

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA CROOKSTON

Celebrate!

ART JOURNAL

ISSUE 4

CELEBRATE!

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PHANTOM HEARTS

one night in forever

As this night passes and time fade
Our souls turn hot as fire but our minds remain cool as shade
For a temporary moment in time we connect
But is it destined that tonight be one we forget
Could this be one that we may not regret

Brief moments of love
Composed of intense moments of lust
Tangible scenes of passion
As if no one exists in the universe but us
Transferring our energies with every thrust

With our hands intertwined and our bodies close
Our spirits become transparent
And we take the form of the heavenly host
But at the end our hearts wander like ghosts
Feelings turn to fire when we part ways and coast

Truly the stars in the sky have aligned finally
With your gates open I embrace the thoughts of eternity
Exploring one another with great explicit curiosity
Memories of pain are erased in this distant reality

In this temporary union I contemplate this life together
Or maybe this is a phase that changes with the weather
Unlimited possibilities what has been revealed was true treasure
Is that what it feels to have a One Night in Forever

by: Nataki Morris

Stone Man Pantoum

He was not tall nor very strong.
He spoke low and less than often
But when he spoke it held attentions.
He reminds me of who I'd like to be.

He spoke low and less than often.
His will stronger than iron.
He reminds me of who I'd like to be.
I can't quite shake the feeling he's watching.

His will stronger than iron.
In his presence I felt safe and calm.
I can't quite shake the feeling he's watching.
He had a key, the key to inner strength.

In his presence I felt safe and calm.
He molded me with gentle patience.
He had a key, the key to inner strength.
I understood how to unlock my own potential.

He molded me with gentle patience.
Never with anger would he strike me
I understood how to unlock my own potential.
But I never understood why anyone would need to leave.

Never with anger would he strike me,
Always with love he would hug.
But I never understood why anyone would need to leave.
Why can't we stay here a little while longer?

Always with love he would hug.
Keep me close and I'll stay with you.
Why can't we stay here a little while longer?
Why can't we stay here forever?

Keep me close and I'll stay with you
He spoke low and less than often
Why can't we stay here forever.
He reminds me of who I'd like to be.

by: Brice Giffen

Sleepwalkers

I used to creep amongst the sleepwalkers,
so as not to wake them up
One can never be too careful
Sleepwalkers are corrupt

All of them were dreaming,
but I knew my thoughts were clear
Vowing not to close my eyes
For fear I'd disappear

Walking with the sleepwalkers,
hiding in plain sight
Resisting ignorance and torpor
Was my purpose and my plight

But what if all the sleepwalkers
really aren't so foul?
Perhaps I had misjudged them
I cast aside my cowl

Mingling with the sleepwalkers
pacified my stress
I relinquished my awareness
For languid idleness

I used to creep amongst the sleepwalkers,
but now I'm sleeping too
I have forsaken my identity
And lost sight of what is true

When you become a sleepwalker,
vivacity is missed
Devoid of acumen and purpose
You don't live, you just exist

by: Alicia Goehring

The Mask of Vice

“Virtue is a mask,” said Nathaniel, blowing wisps of smoke into the air.

It was cold and dark and the sky was starless. They sat outside a coffee shop, the only remaining customers, and their coffees had long since finished.

“Show me a virtuous man, and I will show you a liar, whether he knows it or not.”

He blew another wisp into the air. His rickety chair creaked as he spoke.

“You see, Henry, we are all selfish, selfish men. We hide our guilt from the world and from ourselves. But it’s always there. Only the cynic is proudly defiant. He knows himself and refuses to hide, so we shun him. We cannot bare the sight of our stark and guilty souls.”

Henry laughed. “And are you one of these cynics, Nate?”

Nate looked about him somewhat conceitedly. Nothing was visible in the darkness.

“Oh, Henry. I cannot be anything else. I see it all too clearly.”

“Is that so?”

“Indeed, Henry. And do not think for once I am privileged to possess this clarity. Oh, would that I could be a happier man, content in his ignorance, unaware of his inner darkness. The heart of darkness! Oh would that I could be but a simpler man!”

A smile began to dance about Henry’s lips, and Nate saw.

“You mock me, Henry. You know nothing of my anguish. I am tormented daily by the realization of my inadequacy. Every day it haunts my thoughts, and every night it torments my dreams.”

“Why do you talk like that, Nate?” Henry asked, smiling widely now.

“I only speak the truth,” Nate replied.

“No, I don’t mean what you’re saying, I mean how you say it.

You talk like we live in Victorian England.”

Nate bit his lip. He looked above at the moon, black clouds veiling its luster.

“I’ve always considered mine something of a Victorian soul.”

Henry laughed aloud. Though he didn’t intend it to, his laugh came out more than a bit dismissive. “Oh, really? How’s that?”

Nate breathed deeply, and drew his exhalation out before speaking. “I share with the Victorians a certain refinement. A cultivated purification. You see, the Victorians knew what I know. They knew that man is inherently evil, that his darkness must be curbed, must be held at bay. This is the justification for their strict code of conduct, their sexual restraint, their intolerance of crime.”

“I read that hookers were pretty big back then,” Henry said, giggling.

Nate sighed. “Must you mock everything, Henry?”

“I’m not mocking! I actually read that somewhere.”

“There will always be enemies of progress, slanderers who think they can undermine genuine effort by twisting the truth and contriving facts. All they ever do is display their own ignorance and evil.”

“Evil? That’s a bit strong, don’t you think? Give me a cigarette.”

“Any who undermine the war against evil are themselves evil. And that was my last one.”

Henry pursed his lips. “You are evil. Let’s go get a pack then. We’ve been here long enough.”

A tiny bell chimed as they entered the store.

“Whoa. It’s so bright in here,” Henry said, walking toward the back. White fluorescent lights illuminated every inch of each aisle.

Henry reached the coolers at the back, and examined the assorted beers that chilled behind the glass.

“I thought we came here for cigarettes,” Nate muttered.

“We did. I’m just looking.”

“Just looking?”

“Yeah, I might buy something else. What’s the rush?”

Nate sighed.

Henry looked at him. “You know, Nate, sometimes I think you’re trying to be all defeated and sad. Do you think that gives you some noble dignity or something? Because if you do, let me tell you: it doesn’t. It just makes you annoying.”

“I’m nothing more or less than myself.”

Henry bust out laughing. “God, Nate. You’re something else.”

The tiniest sliver of a smile seemed to play on Nate’s lips.

The tiny bell chimed again.

Henry opened one of the freezer doors, picked up a six-pack of Miller Lite, and turned to walk toward the cashier.

“Ugh. I don’t know how you can drink that piss.”

“To each hi—”

Suddenly, there was a scream.

“GET YOUR HANDS UP. GET YOUR MOTHERFUCKING HANDS UP.”

A hooded man, sunglasses hiding his eyes, was waving a gun at the cashier, who seemed too much in shock to respond. She stared at him, flabbergasted.

“I SAID GET YOUR FUCKIN HANDS IN THE AIR, YOU STUPID OR SOMETHIN? I’LL FUCKIN SHOOT YOU BITCH, GET EM UP.”

She slowly lifted her hands up, mouth wide open, eyes goggling.

“Aight there you go. Now get that money out the drawer and make it quick. I ain’t got all day.”

The cashier’s hands were shaking violently. She was an old woman, thin and frail, and the more he taunted, the more she fumbled at the register.

“What the fuck you doin? You ain’t never worked a goddamn register? Hurry the fuck up!”

Back in the back, Henry was hiding behind a row of candy. His eyes were wide, and he was breathing fast, holding a hand over his mouth.

Nate was furious.

“Are you fucking kidding me?” Nate was standing in the middle of an aisle.

“Give me that,” he said to Henry, and grabbed the six-pack from his hands. He pulled a beer out of its place, and began walking toward the robber.

“No! Nate, get back here! Nate!” Henry whispered frantically.

Nate ignored him. He walked quickly toward the thief, lifted the beer in the air behind his head and said, “Hey asshole.”

The robber instantly turned around, but before he could lift his gun, Nate smashed him in the face with the butt of the bottle.

He crumpled in a heap.

This was all too much for the cashier. Straightaway, she fainted.

And all was quiet.

Nate looked down at the robber and shook his head. “You can come out now, Henry.”

Henry remained hidden behind the candy.

“He’s out cold. Come on out.”

“Nate?” he whispered.

“Yeah.”

Henry peeked out from behind the row. He looked first at the robber collapsed on the floor, then at the bottle in Nate’s hands.

“Shit.”

“Yeah.”

“Should we call the police?”

Nate thought about it. “Nah. Let’s just go.”

He set the bottle down beside the robber’s head, and together they walked out.

Henry silently walked beside Nate, occasionally glancing up at his face.

“Why did you do that?” he asked.

Nate looked over at Henry, his face a bit more steeled than usual. “Why? Because it was the right thing to do. A bit violent maybe, but hey he had a gun.”

“The right thing to do?”

“Yeah, why not.”

Henry, walking slowly, scrunched up his face, starting to look more confused than shaken.

“What happened to the mask, Nate?”

“What?” Nate stopped and checked his pockets. “Oh I didn’t even get those cigarettes, dammit.”

“The mask. What happened to the mask? You said every good person was full of shit and a liar and then you went and did the ‘right thing.’ What happened to the mask?”

Nate sighed. “Oh Henry, you take everything so seriously. We talk and we smoke and occasionally shit happens and so on and whatnot. That doesn’t mean I’m not still full of shit. I have my mask just like everyone else. I suppose maybe sometimes my mask changes.”

“So you mean...sometimes you wear a mask of virtue...”

Henry trailed off. Nate smiled at his friend, remembering in his look of genuine contemplation why he found him so easy to talk to.

“...and sometimes a mask of vice?”

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The two walked together silently in the darkness.

White flakes of snow started falling from the sky.

by: Haitham Al-Twaijri

Pondering

There stands an ivory bridge over the water so calm, one side beginning on the worn wildflower path, the other ending on a small patch of grass. I sit in the grass before it, wondering, pondering its story. How old was it? Who had put it there and why? It led to a tiny island, a blotch of green in the midst of the water's rainbowed reflections. There appeared to be no purpose for the bridge but to cross over it and realize it led to nowhere. But then again, maybe that was exactly why it had been placed there; to prove that not every pathway will lead to something significant, but it could very well lead to something beautiful.

by: Melissa Eastman

Is the Grass Green over There?

Ben is not handsome in the traditional sense, but he possesses a certain charm. Most women wouldn't think much of him upon first glance, but if they got to know him even a bit and caught a glimpse of his smile they wouldn't soon forget him. He is a classic "late bloomer"; a guy who garnered little to no attention from the fairer sex throughout high school and college. Naturally, now that he is (kind of) happily married with a young son, eyelashes are being batted in his general direction quite frequently.

And while he is very stylish and well put-together, from his bold shirt and tie choices to the cuffed up sleeves exposing his tattooed forearms, he is not nearly as smooth as the quiet confidence he exudes. He frequently trips over his own feet, multiple flights of stairs particularly being a weakness of his. He often alternates between taking one step at a time and skipping a step here and there, which on more than one occasion has led to jammed wrists and bruised knees.

Although he relishes the flirty looks and exchanges he gets from other women, he for so long has wanted his wife Rachele to look at him with the same longing eyes. At some point during her pregnancy with their son, Cole, any spark that remained between the two of them had completely fizzled. He was still just as attracted to her as the day he first met her, possibly even more so. He couldn't fight the feeling that she just wasn't into him anymore. There is something about being wanted that Ben finds so much more appealing than being loved and therein lies the problem.

He had left work a few hours early but wasn't ready to go home, so here he was belly up at the bar working on rum and coke numero dos. The bar so desperately wanted to be an old hole-in-the-wall, despite having clientele too young to remember the Spin Doctors and employing a classically trained chef; artisanal, free-range sliders is not something you typically find at a rundown dive bar.

That was when she walked in. She was the type of girl who can (and quite often does) cause audible gasps at her beauty when she enters the room. He nearly choked on his drink and tried, unsuccessfully, to play it off cool as a cough. You could almost

hear all the men at the bar cross their fingers simultaneously, hoping she would sit next to them.

As she ordered a glass of white wine from the bartender, Ben was slipping the wedding ring off of his finger and into the pocket of his pinstriped slacks. "Aren't you a little...perfect to be in a place like this?" he nervously said to her, immediately kicking himself for opening with such a hokey line. He was an excellent self-deprecator and played it off well, so she found herself smiling at his trite attempt at a conversation.

"I think they only let perfect people in here," she joked as she sat down next to him. "I'm Molly."

"Ben. It's a pleasure to meet you."

They made small talk over their drinks. Ben had to catch himself on multiple occasions from referring to his son or his wife, not wanting his cover to be blown. She had now leaned in closer to him, running her fingers along the tattoos on his exposed forearm. He felt like he was dreaming, a mixture of excitement and horror. He and Rachelle began dating in college, she his first serious girlfriend and so he didn't experience the dating scene like so many of his peers. And while he had thought about cheating on her many times over their years together, he never had the heart to actually do it.

Just as things seemed like they couldn't possibly go any better for Ben, he was choke slammed back to reality as the door opened and two new patrons walked in together, laughing. Ben immediately felt his blood run cold; he knew that laugh anywhere. He quickly excused himself to the little boy's room and rushed towards the restroom with his head down, shielding his face with an outstretched palm.

He punched and partially shattered the mirror as he entered the men's room. That bitch! Here he was, just trying to blow off a little steam after a long day's work while Rachelle is out drinking with another man. Sure, he was flirting with Molly, but he never would have actually had the stomach to act on his desires. And if his wife was here, where the hell was the boy? Rachelle left her job when Cole was 18 months to stay home with him full time after a string of illnesses made attending daycare a borderline hazardous decision. They typically had a hard enough time finding a reliable

babysitter when the two of them wanted to break the monotony and go to dinner or see a movie, so how was she able to find someone to watch Cole during the middle of a Friday afternoon?

He paced back and forth, pretending to wash his hands when someone else walked into the bathroom as to not raise suspicion. He needed an exit strategy. Part of him wanted to sneak out of there with Molly to find a different bar, hell maybe even a hotel, but the bar wasn't big enough for him to accomplish this without being seen. The other, angrier half wanted to confront his cheating wife, and expose her in front of everyone in the establishment. Sure, it would kill his chances with Molly but she was out of his league, anyway.

"Who is this guy?" Ben wondered to himself. He seemed good looking enough, Ben supposed, although he was 10-15 years older than he and Rachele. She had always joked with him that she was into older men, but Ben figured that was her alluding to the fact that he was 7 months older than her. They were sitting together at a small table near the corner. She looked stunning, wearing the black and green dress she typically only wore to weddings or the occasional Valentine's Day date.

He wasn't sure if it was the sickening feeling of having his world turned upside or the intake of alcohol on an empty stomach, but Ben threw up in the stall before composing himself and deciding his next steps as he wiped his eyes dry and rinsed his mouth at the sink. Molly would certainly be wondering what on Earth happened to him by now, or simply moved on to the next available seat at the bar. He popped a piece of gum and threw open the door.

"Let's get out of here," he hurriedly said to Molly as he slapped two \$20 bills down on to the bar and swigged the last of his drink. She agreed, but wanted to freshen up a bit in the bathroom before they left. While he waited at the bar, fidgeting and tapping his feet, he heard Rachele burst into laughter again. He'd never heard her laugh at anyone like that other than him. This was more than he could handle. Ben approached the table and loudly cleared his throat.

"Well, well, look at here! My wife, who is supposed to be at home with our 3 year old son, is instead at a strange bar with a strange man! Guess what, you whore? I'm here with someone

as well! That's right, here she comes now. We were just leaving, weren't we, Molly?" Molly looked mortified as she walked out of the bathroom and witnessed the exchange. "You're married, you scumbag? Go to hell!" Her heels clicked on the tile floor as she stomped out of the bar.

Ben turned back towards his wife and this...guy. A streak of mascara ran down her left cheek as she tried to contain her emotions. The guy didn't look up, but instead was closing up a briefcase. "I'm sorry, Mrs. Porter. We'll be in touch." Ben's heart was in his stomach as the man slid a business card across the table to Rachelle, who had a copy of what appeared to be her resume sitting next to her. "Mr. Porter, you have my sincere apologies as well. The conference room we typically hold our interviews in was booked all afternoon so we decided to have a chat across the street at this bar."

Her voice cracking as she spoke, Rachelle began gathering her things into her purse. "I couldn't stand being stuck at home anymore, having no adult interaction," she explained. "I didn't want to bring it up with you until I knew I was a serious candidate and that it was for sure something I wanted to do. Your brother is watching Cole for an hour or so." She hurried out the door before she completely broke down.

Ben felt as though he was having an out of body experience. He'd just humiliated the love of his life for no reason. His own unhappiness with his life had made him oblivious to her discontent. He felt like he might be sick again, but there was nothing else left for him to throw up. He realized after driving about a mile that he was in no condition to drive, so he parked the car and decided to walk the final two miles or so home.

While he was walking, he pulled out his phone and Googled "marriage counseling" and scrolled through the results until he found someone he considered to look trustworthy. Ben knew this was going to be a hard hill for them to climb but he also knew that, more than ever, this is what he wanted. He wanted his happily-ever-after with his princess.

The phone went flying from his hands before he felt it, and it happened so quickly he almost didn't feel it at all anyway. The car slammed into him before the brakes made even the slightest

squeal. His body immediately went limp as it was lifted up and over the hood of the vehicle, his head bounced off the windshield with a sickening thud.

*** **

She hadn't wanted Ben's brother Jared to know she'd been crying, so she was taking the scenic route home while she composed herself. She couldn't believe this was happening. Not only had he humiliated her, he almost guaranteed she wouldn't get that job now. That selfish asshole!

She planned to get Cole and pack a couple of bags and head for her mother's house. They'd be halfway there before he even realized they were gone! "No," she told herself, "he should be the one who has to leave and explain himself to our son and his family." While waiting at a red light, she took her phone out and Googled "good divorce lawyer" and contemplated her options. She absent-mindedly began driving again as soon as the light was green, still scrolling through the seemingly endless search results of divorce attorneys in her area.

Rachelle always drove faster when she was upset, a fact that Ben used to tease her about and call her "dad-ish" because both his father and hers used to do the same thing when they would be on family trips in their youth. She finally decided on a lawyer she thought looked trustworthy, and the 4.7 rating he'd received so far on Google validated her decision. While trying to access his website, she missed the red light and did not realize until the BOOM on her hood and the CRASH of her windshield startled her back to reality.

by: Matt Siverson

Catchall

Every person has a sanctuary, a retreat from the stress of daily life. While some find peace in exotic or luxurious destinations, others find tranquility in places that are comfortable and familiar. My bedroom is my happy place, silly as that may sound. I have painstakingly crafted an environment that is both aesthetically pleasing and functional. Every piece of furniture was individually selected or handmade to compliment my design and vision.

My century-old antique dressers are sturdy, yet intricately detailed. I discovered them at a crowded flea market like buried treasure. I imagine the stories they could tell about every home and era they have lived in. If only furniture could speak. The dressers were perfect additions to my collection of old things in my old Victorian house. I will never understand the appeal of new furniture. Why waste time assembling particle board contraptions that are cheap and disposable? I'd much rather surround myself with pieces that have experience, that hold mysteries. My dressers have survived longer than most people, so I treat them with due care and respect.

Clutter in my environment clutters my mind. I feel secure and in control when my bedroom is tidied and arranged just so. My trouble lies in the fact that I share my home with a husband, four children, and two dogs. While I embrace the love and excitement and chaos a large family brings, my bedroom is my safe harbor. My calm within the storm. I can cope with much of my house resembling the aftermath of a twister in toy store, so long as my room remains untouched. Is that too much to ask? You can ravage the playroom if it brings you joy. Feel free to rummage the kitchen cabinets and tinker in the den. My only request is that my bedroom remain lovely and unscathed.

My family seems to have misconstrued my wish as a challenge. My immaculately organized room is irresistible and my obsession with order has become a game. My beloved dressers, in particular, possess some sort of magnetic attraction for clutter. All types of random objects materialize on their surfaces faster than I can clear them. It's actually quite astonishing. I find buttons, video game controllers, wrenches, socks, dishes, trash, and the like every

time I look. My dressers have become catchalls for everything my family picks up. My children will come in to say goodnight and manage to leave a cup or a toy on my dresser as they exit. If my husband doesn't know what to do with something broken or found, he places it on my dresser. Surely I know its proper place and purpose.

I know my loved ones mean no harm. I doubt they grasp the degree to which it irritates me. When they don't know what to do with something, they place it on my dresser assuming that I will. I am the mother, after all. Sometime between getting married and having children I seem to have developed magical powers. I am the finder of all lost things. I am the seer of sneaky, mischievous deeds. I am the healer of wounds, physical and emotional. I am miraculously immune to the effects of sickness and sleepless nights. My dressers have become alters, displaying offerings and requests. Surely I will know what to do with that apple core and that broken television antenna. It must be my duty to concern myself with all things discarded. After all, with great power comes great responsibility.

When darkness falls and the house slowly becomes still, I breathe in the quiet and commiserate with my dressers. They know what it is like. Their drawers are heavy with other's belongings. Their surfaces are museums of trinkets and trash. Though they are sturdy and beautiful, I notice new scratches and chipped paint. Every night I clear them and wipe them clean. I take in the silence and remove the clutter from my dressers and my mind. We sit for a while in the peace enjoyed only by those who stay up far too late. I relish in the renewed order and beauty of my room. Eventually the day's excitement catches up with me and I must turn out the light. Despite sturdy craftsmanship and magical powers, being the catchall is exhausting.

by: Alicia Goehring

Recollection

With ambiguous loss, there is no closure; the challenge is to learn how to live with the ambiguity. –Pauline Boss, Ph.D.

How does one even begin to mourn the loss of someone who never existed? Is it possible? I have experienced a loss without any closure or understanding, a loss that no one seems to acknowledge or accept. I am left searching for answers, struggling to make sense of this unsanctioned and unrecognized anguish on my own. My grief is real and powerful, whether other people recognize it or not.

The day that changed my life started out like any other, superbly unremarkable. I awoke to the smell of coffee and the sound of my husband singing Elvis Presley songs in the kitchen. I took a quick shower, dressed, and woke the girls up for school. Predictably, Emma was eager to start the day and Claire begged for five more minutes of sleep. I never grew tired of helping them get dressed or sorting out their tangles of blonde curls.

I vividly remember kissing Sam goodbye that morning. He pressed his lips to mine and promised to call on his way home. His wide smile and crooked glasses reminded me of the boy I fell in love with years before. As I watched him leave for work, I could still see my sweet awkward Sam hiding beneath that athletic physique and polished suit. We had been married for nearly ten years and I cherished every moment of it. We built a gratifying life together; struggling, growing, and raising our two daughters. Through it all, he always made me laugh and made me feel appreciated. I vowed never to take him for granted.

In retrospect, I must have sensed trouble.

I chased my giggling girls to the car and fastened them into their seats. Ever her mother's daughter, Claire requested I play Led Zeppelin's Greatest Hits. I was proud of my second-grader's exceptional taste in music. Emma was just learning to read and recited each sign we passed. The glimmer of the sun and the unseasonably warm air held the promise of an early spring. We stopped at a red light and I adjusted the rearview mirror to watch my curly-haired cherubs belt out "Stairway to Heaven" with passion. That moment,

so poignant now, marked the end of life as I knew it. I didn't even see the truck as it sped through the traffic light and plowed into our car.

Unfamiliar sounds and voices filled the darkness. I could hear the hum of fluorescent lighting and machines beeping and chirping incessantly. I was overwhelmed by the smell; it smelled clean, too clean, like antiseptic or bleach. My head was swathed tightly and it itched. I wanted to scratch it, but my arms were too weak. I could feel a mess of tubes and wires connected to various parts of my body. I squinted my eyes open and was assaulted by intense brightness. The room was stark white; the glaring lights reflected off of the glossy tiled floor. I noticed a soap opera playing on a television in the corner and a wide window that was obscured by dozens of flowers and balloons.

Just as I was adjusting to my surroundings, a woman in scrubs entered the room. When her eyes met mine, she appeared startled and scurried out. She returned a moment later with three other people. They all stared at me with excitement and anticipation. A man in a suit and lab coat knelt next to my bed. His attractive smile and salt-and-pepper hair reminded me of George Clooney.

"It's so good to see you awake Lily. I'm Dr. Frederickson. How are you feeling?"

Dr. Frederickson's voice was smooth and calming, but my mind was in disarray. My throat burned and my voice cracked when I tried to speak. I'm sure my eyes revealed my bewilderment. He handed me a cup of water and urged me to take a drink. It was cold and shocking at first, but I was parched and the wetness was soothing.

"Where am I?" I didn't recognize the sound of my own voice.

"It's alright Lily. I'm sure this is a lot to take in. You're at Saint Luke's Hospital, and you've been here quite a while." Dr. Frederickson explained.

"My name is Lauren."

"Pardon me?" Dr. Frederickson seemed to share my confusion.

"You keep calling me Lily, but my name is Lauren. Why am I here?"

When Dr. Frederickson explained that I had been in a serious car accident, my memory returned with sudden clarity.

“My girls! Are the girls alright? Where are they?! Are they with Sam?” I sobbed. I was shaking violently and choking back tears. Emma and Claire had been with me in the car. I struggled to breathe and felt like I might pass out. One of the nurses injected something into my IV that relaxed my breathing and fogged my mind.

“No, please don’t.” I pleaded feebly. “Just tell me where my girls are.”

Darkness fell. I dreamed of Sam and our girls.

It’s too bad I couldn’t stay asleep forever. When the sedatives wore off, the room was filled with unfamiliar faces. A middle-aged woman with a tired face was crying next to my bed. She clung tightly to a large, bearded man. Dr. Frederickson tried to convince me that the woman was my aunt and that I had been in a car accident with my parents. Everyone kept calling me Lily. They must still have me on some sort of sedative because I laughed when he revealed that my parents were killed in the crash. The room grew silent and everyone stared at me as if I were mad.

“You can’t be serious? My name is Lauren and my parents died almost thirty years ago. Is this some kind of joke?”

My would-be aunt shrieked and sobbed on her lumberjack husband’s shoulder. Once everyone settled down, Dr. Frederickson stated that because I was only seventeen years old, it would be impossible for my parents to have passed away thirty years ago. Again, I burst into laughter.

“Seventeen? I’m flattered, but you’re wrong again. I’ll be thirty-four in...”

I caught a glimpse of my reflection in the window and stopped short. I demanded a mirror. Despite the bandage on my head and obvious healing injuries, it was clear that the face I saw was not my own. I saw a girl that, indeed, looked much younger than me. Her hair was deep red, stick straight, and long. Her enormous green eyes were prominent on her thin freckled cheeks. She looked much like the woman crying near my bed. I didn’t recognize the girl at all. I had curly blonde hair that I never grew past my shoulders and

my eyes were chocolate brown. My full face revealed emerging laugh-lines that reflected my age and my happiness. The girl in the mirror was a stranger.

I was diagnosed with retrograde amnesia and a post-traumatic brain injury. A whole slew of specialists examined me and prescribed various treatments. The woman who claimed to be my aunt was kind, but misguided. She continued to visit daily and bring photos of my “family.” She told me that I have a younger brother that missed me and wanted to see me when my health improved. Physically, I had healed faster than expected and regained a great deal of strength. Psychologically and emotionally, I was a wreck.

I couldn't stop thinking about Sam and the girls. I felt sick worrying about them and wondering where they were. Countless doctors gently, yet explicitly, explained that they were not real; I was not Lauren. I had never been married. I had never been a mother. I was a seventeen-year-old orphan with a brain injury and a confused sense of reality. I had imagined my entire life and identity. I refused to believe it. Only a woman who had married her best friend and experienced motherhood could understand the depth of love, and loss, and fear that I felt. Something had gone terribly wrong, the universe had somehow made a mistake, and I had to figure out how to fix it.

by: Alicia Goehring

Lamb Watch

The harsh sound of my alarm wakes me from my peaceful slumber. I reach over and turn it off, careful not to wake my roommate. The light from my phone screen hurts my eyes as they begin to adjust to the bright light. I read the time on the glowing screen. 1:45 in the morning. What am I doing up this early? My mind starts to focus as I roll out of bed and pull on my jeans. The smell of the barn is radiating off of them. I quietly leave the room, careful to not slam the door and wake my roommate. I slide my feet into my boots and pull on my iodine stained sweatshirt. Jeez, I really need to do my laundry. I grab my keys and a granola bar, knowing that I will be hungry in a couple hours and might not get the chance to come back. I step out of the warm building and into the crisp, cool February air. I walk to my car, unlock the door, and drive the short distance to the barn.

Outside everything is quiet, but inside there are close to forty sheep waiting to give birth. I wish I had sheep at home. They are a lot easier to handle than cows. I look at the lambing book to see what has happened today and what I need to do. Five lambs born already today. WOW! I walk through all of the sheep making sure not to miss any that might go into labor soon. With the help of my shift partner we mix up milk and bottle feed the hungry babies. Not all of them need to be fed, but there are a few that need to be supplemented. A lamb in the back of one of the jugs, a small pen for one ewe and her babies, needs tube-fed and he doesn't look good. Why don't you just get up and eat you stupid lamb? Your brother has no problem figuring it out. You poor little guy. I wish you were doing better. The lamb won't stand, won't nurse from a bottle, and barely moves. I feel its stomach; it is as hard as a rock. In the morning I will tell T to look at it and she will decide what needs to be done with the poor little one.

I write down in the book what we have done so far. Bottle feed, check. Walk through ewes, check. Process any new lambs. Just as I was about to see if any lambs needed recording I look up and see a ewe with a protruding water bag. Oh great, looks like it's not going to be a quiet night tonight after all.

“Hey! There’s one in labor,” I call to my partner who is finishing feeding one of the lambs.

“Where is it at?”

“On the other side of the feeder.”

We make our way over to the ewe. By the time we get to her, her water bag has broken and she has one lamb on the ground. She stands to lick off her baby as a second water bag begins to bulge out with a lamb’s head inside. My shift partner and I work together to pop the bag to allow air to enter the sack so the lamb can breathe. Not long after we pop the sack she has the second lamb on the ground. My partner opens the gate to the larger of the two open jugs. I grab the lambs and lure her into the pen by letting her follow her lambs.

We process the two lambs born before our shift and return to the new mother. According to her tag number she was the seventeenth ewe born in 2007, making her nine years old, so she isn’t really a new mother. We process her lambs and strip her out so that the lambs can get the nice warm milk. My partner goes to clean the tray of lambing supplies and I finish writing in the lambing book. When I look up the back feet of a third lamb are hanging out. I rush to get my partner in case we find the need to pull the lamb, but by the time we get back the lamb is lying on the ground. We wait several minutes and finish cleaning before we process the third lamb. We weigh the third lamb, 12.1 pounds. She pushed her biggest lamb out backwards unassisted. That is one good sheep. No wonder they’ve kept her this long. We record the lamb in the book and take one last look through all of the ewes. By now it is nearly five o’clock.

After making sure there is no more work to be done, I leave the barn and drive back to my dorm. I quietly enter the room and crawl into my bed after removing my barn clothes. I talk to a friend from home that is now awake before finally falling asleep after an hour. Within ten minutes my roommate’s alarm goes off and awakens me from my short sleep. I try to fall back asleep but by the time I do I only get an half an hour to rest. I force myself to get out of my bed and get ready for class. I make myself a cup of coffee and am out the door to start my day.

Why don't I just learn to go to bed earlier? I ask myself every time I have a night lamb watch. I honestly don't even care anymore. I am off to six hours of classes and another hour on lamb watch. I love being in the barn and I wouldn't change anything.

by: Neka Davis

A Heart that was Broken

Starved, frightened, and skittish were the first thoughts that come to mind when she arrived at the farm. With wild, darting eyes and skin covering what seemed to be nothing but bones; we took this neglected and abused horse into our care and named her Rosy. Rosy, at first didn't show many signs that she had been emotionally abused as well, but as time passed it became exceptionally clear that this horse would never be the same as our other two horses. The experiences that she encountered will forever affect her, and her abuse is still seen now.

When Rosy first arrived at our farm, we could tell right away that something was wrong. Simple tasks such as catching and leading were nearly impossible. Upon working with Rosy, we found that she is terrified of male handlers. Rosy was most likely abused and beaten by a man who had access to her. The abuse she experienced has made her horrified of men and also strangers. She shied away from everyone that got even marginally close to her.

Not only was her abuse evident, but almost anyone could also tell that she had been neglected and was experiencing malnutrition. The phrase, "skin and bones," did not mean anything to me until I saw Rosy. I had never seen an animal that skinny before. My family and I could each count every one of her ribs and her face was sunken in around her eyes. Her appearance only added to the way we knew that she was not being treated properly.

Evidence of Rosy's abusive past is still present her life. Trying to catch her has proven to be difficult since the moment we got her. Animal abuse teaches the animal, Rosy, to fear humans. Naturally Rosy fears everyone because of this. When approaching this horse, one must move extremely slow and talk in a soothing voice to calm her. Sometimes, however, even this doesn't work; her skittishness is always a top concern, as she associates quick movement with upcoming abuse.

Rosy has come a long way in the six years we have had her but, we still struggle with her on a daily basis. For example, this past weekend we had a farrier appointment to get her hooves trimmed. Normally, to ensure safety, Rosy has to be sedated by the hoof trimmer. This sedation calms her and allows us to trim her

hooves without injuries. This time, however, Rosy was not fully sedated before we began. She had received the proper amount of medication, but with her adrenaline racing high the medication was not effective. Her scared, frightened personality got the best of her and she began to panic. At first, we thought that the sedation hadn't kicked in yet, but we were wrong; the longer we waited the more agitated and skittish she became. Originally she began to try kicking her foot away from the farrier's grip, but this escalated quickly into biting at me, as I was holding the lead tethered to her halter, and rearing up.

Any progress that we make, can be easily shattered with one wrong move of my hand, or even the quick movement of our surroundings. Although Rosy has improved from what she came to us as, I know that I do not have anything more to offer her. The effects of the physical abuse she received before we bought her are too hard for her to overcome. Currently we are considering sending her to a rescue where trainers can begin to help her conquer her past. This decision is one of the hardest I have ever had to make. I know that Rosy needs help that I cannot give to her; however I do not want to send her because of the attachment I have formed with her.

As of Saturday, January 24, 2015, the decision to sell Rosy to the rescue was made. The next step to her life has already been taken, and with the decision already made, the only item left is to contact the rescue and drop her off. I will miss this broken horse more than words can describe, but I know that in the end, this is exactly what this horse needs. Selling Rosy to this rescue ranch will allow me to know that she will be in a safe environment, and her abusive past will not become her future.

by: Savanna Cichy

Portrait of Rose



*photograph by:
Savanna Cichy*

Abandoned in Winter



*photograph by:
Savanna Cichy*

Snowy Hay Days



*photograph by:
Savanna Cichy*

One in a Million



*photograph by:
Amanda Eischen*

The Creation of Eve



*photograph by:
Noelle (Ellie) Sjoquist*

Kitty!



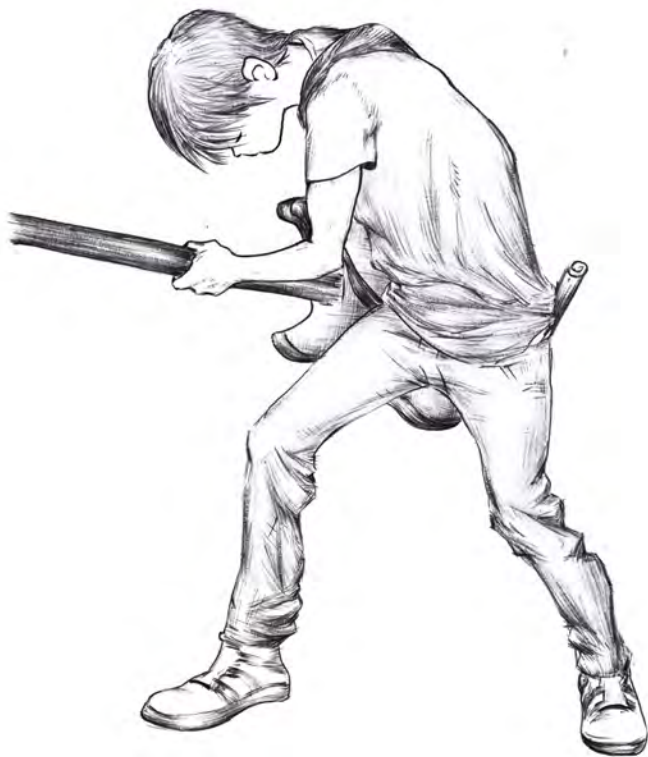
*drawing by:
Rachel MacDowell*

The Mountain Blues



*painting by:
Emily Sutliff*

Crawl



drawing by:
Tao Ma

Worry

Brooding thoughts
In rapid motion,
Panicked starts
And frenzied emotion,
Pesky voices
Singing long
Of everything that could go wrong.

Deadlines looming,
Bills unpaid,
Friends neglected,
Plans unmade,
Health unheeded,
Nothing free,
What's been done, what needs to be.

The plague of passion, worry looms
And blossoms where ambition blooms.
The summit where achievement lies
Is guarded by suspicious skies.

Nothing's certain,
Worry knows,
The more you believe it,
The larger it grows.
Only faith can wring it out,
Faith, the only master of doubt,
Can grow a home for something new,
Something beautiful and true:
Peace of mind with no intrusion –

Doubt is a very compelling illusion.

by: Haitham Al-Twaijri

Whirling Dervish

Whirling and whirling in the swirling flame,
The student cannot hear the lecturer.
The clouds, amorphous, suffocating, grim,
Give shape to the shadows that bandy within,
They say to him, "Witness your soul that we mirror,
Find form in the clouds and you'll see yourself clearer."

Meanwhile, proposing maniacal purpose,
"Love and service!" whirls the twirling dervish.
Does he see? Has he gone? Transcended our plane?
The howling old dervish is at it again.

The clouds promise answers to question long sought –
"I see it! I've held it! - - How soon I forgot!
No devil can bar me from seeking what's mine!
No angel convince me I'm merely divine!
There is Evil conjoined to the holiest graces,
Purity found in the darkest of places,
Condemn you a master to tell you what's true –
I lie to find freedom – I fight – I break through!"

The lecture, receding, becomes what it teaches –
“Grasping, you further the length of your reaches” –
Unseals, at its absence, the scent of conclusion:
“To master your future, believe your illusion.”

Meanwhile, proposing maniacal purpose,
“Love and service!” twirls the whirling dervish.
Does he see? Has he gone? Transcended our plane?
The howling old dervish repeats in refrain:

“We lose what we crave the moment we seek it,
But crave what is not and we always receive it;
Irony? – Only the ego will feel.
For only to ego desire is real.”

The lecture is lost now, its lesson complete:
“Tomorrow, you are the mirage at your feet.
Unseal with your absence the scent of conclusion;
To master your future, believe your illusion.”

by: Haitham Al-Twaijri

Leaf

Down, down in the dirt,
Lay a precious form,
All full of beauty;
Lay beside the worm.

This form, created,
and designed, still
Changing to survive
The dark, harsh world.
Lay there without fault,
its silent form, it
Refuses to halt.

Down, down in the dirt,
Lay a precious form,
All full of beauty,
Lays an offering,
All full of belief,
beside the still worm,
Lays a brown, dead leaf.

by: Derek Beistad

The Hawk

Gus coughed from behind the counter as he polished a glass. I tapped my own glass with a grunt and he shook his head. Glen Miller hummed cheerfully from the jukebox at the far end of the diner.

“You know this ain’t a pub, Harper,” he growled in his deep baritone.

“I know, but the pie’s good and one day I’m gonna get Roxy to marry me so I can have it every night,” I said as Gus poured a gentle amount of whiskey in my glass.

“You found your meat yet tonight?” he asked going back to the polishing. A bell rang and a young couple came in laughing and touching each other. I watched each one cautiously through my glass taking a long slow sip. The man straighten his naval blues in an attempt to be presentable, the lady wasn’t having any of it. She pulled his clothes desperately, but he managed to sit them both at the counter.

“Who says I’m looking for anyone? Can’t a man just get some whiskey and pie in the middle of the night?” I asked touching the glass back to the counter without letting go. Gus eyed me accusingly and nodded slightly at the couple without either of them taking notice. I tilted my head smoothly in affirmation. A young couple, a Navy Squid and some young dish were the ones I had been waiting for, these two kids exactly.

“Pie?” Gus asked them as they sat down.

“Just the java, I think,” the Squid said. “Lucy, behave!” he scolded his moll playfully. Lucy giggled and touched his face with a delicate hand. The touching and smirking doubled as Gus poured a couple cups of black sludgy coffee. Neither paid the cups any attention but the Squid tossed some folding money on the counter and let the woman’s fiery hair strangle his hands. It was clear they couldn’t stay in public much longer. I didn’t have all night, the faster they left the faster I could get it over with. The Squid jumped tossing over the stool and Lucy smirked innocently. Flustered he

snatched it up and slung it down again brushing off his uniform for no reason.

Lucy spoke this time, "I think we should go someplace else, Charlie." The Squid flushed dark red but she snagged his arm and drug him out quick as a blink. I stood up pushing the stool back loudly, brushing my suit with unnecessary care and settled the lid on my head. The stool scraped back into place and my shoes clicked smartly as I took my time crossing the diner.

"You forgetting something?" Gus called not looking up.

Tossing a sawbuck on the booth next to the door I called back, "Be back in twenty, the rest of the ten is for that lemon pie I expect Roxy to have for me."

"You'll get what we have and like it," Roxy's sultry voice floated from the back.

"And some ice cream too, dame." I smiled knowing it would fluster her.

"Careful out there, Harper," Gus said as I left.

I laughed. "Always am!"

The street was dark, hinky for the big Manhattan town at this time but it worked in my favor. Every other streetlamp flickered or was snuffed out. I pulled up the left of my suit jacket and touched a dark animal carved with ink on that side. A wolf. I hesitated as I trace its dark outline with nervous rigid fingers, bracing myself for the electric spike of pain it would cause. With a steadying breath, I dug my fingers into the wolf and ripped it out one burning feature at a time. The beast shook its head trying to claw its way out of my skin and it howled in frustration when it remained lodged on me. Through gritted I snarled and dug my fingernails in deeper and tore the wolf's shape off my bleeding body and flung it away. I bowed, my hands resting on my knees while I calmed my breathing, looking up through the tears I found the wolf staring at me with impatience.

"You know what we're looking for, London," I growled at him through still clenched teeth. My palms tingled as I rubbed the two eagle eye tattoos, the only two I kept visible, and with a fluid movement slammed them over my own eyes. A jolt of nausea

rolled over me as I kept my hands locked over my open eyes allowing the blinding light flood it. When the light dimmed I uncovered them and suddenly it was like going from Dorothy's farm to OZ. Light and color flooded the dark haze into a brilliantly lit cascade of color as I watched the tail end of London dart around the corner. A scream ripped from around the same corner and I was quickly running towards it. "Guess I didn't need you for the hunt tonight after all, buddy," I said to myself and to my massive bearwolf companion. I drew the Dillinger pistol and rounded the corner to find London being held by his throat by a man that was the color of old milk and clad in another naval dress. That's how the bastard was doing it, he was in the navy too.

Lucy huddled behind Charlie, who appeared to have lost a fair amount of blood before London could distract the assailant. The man barred massive needle-like fangs in the front of his mouth where several normal teeth should have been. He bit into London and found that the wolf was made of ink and not flesh. He spit and flung the wolf sideways. "Vampire!" I shouted at him. The vampire's head snapped up from the couple that had caught his attention again. He glared in my direction. Faster than a thought passed The Dillinger fired nine times, nine sickening thuds told me every bullet had struck home as they always did. I holstered the weapon as the creature dropped to the pavement dead.

Lucy choked trying to say something but Charlie managed a few words. "Thank...you."

"You best get that looked at," I said turning away from the devastated couple. "Come London, let's get some pie."

by: Brice Giffen

Frogs

He inhales deeply. The scent of honeysuckles and the damp forest greet him and he wonders how long he's been lying here. How long has sleep held him? He knows it's been a while because the sun is slipping away. It sinks down deep into the horizon; past the easy peaks of the gentle mountains and into the effortless slopes of the valley. His back aches and his arm's asleep but the tranquility of this summer evening is intoxicating. Crickets are singing off deep in the woods and tree frogs will soon be joining in. The forest sings its symphony and he doesn't want to move. He wants to lay here and watch the sky change from vibrant warm hues of the sunset to deep cool shades of the night as the forest hums her lullaby. Soon the fireflies will be out and the forest will mimic the sky. Constellations will flicker and dance in the subtle breeze of the cool mountain air. The night will come to life.

Yet, for the moment, the sky's still bright and his arm is still asleep and the woman to his left stirs. A copy of a worn and well-loved book is laid over her face where she'd used it to block out the warm summer sun as lethargy overtook her and pulled her into an evening nap. Now, however, her hand bats at her stomach, hunting for her bookmark, and she's awake.

She lifts the book from her face and slides the bookmark in place. She notches it between two pages. He sees her smile and he feels his chest tighten in response. It's involuntary and overwhelming but it's good and he embraces the sensation as he watches her. Then her eyes are on him. Their eyes meet and a flush colors her cheeks behind the smattering of freckles on her nose.

Every inch of her, from head to toe, is beautiful. He knows, beyond a shadow of a doubt, that he wants to grow old with her. It's a desire that need not be voiced because they've spoken their oaths before a flock of familiar faces and exchanged traditional adornments. That are tethered to their respective places. A warm reminder that they have forever.

She moves and turns toward him. A shock of her red mane falls over her shoulder and onto her chest. He follows it with his eyes before he lifts his gaze to her and, without words, beckons her closer. There is no hesitation when she answers.

She moves to him and closes the small space between her former resting place and his. Her body is warm when she presses it to him and curls up against his side. Her head is a welcomed weight against his chest and he vaguely wonders if she can hear the increased tempo of his heart. She whispers to him about 'forever' and about her dreams and about their future while she's there against him. He strokes her hair thoughtfully as he listened to her speak. He feels the words as she voices her thoughts she's tucked tightly against him.

After a while she's quiet again and for a time he wonders if she's fallen asleep again until she speak three simple and heartfelt words. He replies to her without hesitation because he feels much the same way. It's a wordless and powerful emotion that the tongues of man have simplified but he takes it for what it is and relaxes against the ground as the tree frogs start to sing.

by: Stephanie Lane

For Frida

She said she didn't need feet
Her wings would be enough
The roots that grew and tried to keep her down
Were of no use

The limits were limitless
Her imagination flew and took an unexpected course
Some may see it as such a mess
Yet I bet you have yet to see that

We don't need feet
Because we have wings to fly
Creativity will be there as an emancipator
Of the chains society may place upon us

We're not weak
We don't need feet
Frida uprooted the roots that kept her down
She said her wings were enough

by: Cassandra Morthera

The Game

At first it's like a game of hide-and-go-seek. It's fun. It's simple. You follow it through an amiable maze, lost in a sense of pure contentment as you encompass one another in a shroud of mutual enhancement.

The trial of this maze, however, starts out as a one-time thing; it always starts out as a one-time thing. Nobody ever thinks they'll do it forever. Nobody ever believes that this game of hide-and-go-seek could take a deadly turn for the worse, disappearing behind a corner and switching places with the deadly gamble of Russian roulette.

No, it's simply fun. It's not a need. It's not a craving. It's not an unavoidable necessity that would drive you to do unthinkable acts of horror. It's fun.

The first step of the game starts off with a snort or a puff; it's nothing intimidating, nothing to be afraid of. You're offered it cordially like it's an honor. So, you take it like one.

The veterans around you inject needles in their arms, inhaling sharply as they plunge the taunting liquid through their veins. You are offered to join them in their quest, but you deny. Needles are for the people who need it. Needles are for the people who have let it manifest into a dark chasm of deadly craving. Needles are for the people who have let the fun get out of control.

But you won't let it escape your grasp. It's a game of hide-and-go-seek, and this is your game. You'll always be one step ahead of it, watching with a knowing eye and ready to stop at any moment if the game isn't fun anymore.

You're better than those other screw ups; you're special. Special as you may be, though, you still find yourself reluctantly scared; this is the stuff your mother warned you about. This is the stuff the schools hid from you. This is the stuff that could get you in a lot of trouble.

But along with the fear comes the invigorating sensation of rebellion, and before you know it you've already done it, and there's

no going back. You are ripped from the driver's seat of your life and forced to watch as the game takes the steering wheel.

Then, out of the nowhere, the initial fear you had is gone. Suddenly you're encapsulated in the warming blanket of peace. Entirely encompassed by pure serenity, you disown the warnings of your mother and you forget the cautions of your school. This isn't like the other drugs; this one is simply pleasant. It doesn't hurt you. It doesn't knock you out. It doesn't make you psychotic. It simply makes you content.

Everything is pleasantly beautiful. You can't even describe the feeling; it's nothing like you thought it'd be. The sun is bright, alighting the dark room you're confined in with its tantalizing rays of affection. The feeling surrounding you is blissful, rushing through your veins, prickling across your skin, tingling throughout your brain, flooding into your eyes, ringing through your ears, fuming at your fingertips, steaming in your nose, and filling your soul with a calming sense of peace and ease.

How could something this good ever be thought to be bad? The people you sit there with, however silent they may be, are suddenly your friends. You can't help the potent feelings of affection overtaking you as you are catapulted into a land of ecstasy, and you simply lay your head back, smiling slightly as sensations of happiness sweep over your skin.

This wave of bliss washing over you is tantalizing, so you decide to follow it. You chase the feeling of ecstasy in a delighted pursuit, begging the warming sensation of serenity to continue its course through your veins, allowing yourself to stay anchored in the dream you have been immersed in.

This game you have decided to play doesn't even feel like a game to you. It feels like being reunited with the innocence of childhood, eradicating any worry, fear, or doubt you may have had and replacing it with a euphoric splendor that charges through your being in an empowering surge.

For hours you sit there playing the game. For hours you are encapsulated in its warm embrace. For hours you let it drive your life, watching as it finds a way to ease your mind and stimulate your senses. For hours you allow the salvation to overcome you, reveling in the intense feeling of tranquility you had never before

seen, and encouraging the essence of the game with welcoming arms.

The next morning you awaken to the sweet afterglow of the night before, a faint sense of peace drifting over your mind as you get ready and leave, wondering how this game could be considered deadly when it left you feeling so good.

There was no aftereffect. There was no hangover. There was no feeling of regret, nausea, illness or defeat. You simply felt empowered. So, you decided to play the game again.

Pretty soon the game became a weekly diversion. The land of your dreams was sitting right beside you every second you resided in reality, reminding you of the glory of the high, and begging you to play just one more time.

Before you know it, someone is offering you a needle, and you look at it tentatively, remembering the time when you had vowed never to inject. You remember claiming that the people who inject are in need; they don't play the game, they are owned by the game. As you begin to shake your head, however, they tell you that it's no big deal. It's the same as snorting it, it just makes it happen faster. How could you argue with that logic?

The first time you do it you puke. Cradling the toilet like it's the only solid thing in your life anymore, you find yourself wondering why you ever did it in the first place. This game of hide-and-go-seek has taken its first turn for the worse, and you decide it's not fun anymore. But it's not that easy.

You try again a day later in hopes of making it to the serenity again. They tell you it'll work this time. It'll feel good this time. You won't get sick this time. And you don't.

Your veins throb with the elixir as it rushes throughout your body, and it hits you like a wall, eradicating any worries, fears, or doubts that you may have had and replacing them with the blissful sensation of absolute tranquility.

You revisit that state of warm relaxation that you have become so fond of, lapsing into a dream where nothing accompanies you but the mellow essence of felicity. The high has become a comfort blanket, and before too long you find yourself unwilling to let go.

It doesn't take long before the visits become a regular thing, and the game turns more into a chore. You're no longer amiably playing peek-a-boo with a feeling of ecstasy, but rather playing tag with a feeling of dread.

The high isn't a high anymore, it's become a state of normalcy. The throbbing through your veins now comes as a relieving salvation rather than a glorifying transcendence. You start to hate it. You hate the game, you hate the high, you hate the nightmare that has become reality, and you begin to hate yourself. It becomes monotonous. It becomes a schedule. Stab. Live. Exist. Pain... Stab. Live. Exist.

A miserable agony reverberates through every part of your being. The skin that used to prickle with excitement now squirms with discomfort. The eyes that used to be flooded with euphoric colors of contentment were now flooded with the painstakingly horrifying images of reality. The soul that used to fly free to the land of dreams was now imprisoned in the land consequences, staring longingly through the bars at the normalcy you had taken for granted.

The drug has become a necessity. What was once the recreational essence of relief has morphed into the very elixir of life. It is an obligation that cannot be overlooked. The needle is your punishment, and every time you force it into your vein and are brought back into the state of normality, you are overcome with a feeling of relief and guilt, filling you with a concoction of confusion that brings back the anxiety that you so long to be rid of.

Reality has transformed into a nightmare, and what you had once called a dream is now an unsatisfying state of normalcy. The simple life you had once lived before partaking in the game seems so far behind you that you can't even remember what it was like. Existence now revolves around a needle, and everything you do is haunted by the terrifying whispers of death in your ear, reminding you that you can't avoid the game for too much longer.

Hide-and-go-seek is for children, and you're not a child anymore. You have seen the other side, and you'll never be able to just play hide-and-go-seek ever again.

The game has morphed itself into the dangerous gamble of Russian roulette. Every time you stab that needle in your arm

you are sitting there with a gun to your head, your body shaking and your head spinning as you force that grueling liquid to course through your resenting veins, waiting for the pounding of your heart to signal its arrival at your core. So far the barrel has seemed entirely empty, but it won't take long for you to arrive at the bullet. The bullet is small, black, daunting, and fearsome. It sits there waiting for you, and at first you are terrified of it.

You fear the time that the trigger is pulled and isn't accompanied by the hollow sound of an empty barrel. You are terrified for the booming sound of death to come shooting through your head, ripping you from the only life you have ever known and catapulting you into the cascading spiral of the unknown.

But pretty soon death seems better than the agonizing revolving spiral that you are trapped in. Soon enough that bullet becomes a desired token, symbolizing a release into salvation that only death seemed capable of delivering.

What was once your biggest fear becomes your greatest desire. Pretty soon you can't take it anymore. The hatred you feel for the game and everything it consists of is so deep that it's tearing you apart from inside. Your tolerance has grown too high. The price has become too steep. The game is pulling ahead, and you are cowering in the background, watching as it swiftly overtakes your life and drives away with it, threatening to crash it and leave it to burn.

You have seen the other side. You have seen a side of the universe that you were never meant to experience. The game has become your punishment. Before too long you have people telling you that you need help. You have a problem. You're sick. You look like hell. What do they know? They don't understand. It's not a choice anymore. The game has won. The game owns you. You'd do anything to get a pinch. All you need is a pinch.

Now you use it just to survive. You inject just to exist. You let it destroy your body in one last futile attempt to reach that high. Watching your life float by as though you're watching a movie, your conscious thoughts revolve solely around the game, and, even though it's not fun anymore, you can't walk away. It's too late for that.

You become desperate. You no longer have the money to afford the normalcy. The demands of the high have become too steep, and it sits complacently on the tip of a mountain that your increasingly weak body can no longer climb.

Your parents realize the extremity of your condition when you come groveling to them for money. Unconcerned about your appearance and blinded to your issue by your tormenting needs, you lurk around town like nothing more than a ghost, striking fear in the hearts of those that loved you and pity in those that didn't.

Finally, they put you away. You know what they're doing, but you don't care. They don't understand. None of them understand. You can't help it; you need it. The rooms are small, the people are cold, and the air is frigid. Everything hurts. It all hurts. Nothing can make you comfortable. Nothing can help you but the high. You need the high.

Lost in a world of darkness and encompassed in a shroud of torture, you find yourself wandering helplessly through a hallway of agony and misery that seems to have no exit. Your body begins crumbling minute by minute, and for the first time you begin feeling the cold fingers of death start clawing at your skin.

You puke. You shiver. You convulse. You scream. You shout. You wail. You claw. You rip. You tear. You pound. You punch. You kick. You squirm. You writhe. You swear. You curse. You struggle.

You cry. You cry like you have never cried before, and between your sobs you beg the Devil to come and claim you as his own. A pathetic junkie like you doesn't deserve to go to heaven. Surrounded by your sins and filled with your wrongdoings, you come to the realization that God doesn't care about you anymore. And why should he? He tried to warn you. He sent you signs. He made it obvious that the game was one only played by losers.

You didn't listen. You were special.

You were going to beat the game.

A torturous cold encompasses your body as you cradle the toilet, puking up whatever your body had left to emit. Trapped in that icy room with nothing to warm your frozen soul, you scream into the emptiness, trying to conjure some sort of company to ease your pain.

The barrel isn't empty anymore. You can see the bullet. It's staring you right in the eye. Death smiles as his finger brushes the trigger, and in his gaze you can see the faint glint of satisfaction as he watches you squirm in terror.

Months later you will thank them for helping you eradicate the façade of a nightmare that the drug had draped over reality. You will thank them for putting up with your harsh words as you slashed at them and pounded on the walls. You will thank them for grabbing the gun from Death, throwing it in the trash and wrapping you up in a blanket to warm your icy body. You will thank them for ending the game.

Your reality that had been, however, will never again be the reality that is. The game will always be there, watching you from a distance, trying to entice you with its dangerous possibilities. The faint disappointment in your parents' eyes will never truly fade, no matter how much they deny it. You had hurt them in a way that they will never truly be able to forgive, and every action you perform will be carefully watched, their gazes filled with a distant worry that will forever plague the back of their minds.

There are nights you refuse to succumb to the refuge of sleep. There are nights you do nothing more than cry, running your fingers gingerly over your scarred arms as your salty tears soak them with your regret.

You cry because you lost the game. You cry because your reality is no longer normal or a dream. Your reality has become tainted, filled with pitiful stares and weary glances. Society looks at you different, unable to eradicate the image of a pitiful addict, cowering in the corner, trying in vain to beat the game that has never once seen a winner.

Hide-and-go-seek is meant to be fun, Russian roulette is meant to be exhilarating, and games are meant to ease the mind.

What is heroin meant to do?

by: Megan Franzen

Forget-Me-Not

I had looked for you, waited for you.
I just didn't know this was your part
A huge role you are playing baby girl
Although your time on stage was short

I found you Elizabeth,
My wise Oak Tree
Now, with your help,
I am finding me.

You are helping me find my missing parts
Making me complete
Showing me the best things of life
Honoring what's most sweet

Living life with No Regrets
Making the most of each day
Elizabeth is printed on my heart
And there you always will stay.

Reminding me to live in the moment
To soak up the light when it shines
To brave the darkness, allow the hurt
This little light of mine

You're teaching me to honor my dreams
Your light within burns with hope
Reminding me that Jesus redeems
It is only through Him we can cope

To make the most of what we have
To honor each moment we're given
You bring out the best in our family
You are Peace, Love and Forgiveness

With the ones I have now, I will treasure my time
Your memories I will keep alive
Knowing one day, there will be no more pain,
When Jesus will finally arrive.

When living seems too painful
Will you bring me the gifts that I need?
After the rain comes the Son
To Him we are blessed to concede.

Jesus Lives.
My baby does too.
With me for just a short while,
You came and brought your gentle peace.
Your gift makes all the pain worthwhile.

I know now, the question I wondered...
Is it better to have loved and lost?
Absolutely yes Elizabeth!
You are worth the cost.

Sweet Dreams my child.
My little girl.
You are in my heart to stay.
We'll be together again, this I know.
For God has planned it this way.

Love, Mama

by: Heidi Lamb Castle

Effective Use of Cultural Differences in Organizations

Different aspects of culture are often viewed in different ways. For example, Franz Boas (2015) says that “specific [cultural] differences are keenly felt, while the similarities are neglected” (“The Diffusion of...”, p.177). Modern times allow for much greater cultural diversity than in the past. Knowing how to use cultural differences to one’s advantage is necessary in order to have effective communication. I am studying communication at the University of Minnesota, Crookston and have studied anthropology for many years. I have completed research throughout the years regarding culture and all aspects of differences in cultures. Culture is one of, if not the most important aspect in human interaction; understanding and using it to one’s benefit will allow for the most effective organizational communication. What culture is must first be defined before one can talk about the problems of cultural ignorance and the positives of embracing cultural differences.

We must define what culture is in order to fully understand how it affects communication. Culture, possibly one of the most difficult terms to define, is immersed in every aspect of one’s life. It affects everything from how people interact, their preferences in situations, how they view others and “outsiders,” and, most importantly in this discussion, how they communicate. Not only does it affect how people communicate, culture affects people differently when they are communicating with people within or outside of their culture. For example, some people are more comfortable talking to others outside their culture than other people are. This is often influenced by the culture in which they grew up.

For the purpose of this conversation, culture will be expressed using a collection of the most accepted definitions. Culture is the learned beliefs, values, traditions, rituals, laws, and ways of thinking and communication of a group. This is not a simple or easy definition, and does by no means include all aspects of what culture is. There are a few things that should be paid close attention to. Culture is a generalization of a group of people. It is not true for everyone in the group. The group that is being generalized can vary. There are broad cultures and specific subcultures. American and Asian are examples and broad cultures while

Japanese, Chinese, and Irish are examples of subcultures of those larger cultures. Cultures can be broken down into even smaller subcultures all the way down to specific families and even to the individual. No one grows up in the exact same way and therefore has their own views, beliefs, and ways of doing things. Having said this, there are two main categories of culture: high-context and low-context.

Cultures have aspects of both of these categories but typically fall more into one than the other. Pamela Shockley-Zalabak (2015) writes that a good example of a high-context culture is Japan because they find “implicit communication more desirable than more explicit information exchanges” (“Fundamentals of Organizational...”, p.110). She goes on to say that the United States of America is a good example of a low-context culture (“Fundamentals of Organizational...”, p.110). High-context cultures use more nonverbal communication and treat space as more public than personal. Low-context cultures are the opposite. They communicate mostly by words and use very little nonverbal expressions in addition to viewing space as more personal and private. To low-context cultures, “communication is seen as a way of exchanging information” while to high-context cultures, it is more of “an art form” (“Contexts of Cultures...”, n.d.). once again, these are generalizations, and specific cultures may exhibit qualities of each.

Culture is a good way to study people and their communication habits, but it is just a place to begin. Gregorio Billikopf (1999) of the University of California does a good job in explaining why these should not be taken for certainty and should just be a starting point; he says that “acting on generalizations about such matters as eye contact, personal space, touch, and interest participation can have serious negative consequences” (“Cultural Differences? Or...”, n.p.). Using the study of culture is meant to be a starting point in communication and functional application, not the entirety of it.

As stated earlier, culture plays a huge role in how people communicate, the ignorance of culture can be detrimental to an organization. Some people take the route of ignoring the differences between people. This often causes more problems than it fixes. The difference between cultures are evident everywhere. Jones, G. E., Cannilla, L., & Slepian, J. L. (2015) from the *Journal of Competitiveness Studies* explain a research experiment in which twenty

graduate business students ranked unethical workplace behaviors:

[Indian students ranked] 'marketing unsafe products' as the most morally wrong act, which was not the case for the American students, who ranked it significantly lower. . . In addition, 'polluting the environment,' another potentially lethal act and high on the moral issue intensity as well, was rated statistically significantly more ethically wrong by international students than domestic students ("Perceptions of Moral...", p.43).

It is important to point out that the sample sized used in this research was very small, so there could be inaccuracies in the results. However, it is safe to say that culture does affect the way one views situations and events. Ignoring these difference will result in the misinterpreting of communication.

When people ignore differences between others, for any reason, they run the risk of misinterpreting information. In organizational communication, this can be detrimental. Miscommunication can cause loss of orders, loss of money, and delayed completion of projects, not to mention cognitive dissonance to the employees caused by these outcomes. All of this can be simply solved by embracing cultural differences.

Cultural differences and cultural relativism are key in successful communication in the workplace. Cultural relativism is the idea that all cultures are equal. It does not say that there are no differences, it says that there are differences, and the differences are what makes the human race interesting and successful. The ignorance of cultural differences is often the result of ethnocentrism, the idea that one's culture is better than others. The other cultures are annoyed because they believe that they are beneath them. Cultural relativism and ethnocentrism both accept that there are differences, but cultural relativism takes those differences as a positive, and there for is able to create a more effective relate with other cultures. Boas states that "... no culture can be assumed to be self-developed and no type to be pure, unmixed with foreign strains" ("The Diffusion of...", p.178). All cultures are influences by others, there is no culture that has not been effected by another. This shows that while there are many differences among people, there are also many similarities. People tend to focus on the differences more.

Looking at both the similarities and differences between cultures is important to fully communicate with one another to the best of one's ability. Theresa Domagalski explains that eye contact in American culture differs from that of Asian cultures. She shows that Americans view eye contact as a positive, a lot of Asian cultures see it as a negative "when they communicate with someone of a higher status" ("Successful Workplace Communication...", p. 6). When people accept that there are differences, they are able to take their time to shape their message to the audience. This helps include everyone in the organization. Including other cultures is a good way to view ideas from another perspective and to strengthen the ideas and completion of those ideas.

Culture is the values and ways of thinking of a group of people that are learned. Understanding how culture works will help people understand that ignoring the differences only limits the effectiveness of a workplace. When organizations embrace cultural differences they are able to maximize the effectiveness of their work by including and viewing more perspectives. Culture must be understood because it can be the most important factor in communication. Forgetting that there are similarities among every human is a mistake. Only when people move away from ethnocentrism and more towards cultural relativism will communication among the species and throughout organizations become the most effective.

by: Derek Beistad

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The Telos of the Ideal

Hegel's philosophy on the dialectic nature of labor is at once a primary source for Marx's scrutiny of alienation and a target of criticism that Marx uses to develop his own discrete philosophy. Hegel conceives of labor—or action fueled by desire—as a negating action functioning to alienate the laborer from the object of his labor, thus allowing the subject an irrefutable realization of his consciousness. In contrast to Hegel, who views this alienation within a historical dialectic through which the human consciousness will ultimately attain perfect self-awareness, Marx stresses the role of labor in the alienation of the worker, specifically within the capitalist mode of production. In his *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts*, Marx supplants Hegel's historic, dialectic idealism with a more worldly materialism, which no longer finds as its telos consciousness's flawless understanding of itself but man's defeat of alienation, culminating in the realization of his species-being.

To Hegel, labor is the action through which human beings attain self-consciousness. In Hegel's thought, man exists somewhat dichotomously. Though requiring an animal life—a biological reality—for existence, man transcends the animal in the nature of the Desire that allows for his becoming. Hegel views Desire as a transformative force that compels a being into action, thereby revealing to others, and thus to that being (as the being realizes the others' realization), the nature of the being. Desire breeds action—a motive force functioning to satisfy the Desire—which, in human relations, is a labor after the objectification of one's selfhood, toward the realization of self through the "acknowledgement," by another, of one's consciousness. In Hegel's formulation, "Self-consciousness exists in and for itself when, and by the fact that, it so exists for another; that is, it exists only in being acknowledged" (Hegel, 178).

Labor, moreover, does not function simply to allow a consciousness certainty of itself; to Hegel, labor is the entire process of experience. A laboring consciousness will examine the object that contains a portion of its selfhood and find a dichotomy, itself maintaining two elements of thought; on the one hand, consciousness realizes the object as it exists for the consciousness and on the other, perceives the object as it exists for the object. Hegel deems these elements of thought "moments": "If the compari-

son [of the thing as it exists for consciousness and as it does so for itself] shows that these two moments do not correspond to one another. . . consciousness must alter its knowledge to make it conform to the object” (Hegel, 85). Yet it is not simply consciousness’s knowledge that is altered. As the knowledge at hand is knowledge of the object, the object, essentially “belong[ing] to this knowledge,” will be correspondingly altered (Hegel, 85). It is through this laborious dialectic that consciousness is shaped through experience.

Here, in framing his conception of the experiential dialectic, Hegel intimates the idea of alienation, in a broad and a strict sense. Strictly speaking, in laboring to objectify what it views as itself, a consciousness “alienates,” or separates, that aspect of itself from itself in the reality of the created object. Though an observer of consciousness—a philosopher, say, as Hegel—will notice the relation between the alienation that is the consequence of labor and the newly-experienced consciousness, the consciousness itself fails to realize this process. Consciousness, then, is alienated in a broad sense from the very dialectic that is a necessary condition for its becoming; although we, the observers of consciousness, may note this process, “it is not known to the consciousness that we are observing” (Hegel, 87). This latter deduction, though, will ultimately cease to be true: Hegel foresaw a telos to his historical dialectic, believing that consciousness, “in pressing forward to its true existence,” would grasp, in finally understanding its true essence, the nature of the dialectic that allowed for its being (Hegel, 89).

A dilution of Hegel’s labor is to be found in Marx’s Manuscripts. To Marx, Hegel’s abstraction, through labor, of a general historical dialectic underlying reality is faulty induction. Marx claims instead that alienation is a necessary consequence, not of the existence of consciousness, but of the premises of political economy. Marx’s logic flows as follows: A presupposition of political economy is the fact of private property, which itself implies a division of labor, wages, competition, etc.; to this premise and its implications, Marx adds what he considers to be a fact of economics; namely, the more wealth a worker produces, the poorer he becomes, as “the necessary result of competition is the accumulation of capital in a few hands” (Marx, 71-2). The alienation of the laborer is then a consequence of the objectification of his labor, itself a necessary

consequence of political economy, given that political economy presupposes private property, which then implies competition, wages, etc.; i.e., to ensure their capital, the “capitalists” will immediately separate, or alienate, the worker from the product of his labor. Furthermore, to absolutely maximize their advantage, these capitalists will reduce the means of labor to a sequence of ceaseless steps, devoid of enjoyment, alienating the worker from the very act of production.

Alienation of the laborer from the product of his labor and the act of production is then, to Marx, no evidence for historical dialecticism, but a consequence of economics. Indeed, Marx saw in capitalism two more, perhaps more pressing, alienations, from which ultimately stem the primary distinctions between his and Hegel’s philosophies. For the purposes of length and specificity, only one of these alienations, that of the laborer from his species-being, will be here discussed. Man, Marx claims, relies on nature—the theoretical and the practical, the scientific and the spiritual—for the constitution of his life. It is precisely this reliance upon nature that grants man his species-being. In separating man from himself—from nature—“estranged [or, alienated] labor estranges the species from man,” and, which is worse, through the effects of capital, “makes individual life in its abstract form the purpose of the life of the species” (Marx, 75). Man is thus alienated once more, but now from his very nature.

Turning back to Hegel now, it is a necessary step to demonstrate the Idealism inherent to his philosophy. To Hegel, consciousness—or the set of all consciousnesses, which Hegel, more or less, deems Spirit—and the historical dialectic framing its development determine the form of the world; “the way to Science,” Hegel writes, “is itself already Science, and hence, in virtue of its content, is the Science of the experience of consciousness” (Hegel, 88). To Hegel, then, this experience of consciousness is the progenitor of phenomenal reality. In that he views the idea of consciousness as the impetus for material reality, Hegel is an idealist.

Far from concluding with this declaration of idealism, Hegel goes on to prophesy in his Introduction to the Phenomenology of Spirit an optimistic—and utterly irrational—conception of the final state of consciousness, claiming that “when consciousness itself grasps. . . its own essence, it will signify the nature of absolute

knowledge itself” (Hegel, 89). What compelled Hegel to draw this prediction may not be known, but it is very much the case that Marx disagreed. To Marx, material reality drives our ideas, not vice versa. Marx is not content with Hegel’s vision of the telos of consciousness, delimiting instead the telos of estranged labor; namely, the revolution of the alienated laborers as communism in its final form. This revolution would engender the realization of species-being in the transcendent culmination that is man’s defeat of alienation; that is, “Communism as the positive transcendence of private property, or human self-estrangement, and therefore as the real appropriation of the human essence by and for man; communism therefore as a complete return of man to himself as a social (i.e., human) being” (Marx, 84). With this configuration of telos, Marx provides a more rational, and perhaps more relatable, conception of the culmination of labor.

In reversing the direction of the relation between material reality and the ideal of consciousness, Marx certainly “turned Hegel on his head.” More critically though, Marx detailed a rational consummation of labor and the struggle of the laborer that held revolutionary action—as opposed to an unpredictable realization of absolute knowledge—as the impetus for true human freedom. For through the act of revolution to communism, man can sever the ties of capitalism that bind him to an inanimate existence and become the true manifestation of human spirit, the free, indomitable, inalienable self-consciousness.

by: Haitham Al-Twaijri

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