

# Bent Pine

CENTRAL LAKES COLLEGE

VOLUME 3 • 2022



# **BENT PINE**

## **A Journal of Art and Writing**

### **2022**

Central Lakes College

Brainerd, Minnesota

Staples, Minnesota

2022

Made possible through Cultural Arts and Club funding from the CLC Student Life Committee, along with contributions from the CLC English Department. The CLC Foundation was also instrumental in starting this project in 2020.

**INTRODUCTION and ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

Egon Schiele is my favorite artist. While I do not think we would get along if we ever met, I do agree with what he said before he died— “Art cannot be modern. Art is primordially eternal.”

The past couple of years have been a struggle for many of us. The world that we live in seems to be unpredictably changing. But art is one of those things that will always be there for you. It evolves along with us and follows us wherever we go. This journal, and the people who make it possible, have been a great consistency that grounds me. I know I can look forward to every Thursday afternoon with the Bent Pine Journal Club. Brandy Lindquist, the club’s faculty advisor, was my English instructor during my first year here at Central Lakes College, and now I have come to think of her as a friend.

The journal may look a little different this year, but you can trust that the work inside has the same artistic spirit. I really care about this journal, and I love how it has brought the creatives of CLC together in one beautiful little package.

I just want to say thank you to everyone for being so creative. Please don’t take life too seriously, and doodle in the margins of your math notes whenever you can.

Olivia Jackson  
CLC Associate of Arts student and  
Bent Pine Journal Club President

*Bent Pine* exists for the students of Central Lakes College—to document their creative artifacts in a book that can be browsed and studied for generations of students to come. For many of our students, the time at CLC is ephemeral. They come and go while seeking various degrees and careers, graduating each May before new faces appear each fall. But their time here is also significant, and we want to remember them.

Students, we want to remember you. Just like we look back at the pages of *Bent Pine* from the 1960s, wondering about where those young people are in 2022, someone will open this journal decades from now, to recognize a name or to admire a poem or to be inspired by a photo or painting.

Thrilling. Palpable. Keepable. I hope you'll put *Bent Pine* on your favorite bookshelf and revisit it often.

This journal aspires to bring joy to those who open its pages. Many people have made this project possible. On behalf of the Bent Pine Journal Club, I offer a big thank-you to each of the following:

The largest thank-you goes to Leon Dahlvang's Graphic Design Program and our CLC Print Shop, including Jeremy Goddard, Candice Ives, Shelby Feiler, Kellie Strong, Duc Tri Pham, and any other volunteers who helped with layout and printing 100 copies of our substantial full-color journal—collaborating on this project together, all created in-house, has been a pleasure, and you make it so easy. Thanks, Leon and crew!

And *Bent Pine* wouldn't exist without the additional support from all of the following: CLC Student Life Committee, Erich Heppner, and Student Senate. The English Department—Jeff Johnson, Leane Flynn, Ryan Deblock, Kate Porter, Matthew Fort, Adam Marcotte, James Rutledge, Lori-Beth Larson, Julie Austin, and Chris Stark for supporting the project and selecting writing winners. President Hara Charlier, Vice President Joy Bodin, Liberal Arts Dean Anne Nelson-Fisher, and all of the administrators at CLC who have been so supportive of this project. Kenn Dols, Chris Bremmer, and Jessie Perrine for help in promoting the *Bent Pine*. Mark Ambroz's Videography Program and Brent Balmer for live-streaming our event. Casey Hochhalter and Bruce Fuhrman of the Art Department for selecting art winners. The Honors Program, Adam Marcotte, and Kate Porter for encouraging students to lead. The originators of the *Bent Pine*, including former advisors Joseph Plut, John Hassler, Evelyn Matthies, Verne Nies, and Rick Hill.

And, as always, I thank the members of the club from the bottom of my heart, for their time, commitment, enthusiasm, and belief in this project—Olivia Jackson, Riley Schackman, Justin Othoudt, Angelina Schultz, Payton Simonet, Avery Anakkala, and George Gebhard. It has been an honor to work alongside you.

Brandy Lindquist  
Bent Pine Journal Club Advisor  
English Instructor, CLC

## THE BENT PINE JOURNAL TEAM

---

President: Olivia Jackson

Vice President: Riley Schackman

Secretary: Justin Othoudt

Treasurer: Angelina Schultz

Lead Student Graphic Designer: Candice Ives

Graphic Design Assistants: Shelby Feiler, Kellie Strong, and Duc Tri Pham

CLC Print Shop Guru: Jeremy Goddard

Faculty Graphic Designer: Leon Dahlvang, Graphic Design

Club Faculty Advisor: Brandy Lindquist, English

The Bent Pine Journal Club: Olivia Jackson, Riley Schackman, Justin Othoudt,

Angelina Schultz, Payton Simonet, Avery Anakkala, and George Gebhard.

Printed by: Central Lakes College Graphic Design Print Shop

Bent Pine Logo: Mary Sawin

### ***Mission Statement:***

*We are a team of creative students with backgrounds in various mediums of art. Our mission is to shine a spotlight on the artistic spirit of our CLC community. The Bent Pine is an outlet for any shy artist, developing writer, or proud poet. We want to celebrate and publish the imaginative works of students, staff, and faculty to illuminate the Brainerd Lakes Area. Together we hope to create something that encourages self-expression and a shared sense of belonging—through Art.*

## FACULTY SELECTION AWARDS

---

### **Literature:**

- Tabitha Kibwaa  
“The Song Shaped  
Like My Mother”
- Christopher Ylitalo  
“Pure White Snow”
- Jordan Fiske  
“The Hourglass”

### **Visual Arts:**

- Heather Reynolds  
Beauty
- Payton Simonet  
The Office
- Kyle Strecker  
Northern Jewel

### **Cover:**

- Willow  
Émali Jiménez-Kloeckl

**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

---

Faculty Selections	* indicates Faculty Selection Award .....	10-21
Alyah Abrahamson	Minnesota Mornings.....	69
Kaylee Alholm	Illness Awakening .....	26
Anna Anderson	Under the Weather .....	72
Kirstin Berg	Ceramics: Beginning Throwing .....	42
Christian Berry	The First to Space .....	50-51
Megan Bistodeau	Night Fall.....	109
Brigid Bonde	The Sun Inside .....	89
Joshua Carter	Seeing Flowers.....	88
Jadyn Cripe-Williams	Crow in Flight.....	105
Katrina Eckenrode	Steel Reeds .....	104
Dave Endicott	The Foraging Frog.....	53
Jesse Engen	Bird of My Dreams.....	81
Isabel Erfurth	Existential 2020 .....	80
Sylvia Erwin	Algrid Buffalo Covey .....	48
Jordan Fiske	Crack in the Earth .....	38
Matthew Fort	North Shore.....	118
Kari Frisch	A Night of Discontent .....	116
Jared Goodman	Buried--A Lenten Journey .....	114
Faith Hamson	There Are Days.....	113
	Because I Have You .....	85
	Sweetie .....	66
	Light and Life .....	79
	Natural Abstract No. 4 .....	77
	Natural Abstract No. 1.....	76
	Playtime Is Over .....	73
	Underground Adventures.....	71
	Ocean Eyes .....	58
	The Hourglass * .....	13-18
	The Guardian.....	134-138
	The Collector.....	123-125
	Forever Fastened.....	64
	Arizona.....	96
	Curious Puppy .....	95
	Tree in a Silo .....	94

**TABLE OF CONTENTS**


---

Emma Hardy	Faith .....	46
	Deadlines .....	44
	Stress .....	41
	What? .....	40
	Love .....	36
	Fishn' .....	37
Kirsten Heschke	Sunshine Otter .....	31
	Sunset Over Thunder Lake .....	30
	Remembrance of North Shore .....	28
Madysen Hull	City Haze .....	65
Olivia Jackson	Sunflower Girl .....	39
Émali Jiménez-Kloeckl	Angel .....	23
Tabitha Kibwaa	Willow * .....	10
Kayden Kircher	For a Friend .....	78
	The Foreigner .....	70
	The Song Shaped Like My Mother *	11
	Outside Looking In .....	29
Shelbi Kline	Abnormally Abby .....	24
Jody Kramer	Dirty Nikes .....	25
Julie Jo Larson	Fed by Attention .....	32-35
Nadia Lindgren	Winter Tears of the Willow .....	91
Adam Marcotte	Chicken Math .....	127-131
	Split Rock Lighthouse .....	67
	Tools: Brother WP-55 & Yamaha .....	112
	581H + Photographs .....	
	Home Sweetie Home + Photograph .....	110-111
Tori Martinez	A Party .....	43
Amy Matter-Hines	Eye-Catching Establishment .....	108
	Oil Pastel Splash .....	106
Samantha Melberg	Tree Climbers .....	107
Finnegan O'Dell	Burning Memories .....	68
Crystal Olson	Aster Shadows .....	93
	Ophelia Beneath the Rosebuds .....	92
	Lower George Falls .....	133
	Frost on the Pods .....	122
	Lady in Waiting .....	132

**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

---

Crystal Olson	Swallowtail Thistle . . . . .	103
	Full Moon Sawbill Morning . . . . .	102
	Smoky Mountain Sunset . . . . .	119
	Flour Lake Solo . . . . .	121
	Fall Footbridge . . . . .	117
	Beyond Two Pines . . . . .	115
Justin Othoudt	Bored Prometheus . . . . .	75
Dakota Parizek	Sights Beyond the Eyes . . . . .	83
Jennifer Perez Krueger	The Poverty Song . . . . .	120
Duc Tri Pham	Drifting Away . . . . .	90
Heather Reynolds	Mail Call . . . . .	87
	A Thousand Wishes . . . . .	86
	Beauty * . . . . .	12
	Fair Ferris Wheel Fun . . . . .	84
	Lake Pepin Calm Before the Storm . . . . .	82
Riley Schackman	Foliage . . . . .	52
Angelina Schultz	Mystic Forest . . . . .	61
	Puppy Love . . . . .	60
	Lonely Beach . . . . .	59
Allie Siemers	Stopping the Stigma Around Mental Health . . . . .	54-57
Payton Simonet	Stillwater Bricks . . . . .	101
	A City on Cork . . . . .	100
	The Office * . . . . .	19
	Willow Reflections . . . . .	99
	Captured Vanity . . . . .	98
	Paper Hearts . . . . .	97
	Downy Yellow Violets . . . . .	62
Kyle Strecker	Born on the Wind . . . . .	47
	Northern Jewel * . . . . .	21
	The Adventure Begins . . . . .	45
Preston Stumpf	Envy Is a Funny Thing . . . . .	49
Lily Thompson	Imagine Silence . . . . .	74
Alynza Welk	Rose . . . . .	63
Erin Wilmot	Cold Morning, Warm Skies . . . . .	126
Christopher Ylitalo	For Mom . . . . .	27
	Brain Boxer . . . . .	22
	Pure White Snow * . . . . .	20

B E N T P I N E

ÉMALI JIMÉNEZ-KLOECKL **WILLOW**

**FACULTY SELECTION | COVER AWARD WINNER**



# THE SONG SHAPED LIKE MY MOTHER

TABITHA KIBWAA

**FACULTY SELECTION AWARD**

The song shaped like my mother  
is kept on my bed,  
so that between classes I can shrivel beside her.  
The song shaped like my mother  
has a place for my knees, my chest—  
she is hollowed in anticipation of my presence.  
The song shaped like my mother  
was formed by my hands—  
I pulled on the limbs of her shadow, measured the crevices—  
The song shaped like my mother  
is perfectly enough to fool me.  
I avoid her eyes, brown with despair.

B E N T P I N E

HEATHER REYNOLDS **BEAUTY**

**FACULTY SELECTION AWARD**



# THE HOURGLASS

JORDAN FISKE

## **FACULTY SELECTION AWARD**

A note from the supervising RN comes across my computer screen—*Jim passed away peacefully in his sleep at 2240 this evening.*

*He's no longer suffering*, I think to myself. He was my favorite patient. It pains me to say that I can no longer count on my fingers how many patients I've cared for that preceded his passing. Every time a new patient enters our memory care unit, I force myself to accept that their life's hourglass is left with a few mere grains of unfallen sand, but it never seems to make things easier when that last grain falls. I stop for a second and ponder, *Why do I endure the emotional toll this job is taking on me? Is finishing nursing school the path I'm supposed to be on?* My mind reverts to the spent grains of sand in my own hourglass, hoping to find something for my dreams to hold onto.

### ***I want to be like him when I grow up.***

I'll cut myself some slack. After all, the prefrontal cortex of my 5-year-old brain is still in its early development. Stupid decisions are bound to happen. I've heard "don't run with scissors" too many times to count, and here I am, doing just that with a giant pair of them.

Seeking to cut down some of the thicket plaguing our large overgrown backyard—just as I'd seen my father do a hundred times—I lock eyes with my next target.

In a full-blown pursuit now, I'm unsuspecting of the large dead log with protruding branches that lay below my feet, ominously awaiting my demise like the iceberg that sunk the Titanic. I catapult forward as my foot snags on one of the branches, causing me to land in such a way that the connecting bolt for the blades lodges into my right temporal region.

Blood seeps down my face like a leaky faucet as I stand in the brush now, a semi-circular flap of skin dangles from the open wound. *I'm in trouble*, I thought. I calmly yet quickly walk back to my parents' old, remodeled barn house, still in desperate need of a paint job. Meandering through the thicket, I look down to see a fresh coat of crimson red, which has re-primed the entire front of my Power Ranger's t-shirt. I hurry my pace. I approach the door to the mud room, which is separated from the rest of the house. As I open it, I see a look of terror on my mother's face as she finishes folding a freshly washed pair of jeans. Her short and frayed brown hair accentuate her heavyset face in such a way that offers her eyes more room for expression; this time being that of a deer in headlights. She shrilly yells for my father

## JORDAN FISKE THE HOURGLASS

### **FACULTY SELECTION AWARD**

to come to our aid. Scurrying to the screams of bloody murder, my father now stands in the adjacent doorway glaring at me, bearing the same expression as my mother. As quickly as he entered, he runs back into the house to congregate my two siblings. *Time for a little drag race to the Emergency Room.*

Heading out the door, I recognize I'm the only one that isn't in some state of panic by now. My brother and sister can't seem to stomach the sight of me as we speed off down the road... We've arrived. *That must've been a record.* We're quickly escorted to a closed off exam room. I sit patiently in the procedure chair as the nurse finishes cleaning the wound.

"Dr. Severson should be in shortly." She remarks to my parents.

After a few minutes, he enters the room—an aura of confidence arrives with him. In a tone that matches his body language, he explains to me how he's going to mend my face back together as he injects the wound with a local anesthetic. Steady and focused intently on the objective at hand, he makes a needle throw to set the first suture. I can't feel a thing. As he ties off the seventh, eighth, ninth, tenth... I can't help but to be enthralled by his unwavering demeanor. If a bomb were to go off 50 feet away, I doubt he'd give an extra blink. I want to be like him when I grow up.

*Another grain of sand surfaces to the forefront of my memory.*

#### ***Paging Dr. Severson...***

It's been four years since my parents' divorce and my father's familial departure; seven years since the incident with the loppers. The warm sunlight of the August afternoon shines through the sliding glass door of my mother's third floor apartment unit. Though it's a beautiful Sunday by any standard, our apartment always seems to lack that sense of "home." Maybe it's my father's absence—or maybe it's my mother's unwillingness to plant any new roots, even with my stepfather now in the picture. Whatever the reason, it feels like I can hear the walls, in all their solemn whiteness, cry out for any hint that new and joyous memories have been made in the three years we've lived here.

I plop myself down onto the tattered leather couch situated next to my mother's recliner where she lay napping. Disinterested in whatever Hallmark rerun she's been watching, I quickly turn my attention back to the only thing that matters to me—my iPhone.

# THE HOURGLASS

JORDAN FISKE

**FACULTY SELECTION AWARD**

Half asleep, my mother looks to me and says, “You guys will have to throw in a pizza for dinner. I’m not feeling well.” With my brother and sister preoccupied in their rooms, I get first dibs on what we’re going to eat tonight. *Booyah baby.*

This is a familiar routine for my siblings and me because of mother’s work schedule. Today is her only day off during the week and she often works long hours, leaving little time for anything but sleep. I worry about her, and I can see the physical and mental toll it continues to take on her each day. But as a single mother trying to provide for three kids, what choice does she have?

Moms are real life superheroes in that way...

Waiting for the oven timer to expire, I continue to scroll through my messages. Then suddenly, all hell breaks loose.

*Paging Dr. Severson. Please report to Jordan’s brainwaves STAT.*

Out of the corner of my eye, I see my mother’s body jerk, stiffen, then slouch in a matter of seconds; causing her to fall from the recliner, landing hard on her side. Her eyes roll back as a white-foamy substance oozes from her mouth.

I jump to my feet. *Something is very, very wrong.*

“Josh! Come here!” I yell.

As my brother and sister enter the room, I yell again, “Call 9-1-1!”

We’re all in fight-or-flight mode. It’s like I can see in slow motion their adrenal glands mass-producing and sending out catecholamines to the rest of their body. My brother scrambles for his phone.

“Send help, I think my mom’s having a seizure!” he cries as the dispatcher answers the phone.

“Okay, I need you to tell me what happened,” she replies with her calm but stern voice echoing on speaker now.

I explain to her in detail what transpired before my siblings entered the room.

“Is she breathing?” she asks.

I check just to make sure even though I know the answer. “No!” I exclaim.

“Okay, I need you to check to see if she has a pulse. The easiest way to do this is by placing your middle and pointer fingers together on the inside of her wrist below her thumb.”

After a few moments of palpating her wrist for any sign of life, I tell the dispatcher I’m

## JORDAN FISKE THE HOURGLASS

### **FACULTY SELECTION AWARD**

unable to find one. My heart sinks into my stomach. *Not like this mom. Not today.*

“Stay calm, emergency services should be arriving shortly.” The dispatcher proceeds to walk me through how to perform CPR. Luckily, I just learned the procedure in my health class the year prior and so I feel semi-adept at performing it. Did I expect my mother to be on the receiving end? No.

*I feel like I've been doing this forever.* It's only been a couple of minutes since I've started compressions. Multiple loud knocks on the door reverberate through the apartment unit as a 34-year veteran of the city's police department rushes in. In one hand he holds a first-aid bag, in the other an AED. He tosses the first-aid bag down and places the leads for the AED on her chest, so that he can alternate between defibrillation and compressions. I can tell he's no stranger to CPR. His compressions are much more precise, stronger, and efficient than mine were. Two other EMTs finally arrive with a gurney and a slew of other medical equipment. Minutes crawl by as they frantically work to get her heart pumping again. Sweat drips down their faces in the heat of the August afternoon as they alternate who provides compressions and who operates the defibrillator. Finally, after the twelfth defibrillation and 34 minutes of being clinically dead, the AED's automated voice instructions deliver a relieving message,

“Analyzing heart rhythm...No shock advised.”

“We have a rhythm. Let's move!” One of the first responders barked at the rest of them. .

They hoisted her onto the gurney and rushed out the door.

*God, if you're up there...Thank you.*

I take a slight sigh of relief knowing that she isn't out of the woods just yet.

#### ***I want to be like her when I grow up.***

Luckily, my brother's old enough to drive because our stepdad is still 15 minutes out. We arrive at the hospital where we meet him shortly after. The medical staff inform us she is being transferred by helicopter to the Minneapolis Heart Institute at Abbott Northwestern hospital due to the severity of her condition—a condition that the doctor is calling a sudden idiopathic cardiac arrest. He elaborates in layman's terms that her heart suddenly stopped, and the reason why is still unknown.

As soon we get the hospital information, we rush out the door and embark for Minneapolis

# THE HOURGLASS

JORDAN FISKE

**FACULTY SELECTION AWARD**

in our stepdad's vehicle. The helicopter will arrive to Abbott an hour before we do, giving us time to think about everything that can go wrong between now and then. *Great.*

As we arrive to the cardiac ICU at Abbott, the doctor quickly informs us of her status. He explains that her cardiac rhythm is stable, but the biggest concern right now is whether she has any substantial neurological function left to even wake up again. She's already been started on a treatment called therapeutic hypothermia and will be kept in this state for 24 hours. He details that the objective is to reduce her core body temperature, minimizing her brain's need for oxygen. This will consequently limit the effects of toxic substances that have likely already caused damage to her brain tissue. Though not unheard of, being clinically dead for 34 minutes without repercussions is extremely rare.

So, now we wait...

...I wasn't expecting us to be here for over a week, but the good news is my mom's condition has improved considerably, and her medical team expects her to wake up any day now, but they're still unsure the extent of brain damage sustained.

We wait some more...

I find myself captivated by one of my mother's nurses—professionally speaking. Beverly is her name. She's been the nurse for more than half the days we've been here, and each day I find myself more impressed, watching her interactions inside and outside my mother's room. She seems like she's always on the go, doing something here or there, but also genuinely caring for each person she encounters.

This is her third time in here in the past hour.

"Sarah, it's good to see your shining face this morning! Your son is sitting next to you, and we are looking forward to you coming back to us again. I just have to administer this medication and I'll let you rest." As she quickly performs her task and checks her chart, she leaves the room in a hurry.

From what I can tell, she's in her early to mid-forties, taller with a thin build. She wears thick-framed black glasses and she keeps her long brunette hair tied back in a messy bun. Each day I've seen her, she's worn different exotic-colored scrubs that match her exuberant personality, a defiant opposition to this gloomy ICU ward.

The way she comforts and cares for her patients, even comatose ones like my mother,

## JORDAN FISKE THE HOURGLASS

### **FACULTY SELECTION AWARD**

has me mystified like that 5-year-old was, ogling at Dr. Severson as he sewed my face back together. She's the first person I'd want to see if I ever woke up from a coma.

*Maybe I don't want to be like Dr. Severson. Maybe I want to be like her when I grow up. Can I be both? I have time to think about it.*

I doze off to the sounds of hospital monitors.

A short while later, I open my eyes to the sight of my mother surrounded by her doctor, Beverly, and another nurse. After over a week of being in a coma, she was finally awake, and with all things considered, she was mostly intact mentally too. *Her last grain of sand hasn't fallen yet.*

#### ***Who Will I Be Tomorrow?***

*Am I cut out to be a nurse? What lies in store for my future?* I still don't know the answers to these questions. Instead, in my reminiscing, I've grown to appreciate the composition of the sand that has accumulated at the bottom of my hourglass. Each grain unique to the one beside it—a different lesson, a different story, a different person, or memory. The hourglass adopts grains sometimes without our knowing—from Beverly to Dr. Severson, and every other person to have touched my soul—they are a collective of my being. I move forward with the memories they have imparted upon me knowing that they are not the remnant, but rather the trajectory. The next grain to fall may be one that broadens horizons or one that amplifies tenfold the recognizable brevity of existence. I look up to the stars in awe, and in that place I realize our big blue beauty that we call home is but a grain to the imperious “beyond.” But make no mistake, none of it is meaningless...

When I leave this place, and the great Gaia consumes my glassy veins like the ocean tide washing away the shore, I can only hope to reside as a grain of sand at the bottom of someone else's hourglass, just as Jim, Dr. Severson, my mother, Beverly, and so many others reside at the bottom of mine—shaping my yesterday and my tomorrow.

# THE OFFICE PAYTON SIMONET

**FACULTY SELECTION AWARD**



• The office •

CHRISTOPHER YLITALO **PURE WHITE SNOW**

**FACULTY SELECTION AWARD**

Oh, pure white snow,  
Blanketing the moonshined earth,  
Tell me; who was it  
That scarred you first?

Was it the workers,  
With their dirt brushed boots?  
Or was it the businessmen,  
In their hand tailored suits?

Never as clean as the day  
When you first fell far.  
Before meeting the tires  
That belonged to a car.

Kissing my cheek  
On your way to the ground.  
How lightly you've fallen  
Onto your shapeless mound.

Before our world  
Got its hands on you.  
You were once so beautiful,  
So perfect, so true.

Oh, pure white snow,  
How I wish you could stay.  
But your color will age  
With each passing day.

# NORTHERN JEWEL KYLE STRECKER

**FACULTY SELECTION AWARD**



CHRISTOPHER YLITALO **BRAIN BOXER**

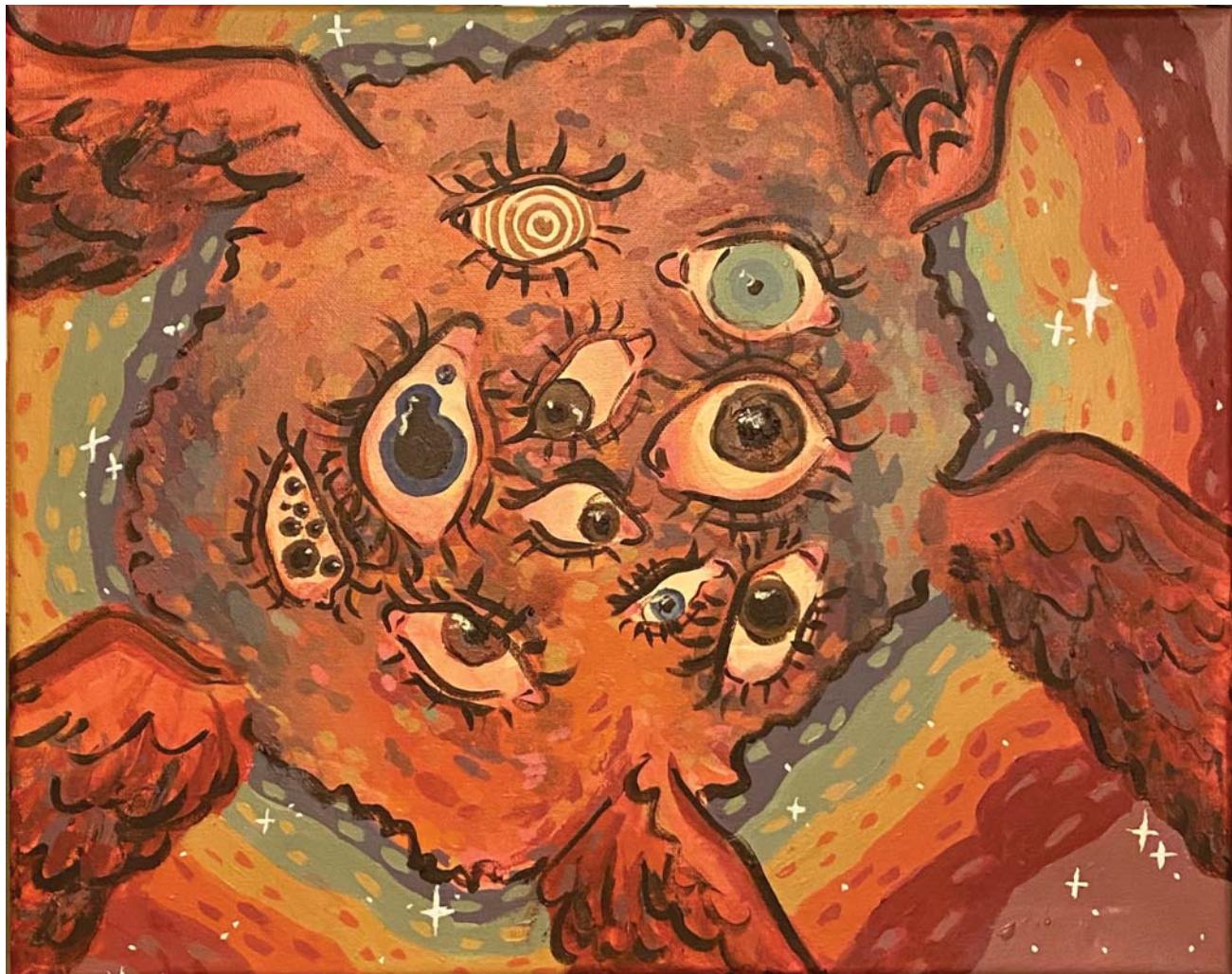
Every night, I set myself on fire  
In preparation for conversations  
That will never come.

Those conversations live in a corner  
Of my mind that probably has  
A couch, with a box of tissues on it.

The carpet, however, has no pattern.  
And the wallpaper is yellow.  
So I resign to my contender.

BENT PINE

**ANGEL** OLIVIA JACKSON



B E N T P I N E

KAYDEN KIRCHER **ABNORMALLY ABBY**



**DIRTY NIKES** KAYDEN KIRCHER



KAYLEE ALHOLM **ILLNESS AWAKENING**

I've learned so much through my journey but there is much I don't recall.

I know it's in there somewhere, but it's hard to find it all.

It's not that I've forgotten the moments of despair, they hit me deeper than I'd ever like to share.

Some days I look and it's still me, yellow staring in the mirror.

I know it's not real, I shake my head and move on.

I know in my heart there are better things to come.

I've got the reassurance now that I'm going to be okay.

But some days I still hear the ticking in my brain.

It's taken awhile to get it all straight, my heart says it's not over while life is saying move forward.

When I look back now and see the beauty through the misery, some days I wish we all had a little more empathy.

All that ever really matters is showing what you mean to me.

Moments go by with tears in my eyes, trying to explain why I feel so alive!

You really are your best you when you see fewer days in your rear view.

What can I say? I guess I've felt this kind of way for far too long.

One day it will all go away, but for now it's here to stay.

# FOR MOM CHRISTOPHER YLITALO

I remember learning everything  
By watching through the eyes  
Of a woman who could sing  
The lowest lows and the highest highs.

I remember wrapping my little  
Red fingers around the hands  
That were too young  
To belong to a mother.

I remember the face  
She would wear when  
She wanted to convince us  
That she was brave.

I remember the face  
She would hide when  
She didn't want us  
To know just how scared she was too.

I remember her laugh  
On the sun baked beach.  
Writing the eyes of each  
Kid in her sand drawn map.

I remember, Ma.  
I remember.

B E N T P I N E

KIRSTEN HESCHKE **REMEMBRANCE OF  
NORTH SHORE**



BENT PINE

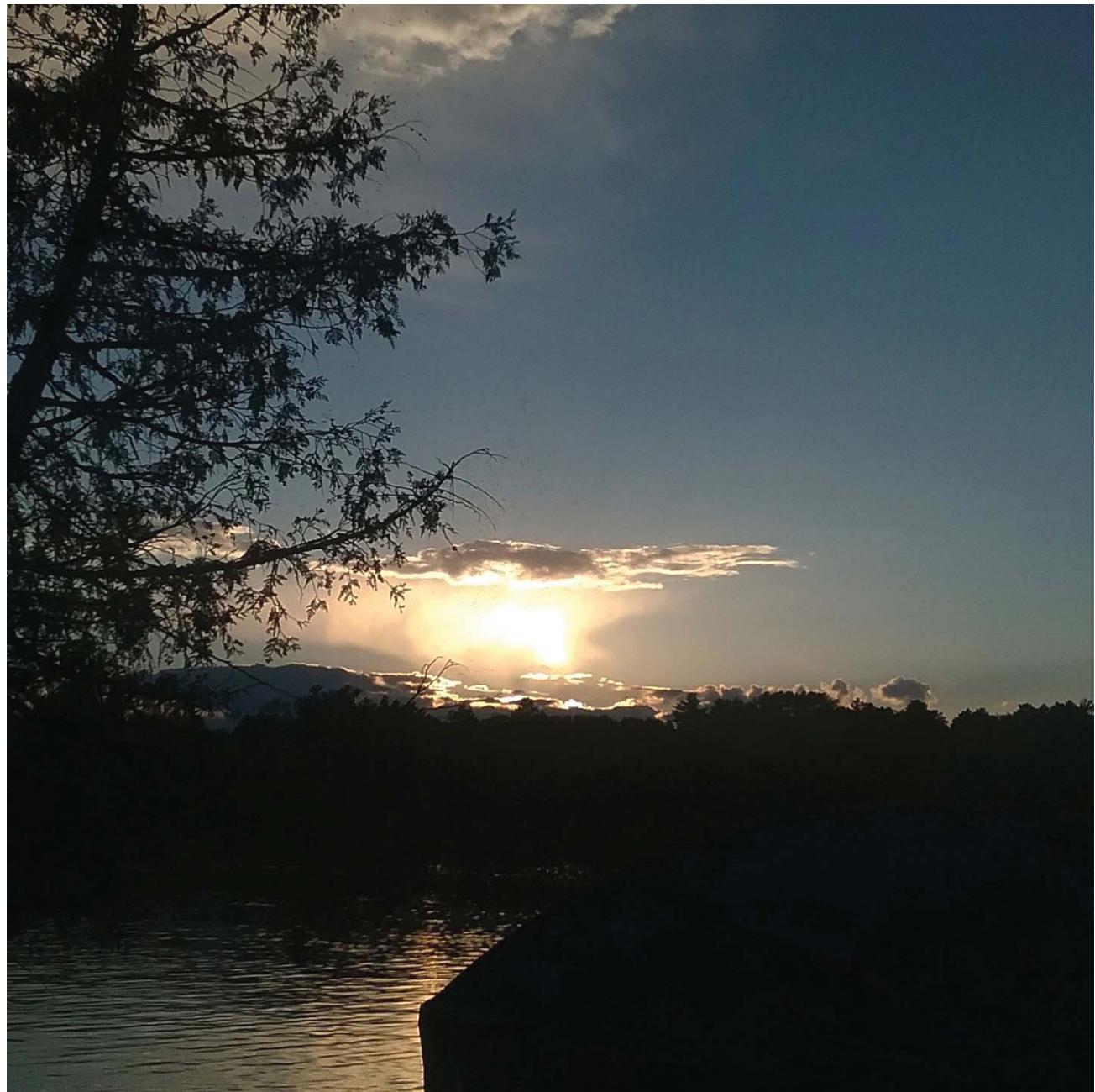
# OUTSIDE LOOKING IN

KAYDEN KIRCHER



B E N T P I N E

KIRSTEN HESCHKE **SUNSET OVER THUNDER LAKE**



# SUNSHINE OTTER

KIRSTEN HESCHKE

Tickling my nose on the grass  
The sun making me want to dance  
Summer may not always last  
But winter nights are in the past

I stumbled upon a little patch  
Of tiny growing flowers in a batch  
Their smell making my whiskers dance  
Making me in a trance

Sadly the sun wouldn't last  
The flowers were now the past  
The other otters were a batch  
Of difference between me and the patch

Going towards the river on grass  
I was hoping today would never pass

SHELBI KLINE **FED BY ATTENTION**

I cannot describe how good it feels to be loved by others based on how you look. It is a kind of attention that keeps you going. So unhealthy, but it feels so good. I can clearly remember how it felt when I first started skipping meals and dropping the weight by the pound. I felt wanted. I received more compliments while I had an eating disorder than I did when I was fat. People I had a crush on finally looked at me and I gained the attention I always wanted.

You always hear about how terrible eating disorders are and how you should get help at the first sign, but no one talks about how great an eating disorder is when you have nothing but hatred for your body. I didn't even think mine was that bad. Well, I didn't think I had one at all. It became natural for me to not eat or make myself vomit after eating. Despite the dizziness, and the rotting teeth from shoving my fingers down my throat after every meal, I could finally fit into the pair of jeans I bought two summers ago.

I did not care about eating; I was fed by the attention I gained from everyone else around me. Served, like it was a three-course dinner at a fancy restaurant every day. Eating it up, like it was my last meal. But no matter what, I never got full. There was a pit in my stomach, and it was not from the lack of nutrition, it was from the lack of being wanted. The lack of not being good enough. I was never scared to destroy my body. Never thought about what I was doing to my body. My body and health were decaying right in front of me, but I didn't care to notice because I finally felt like I was enough. I was skinny.

My parents never noticed; I was good at lying. That is the thing with eating disorders, you become quite manipulative with people around you. I played it off well. Turning the shower on so they couldn't hear the pool of my stomach contents spilled out over the toilet bowl. Saying I ate a big lunch at school when I did not eat at all. But they believed me. I knew that if they knew the truth, they would make me stop. I would have to get "help." Whatever that means. I would end up as another statistic. Another teenage girl who hated her body and was depressed. I didn't want anything from anyone. What I was getting during my eating disorder was enough for me to feel something. I hid it from them for years. I was thriving. How was I supposed to tell my parents that I was slowly rotting inside and out when I didn't even know?

I blamed my thin, frail hair on box dying it at home so many times. I blamed my yellow teeth on drinking too much coffee over the years (I was 15). I started smoking

# FED BY ATTENTION

 SHELBI KLINE

cigarettes as meal replacements to suppress any appetite that might have come over me. Pretty soon, I was smoking a pack of day. Amazing, another excuse I can use to cover up the smell of my breath, disgusting teeth, and deteriorating body. After a few years all of this was second nature to me. Lying, smoking, finding any habit to cover up the fact that I was barely alive anymore. No one ever found out and if they did, no one helped me, but that is my fault. I made it seem like I was perfect and happy.

My eating disorder first developed when I was going into seventh grade, and it lasted until I got pregnant at 18, and then I had to take care of my body. I never got help. I battled it alone. Like a wounded soldier, but my battle was with my body and mind. I was at peak performance when I was 17. Drinking alcohol every single night to the point where I would throw up. I did that because I was tired of doing it with my own two fingers; instead I would just drink to the point where I was vomiting 4 times a night. I always found a way.

I moved out of my parents' house and was living in my older sister's basement, hiding in my own sickness. She knew, but she also knew that I would have refused any help she would give me. I didn't want anyone to help me, I was fine. At least, that is what I told myself and everyone else around me. I never thought about what I looked like to others on the outside. My sister is my safe space. The one person who has always known me, the real me, and she had to sit there and watch me rot. I never asked her how that hurt her. I never took anyone else's feelings into consideration. I do not think I have ever been so selfish as I was during my eating disorder. I was so infatuated with the results that it was all I focused on. I did not care about anyone else but me. My parents didn't pay enough attention to me to notice, but I know she did.

What do you do when you are watching someone you love kill themselves? I wish I could go back and realize that she cared enough to notice. I wish I asked her for help. She would not have ridiculed me. She would have embraced me and shown me love and that I could recover, but I did it on my own. I didn't think I was worthy of that kind of love. The kind of love where people care about you and want to help you. I didn't know what that was at the time. I never realized the role she played in my life until I had a daughter of my own. My sister gave me the love my mother never gave me.

Some part of me wishes my mother and father noticed. I wish that they had held me and told me that I was going to be okay and that they're here for me, but that never

## SHELBI KLINE **FED BY ATTENTION**

happened. I know it's my fault for letting it get so far. I know it's my fault for not asking for help. I covered up my tracks for years, hiding every step I took, further into a hole of emptiness for almost five years. I fell deep.

I never got out of this spot in my life until I had my daughter. I realized I wanted her to never feel the way I did. I wanted her to have a healthy relationship with food and nurture her body. I wouldn't make her eat small meals because she was considered a fat kid; I wouldn't refuse to buy her something sweet at the grocery store because she was a fat kid. I would love her and teach her to love her body, but I knew I couldn't possibly teach her that until I practiced the same thing.

I recovered on my own. I broke habits I had for years. I didn't even know how to just eat a meal. It took everything in me to not make myself vomit, or skip a meal, but I did it. I gained a lot of weight back after having my daughter and eating regularly again. I hated myself. I couldn't even look in the mirror without thinking about skipping the next week of eating. I always felt fat, even when I lost 40 pounds in three months, but I felt even fatter then. I was disgusted by my body, and I realized I wasn't making any progress and I would never recover enough to teach my daughter healthy eating habits. So, I started going to therapy.

I went through therapist after therapist, until I was finally with my fourth one just last year. I was 20 years old when I finally found one that listened to me and took everything I said into consideration. Two years of different therapists and misdiagnoses. I also have binge eating disorder now. Funny how I went from not eating at all, to eating too much. I'm in recovery. I'm learning to love myself. I wouldn't have made it this far into my journey without admitting I had an eating disorder and I need help. I finally felt free after I opened up about it. It was hard. I truly did not think I had a problem. I convinced myself so well that what I was doing was okay.

I am now 21, and I am recovering, but I don't think that I will ever truly recover from my eating disorders. They will always be a part of me. Along with my eating disorders came body dysmorphia, depression, and anxiety. I was severely ill, mentally and physically. I will talk about my mental illnesses now. I don't blame anyone for not helping me. Some part of me will always blame myself. How could I not? I ruined any chance at a healthy

# FED BY ATTENTION

SHELBI KLINE

relationship with my body, but I'm now learning to love it. I never thought I was going to get better. Killing my body became the new normal for me. I won't ever be 100% okay, but I'm aware of that.

I have many days where I struggle with myself, and I still don't like how I look. It's still an initial reaction for me to not look in the mirror when I'm getting undressed to take a shower. I just want there to be a day where I truly look at myself and think *wow, you look amazing*, but I'm scared that'll never happen. I'm not secure with my body; we are not tied as one. My body isn't my temple, and my mind is not a safe space for me. I can't open up in my head and get under the blankets and feel comfort. I hope one day I'm okay. I hope my daughter loves herself. I hope she feels okay talking to me if she ever struggles with her mind and body. I hope I can give her the love and space she needs to feel like I'll notice when something isn't right. I hope. I hope. I hope.

EMMA HARDY **LOVE**

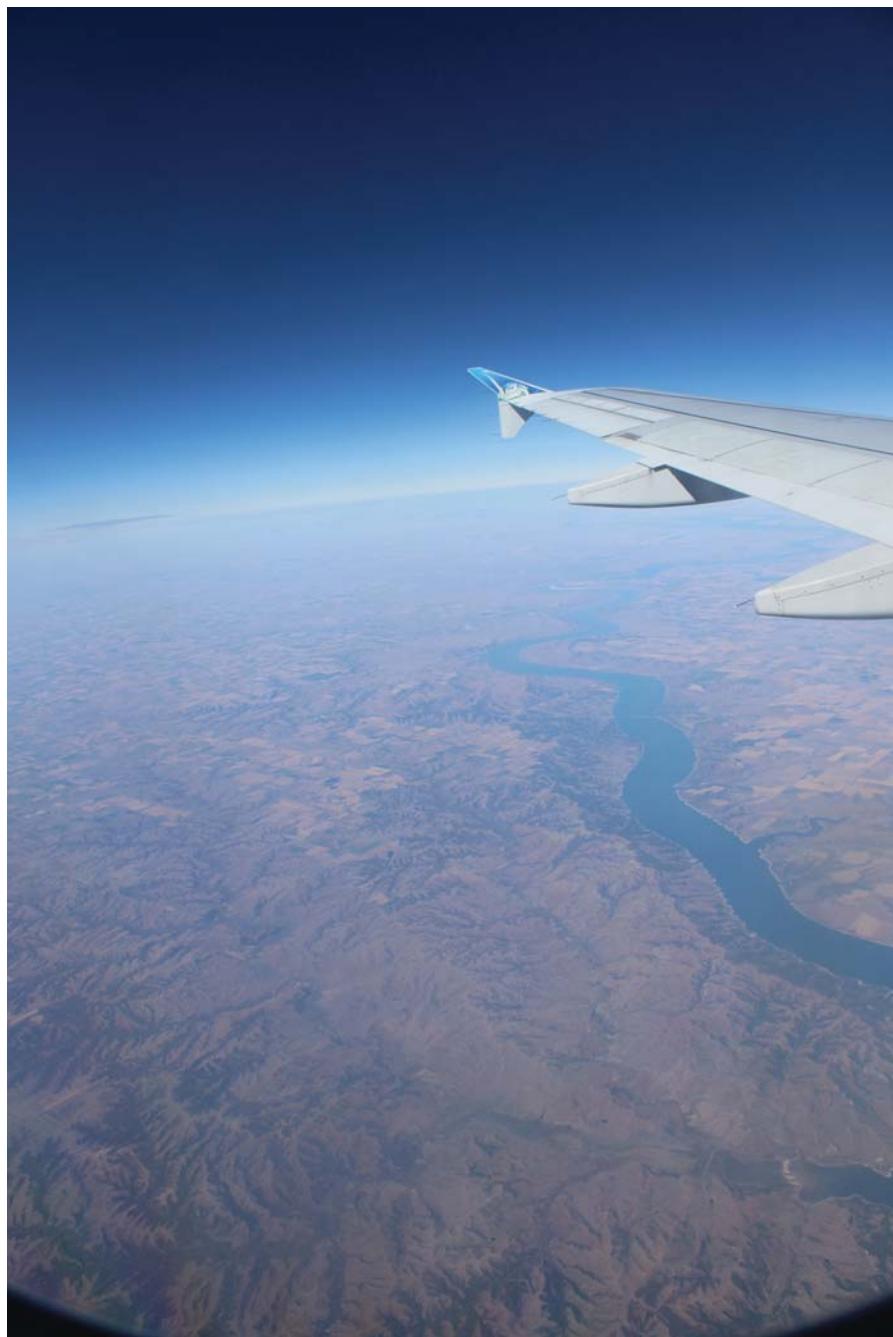
I love you and I don't tell you enough  
To measure my love would be really tough  
But for you, I could try for a while  
It's not by inches, a foot, or a mile  
The measurement would go so far  
You couldn't find the end in plane, train, or car  
Around the earth and right back here?  
That's not even close, not even near  
It's not the distance to the furthest sun  
Because my love will never end or be done  
You ask how much I love you now?  
I can simply respond,  
It's to infinity and beyond.

**FISHN'** EMMA HARDY

In the lake there are lots of fish  
But no matter how much I sit, try, and wish  
I cannot catch a single one  
I leave empty handed when I am done  
I go out early and stay out late  
But the fish just taunt me and steal my bait.

B E N T P I N E

KATRINA ECKENRODE **CRACK IN THE EARTH**



BENT PINE

# SUNFLOWER GIRL

OLIVIA JACKSON



B E N T P I N E

EMMA HARDY **WHAT?**

I am forgetful

My brain is straight up neglectful

I forget everything

I forgot what I was going to get, what I need to bring

I forgot a pencil and the homework that was due

I wrote a list of things to remember but I forgot that too.

**STRESS** EMMA HARDY

My hands are shaking my heart is pounding  
In my head alarms are sounding  
What ifs, What thens torture me, overwhelming my brain  
Single-handedly I've driven myself insane  
Like a computer, I feel like I'm glitching, crashing, shutting down  
Doubt is a virus that closes in all around  
It's all too much, I'm lost without direction  
I'm fighting off stress as though it were an infection  
It's all coming too fast  
It's all a long race and I'm going to finish in last  
Please, please stop the clock from ticking  
There are too many options out there for my picking  
I don't have the time to choose  
With every closed door, it's myself that I lose  
Time keeps going and all I do is get older  
I try to catch the seconds but they simply fly over my shoulder  
I feel like I'm sinking  
I'm drowning in my own thoughts, thinking  
Where do I go from here?  
Why am I stuck in this darkness with all that I fear?  
I ask my questions but it's all in vain  
My words are cut down, just simply slain  
It's some big equation and I don't know how to find the solution  
People are just wasting my time with their verbal pollution  
I've given up my time, my energy, and my thought  
I've given up my best and now my worst is all I've got  
So now I'm here. Shaking. Glitching. Aging. Wondering. Drowning.  
Stumbling in the dark.  
Waiting for my purpose, searching for my spark.

B E N T P I N E

KIRSTIN BERG **BEGINNING THROWING**



BENT PINE

**A PARTY** TORI MARTINEZ



EMMA HARDY **DEADLINES**

I wish to forget this deadline and go on with my day  
But the deadline keeps coming and I can't just run away  
I wish to fulfill this deadline but it is not alone  
As I ignore the deadlines their numbers have quickly grown  
I wish to satisfy this deadline but I cannot quench its thirst  
It's consumed my best so all that's left now is my worst  
I wish to kill this deadline to wipe it out of my mind  
Completion of the task is not a weapon that I can find  
I wish to appease this deadline and give it all it wants  
But fulfillment of its desires is one of its many taunts  
I wish to forget, fulfill, satisfy, kill, and appease this deadline  
If I fight it every day, success can still be mine.

**THE ADVENTURE BEGINS** KYLE STRECKER



I will push you down when you are up, to teach you to be humble  
But I'll be there to pick you up and help you when you stumble  
I will tell you the truth, but I will also tell you lies  
So you will learn the difference and grow up to be wise  
I will hold you back, but only to make you stronger  
So you can go the distance better, faster, longer  
I will stand in your way so you learn to deal with any situation  
But when you feel like something isn't possible, I'll give you motivation  
I will not always give you what you want, but I will give you what you need  
So you can know kindness but not fall into greed  
I'll be there for you when push comes to shove  
To shower you with my heavenly love.

BENT PINE

**BORN ON THE WIND** KYLE STRECKER



B E N T P I N E

KATRINA ECKENRODE **ALGRID BUFFALO COVEY**



# ENVY IS A FUNNY THING

PRESTON STUMPF

Lauria and I have been friends since kindergarten and  
everything she got made me envy her.  
She has a mom and a dad who are kind to her while  
I got a father who sometimes abuses me.  
She got breasts while  
I got flat.  
She got great skin while  
mine looks pale as a sick child.  
She was born with great teeth while  
I had braces.  
She got the popular boy while  
I got no one.  
She lost her virginity to the boy she loved while  
I lost mine to my father.  
She got accepted to a four-year college while  
I got nothing but a diploma that shows you graduated high school.  
She got an engagement ring from the love of her life while  
I got someone treats me like dirt.  
She got married while  
my wedding was something out of Las Vegas.  
She got pregnant,  
so did I.  
She lost the baby while  
I, however, did not.  
And that made me envy no more.  
She became pregnant again while  
my child became fifteen.  
She gave birth to a beautiful baby girl while  
mine went to jail just for being like his father.  
Her daughter graduated with honors while  
mine graduated with a rope around his neck.  
She was awarded with grandchildren and  
I, once again, was alone with my old friend, Envy.

## CHRISTIAN BERRY THE FIRST TO SPACE

“5. 4. 3. 2. 1. Launch.” The sudden acceleration forced every ounce of breath out of Chester’s lungs as the rocket began its slow departure.

Initially slow. As Chester watched, the dials spun upwards at a terrifying rate, showing the forces required for man to defy nature, the fuel and the power and the heat required to lift a man towards the heavens.

And then there was silence, broken only by the faint hum of machinery, and Chester undid his straps and floated from his chair, the first human in space. He glided to the window and looked down on the huge blue marble that was the world, gazing with a potent mixture of emotions, greatest of all triumph, as the marble grew smaller. He turned towards the window that showed him his destination, Earth’s only natural satellite, and stared at that barren surface for what felt like ages.

Then he blinked. His eyes squinted in confusion as a small flicker appeared on that already bright surface.

He died approximately 23 seconds later.

---

“4. 3. 2. 1. Launch.” Brazil gripped the shoulder straps as the G-Forces ripped brutally at her small, tough body. The power required to lift the large craft from the face of the Earth imposed ruthless forces on anyone unlucky enough to be inside the craft. When the roar finally subsided and Brazil undid the straps to float upwards, the first human in space, her battered body screamed at her to remain still. Her discipline refused. She did as she was trained to do, establishing contact with the ground crew and reading off the numbers her dials showed her.

“Gravity .01. Velocity . . .”

She glanced out the forward window just in time to see a faint flicker on the Moon’s pristine surface.

“Control, reporting anomaly on the surface of . . .”

She never finished the sentence.

---

“3. 2. 1. Launch.” Johnson gritted his teeth as the world tore apart around him into a swirling eddy of sound and pain. The roar of the rockets required to lift the first craft to space was like nothing he had ever heard. When the roar finally subsided, Johnson ripped off his straps, not waiting to take in the stunning view outside his window or marvel at his weightlessness as he propelled to the control panel and established contact, staring towards the moon as his training dictated. They never told him why the ritual that he had been drilled in existed, and he never asked.

“Visual contact established. Radar clear . . . Fuel consumption is 65 percent. Velocity is . . . Wait one, Control. Visual anomaly detected on the face of the Moon . . .”

# THE FIRST TO SPACE

CHRISTIAN BERRY

The data streaming back to earth gave the control two radar images of a red blip moving faster than anything they had imagined possible, one just on the outside of the radar scope, the next only twenty miles out. Johnson never finished his sentence.

---

Noble watched the light change from red to green, and the first craft to space leapt with a roar from the world that had contained it. Noble bore the pain for as long as he could, bore the squeezing pressure that threatened to cave in his chest until he couldn't bear it any longer, and the world was reduced to a single screen of black.

Noble woke up on the moon.

The view outside his front window told him this, and his confusion, enhanced by the drugs in his gas mixture, was drowned out by fear as he saw movement outside his window. Control was screaming in his ear, demanding a status report and a year of training took over.

"I am on the surface. Movement outside." There was a pause. "I think it's a gun."

He died two seconds later.

---

"Launch."

Armstrong gritted his teeth against the pressure as the first craft to space launched. When the roar faded to black, he looked out his window and saw the beautiful blue marble called Earth sitting alone in the heavens. The first human in space, he thought. Over the days and weeks and months he and the others with him spent in space, they grew to love the heavens visible with unparalleled clarity outside his window—the sense of weightlessness soon grew to be second nature.

As the rocket they were supposed to be in was ripped apart by an explosion, they made history in a chamber built with borrowed technology deep in the earth. As the ghosts of the other first astronauts looked on mockingly with the indifference only death can provide, Armstrong took a single step, saying those immortal words:

"That's one small step for man. . ."

But humanity was not the first to space.

B E N T P I N E

RILEY SCHACKMAN **FOLIAGE**



# THE FORAGING FROG

JADYN CRIPE-WILLIAMS



ALLIE SIEMERS

# WHY SHOULD SOCIETY STOP THE STIGMA AROUND MENTAL HEALTH?

Imagine you walk into a room with transparent glass walls. You are locked in this room, and you cannot escape the room. However, you can see the outside world going on with their daily lives as usual. You are banging on the thick glass walls, fogging up the area in front of you from screaming so loud. No matter how hard you force yourself against one of these walls, they will not break. The catch? No one can see, hear, or will ever find you in this room. So here you are, fighting for your life in this room to never escape. That is just a glimpse of what someone with a mental illness could be going through.

Most people know someone who is struggling or who has struggled with a mental illness. Mental health is a serious topic that needs to be addressed due to the persisting stigma. As someone who has been personally touched by this topic—having clinical depression, generalized anxiety disorder, and going through an attempted suicide—I hope that I can give insight and spread awareness for those who may not understand the challenges. People die in silence everyday due to a mental illness; with such a high stigma around mental health, some may not be able to get the help they deserve. The stigma around mental health is a problem society needs to tackle. You may ask yourself, “What is this stigma?” or “What does this stigma look like?” or “Why is mental health such a big deal?” The stigma around mental health can look like gas lighting, stereotypes, fewer opportunities, and hesitation to reach out for help.

For example, you’re a 16- year-old boy in high school. Your parents really push you to excel in sports and school and you’re pressured by your friends and peers to be “popular and cool.” You’ve felt depressed lately because you can’t seem to get things right at hockey, you’re struggling to get out of bed in the morning, and you have a few F’s in school. As hard as this is, you have a conversation with your parents about your depressed mood lately. They tell you that what you are feeling will “go away” and “you’re not actually feeling that way, you just want attention.” Instead of getting the help you deserved, you push everything back down inside and pretend to be okay. The stigma around mental illnesses needs to end because mental illnesses are real and mental health is just as important as anyone’s physical health.

### **When There Is Stigma, There Is Fear**

The stigma around mental health creates this false reality for those who have a mental illness that the entire world is against them. The fear that arises with the stigma is that the individual may not feel worthy, they feel they deserve this, or they fear how the people around

# WHY SHOULD SOCIETY STOP THE STIGMA AROUND MENTAL HEALTH?

them will judge. Individuals can be fortunate enough to have a supporting family, caring friends, and access to treatment and help. However, not everyone is in a situation like that or can speak up. As someone who has struggled with severe anxiety and depression for seven years, I first reached out my first year in high school. I wanted to tell the people around me so badly, yet I could not. My parents only found out because of what we originally thought was a heart condition that sent me to the hospital, which was really a full-on panic attack.

Based on what I have observed, most people go much of their lifetime without telling anyone about their mental illness(es). The reality of that is, some do not get a chance to share that they may need help or treatment because they commit suicide first. When fear is present the individual feels the need to push everything down inside them until they cannot balance that anymore. To put this into perspective, you are stressed because you must make varsity for soccer this year, your mom is fighting a battle with stage four breast cancer, you have two jobs to help with the medical bills, you watch your little siblings every day, you are almost failing your classes in school, your friends are mad at you, and you are pressured on social media to be a certain way. No one can juggle everything and eventually we all have our breaking point.

If the stigma were not present, individuals could feel more welcome and open to seeking help and speaking up. For instance, not all parents understand the toll a mental illness has on an individual. They may not understand what a mental illness really means. If a school, for example, held nights for parents and/or students to come and listen to a speaker, learn about mental illnesses, or receive information on getting help, that could really make an impact.

## **Mental Health Is just as Important as Physical Health**

A big misconception some people come across is that mental illnesses only affect your mental health; that is not true. If someone is left without receiving help or treatment, then their mental illness can start to impact their physical health, motivation, and their behavior as well. Someone struggling with mental illness like depression can feel so down that their sleep cycle, exercise, eating habits, and much more are affected. As someone who struggles with depression, I have had times where you could walk in my room and trip over the mountain of clothes because my room had not been cleaned in a month. Nights where I stayed up until 3 am scrolling through Instagram with dark bags under my eyes and days where I have gone without eating one full meal.

If someone were to come into my house for a day and watch my daily routine and witness

ALLIE SIEMERS

# WHY SHOULD SOCIETY STOP THE STIGMA AROUND MENTAL HEALTH?

those examples happening without any insight into what may be going on mentally, they may think I am “gross” or am “lazy” because I do not take care of myself or other things. Over time, however, the “little things” that affect your physical health due to your mental health could turn into bigger problems down the road. The stigma surrounding mental health sets up a chain reaction: The individual facing a mental illness observes the stigma, this stigma can decrease the chance to reach out and receive help, and this can increase negative effects on one’s physical health.

### **People Who Struggle With a Mental Illness Are Sick**

One thing I will never be able to understand is why people are shamed or laughed at for having a mental illness. When I was making my way through my middle school years, I frequently heard “Kill yourself!” or “I’m going to kill myself!” The phrases were tossed around in a joking manner between friends as if nothing were wrong with saying such a thing. Unfortunately, those two phrases are still passed around today. Your friend may be studying for her chemistry final, and she says, “If I don’t pass this final, I’m going to kill myself.” You are scrolling through Tik Tok, and you come across someone’s live video and you look through the comments and people are telling that person, “Go kill yourself.”

These phrases should not be used anywhere or at any time. Phrases like these are offensive to anyone going through a mental illness and they should not be joked about in the first place—other more appropriate terms can be used to express your feelings and emotions. A mental illness is a real illness that a person should not be shamed for having.

Loved ones, friends, co-workers, and anyone around someone with a mental illness can be confused as to what having a mental illness means. For example, in February of 2020 I attempted to kill myself by overdosing on medications I was on. When I got to the emergency room, I had heard my parents talk to the doctor, trying to justify my action as just an “accident.” It was as if they were embarrassed that I had done such a horrible thing. I feel as though my parents did not want to acknowledge what was really going on. Mental illnesses are real illnesses and just as important as any other medical condition. No one should be shamed or be considered “weak” for dealing with mental illnesses.

### **Not Stopping the Stigma Can Lead To Consequences**

If the stigma for mental health does not stop or decrease, grave consequences can (and

# WHY SHOULD SOCIETY STOP THE STIGMA AROUND MENTAL HEALTH?

already do) occur. Suicide is at an all-time high for the world's population right now, especially since we were in a global pandemic and many people had to isolate themselves. As I had mentioned before, many people die in silence each day due to help not being reached. Not only can suicide occur because of a lack of reaching help but self-harm, self-neglect, and physical health problems can occur from not receiving help. Not receiving proper help and treatment can also lead to poor coping mechanisms.

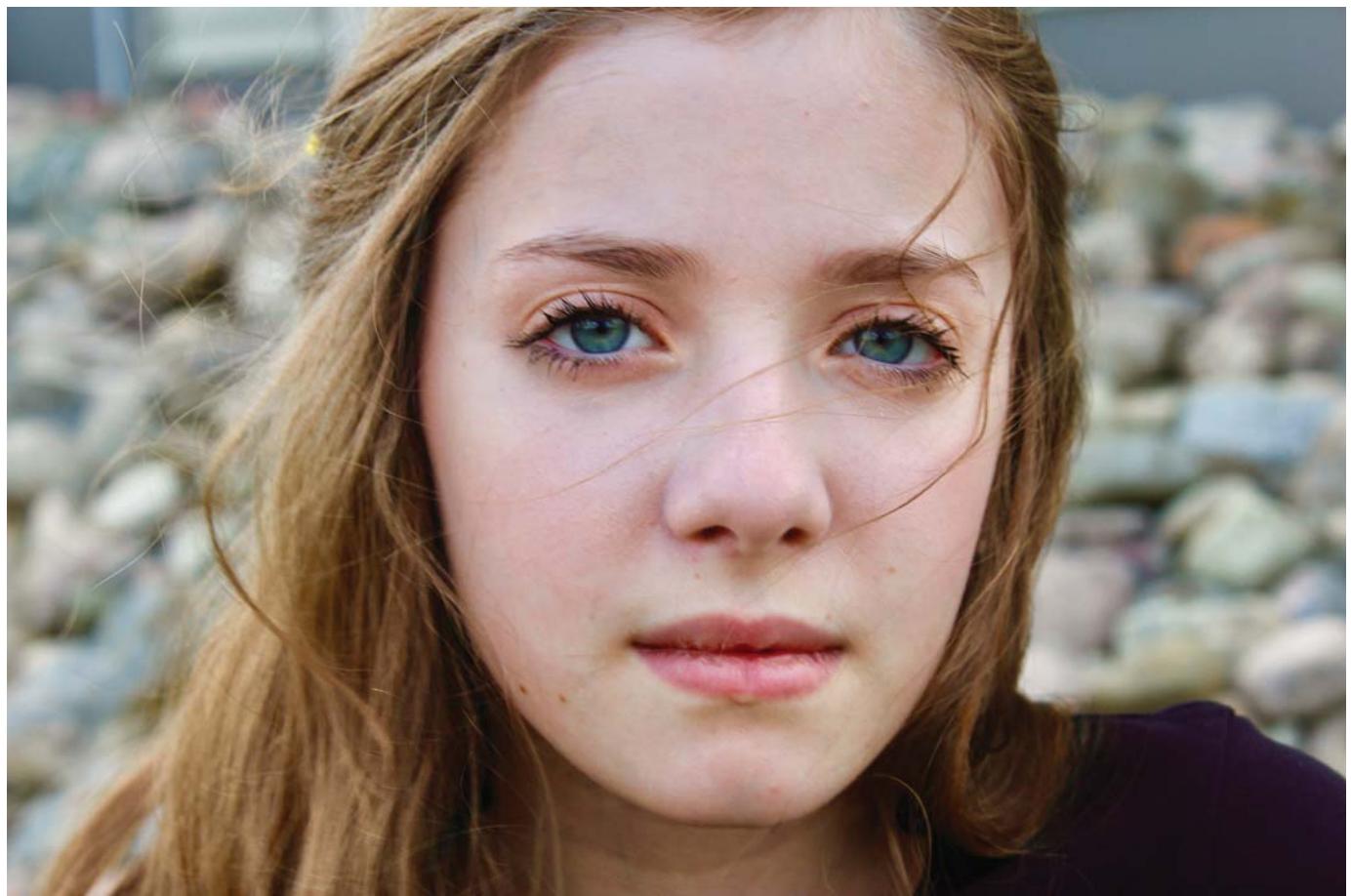
I'll give you a situation. Let's say you go out every weekend with friends to a frat party that you tell yourself you will not go to. You have the mental state of getting so drunk that you are numb, or you want to pass out. You take shot after shot of Patrón and chug any other liquor in sight. Your friends get you an Uber home and you stumble up the stairs to apartment 341. You get into your apartment; you take a Percocet in the hopes of numbing yourself even more and now you dance around your living room listening to Bob Marley. You eat day old pizza that is cold and stale because that was the only edible thing in your fridge from the past week. You then sit down on your grandma's couch from the 1970s that has a pattern of saturated colors and somehow eat a whole box of Twinkies. You stumble to the bathroom and throw up everything from the past 12 hours in your mauve colored bathtub that barely has a shower curtain. You repeat this routine every weekend just to numb the pain again.

These consequences are just as important as an outcome of suicide because many individuals who struggle with a mental illness cope by using alcohol and drugs, which can also lead to death. Society needs to come together to raise awareness and extend compassion to those struggling with mental health challenges—to decrease the full spectrum of negative and dangerous coping mechanisms.

The ongoing stigma on mental health is improving but is not completely resolved. The stigma may never be resolved, unfortunately, but improvement and awareness can take place. People struggling with a mental illness should not be shamed or have a burden put on them due to something they cannot control. The stigma existing around mental illnesses can lead to harmful responses and cause an individual to feel even worse. I now know, having depression, anxiety, and going through an attempted suicide, that *I am worthy*, and my mental health doesn't define me and what I am capable of. With awareness, communication, learning how to talk to individuals with a mental illness, and encouragement to seek help, we can stop the stigma.

B E N T P I N E

SYLVIA ERWIN **OCEAN EYES**



BENT PINE

**LONELY BEACH** ANGELINA SCHULTZ



B E N T P I N E

ANGELINA SCHULTZ **PUPPY LOVE**



**MYSTIC FOREST** ANGELINA SCHULTZ



PAYTON SIMONET **DOWNY YELLOW VIOLETS**

It was a new kind of feeling,  
you know

Watching you cry all by yourself in front of a dry fountain  
I wish I knew how to help you  
If my sweater would cause the same comfort,  
comfort you the way you need

If it would be warm enough to heal your  
charred hand

If my presence would be enough to ease the tears

They run down your face in rivers stronger than the Mississippi  
Your feverish gasps cut through the air like a hand cuts through  
the water

It became too much  
I apologize  
I am so very sorry

But your tears remind me of stars  
Day must come  
But the memory of your anguish will still be there, a fossil  
A trail to follow

It holds your pain and angst tightly in its hands  
Crushing your hope like a grape  
I won't pity you  
But I will step back and watch from afar

BENT PINE

**ROSE** ALYNZA WELK



B E N T P I N E

JARED GOODMAN **FOREVER FASTENED**



B E N T P I N E

# CITY HAZE

MADYSEN HULL



JESSE ENGEN **SWEETIE**

Everything is wrapped  
In a blanket of white  
But it's still cold  
And the wind, how it bites  
Have you heard my Sweetie?  
On a frond that sways  
The one who warms souls  
Gives hope to dark days  
I call out  
I hear no reply  
I call again  
Wondering why  
The air seems to resonate  
Whenever I make a sound  
I pierce the din of silence  
And yet my Sweetie remains unfound  
If you hear my Sweetie  
Singing loud with glee  
Won't you let my Sweetie  
Come back to me?

# SPLIT ROCK LIGHTHOUSE NADIA LINDGREN



B E N T P I N E

SAMANTHA MELBERG **BURNING MEMORIES**



**MINNESOTA MORNINGS** ALYAH ABRAHAMSON



TABITHA KIBWAA **THE FOREIGNER**

she wears her shoes in our house  
touches me like a souvenir  
a spectacle to show home

“Can I take a quick pic?”  
she asks, ignoring the locked door,  
ignoring,  
ignoring.

I am frustrated with mopping  
please don’t invite her over  
anymore

my head is sore where she has pet me,  
there is still dirt on the kitchen floor.

# UNDERGROUND ADVENTURES

ISABEL ERFURTH



BENT PINE

ANNA ANDERSON **UNDER THE WEATHER**



**PLAYTIME IS OVER** ISABEL ERFURTH



LILY THOMPSON **IMAGINE SILENCE**

Shhhh. Listen. Do you hear that?  
The clock on the wall—tick, tock, tick, tock.  
The faucet has a leak—drip, drip.  
The sound of the fork against a ceramic plate—screeeeech.  
It doesn't stop. It never will.  
Family and friends don't understand when I explain it.  
"Just ignore it." "Get over it."  
Really? As if I haven't tried that already. But thanks for the advice.  
There is no cure and the treatments only last so long.  
I've tried holding my fingers against my ears as if I were a kid,  
But that only creates immense pain while those awful sounds seep into my brain.  
People mock me, chew their food louder, click their pens faster.  
Pushing people away and keeping to myself is how I cope,  
Because I can't stand telling people how I'm feeling when they will only smile and nod.  
For them, it's in one ear, out the other,  
I wish that was the case for me.  
Instead, it's in one ear and sitting there,  
Waiting for me to become anxious, depressed, and emotionally distraught.  
Some people say they are scared of dying,  
But the peace and quiet sounds lovely somedays.  
Moral of the story, everyone is going through something,  
Whether you know what it is or not.  
In my case, it's Misophonia.  
I'm not asking for a pity-party.  
I'm asking to be heard.

**BORED PROMETHEUS** JUSTIN OTHOUDT



B E N T P I N E

JESSE ENGEN **NATURAL ABSTRACT NO. 1**



B E N T P I N E

**NATURAL ABSTRACT NO. 4** JESSE ENGEN



TABITHA KIBWAA **FOR A FRIEND**

To tell you the truth,  
long before I gently told you to get off the train tracks  
I saw the train come.  
I saw you laying yourself down on the iron  
I heard the rush of passing wheels  
there, and  
there.

To tell you the truth, I have folded into the ground at the sight of you a million times.  
I write a new eulogy every night before bed.  
I have my apology to your mom and dad memorized.

And I love you. God, I love you.  
And no, I don't understand it.

Every night the train comes. I see you lay yourself down on the iron.  
It takes a million breaths to not lay beside you.  
A million breaths to only fold into the ground  
here, and  
here.

B E N T P I N E

**LIGHT AND LIFE** JESSE ENGEN



B E N T P I N E

KATRINA ECKENRODE **EXISTENTIAL 2020**



**BIRD OF MY DREAMS.** KATRINA ECKENRODE



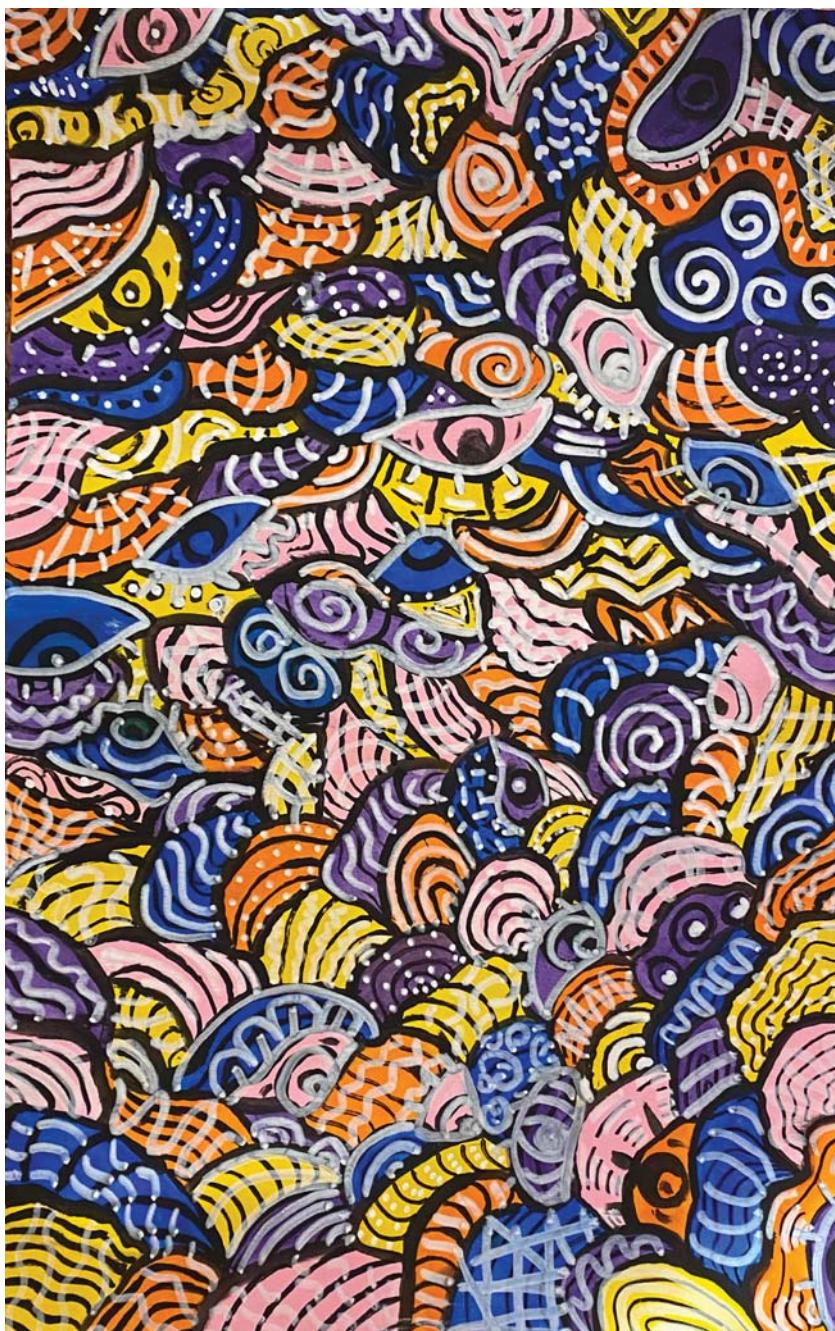
B E N T P I N E

HEATHER REYNOLDS **LAKE PEPIN CALM BEFORE  
THE STORM**



# SIGHTS BEYOND THE EYES

DAKOTA PARIZEK



B E N T P I N E

HEATHER REYNOLDS **FAIR FERRIS WHEEL FUN**



**BECAUSE I HAVE YOU** JESSE ENGEN

I often wonder  
How it would be  
If I didn't have you  
Next to me  
Nothing brings me more joy  
Nothing I'd rather do  
Than sitting, standing  
Being near you  
Your smile so benevolent  
Your eyes twinkle bright  
Tells me everything  
Will be alright  
Your hand feels so lovely  
When it's in mine  
Reminds me that we  
Will both be fine  
We have each other  
To confide in, to soothe  
When the going gets tough  
When we're sorrowful and bruised  
My days are all the better  
My dreams renewed  
My heart is elated.

BENT PINE

HEATHER REYNOLDS **A THOUSAND WISHES**



BENT PINE

## MAIL CALL HEATHER REYNOLDS



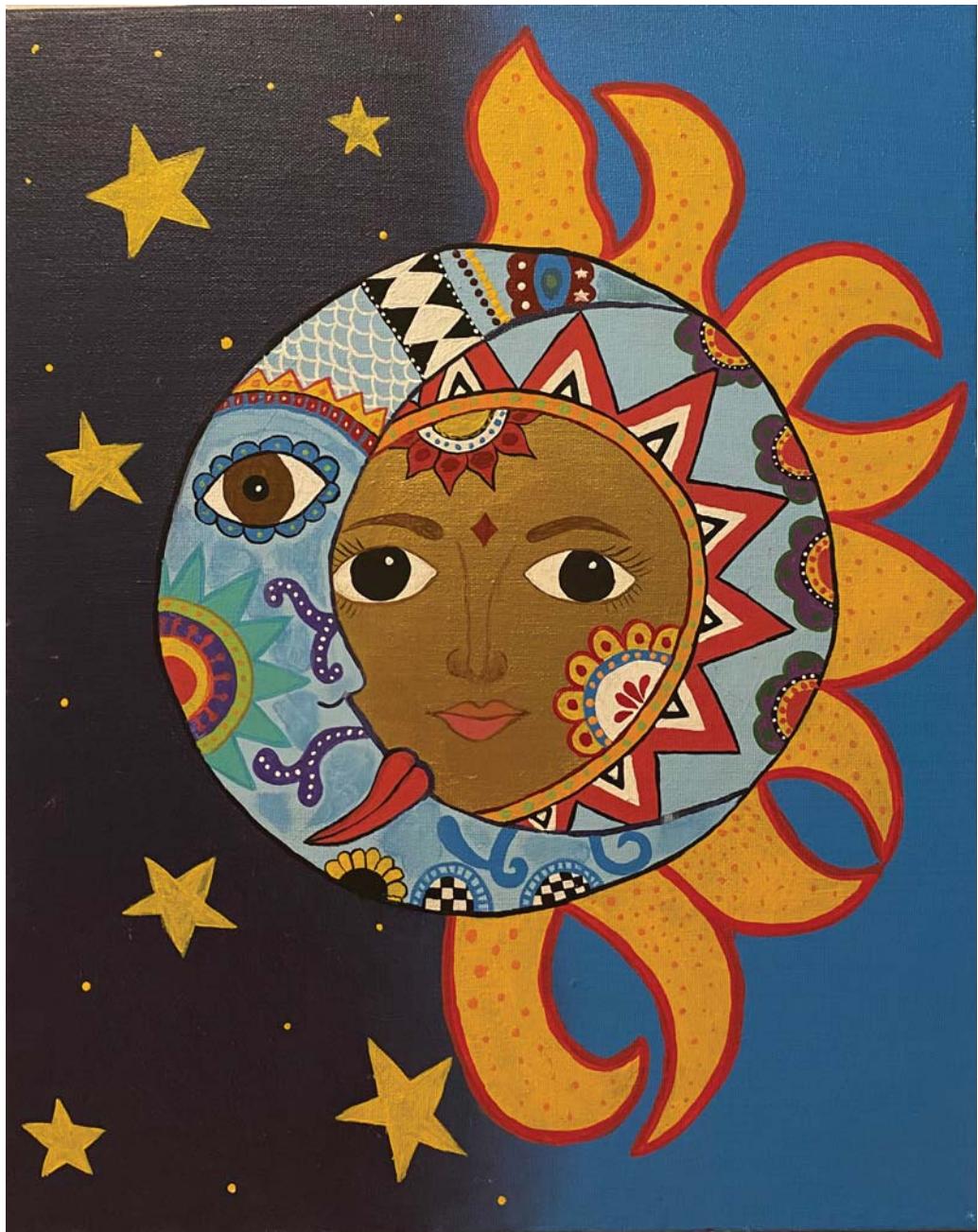
BENT PINE

BRIGID BONDE **SEEING FLOWERS**



BENT PINE

**THE SUN INSIDE** BRIGID BONDE



B E N T P I N E

DUC TRI PHAM **DRIFTING AWAY**



# WINTER TEARS OF THE WILLOW JODY KRAMER



B E N T P I N E

FINNEGAN O'DELL **OPHELIA BENEATH THE  
ROSEBUDS**



BENT PINE

**ASTER SHADOWS** FINNEGAN O'DELL



B E N T P I N E

FAITH HAMSON **TREE IN A SILO**



**CURIOS PUPPY** FAITH HAMSON



B E N T P I N E

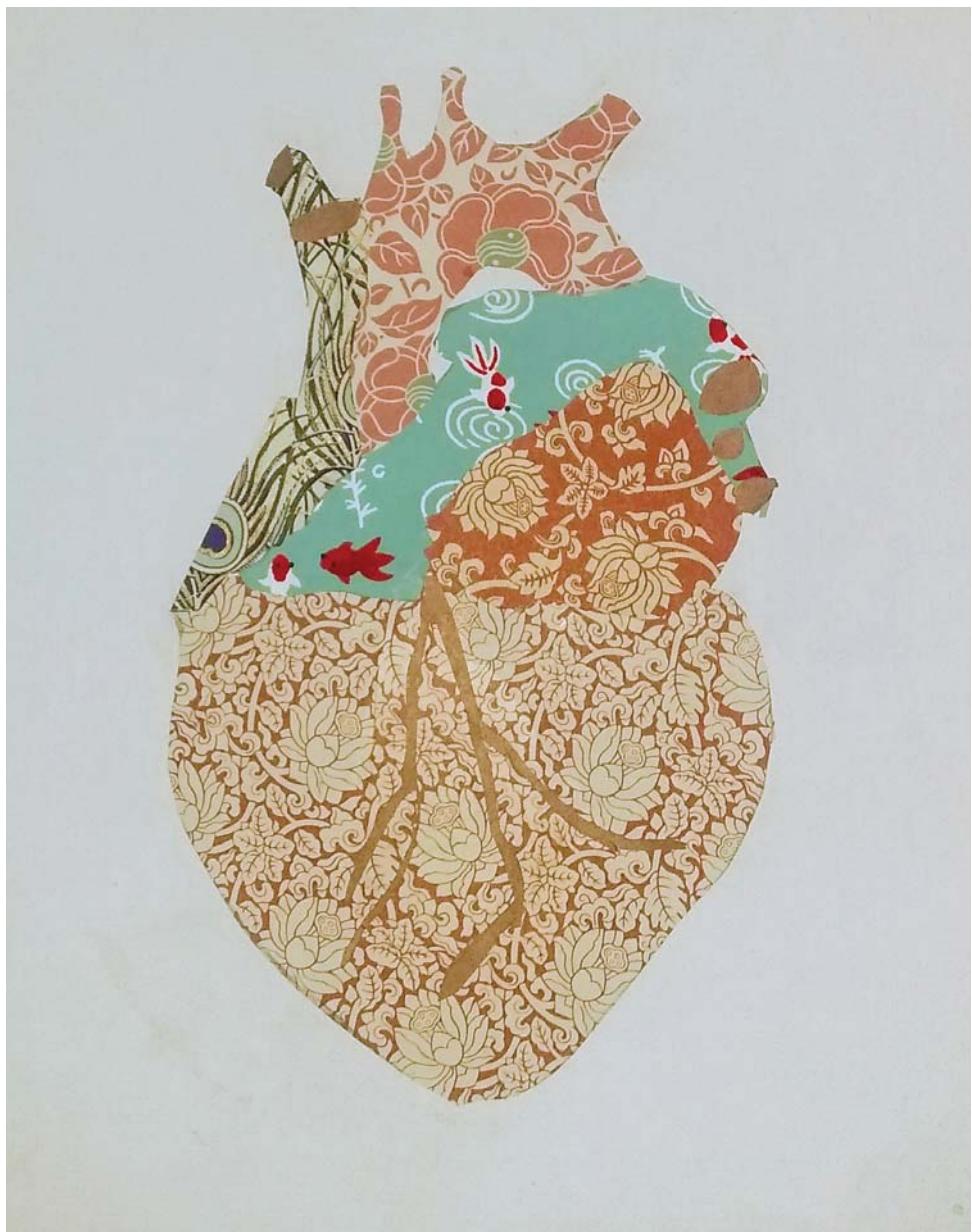
FAITH HAMSON **ARIZONA**



BENT PINE

# PAPER HEARTS

PAYTON SIMONET



BENT PINE

PAYTON SIMONET **CAPTURED VANITY**



BENT PINE

# WILLOW REFLECTIONS

PAYTON SIMONET



BENT PINE

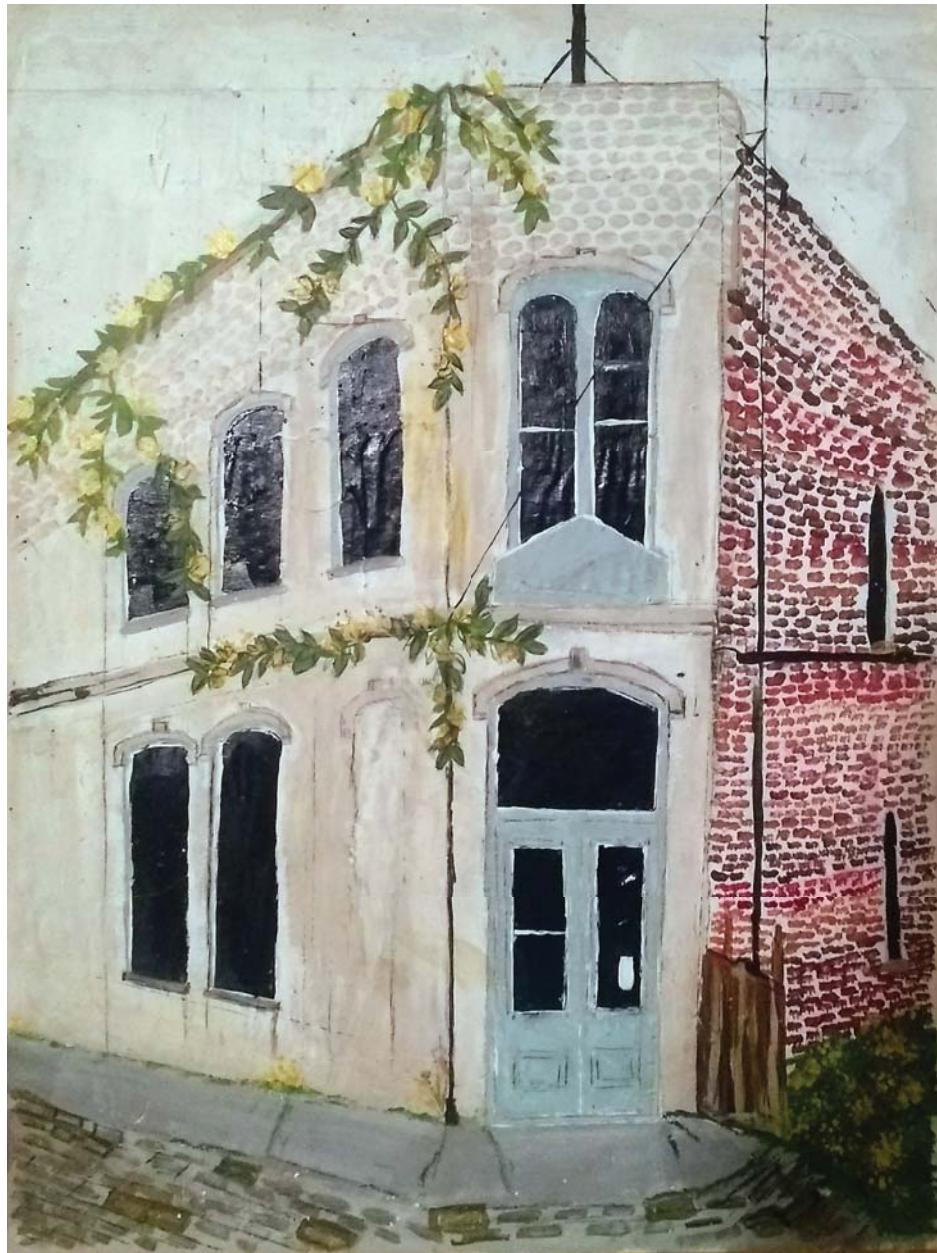
PAYTON SIMONET **A CITY ON CORK**



BENT PINE

# STILLWATER BRICKS

PAYTON SIMONET

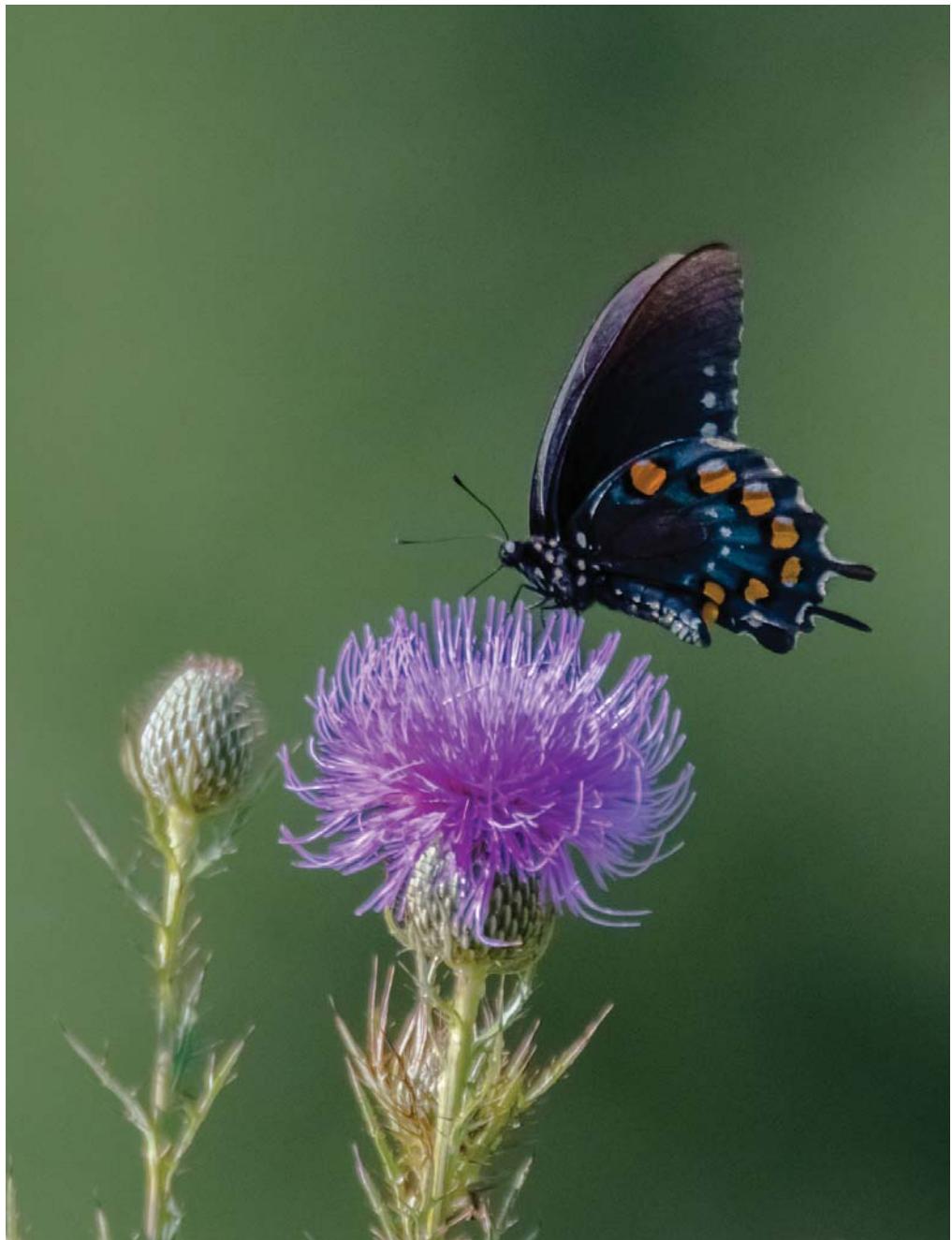


B E N T P I N E

CRYSTAL OLSON **FULL MOON SAWBILL MORNING**



**SWALLOWTAIL THISTLE** CRYSTAL OLSON



B E N T P I N E

JOSHUA CARTER **STEEL REEDS**



BENT PINE

**CROW IN FLIGHT** JOSHUA CARTER



B E N T P I N E

AMY MATTER-HINES **OIL PASTEL SPLASH**



# TREE CLIMBERS

 AMY MATTER-HINES

Long, thin, upturned bill  
Slate gray, white belly, black cap  
White-breasted nuthatch

A small woodpecker  
With black-and-white spotted wings  
Downy woodpecker

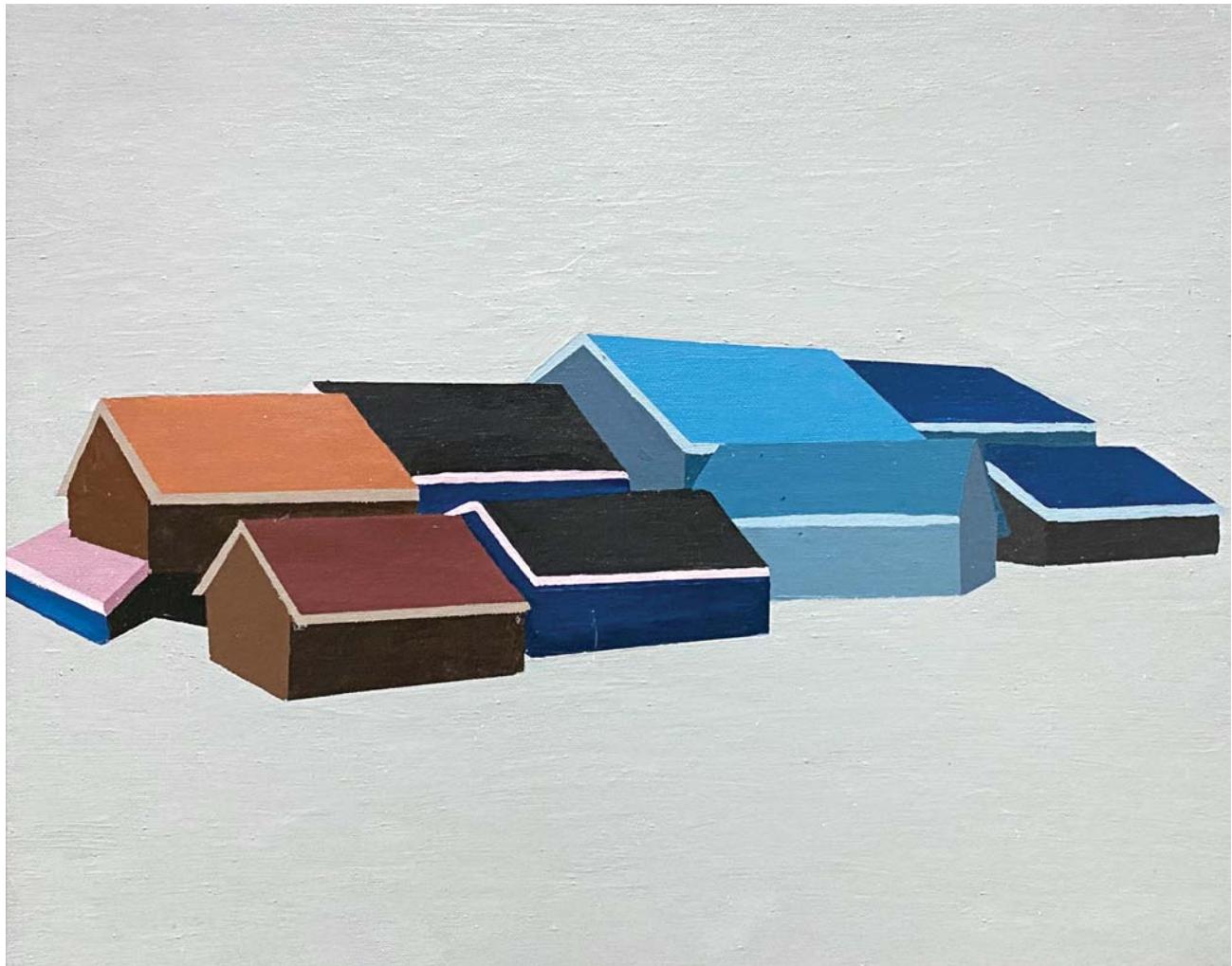
Bright red crest on head  
Pileated woodpecker  
Gray bill, red mustache

Larger than Downy  
Black wings with rows of white spots  
Hairy woodpecker

Red forehead, crest, chin  
Yellow-bellied sapsucker  
Tan chest and belly

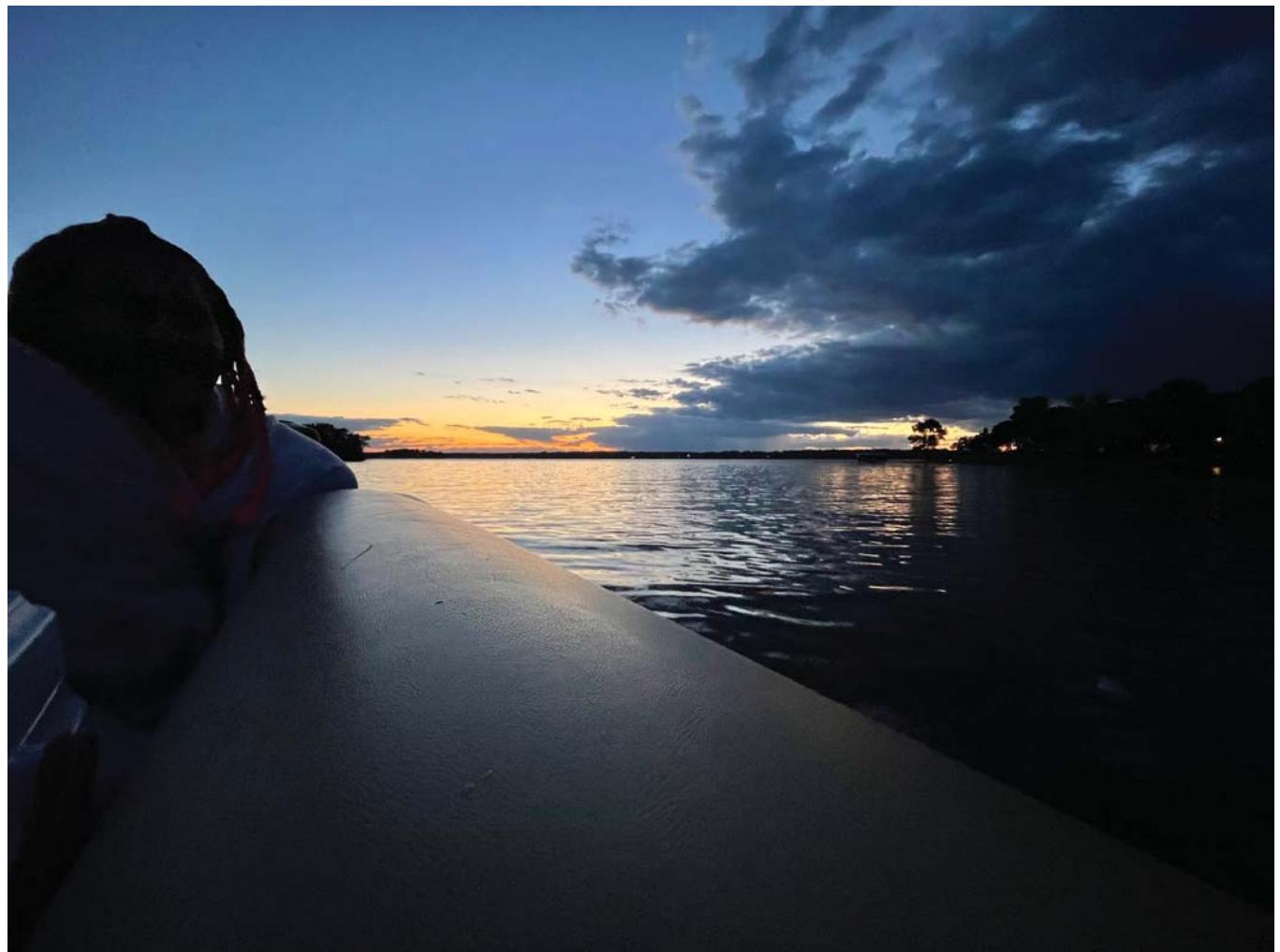
B E N T P I N E

AMY MATTER-HINES **EYE-CATCHING  
ESTABLISHMENT**



BENT PINE

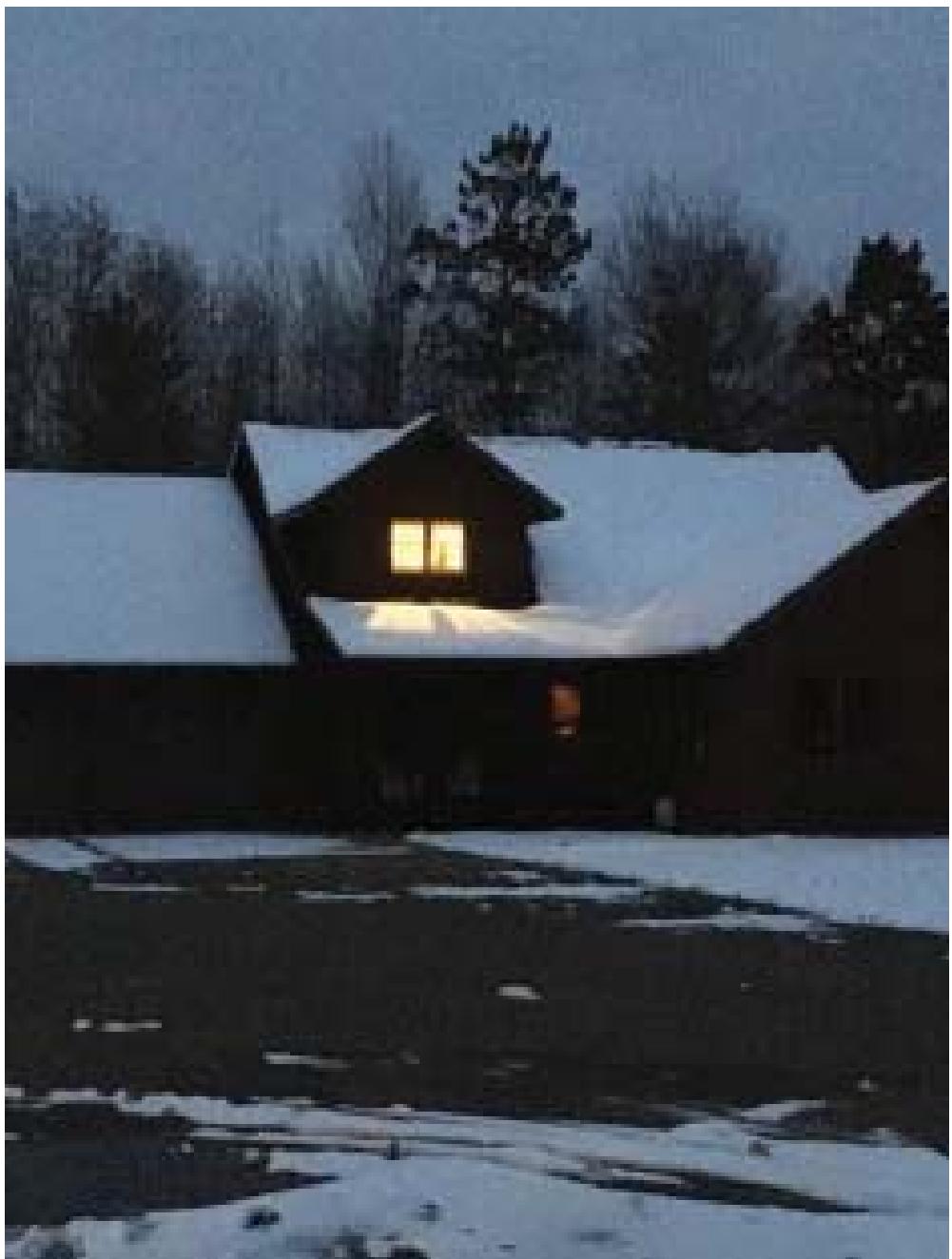
**NIGHT FALL** MEGAN BISTODEAU



ADAM MARCOTTE **HOME SWEETIE HOME**

my breath  
away like  
in the night  
turning to see us  
in wood  
and woods  
in light  
and lights  
our manifest  
of light  
of love  
our spot  
now

# HOME SWEETIE HOME ADAM MARCOTTE



ADAM MARCOTTE **TOOLS: BROTHER WP-55 & YAMAHA 581H**

That's a poor picture of old me  
Standing in front of the east doorway  
Of Ford Hall at Ithaca College in Ithaca, New York.

My father took it, ceremoniously,  
With his flip-flash 110 Kodak Instant Camera  
Before my parents walked away...

Before they walked-ran to the 1986 Dodge Aries  
Idling in the West Tower parking lot  
For the eight-hour drive to Bakersfield, Vermont.



My mother labeled it, "Ad's Graduation," for the album.  
It was raining that day. Of course it was raining.  
In one hand I held a beige travel umbrella



And in the other my Yamaha 581H 925-sterling silver flute.  
In the West Tower, W201, just past the elevators,  
The brand new, Brother WP-55 Word Processor waited.



These—my tools, sometimes (often) weapons—  
Pinned that courage, pinned that me, pinned this future:  
Stay...here. Practice...this. Learn...again. Grow...more.

Thirty years later, let's not be nostalgic about that photo islet.  
In those seconds, as the flash capacitor whined-charged-prepared,  
There was only doubt, the who-do-you-think-you-are sort of doubt,

Against which, sometimes, I pull a smile,  
Clutch any tool, any naiveté, any hope,  
And white-knuckle for something—anything—else.

# THERE ARE DAYS

DAVE ENDICOTT

There are days I wish I could go back  
Say all the things that might have been missed  
Give those I love the things that they lack  
Do all the things on my bucket list

There are days I wish that time stood still  
Savor those things that make life so real  
Soak in the moments, let my heart fill  
Let those you love know just how you feel

There are days I wish that time would fly  
Ending the days that are hard and sad  
Move on to the next before I cry  
Hoping the next day won't be so bad

There are days that time goes by too fast  
Children are grown it all seems so quick  
The time they are kids it soon is past  
Hope that we gave them lessons that stick

There are days that time doesn't exist  
Lost within the broken and the bliss  
Searching for meaning within the mist  
There is no time within the abyss

DAVE ENDICOTT **BURIED—A LENTEN JOURNEY**

Overwhelmed by trying to do it all  
The world it seems so big and yet I feel so small  
Immobilized, not knowing where to start  
Wondering if I have the gifts to do my part

So focused on my selfish wants and needs  
Or trying to impress by doing some good deeds  
Lost within the work and tasks life demands  
In the midst of this chaos without praying hands

Becoming someone that I don't desire  
Sarcastic, cutting, doing nothing to inspire  
Focused on the negative and the wrong  
Instead of all the beauty within each one's song

I seek your grace, forgiveness this day  
Lord help me live your love in all I do and say  
Remove all of my doubt, unrest and fear  
Look into my child's eyes and feel your presence here

Take this hardened heart and make my sin fade  
All creation shows us the promises you made  
Empty cross and tomb will be upon us soon  
Resurrect my spirit and shine like the full moon

BENT PINE

# BEYOND TWO PINES

CRYSTAL OLSON



DAVE ENDICOTT **A NIGHT OF DISCONTENT**

It's quarter of four in the morning  
My brain working overtime  
Can't sleep for unknown reasons  
No melody will rhyme

A young girl from an old town of mine  
Saw no reason to still live  
Wonder why she couldn't see  
All that she had to give

This crazy world it keeps on spinning  
No control some days it seems  
How do I find my balance  
With all these worldly schemes

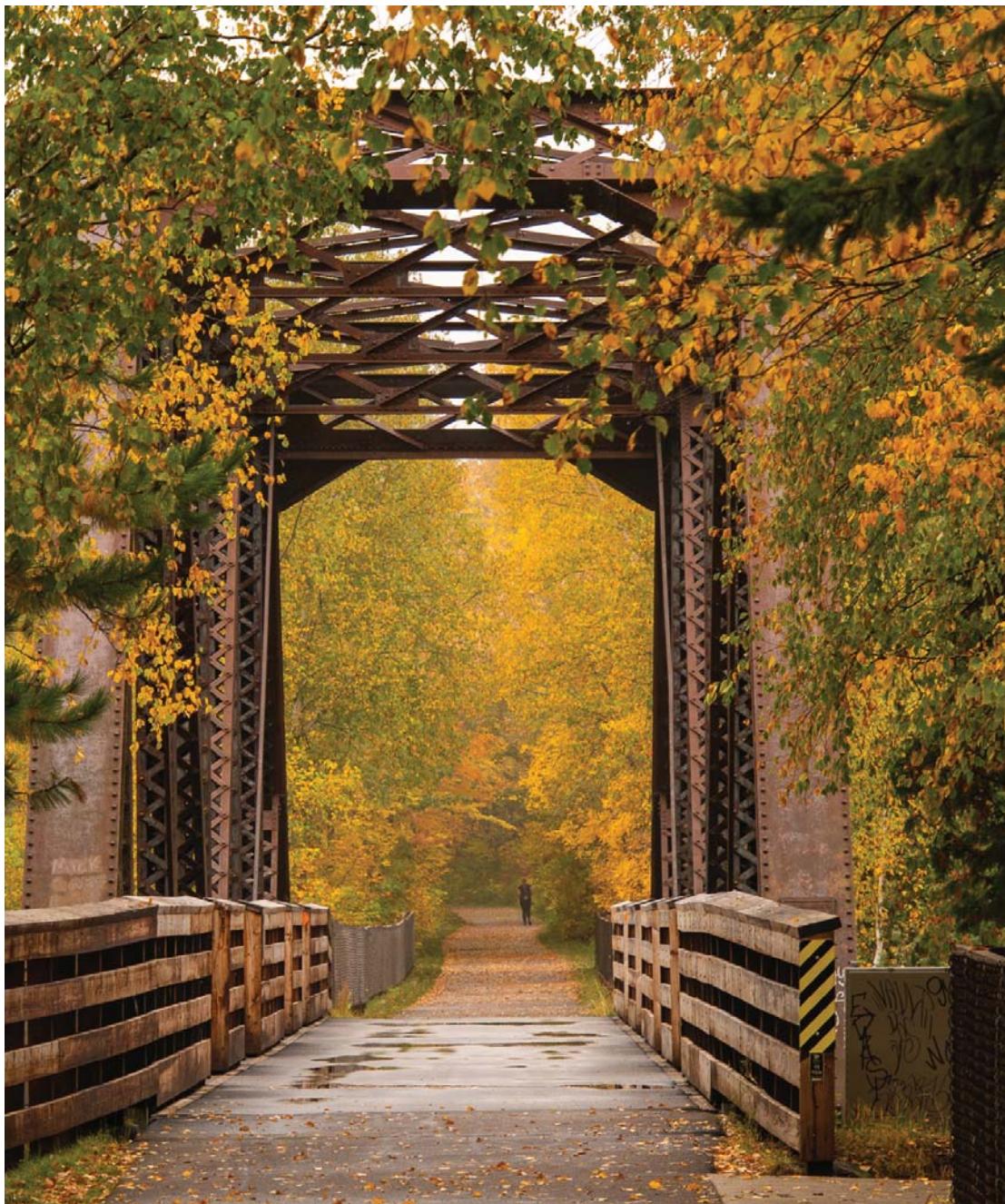
A friend attacked trying to do right  
I hear the fear in his voice  
Civil discourse is not found  
Is compassion a choice

The endless fatigue in all those eyes  
The unrest of civilness  
It is all unsettling  
It gets me I confess

The politics of all this madness  
Where is our energy spent  
The search for unknown valor  
A night of discontent

# FALL FOOTBRIDGE

CRYSTAL OLSON



DAVE ENDICOTT **NORTH SHORE**

An intimidating presence  
White-capped waters are all around  
Secrets beneath your murky depths  
Yet peace for the soul is found

Cold waters on the rocky shore  
As endless waves come dancing in  
Constant song of wind and waves  
Comforts me and cleanses my sin

Rugged shoreline, majestic trees  
Lost in the vastness of this space  
Endless horizon of sky and sea  
Discovering forgiveness and grace

I'm enraptured by your beauty  
Awestruck by your powerful ways  
God's presence here is all around  
I'm thankful for these North Shore days

BENT PINE

# SMOKY MOUNTAIN SUNSET

CRYSTAL OLSON



JENNIFER PEREZ KRUEGER **THE POVERTY SONG**

Poverty's like crying a little, each and every day.  
Poverty's like dying a little, every time you're turned away.  
You gotta bend your pride, and humble yourself  
To feed your children and ask for help.  
Poverty's like surviving life, instead of living it your way.

So, why not use to ease the pain?  
And why not steal to have something?  
I'd rather feel rage than feel nothing,  
All you expect me to feel is shame.

And, no, I don't live in poverty because it's the life I want.  
It's not the choices I've made, or the things I've done  
It's just the hand that I got.  
And you work so hard to pay someone else,  
To raise your kids for you.  
It's not that they don't do their job,  
They just can't love 'em like you do.

And they say that we're lazy, and if we work hard  
We could make it on our own.  
We live in this world, we live among you  
But it's like we're all alone.

Poverty is about despair.  
When you give up the struggle, 'cause the world don't fight fair.  
And you give up all hope, 'cause you no longer care.

So, why not use to feel something?!  
Why not steal to have something?!  
Someone please stop this pain!  
It's easy for you if I'm to blame.

Poverty's like crying a little,  
Each and every day.  
Poverty's like dying a little,  
Every time you're turned away.  
You gotta bend your pride and humble yourself  
To feed your children and ask for help,  
Poverty's like surviving life  
Instead of living it your way.

(Written in 2007)

BENT PINE

# FLOUR LAKE SOLO

CRYSTAL OLSON



B E N T P I N E

CRYSTAL OLSON **FROST ON THE PODS**



# THE COLLECTOR KARI FRISCH

*The following is a memorial poem written by Kari Frisch for her mother's funeral this past fall. Her mother, Carolyn Frisch, was also a former employee at the college. In honor of Kari's mother, a new on-going scholarship for CLC students is being created in Carolyn's name.*

In the Great Depression, when there wasn't much to be had,  
Carolyn was born, "A Collector" God said.

*"You may not understand it or even agree,  
but I've got a purpose, trust me, you'll see."*

So God set into motion the plan he had seen,  
to make Carolyn a collector, nay, the *Collector Queen*.

The collections they started, quite early in age,  
and continued throughout every life stage.

Young collector of milk from the dairy cows,  
chores, hard work, sweat on the brows.

Collector of Bible verses and service to God.  
Be good to your neighbors, the right pathways she trod.

Time with the family, songs and devotions,  
of prayers, celebrations, more than going through the motions.

Collector of Julebukking, Julotta, and other Scandinavian ways.  
Of horse drawn sleigh rides in winter and quarry dips on hot summer days.

No cards, no make-up, no movies. No fun?  
On the contrary, she collected a bunch, no, a ton.

Many mischievous times collected with siblings,  
loud laughs with the neighbors, or even church meetings.

Reunions and celebrations, family trips, and lake shore.  
The good times were a-plenty, the laughs even more.

Rounds of 500, she collected en masse.  
Tests of giving and serving, she'd certainly pass.

KARI FRISCH **THE COLLECTOR**

She collected family photos, unorganized of course,  
family history and stories, her passion the source.

She was a collector of classrooms, of lessons, and plans.  
Of graduations and college, the many clubs that she ran.

She collected more stages one typically goes through,  
like marriage, houses, kids, grandkids, too.

She hosted the parties, mothered the rooms,  
attended the games, and tried out a loom.

She collected new projects, ideas and intentions,  
the makings of which I can't start to mention.

She collected small gifts for herself or for another.  
She was always so thoughtful—our friends called her mother.

Collector of costumes for school and for plays,  
for church programs, celebrations, and whatever you may.

Collector of food to have on hand or to share,  
with those less fortunate or those in despair.

Collector of miles spent on the road,  
adventure or family, there was always a load.

For she collected mementos, souvenirs and knickknacks,  
or traveled with presents to give, if but only a snack.

She also collected some loss and sorrow,  
last of her siblings and some pain on each morrow.

Her body was weak, her memory not good,  
yet her love and her faithfulness solidly stood.

Collector of friends both old and the young,  
a lifetime of caring if you were among.

## THE COLLECTOR KARI FRISCH

Sure, she collected a lot of tangible stuff too,  
like stamps, gnomes, cardinals, perhaps a rooster or two.

The collections collected, they grew and they grew,  
until no one knew just quite what to do.

But it's not the stuff she collected, oh how that remains,  
but the WHY she collected and the love that sustains.

God had a purpose, his reason was true,  
to teach us to be better and generous in what we all do:

*"Have faith-filled intentions, go above and beyond.  
Bless those around you, let your love abound!"*

*Think of others and give of yourself.  
I've given you an example, in love she's top-shelf.*

*For your collector was generous of spirit and quick to lend a hand.  
I know she'll be missed from that mortal land.*

*But follow that example, and do what you can,  
to be good collectors of your own type and brand.*

*In doing so, her love will live on and on,  
and the 'why' of the collections will never be gone."*

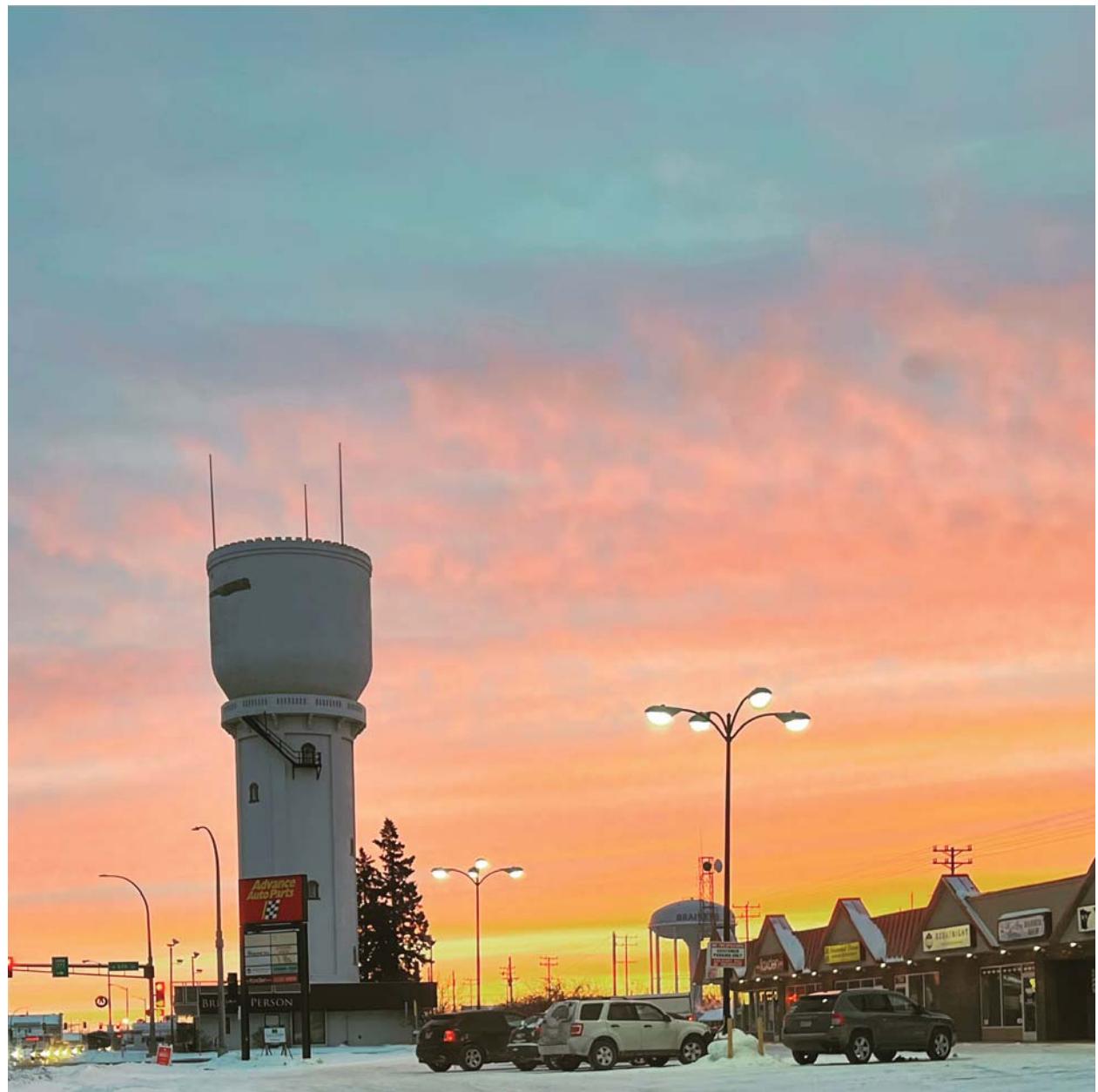
So, as we prepare to go through the stuff,  
please remember Mom, we heard, and your love was enough.

The Skoogs are a 'singing—the heavenly harmonies calling out.  
Towards the pearly gates you're facing, we know that's what it's about.

You lived a good life, were kind, giving, and true.  
Now go collect your tokens in heaven and remember how much we loved you.

B E N T P I N E

ERIN WILMOT **COLD MORNING, WARM SKIES**



# CHICKEN MATH

 JULIE JO LARSON

I was a sensible woman of great restraint, until I became a *Chicken Momma*. The rational world went out the window in April of 2020, when my first four hens found their way to my backyard. Suddenly, I found myself learning chicken terminology, first aid for chickens, and a new math that was not taught in college. A secret math known only to backyard chicken owners. Even Kathy Blake and Pam Pruitt could not teach the highly complicated...*Chicken Math*. Basic math would follow the pattern if you lose one chicken, you get one to replace it. Not Chicken Math.

My first four hens were named Barack, Michelle, Rose, and Maude. They were three-month old Silkie and Rhode Island Red mixes and were considered smaller-sized bantam birds when we met. Cute, feathery, quiet birds with colors ranging from black to white to strawberry blond. They were a perfect mix of hens for a small backyard flock.

How did I acquire a flock of my own? My daughter Morgan suggested I consider getting chickens because chickens eat ticks, lots of ticks, and they lay lots of eggs. Since Morgan gave me the birds for my birthday, I couldn't send them back to the breeder. I decided to learn to live with them and reminded myself that, due to the pandemic, I'd be teleworking for a month or more. I deduced that watching chicks grow up might be fun!

The first month went smoothly. In the second month, I discovered Barack was not a rooster—she was a hen who laid the flock's first egg. That was the precipitating event which began my lessons in *Chicken Math*. Morgan texted me a photo of a lonely, handsome rooster who needed a new home. He had a shiny green head and lovely reddish feathers. My daughter insisted that I needed a rooster; a rooster would keep the flock together. I couldn't say "No" to her reasoning. After I watched him strut into the coop, I named him Red, after my biological dad who also had a habit of strutting. Red began crowing a few weeks after joining the flock. He was a headstrong rooster who spooked easily. When scared, he'd fly off his perch and out the coop door. He only encountered a closed coop door once while trying to escape.

One dark and rainy night, lightening shot through the sky and thunder rocked the house windows. I locked the chickens in their coop earlier, tightly closed the door, and didn't think twice about them as the storm continued to roar for over an hour. The next morning, Red limped out of the coop. He injured his foot during the storm—Morgan said he probably flew into the locked door trying to escape the thunder. Poor Red hobbled for two weeks before he quit walking altogether. It was time to put him out of his misery and cull (kill) him.

JULIE JO LARSON **CHICKEN MATH**

The night before Red was culled, Morgan saw an online ad for a Polish rooster in Baxter. He needed a new home because roosters weren't allowed in Baxter city limits. If we didn't take him, the owner said she'd have to chop his head off. So, we adopted the leggy, slightly larger strawberry and white frizzle haired bird. Within minutes of getting home, he earned the name "Spaz." Spaz escaped our fenced-in run and raced around the yard until the sun set. We finally caught him with a fish net and locked him in the coop with the hens. Red slept in a shoe box until he was delivered to chicken heaven the next morning. Lose a chicken, gain a chicken, basic math. All was again quiet in fluffy chicken land.

My flock of five strolled throughout the backyard and often had to be chased from my front yard. The hens laid eggs almost daily and Spaz kept watch over them. Both my dog and I were tick free the entire summer. I sat outside daily and enjoyed listening to chicken chatter as they roamed through grass and dirt. Chicken raising was an easy gig, until *Chicken Math* struck.

In September, I spent a long weekend in Superior. I needed to finish the final draft of my first book and send it to my publisher before October 1. The whole time I was away, I fretted over my chickens. Were they being fed? Did they get back into their coop at night? Was Spaz being a spaz? As soon as I finished entering the last sentence, I drove the two-and-a-half-hour trip back home.

I pulled my Subaru into the garage and ran right past my husband to check on my five feathered friends. That's when I discovered a small cage with three very small chicks—a fluffy grey/white swirl, a red mix, and a mini-Red. My daughters wanted to celebrate my accomplishment in a big way, so they expanded my flock. Adding Oreo, Harriett, and Beaky made eight. Who was I to be a party pooper? After all, it was a beautiful fall evening and all was well in the coop. *Chicken Math*—lose 0 chickens, add 3.

That feeling of safety didn't last long. November hit hard and cold. I soon learned Minnesota winters are not made for a Polish rooster with bare feet. Unlike my Silky and Rhode Island Reds who have feathered feet, Spaz only had skin on his toes. The hens daily dug in the snow and played in dirt. Spaz tried to keep up, but one day I found him lying in a dirt hole, unable to walk. I picked him up and saw blisters. He had frostbite on both of his feet. I treated his sore toes for six weeks, and they seemed better until February. The morning before our first twenty below zero day, Spaz was found dead in his run. Spaz's death was soon followed by Beaky, who became listless and died in March. That brought my flock down to six.

## CHICKEN MATH JULIE JO LARSON

Michelle was the next to leave the flock in April—my sweet girl had feet issues. Her death was followed by Rose, who was killed by my neighbor's cat in May. Rose was one of my favorites and I took her murder hard. I was losing chickens at an astronomical rate. This time it was my new son-in-law who did the *Chicken Math*. He came up one short though.

Josh drove to Pine City one sunny day and came back with three show-quality Silkies. They were less than two weeks old, too young to determine gender. Baby was the smallest, a strawberry blond who squeaked all day. Lil' Churp had a thick head of stubby feathers and was Josh's favorite. Sugar was a beautiful glacier blue who tripled in size within the first three weeks. Most of the summer the trio squawked in a wire cage until they were the same size as the older girls. Then they were put together. This was necessary to avoid the older hens killing the babes.

The younger chickens were introduced to the flock when Sugar started crowing. His name was changed to Sugar Bear and he soon became the dominant bird. Maude, one of my oldest hens, took a liking to the younger three who often roamed far from the coop without thought. That was the problem with Maude—although a real beauty with her snow-white feathers, she lacked common sense and any awareness of her surroundings. Maude was often heard squawking to her friends; whenever she became separated from the flock she squawked more loudly. Mostly, she just ate bugs and sunned herself.

I enjoyed a second summer without any ticks. A real treat considering that I was diagnosed with Lymes four times since moving to the Brainerd Lakes Area. Despite my reduced flock size, they were eating copious amounts of bugs. I was a happy chicken momma. And then...

Fall arrived, and that meant fewer bugs in the backyard, so the younger chickens and Maude started wandering around the house. There was a large leaf pile on the end of my driveway. The chickens found the leaves irresistible, but the road was just a few feet from the leaf pile. Too close for comfort. I had to shoo the four wanderers to the backyard almost daily. The consequences for their adventures were harsh. The whole flock was put in chicken jail—a covered dog kennel/run which surrounded their coop. They loudly protested. I ignored them.

I worked during the day and let the chickens free-range in the evening. Since my husband was retired, he occasionally let the chickens out before I returned home, especially if they were too loud. Although he was supposed to be in the yard with them at all times, he would forget

JULIE JO LARSON **CHICKEN MATH**

his duty and take a nap if the sun was too hot. Such was the case one day in mid-October. I went to the coop after work and found the kennel door open. Several chickens were missing, but I couldn't tell which at first. I had to conduct a roll call. Barack, Harriett, and Oreo were in nesting boxes. Lil' Churp was curled up beneath the window sitting on a warm egg. She would have been lost if not for laying her egg. I deduced that Sugar Bear, Maude, and Baby were missing. I looked all over the neighborhood but couldn't find them. I called and called. Chicken professionals told me that the birds wouldn't travel more than a few hundred meters from their coop. Obviously the professionals didn't tell my juvenile delinquents the rules.

The next morning, I walked through the neighborhood calling for my birds. I thought I heard Maude but couldn't see her. After an hour, I loaded the car to head to my mom's house which was three hours south. I promised my mom I'd visit that weekend. I was still pondering where my lost chickens could have gone when my phone rang. I had just reached Saint Cloud. I pulled into the mall parking lot to answer the phone. It was my elderly neighbor. Mary laughed and said, "I think your rooster is in my garden. He's a pretty one."

"Is he alone, or does he have the two other jail birds with him?" I asked.

"No, just him." I explained to Mary that I was on my way to New Ulm and I'd see if my husband or daughter could run over.

My husband tried to catch Sugar Bear, but Sugar Bear got spooked and ran into the woods. The others were not with him. That night, five inches of snow fell and temperatures dropped. I feared they would all die of exposure but couldn't do anything to help. The next day was Saturday. That night, I received a text that my rooster was found and was now in his coop. My husband heard Sugar Bear crow and found him strutting about the run.

I returned Sunday morning and searched for the two lost hens. I asked every neighbor I could find if they saw my chickens, but they only saw my rooster. I was frantic. Dear Maude was a special hen—her beauty was unparalleled and she loved to sit on the lawn chair with me. I was so mad at Sugar Bear for losing two of my girls. I vowed to replace the two in spring. Lose two, get two...right?

In December, our family flew to Florida to visit family. I hired a chicken sitter because Barack had sore feet and needed them sprayed daily. Harriett was also showing some foot sores, so she received treatments at the same time. The coop stayed about 35 degrees, but the run temperatures fell below zero. Both chickens ended up with frostbite on their feet in

## CHICKEN MATH JULIE JO LARSON

addition to bumble foot. Now I had two chickens limping and three healthy.

Barack quit walking and was culled the end of February. She was the last of my original flock. Harriett is still limping; I'm doing my best to keep her feet clean and treated. She's been in the laundry room sink several nights a week to avoid more frostbite. Time will tell her fate, but Oreo's always glad when I return Harriett to the coop. She misses Barack and clings to her last living friend.

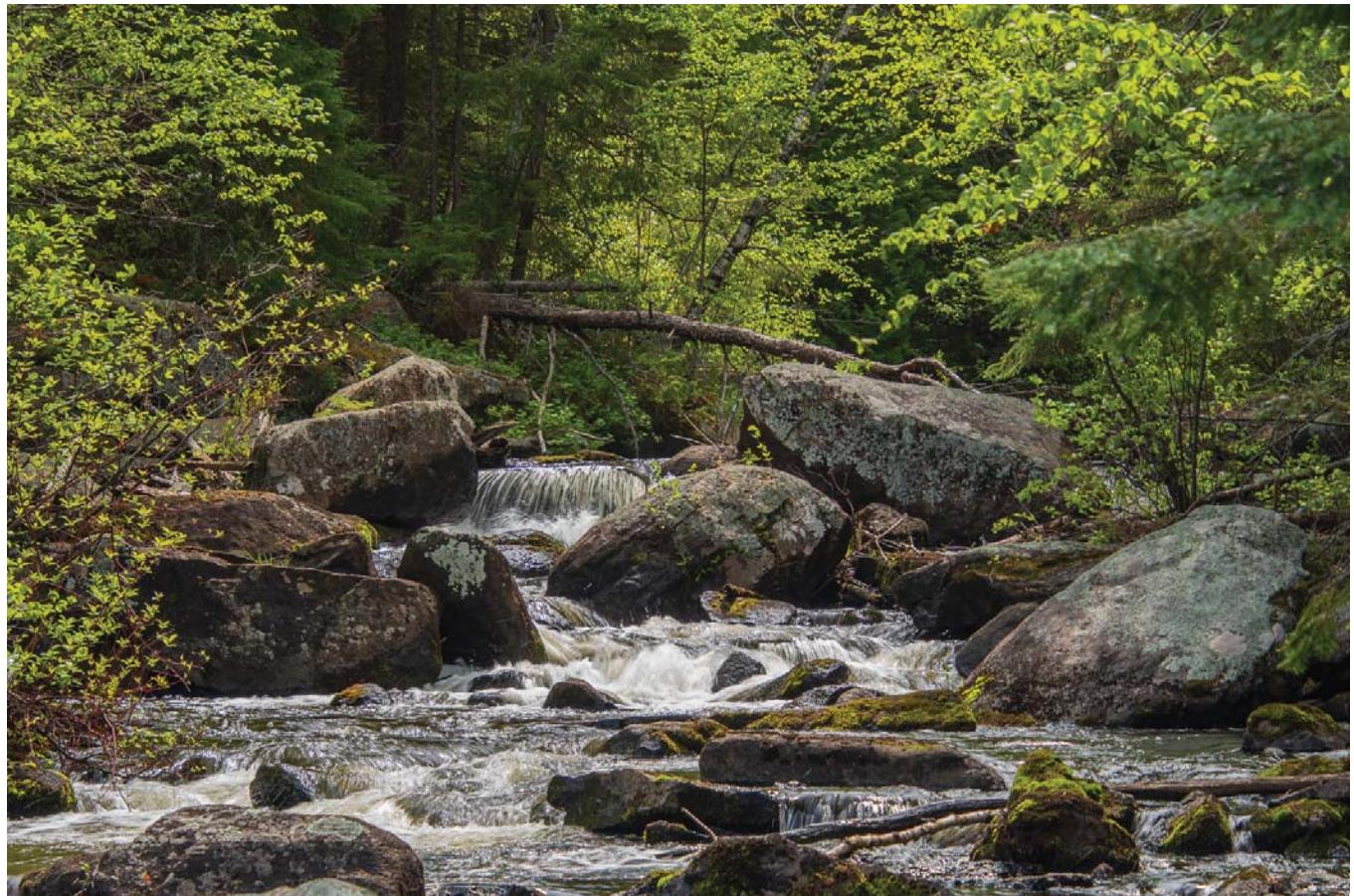
Oreo is not fond of Lil' Churp or Sugar Bear. They are too rambunctious for her. She only cuddles with them on the coldest nights, otherwise each chicken has their own corner. Despite having cozy heaters in their coop, it's often 20 inside. Winters are hard in the Northwoods. I decided in January that something needed to change with my chicken set-up. So, I'm acquiring a larger shed for my flock in spring, an insulated one that can be safely heated with heat lamps. A larger coop means more *Chicken Math*. If I started the winter with seven chickens, and lost three (with one more likely to be culled), that means I'll need eight baby chicks come April. The only thing left to decide is which color chicks I want. Maybe two white, two black, two buff mix, and four glacier blue. That's *Chicken Math* for you!

B E N T P I N E

CRYSTAL OLSON **LADY IN WAITING**



**LOWER GEORGE FALLS** CRYSTAL OLSON



MATTHEW FORT **THE GUARDIAN**

Buckley Dalloway watched as the first snowflakes stuck to the windshield. They'd traveled less than a mile from home when the squall blotted out their neighbor's giant red barn and farmhouse. His father turned on the wipers, and they fell into a clacking rhythm, ridges of ice forming at the base of the windshield. The heater thrummed, filling the inside with an oily smell.

Buckley wished he were trapped in the backseat with anyone but Grandpa Welkin, whose clothes always looked a size too large and who smelled like roast beef and cigar ash. He hated the way grandpa laughed with amusement every time Buckley spoke, as if the boy's every utterance surprised and delighted the old man. Even at eight, he knew that no one could be that amusing all the time.

While his father searched for the centerline, he heard his mother apply a phantom brake from the passenger's seat.

"I'm only going thirty-five, Dorthea," his father said when her foot continued to tap against the floor mat.

"I know. It's just the snow. Snow storms always worry me." His father tapped the real brakes when the wheels slipped and the car's rear swung toward the shoulder.

"We've got ourselves a genuine Minnesota blizzard here," he said.

Buckley thought about what he could be doing instead of taking Grandpa Welkin all of fourteen miles to the Barrington VFW on a Saturday morning. He could be on the phone with Danny, talking about his plans to build a snow fort. Danny had been sick. He'd forgotten the word his mother used to describe Danny's illness, but he knew it meant his best friend would be spending time in the hospital and wouldn't be able to come to their house any time soon.

"Grandpa," Buckley said, "did you ever have friends growing up?" Grandpa laughed his amused laugh, this time slapping his knee with one meaty hand.

"One or two, I guess," he said.

"That's where we're going, Buckley. To see some of grandpa's friends."

"Watch the road, Larry."

"I can watch the road and talk at the same time, dear."

Visiting grandpa's friends sounded like punishment. It meant sitting around while the first wave of old people approached and asked what grade he was in, what sports he played, and how many girlfriends he had. They'd hand him chalky white mints or peppermints or those square, ruby-colored candies that smelled like licorice. And then he'd have to endure a second wave when they forgot he was even there and talked about boring things like illness, death, and

# THE GUARDIAN

 MATTHEW FORT

relatives. ("She was married to Jim O'Connor's boy, but he died." "No, no, she was married to Leroy Connor's boy and he died.") Then after cake and coffee—the worst and final wave—the prolonged goodbyes. How many times did grownups have to say goodbye before they actually left?

"You should tell Buckley about your friend, Max," his father said. He leaned forward until his chest almost touched the steering wheel, squinting the way he did when scanning the newspaper.

"Who's Max?" Buckley asked. "Is he your best friend like Danny is mine?"

"Yes, Max is my best friend," grandpa answered. "He's helped me out of more scrapes than I can count."

"Is he going to be at the VFW?"

"No, I doubt we'll see him."

"Why not?"

"Max died when he and grandpa were still in high school," Buckley's father answered.

"But you said he was still your best friend. How can he still be your best friend if he's dead?"

"Max has always looked out for me, even after he died."

"You're pulling my leg. Is he pulling my leg, dad?"

"You should tell him the whole story, Paul," Buckley's father said.

"Oh, I'm sure he doesn't want to hear grandpa's old stories."

"Now I know you're pulling my leg."

"Well, I'll tell you one, and when I'm done you can decide whether or not I'm joshing you."

Grandpa cleared his throat with a phlegmy cough and adjusted the square framed glasses that rested on a lump midway down the slope of his large nose.

"Well," he began, "I grew up during the Great Depression, and I was about your age—do you know what the Great Depression was? Well, then, a lot of people lost their jobs. Couldn't find any work. Life was bleak until Max Engle moved in next door. Max was a big kid, bigger than anyone in our class, and clumsy, always charging into rooms and tipping over desks or plowing into someone or something. That's how he got a purple scar on his face. He was chasing a rabbit and he got tangled up in a barbed wire fence. My mother called him a bull in a china shop. The other kids at school called him much worse names because of his German accent, and he'd get mad and go charging after them and fight every single one of them. Every

MATTHEW FORT **THE GUARDIAN**

free minute Max and I had we'd be outside playing until it got dark and we had to come in for dinner, not that there was much to eat in those days. I went to bed hungry more than one night, but Max had it much worse.

One Saturday morning in winter he came over. He'd talked two girls from school into meeting us at a pond to go skating. Neither one of us had ice skates. 'Ve just use our shoes,' Max said. When the girls found out that we didn't have skates, they left. Max and I didn't care. We were going to have fun, so we started sliding around, pretending we were skating. Pretty soon we were throwing snowballs at each other. Max had an arm on him and he hit me with a few stingers. When I saw him getting ready to launch another one, I went toward the center of the pond, hit a thin patch of ice, and fell right through to doomsday."

Through the squall, Buckley recognized the Potter's cornfield outside his window.

Instead of corn stalks poking through the snow, he imagined it was a pond, the ice smooth as a marble. Danny wasn't lying in a hospital bed or sick anymore, and the two of them skated on the pond, just like his grandpa and Max had done.

"I can't see a thing," his father said. "The wipers are iced up." He pulled the car over to what might have been the shoulder and stepped outside, letting in cold air and angry swirls of snow. The biting wind made Buckley think of how cold the water in the pond must have felt. When his father had finished smacking the wipers against the windshield, he slammed the door shut, put the car into gear, and once more the whirring heater competed with the howling wind. Buckley inched closer to his grandpa until the seatbelt tugged against his chest.

"Max saved you when you fell into the pond, didn't he?"

"He sure did. That water was so cold I couldn't breathe. Couldn't even move. Next thing I know Max is dragging me out of the water and onto the ice. Got me back home and my mother made me get out of my wet clothes and stand next to the woodstove with a blanket around my shoulders." Grandpa pulled a red handkerchief from his sleeve as if he were about to perform a magic trick. Instead, he blew his nose until it sounded like air hissing from a tire valve. "My mother was furious and blamed Max for what happened until I explained that it was my fault. That night, with what little scraps of food we had and some donated by the neighbors, she baked a pie for Max to thank him for saving my life."

"But that's not how he died, saving you?"

"No, he died a few years later from something we used to call it consumption. I've forgotten the real name for it."

## THE GUARDIAN MATTHEW FORT

“Tuberculosis,” Buckley’s mother said. “That’s it. TB.”

“So you were pulling my leg. That was the only time he saved your life,” Buckley said.

“No, he kept saving me after he died.” White spittle formed two commas in the corners of grandpa’s mouth. Buckley studied his father’s face for signs that he was in on the prank, but his father’s hands clenched the steering wheel, his gaze fixed on the vanishing highway ahead of them. Buckley stared out his window, trying to spot the next farmhouse, but the snow blew horizontally, and it looked and sounded like TV static.

“Okay, I give up,” he said, turning toward his grandpa. “How could Max be dead but still help you?”

“Oh, I’ll tell you that some other time. I’m sure you’re getting bored of hearing grandpa’s old stories.”

“I wanna know.”

“Well, I’ll tell you one more. That’s all. Max and I decided we were going to join the Army after graduation, but Max died before that, so when I graduated, I guess I signed up for the both of us. They shipped me over to Korea to fight in the war. One afternoon, we got ambushed and were taken prisoner. They marched us a mile or so up to this schoolhouse, and their big boss came out and shouted at us and pointed for us to go inside. They kept shouting and pushed us through into a classroom and pointed at the floor and made us sit cross-legged in a half circle. I guess they wanted to know if any more of us were coming. Their big boss yelled out into the hallway and a soldier came in, holding a rifle, and the guy next to me—Danny Johnson from Lansing, Michigan—said, ‘this is it.’ The first shot sounded like an explosion and Jim Klepler, who was sitting on the far right, went down. Then more shots followed. I fell to the floor and crawled over to a desk and just stayed there. One shot hit me in the calf, went straight through.”

“That’s why you limp?”

“Yep, right here.” He pointed to the spot on his leg where the bullet had entered. “I heard more shots and more screaming. My friend Donnie Benz had been shot trying to get up and had fallen on top of me and I just laid there not moving a muscle. Then the noise stopped. I don’t know how much time had passed, but I heard the outside door open and then more gunfire. There were a few of us still alive, hit but alive, and when the big boss left we talked about making a run for it. I heard the outside door slam open again and then four quick shots. Then it got quiet, and I heard a G.I.’s voice holler out to us. My friend Paul Moss helped me up and he and another guy carried me out past the dead soldiers—ours mostly but a few of theirs in the hallway where the last shots had come from. When we got outside, I turned to thank the G.I.

MATTHEW FORT **THE GUARDIAN**

standing by the door. It was Max."

"That can't be."

"Oh, it was Max, alright. Just a bit older. He had the same purple scar down the side of his face. I called out to him but Paul and the other guy kept moving. I looked back but I lost sight of Max. Then when I came home after the war, I worked in the underground mines on the Croft Range, and Max saved me from a few cave-ins. Every time I got pulled out of a scrape, there he was, sometimes the same age as I saw him in Korea, other times just a few years younger than me, but always Max, the same blonde hair, the same purple scar."

When they passed the Oak City Town Hall, Buckley imagined it was a schoolhouse, the same one his grandfather had been marched into as a prisoner. Then he pictured himself and Danny dressed in Army uniforms, forced to enter the schoolhouse at gunpoint. The enemy pushed them to the floor and kept the rifle pointed at them.

The first stoplight for Barrington came into view just as they'd reached the intersection, and his father pumped the brakes just as they hit a patch of black ice. As the car slid into the intersection, Buckley's mother stomped her phantom brake and gasped as a white International truck missed their fender by less than a foot. When the car finally stopped, they were stuck in the middle of the intersection.

The wind had lost its intensity and now pencil shaving-sized flakes fell straight to the ground. A group of men, who had exited the cafe on the corner of the block, had witnessed the near miss. Buckley saw a boy with blonde hair leaning against the wall of the cafe, his bulky frame sharpened by clothes that looked a size too small. He wore a dishwasher's apron streaked with grease. He cupped his hand and lit a cigarette. Buckley saw a plume of smoke rise like a cloud when the boy exhaled. The boy turned and faced the car, while a few of the men stepped off the curb to help push their car. Buckley could have sworn it was Danny staring back at him, the same red-chapped face and tufts of chestnut-colored hair sticking out from the back of his head. The men pushed the car free, and his father waved to them as the car stuttered through the intersection.

When they passed close to the boy, Buckley felt certain it was Danny, a few years older, perhaps, but he looked just like his best friend, except for the long, purple scar down the boy's cheek. Buckley turned and watched until the snow swallowed the boy and the cafe from view. Then he leaned closer, tucking his hand into the fleshy part of Grandpa Welkin's open palm.

The idea and opinions expressed in Bent Pine are those of the contributors and do not necessarily reflect the attitude of the Board of Trustees, administration, the faculty, or the staff or Central Lakes College. Content for Bent Pine was submitted by students, staff, and faculty. The pieces selected for inclusion were based on a blind selection process carried out by the Bent Pine Journal Club's team.



CLC is committed to legal affirmative action, equal opportunity, and access and diversity of its campus community. This document is available in alternative formats. Consumers with hearing or speech disabilities may contact us via their preferred Telecommunication Relay Service.