

# Phaethon

2014



**Even in Darkness There Is Light** by Alex Cooper  
Photographic Technology major

## About Phaethon

The myth of Phaethon is simple. He seeks to know his father. So he asks his mother Clymene, and she tells him his father is none other than Apollo, the god of the sun. Phaethon goes to Apollo and asks for some proof of their relationship, and Apollo says he will grant him one wish. Phaethon wishes to drive Apollo's chariot that pulls the sun across the sky. The only being that can do this successfully is Apollo himself. Not even Zeus can pull the sun across the sky. Knowing this, Apollo tries to dissuade Phaethon from this task. This does not work, and Phaethon is placed in charge of the chariot and its horses that breathe fire. Doomed from the start, Phaethon loses control of the chariot and nearly burns up the Earth. The Earth cries out to Zeus for help, and Zeus strikes Phaethon dead with a thunderbolt. Phaethon, now a falling star, plunged into the river Eridanos still ablaze. His epitaph reads:

*Here Phaethon lies who in the sun-god's chariot fared.  
And though he greatly failed, more greatly he dared.*

In the spirit of this figure, we at the Phaethon value bold, confident, daring, courageous, and risky fiction, poetry, and art. Phaethon is not a tragic figure. His actions, that of a mere mortal, for a brief moment of time are equal to an immortal. He did something no other mortal, or immortal for that matter, could ever do. His confidence, courage, and daring are an inspiration to all of us. We too, if we risk our very lives, can be gods.

So we want pieces that challenge, inspire, stump, and move us. We crave new expression. New ideas. New connections. We do not value art that tests the boundaries of expression. We value art that obliterates them.

### *Faculty Advisors*

Matthew Powers  
Andrew Devitt  
Blake Pitcher

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# Phaethon Team

## **Visual Editors:**

**Tierney Coren**

Communication Arts: New Media

**Cody Manley**

Communication Arts: New Media

**Kevin Montano**

Communication Arts: New Media

## **Poetry Editor:**

**Sarah Stevens**

LAS: Humanities

## **Fiction Editors:**

**Jay Drobot**

Fine Arts

**David Poe**

Digital Filmmaking

**Barbara Schermerhorn**

LAS: Social Science

Special thanks to Communication Arts: New Media majors Jessica Vriesema & Tatiana Maldonado for assistance in visual selections.

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## Third Generation Dishwasher, Empire Diner, Herkimer NY

Tom Stock



Photo by Jay Drobot

Each morning he forces himself out of bed,  
Puts on the dirty white uniform he took off the day before.  
The indelible stains from yesterday's spaghetti sauce  
Show like dried red wounds rising from some forgotten battle.  
He looks at the drawn face in the dirty mirror,  
In his dirty bathroom,  
Wondering where the little boy that used to live there went.  
The stubble on his face,  
Is not long enough to yet bother removing.  
Maybe tomorrow.

Yesterday's coffee,  
Yesterday's newspaper strewn on today's table  
Will have to do, will do.  
He is late.  
He is always late.  
Last night's foggy memories  
Turn into a dull throbbing  
Which even twice boiled coffee can't cure.  
He locks the door as he leaves and wonders why he bothers.

The cold dark winter morning air  
 Mixes with his first cigarette of the day  
 Waking the hacking foul nicotine junkie  
 Living in his tired lungs.  
 Knee deep snow makes a mean joke of his ankle high loafers.  
 The wetness of his feet will remind him all day the lack of boots.  
 Worn deep in the frozen pavement,  
 His path is the path of Sisyphus; his life the stone.  
 Electric blue and bleary red neon sign,  
 'Empire Diner'  
 Draws him closer against his weak will.  
 The unshovled sidewalk entrance,  
 Lit through greasy condensation streaked windows,  
 One more obstacle to cross,  
 Glows ghostly blue under the neon moon.  
 The ridiculously shiny Art Deco stainless steel skin of the diner,  
 Cold and hard,  
 Holds prisoner his co-workers  
 Already frying bacon and making fresh, weak coffee.

Opening the door,  
 The aroma of this oasis of breakfast food  
 Attacks him—

Almost making him ill.  
 God. How many more years to this sentence?  
 Right where he left it yesterday, the whitish apron,  
 Looking like a Jackson Pollock canvas,  
 Sadly waits next to his master, the dish washer.  
 Like a shackle not yet closed in his hand,  
 The goose necked sprayer limply hangs  
 Waiting patiently for the day to begin.  
 Pots and pans, already stacked by the fry cook, wait.  
 For this to be over, he waits.  
 The jail house tattoos cover his arms and his neck.  
 Hieroglyphics which defy the Rosetta Stone,  
 The meaning lost from the generations before who speak from so far away.  
 It's been a long road, this morning walk to the Empire.  
 In the afternoon he will take detours.  
 The walk back will take him to places of comfort,  
 To places of his legacy, his birthright.  
 Tomorrow's another day.



## To Choose Davy Jones or His Locker

Richard Colby

The cold winter air blew steadily into the face of Captain Williams as he stood at the rocking bow of the *Lady Isabella*, gazing through the clear night air that was chill enough to freeze his eyes solid. The sea was busy tonight; foam and waves relentlessly crashed into the wooden planks of the ship as if trying to splinter and break them. The old man knew something was making these waves that even his seasoned veteran's eyes couldn't see; it made him uneasy. The rough sturdy canvas of the sails loudly clapped back and forth letting this old captain know that they were still in working order. The moon was shining bright tonight, casting more than enough light for this hardened sailor to navigate the seas. In fact he knew these waters better than you or I know the back of our hands.

"Aye!" the Captain called to his first man, John, who was currently steering the boat. "Hey, I told you there was a crop of rocks due north of us fifteen minutes ago! Why the hell are we still going north?"

"Ahh, Fuck!" John was about twenty years old. He had less than a tenth the sailing experience that the captain had and they both knew it. However, he was still the second most capable pair of hands on this ship; he knew the ship inside and out. He respected the captain to a fault although he didn't show it; still, the captain knew.

Captain Williams grumbled and returned to his post. He watched for a couple hours until the aforementioned crop of rocks, which was hidden completely below the surface of the water, passed beside the hull of the ship. All danger that this night would bring had now passed them by. This old cargo vessel was now safe from all danger for the rest of this night.

"Hey, rest yourself!" The old man bellowed to his first man. "There is nothing else to do tonight!" The subordinate was more than obliged to concede to the demands and left without a word.

The captain soon afterwards descended himself, taking the creaky wooden stairs that groaned as he descended to his cabin below the deck to wait out the rest of the night on a worn cloth hammock in quiet solitude.

The next morning the sea was even more unsettled. Captain Williams took his place at the helm of the ship, squinting against the cloudless early morning sky, straining to get just a glimpse as to what could be causing the waves and wind.

"Hey Cap'n, want me to take the helm again?" John called out from behind.

"Boy you can't even grow a beard, what makes you think you can

handle men's work? Can't you feel it? There is something out there causing this distress of the sea. When you have grown a beard as thick and gray as mine, then I will let you sail through freezing, troubled seas while we are still a week from land."

John shrugged and walked off.

Throughout the day and into the night the countenance of the sea and wind continued to become more aggressive, and the sails were closed.

Many of the men thought the ship would tip over onto its side. However, John reassured them that Captain Williams was more than capable of handling this situation. They weren't so sure.

The nightfall brought an ominous glow brighter than the moon that could be seen far off on the horizon. After a couple hours it became readily apparent that the glow was moving closer to The Lady with great speed. Another breathtaking hour passed; now everyone could see it. It was a boat that levitated effortlessly above the water's troubled surface.

The men began to panic despite all of the reassurance John offered them.

"It's a ghost ship!" some cried.

"It's the flying Dutchman and Davy Jones!" others screamed.

"Captain, we have to turn the ship around," they begged helplessly.

"Shut up all of you! Are you all mindless idiots? How the hell do you outrun a ship that travels faster than the wind that carries it? We can't run! So shut up and do as I say!" The Captain took a deep breath. "Everyone get your weapons ready! We prepare to fight!"

Most of the men quickly rushed below deck. A few stayed frozen in their tracks, until First Hand John gave them a sharp crack of a whip to remind them of their orders.

In a mindset between a panic of desperation and the placid calm that comes before death, Captain John steered his beloved Lady Isabella, his most dear companion for over forty-five years, directly towards Davy Jones demonic ship. He rubbed the wheel gently as if massaging it, and said in a voice low and trembling so that only he could hear it, "Don't worry. We will make it out of this one too, milady."

Within that hour the Flying Dutchman had reached the flank of the Lady Isabella. The Lady wasn't equipped with cannons, so her men began recklessly firing a rain of lead bullets at the deck of the Flying Dutchman. A return of cannon fire from the Dutchman drilled through the walls of the old sailing vessel, splintering boards and planks destroying everything in their path. The beam supporting the main sail was rushed through with a cannonball leaving the sail to crash onto the deck of The Lady. It was a miracle the ship was still floating.

The denizens of the Flying Dutchman were darker than the starry night, and all that could be seen of them were gigantic eyes shaped like large saucers that were the color of the moon and seemed deeper than space.

It wasn't long before the Dutchman hovered close enough to The Lady for the demons aboard the ghost ship to madly rush aboard. A closer look at the foul horrifying creatures from hell showed that they were covered in thick, dark, matted fur that seemingly deflected the bullets of their assailants. They had grey pointed horns like devils coupled with arrowhead tails. And whenever they opened their mouth or breathed out of their nostrils they emitted a blue smoke that smelled like burning flesh and hair.

The sailors drew their swords. Slash! Bang! Clash! Nothing hurt the demons. Boom! Boom! Boom! The bullets did nothing. Swearing! Kicking! Punching! Screaming! It was hopeless. The ship was lost.

The hellish creatures let out a chorus of bone chilling laughter that sent many men jumping overboard in fear. These cowardly men who abandoned their companions of sea received an even worse fate as they were slowly ripped limb from limb and dragged to Davy Jones's Locker.

For those who stayed aboard The Lady Isabella, their skin was torn off of face and limb. The evil monstrosities were toying with the men.

Still in a quiet mental state, Captain Williams had all but given up; the ship was destroyed, at best they were stranded at sea. He looked around mournfully at his Lady one last time. A single tear trickled down his wrinkled old cheek. He turned to face the direction of his men that were facing the congregation of wicked monsters. He walked slowly towards them and knelt beside a lifeless body on the blood covered deck. He closed John's eyes. A second tear now reached his chin. Above all of them, a central figure stood tall with a malevolent grin on its face. That was Davy Jones.

Captain Williams's mindset changed instantly. He was still calm, but he was no longer passive. He firmly clenched the handle of his rapier and yanked it furiously out of its leather sheath at his belt and charged through the crowd of demons.

With strength like no man before him, he shoved the demons aside, casting some of them overboard. Running faster than he could have in even his youth, he reached Davy Jones in mere seconds. With a single stab, the old man's rapier pierced Davy Jones's heart.

Davy Jones's smile enlarged. He opened his mouth wide giving off a deep resounding laughter loud enough to shake the ships. Williams caught a glimpse of Davy Jones's three rows of teeth just before they bit into his left arm, tore it off, and swallowed it whole.

"Forgive me milady. I have failed you."

*Richard Colby is majoring in Art Studies at Herkimer College. He hopes to become a professional artist or a professor of art.*



# Rememberance

Lauren Robinson

I ran that night.  
The ache in my paws was minor compared to the pain I'd felt in the past.  
It was in my mind, and in my heart.

Over the past month I'd felt this ache, creeping deeper and deeper into my core. It slowly started to dissipate as the numbness started to settle in.

I felt like a shell,  
Frail and brittle.

I missed my own pack.  
I missed being with my pack.

I missed the sweet and strong scents of each and every one of my furry friends. I recall every one of their unique and distinct song-like howls. Each a different pitch but somehow made for each other. I remember fighting with them and joining in unison with them when we praised the moon, the only thing in this realm that we cared for; even before the well being of the pack.

I kept running.  
The pain growing weaker and the numbness stronger.  
My paws were wet and I'd noticed the heavy scent of blood as I neared the river.

I remembered the pack - we were taking a break during our two-day journey to the other side of the mountains. We had our leader then, we felt safe and secure, like nothing would taste better than when our journey finally came to an end and we smelled the fresh pine nettles that were still fresh in our mind from the previous spring.

But that was then

The pack was lost in battle to another pack we had not known was stalking us.

I am the lone survivor  
Because I chose not to fight  
And instead leave my friends behind  
That by far, was the worst mistake of my life.

"Where am I going now?" you ask.  
I'm going to the other side of the mountains.  
I'm going to finish the journey that my pack started  
Alone.

*Lauren Robinson is a Herkimer College student pursuing her Associates along with many other interests.*



## Tales of Fiction by the Pond

Cheryl L. Holt

It had been a long time since I took that walk down to the pond where Kira would wait; her long blonde hair playfully flowing in the breeze as she smiled. I would travel to the end of the road carrying a plastic bag filled with goodies in my left hand and a fiction book clutched in my right. I wasn't sure if we would be able to recall where we left off in the story, but it didn't matter much since it was early enough in the day to catch up, and Kira had all the time in the world.

There were only three houses down the span of our dirt road, ours being the last, but our house wasn't situated at the end of the road because it continued down past the stone wall into what felt like another world. There was a sign on the stone wall that read, "No Trespassing", yet I had done it several times. I remember the feeling that would come over me as I walked through the opening of the stone wall; a feeling of mystery with a touch of fear. These feelings didn't make much sense, because the area was quiet and serene with a beautiful pond filled with fish that would touch the surface from time to time for an occasional water skater fly. A big stone was perfectly situated at the opposite end of the pond where I would sit to read my books. Maybe the strange feelings would come over me because of the abandoned trailer, barn and farmhouse that stood a little further down the dirt road just past the pond. The trailer came first in its dark brown façade and broken windows. I remember looking in through the broken windows before and seeing a dark shadow inside that made me close my eyes and say over and over again, "There's nothing there, it's just your imagination!" Next was the barn and farmhouse, both with their own eerie aura surrounding them, beckoning me to explore if I had the nerve.

One particular day, I walked the usual walk down the dirt road and through the stone wall, only this time I was genuinely frightened. It wasn't dark or overcast outside. It was a bright, sunny and overall beautiful summer day, but my legs trembled and my heart raced. I suppose the subject matter of the book I was carrying didn't help since it was the complete tales of Edgar Allen Poe, even though reading tales of horror and mystery had never affected me this way before. I reached the big stone, clambered up to sit in my usual spot and began reading "The Tell Tale Heart." I had only reached the part where the narrator had awakened the old man on the eighth night, and the thin beam of his lantern landed squarely on the old man's eagle eye, when a strong breeze blew across the pond and the stone where I sat, lightly shuffling the pages of the book in my hands.

That's when I saw her. She was standing by the far end of the pond with a smile on her face. She had long blonde hair and was thin by stature,

wearing a pretty yellow sundress with tiny flowers on it and white, strappy sandals. She just stood there as we watched each other for several minutes. I waved at her, but she just continued to stand there. I rubbed my eyes and focused my attention back on the book because I felt that I had to be seeing things. “Hi! What’s your name?” Startled, I looked up and standing before me was the young girl with blonde hair. “It’s ok, my name is Kira. What are you reading?” I tried to answer, but my voice was cracking and suddenly I felt extremely thirsty. “Can you read it aloud? I’d love to hear a story,” she said, still smiling with a look of enthusiasm on her face. I began reading the story out loud and watched her every expression as it continued. As the story came to an end, she said, “Thank you so much for reading to me. Will you be back again tomorrow?” I nodded in acceptance. “Hooray! I have to go now, but I’ll see you tomorrow.” She started walking away from me toward the pond, and when she reached the far end, she turned to look at me once more; then disappeared as she passed through the woods.

We met the next day and I introduced myself to Kira. I chose a different story to read and she watched and listened in awe. We would meet every day that summer, unless it rained, and I began longing for our story time by the pond. Kira had learned a lot about me, but I didn’t really know much more about her, except her name and her love for fiction tales. As the summer ended and fall brought the chilly air and falling leaves, my time spent by the pond grew shorter like the days. It hadn’t occurred to me that Kira still wore her yellow sundress and strappy white sandals as I bundled up with a fall jacket and insulated boots. The winter felt long, dismal and gray. I was caught up in the monotonous routine of early school days and sleepy nights that led to limited time in reading for fun. I wondered about Kira and if she was as unhappy as I was during the cold, cold winter.

Spring came and on the first warm day, right after school, I grabbed a book and sprinted to the stone wall. When I reached the pond, it was peaceful with not a water skater fly in sight and no signs of the fish. I sat on the big stone, opened the book and began reading, but Kira never came. “Kira,” I called out, but still she never came. I began remembering her flowing blonde hair with the haunting smile; the way she would disappear into the woods and the yellow sundress with strappy, white sandals she would wear in the brisk and windy air. That’s when I realized Kira would not come back because she was happy to have spent one summer with me reading stories to her. She could go home content, and I would keep her image alive in my heart for many years before we could meet again, and share the pleasures of a fiction story.

*Cheryl has always been an admirer of fantastic stories of fiction and great literary tales, so much so that she began writing her own many years ago. She has since written and published a book, with a second on the way.*



# The Season's Change

Jay Drobot

A bird took flight after the winters end, following the order of which it so willingly obeyed.

The new season brought the bird to molt, marking its route where ever a feather chose to be its destined place.

The feathers were once like bricks, properly stacked, mortared in place.

Gripped firmly to the edge of their former expectation, their hold grew weak as they came to age.

Time caused them to fall from their order, the reason for which they endured now shattered.

A single feather parted from the rest, lost in the occasion as it drifted away.

Forced now to endure the conflict of a new campaign, the feathers former master, no more than a reversal film that burnt to cinders in the flames.

A natural action caused the consequence of the division. Exploration without the influence of illusion came to expose the betrayal; the seed once thrown in the city park.

Time now the curator, experience the teacher, sentenced to be an observer who wanders the outskirts of the city walls.

New terms were composed, the cup now empty, with only time left to waste.

Each reversal film, revealed by exposure to light, yet faded when not illuminated, the feather drifted further out of sight.

The feathers session ended upon landing in a clearing, in view of a city nestled at a mountains base.

Shallow in sight, far from home, the feather rested contently, a product of a work shed by its former faith.

*Jay Drobot is a Fine Arts major at Herkimer College.*



# The Floor Caught It All

Kyle Brownell

A shelf of novelty silverware, finally organized after its scheduled daily cleaning, refracted the light from a nearby window. An elderly man with a bottle of polish in one hand, and a rag in the other, turned and let out a contented grunt, now complete with this midday ritual of tidying the single room apartment of which he occupied. This minimalist living space, with the lingering and subtle stench of bleach and aerosol disinfectant, was one that the man took much pride in.

“Cleanliness is, indeed, next to Godliness.” He directed this to the only other inhabitant of the apartment, a petite calico cat, of which was due a thorough bath later that evening, just like every other evening.

The hermit’s rough, chapped hands rubbed against each other in the kitchen sink. Uncomfortably hot water assured him that his hands were free of any dirt and germ. He had been convincing himself for the past forty years of his adult life that his efforts in cleanliness had been successful. For in that time he had received no illness, not even a cough. In the confines of his modestly priced dwelling, this ever cautious man could find peace; a completely sterile life, for the rest of his existence, seemed optimal.

It was rare to catch this insufferable neat freak anywhere outside his home, especially in some of his most dreaded seasons, carrying with them their respective ailments. So, it was only fitting that he had joined the wild in winter hibernation with his own means of seclusion, safe from what he considered to be creeping death.

Yet, despite his best efforts, there was still one blight he could not relieve himself of. No decongestant, fever reducer, or cough medicine could eliminate this stain on his seemingly spotless existence. Spontaneous and sporadically occurring muscle spasms plagued the poor man from pre-pubescence and onward throughout his life. These brief episodes would render his limbs limp while his body jerked back, as if it were a reflex to some incoming object. The old man could feel these movements come over him in a brief sensation, similar to one before a sneeze. This only granted him a mere second to prepare himself for a fit of embarrassment and helplessness.

Ready to relax, the old man cautiously prepared a pot of coffee, being careful not to make a mess on his disinfected counter. Once it was ready, the man’s cat followed him into the kitchen as he went to serve himself his first cup of joe. As steam from the coffee rose to his face, so did a surprising, yet recognizable feeling.

“Aa-aah!” The old man started to quiver.

When that familiar sensation crept on him, it frightened him more

than anything. The glass coffee pot in his hand with scolding hot liquid, too far now from the counter to set down, had put him in an inescapable position. All he could do was wish this wouldn't cause too much of a mess on his freshly scrubbed linoleum floor.

As he had done countless times before, the man's body jerked back in a fixed, mechanical motion. His arms fell to his sides and snapped to a limp state. The coffee pot shattered on the floor into shards with a mighty splash of hot, black coffee. When the man was able to help himself, he instinctively went into the direction of his living room closet to retrieve anything that could fix this awful mess. This effort proved futile, as the man slipped on the puddle below him. Shards of what was just a coffee pot pierced through the poor soul's thin bathrobe. Coupled with the unbearably hot coffee, the pain at hand was excruciating, especially for a person with little tolerance for anything, let alone dirt. His cries and frantic flails frightened the skittish feline beside him, causing it to run off in a frenzy and collide with the apartment door, rendering it unconscious.

All of this commotion carried through the thin walls of the apartment, and with no hesitation, a cacophony of footsteps came from all nearby stairwells. Within the panic, one good Samaritan must have placed one foot too far before the other, because from inside the old man's apartment you could hear loud tumbling followed by a halt of sound. The deafening silence was swiftly broken by cries and screams.

"Help! Help! Someone get down here!" one woman cried. Another croaked an expected and appropriate, "Call nine-one-one!"

Almost as soon as it had begun, the tragic Goldberg sequence seemed to be over and done with. All of this confusion, stress, and pain caused the elderly man to faint. As his head cocked to one side and his vision faded, all he could catch was a brief glimpse of the aftermath. His presumably dead pet, his scratched and bloody mess of a body, and of the most unfortunate his now coffee and blood stained robe, all sprawled out along the floor in a sad mess for paramedics to discover as they rushed into the apartment.

The shelf of novelty silverware now rested with a fine misting of dust as it sat upon its shelf in the quiet, deserted apartment. Those lingering smells of cleaning liquids had grown stale. At least the landlord had hired a cleaning crew to come over in the past week while the old man was away in the hospital to clean up the mess left behind in the kitchen. It was as spotless as the man would have desired, and surely he would appreciate it when he arrived home.

On the evening of the man's return to his apartment, he carelessly tossed his shoes aside after locking the door behind him. His aching, saddened form plopped onto his plastic protected couch, which squeaked when he sank into it. The tragedy that he had caused rendered him emotionless. Even during his stay at the crowded, arguably sanitary hospital, he made no remarks or noticeable

gestures that would suggest any dissatisfaction with his environment. A new fear was consuming him, crafting a seemingly endless pit inside of him.

Loneliness was what he confronted in the hospital room, just as he had the past forty years in his sanctum of purity. This life he had crafted was the wedge, and his persistence the force that alienated him from the outside. Now, all he had left was to bask in the glow of an existence in continued solitude with recently realized baggage to carry.

The man's eyes grew wide. He felt yet another sensation start to come over him, but not in the way of another spastic fit. His eyes swelled while his hands trembled, clinging to his chest for security. Alone in his tiny, suffocating living room, the old man could feel streams flow down his weathered cheeks as muffled sobs lulled him to sleep.

*Kyle Brownell is a novice short story writer, who is currently studying digital film production, with a minor in antique swimwear appraisal.*



# The Walker

Mark Luther

An angelic winged creature soars above the mist covered mountain of evergreens that are set far back into the landscape. The non-gender creature spreads its condor wings outward casting a cold shadow over route 28. A lone walker wore a gray fedora slanted down to shade his weary squinting eyes from the morning golden yellow rising sun.

He walks along the right shoulder of route 28. His pace is quick and steady, making long strides with each step. The blazing sunlight cast a long shadow of John Michael Gabriel- the walker, that stretches five feet upon the road's surface ahead of him.

He has a tanned weather beaten face sporting a neatly shaven silver goatee which he scratched from time to time. "The life of a rogue has its prejudices. My hope is that the next town won't turn out to be another Horizon Falls." John Michael Gabriel said to himself as he spit white mucus on the pavement. The blistering sun is now at high noon, he gazes up, his left hand holding on tight to the fedora. All makes and models of cars, motorcycles, pickup trucks and RV's speed past him with a sharp whizzing sound. "I love the hat mister," a passenger sticking his head out the car window said.

"Cool. Love the hat," another one said. The drivers honk their horns at him. "Who are you honking at, you, neurotic freaks? I don't know you from Adam or Eve for that matter!" John Michael Gabriel said giving a small shrug, an uncaring wave of his hand. He kept up that fast steady pace for another mile. He came upon a weather faded, tricolored sign, appearing to him like an atmospheric ghost.

## WELCOME TO INDIAN RIDGE

A Place of Revolution

"A place of revolution," John said with a chuckle. The corners of his mouth turn upward morphing into a sly smile. His five senses were on high alert as he stepped onto Indian Ridge soil. Uneasiness swept through his one hundred and forty pound body like a whirlwind. He turns the corner on to State Street. "For the love of America," John Michael said shaking his head in bewilderment. He saw a hundred or more pickup trucks parked unevenly in a crooked semi-circle in the Hannaford's parking lot. There were five hundred town's people in front of their pickup trucks. "This is the first time I am ever greeted with a welcoming committee," he whispered. His face slanting down, his eyes rolled up staring at the crowd. "Hey, Walker, or should I call, you by your real name John Michael Gabriel," a tall slender man, leaning against the

front grill of his Ford pickup truck said in a husky loud voice. He heard the sound of guns cocking. "How do you know my name?" John Michael Gabriel said. His eyes aggressively scan the parking lot. "I am in some deep shit," John said taking a few steps backwards.

"You remember Horizon Falls!" The tall man said, standing straight up from his leaning position. He held his Remington rifle with both hands firmly until his knuckles turned white.

"Yeah I remember Horizon Falls; it's an unfortunate thing that happened there. It went to hell in a baby carriage that day," John Michael Gabriel said rubbing his hand on his goatee.

"The mayor of Horizon Falls called and gave me a heads up about you!" The tall man said cocking his rifle.

"Horizon Falls is prejudiced against strangers. I didn't start it and I don't care if you believe me or not," John said as the townspeople gathered around him. He tried to run but was quickly cornered. John Michael Gabriel shape shifted into an avenging angel, his wings unfolded and expanded into full flight. The townspeople fell back with their guns blazing. There was a quick flash of white light, a band of warring angels appeared, bringing an act of God with them. John Michael Gabriel became an urban legend that day in the town of Indian Ridge.

*Mark Luther is a General Studies major at  
Herkimer College.*



## A Christmas Haiku Story

Lauren Robinson

Crisp new snow floats down  
Silently lands on the ground  
Waiting to be crushed

Daylight breaks through night  
Stars replaced by pastel hues  
Christmas Eve is here

My breath turns to smoke  
The frozen ground is brittle  
Jack Frost nips my nose

Our children pull sleds  
Across the icy tundra  
Snowmen wave hello

The coffee pot beeps  
Just one more day till Christmas  
So much left to do

The children come in  
Warmth pulls shivers from their bones  
Parting with the cold

Frost creeps across glass  
Like lace in the window panes  
Looking for entry

Peppermint and spice  
Fill the air as cookies bake  
Joy in every bite

The day crawls slowly  
The minutes turn to hours  
The countdown begins

Night swallows the world  
Candles flicker in windows  
Beacons in the night

Thoughts circle our minds  
Of what we want and wish for  
Dreams sweet and bitter

Morning comes again  
Wrapping paper everywhere  
Some dreams made, others crushed



Cardinals in a Blizzard by Richard Colby

## Two Sides of the Same Coin

Brittany Landry

A high-pitched yelp suddenly echoed through the trees, breaking the silence of the dense hillside forest. Large paws then skidded to a halt in the rocky soil, the mother wolf turning her head back towards the source. A few paces behind her lay a tan-furred pup, identical to her other than size, and the fact that he was now face-first in the dirt. The ground here was untraveled, leaving it uneven and rough compared to the flattened trails. Not to mention that poor pup wasn't as skilled with running at such speeds compared to his mother. Atka was still quite clumsy and stumbled easily, so not even his mother looked surprised that he tripped. But now wasn't the time. Those strange chatters were still closing in behind them, along with their foul stench: hairless skin, dead animal pelts, and that unfamiliar, metallic scent.

With a humiliated glance, Atka immediately rose back to his feet, just by catching the stern glare from the older wolf ahead of him. He knew that it was for his own good. These creatures that chased them were dangerous. They'd already stolen his littermates from him and his mother, in situations very similar to this. Now a light whimper escaped him as he attempted to move again, to catch up to his mother only a few steps ahead. As motivating as that glare from her was, he was finding it more and more difficult. That stumble was a little too much for his young and fragile bones, not to mention that fear had sent shivers throughout his body. Atka forced himself on to three legs, his front left paw curled up against his chest to hang off the ground. It hurt to put weight on it, so he wanted to avoid that. But walking was too hard with only three feet, and running would be absolutely impossible. But his mother didn't even seem to fret about that. There were even worse things to be concerned about, after all. The pup merely watched her as she turned towards him in one quick motion. She was in front of him again in a split second, and he was lifted off of the ground just as quickly, feeling nothing but that that strong yet gentle grip around the scruff of his neck. He was used to being carried around like this, but he never minded it. Somehow it made him feel safer, being so close to his mother, and feeling as if he was moving just as fast as her.

The mother wolf had turned around again almost immediately. Kicking off the dirt, she was off, running down through the trees at her quickened pace. Atka felt it was faster now even, now that he wasn't stumbling behind her, slowing her down, and holding her back. He felt that she could do it now. She could save them again. Even if it was just the two of them now, he imagined it was much better than either of them being left alone. That satisfying thought made the pup feel even more secure somehow. He watched ahead of them, merely catching a glimpse of each tree that passed as his mother maneuvered swiftly in

between them. He then let his eyes drift shut, taking in the feeling of the passing wind ruffling through his fur. He imagined their first home: that forest clearing that led down to the water. It was a beautiful sight to wake up to, a safe place to sleep and run around during the day. And he loved the thought of being able to go back, or to at least live somewhere just as peaceful, without having to spend each day in fear.

And that was a grim reminder: this run couldn't be the last, could it? How long would they constantly be running for their lives? Would they somehow be able to run far enough to escape those two-legged creatures that were hunting them? At this point, that seemed impossible. They were either everywhere, or they were the best trackers to ever live. At the time, Atka believed that. He couldn't imagine being able to escape these horrible creatures. Another whine slipped out through the pup's quivering lips, his head rising slightly to get a look at his mother. He wanted comfort, to stop and huddle against her. But running with him was the only way to protect him now. They just had to keep going, at least until she couldn't hear them so much anymore. Had she gotten some distance between them? Their chatters had died down, and the two of them could only hope that those hunters were giving up on their chase.

A loud bang soon answered that question. Atka had only heard this noise so close one other time before. It brought him right back to that day in his mind, when the rest of his family was taken away. He could remember them stumbling behind, no longer able to keep running alongside their mother. Instinctively, he turned his head, as if to look back and see where his sibling would be. But this was different. Instead of feeling his mother's grip take hold after the noise faded out, Atka felt it let go. Such an abrupt interruption from the run caused the pup to go flying forward, crashing into the hard, rocky ground. He tumbled & rolled, yelping a few times, before he crashed to a stop into the side of a tree trunk. He was slightly relieved that it stopped his violent fall, but the impact from that hurt even worse. Constant whimpering followed. Atka already preferred having an injured paw to this all-over pain. What just happened? His mother never dropped him before. Did that noise scare her? She was still here, right?

To answer his endless questions, the pup carefully turned his head again. He had to look all around him thanks to the fall and rolling which confused his sense of direction. Panic started to take over; he couldn't find her at first. Finally catching sight of her familiar form didn't offer much comfort this time though. He saw her just a few feet away, lying on the ground and covered in just as much dirt and debris as he was. But something was different. Other than heavy, disrupted breathing, she wasn't moving. And her pure tan fur was tinted a familiar red. Atka stared helplessly, following the crimson trails up to an open wound on the larger wolf's backside. That crash was a gunshot, hitting her directly, and is

ultimately what caused such a heavy fall.

Atka couldn't help but suddenly let out a frantic bark. He tried to get up even faster this time, only to immediately fall on his face again. Whines, yips, and whimpers followed as the pup tried desperately to get a response out of his mother, all the while carefully stumbling back towards her. He did manage to get her attention, but not much else but a blank stare. An ear perked up, catching on to those approaching voices once again. And almost immediately, she bared her fangs. A hoarse, threatening snarl followed, which even made Atka freeze up. He knew she would never attack him, but this almost seemed directed at him. His mother continued to stare him down. Her bared teeth and pitiful growls spelled out 'get back,' but the look in her eyes was nothing but sadness. Atka found it hard to comprehend. Anger and sadness directed at him; did she want him to go? Those sounds would catch up soon, and he couldn't go without her. He trusted her to save him, like she always had. He was terrified of ending up like his siblings, and even more afraid of ending up alone. Atka tried another whimper, his last attempt to plead her stand, but the older wolf forced out another growl. He may have been injured, but he could still move. He could save himself. It seemed his mother had already accepted her fate. So long as she could fulfill her job of protecting what was left of her family until she took her last breath.

Of course the pup hesitated, but once both wolves heard the approaching sounds of those human voices again, he finally took a step backward. Another motivating bark from the fallen wolf before him was finally enough to make him about-face and take off, tripping along the way as he staggered through the brush. The mother wolf's aggressive behavior ceased there, and she let her eyes finally close, her breathing easing in unison.

Atka had learned a lot in his short time with his mother. He learned what was dangerous, what could cause a wolf to stop moving, and how to get away from those life threatening situations. He learned how to catch his own food by watching the best hunter he ever knew. He would learn more, and grow up to be just as strong and swift and smart as the mother who raised him.

But he would have to realize all of this on his own. He was too overriden by fear and sadness now to get that far. The only thought on his mind now was to run like his mother always had. He had to get away, to save himself, to escape those creatures. He would survive. He had to, for the both of them.

Although he could barely hang on for the first few weeks after his traumatic experience, Atka managed to survive. He would hunt the small critters that would crawl on the forest floor, and chase the birds that would follow him around out of curiosity for what he'd caught. Atka learned that even this could benefit him. If he could run faster, he could catch anything. He could get stronger to catch those big deer that his mother always brought home. He could get

away from those hunters whenever they showed up again. And that made Atka wonder, what else could he do?

The sadness and truth of being left alone in this forest was always hard to deal with. There were many nights that Atka couldn't even sleep. But as the weeks passed, he made it easier for himself. He would chase the depleting herds of deer, jump around with the crows, and catch what he could to survive. Over the months, he found it easier to keep up with the faster prey, and he finally began to land more successful kills than failed. Life was looking up for the unfortunately orphan.

But those creatures were still around. After all that time, Atka still hadn't learned what they looked like, until one of his hunting missions. The smell was familiar, so the young wolf kept himself a good distance away, where the brush was still thick. They were tall, walked on two legs, and seemed to only have a coat of fur on the tops of their heads. Atka couldn't understand what kind of animal they were. They wore the pelts of the prey they killed, and carried long contraptions that shined in the right light. It was the noise they made, however, that finally helped Atka to understand. As they pointed it towards the fleeing deer, that familiar crash echoed through the clearing, sending chills down Atka's spine.

It was them. And that thing. That's what took his family away. That's what was killing every other creature in this forest. Atka felt a growl growing deep in his throat, but he had enough self-control to hold it back. The last thing he wanted to do was give himself away here. Not when he wasn't ready. He would have to move faster if he wanted a chance to avoiding a death by their hands.

Tinged orange by the setting sun, the forest clearing had quickly filled up with the metallic scent of blood. Loose feathers scattered to the ground as a small flock of crows surrounded a freshly fallen carcass, bouncing and flying in circles impatiently for the wolf to finish. They awaited their chance to move in and get a taste of that meal, but even they knew better than to approach a wolf in the middle of dinner. This one showed little interest in the birds however, despite them being such an annoyance. Green eyes peered over the top of the half eaten deer, glaring at the first crow they locked on to. Even this was enough to cause the bird to hop backwards, making the distance between them greater. A huff of air escaped through the wolf's red-dyed nostrils, and he finally rose to stand up straight. The revealed height of the beast sent a few of the crows bouncing in fear again, but still the wolf paid little attention. He turned on his toes, stepping away from the fresh meat and leaving it open for the birds to horde. They didn't have to worry much about other predators coming to steal it from them. It seemed they'd all been driven out by now, save for Atka; the former lost pup who could barely catch a chipmunk.

Many moons had passed since then, the day he last laid eyes on an-

other of his kind. He remembered his mother: that bloody, huddled mass on the ground, reluctantly threatening her son to run for his life. She met her fate that day in order to save him. How many times had he returned to the very spot, hoping to see her sitting there and waiting? Atka came to a halt, standing beside the tree that he remembered crashing into. He stared at the ground, at the spot where his mother once lied, but it was empty now. No signs of them falling. No blood left on the ground. Her scent was even gone, too.

There was a different scent now, but it was familiar, and not one that Atka was fond of. The instant it reached his nose, his eyes narrowed, bloodied snout wrinkling so that even the tips of his fangs were bared. Those things that killed her were still nearby. They took over this forest, killing off anything else that got in their way. Just that foul stench alone was enough to get a growl out of the wolf, to suddenly pull him out of sadness and into rage. He couldn't change what happened to his mother, but he could do something about the creatures that caused her death.

Growls suddenly falling quiet, Atka stepped forward again, a new goal in mind. He moved hastily ahead, zigzagging through trees as the scent led him deeper into the forest to a side he'd never visited before. That stench only grew stronger as he pushed on. Atka's eyes scanned the forest in front of him, ears perked up and turning to take in any suspicious sounds. As he finally began to hear those familiar, incomprehensible chatters, he slowed his pace. He ducked himself down, pinned his ears back against his head, and stalked silently through the shrubs, his brown fur like a camouflage to the unsuspecting.

As he approached the opening to a clearing in the trees, Atka finally stopped, greeted with yet another unfamiliar sight. A large structure stood before him, seeming to be made of countless tree trunks aligned together and on top of each other. Atka couldn't help but stare at it and wonder how it was even possible. But they had to be here... It reeked of them.

As if on cue, an opening appeared in the front of the square assortment of trees, and one of those very creatures stepped out from inside. Atka almost growled, but he held it back. It was just like a hunt, having to stay silent and wait until the right moment. And as the creature stepped out into the grass, Atka decided it was his chance. Without warning, he charged out from the bushes, eyes locked on to the hairless, two-legged creature. Atka could see the look of shock on his face as he turned towards him. With a savage bark, he lunged, canines sinking into the fleshy part of his thigh. A horrible scream resulted from the man who immediately lost his footing from Atka's tugging and thrashing about. Even Atka cringed at the blood's taste. But despite the bitter taste and the foul stench, this felt right. It felt like this was what his mother saved him for. This was what he'd been running for, strengthening his muscles for, staying alive for.

As the man stumbled, dropping to the ground in a heap, Atka released

his grip. His new target was in range, and in an instant he lunged once more, giving the man no time to even reach for any weapon he might've had. Fangs bit into the throat, easily piercing through. Horrified screams died down into breathless gasps, until the monster in Atka's jaws was silenced and fell limp in his grip.

Opening his jaws, the wolf let the lifeless body drop to the ground once more. But he was only met with one more sudden scream. Atka immediately turned his head, glare focusing on yet another of the two-legged monsters. His face showed just as much shock and fear as the one who lay motionless beneath him. And with the slightest glimmer of the wolf's blood dripping fangs, the man quickly about-faced and ran around the corner of the large structure. Atka immediately gave chase. He skidded in the dirt as he made that sharp turn around the corner, more than prepared to attack right away and kill his next target. But what Atka was met with was not what he was expecting.

His claws dug into the earth, making him skid more until he finally forced himself to stop. Atka stared ahead of him. The human was nowhere to be seen, but another creature was. And this one he recognized right away. Attached to a rope which was tied and tangled around a short, slender tree, was a huddled ball of fur. It shivered frantically, and Atka could hear the sounds of small, terrified whimpers as those young blue eyes stared at the bloody, brown wolf just feet before him. For a minute, all of the anger in Atka's features dissipated. He was staring at a wolf pup, and one that looked just like him at that age. Now Atka was the one overwhelmed by shock. He took a curious step forward, but as soon as the pup picked up on this, his whimpers grew louder. He tried to back up, but the rope around his neck kept him from going far, and in turn made the small canine panic. He could barely move with how much the rope was wrapped around him and the tree. Even Atka could see how much strain it was putting on that fragile neck. The pants and hoarse yelps from the pup afterward were even more convincing.

But before Atka could take another step forward, scuffling sounds off to his right caught his attention once more. It was the hairless creature from before, but now he held a long, dark and shiny object in his hands. Atka's eyes narrowed; he recognized that noisy and deadly weapon right away. He knew it was the thing that made these creatures so dangerous. And the opening was aimed right at him. Shaky, skinny hands gripped the object, fingers wrapping around the handle at the other end. Atka's ears twitched in unison with the small sound of a click.

But silence followed. Having expected another of those deafening crashes, Atka let out a breath he hadn't realized he was even holding. The hunter, on the other hand, stared with a distraught expression, and even lifted up his contraction to look at it in confusion. Atka took this opportunity. He turned away from the captured pup, kicking off the dirt & charging at the distracted man. He

tackled him, and both crashed to the ground. They rolled and thrashed as the wolf clawed and chomped at the now defenseless hunter, who was only able to protect himself from those deadly fangs by holding Atka back with his weapon. But it took all of his strength to finally push the enraged canine off of him, swinging that long object around with him. With a crack, it suddenly slammed into the left side of Atka's head. He couldn't help but yelp as the force of the hit knocked him aside, making him stumble over to the ground. Dazed from the shock, his vision blurred, and he wobbled on his feet as he forced himself back up. He closed his left eye, feeling a warm liquid begin to stream down over it, staining his fur even more. The force of that hard object hitting him directly left a ringing through his head, making him shake it back and forth, but that was a mistake. That only made the pain and dizziness worse. Atka strained a snarl through his bared fangs, glaring at the hunter again through his bloodied vision, who seemed to be in just as much shock. His pause would be his last foolish mistake. With no warning once again, Atka jumped, canines meeting flesh in one quick motion and clamping down. Throat crushed instantly, little resistance followed as the hairless creature hopelessly struggled with what strength he had left. Once those raspy breaths stopped, Atka dropped the dead heap to the ground.

Now he panted, letting himself drop down as well to regain himself from those encounters. Atka never expected that he would go to such lengths. He never expected to get hurt like this. But he was alive. And he still wasn't alone. Suddenly remembering the audience, Atka raised his head, focusing on the terrified little pup that was still huddled behind the pole. He could only imagine how much scarier he must've looked now: covered in blood, standing over what remained of a living creature. Even so, he couldn't just pull himself away. He slowly rose back to his feet, his steps towards the pup just as steady so he wouldn't stumble again or scare him even more. The pup still attempted to yelp, but it was half cut-off by the tightness around his neck. Atka narrowed his open eye, finally coming to a stop as he stood above the cowering pup. He leaned his head down, jaws opening once more, and the pup closed his eyes to brace himself.

The bloody muzzle grazed past him, fangs taking hold of the rope that bound the pup. Although painful, Atka bit down, tilting his head as he chewed on the rope, until it finally snapped between his teeth. The pup was finally released and fell forward to the dirt, taking a few gasps of breath himself. Atka remained where he was, watching him carefully as he scrambled back to his feet, locking eyes with the older canine. Atka was brought back to that day once again, how he would look at his mother with such fear, yet trust. She took her responsibility to raise and protect him, and now it seemed as if it was Atka's turn.

The bloodied wolf leaned down once more, nose gently tapping the backside of the flinching pup, but he didn't react much at first. Atka nudged

him again, with a bit more force this time to make the pup take a step. He was pushing him towards the trees, away from the violence he just left behind. The pup soon understood with one last nudge, and took a few steps ahead. Atka followed, taking a few more steps as the pup hesitated again. Atka looked towards him though, and tapped a paw against the ground. It was as if that ruthless killer from just a few minutes ago was never even there. This easily kept the pup's attention, attracted him even, and made him trot ahead. His hesitating pauses finally ceased, and the two wolves walked side by side into the empty forest.

*Brittany Landry is a General Studies major at  
Herkimer College.*



# Entropy

Leslie Cornish

Oh my goodness! What the hell?  
Everything's ephemeral.  
In the blink of an eyelash, all will be gone  
women and children and even Anon.  
No cars, no bars, no mason jars. No stars.  
No ocean, no sea, no river. No me.  
No love, no above.  
So polish things and make them pretty.  
Everything goes, and that is a pity.  
And nothing remains, not even a spark  
as life suddenly disappears into  
dark.

*About Leslie Cornish: I live in a small town and drive to  
Herkimer for the nightlife.*



# Almost

Barbara Schermerhorn

I put the letter on the shelf near my bed. I look at the clock; it's almost time. I reach for the shirt I decided to wear. It's light and soft as I hold it in my hands. I slide the white cotton fabric over my matted brown hair. It's cold against my warm skin, and I can feel the goose bumps rise on my arms and legs. I lay down on my bed staring at the empty ceiling above. I always liked this ceiling, the small bumps on it often took upon themselves different shapes to entertain me while I lay awake at night. My hands lay on my stomach, and I hold them there. I can feel the slight rise and fall of my stomach as I breathe in and out.

Cold air fills my empty lungs. I close my eyes and the light slowly fades to darkness. A dim glow is all I see now as I lay awake on my bed. Hours pass as I lay there thoughtless, dreamless, emotionless, and meaningless. I notice the glow outside; my eyes are fading darker now. The time must be coming closer.

I slowly open my eyes to see my familiar bedroom with nothing having changed but the soft glow from the moon outside my window. I look at the clock. A tingling feeling in my eyes grabs my attention. I lift my hand to feel it. I bring my hand down to my eye level and notice that I am crying. It has been a long time since I have cried, a long time indeed.

I wipe away the tears and stand to my feet. I make the short journey to the far side of my room. I notice the air is colder now, but I don't mind. The vibrant glow of the moon from my window is all the light I need to see. I open the drawer of my desk and rummage through its contents. My hand finds a small envelope, and I grasp it to my chest as I pull it out. This is it, my escape, my salvation.

I walk slowly back to my bed as I open the letter. I sit on the bed and read over my familiar words again. I have to make sure that it is right. I have to tell them that it's not their fault, that it's not something they could have changed. I have to tell them that I love them and that I am sorry it has to be this way.

I close my eyes and see my mother's face. I open them and jump from the bed. No, I am not going to think about that. I know it will be hard on them, but they will move on. I take my bag from the floor and rummage through it to find my epipen. I take it into my hands and open the box. **TO BE USED IN CASE OF SEVERE ALLERGIC REACTION ONLY**, is the first thing I see as I slide the needle out. How ironic that the very thing that is supposed to save my life will end it in less than ten minutes.

I lay back on my bed and close my eyes. I want it to be as quick as possible. I have suffered enough in this life; I do not want my death to be another

suffering. I place my hands on my stomach again, feeling the rise fall go slower and slower. I take one final deep breath as the clock strikes midnight.

The sound of the old clock from the living room fills the air as I take the needle in hand. I pop off the cap with my thumb and open my eyes. I turn to face the window. One last look at the beautiful moon before I no longer have a desire for such things.

I slide the soft fabric of my dress up my thigh as I clench the needle in my hand. One quick hard thrust of the needle and the deed is done. The taste of salty tears fills my mouth as I open it wide for my silent cry of pain. I can feel the needle fall out of my hand and into my bed as the adrenaline swarms toward my heart. I bite into my lips in an attempt to remain quiet.

My heart is pounding hard and fast. It seems as though it echoes through my room. I can feel my hands grow cold, and then I suddenly remember the letter. I close it to my chest and I hold it there as I lay in pain. I can feel the rise and fall of my chest, faster and faster as I gasp for breath. My lungs are empty, I just want to breathe. Why can't I just die and get it over with?

I try to remain still, but I am moving. Is that me? I cannot tell. Someone is yelling, a familiar voice, but not my own.

I squeeze my eyes shut. "Please! Won't someone stop this pounding? Why is it taking so long? I am supposed to be dead by now."

I think I'm moving, but I cannot be sure. The light is changing, and there are more voices now. These ones are calmer than the first, but they sound rough and masculine. "Who are these people?" I feel sick to my stomach, and I am so cold my fingers are numb. "What's happening? It was supposed to be fast and painless."

I can tell the room is getting brighter now, and I feel a bit warmer. My toes are tingling, and I can smell rubbing alcohol. My arm is hurting so badly now, and my leg is numb. There is an aching pain in my chest. My heart is still beating, but why? A sudden ping of disappointment plagues me as I try to open my eyes. I want to see what is going on. I open them, but I can't see anything and they close again.

"Her IV's are pumping well, she will need a lot of rest." This is a completely new voice from before, but I feel comforted by what he says. I can hear my mother crying; I know it's her, she has a distinct cry that you just know it's her. "Is this a hospital? Why am I here?"

"Sissy? Are you awake?"

I am trying to open my eyes, but it's not working. I try so hard, but it's just not working. Why is this happening?

"Sissy, just squeeze my finger if you can hear me okay?" That's my mom, I can feel a drop of wetness on my face, but somehow I know it's not mine. "Please Sissy, why would you do this?"

They must not have found my note, or she wouldn't be asking.

I hate to hear her sad like this. I know she is scared, but I wasn't. I really wasn't, not when I made the decision, not when I picked the day, not when I planned it all out, and not when I followed through.

Suddenly I am aware of a hand in mine, and I wonder if I can squeeze it now. I try to grasp her hand; it fails. I try one more time, and suddenly there are a bunch of noises and my mom screaming that it's not true, that I couldn't be dead, and she starts to cry and yell. What does she mean? I am alive.

"It's alright, she knocked off her heart monitor." My mom quiets down a bit at this. "That means she is trying to communicate. We are going to take the medicine keeping her asleep off and she will wake up soon." My mom is laughing now, and I hear her voice in my ear. "Don't worry baby, mommy is here." She says, "I love you."

Suddenly I feel my body again. The pain in my leg is almost gone, and I can feel her holding my hand.

I wonder if I can speak. I try to say, "I love you too," but I cannot tell if the words came out.

"She's awake!" My mom yells to the doctors. "She said she loved me back."

I guess that answers it. I am alive, and I can function again. For some reason this bothers me. Wouldn't most people be happy to be alive, happy their family cared? I am so ungrateful.

I notice the blurry image of these strange people standing above me. These must be doctors. I turn my head and a whoosh of nausea and pain come at me. I see my mother's face just before it all goes black again.

When I wake up I feel tired as if I had been awake this whole time. "What happened? Where am I?" I open my eyes and a blinding light fills the room. "Is this Heaven?" It can't be. Suicide is a sin. Maybe it's just a joke from Hell trying to make me think that I am in Heaven, just to drag me down to Hell.

I try to make out some shapes. It's a light, so I am in some kind of room. My bedroom?

"Sissy?"

"What! That's my Mom! What is she doing here?"

"Mom?" I ask but, my voice sounds strange, and there is a stuck feeling in my throat, and I am suddenly aware that there is something in it.

"It's okay sweetie, you're going to be okay now." Her voice is reassuring as I close my eyes and succumb to the darkness once more.

*Barbara Schermerhorn is a Social Science major at  
Herkimer College.*



# The Storm Within

Daniel Swift

Quietly she sits on a bench, looking to the skies for guidance. Her innate beauty hidden behind her soft, silky brown hair, which is blowing in the unstable breeze. She is aware of the approaching storm, but still she sits... waiting.

Her beautiful green eyes shine with brilliance in the midst of the broken sunlight. They broadcast to the world the tears to come. She finds herself ugly and fat, but I know that she's not.

The cloud cover has now blanketed her world and begun to moisten it ever so gently. She reaches into her backpack and puts on the Led Zeppelin hoodie that she holds so dearly. Then she lifts her nicely toned legs and curls into a sitting ball, pulling the hoodie over her legs. The winds and rain have now become more than she imagined.

Her mind drifts away for a moment. What was on her mind? Was it a memory of a boyfriend, a friend, or her family? No, it had to be a thought of escape.

She dreamed of traveling the world and seeing the sights. She wanted nothing more than to get out of this valley of darkness. The enlightenment of new places and cultures was what her brilliant mind sought. However, here in the dark she sat, weathering the storm.

The faint sound of thunder could be heard more and more as she sat there with disappointment. With each flash of godly energy, her body would shake and then quickly recover. She was trying so hard to hide herself from the world, but she was failing to do so.

When the eye of the storm had reached her, she looked around, searching for someone to comfort her. However, only emptiness could be seen. She then looked back, off into the distance, and locked herself back up to embrace the second half of the storm. This half she knew would hit her harder, which meant her defensive walls, her cobblestone fortress, would break and fall.

Brick by brick, they crumbled at her feet. She was losing this battle. However, with childish pride, still she tried to hold it all together. Trying not to expose herself to the cold, dark world that surrounded her.

Now, drenched with the rains of emotions, she snapped back into reality and sunlight kissed her cheek. The skies were clear for miles upon miles, and yet she was still cloaked in sadness and soaked to the core.

She looked around, and the emptiness was now full of laughter, echoing throughout the courtyard. People were walking all around her, and she knew that she had weathered yet another storm.

She put on another painted smile, got up and headed off to her next class. For she had to finish school before her dreams of escape could ever come true. Her escape was just a year away...

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## The Memory of You

Daniel Swift

Our passion has been ripped from us.  
And we are crying.  
Our hearts have been broken by this,  
And we are hurting.  
All of the earth around us fades,  
And we are drifting.  
We are holding on to the memory of you,  
And we will not let go.

Each day has its own flow.  
Push and pulls us, where we need to go.  
Time ticks by so fast.  
Funny how the future became the past.

But that's just how life goes.  
Open your eyes to all that it shows.  
The earth is now a bit greyer,  
But Heaven shines in just the right way.

Innocence fueled by music and humor,  
Got us all through the years.  
We're so different and yet so the same.  
Brothers and Sisters together without any shame.

You live on in all that we do,  
Our laughter comes from,  
All the silly things you use to do.  
From your humor came the light of existence,  
A healing power unbroken by anyone's persistence.

But now that we are left without you here,  
With no new memories for us to share.

*About Daniel Swift: I am a man who expresses himself artistically. I have written many things from poetry to short stories... to even a novel. I have always held on to these pieces and now I feel it is time to let them be read.*



## 423 Caterwaul Drive

Sandra C. Drobot

I walked a cardboard box out to the recycling bin. It was so beautiful outside that I didn't hurry going back inside. I lingered on my wrap-around porch for about a half an hour listening to the birds and not a single other sound that would come from anything civilized. With every breath I took of this fresh, piney air, I felt unburdened. This was my house. It took every penny that I had left to my name but was the smartest thing that I had ever done. It was the one that I dreamed of when I was a child. It had balconies and a belvedere on the roof. It had a center hall spiral staircase, marvelous stained glass windows in two rooms, and three fireplaces. I almost lost my mind when I saw the indoor pool. This wonderful piece of modern architecture was one of a kind, created by the czar of inhabitable art, Preston Browning. This was his house that he lived in. Now it was mine. I would work out the expense somehow. We in the real estate business call it a "stigmatized property." Mr. Browning lived here until he literally disappeared. The mystery of his disappearance was never solved, but rumors of murder and suicide ran rampant in the tabloids, causing this lovely house to become the buy of the century. I got it for a fraction of what it was worth, but I would be eating canned spaghetti for the next ten years.

I walked through my new front door and into the bright kitchen. It was still filled with boxes of things that needed to be put away. I couldn't understand how I could have gotten rid of so much crap and still had so much left. I sighed while I picked up my partial mug of chamomile and sat down at the table to go through the first mail to arrive at this address. The envelopes were now addressed to Marina Costakis. No more hyphen Perez or long last name to deal with. Nope, they were gone, along with that prick Miguel and his twenty year old nurse, not to mention the bastard child that she was carrying. They would soon be going to Brazil when he finished his contract with the hospital where he was an emergency physician. Thank God for the little things!

I worked for another two hours in the kitchen, made up the bedroom, then took some time to have a sandwich for dinner. The house was really quiet. As evening blanketed my new residence, I found that I was feeling a little uneasy. It was my first night out of that cramped, downtown apartment. I felt that it would take a little time to get used to living here alone, surrounded by the silence and endless space. I found a jazz CD that Miguel hated and I loved. I was once again allowed. I blasted it and then turned on almost every light in the house. It was better. I worked until I was exhausted enough to shut everything off and collapse into bed.

The next morning, I had awoken to sunlight streaming into my window. It made me feel warm and almost giddy with excitement. I almost jumped out

of bed with energy that I didn't remember having in a long time. I slid out of my nightgown, threw on my robe, and headed for the kitchen. I was getting ready to make coffee when I saw the bottle of champagne that I had been saving for something special in a box on the table. You couldn't get more special than my first real day in my new house.

I stuffed the coffee back into the cabinet and popped open the bottle. I poured it into the fanciest glass that I had, part of a set that was my grandmother's and never saw the light of day other than for special dinner parties with Miguel's colleagues. There wouldn't be any more of those.

I sipped from the glass, letting the bubbles enliven my mouth. It was almost too good to be true, this whole thing. But it was true, I reminded myself.

I carried my glass of champagne with me to the pool room. The sunlight was shining through the line of French doors and turned the water into a glittering beacon of refreshment. I thought for a second of how much work that it will take maintain this thing. I can't afford a pool guy. I would work it out. No gym that I know of can offer what this pool can.

I peeled off the robe and dove into the freedom that the envelope of cool water offered. I swam several laps before emerging on the side by the French doors that opened onto a balcony that hung over a rugged ravine with a winding creek at the bottom. Right next to the doors stood several boxes which had been left by the movers. I recognized them as coming from the storage unit. I wasn't sure what was in them, so I opened the closest one. This one would be destined for the trash.

I pulled out a gold frame with a photo of Miguel and me, taken on a ski trip about five years ago. My first initial reaction was to think of how young we looked. It wasn't long ago, but we had aged considerably. Did we do that to each other, or was it the normal passage of time? Only a few months after the trip came the news that I could never have children. Miguel told me not to worry. It didn't matter to him. We could travel and do things together without a care. It would be as if we were young forever. That was a load of bull.

He quickly changed his mind when his little squeeze got pregnant. Off he went. I had no children. I didn't stay young either. I could start to see evidence of it happening right in that very photo. I'm five foot ten. Miguel was an inch or two shorter. I was slouching in the photo as it bothered him that I was taller. There would be no more of that.

I pulled the photo out of the frame and intentionally rolled my spine upward, feeling what it was like to be tall once again. I was naked and wet when I walked through that door, standing rigid by the railing. The mountain breeze ran its icy hands over me while I tore the photo in half, separating the two of us the way that the papers that he had presented to me to sign did. I balled up in my fist the half with his image and threw it into the gorge. It floated momentarily in the breeze before plunging into the void. I watched it bounce once off an

outcropping of rocks before continuing its journey to the creek below. I drew a deep breath. I felt like it was finally over. Moving to this wonderful place gave me my life back. I went back into the house to shower and dress.

In the bathroom off of my bedroom, I finished my shower and walked to the vanity to comb my thick mop of long, dark curls. Grabbing a towel, I ran it over the mirror as it had fogged up. As it cleared, I thought I saw a man's face appear in the mirror, and I recoiled back so fast that I hit the back of my head when I slammed into the shower door. I held it tightly and bent forward, on the verge of nausea. My heart was pounding as the image seared its way into my memory, a sandy-haired man with blue eyes and a mustache, mouthing silent words and waving his hand. I took a couple of deep breaths and tried to calm myself. I was under a lot of stress for the past year. This move itself was a stress, whether it was a good one or not. I needed time. This was why I took the month off from the agency to get settled in. I slowly straightened myself up and forced myself to look at the mirror. All I saw was my reflection. My body was still stiff with fright, but my mind was rapidly coming to the conclusion that I imagined it. I decided to use the bathroom in the hall and to get rid of the mirror when I had a chance.

I put the incident out of my mind the best that I could and went back to work. Going through my mental to-do list, I remembered to go to the basement and check the oil tank. If it needed to be filled, I wanted to do it before the snow came and access to the house would be difficult. It was full. As I was turning to leave, a small pinpoint of red light caught my eye from beneath an old work-bench along the west wall. It was a thin beam, like a laser pointer, and it piqued my curiosity. I went to take a closer look. It seemed to be coming from behind some old apple crates that were under the bench. I wondered if it could be from an appliance. I didn't want the house to catch fire, so I yanked out the crates. The beam didn't grow much larger with the crates removed, which had me stumped. Lowering myself down to my knees, I crawled under the bench. There was a crawl space opening, maybe three feet by three feet, if that. The light came from inside, but I could not see from where.

I slid through the opening. It wasn't a crawl space, but opened into a primitive room, maybe a root cellar, with stone walls and hand hewn wooden shelves. It was empty. This was odd to me as this wasn't an old house, but built only ten years ago. At that point, I realized that there was no light in the room. I carefully looked around, but saw nothing. In frustration, I twisted my hair around my finger almost to the point of cutting off circulation. Could the light have been a reflection from something else or from a hole in the wall? I shrugged and made my way out from under the work bench and moved the crates back. At least there were no old electrical appliances to catch fire. I went back upstairs to work some more.

I had finished and decided to tackle the boxes in the pool room. My

heart felt like it stopped as I walked in. Sitting by the pool, looking right at me, was the man in the mirror. I could not move as adrenaline shot through the core of my body.

He was tall, maybe forty-ish, and he had his long legs crossed as he slouched in the old Adirondack chair. He nodded his head in greeting at me, giving me a pleasant smile that lit up his handsome face. He held the partial glass of champagne that I had left behind this morning.

It took a few seconds for me to force the words from throat. "Get out of my house!" I demanded.

He dropped his eyes for a moment, his smile fading slightly. Then he stood up, drained the glass of the final drops of champagne and looked up at me. "I can't," he said, quietly.

I was still fixed to the spot where I had entered the room. "Get out or I'll call the police!"

A look of frustration crossed his face. "Like I told you before. I can't. Calling the police won't help. I think you'll find the phones quite dead."

My vision shrank and my mind clouded. I ran to the extension on the wall and found that there was no dial tone. Now that my body was moving, I ran for the front door, grabbing my purse along the way and fumbling for my phone. I headed for my car, not bothering to shut the door behind me. My hands were shaking, but I managed to unlock the car door and yanked it open, taking a furtive look behind me to see him standing in the doorway. I practically jumped into the car, locking the door. I started the engine and gunned it. Wheels squealing, I took off down the driveway. I got as far as the first bend, and the car ground to a complete stop, without a sputter of warning. I felt pressure on my chest as panic set in. I grabbed my phone and tried to dial. There was no service. I tried and tried before throwing it into the back of the car. A second later, he was standing at my door, his hands in his pockets.

"Come on," he said, calmly. "I'm not going to hurt you. We need to talk." He opened the car door, even though I had it locked, and he offered his hand. "Come on. Let's go talk."

A feeling of helplessness overtook me, and I took his hand. When we walked inside the house, I could smell food cooking. I was dumbfounded as I didn't think I had anything in the house that required cooking. I hadn't stocked the pantry yet.

"Let's go get something to eat." He smiled at me and led me to the dining room.

I walked in and felt my jaw drop. The table that was just a short time ago filled with boxes was now beautifully set and held a formal meal. I felt tears sting my eyes. "What's going on here?" I cried out.

He held a chair out and motioned for me to sit. I stiffly complied, and he took a chair opposite me. He helped himself to the spread, passing me plates

which I put to the side. My throat felt like it was closed, and I don't think I could have eaten if I wanted to.

"I should tell you my name for starters. I'm Preston Browning. I designed this house."

"That's impossible," I said, skeptically. Browning disappeared over four years ago."

He chuckled. "Is that what they say? I disappeared? Sounds more like something Houdini would do. No. I didn't disappear. I've been right here all along."

"There's no way!" I protested. Not with the amount of people that have been through here. I had shown this house at least a dozen times before I bought it. Why didn't you come forward? It makes no sense."

He chewed a mouthful of food and swallowed before answering. "Like I said. I can't."

I rolled my eyes. "I suppose you're going to tell me that you're a ghost or something."

He smiled and shook his head. "No. Not that I know of. Are you?"

I ignored his comment and raised my voice. "Then tell me what's going on here!"

He finished his plate and shrugged. To be honest with you, I don't know. I can't leave here. I was thinking of how lonely I was and suddenly you were here. I tried to warn you to get out. You're too much of a skeptic. You didn't believe what you were seeing. Now you can't leave here either. You have to be careful what you think about around here."

My eyes narrowed. "You can stay here if you want. But I'm leaving. Even if I have to walk!" I was about to leave the table when I heard a voice call out my name that stopped me cold. It was Miguel.

"Marina! No more games! I want my grandmother's ring. The court said you have to return it," he called out.

I felt a wave of anger and bitterness pass over me at the sound of his voice, which seemed to wash away the fear of the ridiculous situation that I seemed to be in. "No way, you idiot!" I said, starting for the door.

Browning called after me. "Stay here! The ring doesn't matter anymore."

I turned to him, furious. "The man took my virginity. He's not getting his ring back!"

I moved into the foyer where I saw him standing, ready for a showdown, when I heard my own voice call to him from down the hall. I stopped and listened. Again it called to him to come to the pool room. A chill ran through me.

He moved toward the sound. "I just want the ring Marina, and then I'll go. I'll bring the sheriff if I need to."

I jumped out in front of him, shouting for him to stop. He walked right through me I stood in horror as he continued on as if he didn't hear or see me. I hunched forward, running my hands over my arms. They felt like flesh and bone, but he walked through me. I turned to see him follow the voice into the pool room. I hurried after him.

By the time I arrived, he was already by the French doors. It was starting to rain, and I heard him protest about going out. The voice said something that I couldn't distinguish, and he moved onto the balcony. He glanced in either direction with a confused look on his face. Just as I began to move forward, a swirl of wind and water rushed onto the balcony, lifting him up as if he were a doll and carrying him over the gorge. He hovered for less than a second, limbs flailing, and then fell like a rock. I screamed and ran to the railing. I cried out in horror as I could see his body in a heap on the rocks below and a red patch of blood mixed with rainwater streaming off of a rocky outcropping that he must have hit on the way down. I stood there, shaking and crying until Browning gathered me into his arms.

"It's over," He said. "Let's go inside." I saw him glance over the railing. "You have to be careful what you think about in this house."

I settled into my new life eventually. This happened only after numerous escape attempts that were never successful. Once I even ran into the woods for what seemed to be acres, only to find myself back in the house with no knowledge of how I got there. No, there was no escape that I could find. Like two hamsters in a cage, we were cared for and fed, with a companion for company, but no freedom. We didn't know what would happen when whoever was our keeper was finished with us. There was always the unending question in my mind of what and why that nagged at me. I tried not to think about it.

Preston was a good companion, even though I had no choice. He was kind, thoughtful, an intelligent man and interesting to talk to. He had a dry sense of humor and made me laugh. I actually fell in love with him. He was a more suitable mate for me than Miguel had ever been. It was nice to be in bed with someone at night again.

I don't know how much time passed, and we had not seen a soul since Miguel. One day, people started to come into the house again with a broker from my office. Preston showed me how to use the mirror, or what we called "the portal," to drive people away. It was the only place in the house where those on the outside could see us. We didn't know if we could do this forever. Someone could buy the house, or it could sell in a tax sale. What if they tore it down? Would we continue to exist? It was a mystery.

The broker arrived with two elderly people, ushering them in enthusiastically. "This is perfect for what you have in mind. Imagine a luxury bed and breakfast on this mountaintop. They'd be flocking from the city!" The broker said. "You could easily divide it to get six rooms plus your own apartment."

Preston turned red and scoffed at the thought of dividing the house that he designed. "We need to get rid of these people!" he said to me, leading me by the hand to the portal.

The man appeared in the room. "There's another big bathroom in here, Cindy!" he cried out to his wife. He stomped on the floor by the tub, I assume, to see if it had any water damage.

I moved to the mirror, pressed my face against it and grimaced.

The man's eyes flew open and he did a little confused shuffle before heading for the door. "On second thought, I like the other place better!" he shouted as he made a hasty exit.

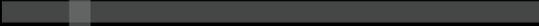
We were doubled over with laughter, after which we fell into the soothing warmth of each other's arms. We didn't know why this happened to us or how much time we had together. For the moment, we were the other's reason for living. Inside our embrace, we were home.

*Sandra C. Drobot is a Social Science major at Herkimer College.*



# Artwork

By Richard Colby  
Art Studies Major





| Blue Terrier



Teapot |



Coffee Mug



Electric Frog |



Mr. Fluffy

## A Desire to Be

Jay Drobot

A vine wraps around a trellis, its many arms extending in all directions, weaving in and out of the slats of wood man had constructed to support and promote its advance as it strives to consume all the areas of untouched open space that lay within its reach.

The vine's body, the spiraling texture of its bark, flows endlessly on, only changing its order to show off one of its many branches or scars. The branches advance from their origin, the body of the vine. Each one, one of the vine's many children, each being blessed with an attempt to experience the sweet success of life. Their goal is to grow and spread as vast as they can, mimicking their creator in appearance and in path. The scars upon its body show its past. Each mark is a memory of a new edition's failed attempt to follow in the footsteps of its creator. Their will to advance cut short by an unfortunate past event.

A fine array of leaves descend from each branch. Their numbers are an even count, one side a reflection of the next. They continue on until they reach the end of their growth. The last leaf on the strand stands alone. This is the one to lead and represent the rest as they follow behind in an even suit. The last reaches further into the vast open plain of freedom in which it strives to overcome. It looks to fill in the empty space with no more than its presence, its purpose to expose itself and those who follow to the life giving light, the reason for its progression.

There are clusters of bluish-purple fruits which descend from its branches. They force the limbs to bend and turn down to the ground, the fruits' destined and desired place to fall. The fruits are made only in the attempt to achieve what purpose their creator had embedded in them. To obtain maturity, fall to the earth, become one with the ground from which they are one day destined to rise up from and reach as far up to the heavens as the years will allow; to continue a cycle which they unconsciously are forced to follow; to accomplish the purpose of their existence; the ongoing repetitive cycle of their survival: to be born, to grow, to reproduce, and to die.

*Jay Drobot is a Fine Arts major at  
Herkimer College*



# A Martyr's Gift of Genesis

Jay Drobot

Isaiah woke up on the dust covered floor of his friend's apartment. He raised himself up reluctantly, his head mimicking the stretched skin of a drum being beaten in a marching band. Running his hand across the smooth contour of his left cheek, he felt the layer of perspiration that had developed during his blissful slumber. The vibration of a box fan, along with the wall hung television, were the only sounds to be heard in the studio apartment.

Isaiah struggled to stand upright. He felt the strain of his bladder and began to stumble to the bathroom door. "Still drunk.," he thought. Nothing new, aided by boredom he indulged himself daily, a slave to an unforgiving routine that he thought only affected him. With the aid of the wall for balance, he relieved himself of the weight that built up from the night before.

He removed his hand from the wall, no longer seeking its support to stand. He turned a couple steps to his left and reached for the chrome, cross shaped knobs on the rust stained, white porcelain sink. As the water was released from its metallic chamber, he lowered his hands to catch the rushing liquid, allowing the rest to spiral down the open drain. He bailed the water up to his face, feeling the refreshment the cool water provided as it washed away the remnants of the night he could not recall. Once again he reached for and turned the chrome crosses, imprisoning the clear liquid in its metallic tomb.

Isaiah swayed back into the room, taking a seat on the recliner chair that faced the TV. He turned to the table that was next to the chair and searched through the accumulation of cans that covered its surface in hopes of finding a cigarette. He noticed his friend who was passed out across the room. Another victim of the night Isaiah could not recollect. Isaiah's fingers found a rectangular carton. He breathed a sigh of relief, thinking his desire would finally be fulfilled. The good feeling was short lived. *Empty*, he thought as he opened the carton to find it was barren inside.

Feeling unsettled after the failed desktop expedition, he turned his focus to the desk across the room. Isaiah unwillingly raised himself up from the recliner and proceeded to take his ungraceful walk. He scanned the desktop, shuffling papers, cans, and empty chip bags in search of what had been his vice for so many years. The search yielded nothing. He began showing the effects of withdrawal. As his mood began spiraling down, he bit his lip, looked up to the ceiling and mouthed one word, "Fuck."

His mind began to think of a solution to his dilemma, his thoughts processing as if produced by a machine with gears left uncoiled. As he turned away from the desk, his eyes caught sight of his last hope. Isaiah began his unbalanced walk over to where his friend was sleeping. His friend was lying with his

back turned towards him, "Like a rock." Isaiah thought. He pushed his friend's shoulder with his fist. "Thomas," Isaiah said, receiving no response from his sleeping friend.

Something was different. Isaiah started to have an uneasy feeling regarding his friend. He grabbed Thomas's shoulder, which was stiff and cold to the touch. Isaiah's heart began to sink as he pulled his friend over. Thomas remained in the position he was, as if frozen in time. Thomas's face was pale in color. His eyes were open, staring blissfully into the new world he had ventured into. Isaiah froze, adopting the same blissful stare as his mind went blank, unable to comprehend what had happened to his friend.

The minutes that passed while he stared at his friend felt like an eternity. Reality finally caught up with him, the strong emotion he felt caused the adrenalin to rush through his body. Panic set in as he stumbled over the thought of what he should do. "What...what happened," Isaiah said, still in disbelief. He began stepping backwards, his eyes still glued to his longtime friend who remained as he was the moment he took that unexpected step.

Isaiah turned away, walking without the unbalanced sway to the door. He left the apartment, the event turning over in his mind as he tried desperately to remember. The afternoon sun bore down on him, causing beads of sweat to emerge on his forehead. The image of Thomas remained stuck in his mind as he made his way to the room he rented a couple blocks away. The answer he so desperately sought was lost. He couldn't recall the memory that would answer his repetitive question.

He reached the red brick building he lived in and forced open its cracked, glass pane door. Isaiah entered and ascended the staircase, not noticing dirt and litter that had accumulated on the steps. At the end of a hallway, he came to room eleven. The one number was hanging upside down on the door, dangling from the remaining bottom nail. He impatiently fumbled through his pockets for the door key, coming to a sudden halt. Something foreign was in his pocket. He dreadfully removed it, revealing what he already knew was the answer to his cycling question. Isaiah opened his hand, a used syringe rolled from his palm to the base of his fingers. His heart sank as the guilt began to ignite within his body, rapidly consuming him. He closed his hand, raising his head as he felt the pain that was the consequence of the answer he received.

In a rage, Isaiah kicked the door open, shattering the frame that the dead bolt was turned into. He stormed into the grey walled room. The dim light crept through the blinds, projecting the shadow of the ceiling fan across him as it made its endless rotation from above. In anger he threw the syringe across the room. He reached under his bed and removed a composite safe, eagerly drawing the key from his pocket to open it.

Isaiah removed the packets of photos and old coins, revealing a chrome

.38 caliber revolver. He was now relieved of his anticipation, finding the cure for the guilt that overcame him. He sat on his bed, the thin mattress depressing and creaking under his weight. Isaiah grabbed the wood grain handle and raised the gun, the image of his friend still frozen in his mind.

The saliva seemed to part as the barrel came to rest on his tongue. He closed his eyes and focused on the cool feel and metallic taste of the barrel, which promised freedom from the pain he would otherwise have no choice but to endure. The hammer drew back as his finger depressed the trigger. The bright flash of the exploding powder was concealed within the barrel as the bullet spiraled through.

Isaiah jumped up, startling his wife who was peacefully sleeping next to him. He didn't hear her say a word as he stood up and walked over to the bathroom, shuffling the fresh images through his head. Isaiah turned the chrome crosses on the ivory white, porcelain sink, releasing a stream of water which spiraled down the open drain. He cupped his hands and began drawing the cool flowing liquid up to his sweat covered face.

He heard from the doorway, "What's wrong?"

"Just a bad dream Alice," he replied.

Isaiah lowered his hands to rest on the front corners of the sink. He lifted his head to view himself in the mirror, redirecting the drops of water as they fell from his face. He watched as the drops of water circled around the raised scar on his left cheek, thinking of how much his life had come to change.

*Jay Drobot is a Fine Arts major at  
Herkimer College*



## In Control

by Barbara Schermerhorn

I could feel the blood trickle down his face and onto my fist. I didn't care, I punched him again. The smell of alcohol was still on his breath. I knew he had been drinking. That wouldn't taint my victory. I didn't care how drunk he was, he called for the fight and I was going to bring it with all I had.

The sound of music and laughter fill the air, and I'm back home now. I can hear my father's laugh echo through the hallway into my room. I hear the phone ring and my whole body stiffens. The mumbling voices are all I can concentrate on now.

"Let him stay," I pray. "Let him stay."

My opponent falls back but stands straight again.

"Let him stay," I say aloud.

The look on his face is a priceless one of shock as I knock him to the ground.

"Let him stay," I repeat, keeping my voice loud and steady.

I can hear the banging of the phone on the receiver and clench my mouth shut when the door finally closes. I know what this means. I grab my sisters and my brother and lock them in my room. I can tell my sister is frightened, and I tell her to count to one million, and then everything will be alright. She believes me.

I can hear the counting of the referee and the crowd. "1, 2, 3..." I can tell this guy is going to be out. He lays there on the mat, motionless as a groan escapes his bloody mouth.

I can hear the groaning down the hall, and I know what is coming before the hit even comes.

"How does it feel?" he asks, "losing to the champion?"

I know what I want to say, but I also know the safe answer.

"I am not the champion. I deserve to be defeated." I can barely get the words out before he hits me again.

"That's right," he whispers into my ear.

"How does it feel to be the champion?" The interviewer asks, shoving the microphone in my face.

"It's wonderful," I say, and I turn toward my opponent.

He is being carried out on the stretcher now. I notice my coach in the corner, and I go to him.

"Well?" He asks

"I am the champion" I say as I walk toward the back.

"Yes you are!" he says.

"I am the champion and the boss of this house!" my father yells.

"Yes you are," I yell and that's when the vase came flying across the room. I tried to duck, but I was too slow. I can feel the throbbing of my eye and instantly my vision goes blurry.

"Hey, you want some ice for that?" Coach asks gesturing toward my eye.

"No, I will be fine," I say. "I'm going home."

As I go into the locker room I hear the cry of a baby and close my eyes. I can hear my brother crying from down the hall, and I close my eyes dreading the outcome.

"What is that?" he asks, forgetting his newborn son even existed.

"Nothing," I say, but he is banging on the door and the crying gets louder.

"Shut it up!" he yells. "Shut it up!"

I crawl to the door as if I could stop him from breaking it down.

"Please," I beg. "Stop, please."

"Please?" A little voice awakened my daydream, "Please, may I have your autograph?"

She has a desperate hope in her eyes and I recognize it.

"Sure thing," I say taking the pink pad and pen and scribbling my signature upon the center with a little message.

"Stay strong and remember, I am the champion." She exclaims her thanks as she runs back into her dad's open arms.

My father's arms seem so much bigger when they are spread out like this. I know that this time I have to be faster, but I just can't move. The table hits me from behind, and I fall breathless to the ground. I turn to see him stumbling toward the door again.

"No, this is not going to happen!" I stand to my feet. "I am nine years old now. I can defend my family."

I walk toward him. I have to keep them safe. Slowly he turns around, and I stand tall.

"Going to hit me?" he asks with a smirk in his face, "Going to hit me girl?"

"Going to hit me?" I look around and see a man standing in the corner.

"Excuse me?" he walks forward now and I recognize him from the taxi service. "I'm late," he says. "Are you going to hit me?" I get into the cab and roll down the window.

"No," I say as I peer out the window.

I stand up as straight as my body will allow, and I look him in the eye. He begins to laugh and starts to tumble against the wall. I think for a moment that he will fall and pass out, but I was wrong. He stands up taller right next to me and looks down at me. I look him in the eye and raise my fist. I know what has to be done. One punch to the gut, and he was on the ground. I wasn't sorry,

not even when we began to cry.

I look in the mirror at the black and blue of my eye and the golden gloves around my neck. Nothing will ever make me feel as good as that night did. That night was when I truly became champion. That night I gained control.

*Barbara Schermerhorn is a Social Science major at  
Herkimer College.*



# From Unexpected Eyes

Briar Roseboom

The sun was shining high in the sky this morning. As I soaked up its rays, I lay in the warm grass of my owner's lawn. As the wind breezed by gently, I could smell the soap my owners used to do their laundry with in a small creek in front of our home. We were enjoying our day while a new government was forming, hoping it would build with peace and stability. Our country had just got out of a war, and we hope that now we will rise with greatness. I lay in the sun as the day went on, but I grew bored, so I wandered over to my owner and nudged his arm as he washed his clothes in hope of a treat, but he just told me to go lay down. So I trotted off into the woods in hope of finding something to cure my boredom. I sniffed around in the leaves and brush looking for a rabbit or wild cat to chase but had no luck. It's not like I would kill it, just play with it. I only kill another animal when my owner and I go hunting so we can put food on the table. But I grew bored of searching, so I decided to wander back home.

On my way back, I picked up some scents that I didn't recognize which made me pick up my pace. I peeked through our wood line to see if anyone other than my owners were around, but there was no one, not even them. I figured they must have gone into town. As I walked into our yard I noticed something worse had happened. Blood covered the grass that I walked on. A trail led over to the side of our small shed. I followed it slowly with caution. I peered around the corner to find my owner's wife lying on the other side, covered in blood from head to toe. She was missing a few teeth and her arm was completely gone. She called to me, "Come here girl, come pooch, come." I did as I was told and crawled next to her face. She spoke slowly and gasped for air in between her words. I could sense her end was near. She told me to go find her husband and that the Khmer Rouge has taken him away. I touched my nose to her face and could feel how cold she was. I didn't take off right away. I decided to lay next to her until she had passed.

It was nightfall when I finally left her side; my journey had begun. I walked around the yard with my nose to the ground, trying to pick up the scent of my owner. I came across his scent and a few others. This made me more concerned. I followed the scent into the woods at a light pace, hoping to catch up with him and the people who had taken him. I ran through the cool night, but there was no one to be seen.

Morning had come and the sun shined through the thick leaves of the jungle above and the humidity began to set in. I was tired and my paws hurt from the rough ground. I decided to take a short break by a small creek bed; I got a drink and laid down to rest. I closed my eyes just for a second; well, what I

thought was for a second. I awoke to a big bang sound; I jumped up and started running to the sound. I stopped at the edge of the trees and looked through the bushes to a dirt road. There on the side was my owner on his knees, with five other men around him holding guns, pointing right at him. There was a man on the ground next to him who was dead already. Two others knelt down crying and pleading to the men not to kill them. I had to make up a plan fast to distract the men away from him so he could get away. I started a low growl. The men looked up startled. I started to move around, making as much noise as I could in hope that the men would come towards me so I could draw them far enough away from my owner, so he could make a break for it. It was working. As soon as they were far enough away I saw him dart off into the woods. They turned and started shooting at him, but he was already in the jungle. I ran across the road behind the men after my owner. I caught up with him quickly. We were running side by side; it was a good few minutes until he noticed I was there. When he did, he stopped, smiled, and chuckled a little bit. We kept walking forward, away from the direction of our home. We couldn't return to our house because of the fear that Khmer Rouge might go back looking for us. It was sad to think that we didn't have a home to go back to; we were refugees with nowhere to go. Always looking behind us to make sure we weren't being followed.

The sun was starting to set now, but we kept pushing through the thick brush. I stopped dead in my tracks, a smell crossed my snout, a burning smell. I looked up in the sky to see black smoke fill the air. My owner stopped and looked as well. He patted on his leg, a signal for me to follow. We went towards the smoke. As we got closer we could hear screams and gunfire; fear filled the air. We hid behind some trees and looked into this small village, innocent Cambodians running for their lives. The Khmer Rouge shooting on sight, the older men were running down women, dragging them into huts and raping them without any remorse. I even saw a young boy carrying a gun, laughing as he shot and killed men, women, and even other children. I couldn't bear to watch. I wanted to do something. I felt so useless. There was nothing I could do to help. In the corner of my eye I saw a little girl dart off into the woods past us, and two other boys with guns sprinted after her. I took off right behind them, as did my owner. We caught up to them. They were in a little clearing in the jungle, and they surrounded the little girl. She screamed out for help. I could hear how terrified she was just by the sound of her plea. I went to go leap into the circle and protect her, but as soon as I took a step my owner grabbed my collar. He shook his head at me and looked away as they shot her on spot. He was right, there was nothing we could do; we didn't have guns to defend ourselves. We would have gotten shot ourselves if we just jumped in. The young boys with the guns ran off in the direction of the village. I watched them as they disappeared into the depths of the jungle. I walked out slowly to where the girl lay motionless on the ground. He walked over to her and knelt down beside her. He bowed his head and si-

lently gave her a prayer. I couldn't believe how fast all this happened. It seemed to me like a lifetime had passed, but now the sun was just about gone, and a blanket of darkness was beginning to set in. We found a small opening in some rocks and slept there for the night.

The sun awoke us as it peeked into our small cave. We continued on a small dirt road, a path to nowhere. In the distance I could hear a faint sound of a vehicle heading our way. I grabbed hold of my owner's ragged shirt and pulled him to get off the road, but he just pushed my snout away. Now you could really hear the vehicle. He stopped in his tracks and listened, and then he jumped into the bushes. I followed close behind him. We ducked down into the shadows and watched as the truck came closer. As the truck grew nearer you could see that it was filled with Khmer Rouge men. Out of the corner of my eye I spotted a big snake right by my owner's feet. I tried to paw at it to get it away. I tried not to make any noise, but it was slithering closer to him. Then he looked down to see what I was doing, and he saw the snake. He jumped high in the air and out into the road right in front of the truck. They came to a halting stop and piled out of the truck and surrounded him in seconds. I jumped out in between them and my owner, growling and showing my teeth. Their guns turned from him onto me, but they were shocked to see my owner step in front of me, and he explained to the men that I was all he had left and that I could help the men. I could help them hunt for food. They stood there for a minute in silence and looked at one another, and then the leader of the group nodded his head. They pushed my owner onto to back of the truck and I jumped in next to him.

Two hours later we arrived in this camp. There were hundreds of men and women in these swamp-like fields. They were working in muddy water and filth. On the way over to the camp, we passed these fields filled with thousands of dead bodies; they called them the killing fields. Finally the truck stopped in front of this big tent. They threw me out of the truck, my owner as well. They yanked him to his feet, and we headed into the tent. As we went in, I saw women and children on their knees in a line with their heads bowed down crying, Khmer Rouge pointing their guns at them. We entered the tent, and then I heard multiple shots fired. They pushed us in front of this man who was arguing with one of the men that had brought us in. Then I saw this man nod his head, and the others lead us out. I figured they were going to let us stay here since they didn't shoot us.

They put us in this little hut; we were crammed in these so called sleeping quarters with twenty other men. It smelled of feces and decay. We slept curled up in a corner with no space to ourselves at all. It felt like we only slept for three hours when they came to get us. They pointed to my owner to follow the other Cambodians in the muddy water, and the men called to me to go with them, but I sat down next to my owner as he worked. One of them pulled his gun out and pointed it at me. He yelled. He went over to the men and told them

my commands he used to go hunting. They started to walk into the woods and called to me to follow. I looked at my owner; he gave me the ok, so I went off into the woods behind the men. Right off the bat I was on the trail. I bolted into action, chasing the animal down and directing towards the men so they could get a shot in. Two hours later we returned to the camp. We got three deer and a wild cat. I went straight over to my owner, he was still working, so I laid down on the bank next to him and watched him work. He looked up and saw me, then turned and saw the men hanging my killings. He gave me a pat on the head for a good job and returned to what he was doing.

The day passed on and the blazing sun was high in the sky, but he kept working through the day; they didn't even bring him water or food. Finally they called his group over for a small bowl of rice; he ate it all in two bites. Then they made them go back to work. I watched him as he pulled grass from the water. I tried to sleep, but every time I closed my eyes a gunshot jumped me to my feet, fearing that the shot was my owner's end. As I watched over him, some kids wandered over to where we were and they started throwing rocks and hitting me with sticks. My owner told them to stop, but they wouldn't. This one boy hit me so hard that I snapped and bit his arm; he cried out in pain, and one of the guards ran over and looked at the boy as he held his arm, blood seeping through his little fingers. Then he looked at me and raised his handgun to my head, my owner jumped between us. He dropped to his knees and pleaded to the man to let it go, but in an instant he turned his gun and shot him right in the head. I watched as he fell to the ground. I jumped over to him and nudged him, but there was no movement. I heard a loud bang right by my head, then I saw nothing. My journey was over.

*Briar Roseboom is a Criminal Justice major at  
Herkimer College.*





# *Photography*

By Jay Drobot  
Fine Arts Major

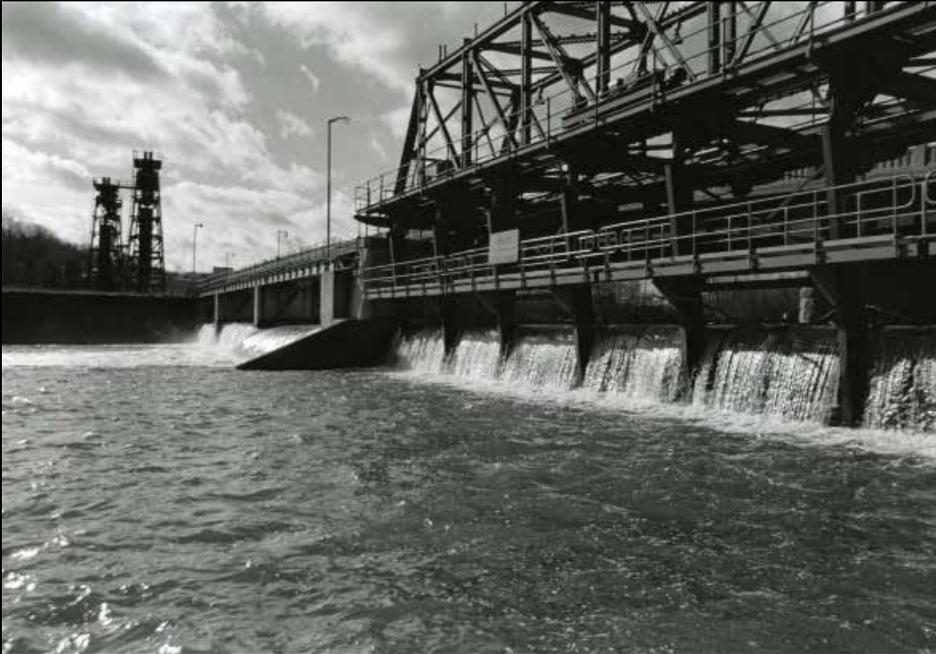


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Black and White Film  
Traditional Darkroom Processing



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## Assessing My Retirement

Peter Clarke

How can I know if my retirement has met or exceeded expectations?

In Luang Prabang I will ask a monk in a saffron robe as he accepts my rice.

In Aswan I will compute the added value of riding a camel to the monastery of St. Simeon.

I will consult the gardener at the Ritz Carlton Powerscourt in Enniskerry.

I will ask the cripple who made the wire mobile we purchased in Victoria Falls.

I will weigh the tears I shed at Pol Pot's Phnom Penh torture house.

I will measure the wind and blueness of sky at Korcula in January.

I will listen in darkness to the elephants tearing up grass outside our hut in Huange.

I will gauge my surprise at the Homo memorial in Amsterdam.

I will ask Ovid if wading in the Black Sea at Constanta offers consolation in exile.

I will try to quantify the worth of standing, rooted before Piero's Resurrection at San Sepulcro.

I will calculate value of the taste of Lardo di Colonnata at the Corona in Bagni di Lucca,

Of mussels in Bruges and escargots in Paris and chesnuts in Zagreb.

How can I know if my retirement has met or exceeded expectations?

Who am I to have had such expectations?

*Peter Clarke is a Professor Emeritus of  
Herkimer College.*





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