



# KAMELIAN 2014

KISHWAUKEE COLLEGE  
LITERARY AND ARTS JOURNAL

# KISHWAUKEE COLLEGE LITERARY AND ARTS JOURNAL



*On the cover...*

## **EDEN HALL GREENHOUSE**

**1ST PLACE PHOTOGRAPHY**

8" H x 10" W

**R**ealizing that educational institutions should encourage intellectual inquiry and being cognizant that we live in a pluralistic society, the following disclaimer is given.

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# CONTENTS

KAMELIAN 2014 * PAGE 2	AWARDS
KAMELIAN 2014 * PAGE 3	JURORS
CURIOSITY * PAGE 27	ANDY ANAYA
FAMILY * PAGE 36	
CONFRONTATION * PAGE 23	JESSICA BROWN
UNTITLED * PAGE 17	
A MILLION WISHES * PAGE 16	KAITLYNN COURIER
SELF-DEPRECATION * PAGE 38	HEATHER LYNN DOTY
 * MY ONLY SUNSHINE * PAGE 31 & 39	KRISTEN DROUGHT
GHOSTYARD * PAGE 18	NATHAN DULCEAK
SOLACE IN AUTUMN * PAGE 13	
UNTITLED * PAGE 10	MARY EMMONS
ripples * PAGE 4	ASHANTI FILES
PASTA * PAGE 20-21	EMILY GREER
GREENHOUSE * COVER & PAGE 30	EDEN HALL
STEAM * PAGE 28	
ANGER IS * PAGE 33	CHRISTOPHER HENNING
HOLLOW NIGHTS * PAGE 24	MAYA HILL
NATURAL SPACES * PAGE 11	
THROUGH THE WIRE * PAGE 32	TINA HOLDRIDGE
GET UP * PAGE 7	MARIAH MAHON
THE RIVER * PAGE 37	
BLADES * PAGE 6 & 7	ZACHARY MARTIN
HUMAN WASTE IN A WORLD OF GIANTS * PAGE 9	BECKI MILLER
INFERNO PRELUDE * PAGE 5	
BEAUTIFULLY * PAGE 35	MANDA NEILL
WING ESTATE LAB * PAGE 15	BRYCE RAY PARKER
FRANCISCA * PAGE 34 & 35	SEPTEMBER PEREZ
I BELIEVE IN SUPERHEROES * PAGE 8	VARINIA LUQUE-PLACENCIA
WAR * PAGE 37	JENNIFER STEMEN
A FOOLISH THOUGHT, TO SAY A SORRY SIGHT * PAGE 26	RAVEN TALLITSCH
TRANSITIONS * PAGE 22	JOANNE TOCZYLOWSKI
IRON MASK * PAGE 19	WILLIAM VAUGHN
MARbled MASK * PAGE 29	
SLEEPING MASKS I AND II * PAGE 12	
STANDING IN THE SHADOWS AT THE EDGE OF MY BED * PAGE 25	JENNIFER WALLIS
TREASURE BOX * PAGE 14	
MIRAGE * PAGE 40	BLADIMIR ZACARIAS

# AWARDS

## 2 DIMENSIONAL ART

FIRST PLACE \* **BECKI MILLER** \* HUMAN WASTE IN A WORLD OF GIANTS  
SECOND PLACE \* **BRYCE RAY PARKER** \* WING ESTATE LAB  
THIRD PLACE \* **JESSICA BROWN** \* CONFRONTATION

## 3 DIMENSIONAL ART

FIRST PLACE \* **JENNIFER WALLIS** \* TREASURE BOX  
SECOND PLACE \* **JOANNE TOCZYLOWSKI** \* TRANSITIONS  
THIRD PLACE \* **MARY EMMONS** \* UNTITLED

## PHOTOGRAPHY

FIRST PLACE \* **EDEN HALL** \* GREENHOUSE  
SECOND PLACE \* **MAYA HILL** \* HOLLOW NIGHTS  
THIRD PLACE \* **NATHAN DULCEAK** \* GHOSTYARD

## POETRY

FIRST PLACE \* **JENNIFER STEMEN** \* WAR  
SECOND PLACE \* **CHRISTOPHER HENNING** \* ANGER IS  
THIRD PLACE \* **HEATHER LYNN DOTY** \* SELF-DEPRECIATION

## ESSAY

FIRST PLACE \* **SEPTEMBER PEREZ** \* FRANCISCA  
SECOND PLACE \* **VARINIA LUQUE-PLACENCIA** \* I BELIEVE IN SUPERHEROES

## SHORT FICTION

FIRST PLACE \* **KRISTEN DROUGHT** \* MY ONLY SUNSHINE  
SECOND PLACE \* **ANDY ANAYA** \* FAMILY  
THIRD PLACE \* **ZACHARY MARTIN** \* BLADES

# JURORS

## ART AND PHOTOGRAPHY

**BLAINE BRADFORD**

FOUNDATIONS TWO-DIMENSIONAL MENTOR / INSTRUCTOR  
NORTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY

**ERIC FUERTES**

THREE-DIMENSIONAL ADJUNCT INSTRUCTOR  
NORTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY

**CYNTHIA HELLYER HEINZ**

FOUNDATIONS COORDINATOR  
NORTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY

## POETRY ESSAY AND SHORT FICTION

**CAROLSUE CLERY**

TEACHER AND AUTHOR

**ESTHER DIMARZIO**

RETIRED ENGLISH INSTRUCTOR  
KISHWAUKEE COLLEGE

**LISE MAE SCHLOSSER**

ADJUNCT ENGLISH INSTRUCTOR  
WAUBONSEE COMMUNITY COLLEGE

# RIPPLES

I trace back the paths that I've chosen to take  
Only to realize they were not choices,  
Just ripples on a lake  
Originating from a single cast stone  
That was a stupid mistake made on a lonely walk home  
And I am sewn together, stitched in a womb  
And outward these timeless ripples bloom  
Across the lake of my existence  
So persistent that my life is an accumulation of choices  
yet I look to these ripples and perceive their voices  
Recollections of a mother hell bent on a will  
Recollections of a daughter choosing to not fill  
The shoes of a misfit mother  
I uncover, I reveal decades of ill given advice  
Which was equally ill received  
And try to trace back that dreaded stone that I perceive to have started it all  
Started the cascade of a daughter's fall because the cause is still unknown  
Three generations of women unsown, related but unknown to each other  
I am desperate to escape the ripples of my mother  
Just as desperate as she is to escape the ripples of her own  
Fighting the ripples that engulf my daily life  
To escape the strife that always seems to belong  
I wait for the ripples to someday slow, to fan out and release me from this curse  
But those never ending ripples seem to grow stronger daily instead of just disperse  
They engulf me, shroud me, whip me from side to side  
I submerge beneath them to where the truth hides  
These ripples are the only thing that's holding us together  
So for now at least I'll pretend to not know better  
And go with the flow of the ripples

**ASHANTI FILES**  
POETRY



**BECKI MILLER**  
**INFERNO PRELUDE**

RELIEF PRINT  
9"H x 12"W

# BLADES

“Horatio, I am sorry to tell you but I have some bad news. Due to your horrible accident, the extensive injuries and damage to your legs, we are going to have to amputate both legs above the knee”.

Those words kept swirling around in my head. All I could hear was the doctor’s words ringing through my ears again and again. This cannot be true and it certainly cannot be happening to me. All of my hard work, my dreams and goals, my training and accomplishments, seemed worthless and pointless now. Never would I have thought while walking out the door that morning, preparing for my long run, it would end with the word “amputate”.

It began as an ordinary summer day. It was early and the dew on the grass was still heavy. My alarm went off at 5:35 a.m., as it does every morning. I had been putting in extra workouts this summer to prepare for my senior year of track. I wanted to earn a track scholarship for college and was determined to be successful. I followed my normal routine: brush, eat, stretch, and head out the door. My typical breakfast consisted of a whole wheat bagel with strawberry cream cheese, a banana, and a glass of orange juice. Today I decided to have milk instead, it went downhill from there. As I was leaving my front yard, I tripped over the neighbor’s bike. I said “Thanks for nothing,” as I wondered why her bike was on my lawn, and off I went.

I was on mile six when it happened, I didn’t even see it coming. I came over the hill, following proper running etiquette and staying on the proper side of the street. I had my headphones on and was watching my pace on my phone. I saw a red Audi in the opposite lane. I knew I was doing nothing wrong and was minding my own business, paying him little attention. Suddenly I saw the car swerve into my lane, I couldn’t react in time and the driver didn’t see me. In what felt like a split second, my life was changed forever. I heard a crash, my body fell to the ground, and suddenly I felt nothing.

The next thing I remember was waking up in the hospital. The doctor was there, talking to my parents standing at the foot of my bed. I didn’t know where I was or why I was there. “What is going on?” My mom had been crying. She walked over to my side. I started to see flashes and began to recall what happened, “The red Audi”, I said. I remembered feeling a crush and falling, I looked to my mom. She nodded, tears streaming down her face. “What’s next?” I asked. That is when the doctor told me:

“Due to your horrible accident and the extensive injuries and damage to your legs, we are going to have to amputate both legs above the knee.”

“Why me?” I asked. I knew there wasn’t a real answer, but all I could think about was my senior year and the State track meet.

The doctors explained the procedure, the process, and the next steps. I knew this was not going to be an easy recovery, but I also knew I was determined to not let this accident ruin my life. I was willing to meet the challenge and overcome whatever lay before me. It wasn’t easy, but I was ready to embrace the road ahead.

Physical therapy was rough. Three or four days a week I would go to the rehab and recovery center for two or three hours at a time. The exercises were painful and the work was grueling. I was determined to fight through the pain. My goal was to be able to walk before the first day of school. Despite my hard work, I was not going to be able to hide the fact I was walking on prosthetic legs. The therapy was helping me adjust to the new style of walking and giving me more mobility than I had, but I knew it would never be the same. As the start of school approached, I knew I was as ready as I could be, and had accomplished my goal. I would walk into the building on the first day with my new prosthetic legs.

“HA, HA, HA! Hard to be a state champ like that! What are you going to do? Hobble down the track? I’ve seen penguins move faster than you; you will never beat me in the quarter mile. I’ll see you on the line.” Frank yelled down the hall in front of everyone. Frank wasn’t my only problem. He, his friends and many others made fun of my new challenges and the goals I had set for myself. Day in and day out, Frank would make fun of me. It was constant harassment and ridicule, but I was determined to rise above it.

Despite Frank and his friends, I was still determined to reach my goals. After talking to the doctors, therapists, and my parents, we had ordered running blades to allow me to continue training. When the blades arrived, my faith in my own ability and my dedication to complete a goal I set four years ago was renewed. I took my blades and headed straight for the track.

Frank and his friends continued to harass me. I never really gave in to their jeers, and daily worked out on the track long after others had left. One night I thought I was alone on the track while running four hundred repeats. I didn’t know my varsity coach was still on campus. I was half way through my workout when Coach Thorson approached me.

“Son, I hope seeing you here tonight working so hard means you will be practicing with the team and participating in the spring season.”



I had no idea what to say or how to respond to Coach T. I was honored, speechless, scared, and excited. My hard work continued to pay off and I could see my goals being accomplished. I was ready to practice with Frank and the team and prepare for the spring season. I told Coach T to count me in and that I would be ready for the season's opening meet.

The day had finally come. I had continued to work hard throughout the fall and winter. The comments and jeers fell on deaf ears. I was not going to allow Frank or anyone else to stop me from my goals. I had set these goals as a freshman and I was going to accomplish them as a senior. I knew I faced more challenges than I had expected, and I knew a lot of people were expecting me to fail; I didn't care. I wanted to be successful and I was determined not to let anything stop me. Losing my legs in a terrible accident was not going to prevent my dreams from coming true. My hard work was going to continue to pay off and nothing would stop me.

Although tempted to give in to the jeers and jokes from Frank, all I could hear were the positive words spoken by Coach T. I knew no matter what happened today, or the physical result of the race, I had accomplished more than just the quarter mile. I had persevered through trials, and had been mocked for my goals and dreams. I was determined to accomplish something no matter what others said. It was finally race day and I had nothing to lose.

I knew my event was coming up. I was mentally prepared. I made final adjustments to my blades and waited for my heat to be called. I knew others were watching, staring, waiting. They waited to see if I would succeed or fail. I was ready to show everyone what I had worked so hard to accomplish, I was ready for a state qualifying time.

I stood in my lane. I was in lane one, with Frank to my right, and no one to my left. I wished Frank good luck; he had no idea how much his comments had actually spurred me on to be in this moment. I said a little prayer, thanked God for this opportunity. I felt invigorated as I waited for the start gun. I looked to my parents and Coach T; I knew my hard work was worth it. I crouched, ready, set... "BANG." ❧

**ZACHARY MARTIN**  
3RD PLACE SHORT FICTION

# GET UP

Get down

You can't get back up.

If you sit down now

You won't stand back up.

Keep moving

Even if you can't run

Walk.

Crawl.

Drag your body through,

The sand.

The marsh.

The mud.

The second wave,

Will come,

Hit you,

Push you through.

For a minute,

For a second,

For long enough.

But,

Get down,

You won't get back up.

**MARIAH MAHON**  
POETRY

# I BELIEVE IN SUPERHEROES

I believe in superheroes. What is a superhero? A superhero is a figure with extraordinary abilities. A superhero is someone who realizes big and incredible actions. A superhero is a character with amazing powers, but I think that superheroes are ordinary people with something extra.

When I was a little girl, my parents worked almost all day. When my dad came from work at night, he didn't look tired or stressed. He looked like he had been waiting all day for the moment to come to the house and play with me. Now that I'm a big girl, I think about the stress he had all day, walking hurriedly through the halls of the building, trying to find documents in his big desk, and throwing his coffee all over the floor. No matter what, he always came to my room and played with me, leaving behind his work life. He made me laugh like crazy, he told me a story to sleep, and he kissed my forehead. Who has the strength and the ability to work and get tired all day and then come back home without problems and bad feelings?

I know a few dads, moms, grandfathers, grandmothers, sons, brothers, sisters and a lot of people with this extraordinary ability. My dad taught me that ordinary people can do amazing things; they just need something extra. They just need a reason for coming back home and forgetting everything. My dad taught me that superheroes exist and we are surrounded by them.




Most of us know superheroes like Wonder Woman, Spiderman, Aquaman, Iron Man, Batman and so many others. We know these superheroes because they are famous and they have done incredible things. But what about the superheroes that we do not know?

I believe that big actions are done every day by small persons. These are the things that make ordinary people become superheroes. A small action for me is the biggest and most incredible action for another person to take; and no matter how small the action is, it always deserves to be told. There should be so many others in non-famous magazines or in kids' notebooks that nobody knows.

These daily small superheroes do not ask for any movie or big magazine; they just do what they do, because they want to. These are the true superheroes that I try to meet every day in every place I go.

We all grow up with the idea that superheroes do not exist and they are a Marvel creation. I don't know anyone who flies across the sky to stop a falling plane, or a green angry man who helps defeat Evil. I don't know if there is a man that has the abilities of a spider and fights with a big octopus or a sand man. But I do know people with the power to save lives; I do know people with the power of making other people laugh just by talking and telling a story. I know people who like to help other people. I know a mom who has the power to make my life happier, and I know a sister who has the power of understanding me; I also know a guy who has the power to make me feel like I'm flying. And I know a father who is not physically next to me, but he still has the super power to reverse time and make me feel as if we are together every time we talk on the phone.

Every day that I go out of my house and see people walking on the street, I like to imagine what kind of superheroes they are and what extra thing they have to fight for. I believe in superheroes because I know a few of them, and I'm sure that there are many more in the world, hidden under their costumes of ordinary people. 

**VARINIA LUQUE - PLACENCIA**  
2ND PLACE ESSAY



**BECKI MILLER**  
**HUMAN WASTE IN A WORLD OF GIANTS**

1ST PLACE TWO-DIMENSIONAL ART

RELIEF PRINT  
12"H X 9"W



**MARY EMMONS  
UNTITLED**

3RD PLACE THREE-DIMENSIONAL ART

CLAY

14"H X 18"W X 5"D



**MAYA HILL  
NATURAL SPACES**

RELIEF PRINT  
12''H X 9''W



**WILLIAM VAUGHN**  
**SLEEPING MASKS I AND II**

CERAMICS, ACRYLIC  
7"H x 4"W x 3"D



**NATHAN DULCEAK  
SOLACE IN AUTUMN**

PHOTOGRAPHY  
7.5"H x 10.5"W

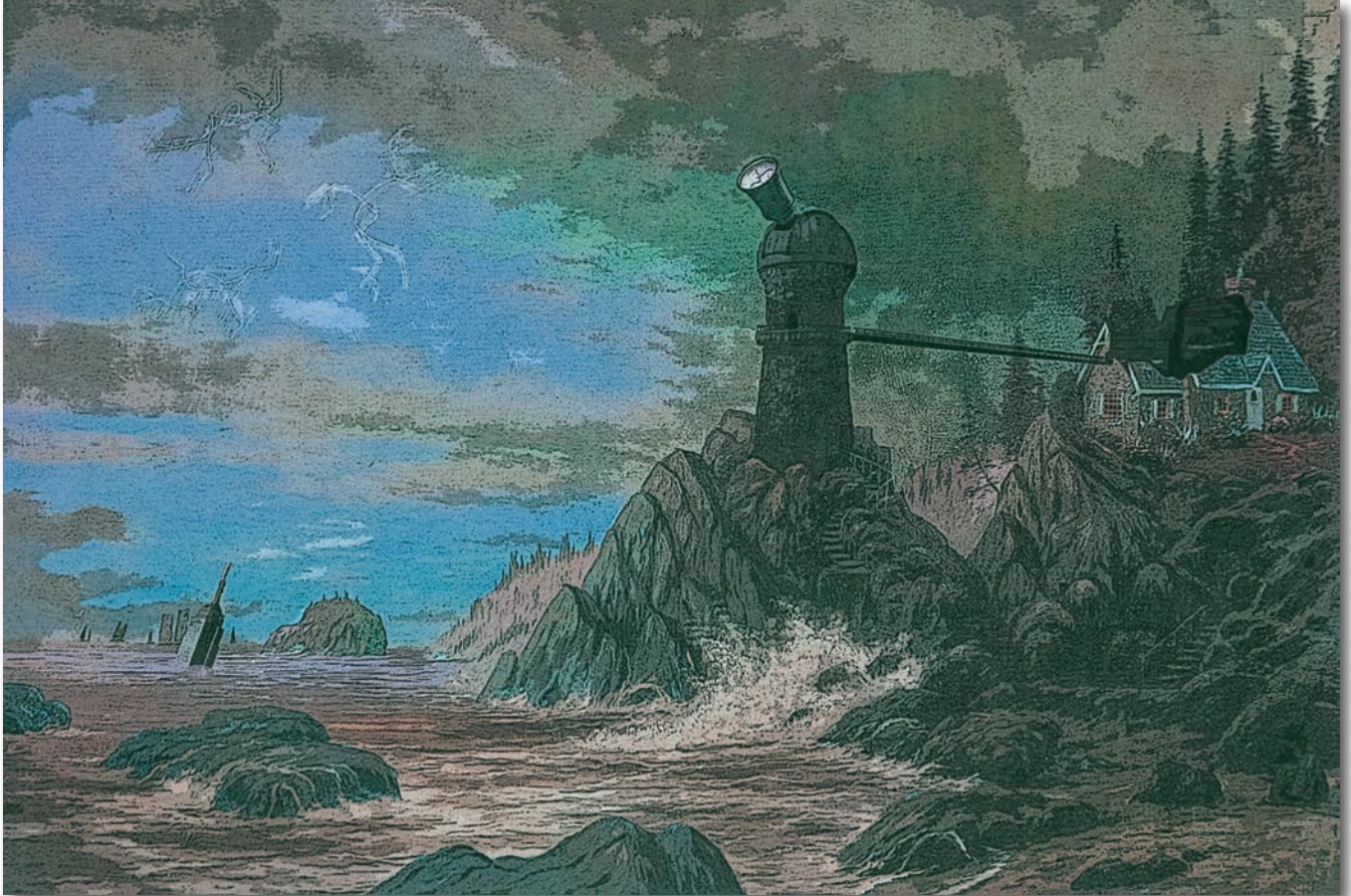


**JENNIFER WALLIS  
TREASURE BOX**

**1ST PLACE THREE-DIMENSIONAL ART**

SILVER, COPPER, FOSSIL  
3" H X 3" W X .75" D





**BRYCE RAY PARKER**  
**WING ESTATE LAB**

2ND PLACE TWO-DIMENSIONAL ART

PHOTO MANIPULATION

7"H X 10"W



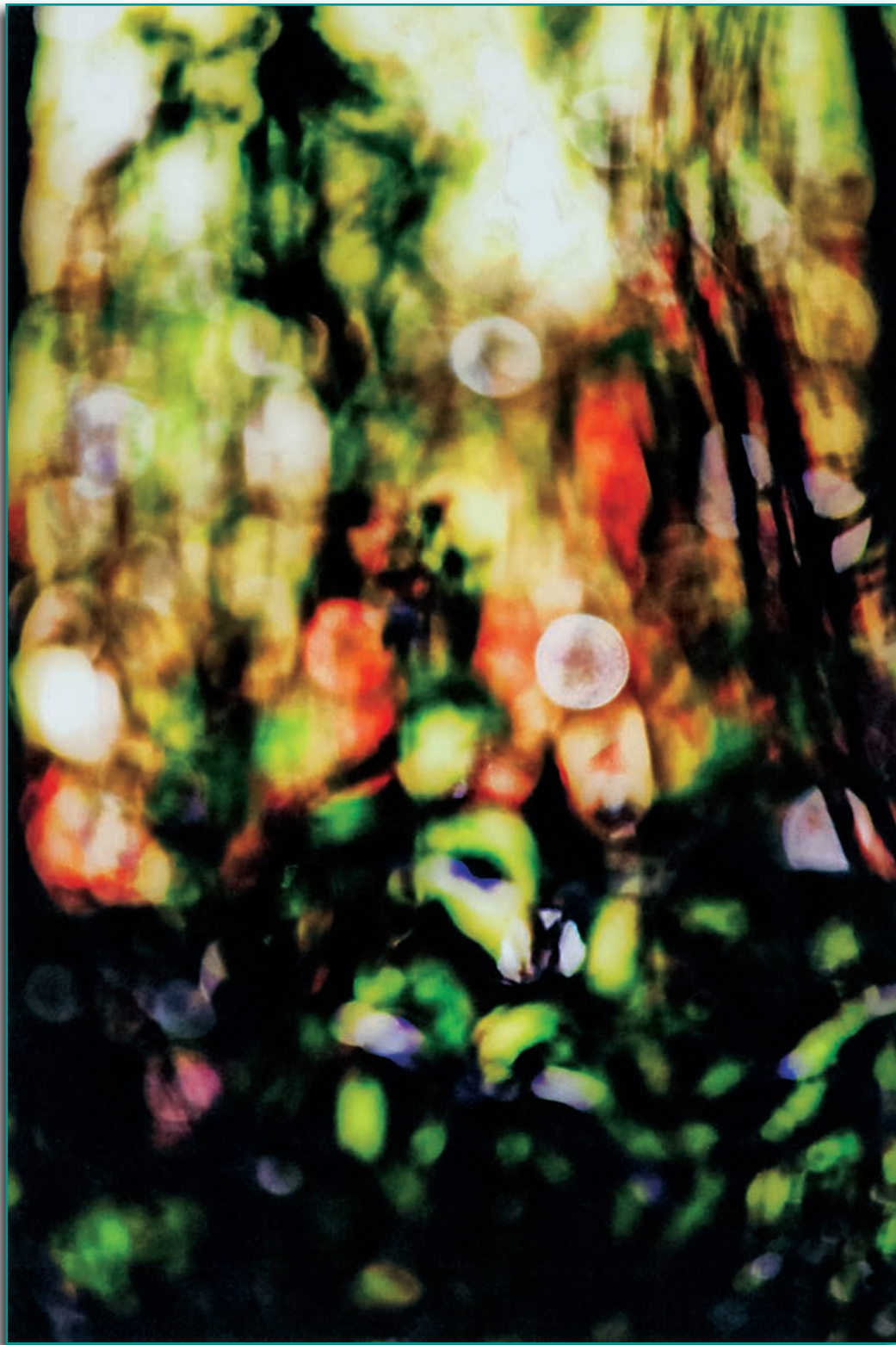
**KAITLYNN COURIER  
A MILLION WISHES**

PHOTOGRAPHY  
11" H X 8" W



**JESSICA BROWN**  
**UNTITLED**

RELIEF PRINT  
15"H X 11.5"W



**NATHAN DULCEAK  
GHOSTYARD**

3RD PLACE PHOTOGRAPHY  
10.75"H X 7.25"W



**WILLIAM VAUGHN  
IRON MASK**

CERAMICS, ACRYLIC  
6"H x 4"W x 2"D





**EMILY GREER  
PASTA**

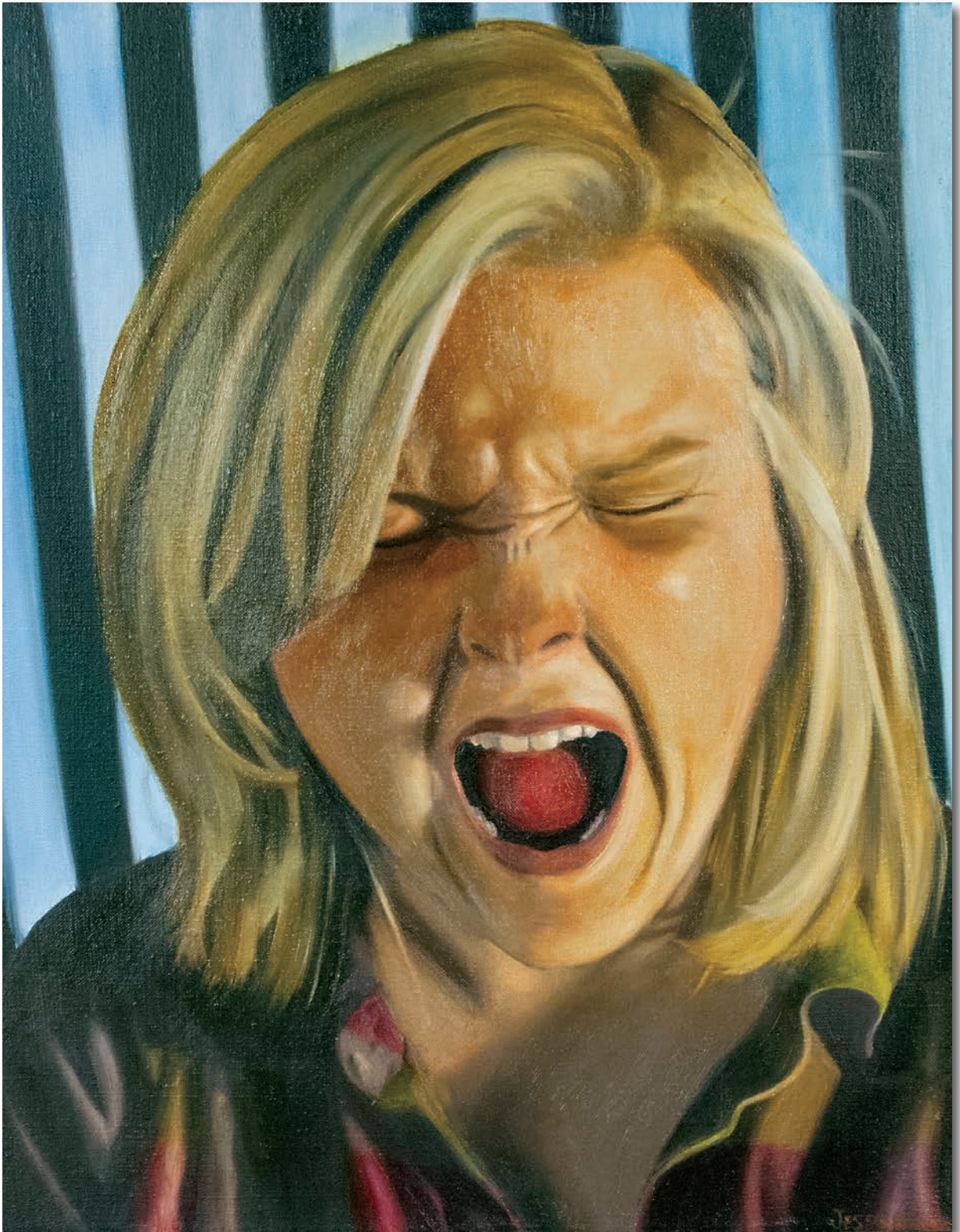
ACRYLIC AND OIL ON CANVAS  
48"H X 24"W



**JOANNE TOCZYŁOWSKI**  
**TRANSITIONS**

2ND PLACE THREE-DIMENSIONAL ART  
STERLING SILVER, LABRADORITE, ONYX  
2.5"H X 3"W X .5"D





**JESSICA BROWN  
CONFRONTATION**

3RD PLACE TWO-DIMENSIONAL ART  
OIL PAINT ON CANVAS  
20"H x 16"W



**MAYA HILL  
HOLLOW NIGHTS**

2ND PLACE PHOTOGRAPHY

8" H X 10" W



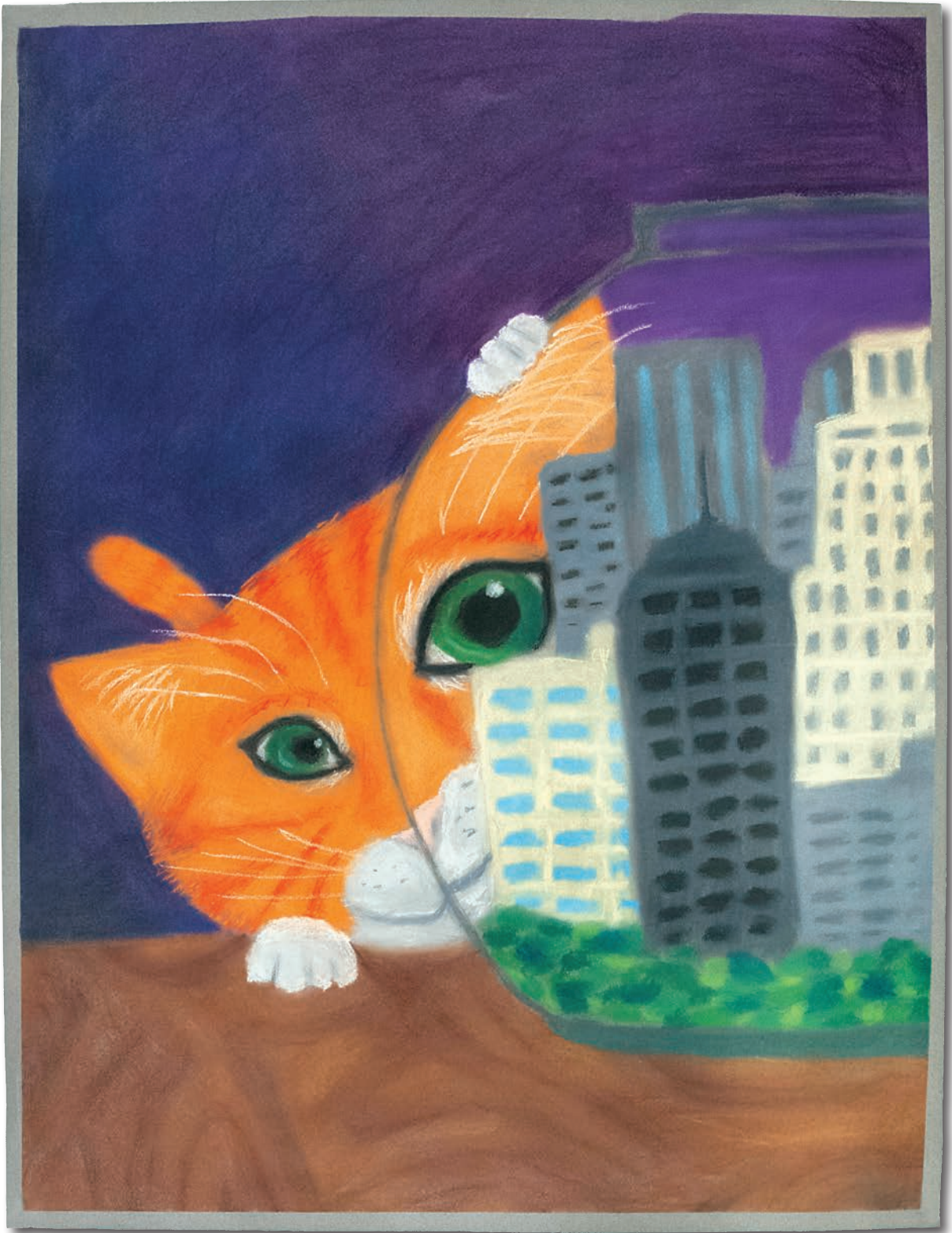
**JENNIFER WALLIS**  
**STANDING IN THE SHADOWS AT THE EDGE OF MY BED**

COLOR PENCIL  
11" H X 10.75" W



**RAVEN TALLITSCH**  
**A FOOLISH THOUGHT, TO SAY A SORRY SIGHT**

OIL GRISAILLE ON CANVAS  
20"H x 16"W



**ANDY ANAYA  
CURIOSITY**

CHALK PASTELS ON PAPER  
25.5"H x 19.5"W



**EDEN HALL  
STEAM**

PHOTOGRAPHY  
12" H X 8" W



**WILLIAM VAUGHN**  
**MARBLED MASK**  
CERAMICS, ACRYLIC  
7"H x 4"W x 3"D



**EDEN HALL  
GREENHOUSE**

1ST PLACE PHOTOGRAPHY  
8" H X 10" W





# MY ONLY SUNSHINE

Seventy two years, eight hundred sixty four months, three thousand four hundred fifty six weeks, twenty six thousand two hundred eighty days, six hundred thirty thousand seven hundred twenty hours, thirty seven million eight hundred forty three thousand two hundred minutes. And not a single one could prepare me for this moment.

Lorraine's leathery hand grasped mine with all the strength she could muster. I patted the back of her hand as her fingers twitched in discomfort from the tubes running out of her veins, and she sighed. Pain and discomfort interjected itself into our daily routine, but we tried to make the best of it. I pulled up a chair and got as comfortable as a ninety two year old man could manage. I massaged her hands gently to help her focus elsewhere. I looked up to see her eyes closed. She had the faintest smile on her face. She quietly hummed our tune, and as she did, I picked her favorite lavender nail polish from her bag and began painting her nails. I did this every Saturday since her arthritis stopped her from being able to do so. I concentrated, making sure her nails were just the way she liked them. She hummed our song over and over again, and memories flooded my mind.

A new decade started that night. My ship had docked the night before, and my crew was staying in a small town in California. My blues didn't stand out from many else in this crowded room. When a sailor gets off a ship, booze and women are the first thoughts that enter his mind. Before the clock struck midnight, I spotted a gal across the bar. Her light brown curls framed her slender face, and her smile was the most genuine I had ever seen. I caught myself walking toward her. I had two days on land, and I was not about to waste them.

I tapped on her shoulder. "Excuse me ma'am. Do you have anyone to ring in the new year with?"

"No," she said as she smiled shyly.

"I don't mean to be fresh, but would you honor me with a kiss at midnight?"

"Well, I ain't no fuddy-duddy, so I suppose that'd be alright."

"I appreciate your services, ma'am."

And when the clock struck midnight, I had found the love of my life in that tender kiss. Lorraine didn't know it, but I sure as hell did.

As we parted lips, she said "Might I say, sir, that was one of the finer kisses that I've had in my life," elegantly showing that ever-glowing sunshine of a smile.

"And I don't think that I've felt softer lips before in my life. Not trying to be upfront, but, may I ask for your name?"

"Oh," she said, chuckling. "It's Lorraine, Lorraine Stuckley. Might I ask of yours?"

I do say, a grown man in the Navy isn't supposed to smile a lot, but in the moment, it was all I could do. "My name is Burton, but everyone calls me Burt."

"I think that I'll call you Burton," she said, smiling that sunshine again.

I wasn't falling in love in that moment. I had already fallen.

The doctor came into the room, and Lorraine's humming faded. Her eyes fluttered open, and she mumbled a greeting.

"Mr. Jensen, may I speak with you in the hall?"

"I...I suppose so. Lorraine, darling, I'll be right back."

Her hand tightened on mine, and my heart began to ache. I hated seeing my love like this. She reluctantly let go, and I followed the doctor into the hall.

"You and I both know she has taken a turn for the worse. Her sodium levels are extremely low, and she is struggling to retain nutrients. I don't think-

"I don't want to hear it. I know she is struggling, but my babydoll is a fighter. She'll hang on a little while longer. Now don't you bring me any of your negativity and please...just let me enjoy my time with her. She's my world, and I don't know how much longer I'll have her. We have been in and out for a month, and I won't hear another damned word!"

I marched back into the room, adjusted myself in the chair, and continued Lorraine's manicure.

"What did the doctor have to say" said Lorraine, still not opening her eyes.

"Oh, he was just giving me an update on your vitals," I said, not even looking her in the eyes.

"Burt, just tell me. How bad is it?"

"You're fine, Lorraine," I said.

She sighed, like she had a million times throughout our seventy two year marriage. She could smell my bullshit a mile away, and she also knew that I would never tell her how bad she was. Lorraine saw my stubbornness, and had since the day we got married.

"Burt, I know that I'm going downhill," she said with a resigned voice. She felt what was coming; she just wanted to hear me say it.

"Lorraine, you are completely healthy. You don't even need these damn IV's. Doctors these days think that they know goddamn everything," I said, still focusing on her manicure. I couldn't look Lorraine in the eye; all I could focus on were her fingernails. Her beautiful fingernails. I was painting them her favorite shade of lavender, as she was custom to every June. For the past seventy two years, her fingernails were clad with her favorite color.

It was a warm June day in the summer of 1941. I was honorably discharged after three years in the Navy because some damn Nazi blew my knee out in March of that year. I hobbled down the aisle with my cane. I tried to hurry, ignoring the pain, because all I wanted was to see my beautiful bride glide down the aisle.

I knew that Lorraine was the girl of my dreams. She was the last thing I thought about when I went to sleep at night, and the first thought that entered my mind when I woke up. When the organ sang out and our guests rose, I felt my heart stop. An angel rounded the corner and ascended toward me. Her smile radiated, and I was breathless. How could something so beautiful be mine? She stepped up next to me, and lightly grabbed my hand. Her delicate fingers were tipped in a light shade of purple, matching her flowers. A single tear ran down my cheek as I mouthed "I love you." She smiled, and her lips started to tremble. I squeezed her hand, and she regained composure.

*Continued on Page 39*



**TINA HOLDRIDGE  
THROUGH THE WIRE**

PHOTOGRAPHY  
4.25" H x 6.5" W

# ANGER IS

Anger is a pit  
You keep falling down  
Hot fluid so thick  
You start to drown

Anger is a poison  
Pulsing through your veins  
Emblazoned venom  
Burning through your brain

Anger is a captor  
Promising to keep safe  
But when it has you  
It is already too late

Anger is a thirst  
That few can quench  
Vast and pained  
Hearts it has wrenched

Anger is a fire  
Simmering deep below  
With a bestial howl  
It makes a hollow echo

Anger is a cancer  
Spreading far and wide  
Bloating all our sorrow  
Reasons no one can confide

Anger is a pit  
In which we often fall  
Anger is a pit  
The doom of us all

**CHRISTOPHER HENNING**  
2ND PLACE POETRY

# FRANCISCA

**A**s a child I always saw my grandmother as someone who would spoil me. She would give me anything and everything I wanted. She would walk me to school every morning and prepare my after school snacks for me. If my mother wasn't there my grandmother was. Then as an adult, I heard my grandmother's many stories of living in Texas and coming to Illinois. She raised fourteen children and has dealt with seeing many of her loved ones pass away. She has had many trials and tribulations throughout her life, and her ability to overcome all of them is remarkable to me.

So, as I enter my Grandmother Francisca's house, I open the door to a place full of memories, and around every corner is a childhood memory. I walk in and still see her big black fridge that is still full of pictures: a photo album when you really look at it. Then the smell of tortillas enters your nose. I walk into the room that my grandmother sees every day and every hour. She sits on a chair that is specially made for her. As I prepare the questions I'm about to ask, my grandmother's home nurse begins to situate her.

My grandmother is one of the most beautiful people I have seen in my life, not just by looks but by her heart. As she is combing her black curly hair back, she says, "I'm ready for your questions."

I immediately reply, "Okay, when did you start your first job, and how old were you?"

"I remember when I was about six years old, my father took me out to the cotton field that he was working at, and my brothers, sisters, and I would start picking. I was young, but I liked to do it."

After telling me about her childhood in Odom, Texas, she then said that by the time she was thirteen her family moved to Donna, Texas. They bought a field that had oranges, tangerines, and grapefruit. By the time Francisca was fifteen her father passed away, and she had married my grandfather, Benito Alamia. Francisca's mother moved in with Francisca's sister. After she heard the news of her mother becoming ill, Francisca decided to stay with her mother and her sister.

"My Mom was sick, and I was the youngest. I knew I had to go take care of her."

The thought of how her mother died must have brought a rush of memories back to her as she spoke with me in a low tone voice.

"She didn't want to die, not until your grandfather (her son-in-law) was there. All she kept saying was, 'Where is Benito?' She wanted to wait till he came to the house because she knew my sister and I wouldn't be able to handle it."

She then went on to say that she and my grandfather stayed in Donna, Texas for a few years, and they had many of my aunts and uncles: Victoria, Noemi, Gloria, Benito, David, Poncho, Bobby, Eloy, Armando, Joe, Oscar, Amelia, and Noe who were all born in Texas. Between 1934 and 1960 three of the children, Poncho, Bobby

and David, all passed away in Texas. "Poncho died of pneumonia at four year old, David died of pneumonia as a baby, and Bobby died when he was four years old because he had a hole in his heart. They just didn't have all this medicine back then," my grandmother said as she rubbed her forehead. You could see the anguish in her eyes, and her face with a dull expression.

In 1969 at the age of thirty-five, my grandmother and grandfather moved to DeKalb, Illinois. They had heard through many of their friends that Illinois had many jobs in farming. So they came with all ten kids and very few clothes. The Catholic Church helped them find a place to rent; they paid rent of one hundred and fifty dollars for a whole house. The older kids, Benito, Joe, Noemi, and Gloria, all went to school and graduated; they started their jobs in factories. Eloy, Armando, Oscar, Amelia, and Noe were the ones that would stay with my Grandmother at home. When they first settled in at their new place, they had many angry neighbors. At that time many people did not see Mexicans in DeKalb County, and it was not acceptable to have them as neighbors. The Daily Chronicle even wrote an article about them titled "The first Mexicans in DeKalb, Illinois."

"We had tomatoes and bricks thrown at the house. They would say things to us, but I didn't care. I never said anything back." My grandmother goes on explaining how even though her neighbors were narrow minded at the time, the church was not, and they helped them with everything. She wasn't able to send her kids to school because they didn't have any warm clothes. So, the Catholic Church provided them with clothing. My grandmother then had my mother Engletina in DeKalb.

While I had learned about all this history with my grandmother, I had overlooked one thing - my grandfather. Since I was unable to meet him, I would always hear stories. So I then asked my grandmother, "How did my grandfather treat you?"

"Your grandfather was a good man, and he always made sure we were taken care of, but he went out a lot. He was always at the bar, and I could never leave." She loved him, but I knew by the way of her voice that he did some things that my grandmother did not agree with.

She said, "He never wanted me to leave the house, and he was a jealous man. He would go to work, and then straight to the bar." Without my asking she said, "I couldn't leave him. We had too many kids together, and after a while I didn't care where he was."

My grandmother with all these children may not have been bringing home the money, but she was the reason why everyone had food on the table and clothes on their back. My grandmother was so used to this lifestyle until the unexpected happened in 1988. My Grandfather Benito was diagnosed with cancer. I asked her, "How did you find out he had cancer?"

# BEAUTIFULLY

“Well one night he came home from the work, and he sat down in the kitchen. I said, ‘Benito, what are you doing?’ And he kept responding, ‘What?’ She said, ‘Benito? What’s wrong?’ He said, ‘what?’ Any question I asked him he responded, ‘what?’ So, I called my sons and they called the ambulance. They took us to the hospital, and they transferred us to Rockford. The specialist in Rockford diagnosed him with a tumor, but once they operated on him, they found out it was cancer, and stopped the procedure. The doctor offered your grandfather chemotherapy, but he said he didn’t want to do it. Within three months he passed away.” My grandmother remembered this day like the back of her hand. The man that she was used to never seeing was gone for good. Yet he was so significant in her life, and I could tell by the motionless expression on her face that her eyes still showed love for him. I had brought up a part of her life that will never be forgotten.

Being curious I asked, “Why didn’t you get married again?” She said, “After your grandfather, I was done answering to people. I was able to leave the house and not have to tell anyone.”

Then in 1980 my grandmother was diagnosed with diabetes, then diverticulitis, and finally renal failure. In March of 2013 she had both of her legs amputated, and yet she is fighting these diseases every day. She knows she has lived a beautiful and unforgettable life. She is a woman who is true inspiration to me. Physically, she is not able to do much, but mentally and emotionally, she is one of the strongest women I know. Through her battles with racism, poverty, and heartache, she has overcome it all. ☞

**SEPTEMBER PEREZ**  
1ST PLACE ESSAY

Beautifully...

Words lack luster.

Fail to define the bottom line of the previous page.

What’s that mean?

Why is this beautiful bird locked in this wretched cage?

Silence is expected, invented to protect nonsense.

Silence adhered to, invented to leave your conscience...

Unrattled.

Fact is fiction, to those who deny it.

Reality is what you make it.

New truths move on cascading like crystal clear water in a midnight stream.

When the sun rises it’ll show what it truly means...

Fear.

Questions create strength.

Questions assist courage up from its knees.

Cover no more.

Breathe in and spin.

Spin. Spin. Just spin as you did once before.

Freshness is life filling your lungs.

Filling your heart; filling your soul.

Allowing you to; beautifully lose control.

**MANDA NEILL**  
POETRY



# FAMILY

**W**hen the butterfly flew past them, Estelle had been walking in between her fathers and holding their hands. It was a fine spring afternoon in Madison Park. Its abundance of trees and green hills made one forget the fact that it was in the middle of Tressanel city and right next to its busiest street.

“A butterfly!” She squealed happily as she freed her hands to chase it.

“S-Sweetie,” Dante stammered nervously as he watched her run out further.

“She’ll be fine,” Cameron laughed. He took the moment to loosen his tie; he had just got out of the office, “you worry too much.”

“And you don’t worry enough,” Dante retorted, annoyed by Cameron’s laid-back attitude. “You didn’t even bother changing when you got out of the office. You took my daughter to the park in a business suit—”

“Our daughter, babe.” Cameron sternly corrected him.

Though it is true that Estelle was Dante’s biological daughter, with their pale skin, green eyes, and their thick, black, curly hair; they looked so much alike. Cameron was in the process of adopting her, and though fatherhood is a prospect he never thought he would ever be qualified for, it is one he is taking on out of love for both his new husband and his little princess. Dante saved his life at a time when Cameron felt hopeless. It was the least he could do, or that’s how he felt.

Cameron towered over Dante; he was strapping and muscular whereas Dante was thin and a bit pallid. As Cameron looked akin to a model on the cover of a romance novel, Dante to the man one would ask for if they need help with taxes, and given the fact that Dante is eight years older than Cameron, this aids in making the attraction that much more baffling to the everyday onlooker. So, it goes without saying that what they have goes beyond looks.

“Legally speaking, not until all the papers are taken care of,” Dante replied sheepishly. Then he realized that what he said might have upset Cameron.

“I spend my entire work day looking at papers, and, quite frankly, I don’t give a crap about them,” Cameron said in a half-joking tone, “and I sure as hell don’t need them to tell me we’re a family.”


Dante was about to respond with an apology when he noticed the butterfly from before flew above them.

“Daddy! Hurry!” Estelle tugged at Dante’s pant leg, “Up! Up!”

“Alright hun,” Dante hoisted her on his shoulders, and just at that moment, the butterfly had landed on Cameron’s nose.

“Stay still Dad,” Estelle commanded.

“Yes, ma’am!” Cameron said, smiling and attempting to be still.

It was as if their conversation had been completely forgotten. Sadly, just as the young Estelle reached out for it, the butterfly flew away. 



**ANDY ANAYA**

2ND PLACE SHORT FICTION

# THE RIVER

The river rushes around you.  
From a dry spot  
In the middle,  
You jump to the grassy shore.

You've lost your bag,  
You've lost your towel,  
You think if you hold on  
Tight enough  
Your life won't  
Pass you by.

But the river  
Always rushes  
Around you.

And you can't hold on  
To the possessions of  
Your life  
Or the small moments of  
The past.

And all too quickly,  
It's lost to the river  
And floating away  
Along time.

So jump right on back  
Into the middle.  
And don't bother attempting  
To keep your feet dry.  
For you can't stop the  
Rushing of the river  
And soon you'll be lost  
To time.

**MARIAH MAHON**  
POETRY

# WAR

Whispered words fall upon deaf ears.

A cold heart has abandoned all fears.

A cry of pain is easily ignored.

Hushed voices speak behind closed doors.

A father hides his tears trying to seem strong.

A terrified boy is quickly ushered along.

Fighting has taken a soldier and another is now needed.

A mother begs and cries but her words are not heeded.

So many have died in needless wars.

So many have perished on distant shores.

For power, for wealth.

For safety, for health.

For hate, for fears.

For months, for years.

For the future, for the past.

For peace that will never last.

Lives given, lives taken.

Humanity forsaken.

**JENNIFER STEMEN**  
1ST PLACE POETRY

# SELF-DEPRECATION

Every day I fight a war against the mirror.

Some days I even question why I'm here?

I am ugly, I am fat, I am this, and I am that.

My reflection is a joke; I tear apart, and poke.

Oh woe is me, why can't I let her be?

That girl has been knocked down by everyone in town.

When she walks about her mind is filled with doubt.

Her smile so insecure, eyes hollowed out in fear.

She cuts her wrist with memories of his fist.

They tore her apart, and abused her little heart.

They mocked her in the halls, and pushed her into walls.

They locked her in her head leaving her for dead.

They twisted all her good till there was nothing left they could.

They made her so disgusting, an empty cage rusting.

Why couldn't they let her be? Why'd they turn her into me?

**HEATHER LYNN DOTY**  
3RD PLACE POETRY



*Continued from Page 31*

The priest went on for what seemed like forever. We said “I do,” and when we kissed for the first time as husband and wife, it was like our first kiss that New Year’s Eve a little more than a year before. I was the happiest man alive, and I had no doubt in my mind that seventy two years later, I still would be.

I finished both hands, and I could tell Lorraine was getting tired. She didn’t have much energy to exert, so she needed all the rest she could get. I stood by her side, stroking her hair, and sang her our song until she drifted to sleep.

*“You are my sunshine, my only sunshine. You make me happy when skies are grey. You never know dear, how much I love you. Please don’t take my sunshine away. I’ll always love you, and make you happy. If you will only say the same. But if you leave me to love another, you’ll regret it all one day. You are my sunshine, my only sunshine. You make me happy when skies are grey. You never know, dear, how much I love you. Please don’t take my sunshine away.”*

Lorraine lay still, her chest slowly rising and falling. I stayed for a few minutes to make sure she stayed asleep, and then I ventured down the hall to get a bottle of water. I returned quickly, and all stayed calm in my absence. I moved to the recliner sitting in the corner of the room and settled in for the night. This chair had been my bed for the last four nights, but I didn’t mind. As long as my sweetheart knew I was by her side. I drifted into a fitful sleep.

Ever since I was a child, I imagined myself having a big family. I wanted to teach my sons football; I wanted to protect my little girls from monsters in their closets. After meeting Lorraine, and finding out she wanted the same, we dreamed together of the life we wanted to have. We were unaware at the time, however, that it would have to stay a dream.

On our wedding night, we talked about our children and how we wanted to be prominent in their lives, and our grandchildren’s, for as long as we could. We decided not to wait and to try to get pregnant as soon as possible. After a few weeks, we discovered that we had succeeded, and a little one was on the way. Our excitement radiated.

We planned out everything: possible names, the color of the nursery, the gender we wanted to be the oldest, where they’d go to school, and all they would accomplish. In week 17, we found out it would be a boy. In week 18, Lorraine noticed sharp pains coming through her stomach. In week 20, we found out that our son’s heartbeat was decreasing. In week 21, James Doyle Jensen would not make it to full term.

Doctors told us that it would be pointless to try again. Lorraine wasn’t strong enough to bear children, and no matter what we did, she would never be able to give birth. Our dreams had shattered. One by one, we picked up the pieces and moved on. But there has been a scar wedged deep in the topic since that day, and we rarely addressed it for the other’s sake.

Briefly, in between reality and my mind, I heard the sound of two monitors beeping: my wife’s and my son’s. Two heartbeats were struggling to keep up with one another, but they didn’t quit. They fought the race of life, and though determined, I could hear the struggle protruding through the otherwise silent air. I drifted back into my dream.

Three years ago, Lorraine and I were on our way to our favorite diner for lunch. We went every day at 11:30 and sat at the same table. The waitresses knew us by name and had our drink orders memorized. My tea and her coffee would arrive before we even sat down, still

piping hot. Lorraine’s memory had started getting hazy, and sometimes she needed help remembering what she liked to eat.

But this day was different. She had been unusually quiet, and when she did speak, her words were very slurred and jumbled. I could tell she was frustrated, so I suggested she write on a pad of paper to communicate until this hiccup ran its course.

We wrote back and forth, like two children passing notes. Our food arrived, the same thing we ordered every Wednesday: mashed potatoes, chicken dumpling soup, and a reuben to split.

Lorraine stopped her spoonful of potatoes right above her plate, and froze. In an instant, she was convulsing on the ground. Something was terribly wrong. Our waitress called 911, and an ambulance arrived in four minutes and twenty three seconds. I knew from my medic training not to try to restrain her because it would only hurt her. The only thing I could do was stand by and watch the love of my life have a seizure. I had never felt so helpless in my life.

When we arrived at the hospital, Lorraine was stable. The doctors ran every test they could think of, but they found nothing to be wrong. No one could have predicted the vicious cycle that we had been tossed into that afternoon: endless doctors’ visits, tests, and tears. But I did not leave her side once. I was not going to let my babydoll go through this alone.

A loud beeping stirs me from my sleep. I slip on my glasses, and see her monitor going crazy.

“NURSE! NURSE! SOMEONE PLEASE HELP!”

The small graveyard staff come running into our room, and begin checking everything. Lorraine lay still, and I notice her chest has stopped moving.

“Please...she’s my world. I can’t lose her. Not yet. She’s all I have.”

“Mr. Jensen, you need to leave the room. We’re doing everything we can.”

“I won’t leave her side. I haven’t yet, and I won’t.”

A nurse steps aside, pulls up a chair next to the bed, and allows me to sit. I grasp Lorraine’s hand with every ounce of my being, and I begin singing our song.

*“You are my sunshine, my only sunshine, you make me happy, when skies are grey. You never know dear, how much I love you. Please don’t take my sunshine away. The other night, dear, as I lay sleeping. I dreamt I held you in my arms. When I awoke, dear, I was mistaken. So I hung my head, and I cried. I’ll always love you and make you happy. If you will only say the same. But if you leave me to love another, you’ll regret it all one day. You are my sunshine, my only sunshine. You make me happy when skies are grey. You never know dear, how much I love you...”*

The nurses had tears running down their faces as I felt my heart crumble. Her heart beat turned into a monotonous tone, and I knew.

*“...please...don’t take my sunshine away...”* ☞

**KRISTEN DROUGHT**  
1ST PLACE SHORT FICTION





**BLADIMIR ZACARIAS  
MIRAGE**

PHOTOGRAPHY  
4.25"H x 6.5"W

# KAMELIAN 2014

EDITOR  
AMY SMITH

GRAPHIC DESIGN AND LAYOUT  
JEFF HULTGREN

ARTWORK  
PHOTOGRAPHED BY  
GEORGE TARBAY - NIU MEDIA SERVICES  
NORTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY

PRINTING  
CASTLE PRINTECH - DEKALB, ILLINOIS

SPECIAL THANKS  
ANDY ANAYA  
MILES HALPERN  
STEVEN HOOVER  
MINDY KAY LANGE  
JAIME LONG  
ISABEL SMITH LUKENS  
VALERIE SMITH  
PAT ZILM

KISHWAUKEE COLLEGE ART GALLERY  
KISHWAUKEE COLLEGE MAINTENANCE & CUSTODIAL DEPARTMENT  
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This publication is partially funded through student activity fees.

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KISHWAUKEE COLLEGE  
21193 MALTA ROAD • MALTA, ILLINOIS 60150-9699  
815.825.2086



