

Aurora 2011

Literary Arts Magazine | Staff

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Cover Art | ***Luonna's Landscape***, by Luonna Lancaster, WED 2014

Aurora provides a forum for original literature and creative arts. Submissions remain anonymous until a staff of readers complete the review process. The editor maintains responsibility for final selections in preparation of works for publication. Please address all correspondence and submissions to the editors. Submissions guidelines and dates available upon request.

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Editors Note

Dear Reader,

I have Googled, interviewed, begged, and researched different ways to write a Letter from the Editor, and I still can't tell you exactly what one contains. I've written rough draft after rough draft—failing with each one. So, you are left with this Small Note from the Editor instead.

This year I have not only gotten to work with some pretty amazing people, I have gotten to see some pretty, amazing pieces, not all of which could be published. With the experience I've gained working on this magazine, I have come to realize my dream of working on a publication like this professionally. I can only hope we get as much talent submitted for future issues, and only trust that you can come to appreciate these pieces as much as the staff here at Aurora does.

Sincerely,

Cecilia Pryor, Editor

A large, stylized, gray cursive signature of the word "Aurora" is positioned at the bottom of the page. The letters are fluid and interconnected, with a prominent, sweeping 'A' at the beginning.

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Wabashiki,
Amber Slaughterbeck,
Campus 2012



In Maw-Maw's Kitchen

Dianne Matthews, WED 2013

"Maw-Maw, what does it feel like to be old?"

She had been putting dishes in the cabinet and she turned to look at me, dried the chipped Blue Willow bowl and smiled.

"Who's old?"

"Well," I said, "You are. Aren't you? You're the oldest person I know." I was 10 years old, and she wasn't much bigger than me. She placed the bowl in the cabinet, dried her tiny, wrinkled hands on a stained apron, pulled out a chair and sat down at the table. She was quiet for a moment, pulling a kitchen towel over the left-over cornbread.

"What do you want to know?"

"Does it hurt?"

"Sometimes. Anything else?"

"When does it happen? When do you know you're old? Can you feel it when it happens?"

She smiled and looked off into the distance. Her voice grew softer, "When I first wake up—before I open my eyes—sometimes I think I'm still a little girl in my Papa's house. Sometimes when I'm still fuzzy from dreamin', I'm a young wife with two little boys to care for. I don't reckon you ever

feel old in here – or here," and she pointed to her heart and her head. "I sometimes forget until I move. When I move, I remember what the years have done to this old body. Sometimes it hurts – sometimes it's just a little harder to get my body to do what I want it to do."

"And when do you stop caring about young girl stuff and start caring about old lady stuff?"

"Old lady stuff?" she laughed.

"Yeah. Like aprons and garlic and liniment."

"When you're as old as me, you'll still be a girl inside. I would still love to sit on my Papa's knee or dance with a handsome boy or get married and have babies. But you got to do those things when it's your time. And I had my time."

"Was it a good time, Maw-Maw?"

Her eyes were shiny and she twisted the towel in her fingers. "Yeah. It was a real good time."

"So how old do you think you'll feel when you wake up tomorrow?"

She laughed and wiped the tobacco juice from the corner of her mouth.

"Lord, child! There's no tellin'."



The love of the game

Danya Long, Campus 2011

Clean grass and dirt fill the air,
Shouts from coaches and players resonate.
Cracks of bats and smacks of mitts
Consume the hot Alabama complex.

Another loud pop—the ball bounces,
The throw to first beats the runner.
“Go three! Go three!”
The ball cuts the air toward me.
A quick glance left: the runner.
A locking glare forward: the ball.

There is no smack of the mitt,
No cheers from fans or players.
The hollow thud of ball hitting face;
Hot iron oozing from my mouth.

Metallic rustle as people rise to see.
Gasps of horror reach my ears.
Shuffle of feet around me as play finishes.
My only thought: “Mom’s going to kill me!”
Two missing teeth, and for what?
The only reason, the love of the game.

My Car Escort

An-Ru Teng, International

Wherever you go,
I go.
I turn you on,
You rock respond.

Speeding my journey,
I depend on you,
I trust in you.
You are my escort.

Protective, supportive are you,
Contented am I.
Outside the windows,
Day goes into night.

As music flows full in you,
Its tempo quivers me,
We
Have the same beats.

Wrapped in Radio Strings

Margaret Riser, Campus 2014

In the passenger seat
I am still except for
Eyes flickering front then far right
Capturing the slate sky on pale brown grass
Winter’s interstate provokes a chaotic
Rumble of emotions behind my eyes
So I close them.
As the volume of the music rises, my chest
Does, and I exhale as his tenor pierces
The steady pounding of a bass drum
Being my heart’s metronome.

Moving

DeAnne Roberts, WED 2012

Empty rooms, bare walls
All our lives in boxes.
Van cramped, car full
Off on our great adventure.
No home yet, no job
Living out of boxes.
Dingy rooms, holey walls
Not what we expected.
Service jobs, long hours
We build a new life beyond the
boxes.



Lil sis

Zahra Adni, Campus 2012

My sister bounces
From stone to sidewalk
Avoiding the unseen
Bubbling lava
That once was grass

Kindergarten

Cecilia Pryor, Campus 2012

As I stared
carefully past
the green paint

I got lost
in the maze
of my fingerprint

wandering
wherever
it would take me.

Beginning Ballet

Chrystal Goodpaster, WED

Girls positioned on marks
Red, blonde, brunette, black-haired
One impatient for instruction
Little bottom wiggling
As the music starts
Pink taffeta tutus swing
Plump hands reach and circle
Tiny black ballet slippers
Slap out of time
Short, chubby legs kicking
Seldom a surprising graceful move
Mostly clumsy clomping steps and
Twirls that end in splaying splats on the floor



Poetry Stinks

Lauren Sutton, Campus 2013

Poetry is like dumpster diving.
Some people enjoy it.
Others detest it.

You dig through a mess of words
seeing which ones are treasures
and which ones are garbage.

Sometimes you have to dig really deep
before you find anything worthwhile
and beautiful.

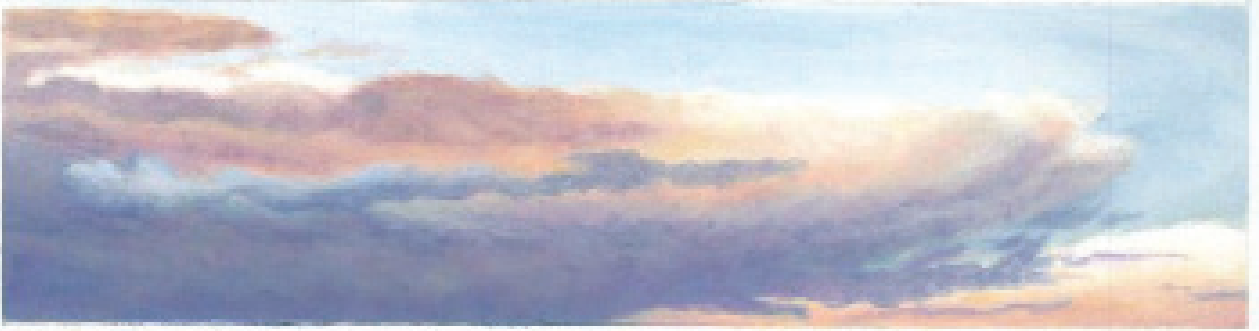
But most of the time
you come up empty handed
and stinking.

The Fox In Socks

Hannah McGrayel, Campus 2012

The Fox in socks
ordered a scotch on the rocks.
How does a Fox in socks
order a scotch on the rocks?
He stands on a box
and says, "I'll have a scotch on the rocks
—hard day at the docks."
"You must watch the clocks.
I was about to lock up the locks,"
said the guy, as big as an ox,
wiping tables and bottles of scotch.
"Just as well," said the Fox
"I'm really in detox,"
and he walked off in his socks.





Sky Study - Wyoming, Kimberly DisPennett, Administrative Assitant for Academic Affairs



Hospitalizations

Virginia Unverzagt, MAPT Director

Joy's sixth hospitalization before she was two years old was the worst for me. Knowing the intake nurse, the best vending machines or the day on which my favorite meatloaf was served did not take the edge off this experience. Upper respiratory distress or pneumonias necessitated Joy's hospitalizations. Since she was delayed in her baby milestones like rolling over or sitting up, it stood to reason that some of her vital systems would need catching up as well.

When I was six months old, my two-and-a-half year old sister, Ann, died in the hospital. My mother's grief was so searing that she was unable to speak of the tragedy until I was a mother myself. I learned that Ann had been strapped to her bed, had vomited during the night and choked to death, alone and unnoticed. It wasn't until my mother went to visit her little girl the next morning that she entered an empty room – her Ann was in the morgue.

The reality of that incident impacted me so much that I rarely left Joy alone while she was in the hospital. During this sixth confinement, I was exhausted from being up all night for several nights before Joy's being admitted. When it seemed that things were under control and Joy was settled down, I went home to get some rest.

The nurses called me at five AM to come immediately. They said Joy was agitated and would not calm down. When I walked into her room, I saw that she was strapped on her back, restrained from pulling out her IVs and catheter.

I freaked out. "You will not restrain her like that. You will strap her to me."

And that's how we spent the next three days.



Get Dressed

Virginia Unverzagt, MAPT Director

"Joy, you've got to get up and dressed, the school bus will be here in twenty minutes. It's ten below with a wind chill factor of minus twenty. Put on these warm pants and this turtle neck."

Joy insisted on the flowery dress, and a whilry-twirly one at that; I required the warmer choice. After all, it was a mother's duty to ensure her child's protection against the elements. A few go-arounds later, we compromised by her wearing it all.

Everyday the same meltdown/struggle ensued: my laying out a set of practical clothes to suit the weather, Joy insisting on her alternate choice of a pretty dress.

I consulted with her classroom teacher who suggested a behavior modification approach. We tried rewards, charting, forced choice. No luck. I talked to other parents in her class, but no tried-and-true plan seemed to work. I read self-help books by child psychologists. Nada. No amount of discussion, deliberation or consultation with experts netted my hoped-for outcome: to get Joy dressed without incident. Yet on summer days that called for a sundress, or formal occasions that allowed for a "princess" type dress, there were no problems. I could not figure it out.

One morning, after months of exasperation, I held Joy by her shoulders, looked her straight in the eye, and said through clenched teeth, "Why is getting you dressed so hard?" She looked at me sweetly and said, "It's not hard, mommy, all you have to do is ask me to get pants-ed or get skirt-ed. You always tell me to get dressed."

I've learned to be very careful in my speech.





Red Ink to Clover, Camielle Larrick, Campus 2012

A Tale of a Wake

Virginia Unverzagt, MAPT Director

This visit to the funeral parlor was going to be different. A friend's husband had died and I saw an opportunity once again to share a sacred moment with my daughter: honoring someone's passage from death to life with God.

All the way to the funeral home I repeated the directions to my teenage daughter, Joy. "When we get inside, you are to go to the back of the room, sit down, and be quiet. You are not to try to make the deceased man sit up like you did to Grandma Mary. You are not to yell at the man in the coffin that it's time to get up like you did with Uncle Norbert. You are not to open the closed half-door at the foot of the casket to see if my friend's husband has shoes on like you did with Aunt Marie." I was sure I had made myself clear.

After I parked the car, Joy and I proceeded toward the entrance. In the time it took me to direct a confused motorist to her parking spot, Joy had disappeared into the building. When I got inside, I frantically looked for her, fearing the worst. I found her sitting in the back of the room just as I had instructed her. Yes!

No! My relief was short-lived.

"He's dead forever," Joy said.

"What do you mean?" I countered.

"When I took his glasses off and tried to push his eyes open, they were sealed shut. So I just came back here and sat down."

After I recovered from her admission, I witnessed the man's smudged eyes and glasses askew, so I informed the funeral director, "The deceased needs some attention." We quickly and quite unceremoniously left. In the car we had another discussion about funeral home etiquette. "All I was doing is what you told me. You said we were going to awake. I tried to awake Grandma Mary. I tried to awake Uncle Norbert. Today I tried to awake this man." What profound simplicity lay in her innocent interpretation of my directive!

Oh, autism you are a formidable companion.



Insomnia

Stephanie Runyon, Campus 2013

Blackness.
I stare. Where are my stars
who have come to carry me away?
Waiting for the long awaited arrival,
Yet tortured by restlessness, it mocks me.
The impatient wind,
The unyielding to-do list,
And coo-coo of the clock,
All sidekicks.
Rain pellets hitting my window,
One. After. Another.
The hand is already a third of the way around.
But I am still here. Waiting.
It grabs hold of me by the throat, for I am
Trapped—unable to soar.
It knows my weakness.
That I can't rest.
Life doesn't stop.
No anecdote, it's endless.

The Moon

Lauren Sutton, Campus 2013

The man's face
scrunches in anger
as he fights with his wife

The man's face
smiles in victory
as he wins the battle

The man's face
settles into peace
as he sees his children

The man's face
sighs in happiness
as he watches them sleep

The man's face
sighs miserably
as he sees them waking

The man's face
settles in defeat
as he takes in the truth

The man's face
smiles in surrender
as she takes back control

The man's face
scrunches in prospect
as he waits for darkness



"Flakes II"

Margy Frazier, Campus 2014

I guess I always knew deep inside that he was a flake.
I remember the morn-ing so clearly –
Sitting at the kitchen table (then our kitchen table)
Pouring my cheerios into my glass bowl.
But he scoffed at my cereal choice,
And pulled out a box of cornflakes – for himself.
Then he kissed me (on the nose)
And promised he'd never leave me, ever.

The next morning, he was gone.
The cornflakes were still there, though.

Diet

Dianne Matthews, WED 2013

Too many thoughts about the size of my thighs!
So I gave up potatoes. And chocolate. And wine.
And now I have broccoli. And turnips. And water.
And I no longer think about the size of my thighs.
I think about potatoes. And chocolate. And wine.

Math Phobic

Elleen T. Vera, WED 2011

Math Anxiety
Still at forty-nine years old
I am no Einstein



Riding and Writing

Rosemary Nudd, SP 1969, Associate Professor of English

Riding

It has to do
with bodies:
humans', horses', heaven's, earth's—
so freely fused in one embrace
that space and grace unspeakable
are told through muscled flesh and bone.

It has to do
with movement:
power pulsing past containment,
flight, delight, fluidity,
unleashed, unlocked, and understood.

It has to do
with sharing:
sweating, struggle, tension, triumph,
carrying (and caring) creatures
riding/rising
into life.

Writing

It has to do
with bodies:
laying claim to life forever,
willing flesh-made-word to stay,
to say the solidness of love.

It has to do
with movement:
rhythm racing towards completion,
reining flying fluency
to manage meaning's heavy load.

It has to do
with sharing:
hopes to coax collaboration;
stories strong as steeds to carry writers/riders
into life.





Last Unicorn/Star Chaser, Tracey Dykstra, Campus 2014



The Last KO

Danya Long, Campus 2011

Deep red blood slowly drips from the cut above his eye as he picks his bludgeoned body off the floor of the ring; he isn't giving up this fight. This is considered the match of the decade in the professional boxing world, and Keyan "KO" Orndock is not going to let down his family and fans.

"Cheap shot. Go for left side," KO thought.

Darnell "Big D" Ryan, his archrival, poises himself in the opposite corner of the ring. Sweat runs down his bald head and the tattooed image of Cerberus inked on his chest. His corner man leans over and says something in his ear, and a chip-toothed grin spreads across Big D's face.

KO stands against the post of the ring as his corner man squirts water into his mouth and his trainer patches up his injuries. Big D smiles. KO's shoulders tense up, his jaw tightens.

"Fuck him. I'm not done yet," KO mutters through gritted teeth and an oversized mouthpiece. He pushes away from the post and strides to the center of the ring toward the referee and Big D.

The bell sounds to start round five. KO's eyes drill into his opponent. He charges at Big D, arms ready in front of his chin. He lands a blow to his opponent's left cheek. Sweat, spit projects around the ring. Another punch to his stomach. Big D falls backward into the ropes. KO delivers continuous body blows until the ref tears him off.

As the two men are forced into their respective corners, KO slips out of reality.

He was seven years old when his father, Mike, started teaching him to box. Mike would take KO to the gym with him to train, and he developed a passion for the sport. His first time at the gym Mike helped him lace up his child sized boxing gloves and led him to the punching bag. His first punch did nothing but hurt his arm, and Mike chuckled. That chuckle fueled KO's strength, and the next blow was aimed at his dad's thigh rather than the bag. His dad let out an "umph" and bent over; KO snaps back to the match. Big D glares at KO as he looked up. His eyes are black and focused. Their eyes meet across the ring. All goes silent.

The ref stands in the middle of the ring waiting on the two fighters to approach. Big D limps in, but

KO approaches the center with a confident swagger. The men bump gloves with one another. The bell rings. Round six. This time Big D takes the initiative, landing a hard uppercut to KO's chin. He stumbles backward but manages to keep his balance. KO shakes his head. A pain shoots down his spine. Another blow to the left side. KO's body absorbs the shot. He delivers his own left-right combination to Big D's face and stomach. He doesn't seem fazed by the punches as he manages to smirk around his mouthpiece. KO goes after Big D. Nine punches to his upper body. Headlock. The ref approaches as the bell sounds the end of the round, and the two boxers separate to their corners.

Still dizzy from the blow to his jaw, KO leans against the ropes. His vision grows cloudy and he was twelve again. *He was sitting in the front row of the arena, watching his father face off against his biggest rival, Cesar Hernandez. His eyes pulsed with excitement. As the match went on, KO's gleam faded as Mike took a beating. In round twelve, he hit the floor and was down for the count. KO had never seen his dad lose a fight before; his shoulders drooped and he hung his head as he approached his dad afterward.*

"Son, you just can't win every fight. Sometimes they're better than you, and sometimes you beat yourself. You can't just quit because you lose once; I want you to promise me you'll never give up because of that," said Mike.

The bell – round seven. KO doesn't remember walking to the center of the ring. He stands in front of Big D once again. KO's disgusted snarl flashes. Two quick blows to Big D's chest. Knocks the wind out of him. Big D bends over gasping for air as KO delivers a punch to his left kidney.

"That's for the cheap shot earlier," mutters KO.

Big D uncurls himself; every muscle in his face tense, his jaw locked tight. He catches KO off guard, a punch to the chest. He lands two more shots to his chest. KO comes back, a blow below the belt. Big D falls to the ground. The ref pulls KO away mid-punch.

"You know better than that! Keep it clean, damnit!" yells the ref.

KO returns to his corner. His corner man confronts him.

"What the hell was that KO?" he questions. "You



don't fight like that! If you're gonna beat this guy, you're gonna do it fair!"

KO doesn't respond, a memory taking over his mind. *It was January 15, 2007. Three years ago. His dad was fighting Cesar Hernandez...again. It was supposed to be the last fight of Mike's career. He would retire. Tenth round. The fight was almost over. Both Cesar and Mike were beat badly; cuts on their faces, arms, and chests. Mike's right shoulder was drooping, too heavy to hold up. Cesar had a bad limp. Neither was going to give up. Both were ready for the fight to end.*

The bell rang. Mike got in a few hits to the face. Cesar stumbled, regained his composure. He went after Mike, delivering consecutive blows to his chest and arms. Mike stumbled, hit the ropes. Cesar took advantage of the opportunity. He landed a hard uppercut to Mike's jaw; his neck snapped backward. He fell to the floor. Mike lay unconscious at the edge of the ring. KO, now twenty, raced to his dad's side. The two on-site paramedics pushed the growing crowd away.

The sirens faded into the distance, and so did Mike's life. KO lost his father that night within an hour of that fatal blow. He keeps his promise he made, to honor the tradition of fighters.

KO comes out of his daze; he isn't sure if it's sweat or a tear inching its way down his cheek. He stumbles to the middle of the ring to meet the ref and Big D.

The ref tells both men, "Keep it clean, gentlemen." He stares at KO, and then focuses his gaze on Big D.

Both men tap gloves. The bell rings. Round eight. Big D and KO both fatigued. Neither attack quickly, letting their footwork take control. KO strikes first. A combination to the chest and stomach. Big D stumbles a little. Takes a couple seconds to stabilize. He goes after KO, eyelids sagging with exhaustion but eyes dark and focused. He unleashes his power on KO with a series of blows to his face and chest. KO smacks against the ropes, falls to the ground; Big D ensures victory with a hard blow to the back of his neck.

The snap is heard throughout the arena. The crowd grows silent, waiting on KO to get up and retaliate against Big D for the horribly illegal cheap shot he just delivered. KO isn't moving though, and it doesn't appear he was breathing. Paramedics rush into the ring. The look of worry in their faces doesn't give hope. As they approach KO and check for a pulse, one of the paramedics breathes heavily and turns to his partner. A slight nod of the head. Everyone knows.



Church Service

Sierra Shepard, Commuter 2013

Smell of old wood.
Sound of hymns
Being sung by
Just forty voices.
Taste of home-made communion bread
Dunked in room-temperature grape juice.
Itchy ruffles of my crinoline slip
Scratch my legs—
Don't complain.
Keep my head bowed low,
Listen to the people pray
And laugh
When Preacher makes
A hell of a joke.
Try to keep my eye
Off the time.
Watch a spider climb
The back of the pew in front.
Don't seem impatient.



Chapel, Kimberly Tabor, WED 2011



The Wolf and Peter

Lauren Sutton, Campus 2013

My papa's a great hunter. Someday, I'm gonna be just like him. I'm gonna kill bears and cougars and wolves, and everyone will love me. They'll say, "There goes Bob's boy. He's one mighty hunter. Maybe the best that this side of the Rockies has ever seen."

But my Papa won't let me go out huntin' with him. He says I'm too little; that it's too dangerous out there for a seven-year-old. "When you're older," he says. But I wanna go now! I wanna get out there and kill me somethin'.

Oh look! There's a doe. She's too busy eatin' to notice the mighty hunter sneakin' up behind her. I creep even closer, and slowly raise my rifle up, finger tight on the trigger. Just a couple more steps and...

POP!

"Ah! Oh Peter! How many times have I told you not to bother me when I'm cooking? Take your toy outside, and don't come back in until I've called you for dinner."

"Yes, Mama."

It's late fall, and the dry leaves crunch under my feet as I stalk animals in my back yard. There's a squirrel! POP! And a bird! POP! I even spot a rabbit! POP!

Each creature scurries away at the sound of my toy rifle. If I had a real gun like my papa, they wouldn't be able to run away. They'd be shot dead. But Papa won't get me a real gun, 'cause I'm too young.

I'm tired of bein' too young! I'm just as brave as my papa. I could track down any kind of animal, and I'd never miss a shot, if only my papa would let me go huntin' with him...

I see the rabbit sittin' just on the other side of the fence, starin' at me. Stupid rabbit. It doesn't think that I'm a real hunter. It thinks that it can get away with just sittin' there; that I can't do anythin' to hurt it.

"Think again, rabbit."

I charge the fence and scramble over the rough wood. I get a couple splinters in my left hand, but I don't pay no attention to 'em. I've got to focus all of my energy on catchin' that rabbit!

But boy, is it fast. It takes off, zig zaggin' between the bare trees. It's hard to see it exactly, 'cause it's brown and blends in so well, but I can hear it as it bounces through the dead leaves. I sprint after it, the crisp autumn air burnin' my throat. I catch glimpses of its white tail, and know that I'm on the right track. It's

not gonna get away from me. It's gonna see that I'm a real hunter.

Man. I wish it would slow down a little. It's getting' hard to breathe, and my gun's gettin' heavy in my hand. I keep trippin' on roots hidden under the brown leaves. And that white flash of tail seems to be gettin' farther and farther away.

I slow to a stop when I no longer see the tail and listen. Now I can't even hear the rustle of leaves. No! It got away. It can't get away. I'm a mighty hunter. My prey never escapes me!

I kick angrily at the leaves and throw my gun down. Stupid rabbit.

I look around to figure out where I'm at. To my left is a group of trees. To my right is another group of trees. In front of me are some trees. And behind me are... more trees. All the trees look the same. Which way did I come from again? This way, or that? What if I can't find my way back? What if I'm lost out here? What if...

Calm down. I'm a mighty hunter, and mighty hunters never get lost. I must have come from that way. The leaves are all crunched up, so that must have been the way I came through. And I ran in pretty much a straight line, so all I have to do is keep going straight through the forest in this direction and I'll be back home. No problem.

I grab my gun and head off. I'm feelin' pretty good, pretty sure that this is the right way. I stomp my feet through the leaves, enjoying the crunchy sound they make. Yup. Pretty soon I'll be back home and I'll be eatin' some of Mama's meat loaf. I'll be tellin' Papa all about my adventure. Maybe I'll tell him that I actually caught the rabbit. That'll make Papa proud of me. Maybe then he'll take me out huntin' with him.

CA-CLING!

"AHHHAAAAA!!!!!!"

Oh my God. Oh. Oh! Ah! What happened? What...? Oh, my leg. Aaah! Oh my God! Everythin's spinnin'. I'm on the ground. That dead leaf smell fills my nose. My fingers dig into dirt. My stomach tightens and I throw up. OH MY GOD! It hurts so bad! It hurts.

"MAMA! PAPA!"



Tears and snot run down my face. I try to sit up, but everythin's still spinnin'. My left leg feels like it's on fire. Oh, God. What happened? The leaves in front of my face start to go blurry. Aah! My whole body tenses and then relaxes as everythin' goes black.

When I wake up, the sun's a lot lower in the sky. I lift my head out of the leaves and puke, turning left then right. I brace myself against any pain that's gonna come, and push myself up onto my arms. There's a sharp pain in my left leg. I risk turnin' my head to look back.

There's a metal trap around my left ankle. I've seen somethin' like it in the shed back home. Papa calls 'em bear traps.

I turn back 'round and wipe my face. Fresh tears are burnin' in my eyes. But I can't cry! I'm a mighty hunter, and mighty hunters don't cry. Mighty hunters figure out a way to get out of situations like this. All I have to do is get my foot out of the trap.

I twist my body to the right. I wanna flip over on my back, but I know it's gonna be real painful. But I have to if I'm gonna get out of this mess. So I take a deep breath and swing my right leg over my left.

"Ahhhaaa!"

I lay on my back, my arms spread out wide, breathin' hard. I accidentally let a few tears slip down the side of my face. But after a few minutes I get control and sit back up, wincin' with pain. I have a better view of my foot now.

Six long spikes are diggin' into my boots. My foot's sticking out at a weird angle. Blood's drippin' down the grey metal.

I scooch closer and grab hold of the cold metal on both sides of my leg and pull, but the thing barely moves an inch. I can feel the splinters in my left hand digging deeper as I pull harder. Finally I have to let go, and when I do, the pressure on my leg feels ten times as strong as before I messed with it. I suck in a deep breath, hold it, and try again. I pull and pull, my fingers going numb, my face gettin' hot. I let go and air rushes outta my lungs. I fall back to the ground with a sob. It's gettin' darker, and I can't get out. Soon all the wild animals'll be comin' out, and I'm no longer a mighty hunter that they have to fear; I'm just an easy dinner.

I start shakin', partly from the fear, partly from

the pain, and partly from the cold. I've only got on my red flannel jacket over a t-shirt and a pair of blue jeans. That usually keeps me warm enough during the day, but Mama always makes me come in when it gets dark 'cause she says it's too cold at night without a heavier jacket.

I turn onto my left side, careful not to let my right leg bump my left as I bring it across and closer to my body. Layin' on my side, I wrap my arms around my right leg as best as I can and wait, shiverin'. Mama and Papa have to come lookin' for me. I'll hear 'em callin' for me here any minute now and they'll come walkin' through those trees and rescue me. I just have to wait.

But as the sun gets lower in the sky, I start to doubt anyone's comin' for me. I don't hear any shouts. I wait and I wait, but I don't hear any shouts. All I hear are the animals startin' to stir. Huh? What was that?

"Oh no."

Tears start to trickle down my face again. Standin' to my left is a big, grey wolf.

My papa has told me all kinds of awful stories about wolves. They travel in huge packs and sneak around, killin' everythin' they can get their sharp jaws on. They love to trick lil' kids and when they ain't payin' close attention, the wolves gobble 'em up. They hunger for human flesh, especially lil' boys' flesh - especially trapped lil' boys.

I try to pull back from the animal, but cry out when I move my left leg. Its eyes widen at the sound, and I know it's realized I can't get away. It takes a step closer. Another step. And another.

"Get away!"

I throw my toy rifle at the beast, and the wolf skids back a few feet. But it doesn't leave. It keeps watchin' me, slowly circlin'. I can't stop the sobs from rippin' out of my throat. It starts to move closer again. Stupid me! Why did I throw my rifle? I could've used it to at least hit the wolf with...

It reaches my trapped left leg and sniffs, its nose twitchin' with excitement from the smell of blood.

"Pleeease. Just go away!"

The wolf raises its head and stares me straight in the eyes. Its golden eyes don't look evil like all the stories tell, but instead confused. It takes a cautious step closer to my face, but stops as I draw back. Its ears





Untitled, Bailey Deakins, Campus 2014



twitch, and it cocks its head slightly. Then it does somethin' I never thought it'd do. It just laid right down next to me, its body pushing up against mine. I can feel its warmth movin' into my frozen bones.

My mouth hangs open a bit, and I stare in wonder. She wasn't gonna eat me. She was actually tryin' to help me. Wolves ain't as evil as the stories said; at least, not this one.

Her head's restin' on her paws with her eyes lookin' up at me. I move forward a little bit, and she raises her head. I take a deep breath, and move my left hand closer to her. I pause, and she blinks, waitin' for me to make the first move. I keep goin', my hand tremblin'. Inches away from her black nose. She doesn't move to rip my hand off. Just a lil' closer...

There! I'm pettin' a real live wolf! And I'm not dead! A smile spreads across my face.

Her muzzle is so soft. I follow the long bridge of her nose up to the top of her head, between her black tipped ears. She closes her eyes and drops her jaw in a happy pant. I can feel her hot breath on my face. It's weird, 'cause her breath doesn't really smell all that bad. Not like you'd expect a wild animal's breath to smell.

I run my hand through the thick fur around her head. It's so soft and warm! It feels nice on my frozen hand. I reach my right hand around her neck and scooch closer to her, huggin' her body. I bury my face in her fur and can see all the different colors mixed in with the grey. There's black and white and even

a little brown. I close my eyes. Pretty soon I fall asleep.

When I wake up again, it's mornin' and I'm still alive. I'm stiff and my leg still hurts, but I'm alive.

I sit up, and don't see the wolf anywhere. I frown. I'd hoped she would have stayed with me for a little longer. It's lonely here in the woods, and I don't even have my trusty rifle with me to keep me company. I wonder how long I'll have to be alone for.

I don't have to wait very long. All of a sudden, I hear voices yellin'. Then the wolf pops through the trees. She slows her run to a trot and circles 'round behind me. She sticks her nose under my arm for a second before headin' back through the trees behind me. Not long after her grey fur disappears, my papa and three other men come through the trees in front of me. They've got angry expressions on their faces, and they're holdin' their guns up, ready to fire the first glimpse they get of the wolf. My papa's face turns to shock when he sees me and his arms lower. He drops his gun to the ground.

"Peter? Oh thank God we've found you!"

"Papa!"

Papa frees my leg, and lifts me into his big arms. On the way through the woods towards home, I see that rabbit again. He's sittin' just on the other side of a huge wolf print, staring at me. He knows that I'm not a real hunter.





Untitled, Dawn Ferguson, WED 2017

Walking With PawPaw

Dianne Matthews, WED 2013

I stretch my legs to match his stride,
stepping in footprints shaded by the brim of an old felt hat -
left leg, right leg, left leg, right -
room left over around my shoes
in soft dirt punched down by a gentle giant.
I run to catch up and grab his hand.
Rough and brown, scraped from toil, it swallows mine.
His smell is sweat and tobacco and overripe peppers -
the manly smell of hard work.
I laugh when he spits tobacco juice and says,
"Can you do that?" I try.
Spit runs down my chin and we laugh.
"Don't tell your Maw," he says.
And I don't.





The Secret Life of Daydreams, Heather B. Ennis, Campus 2014

Bit Lip

Cecilia Pryor, Campus 2012

Higgedly-Piggedly
Digging Pig.
Lisping Ship.
Fizzy tizzy tipsy,
frippersy tip -
fitted and lit.
Dipping and tripping
picking, licking
dripping and tipping
did trick the lid.

A Sonnet

Hannah McGrayel, Campus 2012

When trees twist around a twisted world
then, having purchase gained,
pull it and itself straight, uncurled,
in right, in deed and in name
the past will have quite forsaken
its old well-acquainted rules.
The fast foundations will be shaken
and turned to worthless fools.
This is just the way things never go.
In trees and also the world
good and evil dwell. Some twisted grow
and straight remain, unfurled,
but truly bent makes not the other
and good does not tear good asunder.

Learning to Lie

Hannah McGrayel, Campus 2012

When first I couldn't lie, more
than a watchful eye could see
us sneaking love
while on the walking grove
I would underestimate
the one who saw mistakes.
I thought she didn't
Know the things I wouldn't show.
If she knew she'd be mad.
That's just for Moms and Dads, or so I thought she'd say
until there came the day she told me
that she knew.
I didn't have a clue.
Being so surprised,
duly I surmised
to fake some nervous laughter
and become a better actor.



The Kabinett

Maureen Brown, Campus 2011

With a grating crack the closet door gave way to the weight of Moritz Dassler's small frame. The thick, wet sheep-like odor of lanolin and turpentine rolled out of the space like a blanket of fog. They can't be far, he thought, there is no mistaking the smell of good shoeshine. Moritz crouched over, relying on the paling light from a nearby window to guide his search. A chalky powdering of dust formed on his hands as they fumbled over a forgotten copy of *The Sorrows of Young Werther* and the wooden hilt of what a shoemaker's son could easily identify as a sewing awl.

It was the slight dimple in the otherwise stiff leather upper of one of his father's jackboots that Moritz felt first. Reaching out to find its mate he felt a similar groove just above the ankle. Such care had been taken with them that these small signs of wear were the only indication that the boots had famously marched out the tune of *Fatherland*; *My Fatherland* while the German infantry advanced on Brussels nearly twenty years prior. Moritz imagined what his father must have looked like in uniform. Even then he probably stood as tall as a doorframe; the forest green of his coat and trousers giving him the look of a Nordmann Fir. His muted blond hair cut so short as to be barely distinguishable from the sides of his head peeking from beneath a beret; the imposing grasp of his bear claw about a saber enough to send the Allies running. The Order of Military Merit that Moritz envisioned, as it must have looked when first pinned to this figure's chest, was proof. His father had been a man once.

It was Moritz Dassler's greatest shame that this was no longer the case. It would have been tolerable had it just been that his father was unable to serve the New Order himself, but to forbid Moritz from serving the Führer had been too much. He absentmindedly traced the metal brackets outlining the horseshoe heel of one of the boots; thinking back to earlier that afternoon. The words spoken in the schoolyard still rang in his ears. "Hitler's program for educating youth is hard. Weakness must be hammered away. In his castles of the Teutonic Order a youth will grow up before which the world will tremble," the section commander bellowed above boy's heads. "For

those of you who are devoted enough to be a part of the movement, enrollment begins tomorrow. Be sure to bring a sturdy pair of boots."

Sitting down, Moritz eagerly shoved the first boot onto his right leg only to discover that its high top extended above his kneecap. These boots, of course, would have hugged his father's calves perfectly; their black polished surface reaching just high enough to graze the backs of his knees. In a fit of frustration Moritz whipped the boot off his leg and threw it into the depths of the closet. He fully expected to hear the satisfying thump of leather on oak floor boards; instead his ears were met with the sharp ring of metal brackets upon what sounded like an out of tune marimba.

For a moment afterwards the only discernible sign of life in the closet was the elastic rise and fall of Moritz's chest and the corresponding whoosh of breath from his nostrils. He didn't move until it became clear that the only other creature around was the upstairs neighbor's terrier, whose nails he heard scratching the floorboards overhead. Fully seated and reclined on his palms, he shifted an arm and leg to his right and dragged the rest of his body with them towards the corner from which the sound had emanated.

Reaching out into the darkness his fingertips skated across the ice-cold surface of a sheet metal box until they tripped upon a thin seam. No booming voice from above intervened as Moritz swung the little compartment door and thrust his hand inside; even if there had been it is hard to say whether he would have taken heed, so intentional and swift were his actions. It wasn't until his hand fell towards the base of the box that Moritz discovered it contained something more than air of a significantly lower temperature than the surrounding environment; he withdrew it with a mess of brittle paper resting between his thumb and forefinger.

As he leaned towards the half open door to better utilize the fading daylight, Moritz noticed the yellowed corner of a photograph jutting out from the stack in his hand. Nearly tapping it back into the pile in his haste, he grabbed the little corner revealing what appeared to be a small blank rectangle. Briefly,





Untitled, Kimberly Tabor, WED 2011

the squint lines around his eyes deepened and the skin to the left of his nose tensed, lifting his upper lip in a lopsided fashion. His expression relaxed slightly at the sight of unfamiliar scrawl in the lower right hand corner of the space: Mülheim March, 1917.

Flipping the photograph over the first thing he noticed was the young man standing in the foreground. Initially, his father appeared exactly as Moritz had imagined, right down to the medal on his chest. However, upon closer inspection there were marked differences. For one, the ridiculous smile plastered on his face ruined anything remotely imposing about his figure. Moritz couldn't remember a time when he'd seen the man without a frown on his face, let alone sporting anything better

than a neutral expression. Also, the saber, which Moritz had imagined held firmly in his father's grasp, was nowhere to be seen. Perhaps more distressing than its absence, though, was the item that replaced it, namely, the hand of the other person in the photo.

She looked nothing like his mother. Even through the discoloration of an ancient black and white photo, Moritz could tell. This woman was dark featured and significantly shorter than both his father and his mother. Her hair was pinned up behind her head and covered by a scarf. A single stray ringlet of hair outlined the contour of her rounded cheekbones. She too wore a smile, but one that looked at home on her face.



Together they stood under a white canopy supported at its corners by four ornate poles crafted of some sort of metal. Between them stood a man dressed in a black suit. He would have been the model of uniformity had it not been for the unruly beard that extended down to the meeting point of his lapels. There was no mistaking the occasion. Whether inspired by disbelief or desperation Moritz frantically scanned the photo for any evidence that might contradict where his mind was taking him. It wasn't until his eyes rested upon the image of broken glass beneath the very boot that he now held in his hand that Moritz came to what seemed the inescapable truth: his father had deceived both him and his mother—all for the sake of a Jew.

In a way this made his decision that much easier. Before he couldn't have been sure that his father's reluctance to allow him to join the HJ was inspired by disloyalty. But now his suspicions had been confirmed. The Fuhrer's expectations were clear in this case. Moritz would turn his father in and join the movement. He would leave his old life behind and become the man his father never was, the type of man that could bring Germany into the future.

Engrossed as he was in these thoughts, Moritz didn't hear the tell tale creak of the floorboards down the hall. He was startled by the sudden darkness his father's shadow cast upon the closet as it eclipsed the doorframe. Quick to recover, he jumped to his feet and drew himself to his maximum height, which was still at least a head shorter than that of his father.

"I know about her," he said, all but shoving the photograph up into his father's face and leaving no time for him to reply. "If you believe that I'll allow your weakness for those people to deter me from serving the Fuhrer then you misunderstand my true devotion to our people."

Having said his piece Moritz held his father's hard blue gaze with a pair of eyes as dark and vast as black holes. His father reached out and placed a hand on the side of the boy's unflinching face. With a voice both steady and heavy with the weight of the words he spoke, he replied,

"Her name, your mother's name, was Rivka and as her son you share her people."

Rota

Maureen Brown, Campus 2011

Where wind washes lazily over willows,
rocking the limbs of a child
nestled in knobby branches.

Where ocean's scent rushes in a mist
off battered shores below,
familiar as mother's favorite perfume.

Where piñón nuts pepper the shaded circles
of a patchwork lawn, a gritty snack
for dirty fingered children.

Where naked feet dance across
blacktop, pink imprints left
where asphalt lodged in flesh.

Where palm leaves brown, yellow, and green
form lattices up bleached stucco houses,
discerning one from the next.

Where waning light casts sideways glances
at the blinding edges of magnolias,
clinging to their last days.





Creep, Bailey Deakins, Campus 2014



Toxic Waste

Danya Long, Campus 2011

"Is she really wearing that?"
The tears well up inside
like a bathtub slowly fills,
ready to cleanse another victim.

"Look at that fag!"
The blade cuts in
a little deeper than before,
bittersweet pain escapes.

A live webcast,
a ridiculing look,
a hateful comment—
The last shallow, watery gasp.

The modern day genocide,
draining the toxic waste,
polluting the water with
the blood of the innocent.



Once More

Tooria Poore, Campus 2013

Once more
He says
Once more
And the sky is dark
And the world is spinning
And love and hate
Are intermingling
Once more
She says
Once more
And the grass is green
And the air is sweet
And spotted fawns play
In the flowing wheat
Once more
He says
Once more
And lightning bruises the night
The tree snaps
And thunder crashes
As on stained glass rain taps
Once more
She says
Once more
And the bear licks the honey
And the bee stings his tongue
And the fox tries chasing the rabbit
But, crippled, cannot run
And the grass is green
And the air is sweet
And spotted fawns play
In the flowing wheat
And the sky is dark
And the world is spinning
And love and hate
Are intermingling
Once more
He said
Once more





Mimosa, Angie Hudgens, WED 2012

Golden Smoke

Tooria Poore, Campus 2013

Golden smoke drifted through a perception
Of lavender and blue
A frail wind caused a ripple upon the green ocean
And carried with it
A scent of sweet nectar
Peace rested within
An incomplete and surrounding silence
As droplets of light began to seep through
Onto a satin shroud
Washed indigo;
Now softly shimmering
Moonbeams fell as steady as rain
Staining the green ocean silver
Flooding the darkness with pale light
Euphoria rode in on a shooting star
To dance with a juvenile June
To a song which was of her very essence
So beautifully hypnotizing
And in that incomplete and surrounding silence
June slipped away





I am the one who...

Karen Anderson-Fignon, MAAT 2013

Proverbially Speaking

Maureen Brown, Campus 2011

Ignorance loves company.
 Absence speaks louder than words.
 A penny saved makes Jack a dull boy.
 An apple a day is more than we can chew.
 The road to hell proves the rule;
 all is not gold in love and war.

Spotting Familiar

Margaret Riser, Campus 2014

Unfashionable minimalism
 He must have realized his life to be a cheap simulation
 Of the common vibrancy when we shared that moment
 Chins resting on our window sills
 The city drawing deep breaths past us
 Watching from a distance and feeling from a distance
 I recognized a familiar revelation.



A Weddin' in June

Sierra Shepard, Commuter 2013

I'll not cry on my wedding day. I'll be a dutiful daughter, just like Ma taught me to be. I gotta settle this. There'll be close to thirty people in church awaitin' on me. I'm goin' down to that church, an' I'm gittin' married—even though I feel like a pig goin' to the slaughter.

I remember when Uncle Cole came to the cabin, drunk an' yellin' all about how Pa had stolen from him. "Jed, you're a sneaky's a fox, an' ya tricked our Pa inta givin' ya all this here land an' prop'ty t'ya! Ye're a sneaky son of a bastard, ye are! Now I wan' back wha's mine, hark ye!" he'd shouted with slurred words. It weren't like that though.

Granpa knew Pa was more decent than Cole, so he'd left the more land for him. Cole had been madder'n a hog and wouldn't settle down or leave 'till Pa promised to pay him back. "Only one way to settle it, Jed. Now, yer my brother, an' I think yer promisin' yer daughter ta my son Rob's the only way ta settle this. It'd be a peace makin' between our clan."

Pa had tried to argue it, 'cause he knowed how rotten Rob was, and that I hated him even then. But he knew that Uncle Cole was right. That's just the way things work in these hills. Girls are oftentimes married off to settle family feuds. I'd be a good bargain, and the sacrifice seemed only a trifle compared with all that was happenin'. I was 'leven years old at the time. I hollered about it, but it done no good and I felt sorry for it after Ma explained to me why all that was happening was. I gave up, but still weren't happy about it. I reckon Uncle Cole figured that this was the only way he could get Rob married.

Rob was the meanest little varmint of a boy I ever knew. I remember one time when we was playin' in the turnip patch and he went an' branded one of my cats with a hot poker. I hollered at him for it, an' I tried to hit him. He hit me back—hard. His Pa didn't do nothin' about it neither. He's always stirrin' up some kind of trouble, and he's turned out to be a cussin' drunkard, just like his Pa.

Uncle Cole had been 'round tellin' the whole of Abel's Holler how he thought Pa had stolen from

him. He shouldn't have been able to convince any of 'em, but half the clan's drunkards just like Cole and likes to see a fight, however senseless it might be. And so that was the start of the feud.

Since then there's been all kinds of Hell breaking out. There's been every kind of trouble from fist fights and yellin' to burning barns and stealin' stock. Sometimes it's been real bad, like a couple winters ago when the Bryans didn't even have enough of anything to make it through the winter. Pa helped them out though, 'cause they been standin' with us. Lizzy Bryan was my age, an' we were like sisters. She was burned up in that barn fire. Nobody knew she was in there when they set the fire to it, but Cole's side of the feud's blamed for that murder, and it turned the feudin' worse. I hate that it's come to things like that. I hate that Lizzy died from it. It makes me wanna cry, and I don't understand why this senseless thing's even still goin'.

I've been raised now thinkin' that marrying Cousin Rob is the only way this feud's gonna quit. I expect Rob will bother me just like he done eleven years ago. He'll be expecting me to wait on him and take care of everything, and he'll blame me when we don't got somethin' and it's really his fault. Honest, I've thought about ways I could avoid marrying him. Some of 'em real nasty; even gone so far as thinkin' of killing myself. I always figured poison would be the better way to do it.

It's not that I don't wanna help out my family, and I sure do want to see the feud done and everyone happy. But even if I do marry Rob, is it really gonna make everyone happy? I sure know I won't be. And who's to say that the feud really will stop even then? What if it's all for nothing? That's what makes me keep thinkin' about doin' it. It's strange and appealin' to think that I could just end my life and not have to worry about those troubles no more. It's an idea that seems mighty tempting, even now.

I'm dreadin' walkin' down that aisle like a hog going to the slaughter. This just ain't right. It seems like a sin that I should knowin'ly marry a man so terrible as Rob Hampton, the boy who tortures





After the Storm, Brenda Spiering WED

cats and chugs his whiskey. Surely puttin' yerself through a living Hell is just as bad a sin as taking your own life to save yerself from it.

As I walk through Abel's Holler in my own white weddin' dress, I think about how these are my last moments of freedom. I just caint stand it! I don't think I can do it. I wouldn't be livin' good and true if I married Cousin Rob. He'll always be stirrin' up trouble, feud or no feud. No, I caint go. I'll do anythin' to keep from marryin' him; even if that does mean a killin' my own self. I hope the Dear Lord can forgive me for it, and still open up His pearly gates. I'm ready to go home—home to Heaven—to anywhere but here. I love these hills, with the cornfields and whiskey stills; but I'm gonna do what'll keep me from Worldly Hell.

I throw off the red slippers that bound my feet and run through the brambles and tangled trees. No one's gonna catch me now. I'm gonna be free! No more burnin' houses and barns, yellin' and fightin'. I trip, fall and scrape my left knee, and my dress is torn by the root of a cherry tree. I git up and keep on runnin'. When I stop, tired

and outa breath, I look around and realize that I've never been to this part of the woods before. The part of the woods by the church is outta the way. When we are goin' thataway, we're just goin' to the service; not to poke around.

I caint tell how close I am to the church, but hope I'm far enough where nobody'll find me. I sit down on a big rock to rest and look around. I see red and black oak trees, beech trees and holly, blackgum, and a plenty of hemlock. There's a raccoon sittin' on a pine branch, a warbler bird singin', and a cardinal too. I relax a bit, feelin' glad to be somewhere different. I feel a little bit of that freedom I felt when I was a little child playing in the woods.

I hear a noise I don't recognize. There's somethin' in the brush over there. It might be a bear. "Damned trees!" I hear somebody yell. I hear some more mutterin' but caint tell what words they're sayin'. Oh, no! I reckon that'll be Rob or Uncle Cole come lookin' for me. I scamper for a place to hide, and make my way behind some thorn bushes. "Where'n tarnation's that girl?"



Aileen! Aileen Hampton! Git yer purty little hind end out here!" I look out from behind my hiding place and see the back of Rob Hampton. I ain't movin' fer nothin'.

"Thar ya are! Come here ya whore! Whadda ya think yer doin', runnin' from me, cuz?" He'd spotted me as he walked around the bushes. God, please! I don't know what to do. He's comin' toward me, his thick face newly shaven and red with anger. I notice he ain't wearin' his usual ripped-up coveralls, but new clothes and black shoes, all fixed up fer our weddin'. He comes toward me with raised fists, yellin'. I don't got no place to go, except forward.

I run back at him, hopin' to surprise him. As I run I see his eyes widen from their usual squint, and his fists open; but only fer a moment. He keeps boundin' toward me, and then he grabs me 'fore we hit. I feel his chubby fingers diggin' hard into my arms and his large body shovin' on mine. I'm strong fer a girl, but Rob's a lot bigger. He knocks me to the ground, and I caint do nothin' but wiggle. I spot a rock over to my right and try to reach it, stretchin' my fingers as far as I can. Got it! I hit Rob in the head with a sharp edge. He yells and loosens his grip on me. I take the chance to free my arms from his pin and hit him again.

He cusses at me and snatches the rock from my hand. I see his hand and the rock comin' down on my face, and feel a pounding on my left cheek. He keeps poundin' the rock on my face and forehead, and I caint do nothin' but yell out at him and turn my head from side to side. I feel a sharp pain in the side of my head, and then I'm out.

I wake up feeling groggy and light-headed, not knowin' where I am. Then I see an old woman in front of me, with warts on her face and white un-brushed hair. It's old Widow Crutcher! I heard of all kinds of strangeness of her doin', an' I seen her twice while playin' in the woods. Folks say she's a witch.

"Well, mornin'" she says with a toothless smile. I don't know what else to say but "Mornin'" back. "Took quite a beatin', didn't ya, Sweet Pea? I got what you want right here though." She holds up a bottle

of a liquid I don't recognize. "You can have it if ya want. Or thars some whisky on the table; take yer pick."

"What's that?" I ask her, lookin' at the bottle of liquid she's holdin' in her hand.

"It's what you said you wanted. While you were asleepin' you asked fer a poison that could take yer life away. This here'd do it." I stare at her, kinda confused and wonderin' what she knows. "You were mutterin' all kinds of things in yer sleep. 'Bout a feud an' a burnin', and wantin' to die. You sure kept on 'bout wantin' to die. It's to my knowin' that people say their deepest wants when they're asleep as you were. So I thought I'd fix you up some of this here concoction, thinkin' that's what you've been lookin' fer. You can have it if you like. Everybody dies someday, so 'twon't make no difference whether yer gone now or later, I figure. Then again, life's a gift; but so's death."

I reach out and take the bottle of poison from her small gnarled hand and look at it closely. "It's yer choice if yer wantin' to take it or not. Do you want to take it and leave this world and its troubles alone? Are you tired of the fightin'?" Yes; yes I am. I touch my fingers to my face and head, feelin' where Rob had hit me. I think about Lizzy, the cats, and other pets I'd had. I think back to the days when I'd chase crawdads in the crick and try to tickle the fish with my toes. I realize that those days are done fer me. I want to leave. I caint live like this. There'll always be a feudin' in these hills.



Climbing High

Courtney New, Campus 2014

Foot on the rock,
harness around me,
my panic sets in
when my hands start to slip.
I've lost my mind!
Fear runs through me.

People below me shout
"You've got this!"
"You can do it!"
"Keep going!"
I climb higher
past the halfway point.

I'm almost there,
just five feet left.
I lift my leg high,
positioning it on the next rock
and push my body up.
I'm at the top,
smiling faces below me.

Lean back.
Feet bouncing against the wall.
Slowly lowering down.
I smile with relief
when my feet hit the ground.
I had made it to the top,
and that climb won't be my
last.



Notes

Aurora