state to another in their culture, way of life, and accents.

- Housing protections

There are no fences around houses; many Americans have open fields and gardens. Back home the land owned is separated, from the street and other houses, with a fence or wall.

And You Came Again

by Ana Clara Amorim Soares

And you came again, with that your impulsive and crazy way,

Making me believe that you're back to stay.

But look, how good I could be,

I did not learn,

With that old story that happened between me and you,

That will repeat itself, and for you to see,

How much I love you and loved you,

I left again you come into my life,

Thinking you could heal that wound,

That you shall did.

Hilary is now

Again you went away,

Without telling me as formerly,

And now, I no longer run after,

Also I do not care anymore.