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VANDALISM

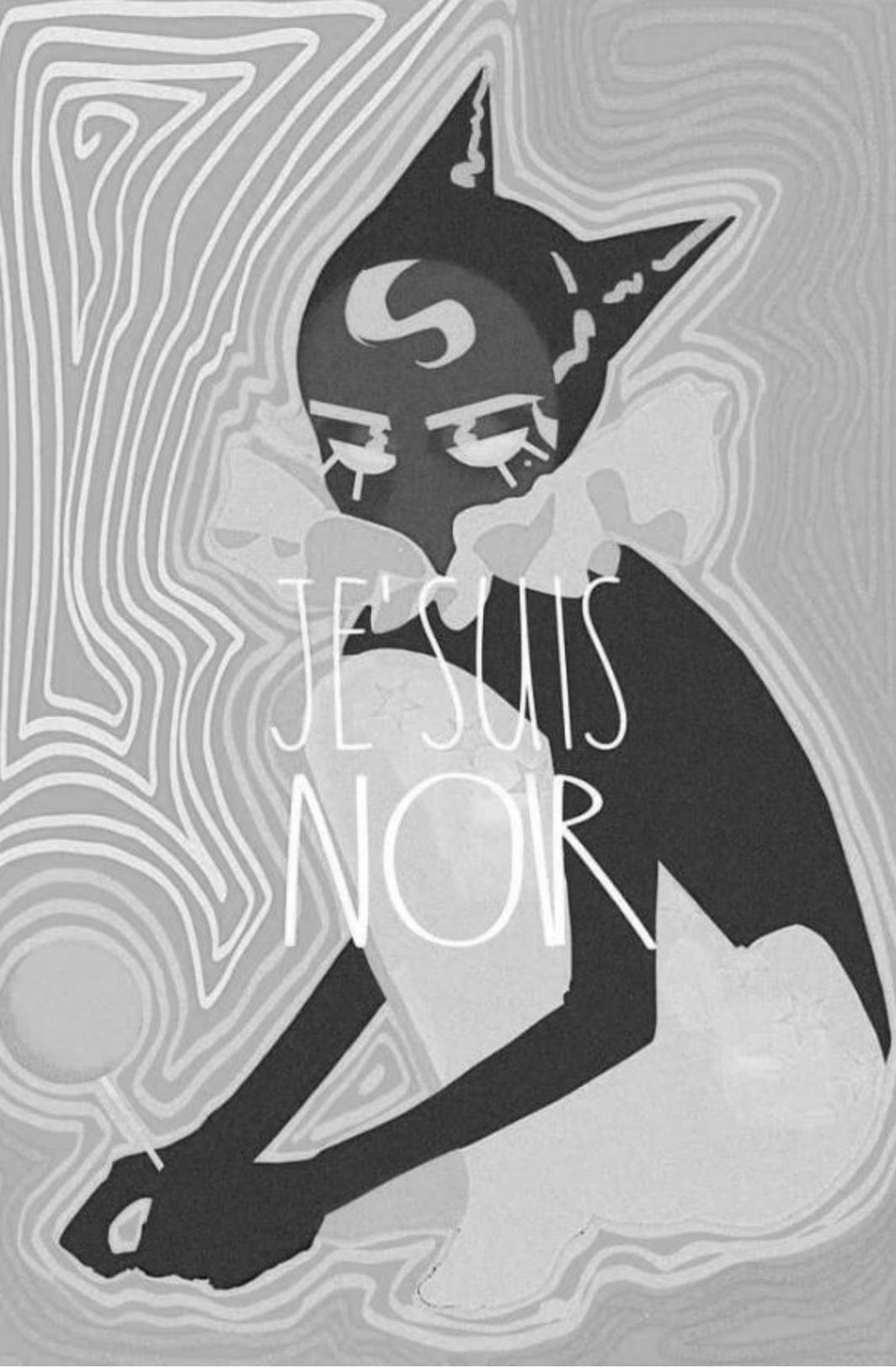




VANDALISM  
UNIVERSITY OF IDAHO'S  
UNDERGRADUATE LITERARY JOURNAL  
ISSUE 7  
2021



Sigma Tau Delta, Eta Chi Chapter  
University of Idaho  
Moscow, Idaho



JE SUIS  
NOIR

# Vandalism

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ISSUE 7

*Nostalgia*

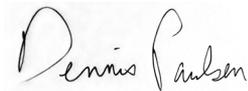
## A NOTE FROM THE EDITORS

The first Sigma Tau Delta event I went to was a Vandalism reading event at Hunga Dunga Brewing Company. A rare opportunity where the vice president worked there, and most of the attending readers were over 21. Soft warm lights, attentive listeners sitting shoulder to shoulder at long oak tables, tall glasses of dark beer, and writers reading their work from behind a large metal keg. It was one hell of a first impression.

What struck me that night as I shakily read my short fiction, and continues to inspire me now is the supportive nature of the members of Sigma Tau Delta and the whole of the U of I English Department. The group became very important to me, and I wanted to do everything and anything that came with being a member. Fall '19 going into Spring 20', ideas were hatched and plans were made that were slapped from our hands when COVID-19 shook the world and forced us all into our homes.

It has been over a year of grieving, anger, and maintaining sanity on a planet that's tilted off its axis. Coming back to class either in person or over Zoom has been difficult, but the teachers and students of our school have worked hard to meet the challenge and accomplish our goals. When Emma and I had our first meeting with our advisor, the awesome Micheal McGriff, we talked about how important it was to pull Sigma Tau Delta back together, refill our ranks, and publish the journal.

I'm extremely proud of this year's members of Sigma Tau Delta, and thankful to have been working side-by-side (virtually) with Emma to make Vandalism happen this year. The art and written works in this issue of Vandalism, artfully arranged by our book editor Crystal, represents Sigma Tau Delta's goal to support the creatives and scholars at the University of Idaho as I have felt supported by them. Here's to the years that have gone, and the many to come.



Editor

Sigma Tau Delta President, 2021

## A NOTE FROM THE EDITORS

This edition of *Vandalism* is near and dear to my heart. My years in Sigma Tau Delta have been dominated by the pandemic, and with the interruption of such unprecedented events, we were unable to do much of what we wanted to as a group last spring. This year, however, marks a sort of rebirth for the University of Idaho chapter of Sigma Tau Delta.

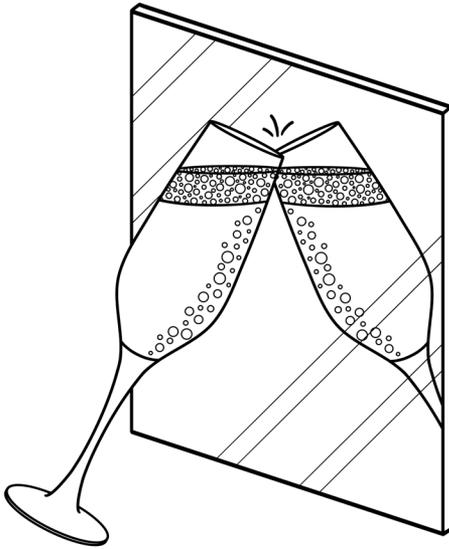
Despite the circumstances, Dennis and I wrangled up a group of members, and we started planning. Part of what drew me to Sigma Tau Delta in the first place was the community and the support of a safe place to explore my creative writing skills. The events I did attend pre-pandemic were inspiring and fun, something I'll remember for the rest of my life. The community we created this year was different, but eager to create something lasting—we worked together over Slack and Zoom through the entire process of creating this journal. With the patience and support of each member and the incredible work by our editor Crystal, we did it.

This issue represents to me the power and resilience of the creative community here at the University of Idaho, the perseverance of creatives across campus despite unprecedented circumstances and stress. This issue represents to me what writers and artists are capable of, the strength of an artistic community coming together to create something beautiful. And I'm so damn proud to be a part of it.



Editor

Sigma Tau Delta President, 2021



**2020 SUCKED**

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VANDALISM

**Bailey Brockett**

## How Much Ocean Do We Need?

How much ocean do we need? The ocean can teach us. He can help us. If we are going to reflect, we must stand on the beach, wiggling our toes in the warm sand, looking out onto the horizon into the great beyond, past the rocks and the crashing waves, understanding that we are just as much a part of it as it is of us. The symbiotic relationship of ocean and man is as deep within ourselves as the ocean is into the core of the earth. It is constant and fickle.

When I was younger, about six or seven, we took a family trip to the Oregon Coast. The beaches there aren't scattered with bikini-clad women, as the coastal winds would render them frost-bitten. The beaches are instead scattered with kite-flyers and fragments of sand-dollars. There are lighthouses filled with ghosts, and tall cliffs beat by waves of white and blue. I clutched my father's hand and stared out into the vast unknown, thinking six-year-old thoughts. I felt so small, as a six-year-old typically does, but at that moment I didn't mind. Staring at the ocean, I felt like the world had to offer me something. It felt like a friend.

That was years ago. I'm twenty now. I have been to visit my old friend often. In silence and in crashing waves, he tells me of his adventures, and I tell him of mine. I smile with the sun in my eyes, and I close them to remind myself that though I may leave, he will not. He will remain, waiting for me to return with new stories, new adventures, new people. Yes, he is constant and fickle and filled with life, as I would like to be.

## Stay

My body and I used to be in love. We adored each other, spending every possible moment creating, adventuring, enjoying the presence of one another. We were elated to be friends, even more so to be lovers. And the love I had for her was irreplaceable, so beautiful. It could never be felt again, not by anyone in the world.

She changed, and I've always despised her for it. We don't like each other anymore. Not a bit. We haven't liked each other for many years. I don't know how I ever loved her. She is a monster and she is an enigma. We hardly speak. She just simply carries what I need, and we have a mutual understanding to never interact unless absolutely necessary.

But today, I hated her so much. I took every piece of clothing off after school and I stood there naked, exposed, just staring at her, infuriated.

"God, you are so ugly. Why can't you just look like everyone else?"

I asked her.

She didn't reply.

"You are why people don't take me seriously. You are why no one asks me out. That boy that claims I'm beautiful? He'll go running when he sees you," I responded to her silence.

"I hate the clothes you wear. You only wear them to hide the rest of you."

Again, silence.

"Why can't your hair look right for once? Why do you pick your scars and expect everything to be smooth after a day? Why do you have those fucking scars?"

I threw everything I had at her. I wanted her to hurt, and to suffer, and to feel absolutely everything. I berated her. I scratched her, and I slapped her and tried to tear her apart.

"Why don't you tell me how to fix you?!" I screamed.

We stared at each other for what seemed like hours. We didn't speak. We didn't have to. I had done the damage.

She finally spoke. I could barely hear her.

"You're the reason I don't feel good enough to be loved."

And we cried. We sat and held each other on the floor, sobbing, trying desperately to feel anything from each other.

And I fell in love with her again. I knew I never fell out of love with her.

"I'm sorry," I told her.

"Please stay, I promise I'll be better."

Again, she was silent.

"If you really love me, you'll stay. I know you'll stay."

A tear slides down her cheek. She grabs my hand and holds it to her heart.

"I'll stay," she whispers.

"I'll always stay."

## Dakota Brown

*Dakota Brown is an undergraduate student studying English and Secondary Education at the University of Idaho. In her spare time, she can often be found tutoring kids online or writing creative pieces. Dakota is also a huge nerd who loves to geek-out with others. She enjoys playing Dungeons & Dragons with her friends and has a competitive side that reaches its peak during UNO matches. She is grateful to have the opportunity to be published in Vandalism this semester, and is excited to see what others have contributed to the theme of nostalgia.*

cold

You are like morning dew that has frozen  
underneath a forgotten bridge in the middle  
of a fablesque forest full of frostbitten trees.

You are beautiful, and you are delicate.  
Any sudden movements and the fractures  
would cause you to crumble and fall to the  
bottom of the iced-over creek bed.

You are beautiful, but you are cold.

You do not care for people's warmth,  
and you would rather sit alone,  
frozen in the forest – far away from  
the pain that seems to surface

when allowing other people  
to make a home out of you.

You are like snow that settles on drain pipes,  
dripping downwards and glacializing.  
Shattering when shaken and mesmerizing –  
forever forced to see frigid reflections.

You are cold, and you are beautiful.  
Any fool could see that it is because  
you know what it feels like to be forgotten.

Kimana Cofre

*“Yup”*

[untitled]



## Felice Caven

*Hi everyone! My name is Felice Caven. I'm currently a senior here at UI, majoring in Secondary Education with an English emphasis. I grew up in Sandpoint, ID, where there are many mountains to be explored, many spots on the lake that are a part of my childhood, and many trees begging to be hammocked on. My love for writing sparked in Jack Hill's Fiction Writing class my Sophomore year. He inspired me to step outside my comfort zone in my writing, and I discovered a world of creativity that I never knew was in me. Although some of this story is real and some fake, it's one of my favorite pieces I've ever written, and I hope you enjoy it just as much!*

## I See Fire

“Ivy!” he shouted down to me from the lookout as I grabbed my last bag from the car, “should we take it now?”

I had done LSD once before. I enjoyed it because I was with my best friend and we just laughed for the majority of twelve hours. Still, the thought of doing it again gives me anxiety. The fact is, you never know what you’re going to see or feel while you’re on drugs; the unknown scares me. Luca knows this. He knows I easily get paranoid before taking drugs. He also knows everything about me since we’ve been dating for the last two years and we were best friends for three years before we dated. This is why I believe we have such a strong relationship — he’s not only my significant other, he’s my best friend and vice versa. This means he always knows how to comfort me, calm me down, and help me enjoy myself. I trust to be at one of my most vulnerable states with him whether I have anxiety from being on drugs or anxiety in general.

That’s one of the reasons I love him so dearly; he constantly influences me to face my fears, without pressuring me, so that I can experience the most thrilling moments that life has to offer. I know in my heart that if I were to have never met Luca, I would’ve missed out on some of the best days of my life.

No matter what kind of drug someone takes, they take it to enjoy themselves, to gain different and new perspectives, and to have fun. This is why Luca and I chose to take LSD that day; we’re always looking for a new adventure to go on and a new place to explore. So, we figured a fire lookout, Lunch Peak, would be the perfect destination.

“Let’s wait a little bit until we unpack and make lunch considering it’s only 10:30 AM,” I had sarcastically replied.

When we arrived at Lunch Peak from our three-hour drive up the mountain, away from all civilization, there was little-to-no visibility from the

smoke. The lookout was raised from the ground and had at least twenty-five stairs leading up to the door with a fence in front of the first step. Luca had explained to me that the fence was there because one-time people were staying there, and a bear crawled up to the stairs in an attempt to break in because he smelt their food. "Perfect," I remember thinking to myself. The inside of the lookout was small with old, wooden floors and windows, some fixed with duct tape, covering the entirety of each wall and producing a 360 view of the mountains surrounding us -- although we couldn't see them yet from the thick smoke. While I was setting up our sleeping bags and pillows on the bed, Luca brought up the cooler from the car and made us PB&J sandwiches. After we had eaten lunch and settled in, we decided to take the LSD. He pulled out a sheet and ripped off one tab for me and a tab and a half for himself because he has a "higher tolerance." We put what looked like a tiny white piece of paper on our tongues and waited for them to dissolve. Once they were gone, we popped open two bottles of Corona, put in limes, and waited to feel whatever was about to come over us.

One of my favorite moments from that day was when we put on our "PNW Venture" playlist we made together. The type of music that makes you want to go for a drive, roll down the windows, fall in love with the moment— and we were definitely on an adventure. Luca was laying on the bed watching me dance and sing every lyric to one of my favorite songs, "Dissolve Me" by Alt-J (that just so happened to describe the situation perfectly considering the first line of the song is, "Now dissolve me, two tabs on your tongue."), with my speaker in one hand and my Corona in the other.

He smiled and said, "You're a freak."

I jumped on the bed, kissed him, and laid next to him. We talked about random things that wouldn't make sense to other people, but they made sense to us. We we laughed until our ribs got sore. I remember that feeling of being the only two people in the world like it was yesterday. We had what people called, "the acid giggles." From my experience, you get them for a few hours or so after you take a tab. It's my favorite part about doing

LSD because you're "high" but not quite "tripping" yet, and you're so happy and think absolutely everything is funny. For those two hours, I laughed so much that my abs hurt the next morning, without any idea of the trouble that was yet to come.

Finally, the smoke had cleared up from the wind. Even though Luca hates when I take photos of him because he's "photo shy," I didn't care. I wanted to be able to look back at the picture and remember this moment. I sat up to take a picture of him on the bed with the breathtaking view of the finally visible mountains through the windows behind him. However, what started as a picture-perfect moment quickly turned into the beginning of a disaster. When I looked closely at the picture, I realized what looked like a regular cloud at a first glimpse was actually a huge cloud of smoke coming from a mountain two drainages away directly in front of us.

For those of you that don't know what a drainage is, it's a valley in-between two mountains where rain and snowmelt drain off into a creek.

I'll never forget how I felt at that moment; my stomach immediately dropped, and everything began to change. Even though we had been planning a trip to the fire lookout for months, and I was fully aware that we were in the midst of fire season, it never crossed my mind that we would actually see a fire, a bit naive. I remember the distinct feeling of becoming overwhelmed and anxiety taking both over my body and mind.

"Don't overthink it, it looks far away. Let's go explore while the smoke is gone," Luca said.

I trusted him and convinced myself I was just being dramatic, so off we went to go explore. With high hopes and high attitudes, we found a trail and decided to follow it. We were both silent for the first couple of minutes, but it wasn't an awkward silence, we were both just taking it all in — the narrow trees towering over us and all the different colors that the end of summer entails like deep green, white, purple wildflowers and weeds, and a soft blue sky as well as the faint sound of little creatures rustling through bushes when we got too close to them, birds chirping, and a subtle

breeze blowing through the trees. The sounds I heard were louder and more distinct than usual, the colors were more vibrant than normal, and I even saw the plants and trees vibrating in an upward motion as if they were growing, slowly but surely. The light breeze blew in my hair. I felt alive. I finally understood why it is that people chose to take LSD while they're exploring in the wilderness — it gives you a different type of appreciation for the outdoors and enhances all the different kinds of colors and sounds that nature entails. You recognize how many life forms are right in front of you that you can't even see, and for a moment, you feel connected to them. Within minutes we stumbled upon a beautiful meadow when Luca said,

“Let's take a break right here.”

We sat on a huge boulder overlooking the limitless beauty of nature before our eyes. He played our adventure playlist once more and we sat there, his arm around me, content. We talked about how we were positive we were the first people to ever sit on that boulder and walk through that part of the forest because it was all too beautiful and pure to had ever been touched by man.

“Look at the trees really closely; do you see that?”

I looked and instantly knew what he was talking about. The leaves on the trees were subtly changing from green to burnt orange. I smiled in awe. A strange feeling of nostalgia came over me; I knew I was going to miss this moment one day; I somehow already longed to relive it. We continued on our hike and came across a sign that said, “You are entering grizzly bear territory. Proceed with caution.” Normally, I wouldn't have thought twice about it, but since I wasn't exactly thinking clearly at the time, I was startled.

“Maybe we should turn around, there's probably a ton of bears out here and we don't have bear spray or anything,” I anxiously suggested.

“There are bears everywhere we've hiked before, don't let it stress you out. Look where we are, it's beautiful, just try to relax and enjoy it.”

Once again, he was right. I always let things stress me out to the point where I stop enjoying and living in the moment, and I always regret

it looking back. We then decided to leave the trail and hike up higher in a different direction because we had yet to see the lake we had always called home. We found the edge of a cliff and took another break, not because we were tired, but because of the striking view. Below us was a huge valley of trees and in front of us the sun was setting. I could see the sky simultaneously changing in different areas from dark orange to light pink, from violet to bright yellow, at a snail's pace. I felt like I could feel the colors changing. A doe and her fawn came out of the trees and continued on their journey about ten feet in front of us. Of course, we'd both seen trees, sunsets, and deer before, and maybe it was the LSD and maybe it wasn't. Regardless, the scenery was one we have never experienced before. It was surreal. Once the moon began to rise, we decided we should go back, make dinner, and watch the rest of the sunset from our cozy cabin.

When we arrived back to our humble abode for the day and night, the once white cloud of smoke from the mountain in front of us had turned into several overwhelming clouds of smoke on three different mountains surrounding us. As the setting sky got darker, so did the clouds of smoke while the flames creating them scorched brighter than the moon. We grabbed the binoculars and what we saw did not make me feel any better, for lack of better words. We saw individual trees exploding into flames and the red and orange color taking over more and more trees by the second. I looked at Luca. I must've had fear in my eyes and shock in my expression because he said,

“Ivy, I promise we're safe. We're at a fire lookout, looking at fires is what this place is for.”

So, we went inside and made dinner, popped open two more Coronas, grabbed lawn chairs, and went outside to find the perfect place to watch the rest of the sunset. It was the most spectacular sight I have ever seen; the faint smoke in the sky. All the while the LSD intensified

the changing colors in the sky once more and the smoke covered the sun, transforming it into a blanket of comfort. I felt okay again.

“I don’t feel it that much anymore... should we take another tab?”

Luca asked. I was hesitant but I wasn’t feeling it that much anymore either.

“I’m down.”

Luca ran up to the house and brought back two tabs and two more Corona and limes.

“You read my mind,” I said.

At this point, the sun had completely set, and we were really feeling it this time.

“Let’s go back up to the cabin,” Luca said.

He could tell I was starting to get nervous that it was getting dark. By the time we got back to the lookout, it was completely dark, and the wind had sped up so much that it could have blown me over if it desired. The fire had spread even more, and the vicious flames across the valley resembled my personal hell.

I’ve heard stories of people having all different kinds of bad trips, ranging from seeing disturbing visuals of monster-like figures to being paranoid that people were trying to break into their homes to kill them. But no one had ever prepared me for what it’s like to feel like you were going to die from a real-life catastrophe — not one that you make up in your mind, one that is right in front of you... and real. Luca grabbed the binoculars and said,

“That’s so cool,” as he watched the flames light up the night sky.

I felt sick to my stomach.

“That looks like it’s a mile away... and the wind is traveling so fast I feel like it wouldn’t take that long for it to reach us,” I said. Although, looking back, it was most definitely not a mile away.

“What can I do to assure you we’re safe?”

I stood there silent. He got out his phone and started dialing a number.

“Who are you calling?”

“My mom.”

Luca’s mom works with the Forest Service and was the one who got us the reservation to go up there in the first place.

“Hi mom, um, there’s like a pretty big fire straight in front of us and Ivy is kind of freaking out, so I just wanted you to reassure her we’re safe.” He put her on speakerphone.

“I wouldn’t have let you guys go up there if you were in any danger. People are monitoring that fire 24/7 and they would come to evacuate you if they needed to before the fire even got close to you, and I would never put you in harm’s way.”

“True, she’s right,” I said, even though she was oblivious to the fact that we were on LSD, and what we were seeing was far more frightening than it probably would’ve been if we weren’t tripping, but obviously we couldn’t tell her that.

I tried my best not to look at the fire but considering there were no blinds on the windows, I failed. The second I looked up a knot formed in my stomach again. I had never felt fear like that before in my life, and I tried to think rationally, but couldn’t.

“Do you think I’d be this scared if I was sober?” I asked.

“I’m not sure... probably not,” he grabbed me and sat on the bed. “Ivy, I promise you we’re going to be okay. My mom said so herself. Don’t let yourself have a bad trip. We’re probably never going to see a wildfire in front of our eyes like this again, it’s pretty cool if you think about it.”

“Or fucked up,” I sarcastically replied, thinking about all the animals that were fleeing for their lives.

I laid on the bed, completely devoured by what I was seeing, and Luca laid next to me. Then, an odd thought came to my mind about the song

“I See Fire” and how it fit the situation perfectly, so I played it to see what it would feel like listening to it as we were both captivated by the fire before us.

Before you continue reading, I urge you to listen to the song “I See Fire” by Ed Sheeran whether you’ve heard it before or not. Imagine you and someone you love sitting side by side in silence for the entire five minutes of the song, taking in every lyric, while being hypnotized by a ginormous wildfire directly in front of you. And on top of that, you’re tripping.

When the song ended, Luca and I simultaneously looked at each other and said, “Holy shit.”

“Well, that honestly kind of freaked me out.” Luca laughingly said.

Even though Luca was somewhat joking, the chance that he was even somewhat scared frightened me because Luca never gets scared, and when he does, he never admits it.

“Are those cars?” Luca asked me.

We were so high up that you could see the entire road leading up the mountain to the lookout. I saw it too. There were multiple headlights headed our way and we were two hours from the nearest town.

“Dude, are those cop lights?” I nervously asked.

“Holy shit.” Luca replied, “I think they are.”

I could hear the panic in his voice.

“Do you think they’re coming to evacuate us?”

“Maybe,” he reluctantly replied.

The lights disappeared into thin air. We had no idea if they were real or just the LSD, but we both saw them. I sat on the bed and tried to hide how scared I was and calm myself down even though the world around me was on fire.

“Let’s just go. We’re both scared and it’s ruining our night,” Luca said.

I felt relief for the first time the whole night. “Are you sure?”

“Yes. Let’s go.”

We quickly packed our bags and bed into the car. I felt anxious and panicked, and Luca didn't say a word, so I know he was more scared than he was showing. When we anxiously said goodbye to our little home, we both felt a wave of sadness and regret come over us — I thought of one of my favorite quotes, “You get a strange feeling when you're about to leave a place. You'll not only miss the people you love but you'll miss the person you are now at this time and place because you'll never be this way ever again,” which describes how I felt better than I ever could. Summer was coming to an end, and Luca and I were both about to go our separate ways for school. This trip was our last ‘hoorah’. The feeling diminished once I looked back at the fire.

“Let's get in the car,” I said, not even taking into consideration how dangerous it was that Luca was about to be driving three hours while on two and a half tabs of LSD.

It was time to get serious. For the first hour of the drive, the road was barely a road at all — huge boulders were covering almost every inch of it and it was barely wide enough to fit his car on, to begin with. Out of disappointment from leaving, neither of us said a word for the first ten minutes but for the first time in a couple of hours, I felt safe. However, I couldn't shake the feeling that we should have stayed. Within minutes it all seemed to turn red; it was as if our only route down would be our last. Luca finally broke the silence and said,

“Is it just me or does it look like we're driving directly into the fire...”

“Yeah, that's what I thought too.” He heard the terror in my voice.

I thought about which direction the fire had spread when I was looking at it, and it traveled far to the left. Which is exactly where we were.

“Maybe we should turn around.” I was done hiding how terrified I was.

“The road's too narrow, we can't.”

The further we drove, the more our instincts were screaming at us to stop. The deep red reflected off the trees would've enraged a thousand bulls. I closed my eyes and started taking deep breaths.

"Are you okay?"

"No, I'm so scared right now."

"Me too Ivy. It's going to be okay I promise, we just have to get down this mountain."

I didn't think our situation could get any worse. Little did I know, our tire was slowly forming a hole, releasing all of its air. All of a sudden, our entire car was leaning forward on its right side; we heard the rims screeching against the road and hitting rocks making an overwhelming banging sound every time we blinked.

"Shit!" Luca yelled in a panic as he lost control of the steering wheel.

The breaks were making what sounded like a high-pitched grinding noise for the entire two minutes that we were uncontrollably sliding down the mountain. After we finally managed to come to a complete stop, Luca and I just sat there, hyperventilating.

"What the hell was that?" I asked.

Luca didn't respond and jumped out of the car to check out what just happened. I couldn't move. I was paralyzed. I thought for sure this would be the end for the two of us. I grabbed my phone and dialed 911, but there was no service, so I held the phone in my hand and planned to press call as soon as I had service. When Luca got back in the car to tell me our tire had popped and that he was going to get the spare to swap it out, he saw the phone in my hand.

"What are you doing? Ive, we'll figure this out together, just breathe for me."

He shut the door and got the tools and spare tire out of the trunk while I sat in the passenger seat contemplating how we were going to get out

of this alive. I heard Luca struggling outside and cursing to himself, so I took a deep breath and got out of the car to see if I could help in any way. Neither of us had any experience changing a tire and we didn't have internet to look up how to do it. But Luca was smart. I knew he could figure it out if he was sober, but unfortunately, that was not the case. As I shined my flashlight for Luca while he was frantically rummaging through the tools trying to figure out what is used for what, I couldn't help but think about the fire on our tail. We could barely breathe from the smoke and I have never seen Luca more stressed and upset in my life. I know he was trying his hardest to hide how scared he was for my sake and make me believe everything was going to be okay the entire day and night. So, it was my turn. I took the toolbox out of his hands, put it on the ground, and hugged him tightly.

“We'll figure it out babe, I promise,” I told him, “I love you.”

“I love you too, Ivy. Thank you.”

We got back to it and finally figured out how to unehinge the flat tire. I went to the other side of the car where Luca couldn't see me and began to cry. The trees lit up in flames crept closer and closer; I felt like I could feel the heat from the fire and I couldn't stop coughing — I don't know if I couldn't breathe from the smoke filling my lungs or the fact that I was having what felt like a panic attack, but I wasn't sure because I had never had one before. I thought about my mom, and how she would somehow blame the death of me on herself because she “let me go up there”. I thought about my dad, sisters, and best friends, and how I would never be able to say goodbye. I sat down against the car and began to pray for the first time in my life before Luca popped up and said,

“I got it the spare on! Let's get out of here.”

When we started to drive again, all the warning lights came on and the car began to aggressively wobble.

“I don't think the tire is on right,” Luca said, “But I think it'll work until we get home. I'll just drive with my hazards on.”

“Well if we see a cop they’re going to pull over and see if we need help,” I replied.

“We won’t see one,” he said confidently, but I knew he only said that to make me feel better.

Luca grabbed my hand and held it the entire way, too focused to say a word. After the tense, bumpy ride we finally made it down near the highway. We pulled off, got out, and sat on the roof of the car looking at the stars that led us to safety. Finally, able to catch my breath, I said,

“I’m sorry I made us leave. I wanted to stay; I was just really scared.”

“Ivy it’s okay, it’s not your fault. You didn’t make us leave; I was scared too. We did what we thought was the right thing to do,” he replied. He held me in his arms for a minute longer and said, “I’m just glad we’re okay.”

We continued with the drive and laughed while both agreeing that it felt like we were in a spaceship and every car that passed by looked like a meteor.

We finally made it to my house and Luca parked the car; we just sat there for a minute.

“That was the craziest experience of my life.”

Luca laughed, “Yeah, me too honestly.”

We went inside, got in bed, and held each other the tightest we ever had. By this time, we were almost sober from all the troubles we encountered, or at least that’s what we thought.

“We made it,” I joked.

“I don’t think anything else could’ve gone wrong,” Luca said with a smile of relief.

I laughed and replied, “For real. How are we going to explain that to our friends? They’re going to think we’re crazy! I mean, like, was the forest surrounding the road even on fire? Was the fire even that insane? Or were we just trippin’?”

“Honestly, I have no idea,” Luca said chuckling. “Regardless, I couldn’t have got through any of that without you, little buddy.”

I smiled and kissed his cheek. “We make a pretty good team, huh.”

“Yeah,” Luca said, “We do, don’t we.”

After Luca kissed me goodnight he immediately passed out, but I knew it was the beginning of a sleepless night for me. I stared at the ceiling and the patterns from the paint made out hundreds of mountains on fire, *I guess I am still tripping*, I thought to myself. I kept replaying the entire day and night over and over again in my head — the scenery, the dancing, the singing and laughing, the feeling of being on top of the world with the one I love, the magnificent view of the flames on the mountainside. I smiled to myself because I knew it was a memory that I would always treasure in my heart even if it was the most terrified I had ever been, and there’s no one else in the world I would rather have spent that experience with than with him.

When we woke up the next morning, we made a pact to live every day for the rest of the summer like it was our last, considering we had what we thought was a “near-death experience.” For the last week that we had together, we did everything that we had been wanting to do all summer. Most importantly, we loved harder and we laughed louder — we both knew that experience together had an impact on us that would always remember.

**Grace Kohlman**

*All I want to do is make good art. I have a love for illustration, character design, concept work, animation, and storytelling, and aim to one day write, illustrate, and publish my own comics. Also, I aim to one day own a sword. No real reason for that, I just think they're neat.*

School Doodle Core



## Saharah Chalupny

*My name is Sabarah Chalupny, I'm a senior graduating this semester of Spring 2021 with a degree in English with a creative writing emphasis and Child & Youth Development. I've been writing things since I was about ten years old, harboring many different ideas and characters in my head with a goal of publishing a full-length novel one day. It also wasn't until recently that I fell in love with writing poetry, and hope that the things I've felt in my life transferred onto paper can resonate with others. After I graduate, I'm moving to Oregon to spend some time writing and will hopefully be able to attend graduate school and gain qualifications to teach writing at a college level.*

Pink

When you get so high you can't see straight  
 It's the color of your eyes;  
 Your cheeks after screaming and crying;  
 The skin under your nails after scratching it off;  
 A post-it note left on the fridge  
 'be back soon' and they aren't;  
 Your first nail polish from the dollar store  
 That went well with your senior prom dress  
 Left lying on the floor;  
 What the shower water runs;  
 Your first drink that tasted like strawberries  
 But didn't taste the same the second time;  
 Scars left to heal under your jeans and  
 The frosting on top of your fifteenth birthday cake  
 With candles that wouldn't go out.

00:00

I found another cut on my finger

I found expired hand sanitizer in my car

I found a lone puzzle piece under my coffee table

I found a moment to breathe in through my nose

I found a moment to breathe out through my mouth

I found out I'm allergic to something in the mornings

I found the smell of baking soda and vinegar down my bathroom sink

I found new bruises on my hips

I found myself cutting my nails shorter

I found old scars

I found new words

I found time slipping away, until the sun sets at four o'clock and the same  
document is open, the same song is playing over and over again like  
a broken radio and I think about how the best indicator of time is  
my microwave, stuck on 00:00 forever because it might be too fast or  
too slow so why set it at all?

I found another cut on my finger and a receipt for Band-Aids

French Toast

The morning of my sixth birthday  
Mama made me a piece  
With a single candle  
Flickering over the island of  
A kitchen I don't remember living in.  
Up the mountain, on cold Saturday  
Mornings, I'd ask mom again to  
Make me some, and I could get  
Away with it until her beer was empty  
Or she needed another smoke.  
"Watch me," she said, "so you  
Can do it yourself one day."

I wish I'd known,  
Living in that ghost town  
Stepping on eggshells and cutting  
The mold off of the bread loaf,  
That it'd never taste the same.

*Alexis Eborn*

Folk Tale

He told me there were giants under the mountains.  
 He told me you could see them in the ridges and the hills.  
 He traced them for me with calloused hands.  
 I did not believe him then.

Now I have counted their wildflower hairs  
 Of snowdrops, foxgloves, milkmaids.  
 I have stood in their earthy palms  
 Felt their cool breath through my hair

Now I have felt the rumblings of their dreams  
 And sat in their scraggly laps  
 I have explored the creases within their brows  
 As they lie beneath the hill

He told me there were giants under the mountains.  
 I did not believe him then.  
 Now I stand upon the shoulders of slumbering goliaths.  
 I watch the world pass from their rugged height,  
  
 And pray they do not shift.

## Theo Hadley

*Theo is an English major with an emphasis in Creative Writing. He is a self-proclaimed 'old-soul' from the south-eastern coast. Theo says that he does his best writing surrounded by the sound of acoustic guitar and the smell of campfire smoke. He aspires to some day write something worthy of a Pulitzer*

*Prize. Until then he will be working away in a cable knit sweater and searching for those words. Theo finds joy in star filled night skies and just about any bottle of whiskey. Theo would like to remind his readers that all tastes are acquired and that his writing is just the same, not meant to please the masses but simply meant to please an important few.*

## Typewriter Tactics

We've started to search for safety in  
perfect paragraph palaces.

Beyond the crimson cemetery of  
demolished doppelganger drafts.

Travelers tell tall tales.  
Painting on thick the  
indecent implied images  
of continental corners  
where the women pay in  
lost love,  
and the men pay in  
pretty penny promises.

Forgetting how it feels to  
hold the hard-calloused hands  
of the pleading mothers praying in  
calligraphy constructed cathedrals.

We'd wish them well.

## C. Illarai

*Illarai lives in the Pacific Northwest despite harboring a specific distaste for cold weather. Her work has been featured in Trestle Creek Review and displayed in Apostrophe Art Collective's spring 2021 Spokane exhibit. She has been accepted into the 2021 summer Denver Publishing Institute and has big plans and high hopes. A lover of hot tea, unbridled snark, and Asian food, her hobbies include knitting, chasing her toddler around the house, and taste-testing every loaf of bread her husband bakes.*

*Read more of her work at [illarai.weebly.com](http://illarai.weebly.com)*

Fish Heart

It's the size of a thimble between my fingers  
Charon's currency pays for the lesson,  
Leaving questions unanswered  
Afraid to drop it, to send ripples  
Rain washes the blood back  
down concrete drains  
to the sea

Fish



Fugacious

fu·ga·cious; /fyü-'gā-shəs/ adjective

Fugacious is often used to describe immaterial things like emotions, but not always. Botanists, for example, use it to describe plant parts that wither or fall off before the usual time. Things that are fugacious are fleeting, and etymologically they can also be said to be fleeing. Fugacious derives from the Latin verb *fugere*, which means “to flee.” Other descendants of “*fugere*” include “fugitive,” “refuge,” and “subterfuge.”

Worn floorboards creaked gently as though a silent wind slid along their faded surface. It was a pale figure who rustled the air, gliding listlessly across the massive room. There had once been grand parties held here with echoing songs and laughter that filled the halls of the house. A sigh escaped her lips at the memory. She'd been dead for two-hundred-and-three years already and the last of her great-great-grandchildren had finally abandoned the family home in favor of more modern housing. The trouble simply hadn't been worth it. Not that she blamed them. Even when she had been alive, the upkeep had been exhausting and expensive with costs rising every year. And that was before their troubles had really begun. She couldn't leave of course, but she could appreciate the amount of work her family had devoted to their home over the years. The manor had been built by her grandfather, reaching completion sometime in 1804.

No. Wait. Was that right? The years had become difficult to track without the constant changes of life. The old clock sat beside a large window, almost unrecognizable beneath its heavy layer of dust. She looked at the gleaming clock face as though it would answer her. Life seemed so much more complicated when she had been alive. Living with her grandchildren's

children showed her the power technology and medical advances had to change a person's life. One had been a novelist who visited the manor to escape these technological advances even as she wrote using one with a glowing screen. She watched, mesmerized, calmed by the quiet clicking of the plastic keys, so different from the hammering clack of the typewriter.

She looked again at the clock. Reaching toward it, her touch disturbed the years of quiet neglect as she remembered how she used to hide from her cousins behind its polished sides. Those had been long, golden summers full of dramatic enactments she could no longer remember precisely. That was when her mother's sickness had brought family to come stay.

Turning away from the memory, she drifted through the peeling French doors and into the cool dark. A short path led her to the spectacular rose garden which had once belonged to her mother. Its stewardship had then passed to her, and to her daughter after that. When she had been alive, she and her daughter, Olivia, would take their tea together in the garden at this very table; now a lump of crumbling rust. Olivia had adored the flowers and been eager to learn everything she could about them. These were floribundas, planted by her daughter after her great grandmother. She remembered sleeping there on the eroded stone beneath the blooms in the wake of Olivia's death. She would let their silky colors keep her grief in a space of comfortable denial. Beside this spot were the *Rosas albas* Olivia's aunt had planted in memory of her cousin, and the *centifolias* by her grandmother's hand commemorating a death no one but the flowers now remembered. Without needing to see them she knew that the Bourbon roses she'd planted herself still grew, shrouded in layers of dusky petals near the cracked fountain.

As the garden grew, so too did the traditions of her family until new additions became customary to mark the passing of each loved one. She wondered whether the new hospital had yet seen as many deaths. The

brambles were thick and dark now; pale, sunset-colored blooms imprisoned inside, doomed to glimpse the outside world through a prickled frame.

Beyond the wall were the vast fields where her grandnephew used to grow plums. Dew shook loose from blades of grass and dandelion seeds scattered at her gossamer passage. The lights of the city polluted the air just over the rise of the next hill.

Now her family was gone, and the manor would soon have new owners. She tried not to despair, keeping an optimistic curiosity of what their plans for the house might be. Did they know about the family's history? Their bad luck? She didn't know what she would do if they came to dig up her roses. Grass near her feet blackened at the thought, dewdrops steaming away into mist. No, it wouldn't come to that. And if it did. Well. It would be easy enough to guide them upstairs. That snarling hall would ensure the safety of her roses. Her Olivia.

Still, she turned to look back on the house from the hill, sighing wistfully. It would be lovely to see the old thing restored to her former glory. There could once again be music, dancing, and laughter. Her family could be remembered as the builders of such a marvelous structure and celebrated finally as they deserve for all their hardship. The fantasy warmed her even as she recalled their losses. They would remember her. They would they love the old manor as much as she had and more. These ones would survive.

End.

Hematology

internal bleeding  
slowly seeping  
saturating  
soaking through  
struck in the lull  
of trust

stay vigilant  
blissful in ignorance  
blind and dumb  
bars to look through  
never again

the shape of cells  
made up by words

everything inside is blood  
wrapped in veins  
warped, hot, and sticky  
wry in a cool skin

## Abigail Johnston

*Abigail Johnston is a senior at the University of Idaho double majoring in English Literature and English Education. She loves all things writing and English and hopes to be published in the book industry someday. After a year-long study abroad experience in London this last year—which inspired the piece, ‘London in November’, featured in this year’s issue of Vandalism—she hopes to work in a field that allows ample time for travel and international experiences. Besides an obsession with coffee and a good book, she loves health and fitness, and traveling has become a huge part of her life the last few years.*

## London in November

In London, the bustling, rainy, historic center of England, the celebration of Guy Fawkes is held in the first week of November each year. Revelers from all over England crowd the city streets for Bonfire Night. Hotels are booked, hostels filled, the narrow streets packed with taxis and buses running late into the night—later than normal. The pavement is crammed with pedestrians walking to and from with hot cups of drink clasped in their hands, a sea of wool peacoats and tightly wrapped scarves (locals) inhabit the same space as baseball caps and sweatshirts (the beloved tourists). Street performers, energetic, instruments braced on their shoulders, decks of cards in their hands, play, and beckon to the crowds on the bridge with cases open at their feet asking for pocket change. All-day and night Tower Bridge is lit from underneath with its two spires startlingly bright, sitting in wait for the scores of fireworks to be set off around the city, the explosions of color lighting up the dark London skyline.

We get off the Underground at dusk. The platform in Central is thick with people disembarking the District Line. The sounds of exhaust lines and strangers chattering amongst themselves fill the platform, background noise brought into focus. Music is pounding around us as we ride up the escalator to ground level, the crowds gliding upwards, single file, always keeping to the right. The crowds I had been in previously were nothing compared to this. Fireworks explode over our heads as we exit the station, on ground level at last, as green sparks drip from the sky, on what's become a rare clear night in London. Revelers jumping and clapping at the display jostle us as we try to get our footing, blinking at the onslaught of blaring horns and headlights and people.

We had gone and booked two tickets weeks ahead for this event, yet reservations were overbooked. They tell us it is now first come

first serve to the viewing area at Tower Bridge by informing us we could view the fireworks from several blocks back, near the station entrance where a Waterstones bookstore awning all but blocks the bridge skyline. A verbal snafu occurs with the area attendant, who looks down at us with an important air about him as if he weren't working a job that paid a mere eight quid an hour. He says it is the most crowded event of the year in this part of central and that by selling tickets they could curtail the crowds. He could upgrade our tickets for another ten quid apiece and we could have a riverfront seat for the show. We say we'd rather watch it on the television, and the attendant says suit yourselves.

We say we prefer it to being around the likes of ticket scammers, all very politely of course. And the attendant pauses, we wait patiently; scarves tucked into the collars of our jackets. Nicole leans on the edge of the ticket counter, looking at me with a smirk on her cherry-colored lips, a stark contrast to the blond hair surrounding her face.

"I can let the both of you in. A block up on South Bank," said the attendant.

"How much extra?"

"Two quid."

We are led down the winding, busy streets by another attendant, younger than the first and much more sociable. It was several blocks away, filled with onlookers, and twice the size of the viewing area at Tower Bridge. The area is scattered with benches, trees to lean on, several of which were not taken. The section had a fantastic view of the other side of the bridge, a view of the water. We are pleased with the turn of things.

Leaning on one of the trees, we watch sporadic bouts of fireworks go off over the city, far enough that only small pinpricks of gold are visible to the naked eye.

"Let's get some mulled wine," said Nicole.

“Do you think we have the time before they light up?” I ask, glancing at the now dark, clear sky over the Thames, skeptical. A large pile of wood sits several paces away down near the river, uniformed patrons standing around it.

“That wine is so good,” the Brit said, “I’ve got to try some.”

The bartender over at the stand ladles us two large paper cups full of steaming mulled wine, the aroma of cinnamon, pungent grapes and oranges touch our noses. People are still flowing into the roped-off viewing section, the small pods of people now morphed into a crowd. We follow the throng closer to the banks of the river. Several layers of people stand between us and the soon-to-be bonfire.

It was a pit of sand really, placed on top of the cobblestone walkway by the river, circled with large stones. It makes a pit about twenty feet across, with large logs and pieces of wood propped up and braced against each other.

“Did you see that spark?” the man standing next to us says to a woman beside him. A second later, the space between the logs is lit, sparks of orange licking the rolled-up balls of newsprint stuffed down at the center. And then there was a bonfire before our eyes, the flames flicking pell-mell up into the air, reflected on the calm water of the Thames.

“Where are the other fires?” asks the Brit, paper cup held close to her rouge lips, blonde hair flicking in the breeze off the river. Then it appears. Seven bonfires flickering into view, one at a time, vast, orange, flickering mockingly, massive in height, the flames blasting free, into the black night. And drifting off to the side are embers floating to the ground.

Everyone watches as the fires flicker to life up and down the riverbank, the flames dancing in the light breeze.

Each year on the fifth of November, fires lit at dusk are built in their respective locations throughout the city, for the evening festivities.

Those who gather to see the fire flicker to life do it in remembrance each year of the historic Guy Fawkes and his motley crew's attempt to blow up the House of Parliament. The fireworks were going off in full when we finally make it back towards the tree we staked out as our own. The night was cool and crisp, with the warm feeling of mulled wine in our stomachs. Across the river we can see the crowds getting riled, ready for the final act. Small figures on the bridge, where traffic had been stopped for the event, looked above their heads as scores of fireworks explode into the London sky.

Green, red, yellow, indigo, and gold coat the starless heavens in bursts, tendrils of gold flicking down towards the water, out over the buildings as a raft on the river unleashes a storm of fiery color up to the sky.

"I wonder what it was like back then," I ask, "in England when they tried to blow everything up."

"Chaotic," said the Brit, sipping her wine with a shrug, eyes on the sky.

"Remember, remember the fifth of November," I said with a smirk. Symbolically, England burns in remembrance.

That was eight months ago. It seems like a different world now, back in America. Far away from the cobblestone streets of London, with strange celebrations and people who race to and from with headphones trying to catch their stop on the Underground. The cheeky wit of British, even all the rain, the sprawling city with all its gloomth—it sneaks up on you, and one day you realize you miss it. It's only a plane ride away, I remind myself, and there are always ways to make things work. A hostel to stay at, a way to make the most of what you have on hand, there is always a way to see what a strange city has to offer.

**Jack Kindall**

Remembrances of Home I Used to Have

1. Ice

When the world turns white and the North wind screams through the tamarack stands, making them rattle and creak like rusty cellar doors, the lake goes to bed and tucks itself in with a thick quilt of deep black ice. Ice that cracks like slate and sings whale songs in the pale, clear, crystalizing moonlight.

Cold silver shimmerings glide in packs through the darkness beneath. They are trout on the hunt. And hunting them, apart from us, are mackinaw. Great green-eyed torpedos. Oozing orange oil into oblivion. Antifreeze. Drill a window into their world and you will see. Let your eyes adjust to the darkness. Drop some boiled yellow corn for bait, to illuminate the underworld and wait. Here they come. Small ones first. The backs of trout are eerie blue in the watery gloaming. A school of five, six, seven fish go by. A minute, two minutes. The green-backed behemoth, a veritable submarine, comes into view. One cannot see all of him at once. First the eyes like side scuttles, pale blue port holes. Then the back. A trunk of jade, scarred white in slashes. It tapers to a film. A membrane at the caudal swishing back and forth. He stalks by silently. Oil bubbles up behind him in a cloud and rims the hole a sickly orange. Half an hour. An hour. Here they come again. Now it's four, five, six. The oil bubbles up.

Drop a hook amongst the corn. A silver spoon. Swedish pimple. Jig. Jig. Jig. Jig. Let it flash and dance in the dark. Send chill tremors down their scaly sides. Let their hearts beat a little faster. Get their thick blood moving with the promise of prey. And when they strike. A stiff *jolt* down. Terry just a moment. The jaws are slow. The cheek is hard. You must be sure there's no escape. *Nom!* Set the hook. Sink the barb. And pull with gusto! The fight is on. Shiver. Shake. Shimmer in the deep. Shoot out of sight. Spiral back in. Drawn

by the lip. Don't let it rip. Electric convulsions of aquamarine. And red. Now at the hole. Slip not, my silver barb! Onto the ice. Frozen flurry. Flopping in thin air. *Thud*. The club tolls. Twitch. It's over. Now eyes glass and muscle starts to freeze.

December brings a crimson flesh to Rainbows. Slit them first along the spine. Keep to either side, the dorsal flange. Just the skin. Now press deeper. Sliding down when blade meets bone. *Tuk-tuk-tuk-tuk-tuk*. Zipper past each vertebrae. Now flex the blade outward. Stay tight close to the ribs. Clean strokes. Like cutting fine silk fabric. *Snicker-snack*. To the belly. Snip thin white skin. Trim fins. Flip him over. Do it again. *Slit. Tuk-tuk-tuk-tuk-tuk. Snicker-snack. Snip*. The skeleton, disrobed, returns unto the deep. The tender loins carefully, gingerly removed, we keep.

## 2. Fire

A house in winter has little heart without a hearth. Rise early. Creep through frost-laden air to the big iron stove in stocking feet. Stack small sticks and light a crumpled ball of last week's news. Exhale life into the embers. *Fwoom*. Huddle in the glow.

Hardwoods, oak and maple, burn hot and slow. Not much flame to show and a minimum of crackle. But they're hard. To split and otherwise. A maul will beat your hands to bloody pulp on a stump of wet oak. Red fir's good. Not quite as hot, and doesn't last as long. It too is knotted thoroughly, though splittable. The best, I think, is tamarack. Western larch. Most preferable of trees. They grow in stands. Tall and straight. Each branch consolidated to the top-most stretch of trunk as though some great bird had built its nest atop a pole. And when they die and dry, they crack. Lengthwise. A magnificent check. A testament to the beautiful straightness of the grain.

I'll take my great grandfather's saw. A cold steel cross-cut from the east. With small pyramidal teeth and flush rakers like lolling steel tongues. Made for taking little bites from tough hardwoods. Up the hill. Into the snowy pines

to gnaw down one such tamarack. The saw was last sharpened in nineteen-twenty-eight. No matter. I find a good straight trunk. Checked and branchless. Dead. Eight inches thick and forty feet tall. Sight it in before you cut. Pace out an estimation. Is there enough room for this thing to fall? I hope so.

Set the teeth and watch as gold dust piles up. The blade bites and spits, bites and spits. Chewing all the while. The notch is cut, falls out, is cast aside. Now start the felling strokes. The teeth keep chewing. Cautious. Apprehensive. Waiting for gravity to take over. *Pop*. Stop sawing. Silence. Another pass with the blade. *Pop. Pop*. Here it comes. Grab the saw. Get away. *Pop. Crack. Tüimber!!* It topples like a church steeple. Whooshing to the ground. *Fwoom!* The fall is broken by an inch of wet snow.

I cut the branchless trunk in five foot lengths. Manageable logs to be carried down the hill to my home among the snowy pines. Buck the logs into rounds. Split. Effortless. They spring apart like shattered magnets. Inwardly repellent. Not a knot to be found nestled in the butter-yellow xylem. Stack. Stock the hearth. Feed the fire.

It burns hot. Fast. Enthusiastically. Like wood that wants to burn. Pitch pockets pop. Crackle like fireworks. Rattle the glass and resonate in the stove pipe. Tangerine tongues lick the corners of the catalytic converter. Hungry for another log. Hardwoods leave a dense black ash, but tamarack burns clean. There are no charred coals left next morning. Just a skiff of soft white ash. Like freshly fallen snow that melts to nothingness between your fingers.

On this bed of fallen flakes, I lay a crumpled bit of last week's news. Stack small sticks like Lincoln logs. Kindling. Crisp in the cold. Soaked in creosote. Arrange them like a cabin nestled among drifts of snow. The paper at the heart. Then take two larger strips of pine and place them carefully to flank the house. Now get a long, green-headed match. One swift stroke against the box to coax a flame. Touch it quickly to the headline: *California Man Accused of Arson*. Exhale life into the orange embers. One. Two. Three breaths. *Fwoom*.

## Gladys Lemesurier

*My name is Gladys Lemesurier and I'm from sunny Southern California. As a child, I was constantly surrounded by animals, gardens, and piles of books. I'm an English Literature major with a love for Victorian and Edwardian era books. I like to spend my free time pressing flowers, trying new baking recipes, or gardening and taking care of my many houseplants. My favorite genres to write are poetry, fantasy, sci-fi, and magical realism. It's my dream to one day be a published novelist living in a little forest cottage filled with books and sunshine.*

Mother

I wonder often if anyone really  
remembers their childhood.

I see my own as an over-saturated  
movie reel playing too fast,  
skipping and repeating.

Climbing the oak trees.

Picking strawberries.

Planting radishes and zucchini and tomatoes  
fingernails caked with dirt and fertilizer  
pushing tiny seeds into soft Earth.

My favorite sun-streaked memory  
is of the Tangelo tree towering over the garden  
arms extended outward, dark waxy leaves  
shielding delicate new plants from harsh California sun.  
For hours I would sit in the lap of  
that gentle giant and listen to the  
melody of the wind whistling through the branches  
until the starry sky and my mother's voice  
dragged me back inside  
to wash off the traces of soil I wasn't ready to let go of.

When people want to start a stable life with the little house  
and the picket fence and the kids and the dogs  
they say they are "putting down roots" and I think that's  
because we long to be like the trees  
taking only what we need from the Earth and being able to stand

strong and steady enough to shield those weaker than us.

I can't imagine being like a tree.

Not because I didn't love that gentle giant.

I did.

I do.

But these giants can only put down roots once

and then suddenly they're too big to

leave or move or grow.

Uprooting so much tangled growth

equivalent to severing its life.

Children don't understand we can't always bring things with us

when we move on.

Leaving her behind in that jungle garden

felt like someone had ripped out

my own old-growth roots.

But, I also love the world.

So hopefully,

she understands-

that little girl will always be

curled up in her lap,

eating sweet orange fruit,

windchime laugh harmonizing with the wind-

but humans can't put down roots.

Seven A.M.

My mother breaks the porcelain swan that lived at the end of the hall.

My mother throws Spanish curses at the wall and cuts her foot as she walks away.

My mother tosses all the pieces unceremoniously into a plastic WinCo bag.

My mother either won't or can't bring herself to try fixing it instead.

My mother clangs pots and pans instead and tries to wake the dead.

My mother reorganizes the living room furniture for the third time this week.

My mother doesn't notice my sister pulling a bag from the trash.

My mother is loudly unaware of the pieces being glued back together.

My mother can only comment on how the swam is full of little holes now.

My mother has no apologies or "Thank you's" to offer.

My mother still dances through the house without rhyme or reason.

My mother still lives her life without regard for the fragile objects.

My mother still comments on the cracks in the porcelain swan.

## Megan Lolley

*Megan Lolley is a second-year undergraduate student at the University of Idaho studying Secondary Education and English with minors in Spanish, Creative Writing, and Professional Writing. Though she experiments with different types of prose, most of her writing falls into the genre of poetry. Her work has been featured in The Looking Glass, The Owen Wister Review, and the 2019 America Library of Poetry Student Poetry Collection, Illustrious. Other works of hers are to be featured in Loomings and The Albion Review.*

*After completing her undergraduate degrees, Megan plans to apply for a graduate program in English or Secondary Education. Her career goals are to become a high school English teacher and eventually a university professor. You can find Megan outside reading when the weather is relatively nice. She is a soft cheese enthusiast, and she might bother you to have a picnic with her.*

Autumn is a boy [with gold in his pocket].

Autumn is a boy who lives down the street—  
and the air around him is always sugar-sweet.  
A child who whispers to the swirling leaves,  
with mysteries more than one can conceive:  
His coming and going is unfailingly bittersweet.

Strawberry cheeks and hair the color of wheat—  
September brings him back on wet earth and bare feet.  
A garland of color on his sleeve:

Autumn is a boy.

He travels with the sun and his nimble bird fleet  
and shows a new color of the sunset to everyone he meets.  
His looks may appear mild, but don't be deceived:  
A wink of mischief charms eyes of frosty sea.  
With songs and laughter, he leaves in December's seat.

Autumn is a boy.

soul of the earth

I must be an old soul,  
dug deep from the earth:  
a cocktail of every violently beautiful thunderstorm  
sweetened by the cherry blossoms of June.

I toss my branches around like an ocean  
and the rain that fell centuries ago  
falls on my face today, touching my tongue  
like sugar as the heavens pour its tears from my eyes.

I think we should all stop and marvel  
at the heavens tossing Her head;  
as thunder roars and lightning soars,  
we hear earth's scream against mankind,  
tossing aside every delicate tulip and drenching  
every wispy bird as a reminder that  
she cannot and will not be conquered;  
Man can bind his shackles around the ankles of the earth  
but he can never take her voice.

strawberry-gold tea.

Strawberry-gold tea is trembling  
 in your cup, displaced by your sweet breath—  
 perfumed with the taste of citrus and my lips.  
 Your eyes carry the morning; it eddies  
 around your irises as a spoon stirs a cup of tea.  
 Heat presses itself into your lips as you  
 lift your cup, the steam curls around your ears,  
 winding beneath them to disappear beneath  
 your sweater. My fingerprints have tousled  
 your hair. Your fingers—printed with the angles  
 of my shoulders, my spine.  
 You: a masterpiece painted with the sun.  
 Even so, nothing of you is as splendid  
 as the morning in your eyes, that swirls  
 and eddies around your irises—that  
 dots the darkness of my night with stars,  
 and wakes me with a cup of  
 strawberry-gold tea.

**Dani Moore**

*I'm Dani Moore, and I'm currently a senior at University of Idaho pursuing an art major and a creative writing minor. I'm hoping to continue my writing into the job field, specifically in creative journalism. I write in multiple genres, but poetry is among one of my favorites. In my poetry, I typically write about my experiences, especially of that of my hometown and my adolescence. I'm currently working on compiling a journal of poems regarding my teenage years growing up in my hometown and am excited to add more onto it. I'm so glad to be a part of this year's issue of Vandalism and can't wait to see it come to print!*

drive

my hands clasping the steering wheel firmly,  
 i circle the empty lot in lazy circles & loop-de-loops  
 creating a tracework in the asphalt,  
 the wheel still feeling foreign in my hands  
 and awfully sticky.  
 don't worry, my dad says.  
 you'd have to be awful to hit the only other car in the lot.  
 i roll my eyes & continue to drive.

this new car is smaller, sleeker  
 much easier to maneuver than our clunky suburban.  
 it's the first time i've driven by myself  
 no nagging voice at my side or shrieks & snickers from the backseat  
 nothing but the zooming scenery of wheat fields  
 altered from the windshield's glare.  
 it feels freeing, to drive.

want to go drive? my friend at the time, jill asks.  
 it's summertime & we're teens in a small town,  
 nothing else to do besides loiter at walmarts,  
 leave town, and drive.  
 something about being behind the wheel  
 & letting your thoughts spill out into the passing fields  
 always seems to evoke the deepest conversations  
 i've ever had.  
 it was nice, to drive.

he glides all over the night streets,  
windows providing a foggy refuge from the cold,  
while we zoom past suburban wonderlands, dirt roads, and downtown areas,  
both of us waiting in awkward anticipation  
for a hint from the other, a movement, a word of approval,  
so that we could say fuck it all  
& do what we both longed to do in the backseats of the car  
& not stop until 3 am.  
we weren't really driving, then.

everyone has left town now.  
leaving me behind so I could attend school locally,  
the wise decision, some told me.  
a wise decision, but a lonely one,  
there was no one to drive with now.  
i pleaded with the universe  
to send me a text, an invite, a question if i was okay.  
none came.  
as a replacement for evening plans,  
i went on a drive on a thursday night, at 11 p.m, burning gas money.  
for the first time in my life,  
it didn't make me feel good.

stripped

the salmon pink clouds  
 make the sand appear almost white  
 & with every step i take  
 i feel my worries ooze out from my soles  
 softly crushing the sand  
 it's 6 pm & springtime on the oregon coast  
 not a breeze to be felt  
 or a person for miles  
 a rarity one never experiences  
 we strip down to nothing  
 cast our clothes and inhibitions behind us  
 shrieking among the waves & the mist  
 yet barely heard over the roar of the ocean  
 our party is crashed by hikers  
 making us scramble for our clothes  
 laughing like madmen  
 as we once again gather up our cares  
 & return to normalcy

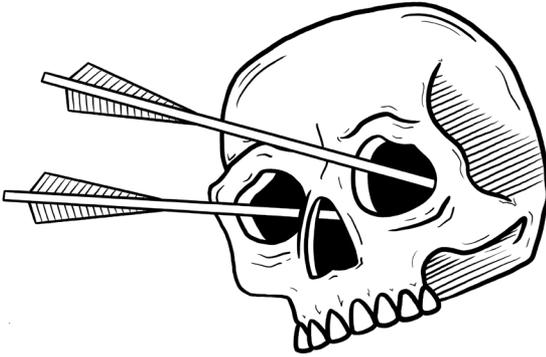
## timelapse

once you've left your childhood home  
and gone out in the world  
you never truly get to come back.  
your childhood comes to a close  
the minute you leave the front door.  
and even if you do return  
things are altered  
never the same as how you left them.  
you stop recognizing faces  
at the local diners & hang out spots  
no longer able to attend  
the activities that were once part of your daily routine.  
your favorite restaurant  
is no longer as good as you remember  
and your childhood room seems smaller than before  
the people once dear to your heart  
have mostly forgotten you  
forging their own paths  
and their own lives  
that you don't have a part in.  
one year  
ten years  
twenty years  
it's funny how a place can seem so unchanged  
yet at the same time, a world apart.

Kid



Eye for an Eye



EYE FOR AN EYE, AND I CAN FINALLY GO BLIND

## Luke Woods

*Luke is a junior in the Mechanical Engineering program and looks forward to continuing with graduate research in Additive Manufacturing and Rapid Prototyping. They also have strong interests in art, music, and games—constantly seeking new and interesting forms to pursue.*

nostalgia



## Alea Nielsen

*Alea Nielsen is an English major from Wenatchee, Washington. She is a writer of nonfiction essays and fictional short stories. She also reads a lot of books while drinking copious amounts of herbal tea and eating chicken nuggets, chinese food, or quiche. Outside of class she can be found at the local library browsing the shelves for fantasy and thriller books to indulge in. Recently she has started a Youtube channel where she discusses and reviews wonderful literature. One day she would like to write her own series of fantasy novels that may or may not be in progress at the moment. When she gets tired of reading and writing she is often in the kitchen baking delicious breads and cookies or watching cartoons like an adult.*

## The House on Johnson Creek Road

## I

There were creepy crawlers in the apricots last year. Earwigs saw the fruit as affordable housing and moved in fast. Saturday morning at Grandma's breakfast table I split the soft orange fruit in half and an earwig wiggled out, dashed past my plate of waffles, and made a beeline for the jam. Anyway, the apricot tree is in the side yard to the left of the house past the compost pile, a collection of old sliced up melons rotting into the grass while flies stop by for a visit.

## II

The apricot tree was there before I was born. The branches have become gnarled and overgrown since then, and the tree next to it is nothing but a thin decrepit stump poking out of the earth now. Evidently the lawn surrounding the apricot tree, the one littered with the brown and orange flesh of fallen fruit, used to be part of the hay field that surrounds my grandparent's house. I was not aware of this until last summer when I attempted to mow the overgrown lawn with a riding lawn mower. It was like taking a cheap plastic razor to a huge overgrown beard. A messy disastrous task. Interesting how mother nature reverts if you turn your back on her for a few months.

## III

Tropicana rose bushes stand like soldiers in a line on either side of Grandma's front door. Petals in buttercup yellow, soft peach, blush pink, magnificent magenta. In the summer they all bloom at once and the walkway to the old brown door smells like heaven. I noticed one morning that the rose bushes were attempting mutiny, growing up in clumps, thorny vines trying to reach up and penetrate the window panes. I tamed the rose bushes

as I did the lawn, trying to hold nature back from consuming the only place that has ever really felt like home. Blackjack the inky black cat who adopted my grandparents years ago rolled around in the thorny clippings as I hacked down every last bush.

IV

When we showed up to Grandma's house last summer it seemed the surrounding hayfields and front lawn flora were consuming the house. Rose buds tapped impatiently on the window panes demanding admittance to the bedroom where time had worn the green and orange 80's carpet rather thin. It was the first time I ever entered the house and thought it smelled musty and aged, like a nursing home. Full of pill bottles, piles of old papers, and ancient technology that has long been out of use.

V

At the house on Johnson Creek Road the new puppy, fluffy and racoon-like with a dark brown circle around each eye rolled across the jade green grass in front of the house. When we picked her up from the breeder this morning they had dressed her up in an orange printed bandana and matching leash for her big day. We had to put her in a plastic play pen so she wouldn't get lost out in Grandpa's hay fields. Dad decided to name her Maggie.

VI

Grandpa convinced my mother that if she wanted her only child to be compassionate she had better get me a dog. Mom consented and called a Cockapoo breeder. Cockapoos are half Cocker Spaniel and half Poodle, the quintessential family pet according to my grandparents. We got Maggie the summer I turned eight, the largest puppy in a litter of three. We took her home and she grew like a weed. She used to fight with the sprinkler in

our old backyard, eating jets of water then galloping into the house leaving muddy paw prints on the faded blue carpet. When she was really little I stuck her in the kitchen sink and picked live ants out of the white fur on her chin. She liked to attack ant hills under the deck too. Maggie was a menace.

## VII

The house on Johnson Creek Road has housed one cat, two grandparents, two aunts, three uncles (divorces make odd numbers), three dogs (all of which were named Puff), four mothers, and five grandchildren over the last forty years.

## VIII

Great Grandpa Harry, whose grave I like to visit, did all the electrical work in the house. My grandparents built the place long before I ever existed. My mom and her two younger sisters lived there for years and all of us grandkids were practically raised there. The dirt is full of our blood, sweat, tears, and memories. My cousin's old snow boot is still lost in one of the big bushes by the gravel driveway. Our childhood games are still stacked in the "secret room" where we used to play with magnets and plastic marble race tracks on the shag carpet. The living room still has a hand drawn portrait of my mom and aunts, the whole house is covered in baby pictures of me in strange hats and Christmas dresses. The kitchen floor is worn from years of Easter egg dyeing sessions on the floor, and there is a bullet hole in the corner where my Grandpa's gun accidentally went off. The curtain above the yellow kitchen sink is decorated with the colorful glass hummingbirds my grandma loves so much.

## IX

Now my grandma, my second mother, the woman who always has cookie dough residue in her wedding ring from all the treats she bakes for

other people, is growing older. She dyes her hair red to cover the gray and she walks up and down the long driveway every day for her early morning exercise. She likes to talk to the neighbor's cows when she walks by them and Blackjack usually walks with her.

X

Called Mom yesterday to get her lasagna recipe. She doesn't like to tell me bad news when I'm at school, thinks it will be too distracting. She conveniently didn't tell me when Grandma had cancer either. I found out that news from some of her texts I stumbled across, but that's another story. Called Mom yesterday and she said our dog is dying. Didn't say it like that of course, but she and Dad couldn't wake Maggie up last Thursday. She was breathing but she was dead to the world. She woke up on her own later. Her eyesight and hearing are worsening too, she can't hear you call her name anymore.

XI

My great grandma passed away a few years ago. She lived to be ninety-eight. Now all of her old furniture resides in my grandparent's basement outside the room I always sleep in when I visit. Sometimes I think about how my grandparents will be gone, their furniture and treasured belongings moved to my parent's basement. Then eventually my parent's things being in my own basement when they're all gone. It will be just me. An only child with no parents, an orphan. With a basement full of furniture. And I am terrified of that...

XII

My mom told me last week that Blackjack died. Apparently he wasn't eating and was extremely lethargic, so my grandparents took him to the vet. He had a huge tumor in his stomach. We had no idea. Grandma

told me on the phone that she cried when they had to put him down. My Grandpa dug a grave for him in the frozen November ground on the front lawn next to their old dog Puff's grave, but not too close because they didn't get along very well when she was alive.

## XIII

Grandpa keeps saying that all that property, the hay fields, are becoming too much and he wants to sell the place and move. Grandma always looks at all the clutter in the closets, everything she would have to pack and move or get rid of and says you have to be in the mood to go through your things and quickly shuts the closet door.

## XIV

Maggie, the boisterous puppy, grew up to be the fluffy behemoth that laid on my stomach all day when I was sick. Now she's thirteen, and she's dying.

Not only will I outlive my grandparents and parents; I'll outlive Maggie too. What am I supposed to do when I inherit my parent's empty shell of a home? No family, no pets, just echoes and the faint scent of the stranger who owned the house before we did.

## XV

Mom says it's too late for them to move. Mother Nature seems to agree. They can't do everything they used to. The land and the lawn are trying to swallow the house. The weeds try to choke out the swimming pool. Mother nature wants her land back, and I'm not ready to see it consumed yet.

XVI

One day I will get the call. I  
 Thought I had received it once  
 But no, a false alarm.  
 The call will come and I'll run  
 Back down the gravel driveway  
 Past grazing cows in the pasture,  
 Past thorny vines rose bushes flanking the door  
 Dash up the stairs where the white  
 Paint is dirty and our heights  
 Are penciled on the wall with dates.  
 One of the ancestors will be gone, the other  
 Mute with grief but the  
 Blue sky and hay fields  
 Will shine through the window on our  
 Pain anyway. When I go I would like  
 To be buried there,  
 By the decaying apricot tree  
 With the cat and the dog.

**Sean Parker**

## Trains of Memory

I was sitting behind the wheel, waiting for a train to clear a level crossing in the middle of nowhere, Kansas. Alan had only just woken up in the passenger seat, and was now taking the opportunity to remove his jacket. In keeping with the immutable law of the railway, the final car came into sight just as I began to think it would never end. It was one of those trains with an engine on both ends, and as it passed, I noticed a scratch in its paint running underneath the lamps. It reminded me of a face. That was what brought my mind to a certain show I had watched a long time ago.

“Hey, man.” I said as the cross bars began to raise. “You remember Thomas the Tank Engine?”

“Uh, yeah, vaguely.” Alan responded, sliding his seatbelt back into place. “What about it?”

“Have you seen any of the more recent stuff they’ve done with it?”

“It’s still running?”

I pressed on the accelerator. “Apparently. I was flipping through the channels a few months ago...”

“On an actual TV?” He laughed. “Keeping the old ways alive, are you?”

“I’m an avid archeologist, don’t you know?” I smiled as we continued down the narrow road. “But anyway, I was flipping through channels, and I came across one of the new episodes.”

“Fascinating, man. Anything changed?”

“Oh, you don’t even know.” I responded. “It was the freakiest thing. I came in on some landscape shot, with the narrator talking over- it sounded like a different voice, but I can’t remember- but anyway, then it cut to one of the trains talking. I think it was the green one, I can’t remember his name.”

“Percy, was that it?” Alan supplied.

“No, I remember him, he was small, this one was big.”

“Gordon?”

“Maybe, it doesn’t matter. Point is, it cut to him saying something, and his face moved! Like it actually moved, like it was actual CG instead of that quasi-stop motion they used back in the day. I can’t tell you how unnerving it was.”

“I think they’ve had that for a while, man.” Alan replied. “I remember watching it with Greyson back in, oh, 2012 or so. I think they had the CG faces.”

“Well, I haven’t seen it since...” I paused. “Actually, I can’t remember ever actually seeing it on TV. It was always on VHSs that we had. They were probably from, I guess, the 90’s or before.”

“Maybe, it’s an old show.” Alan reclined his seat back a bit. “How long’s it been on the air? 30, 40 years?”

“I think it started in, like, ’84 or around there. So yeah, about 40 years.”

“Damn.” Around us, the fields switched from wheat to corn. We sat in silence for a moment, listening to the hum of the wheels on the road.

“The character’s even older, I think.” I said, after a little while. “I had a book of Thomas the Tank Engine stories as a kid. I remembered the writing style seeming a bit weird to me, so I checked the date on it recently. 1945 was the date of first publication.”

Alan sat straight up, held back by his seatbelt. “1945?” he almost shouted.

“The hell?”

“Yeah, some Reverend wrote the stories back then, then they got turned into a show in the 80’s. That was a bit of a trip to find out.”

“No kidding.” Alan leaned back down. “Wonder what younger me would have thought of that?”

“Younger me probably wouldn’t have cared much.” I slowed the car as we passed a sign informing us we were entering the town limits. “It doesn’t really change the show all that much.”

“Still, it’s weird to think that something so big in our childhoods was that old, even then.”

“Yeah, it really is. Even weirder that it’s still going. I mean, they have to have run out of that Reverend guy’s stories by now, right?”

Alan shrugged. “Since when has that stopped anyone?”

We passed a cluster of small businesses in the midst of the flat plain. At the far end of town was a gas station. I took a glance at the quarter-full fuel gauge, then began to slow down to make the turn.

“Yeah, nothing ever ends anymore. Our grandkids are probably going to be watching that show.” I said, pulling into the mostly empty parking lot. “You want to go in and get something?”

“Yeah, I’ll grab some more water in there. You can get the gas.”

I pulled up to the pump. Alan jumped out, and I popped the gas cap. The sun was starting to get a little low in the sky. Maybe we could make it to the next town before nightfall. Maybe we couldn’t. Either way, the only thing to do was to keep on driving. I scanned my card and inserted the nozzle. We still had a long way to go.

## Tekla Shaw

*Tekla Shaw is a senior studying English with an emphasis in professional writing and a minor in public relations. She came from Alaska to Idaho to attend college, and she hopes to one day return to Alaska and settle down. She discovered her love for stories well before she learned she could write them down.*

*When she isn't daydreaming about what she wants to write next, she enjoys hiking around her hometown, camping in scenic spots, and reading in a cozy corner. She hopes to continue to write stories about themes and ideas that are intriguing to her when she's not climbing any mountain she can find.*

## A Walk with Grandpa

There's something about  
a walk with Grandpa  
through big green forests  
filled with tall trees.  
When he says, "these are older than me!"  
you laugh at the thought.

All the sounds of the world are replaced  
with his boots thudding on the ground,  
with his fairytales painted in your head,  
with his change jingling in his pockets.

A gentle smile rests on his face  
as he looks at you  
while you look at the trees.

There's patience in his voice  
as you ask the same questions on every walk.

Why are the trees green?  
Why is this one shorter?  
Why are we walking on this path?

They are green because that's your favorite color.  
That little tree isn't done growing yet, just like you.  
This path will lead us home.

You continue on,  
deeper into the trees.  
You are holding hands,  
and he hums a little tune.

There's something about  
a walk with Grandpa  
that lets you know  
you're already home.

## The Spitting Image of My Youth

“Okay Grandma, Elise wants to know if you’re ready to see her surprise?” calls my daughter from down the hall. I hear some giggles from little Elise and some whispers of reassurance from her mother.

“Of course! I can’t wait to find out what my favorite granddaughter has in store for me.”

“Close your eyes Grandma,” comes the voice of Elise from down the hall, “no peeking!”

I place my hands over my eyes while I wait for her to start her trek down the hall. From my overstuffed chair in the living room, I have a front row seat to Elise’s grand entrance from the bedroom down the hall. I hear the clop clop clop of shoes too big for the feet that reside in them.

“I’m coming Grandma- oh wait! Turn on the record player Mom quick!” said Elise.

“Okay, okay,” I move my hands from my eyes to see my daughter jog down the hall on her tiptoes, as if her entrance before Elise could ruin the grand surprise. She hurries over to my dusty record player. It has been tucked away in the corner by the couch for years, but she seems to get it set up in no time. It took her merely moments to pick out a record. Elise must have picked out just the right one while I had been in the kitchen making lunch.

The music begins and I recognize it immediately. The Five Satins were my favorite back in the day, and my oh my did I dance to “In The Still of the Night” many, many times. I begin to sway in my chair, hands back over my eyes and a smile on my face as the clop clop clop begins again.

“Okay Grandma, you can open your eyes!” squeals Elise.

I open my eyes and fireworks begin to go off in my stomach, my heart starts replicating their thunderous boom, and my hands cover my

mouth so as not to let the sparks escape. Small tears begin to involuntarily form in the corners of my eyes. My sweet granddaughter, the spitting image of my youth.

She is wearing one of my wide brimmed hats, the kind I wore when the camera flashes shone like the sun, bright enough to blind. Upon her now twirling and dancing feet are a pair of my baby doll heels. I wore them on dates with her grandpa and on stage when I sang. Swinging around her neck is a string of pearls, the first ones I ever owned, given to me when I landed my first ever job as an actress. Her ears look smaller than ever with a pair of my red-carpet-ready chandelier earrings hanging heavily from her lobes. Her small hands are covered in delicate white gloves. All the actresses wore them to keep their skin soft and free of wrinkles.

“Guess who I am Grandma!” Elise calls out as she continues to sway and dance to the music. Her mother leans against the wall and smiles as her daughter follows right in her footsteps, dressing up in all my finest clothes from a lifetime before them both.

“Oh, could it be? The great actress Loretta LaForte back from the grave?” I smile, wipe my little happy tears, and hold my hands out to her, “come Elise, let me get a good look at you.”

She walks over to me with her gloved hand outstretched and a toothless smile on her face.

“Do I look like you did?”

“Yes, pretty close. You could be the next Loretta LaForte, or whatever silly name you can think up.”

I put my hands on her cheeks and notice my wrinkles and veins in stark contrast against her soft youthful skin. I feel my heart swell and the tears threaten to make an encore appearance.

Her bright eyes look at my tears inquisitively.

“Why are you sad Grandma?”

I brush my thumbs across her pink cheeks and let the tears fall.

“My dear, these aren’t sad tears at all. You’re just reminding me of such happy, happy times.”

“From the time you were an actress? Mom told me you were something like that when you were young. You were in movies!” Elise jumps up and down a little when she says this.

“Yes, a long, long time ago now. I stopped just before your mother was born.”

“Why’d you stop doing it if it made you so happy?” she asks me curiously.

I think back to the day I decided to put it all away. I did it to pursue life as a mother; to pursue life behind the scenes and explore new creative endeavors; to pursue a spot in the crowd where I got to cheer on my children; to pursue life as a grandmother to sweet Elise.

“It did make me happy, but it wasn’t the only thing that brought me happiness. I had so many new opportunities to find happiness in, and now I have those memories to bring me happiness whenever I need it. But really, I traded that momentary happiness for something much better.”

I move my hands to Elise’s shoulders and give her a small kiss on the forehead. When I move back to look into her eyes, I see them sparkle with joy, and I regret nothing.

## False Endings

I have had so many false endings to the movie of my life. Sometimes it's like an indie film, driving off in the sunset while a folk song plays softly on the radio. Other times it's a romantic comedy, where in the end I decide I am enough, and I walk towards the camera with a content smile on my face while a pop song plays me out. A rare one is right after an intense workout. I feel like an action hero that just saved the day who walks away from the exploding gym behind me, putting on my sunglasses and leaving this no-good-too-small-town. But all of these are false. Because right after the end, another one begins, and life keeps going.

Today, I'm in the midst of a drama. Maybe it is the kind where there are only six episodes a season, and the leading man is perfect and unobtainable. Or maybe it's the kind where I've somehow burned all my bridges and the only living thing that still cares about me is my cat. I don't have a cat. But if I did, it would be the only one who cared. Today I'm feeling the blues like an actress working her butt off to get that Golden Globe for her first breakthrough acting role. I would get a standing ovation for this one.

Why? Why am I sad? Well, it could be so many things, but I'll only list a few. First, I forgot to water my plants for days, so they all died. Then, I forgot to take out the garbage and it's piling up and making the kitchen reek of rotten food. Also, I don't have any lightbulbs left to replace the ones that went out in the bathroom. And I got fired last week. Along with half of my co-workers. I think these are reasons enough to sulk.

My coffee has gone cold in my hands and the grey clouds overhead are threatening to become a storm. I have the radio on the classical channel, setting the scene for my pity party. My spot on the couch looking out the window has made my butt numb from sitting too long, and when I blink, I

still see the grey clouds outside. The tears have missed their cue, but still wish to join me on stage. I don't let them. I'm living for the drama of this scene and they would ruin it.

Unfortunately, the scene is interrupted by the buzzing of my phone on the couch cushion next to me. I feel my body jolt and break from the statue position I have been sitting in for hours. The name reads "Hannah" which rings zero bells. I hesitate to reach for the phone. I'm not really interested in talking to anyone.

It stops ringing. She leaves a voicemail. The classical music comes to the forefront of my attention again, and I'm pulled back into my stupor. But this time I'm not so settled in my sadness.

I think I remember Hannah. She was a friend of mine in college who was maybe my roommate for a semester. No, two semesters. Yeah, she had a habit of making cake every weekend. Oh, and she was really good at knitting, made me a hat and a scarf in like a day. They worked out perfectly when the heating went out at the apartment. I think we were pretty close at some point.

I wonder why she called after all this time. We hadn't spoken in years. How many has it been? Five? Ten? Maybe more? What has she been up to now?

I grab the phone and look at her name on the screen again. I'm pretty sure she was going to school to be a teacher or something. She used to have me help her create lesson plans or presentations of some kind. I don't remember what they were for sure, but they usually ended in giggle fits and too much wine. We had a lot of nights like that.

I feel an involuntary smile come over my face as I remember these evenings that seem foreign. My nights are very different now, but the wine still shows up on the menu as the main course every now and then.

Hannah and I used to go to the farmer's market on Saturdays. We would usually meet up with a couple of our other friends and walk through

the stalls, laughing and joking around while we drank coffee from the local coffee shop. We would marvel at all the fresh produce that would cost us an arm and a leg. Afterwards we would go to the grocery outlet that sold veggies for mere cents and pretend it was from the market while making some kind of soup that would feed us for a week. It was simpler then, and I can't believe I forgot about it.

I wonder what the false ending on that chapter looked like. Did we have a major fight where we destroyed the apartment? Or did we both like the same boy and he picked her so we couldn't be friends anymore? I bet we both shook hands before walking off in different directions, both promising to write and keep in touch.

Or was it more of a natural departure, slow and unnoticed, and years later you can't even remember you had known each other at all? The clouds outside have parted, and a small sliver of blue has escaped the grey folds. A stream of sunlight falls on my dead plants in the corner of the windowsill.

I unlock my phone and listen to the voicemail. Her voice is more familiar to me than I thought it would be, and I'm reminded of our late-night phone calls when we both went home for holidays. I feel a small smile pulling at the corners of my mouth as she asks if I wanted to catch up while she is in town visiting her husband's family.

I'm still shaking off my award-winning performance as a sad starlet when I text her back. I smile and look out the window after I hit send. Bach plays gently in the background.  
Ah yes, another false ending.

**Tayla Travella**

## A Distant Tomorrow

“we’ll save our goodbyes for tomorrow”

but tomorrow never came

and neither did the goodbye

or at least, tomorrow didn’t come like i expected

it didn’t arrive with melancholic tunes or a rainy sky

our last day had a high of 95 degrees

but it didn’t have any of the highs i had come to expect

it didn’t have those precipitous lows, either

it was...entirely ordinary

i always expected we’d shatter

how could i have known it was more of a slow suffocation

how could i have known that day was The Last Day

how could i have unknowingly stumbled across our last sentence

sometimes i wonder,

would i have told you I loved you?

even if the words swept through your hair and your eyes narrowed and darkened,

forests crackling during a thunderstorm,

a slight grimace reminding me that

love is reserved for those who do not splinter under its weight

and as you walked away i didn't think to look back  
i stepped inside to avoid the oppressive heat, locking the door behind me

i wish i'd pressed my nose against the glass  
condensation clouding your form  
my breath matching your footsteps

if only i'd known it was the end,  
our End.

Lost Loves

“their hearts were in their throats”

it’s a phrase i’ve seen frequently

i’ve felt it often

when your pulse is trying to suffocate you

stealing all the room in your throat

i gag and i gag but there’s nothing to expel

nothing but the stuttering of heartbeats before white-hot panic takes over

there’s no better phrase

to describe the feeling

when you know

with inexorable certainty

that Someone you love

[and

you

thought

They

loved

you

too]

is about to tell you

They just lost Their love for you

like a forgotten coat in a taxi

whisked away on roads you recognize in daylight

but that look so foreign in this night

it's standing on the edge of a cliff

bare toes clenched on sharp gravel

staring at the leering unfeeling rocks below

white knuckling my phone

breath catching in my throat

I unclench my frozen fingers,

watching your reply disappear into the ravine,

and count to 3, forcing My lungs to be lungs again

I'd rather you never tell me you love me,

than tell me every day,

only to leave that affection out in the rain

till it becomes rusty and worn-down,

a sad scrap of a life I just now realized

was a past one.

Tear

my tears are not tears  
my tears are lions blood  
withering fury and crimson rage  
tracing well-worn tracks  
cascading around my cheekbones  
flooding through my jaw  
splashing out my ravens throat  
dark feathers dripping rubies like sand  
feeding the hourglass lake  
under the weary waning moon

and the demons among the trees  
clamor for beast blood  
rising raving under heartless stars  
consumed by vile fantasies  
crooning a song crooked with malice

the wind weeps for the creature  
as her screams peel apart the breeze  
and the lake overflows with wildthing blood

**Jaime Sugai**

## Kadence Warner

*Kadence is a 23 year old Creative Writing major. His writing career began in middle school when after being asked to share a poem in class one of his teachers made it a weekly event for him to read aloud what he had been working on. This led to another teacher taking him to a youth writing conference where he was the youngest attendee to share their work with a published author. He has always loved writing but growing up in small town Idaho never thought that anyone would read his writing. He attributes a major part of his success to all the educators that have helped push him to pursue his dream of being a writer. Kadence is both extremely thrilled and grateful to be able to share his work on such a large scale.*

Unity and Diversity



Ekphrastic poem

Give me color spreading from a spectrum.

Gradation fading

Fading in, fading out, or just fading

How many layers of coverup did it take?

I was given an extra rib only to bind it so tightly that I might misalign it all together.

Someday my bones will tell the parts of my story I never wished to partake in. The parts I  
ached to have removed from my narrative.

I often think about why they decided to call it 'race'.

Placing worth on complexions predetermined by our distance from the sun.

When in reality it's just different sides of the same position in space.

That our beauty stops and begins at the skin, and that my pride was my first deadliest sin.

Are they scales or just skin cells? And who do the brass scales tip in favor of?

And just because your tongue is in a language I do not speak, it does not mean I am afraid.

The sea blue sky has always faded into a peach blush and turned a lightly speckled black.

Like generations worth of mirrors as they're reflecting back.

Show me that you know that the lines were never really blurred, they just weren't there.

Erase them entirely and show me that you have the ability to care.

We aren't here by chance. But rather by the hard work and dedication of the generations  
passed.

They told us we had to keep our clothes tops on. But never did anyone turn a firehose on.

We are privileged to be here.

Finding justice in an odd number because we could never truly be even.

If you're wondering why this fight still isn't over yet, that's the real reason.

## Atomic Days at EBR-1

What little of it remains  
in regards to my time,  
when I'm on my knees lying  
in wait for a moment to watch  
if it was worth it buying  
traction in the form of chains?

We were taught to break the chains  
and to salvage the world that remains.  
Money wasn't always how we were buying,  
we mostly paid in our time.  
It hurt to see the hands tick on my watch  
and trust me when I say, I am not lying.

Flat out on our backs lying  
under the weight of the chains  
we shackled onto one another. We had to watch  
the downfall of crumbling city remains  
and wait helplessly for the time  
to come where there'd be no salvation left for buying.

We were always working for our buying.  
Always honest enough to keep on lying.  
Once more and time after time  
we scraped the cold gravel like tire chains.  
Measuring the oxygen that remains  
and pretending it isn't too painful to watch.

Who is the look-out keeping watch?  
And which version of the story are you buying?  
Vultures circle over-head for a chance at the remains,  
but if I said that thought scared me, I'd be lying.  
We are like junkyard dogs, our blue collars made of iron chains,  
our growls low, saliva dripping come feeding time.

Only humans suffers from the concept of time,  
the insect is never late, never wears a wrist watch.  
When we numbered the days, we forged our own chains.  
Sometimes knowing the price keeps us from buying,  
or maybe we're just fooled by a value, and maybe we've always been lying.  
Maybe no one really knows what came before, what'll be left, and what  
remains.

In a sea of corporate chains there are no 'independents' among the remains.  
It's the entertainment everyone wants to watch, say that you don't and you're  
lying.  
Make it worth my time, give me something no one else is buying.

## Boomtown

How long did you count the days  
until you would reach that age?  
Everyone wants to leave, but always stays.

Memorizing all of the different plays,  
X's dragging O's across the page.  
For a moment, these were the glory days.

You were an actor in many ways  
playing yourself up on a stage.  
And that's a feeling that stays.

Always doing anything that pays.  
Emptying bottles to fill up with rage  
and waiting around for better days.

Watching as the thread in your hand frays  
feeling the fall is too far to gauge,  
bravery fades, but the fear stays.

So paint the walls a new shade of gray  
and forget about a 'living wage.'  
If we make it to the end of days  
then we already know that nothing truly stays.

## Lex “Supah Space” Etranger

*A stranger in a strange place. Mars based Graphic Designer Lex Etranger, better known as Supah Space, creates visual art through a bizarro understanding of the human experience. Originally a character artist, Etranger has blended her passion for graphic design and visual story-telling, bringing about a marriage of bold and colorful work showcasing her aesthetic obsessions.*

[untitled]



## Kassidy Wigen

*Kassidy Wigen was born and raised in Coeur d'Alene, Idaho. Her passion for writing began when she was given a pink Girl Tech Password Journal when she was ten years old. Since then, she has upgraded to better journals, ballpoint pens, and continues to write nearly everyday. She enjoys writing poetry more than large pieces of work as she believes that smaller pieces are still capable of holding much weight. She is currently pursuing her bachelor's degree in English literature and hopes to attend graduate school next fall. Aside from writing, Kassidy enjoys hiking, travelling, indulging into cheesy sitcoms, and spending time with her cat King Julien.*

## Lady Daydream

The shitty beer and the sun  
Somehow — make things glossier  
The ink blotted needle moving up  
And down  
9 months past April and I look at  
My arm and I'm reminded of you

Your parents front yard on sixth street  
The sunlight brought out you and  
the freckles of green of the spring  
Your voice is terrible as you  
hum my name  
Your fingers strumming the guitar,  
the only good thing

Bat City

Before there was Austin,  
there was us.  
We weren't in the humidity and I —  
wasn't crying in a studio apartment

Hand in hand,  
arms swinging like noodles  
You make faces at me as we sit and  
eat a disgusting amount of pad thai

Austin.  
My voice had never carried,  
so loud  
The plane ride home and,  
My pen exploded from the pressure,  
while I wrote about us

My feelings refined  
A love I —  
Can't seem to absorb

## Weekend Warriors

Lights flickering on  
Our childhood cue. I could finally  
Breathe —  
Rest for an hour

Saturdays seem to procrastinate  
Realizing I'm up until  
the early hours of Sunday  
The heels clicking on the linoleum  
you stumble to the bathroom

Nauseous, again  
The dinner I made for myself didn't make me sick  
Do you want some?  
Red eyes accompanied by an  
unintelligible, slurred response

numerous,  
restless,  
weekends.

I grow 5 inches and  
I understand what vodka tastes like  
It buzzes off my lips  
I stop waiting up for you.  
You stop coming home.



Vandalism: Issue 7  
Published by: Sigma Tau Delta, Eta Chi Chapter

Editorial Board: Dylan Foster, Dakota Brown, Katie Piper, Cyndi Enderle, and Megan Lolley

Editors: Dennis Paulsen and Emma Shaul

Editorial Advisor: Mike McGriff

Vandalism is published once a year by the undergraduate members of Sigma Tau Delta, Eta Chi Chapter, at the University of Idaho. Submissions are open to all undergraduate students at the University of Idaho and are accepted year round. Submissions must be emailed to [UISigmaTD@gmail.com](mailto:UISigmaTD@gmail.com). Visit Vandalism's website for submission guidelines and details.

Special thanks to Michael McGriff for his guidance and expertise and Jennifer Baillargeon-Hauck for all of her hard work that made this issue possible. Thank you to our Vandal community who foster and develop the brilliant creativity in this issue and all those issues past and future.

Cover Art: Lex "Supah Space" Etranger  
Layout & Design: Crystal Carney

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