

ISSUE #3

2015

# EQUINOX

*Literary & Arts Magazine*

**CAMPUS HONORS PROGRAM**

*University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign*

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## About the Magazine

*Equinox* is the literary and arts magazine that is exclusive to the Campus Honors Program of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. It was created, organized, and published by Chancellor's Scholars.

The mission of *Equinox* is to share the artistic and creative talents of CHP members. Its name, borrowed from astronomy, reflects this mission: the vernal and autumnal equinoxes are days of the year when day and night are seen equally. The duality of day and night reflects the balance between academic and artistic achievement among Chancellor's Scholars.

## Acknowledgments

*Equinox* extends thanks to all submission reviewers and editors for collecting, reviewing, and selecting submissions for publication in this second issue.

We additionally thank the CHP Computer Administrators—Zach Brewer, Sanjit Dutta, Alex Kordas, and Abhishek Nigam—for their assistance in making this issue an online publication, the Honors Student Council for co-sponsoring the release party, and all of our student contributors for making this magazine such a success.

Endless thanks, also, to CHP's own Professor Paul Diehl and Associate Director Elizabeth Rockman, who advocated on our behalf for the opportunity to publish with the Illinois Office of Undergraduate Research this year.

Finally, we wish to thank the Campus Honors Program for their assistance in making printed publication possible.

Your dedication, time, and contributions were invaluable in the continuation of the magazine. *Equinox* Issue #3 could not have been created without you.



## **Staff**

### **2015 Executive Board:**

Samantha Fuchs, *Co-Editor-in-Chief*

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### **Cover:**

Design by Pooja Bag

## Letter from the Editors

Dear readers,

Welcome to the third issue of the Campus Honors Program's (CHP) literary and arts magazine, *Equinox*! We happily present to you the artistic, poetic, and prosaic creations of wonderfully talented and hardworking CHP students. This magazine is the result of months of work, time, and love, both for this year and the initial creation of *Equinox*.

Back in the olden days of 2012, CHP was looking for a new way to demonstrate its students' creative capabilities. That first year, *Equinox* brought that vision into being via a literary magazine compiled by a team of four spread over three time zones. In year two, the *Equinox* staff grew to an executive board supported by a bevy of CHP students eager to polish our existing processes for better quality and efficiency.

Now, with the last two founding members of *Equinox* and three of the executive board graduating, this year has been an exercise in passing the torch. Well, maybe more like throwing torches at audience volunteers, rambling disjointed tips on how to juggle, and hoping they still have enough freedom to improve on our routine. To our delight (and relief), these enthusiastic audience volunteers have not disappointed. In addition to picking up on the foundations of publicizing, submission reviewing, copy editing, layouting, and printing--no small feats!--they also proposed our first cover contest.

While there were inevitably some hiccups throughout the process, who's to say that change is bad? This is, after all, only the third issue of *Equinox*; growing pains are inevitable. We can only hope that this year's magazine participants glean joy, pride, and inspiration from the journey of its creation--as we have. With bright eyes and full hearts, we leave the torches of *Equinox* in their capable hands.

Best wishes to the *Equinox* team of issue #4!

Samantha Fuchs and Ethel Liao  
Co-Editors-in-Chief

# **I. Poetry**

**The Lamp Digest**

*From the Perspective of the Honors House Lounge Lamps*

Samantha Fuchs

In a little blue lounge, down the block from the bus,  
Stand two happy lamps making a bit of fuss.

“We get students tomorrow!” Left cried in delight,  
“We’ll see young, eager faces!” She gleamed, glowing bright.

“There’ll be parties and game nights and all around fun,  
Plus some snack time and naptime, when finals are done!”

Left glowed with a hum, and Right just rolled her shade,  
“You know that’s not all for which this house has been made.

“We’re a program of Honor, a house of success,  
We’re where students come to prepare for their tests.

“There’ll be laptops and notebooks and books for their classes,  
Not chances for students to goof-off their asses.

“There’ll be meetings and screenings of movies and art,  
And lectures for learning outside normal parts.

“We give light in the evenings when essays are due,  
Or math problems or research reports; projects, too.

“All of these are for studious practice and work  
Where students can be proud of their handiwork.”

“Yeah, I know, and that’s cool, but I still see the joy,  
And the vision they bring, and tomorrow, oh boy,

“It won’t be just grades and assignments done here  
It’s their writing and painting and fun times all year!

“Your stuff fits their work professionalism,  
But I see way more of the students’ holism!



“It’s the work and the play that makes life worth the grind,  
Creativity and academics combined!”

Right gave a sigh, said, “I see some of your point,  
But I still wish you’d use less exclamation points!”

### **Memory Solstice**

Sam Walder

The cornfields here are so fertile they grow skyscrapers.  
Neon flows through the rain-streaked windows  
And chipped ivory statues shout from beer to beer.  
I have to clean my apartment, but first  
I need to watch puddles form on the pavement below.

Later, moonlight meanders  
Two thousand miles over the great plains.  
Dreams crash from the stars and seep into the soil  
Awaiting harvest.

**Rachana's Story**

Aashay Patel

Which one? Doctors deliver an orphan.

**Haiku Poems**

Ana Petracovici

Forest of ice sculptures  
Teased by the whispering wind  
A deafening crack

Reflected in the  
Flow of a gurgling stream  
Effervescent moon

Unnoticed beneath  
Footprints in the trampled snow  
First crocus of spring

Exhaust fumes mingle  
With the scent of fresh roses  
On a street corner

In the quiet of  
Morning, the crunch of gravel  
Keeps me company

**Our Twisted Hero**

Sam Walder

On Monday I wished death upon my tormentors,  
Imagined flaming obsidian splitting their skulls,  
Checked my phone—no new e-mails,  
Remarked upon something ephemeral,  
And gawked at the girl who bent all the way at the waist  
To pick up some ordinary object.

From the twelfth story of my dormitory  
I see invisible strings pulling people apart.  
They cry and struggle, but the silky nooses of fate  
Tighten, drag, extinguish.

An explosive man with an oak tree torso  
Tattooed by time and punishing work  
Dragged his serrated knife across the strings.  
The sound of Fate snapping was like all the violins of the world  
Charging up a capacitor with passion  
And then splintering under its pressure.

He barreled into thin air and crashed,  
As if it were drywall, into another dimension.  
He was gone; the hole remained.

I saw women clutching Starbucks fall towards the rift  
A bus broadsided a stroller  
Dogs stopped pulling on their leashes  
Young men felt love for the first time.

One after another, they careened towards freedom, and  
Only in a flash, a fluttering refraction of a false shadow,  
Did I notice on the edge of my consciousness the synaptic fragments of Fate's ropes  
Emanating from the hole.

**Then fall the trees**

Ryan Woods

Then fall the trees  
And dies the mother.

Clouds swiped about the background,  
Brushes and bristles and brooms  
Swashed in white and blue.

The old song of wheat in waves,  
The Lieder and the lyre and the rye.  
And so it plays.

Darker and Lighter; reach the golden orb;  
Feel the invigorating bath of its rays;  
A child playing, worry-free in the sun  
in the sun in the sun in the sun in the sun

Then fall the trees  
And dies the mother.

Did I speak of the blue mountains?  
The baby-blue mountains,  
Snug on the horizon,  
Smiling,  
Their eyes in the cotton sky.  
Did I?

Aged, Aged  
Bristles in the eyes  
The cotton dies  
But still play the Lieder.

Baby-blue mountains,  
Old now too,  
A darker blue,  
And dryer



The dry sun has withered and cracked the trees

Then fall the trees  
And dies the mother.

Lying in the waving wheat  
Naked feet  
Summer-clothed

All around are golden lights that hail in the joy the trumpet joy  
Shafts of gold  
And dandelion.

Naked both,  
In love.  
No more.

A typewriter  
Hah! I never used one.  
But I can imagine,  
The slashing, smacking,  
Clicking, clacking  
Black on white

Then fall the trees  
And dies the mother.

The heavens sneeze  
And flee the clouds,  
Running,  
Half-joking  
(But half-afraid,  
Like children)

I see children, now.  
They look like supercharged  
Forms of energy  
Bursting forth in socially-acceptable madness

I was a child once

Then fall the trees  
And dies the mother.

Is a tear like a raindrop?

It rains.  
See how the sheet is pulled over us,  
And we are covered in the darker gray;  
The white has fled from us,  
So has the sun.

The rain on naked flesh is  
Primal,  
Sexy,  
Slimy

See the baby-blues now?  
See how they become purple in the rain,  
In the transparent sheet of rain?

There are waves in the sea  
Which are wet  
And the waves of wheat  
Are not.

Andsoonandsoonandsoon

I was a child once.  
I were children once.  
They were me once.  
I was once them.  
Then I was one of them I was  
I really was  
I really was

Sometimes I lose track of myself,  
When the trail of thought takes a turn  
Away from the rut, well-worn in time,  
Toward the trees on the side

Look at these trees!

Molly, please,  
Can we follow the Lieder?

See how they reach the golden orb?  
See how they feel the invigorating bath of its rays?

Like a baby in a golden bath;  
The golden sun-shower of a universe's birth.

How ethereal, serial, surreal, irreal, unreal, funwheel

Then fall the trees  
And dies the mother.

**Leaving Boston**

Sam Walder

In autumn  
Forest students stand rooted and tall  
Shed institutional green for Crayola creativity  
While prairie kids wither with the corn

How might the cobblestones hop up into playful shapes  
If your bubble gum pops?  
You pick up leaves and leave pickup trucks to rust

Or Daniel Boone

Or Thomas Jefferson

Or Bei Dao.

Do you really believe  
As the head is shaved the thoughts escape?  
I'll travel for you, with you two  
To escape the fluorescent castles and  
Threads I wove so carelessly

The ignorant  
Miss Main street  
Strike into the wilderness  
Are glorified

Dawn comes and we're still driving  
Masses rise in the distance, brooding against pale stars  
I open the window and feel a new breeze  
From road to road, the signs say welcome home

River of flowers  
Voice of reason  
Village of lovers  
City of dreamers



**Her Doors are Locked**

Meredith Staub

Elegance marred with doubt,  
Eyes look down and away.  
She may be down, but never out.

People she must live without  
Haunt her mind, and there they stay:  
Elegance marred with doubt.

A voice is screaming, whispering loud:  
She thinks it's hers—"They'll see one day."  
She may be down, but never out.

They wonder what she thinks about  
When her gaze is far, far away.  
Elegance marred with doubt.

Expression holds neither smile nor frown,  
But her heart yearns to say, to say,  
She may be down, but never out.

Secrets hidden behind a cloud  
Of memories and nights, and never days.  
Elegance marred with doubt:  
She may be down, but never out.

**Sunny**

Sam Walder

At night, windows become mirrors  
And we are forced into self-reflection.  
I grope blindly for peace, but  
My leeching galvanotropism propels me towards  
The nearest glowing screen.

I think of my research partner in Beijing.  
Brought together by chance  
And the egotism of others,  
We now bare our hearts on WeChat.

Sarcasm doesn't translate well,  
But honesty is pure and soundless.  
Carefully, I construct translatable sentences.  
Unknowingly, I construct a persona:  
Charming, sincere, thoughtful.

So it came to be that my personal ideal  
Became trapped in my smartphone.  
Could I pluck his soul, gasping for impossible breaths,  
Out from the million bits in which he is stored?  
If we could meet, would that fragmented dimension of agathos  
Condescendingly sneer at his flawed integral?  
Or would he, in his sincerity, understand?

The distance separating us is inhuman,  
So I stay awake into the night and stare out windows,  
Texting myself thoughts and hoping that one day, I might answer.

**Break Me**

Warren D'Souza

My heart is on the table and he tells me to fix it.  
 But what do I fix? I don't see it's broken it's there I know what I am -  
 He cuts me off. It's *broken*. You're *broken*.  
 What a strange word. A calm word. Say it with me now. Broken. How do-  
 you stay calm when you describe the heart's accelerating entropy as *broken*.  
 That's all it is, right? Entropy. The broken is natural. Give it time.  
 Now wait entropy doesn't work like that.

Now I agree with him. Broken. That's my word. Not just my word but actually me. And  
 I need to fix it. Me.

I look at the heart and see it is breaking. Almost two pieces now.  
 Wait how did that happen it was whole just a second ago NO It was broken all along, you just  
 tried not to know.

The tattered strips of cloth in my hands dripped my blood.

I hold the strips and moved my heart left. He says no. I move it right. He still says no. I  
 put it back in the middle and he glares. Still broken.

Angry now. I lift the cloth and press against him. He pushes back. I press harder. Blood  
 drips down to the heart. It's working. Harder.

The mirror shattered and he was gone.

Now we're both broken. But I wanted to be him. He could disappear when the broken-  
 ness was too much.

**Grief**

Ryan Woods

How does one recover  
When what one has lost  
Is the very life-principle  
The dream  
That brings to light all darkness  
That invades life so easily  
As air to a vacuum?  
How does one turn oneself around  
Sound the horn of "Onward!"  
And rage into battle?  
Indeed, the word is right -  
Rage  
That is what one can do.  
But when this rage ends  
In tears and nausea  
And exhaustion -  
What then?  
Where does one turn for comfort?  
To whom does one go  
For the balm that heals  
The very wound of the heart?  
Who can replace one's very soul?  
In the quiet hours,  
In the soft light of the morning  
Or the evening,  
Who will fill one with thoughts of pleasure?  
Where is that fiery sprite  
That lures one onward  
Into the night  
And onto unknown paths,  
Dancing on the horizon,  
Half-demon, half-fairy,  
Goddess of one's ideals?  
Where is the sun  
Shining so bright in a moment  
And then extinguished?

How can life go on  
Without its sun?  
Where is the elixir  
That invigorates,  
Gives life its youthful luster  
Restoring to it the glory  
Of an unworn child  
With virgin eyes?  
Where is the spirit  
That embodies one's very dreams?  
In what manner can one go forward,  
When all pathways are dead?  
There was once a flower,  
A brilliant leaf,  
A glorious color -  
My dear, the flower is dead;  
It is no more.  
Can one even bury it?  
Can one take one's joy and love  
And bury it in the coffin?  
No, but it is turned  
Into a haunting terror.  
When the light of life is extinguished,  
Then is the present the dark cloud,  
Looking backward on -  
Mere memories! -  
Of the sunlight.  
Do the dead hear our cries?  
Can the beloved feel the pain of the lover,  
When the beloved does not feel the love?  
The answer is no,  
Though one might protest  
There are others whom the beloved has loved.  
Pain is that universal,  
That terrible.  
Have you heard the dirge  
That drowns all laughter?  
Have you cried into the night,  
Then, exhausted, fallen into nightmare,

To cry again, ever more tired, in the morning?  
Where does one go to heal this wound  
When the cure itself is gone?  
There is nowhere to go.  
Dearly beloved,  
You were the light of life,  
The embodiment of the ideal;  
You were the sun and the rain and the sky;  
Your laughter was my laughter,  
Your tears, likewise, mine;  
You were the invigorating force  
That gave motion to my life.  
Now I hear but a pitiful sound,  
Meaningless, really,  
Of my fist on resettled dirt.  
I may cry,  
But no longer will these tears bring forth from the ground  
Any life.  
I may laugh again;  
But it is only an echo.  
I may smile;  
Once again, just a reflection.  
The lake of one's youth is dried up;  
The refreshing water that,  
Upon the skin  
Would scream "I AM ALIVE!  
I AM LIFE! I AM JOY IN ITS FULLEST INCARNATION!"  
Yes, this lake is gone now;  
What's left is -  
Not even a puddle -  
But a stony basin.  
I pick up a stone,  
See it glint in the sun.  
I pick up another,  
And another.  
Holding it in my fist  
Is some strange ritual  
Summoning my memories.  
The image is rained upon

By my tears of anguish.  
I throw the stone  
And hear it clank further away in the basin.  
There is an echo.  
This echo is my life;  
I am but a shade;  
My doppelgänger has become myself.  
Let the passions flow through me;  
That is, indeed, exactly what they will do.  
For, no longer can they touch me;  
I am gone.  
Only loss still gives me form.  
Where is that form that once so strongly complemented mine?  
Where is the sound that gave voice to my life?  
Where is the music that sends away the stillness of death?  
It, too, has died.  
How can I move on?  
How can I move forward?  
Is there anything left to give me life?  
Am I - can I be - anything more, now,  
Than an empty shell?  
Perhaps I, too, have died.  
Perhaps I, too, am buried there,  
In the ground.  
I would be persuaded  
Were the pain not so strong  
And so present yet  
In my limbs and stomach.  
I vomit.  
From where does the meaning come  
Now that the meaning is gone?  
It cannot come.  
But I will yet haunt these hills  
And forests  
Like the wailing of the wind  
Until my frame, too,  
Like my heart,  
Is dissolved into oblivion.

### **Waiting For Another Man's Death**

Sam Walder

When providence came down to Earth, we couldn't imagine what it was.  
In the spirit of the game, we played detective.  
But then to Egypt, to Lebanon, to Russia, lighting up at night, the gunfire  
Across continents flashed as benign as fireflies.  
The mysterious shade of history took its form,  
delivering rusty signs to a dust-covered future.

There we stood, optimistic. We said,  
Let's all work together and build a new tomorrow!  
A garden city that will be spectacular in its ruins. But first, a bit of fun.

In our global infliction, our neural condition degraded.  
We celebrated the ancients and burned our money  
We made fun electronic  
But still preserved our violins.  
Oh God of the future, where have your laws gone?

I was alone. I told her,  
Watch the moon with me.

Yes, we were all drunk.  
But we all adored one another in that  
Politeness which is forced at first but somehow treads the line towards legitimacy.  
I wrote their essays for a thousand dollars  
And crashed my roommate's motorcycle.  
She dressed up like a clown  
On her best behavior  
Crashed her personality

In the wreckage, we could only find pieces of his.

And on my best behavior?  
I'm not like him.  
Slit my skin and you'll see no secrets.

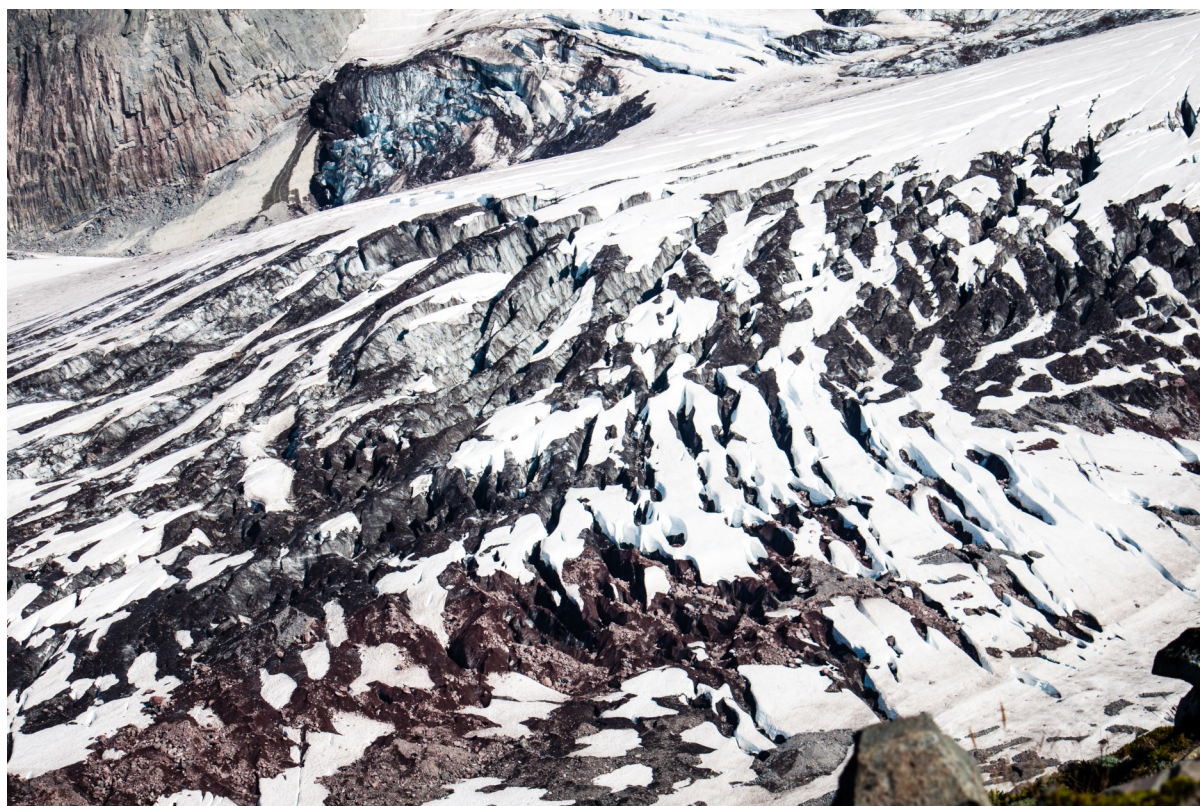


And take me forward to the golden age,  
Impossible woman.  
I want to crawl into your mind  
Caress you in the right places  
And breach the dam of your thoughts.  
I'll let them pour out onto the floor  
Sort them and  
Stare into your eyes until they shed their sins and become completely clear.  
I want you to overflow like the Mississippi  
Slide as water in water all the way south, be  
Thrust out into the ocean exhausted as the old Earth  
And only then might I reach softly into you  
Slip past the cobwebs thick as quilts around your ribs and maybe touch your heart.

## **II. Visual Art**



**The Sea Calls, Grace Deetjen**  
*Digital Photography*



**Crevasse, Bodecker Della Maria**  
*Digital Photography*





**Darkness of Beauty, Tara Chatteraj**  
*Digital Photography*



**Artichoke**, Charlotte Hunt  
*Charcoal*





**Field of Influence**, Ethel Liao  
*Digital Painting*



**Forest Falls, Bodecker DellaMaria**  
*Digital Photography*





**Sleepwalking the Whales, Miriam Juliet Horsley**  
*Marker, Watercolor, Pen*



**Driftwood**, Charlotte Hunt  
*Digital Photography*





**Candied Dew, Ethel Liao**  
*Digital Photography*



**Fracture, Bodecker DellaMaria**  
*Digital Photography*



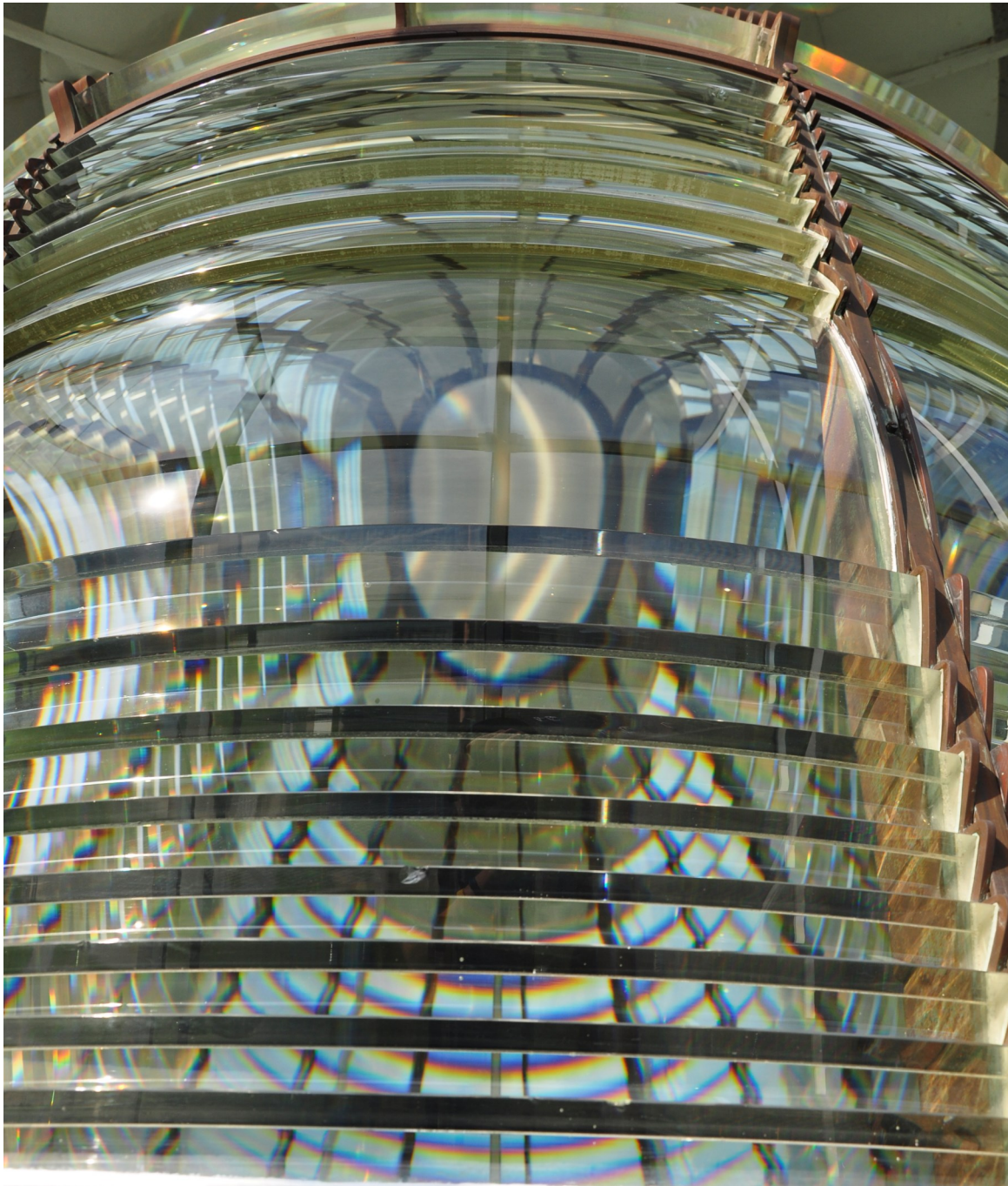


**Drift,** Tara Chatteraj  
*Watercolor*



**Catch of the Day**, Ethel Liao  
*Digital Painting*





**Rainbow of Fresnel, Erik Kountz**  
*Digital Photography*

*A Fresnel Lens is an optical instrument invented in the 19th century that bends light like an ordinary lens except with much less necessary material. This lens is the 1st order lens from Bodie Island Lighthouse and light from it can be seen for 18 nautical miles (21 miles or 33 kilometers).*





**Icy River, Charlotte Hunt**  
*Digital Photography*





**Abeja y Flora**, Grace Deetjan  
*Digital Photography*



**Chrysanthemum Queen, Jessica Chen**  
*Digital Painting*





**Still Dance, Bodecker DellaMaria**  
*Digital Photography*



**Fallen Glory, Grace Deetjen**  
*Digital Photography*



**Epilogue**, Ethel Liao  
*Digital Photography*





**Defy the Ocean,** Erik Kountz  
*Digital Photography*



**Frigid Curls, Grace Deetjen**  
*Digital Photography*





**Horizon**, Bodecker DellaMaria  
*Digital Photography*





**Love and Poetry**, Grace Deetjen  
*Digital Photography & Manipulation*

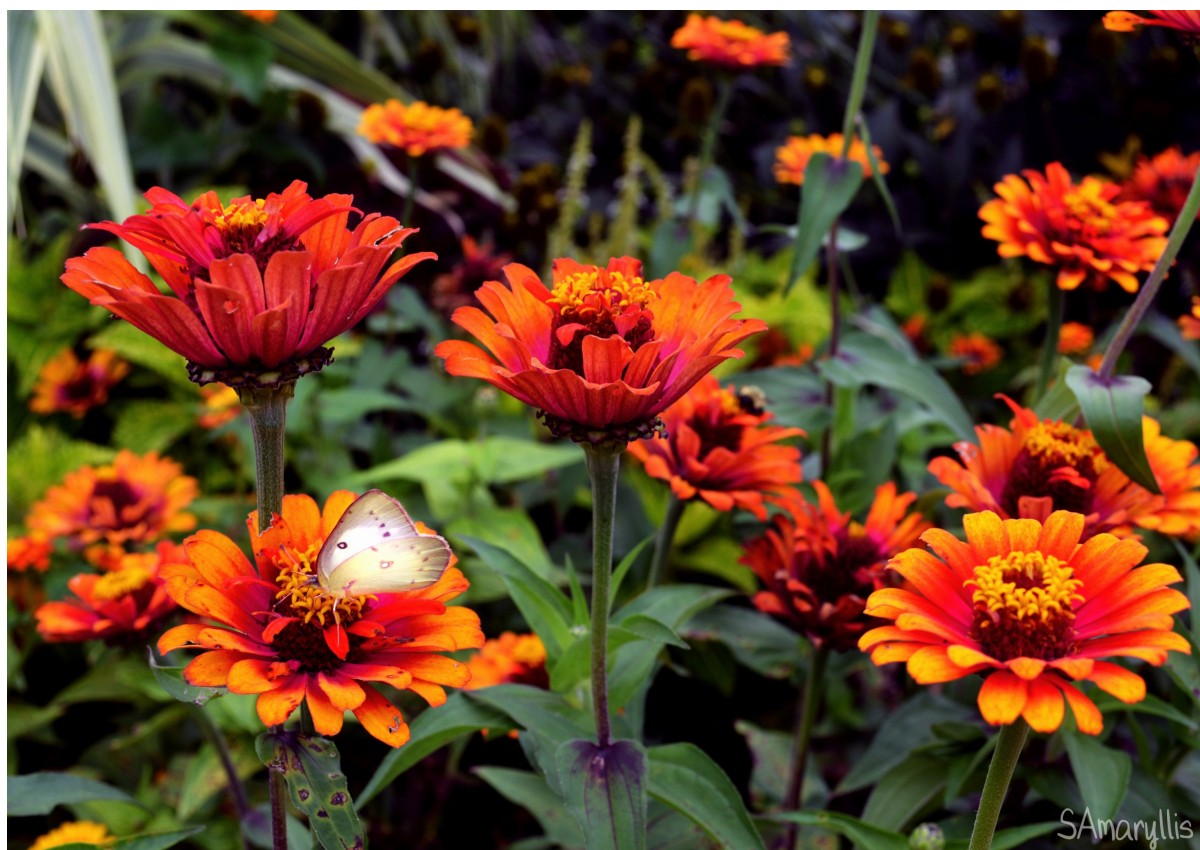


**Wishing on Stars, Ethel Liao**  
*Mobile with 1000 Resume Paper Stars, Fishing Line*





**Crater Lake, OR,** Grace Deetjen  
*Digital Photography*



**The Arrival, Ethel Liao**  
*Digital Photography*

# **III. Prose**

**Yellow Annual**  
*Miriam Juliet Horsley*

When he met the girl she was young, and such was their love—an acceptable age for love to be, especially in the naïveté of her childhood. She was chaste and pure, lively as the early wind that ripped blackthorn blossoms from their sleep, with as strong a profound longing for a kindred spirit as he had. The only rival of her golden hair was the yellow of the wildflowers that opened at her touch and for all the world there was nothing to match the brilliance of her eyes, which captured all of the colors of the sea and the earth and the sky in a single shade of roasted barley.

In those early days of ewes lambing and farmers laying their oats into the new-soft ground she was a mere child, barely reaching the tree branches she so eagerly climbed. Her energy rained on everything around her, making them twist up to meet her eager hands: leaves curled from branches as she touched them, and flowers escaped the stifling earth at the sound of laughter falling from her peach mouth. Even he felt himself drawn up in juvenile rebellion against the dark edges of a weary mind, clearing himself of sadness like mist falling away from old eyes. Those days were too short.

At the end of such days, even as they grew longer with the greenness of the earth, he would cross the furrowed wheat field to his home and she would grab onto him and cry no matter what promises he gave of return. Return he did, time and time again, to the mossy thickets where he found her, and in those hours of play he would himself become a child again, until the sun set on the illusions of youth and he again became worn beyond his four-and-twenty years. It was then that she would beg him to stay in the rising wheat, and it was only in the darkness that he could have the resolve to reject her, looking back to see her clutch herself in her own arms as if to convince herself he was still there.

As the weather warmed and winds banished the early rains she no longer cried, for she had become too old to doubt his return, and he had fallen too much in love with the mysteries of nature to tell himself that he would stay away. The high sun and mild breezes found her showing him the life found in the plants she had herself nurtured; he no longer was lured into a pretense of childish joy but was shown the wonders of the earth with a mature curiosity only found in the inquisitive years of young adulthood. Leaves that unfolded at her touch now showed him which tree was which. Berries that had formed with her voice now were given names and tastes. Branches that once were used as antlers on the head of an imaginative child now could be made into brooms and baskets. Nature that had unfolded from her arms now revealed their uses.

It was in these days that he learned how to make wreaths of flowers, and he

placed them on her head as payment for the lessons she taught him; just enough of her youth remained for her to be happy with such simple gestures. Yellow blooms now stood out against the dark flaxen crown of her hair and brightened the growing wisdom in her eyes. Sunlight slowly stretched wheat towards the sky and with it grew the girl. The trees that she once could not climb for their height bore her weight steadily as she grasped for the freedom of the heavens, but the dust and leaves that patterned the hem of her white shift kept her firmly planted to the earth and, as her adolescence faded into the shrinking shadows of the solstice, so the leaves reached the height of their growth and began to droop on their branches.

She still followed him to the rows of wheat when the sun ducked its head below the horizon, but there were no grasps or pleading, just a following of barley eyes as he left her in the distance. Soon his figure would be swallowed by grain, and she would seek an embrace from the forest instead of his arms.

As the stalks of wheat and the boughs of trees became heavy with fruit and the light of the sun began to wane, she was old enough for him to love her, not this time the want of family that he never had but the captivating, untamed love the wind speaks of as it rattles the golden leaves from their perches. The days were spent discovering how to harvest the fruit of the earth, learning how to better cultivate and nurture the birth of grains from the whispers of dry, swaying grass, absorbing the secrets of herbal cures from the cool murmurs of brooks, gathering knowledge on how to make tools and homes out of wood and stones from the chattering teeth of beavers. The earth laid out its ripe bounty in front of her, and in turn she told the earth to give its gifts to him. He returned her benevolence with twisted crowns of rust-colored leaves and fronds of wheat, and her modesty was content with them.

He could not have loved her more as the trees began to shiver off their leaves and her hair curled into deep hazelnut locks that nearly brushed the leaves beneath her, and though her walk was slower and her voice carried the sigh of twilight instead of the wind of morning, she could not have been more beautiful to him. The flowers still bent to tickle her feet as she walked, but now even running she could not outpace the roe deer; her ripe apple mouth curled into a gentler smile in place of the loud laughter that used to echo through her forest. All of the blooms her childhood had coaxed forth watched in their fading days as she became the mother of the trees rather than the daughter.

Love was amnesia for he who each day blinked at the sinking sun and remembered the weight of his home, and in the dying hours the heavy stalks of wheat watched as he held her. Both were as reluctant to part as she had been at their meeting, but there were no tears. There was tomorrow.

When the wheat cracked between teeth and was scythed from its field, her hair ceased to darken. The ends slowly bleached to the cold silvery white of aspen bark,

collecting dead leaves as they dragged the ground behind her, and her wreath of leaves became one of *Sarcococca* berries and brittle branches. He came less to her forest.

The days he did not greet her at the edges of the frostbitten field she would wander, snow melting beneath her feet as she walked underneath the ceiling of icy boughs that were a barrier between herself and the sky that once felt like freedom. She would watch from a distance as he made his home as the beaver taught him, and a smile would frost her indigo-plum mouth as he safely stored his harvest against the chill. And then alone she would pass her hands over the sleeping trees and feel their dreams, stopping when her hands were needed to rub her arms warmer against the bitter wind, which rasped its regret as it abused what her shift would not cover.

When he would come, she would lead him again into the familiar glade and teach, voice softer than fallen snow and barley eyes filled with intelligence and a faintly swirling color of melancholy. She was no less beautiful, hair becoming more grey-white as the clouds day by day, but all childish fantasy was broken inside him and even with her beside him he barely believed that she was there, the light of a new year and shadow of its end. He never sighted the quiet tears that she shed as his footsteps faded into silence, and she became accustomed to the embrace of her own arms over his.

The sun was at its bleakest when she did not look for him at first light.

Instead she stumbled through the forest, frightening deer with the snaps of branches, snow no longer yielding to the soles of her feet, wind no longer caring whether it blew on her or through her. She thought of him sometimes, and knew that the earth was taking care of him, and her cold blackthorn-berry lips tried to smile as she thought of how he would pass on the knowledge that she gave him.

It was nearly time for the rebirth of the forest, during the most biting chill that the wind could muster, that he came to the wood without meeting her at the field as he once did. He stopped and looked, trying to find the shadow of that wood that he once knew so well, and she came to him, snowdrop hair swirling with each movement and barley eyes frosted over with a vague, sightless mist. For long moments the silence of snow reigned, then she turned and led him into the forest with faltering, measured steps. Without his asking she took his hand and guided it to the prickly leaves of the holly, trying to teach him its secrets. He pushed her hand away.

Instead his hand reached into his heavy cloak and drew out a halo of *Mahonia* flowers, blooming golden yellow even in the harsh cold, and he placed it on the pale crown of her head as she used to. She felt them with faintly blue fingers and understood his thanks; she was at once content with the joy she had given him and filled with regret for the things she would never give him for lack of strength.

Exploring the crown with gentle hands she pushed her fingers towards the sky, stretching out and twisting into woody kinks, dark and brittle, creating the branch antlers with which she would play as a child. Her hair stiffened into bark and pushed



down into the soil as the shift warped into a collection of knotted tree trunks, and in the instant before he could see no more of her, barley eyes were cleared and shone like the sun, and peach lips widened to let out a gentle laugh. The tree whispered and sang as its branches burst into the sky, shattering the ice ceiling, and green leaves exploded from its arms, breaking the fury of the wind against its unyielding trunk.

He stood and marveled, then smiled as fragile yellow primroses broke through the snow and clustered around the base of the tree, heralding the end of the cold.

In time, he returned to the tree and watched as its green leaves burned gold in the time of harvest, and he would come to call her tree a hornbeam for her yellow crowns and her branch antlers. It provided for him strong wood and ample shade and as he came back, year after year, he told his son the stories of she who had given him everything on the earth and in it; even today her spirit blazes in the flower-yellow leaves, laughing in the wind and watching his sons and daughters work the earth as she taught him.

## A Seemingly Inanimate Companion

Samantha George

Every Monday, Wednesday and Friday afternoon, over five hundred students cram into the stuffy lecture hall of Noyes Laboratory and learn why chemistry is beautiful. There, benzene molecules are “gorgeous” and those killer problems on the last exam are deemed “well-crafted,” making you almost appreciate the fact that they gave you such a hard time. Dr. Kelly Marville is the one working to relay the intricacies of CHEM 104 to this class of cramped students. With her perplexing accent (which students later found to be from Barbados) she lauds the logic and beauty of the subject. However, to her chemistry isn’t just a subject, it’s a living being, her oldest friend.

“Most students laugh when I describe chemistry as a person rather than a thing. I suppose I would say it’s a person because it became something that saved me from myself.” Marville confesses this in her office, sporting her usual business casual attire made sassy with a short leather jacket. “Chemistry has solidified me. I’m very good at it. I’ve been so many places, but it’s been this companion that has stuck with me since high school.”

When she was seven, growing up in Barbados, she came home from school one day to find her mother in tears, her house emptied out and her father gone. He took almost everything, but left the unpaid bills and three daughters. Marville’s mother took on two jobs cleaning peoples’ houses, but she became very sick. The two oldest daughters, Andrea and Jackie, had to abandon their dreams of college in order to find jobs and pay off the bills that were piling up at the door.

“When you don’t know where your next meal will be,” Marville explains, “you begin to get very down.” During that time of turmoil, Marville says she could have taken a very different path, perhaps a dark path. “It was a chemistry teacher that reached out to me. He pushed me to be better despite things being pretty bad at home.” During lunch, the high school chemistry teacher would talk to her. He discovered that she had a predisposition for chemistry and began giving her material that was advanced for her grade.

However, while her chemistry teacher fed her mind, Marville’s stomach remained empty. One of her friends, Renni, realized that Marville wasn’t bringing lunch to school. And suddenly, sandwiches wrapped in foil appeared in Marville’s backpack. “I didn’t even ask. Someone could have poisoned me. But I ate like a crazy person; I was so hungry.”

They never spoke of it, but the act solidified their friendship.

When Marville finished high school, she didn’t think her path would lead to higher education. Despite being a fantastic student and receiving offers from many schools, there were still bills to pay and house that was falling apart around her family. She began applying for jobs in Barbados, but her oldest sister, Andrea, stopped her.

“You are good at school, better than we ever were. We will do what we need to do. You already got a scholarship. You are going to be the one who will finish school.”

And with that, Marville went to college, finishing her Bachelor’s degree in Chemistry at University of the West Indies and her Ph.D. at University of Toronto. Her journey shifted to the U.S. after a presentation she did for her Ph.D. brought on a job offer with Novartis Pharmaceuticals in Florida.

She loved research. She was synthesizing lucrative compounds and things were going well. She was set on getting her family out of poverty, on making life better for them. However, her job became her obsession and denatured her pure intentions.

“If I could really be quite honest, and I try to be very honest with myself, I would say if I looked back at myself, when I was really driven by research and getting publications and trying to just get ahead at all costs, I would say I wasn’t a good person. It wasn’t like I was vindictive or anything, just that my priorities were pretty screwed up. I hardly saw my family.”

For a year and a half while she continued research, Marville didn’t interact with her family beyond sending them money. However, her time with Novartis was cut short when a chigger bite triggered a severe immune response. She had to leave her job and go home to Barbados, where she was confined to a wheelchair for months due to inflammation in her legs. Her family helped her recuperate, getting her into bed and to the bathroom, trying to figure out the next step. To Marville, though, there was no next step. She couldn’t do what she loved, what she was good at. She was confined to a bed, unable to use her mind, going crazy.

But her family persisted, and under their care she slowly recovered. “When I was really obsessed with publications, I hardly gave them the time of day. But they embraced someone that really didn’t deserve it.”

In the meantime, her friend Renni was once again helping Marville. This time, Renni did not sneak sandwiches into Marville’s backpack, but instead applied for a chemistry teaching position on Marville’s behalf. “Without my permission,” Marville adds.

With cane in hand, Marville went to the first interview and did a “piss-poor” job. She didn’t want to teach. She wanted to return to the lab. However, despite her best efforts to fail, she was hired at one of the best schools in Barbados, Harrison College. Against her wishes, she began to teach.

A few weeks into the job, Marville’s mother noticed a change come over her daughter.

“You look happy.” Her mom observed.

“Don’t be ridiculous,” Marville retorted. “I can’t be happy. I’m not in the lab.”

Marville eventually had to admit she loved teaching. Her students were motivated and wanted to learn. But the position was only open for a semester. Novartis called and asked when Marville would return to the lab. Surprising everyone, she

turned down the offer in order to continue teaching.

The next part of her journey brought her to schools in some of the toughest, most impoverished communities in America.

In Kentucky, students weren't expected to live beyond eighteen, due to the fact that most of them were involved in gangs or drugs. The principal of the school had given up, deciding that kids couldn't learn. To him, the only purpose school had was to keep kids from killing each other. Marville saw things differently. She revamped the chemistry department, worked weekends and was able to allow students to do their first lab in years.

In Montana, she taught on a reservation. While the freezing fog made her nose bleed, she again reworked a non-existent syllabus, and was able to inspire some students to love chemistry as much as she did. "I was able to take them so much higher than persons ever expected them to be. Which is what my chemistry teacher did for me. He saw something in me that I didn't see in myself." She tends to gravitate toward places that reflect her own past. "Some people think that U of I is a strange choice, that the students are more motivated and everything. But I don't know." What she does know is that she'll move on when she feels she's not needed anymore, when she thinks there are other places that she could do good.

"I think I'm happier now than I ever was when I was making a lot of money. I'm still on the journey, still trying to figure out myself and be the best person I can be, make my family proud." She talks to her mom everyday on the phone, and was able to help her begin a catering business so she could stop cleaning houses. Both of her sisters were able to go back to school. One has become an accountant; the other, a jeweler. A new house was built to replace the roof riddled with holes and the floorboards that gave way underfoot. Marville explains that it was very emotional to tear down the old house. It was the end of an era, an era that she got through with that faithful friend, chemistry.

When asked what the most beautiful aspect of her companion was, she responded that what she found to be breath-taking was the logic of it all. That there were molecules in everything, performing a specific task, doing what they were meant to do, amazed her. It wasn't just the beauty of chemistry, but the comfort as well that inspired this love. "When things were uncertain outside, uncertain about how bills would be paid, where meals would come from, I knew that chemistry would be this logical thing that would happen. This would be the thing that wouldn't let me down. It would be there. Chemistry is still my friend, my companion, helping me find my way."

She always hopes to instill this idea in her students, that education is a lot more than just grades, that it can really transform your life. It did so for hers, and she hopes through her teaching that it can do so for others.



## Through Different Eyes

Ana Petracovci

On a cloudless day two summers ago, at the beginning of my freshman year of college, I decide to take my bike for a spin. As I pedal across the campus, I find myself wandering further and further south, the pumping motion of my legs on the pedals lending rhythm to my thoughts. My eyes turn to slits against the blaring sun, the wind whipping my flyaway hair across my cheeks and into the corners of my mouth. When I reach the bustling intersection of Lincoln and Florida Avenues, I suddenly realize exactly where I am headed.

The field of unkempt grass is visible from several blocks away as I pedal east down Florida Avenue. I turn right onto Orchard Street, welcomed by the familiar sign proclaiming “Orchard Downs: Graduate Family Housing.” My bike hiccups along the uneven sidewalk as I navigate the cracks and protruding weeds, riding deeper into the neighborhood. Orchard Downs looks almost exactly as I remember it from over eight years ago, if perhaps a little worse for wear. The telltale signs of wear are visible in the rusty balcony railings, the faded, weather-beaten bricks of the buildings, and the asphalt parking lots crisscrossed by spider webs of cracks, all the more noticeable under the sun’s intense scrutiny.

This was my childhood home, the site of my many adventures and exploits, victories and tantrums. It’s a profound experience, viewing Orchard Downs through fresh eyes, without the veil of my glorified childhood memories. I cycle through the winding roads, nostalgia forming a lump in my throat that refuses to go away. On my right is the famed Orchard Downs hill, whose treacherous icy slope is perfect for sledding during the wintertime. Next, I pass the South Laundry building, where I learned to shoot my first free-throw in the basketball court behind the parking lot.

Soon, I am picking up speed, coasting aimlessly through the maze of narrow sidewalks, assaulted by the intense humidity and comforting boom of cicadas. I imagine myself once again at nine years old, twiggy legs flying across the pedals, mind racing with the endless possibilities of summer. Summers were my freedom; I would often head outside to play at eleven in the morning, and not get back home until after seven at night. For my nine year old self, it was exhilarating. On a beautiful day like this, I would be busy assembling my gang of friends.

Because the vast majority of graduate students living in Orchard Downs were international, my friends came from all sorts of different backgrounds. In the building next to mine were Sandra, my friend from Cameroon, and the ever charismatic Bruno.

“Sorr-e, sorr-e,” he would apologize in his thick Polish accent after doing something particularly goofy.

Then there was Jane, the petite, proud French Canadian; and Hye-Ji, my Korean

friend who tried unsuccessfully to get my picky palate to appreciate sushi. Together, we formed a veritable United Nations, though we were blissfully unaware of the fact. We would roam the flat, mowed fields behind my apartment building, clambering on the sandbox roof or inventing a new game on the monkey bars. We were the Orchard Downs gang, and the world was our playground.

I finally approach the next intersection and turn right towards my old street, Hazelwood Drive. I smile at the two empty wooden picnic tables nestled under the shade of a tree. At the corner by my bus stop, toothless Chinese grandparents would sell their daily fare of vegetables on these picnic tables, beckoning at us with fistfuls of onions and lettuce.

I turn left onto Hazelwood Drive, retracing my daily trek to and from the bus stop. As my eyes slide over the familiar buildings, I realize that I probably don't know anybody who lives here anymore. The parking lot is filled with unfamiliar cars, heat emanating from their sun-scorched surfaces. Everyone has moved away; in fact, I was one of the last of my old friends to still live in Orchard Downs, before we too moved away to my parents' new jobs about eight years ago.

My old building has a fresh coat of paint, but the color is the same monotonous beige as before. It's a hot, lazy afternoon on Hazelwood Drive, and I almost go inside my old building, curious to reopen the heavy metal door and retrace my old steps in the cool, dark hallways. But I stop myself at the last moment. I realize that I already know what's inside; the dark hallways and cramped apartments haven't changed at all in the interceding years. It is I who have changed.

I find myself standing at a mental crossroads. Under the soothing hum of the cicadas, I close my eyes and let the memories flood over me in intense undulations. I never thought that I would be back in Urbana, much less in my old childhood home. Nevertheless, I realize that this time, my future lies up north, in the bustling campus, not on this deserted street. There's nothing for me here now, except empty hallways and vibrant memories. A subtle shift in the wind snaps me out of my reverie. Slowly, I begin to smile as I squint at the shocking blue of the sky. It's time for the next adventure.

## Bitter Tea

Meredith Staub

Boil the water. Pour it, steaming, into a mug that fits your mouth with a handle that fits your hand. Place the teabag carefully into the water. It will float, then darken, then sink. Amber tendrils will flow from it, staining the water, flavoring it. Now it is time to wait.

My mom always said I never cried. My family jokingly called me a Vulcan when I was younger, after the emotionless, logical aliens of our favorite TV show. I loved the comparison. Vulcans were not emotionless; they were just in control of their emotions and did not let them take over. I liked that I had that ability, to look at things objectively, to choose what I let other people see. Vulcans were strong. Vulcans were intelligent.

When I started taking a medication that affected my hormones, I found out what it was to truly cry. To cry for minutes, for hours, for a day, with no way to stop until my body decided it would stop. I cried at throwing away crumpled receipts, I cried seeing a balloon floating away into the sky, and I cried while cleaning the kitchen on spring break because of nothing. Because of nothing. My doctor changed my brand. My crying stopped. I have not cried for nothing again.

Never leave a teabag in the tea. Bitterness is wrapped in the leaves, hidden, and when the teabag is left too long, the bitterness is slowly released.

I sat on my couch. *A mistake*, my mind whispered. *A mistake, a mistake, a mistake*. But I couldn't stand any longer. It was either sit and stare at the clock or stand and stare at the clock, and my legs were tired of the latter. I couldn't take my eyes from it. 8:36. Plenty of time to dry my hair. Plenty of time to get dressed. Plenty of time to leave. 8:37.

I was not sad. I knew sad. I knew how it felt to see that balloon in the sky and the receipts in the garbage. But I could not go to work. And as the time passed and the clock read 10:57 and I had moved to lay in my bed wide awake with my hair still wet, I missed my French class. I was not sad.

The bitterness hidden in tea leaves is invisible. You will not see it seeping into your drink. You will not know how long is too long, and how late is too late.

I didn't sleep in. I would wake up. Sometimes I would make it to the bathroom to brush my teeth. Sometimes I didn't make it that far. Then I would look at my clothes, and find that I could not put them on. I couldn't move. I couldn't even reach for them. Why would I? Why should I? Sometimes it happened at night. I would come home to do my homework and be unable to reach for my backpack. I would sit. I would stare. I would not sleep. But at the same time, I was starting to realize that I was not fully awake.

When I was a Vulcan, I could be sad. I could calm myself down and look at the

sky and feel better and decide to go do something that made me happy. I could take the teabag out in time, add some cream and sugar, and my tea would not be bitter. But this feeling, this feeling that was not sad but took me miles away from happiness, I could not handle. It was a pit, and I could not climb out. The string on my teabag had broken and it had sunk to the bottom where I could no longer see it.

I broke down studying for the physics GRE. I started sobbing uncontrollably, consumed with the knowledge that I would not get into the grad school I wanted, and that I was a failure of a physics student for not being able to answer these questions. Comforts were lies to my ears. Once again, I could not stop until my body decided it would. But this time, there was no inanity to my sadness, no unintentional tears for paper or balloons, just a suffocating hopelessness that left a pit of dread in my stomach. The next morning, I woke up. But I was not awake.

My tea is not your tea. It is a different color, a different leaf. My depression is not your depression. And it is not my mother's, or my aunt's, or my grandmother's. If minds are unique, then a disease of the mind has different flavor in each mind.

I am almost awake. I am so close to awake. I will be awake again.

A fresh teabag is in my mug, and the kettle has started to whistle.

## The Way We Move

Samantha George

From afar, movement looks cohesive; it looks purposeful, even graceful at times. Up close, though, we may see that the minute movements that comprise the final product are at times a bit odd, a little ridiculous. However, it's these seemingly insignificant, awkward movements that result in that final motion, the one we see as beautiful.

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I sat behind him in Calculus class. Every day I'd vacillate between the decision to listen to lecture or discuss something absurd with this stranger in front of me. More often than not, I chose the latter. Conversations with him usually meandered through a myriad of topics, resting on each one for only a moment. Rarely did he talk about himself, which was a shame because he was very interesting. He was strange and I liked that. His hair fell a bit past his shoulders, brown going more toward ginger, and his usual attire consisted of a weird t-shirt, cargo pants and sandals. Even during the winter he wore sandals.

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A sarcomere is the basic functional unit of contraction in a muscle cell. It's basically a rectangle spanned by thin tigtropes of molecules called actin. The ones walking the tigtrope are myosin proteins. They're comprised of two globular heads that attach to the actin and a tail that links to an anchoring molecule. If the actin is uncovered, the myosin will automatically begin walking, its stride pulling other fibers, causing the muscle to contract. However, the actin is surrounded by regulatory proteins called troponin and tropomyosin that block the binding sites on the actin. Only when the threshold of stimulation is reached will the regulatory proteins move and allow myosin to begin its travels.

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We didn't dance much during prom. We wandered around the hotel, exploring an empty arcade, vandalizing strange back hallways with sharpies and pilfering fruit from platters at the front desk. I wondered why he didn't ask one of his closer female friends to accompany him to prom, but I was strangely happy with his decision to ask me. Something had changed in my mind.

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When a muscle cell receives enough stimulation, a structure called the sarcoplasmic reticulum releases a flood of calcium ions. These ions bind with those regulatory proteins, troponin and tropomyosin. The proteins change in shape, opening the actin site to myosin. Myosin begins walking; its movement brings the muscle cell deeper into contraction. This is not a runway-model walk, though, or even a normal walk.



Myosin has an awkward, ridiculous way of traversing the span of an actin filament. It's an unwieldy staggering in which one leg swings out to the side, circling in front of the first leg to bind to the next actin site. It pauses to regain composure. Then the other leg goes about the same motion. And so it goes, drunkenly stumbling toward a destination, slowly contracting the fiber.

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We spent a lot of time together that summer. It began with his attempts to teach me how to play *Portal* and evolved into walks that criss-crossed his neighborhood as we searched for good climbing trees. He persuaded me to join him in the consumption of a ghost pepper, and we suffered together as the capsaicin wreaked havoc on our insides. Many days, we sipped on oolong tea picked by monkeys and talked about everything. Everything.

He told me about his attempted suicide, explaining that his two-month absence from school in the winter had been caused not by an intense flu, but hospitalization as his liver recovered from an overdose of sleeping pills. Since sophomore year, he'd been seeing a psychiatrist. A dozen or so different medications had gone through his system. None of it had lessened his wish to self-destruct. I was glad he was alive, amazed that I'd never known and so sad about the possibility of his not existing. I wanted him to want to exist.

The next year, I was a senior. He had graduated and took classes at a nearby college. His friends cut his hair, reducing the shoulder-length locks to almost nothing. I looked forward to Fridays, not because of the weekend's arrival, but because he would come to school to eat lunch with me in our usual place. He still wore sandals in all weather.

Mid-way through the year, he decided to attend an art school in New York. Before he left, I realized I liked him. It was a very inopportune realization that I decided to keep to myself. He'd find someone interesting in New York, someone artsy and strange and perfect.

During his five-month hiatus, Facebook was our tireless mailman. Our messages experienced an exponential growth pattern. Two-line messages morphed into two-page long responses that had to be typed up in a Word document before being pasted into a message. Even in writing, his idiosyncratic speech was apparent, but I missed hearing his actual voice. I missed him.

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Myosin continues its stumbling forward toward somewhere. I'm jealous of its ability to move forward without fearing where it's headed. Each step it takes is eleven nanometers. A millimeter is about the width of a fingernail tip. A nanometer is one-millionth of that. Myosin seems not to move very far with each strange step, but at least it moves.

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He ate lunch with me the first day he returned. We made a meal of passion fruit and mangosteen that he'd brought back from New York. I pestered him with questions. "Where did you go? What did you do? Was it awesome? Did you find any pretty ladies?" The last question just slipped in without my planning it, but I anxiously awaited the answer. "No," he replied with a smile, "they were all old."

I graduated. The beginning of my summer I spent with extended family as they heaped congratulations on me. After that, I spent my time with him, climbing trees and finding strange foods.

One day, he told me to come over to his house for a surprise. I walked into his room to find a huge box wrapped in black duct tape. Cutting it open I found another box, which I cut open to find a Dali-style melted clock. I thanked him. I hugged him. I kissed him.

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One myosin molecule moving along one actin filament isn't enough to cause a muscle to fully contract. It's when a bundle of fibers is traversed by billions of myosin molecules, all walking toward the same place, all stumbling in the same direction, that things happen. Their motion seems unwieldy and strange, but when an arm bends, when fingers wriggle, when muscles finally move, we see that the arc of movement is amazing. There might be some purpose in it after all.