

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA CROOKSTON

Inspired

ART JOURNAL



ISSUE 5

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2017

PREFACE

Dear Reader,

Welcome to *Inspired!* It is an honor for me to introduce the fifth installment of UMC's creative writing and art journal (originally titled *Celebrate!*). Here you will find original poetry, prose, photography, and art—all created by students, faculty, and staff at the University of Minnesota Crookston. Our name may have changed, but our commitment to promoting the creative work of the UMC community remains constant.

This year, we are particularly excited to publish the winners of the first-ever Peace Essay Contest. The contest was sponsored by the Academic Success Center, the Liberal Arts and Education Department, and the Office of Diversity and Multicultural Programs. You will find the winning essays—by Pratima Thapaliya, Yoonhee Cho, and Adam Connette—in the third section of this issue. We hope the contest will become an annual event.

Of course, not all change is good. We were deeply saddened by the recent passing of Dr. Abdo Alghamdi, whose poem “EquusTEARian” was included in this issue of the journal. Dr. Alghamdi's warmth, energy, and sense of humor were an integral part of the UMC community. We open this issue with photographs, memories, and reflections shared with us by his students. Dr. Alghamdi, you will be greatly missed.

The tribute to Dr. Alghamdi highlights the delicate balance between laughter and sorrow, light and dark. Reading this year's submissions, I was struck by the many writers who took up their pens in times of grief. Their works show us that beauty can be found even—or perhaps especially—in the darkest of places. Art, it seems, has a unique power to combat despair.

I hope you enjoy the work in the pages that follow, and that you close this issue feeling consoled, energized and, most importantly, inspired.

by: *Allison Haas*

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EQUUSTEARIAN

Fenced in... knee-deep in snow...
The daylight has gone... and the wind blew...
Stood all night long... awake, wet, and shivering...

All alone... no hope for Avalon
The gleaming stars were hiding from the brutal night
All along... no way to belong
Watching a cowering sun hiding behind a cloudy blanket

No sleeping for the tired eyes
No dreaming in a bed of ice

No comforting the itching heart with lies
Nor tempering how loneliness leads to vice

The pain may come and the pain may go...
but I am awake forever
Drop the rein and let me go...
even a horse can suffer

You tell me “yes,” he tells me “no”...
and I move however
You tell me “fast,” she tells me “slow”...
and I run whichever

The wind may come and the wind may go...
but here the chill can thunder
Drop the rein and let me go...
I feel the itch in my liver

Dreaming high and reaching low...
how far goes that river?
You tell me “hey,” he tells me “Ho”...
any freedom to engender?

The wind may calm and it may blow...
my bones became so tender
Drop the rein and let me go...
I won't die from hunger

by: *Abdo Alghamdi*

TRIBUTE TO DR. ABDO ALGHAMDI

On August 8, 2017, the UMC community lost a great teacher, mentor, colleague, and friend — Dr. Abdorrahman Alghamdi. Abdo, as he was known to his colleagues and students, was a professor of Animal Science, though his interests and talents ranged far beyond this field. His poem, “EquusTEARian” can be found on page 7 of this journal. In honor of Abdo, his students submitted the following photographs, memories, and reflections. They speak to his kindness, his irrepressible sense of humor, and his dedication to his students.



Abdo in class

Those of us who have had classes with Abdo know he taught not only from the book, but from his own experiences and from the heart. I can't remember one class where he didn't walk through the door with a contagious smile on his face and a friendly hello. He was much more than just a professor: he was a friend and a great role model to many. If one day in class, you looked glum, he would, despite his busy schedule, take the time to make sure you were ok. Abdo's love for research had a lasting impact on me and, I know, on a lot of others as well. There was one day I stopped by his office and in less than a minute he was asking: “Anna, do you have a moment? I know you'd find this interesting.” We spent the next hour discussing his research. That evening planted a little seed in my head. I found myself searching for research opportunities, and that seed has grown into so much more.

—*Anna Thiele*, Animal Science/Pre-Vet student

Abdo really cared about his students. Last March, I had a really bad respiratory virus that lasted for about three weeks. I had just been to see a doctor, who suggested that I drink Theraflu, a pain-killing tea. Following my appointment, I had my reproduction lab with Abdo, which was in the UTOC Lab. Drinks and food are not allowed into lab facilities for safety reasons, so I had to leave my tea outside. Abdo could tell I was in pain, and I that I was teary-eyed due to my sore throat. It made it hard to concentrate. Abdo left the room for a second. When he returned, he announced that we were moving lab one room over to a lecture room. He made up some excuse as to why he wanted to be in another room, but he later told me that he had moved the class because he could tell that I was struggling. As he told me the real reason for the move, he also handed me some cough drops and told me to grab my drink. The fact that he made everyone move showed that he really cared that all his students were comfortable enough to focus on and absorb his lecture for the day.

—*Hana DeMartelaere*, Animal Science/Pre-Vet student

My favorite memory with Abdo was going over tests in Animal Breeding. It sounds so silly, I know, but I used to love watching Abdo get very animated when he was explaining the correct answer. I did very well in the class but on every test there were always 5 or 6 questions where I missed the wording or didn't follow directions. I would always frantically look through my test to see what I missed and make faces expressing the stupidity I felt for missing those questions. Abdo would laugh and look at me and ask "Did you miss something?" We would both laugh, and I would explain my silly mistake. I am deeply saddened by the fact that I will never be able to take another class with him or even hear him laugh with me one more time over one of my silly mistakes.

—*Johanna Boogaard*, Animal Science student

Coming to terms with the fact that new Animal Science students at UMC won't get to experience the longest syllabus known to man or take exams with thirty true or false questions where all the answers are false, is heartbreaking. Some professors teach their students lessons in and out of the classroom. Abdo Alghamdi was one of those professors. In the classroom Abdo was tough: he pushed his students to truly learn and never took it easy on them. I distinctly remember him handing back exams during a class, and when he put mine facedown in front of me he looked me in the eye and told me, "I expect better from you." I got a B. I remember being so angry that he was pushing me, that he always expected me to strive for the high score instead of just an acceptable one. It made me work harder, just to get the quiet look letting me know he was proud when I did meet his expectations. He pushed us to do our best in the classroom because he truly believed in his students and was genuinely the happiest when his students did well, and because of that we took the lessons we learned with us to veterinary school, to the work force, and into everyday life. Although he was tough, Abdo also had the best sense of humor. No class went by without jokes: he would dance around to show you what a chromosome looked like, we all knew of his hatred of the bulldog, and there are way too many pictures out there of him cheesing for the camera while his student is shoulder-deep in a cow. If you had a question, his door was open. If you just wanted to chat about your day, his

door was open. UMC will have a little less laughter without him here. We may not have loved his exams, but we without a doubt loved him. We will never forget the lessons he taught us, in and out of the classroom.

—An Animal Science student



Abdo with four of his students

May the force be with you, Abdo.

INFINITE MOON

Winter days are full of haze
And spring I long to see
Those summer night's stars shine so bright
Now it's autumn the times changing like leaves

Oh tell Me where is this woman
The woman I see in my dreams
Oh tell me where is that woman
A vision that haunts in my sleep

I searched all through the heavens
I explored the waters of the deep
High and low I go to and fro
Yet I still have not found none other than thee...

by: *TKVI*

JOURNAL: THE WRESTLING OF A WRITER

November 29, 2016

Writing brings life to my soul! Writing is like kneading individual ingredients to make bread; it stirs together thoughts, feelings, impressions, events; and brings them together to make something living. Writing is about developing perspective and insight.

December 6, 2016

I SHOULD write something today... but fear has me paralyzed. When I was younger, I had ambition to write and share my thoughts with “the world”. I thought, “To be a novelist would be so exciting!” The older I get, the less I feel like I have something noteworthy or new or interesting to broadcast to a faceless audience.

I can easily be bored with other people’s writing — like those Christmas letters from distant relatives that drone on about people I do not know and events I find of little interest. That is a big fear in writing — boring the readers... blah...blah...blah.

December 13, 2016

I am dreaming about writing a book. Could I really do it? Turn ideas into a publishable book or story or article?? Winston Churchill said writing a book is an adventure. “To begin with it is a toy and an amusement. Then it becomes a mistress, then it becomes a master, then it becomes a tyrant. The last phase is that just as you are about to be reconciled to your servitude, you kill the monster and fling him to the public.” Am I ready for the challenge??

December 25, 2016

Journaling is a wonderful way to try out ideas... explore feelings... test values...get to know more about what is going on in my brain and heart. Writing is more of a process than a product.

But, I think there is value in the caution that too much introspection is NOT HELPFUL. There is a time for living and a time for reflecting. Today is a time for LIVING!!

December 31, 2016

I just need to write to wash all the turbulent thoughts out of my brain that are holding me captive. It is cleansing to get it all out on paper and read it over; then, put it aside. Journaling helps me to let go.

What is the power in the written word to acknowledge our emotions are real and valid? It seems to bring healing in those painful experiences to write out the details. Sometimes an amazing thing happens. I sense God's presence. He is with me. He hears my cries. He cares. Journaling seems like letters to God.

January 3, 2017

Today I reread some of my Prayer Journal from 2016. I am grateful for the reminder of all the good things I enjoyed this past year.

Some entries speak of my worries and ask God for guidance to pressing questions. They record my impressions as I "listened" for the response that came as I meditated on God and on Scripture. I think of it as my conversations with the Lord. Prayer is not only talking to God, it is also listening for the quiet whisper that testifies to the presence of the Almighty Lover of my soul.

Praying and journaling at the same time enriches both experiences for me. As I reread my prayer journal, I looked for insights and guidance. I felt a sense of wonder in the interaction of the Spirit with my spirit. I wrestled with my "hearing"; am I accurately perceiving God's thoughts toward me and His guidance for me? Lord, help me sort out what is good and discard the rest.

January 10, 2017

Today, I received a handwritten letter from a friend... and I felt loved!! Writing letters... by hand... on stationery... and mailing them seems like a lost art. What a rarity to find one such treasure in one's mailbox! It is like a long-distance kiss!

Note to self: Writing a letter is definitely a worthwhile writing endeavor!

January 17, 2017

Who of us can resist the urge to read the posts and tweets from family, friends, and even some strangers? Joan loves sharing inspirational quotes. Amber posts pictures with "cute" captions of herself and friends. Joe is on a political rant...and hosts of others are adding to the dialogue. It seems no one feels restraint in expressing their opinions or revealing their personal lives. I, on the other hand, feel little compulsion to engage in similar activities.

Am I an oddity...a social anomaly? I do not understand what motivates people to toss the details of their lives out there for the whole world to view. I value privacy, as did our ancestors who included it in our *Bill of Rights*, yet many are very willing to fling open the window shades and jump on the party lines¹ so everyone can see and hear them. Maybe it is their desire for those "15 minutes of fame". Maybe I am just odd.

February 14, 2017

I love him with ALL of my heart and today is the day to SAY IT. Words do not seem adequate... How do I tell him he "rocks my world??"

Writing a novel or a 20-page essay takes exceptional writing skills, but a love note... it is the epitome of the writer's craft. It must be elegant and transparent... Succinct yet expansive with meaning. A love letter allows the beloved entrance into the deepest corners of my soul. I want it to be my best work... for it has the highest purpose: to communicate LOVE.

by: *Lynne Mickelson*

¹ A telephone line shared by two or more households.
The policies officially adopted by a political party

LIFE IS LIKE A JUMPER COURSE

Life is like riding a jumper course. Waiting is a good thing. You are cantering up to a fence. It's big and brightly colored. It's scary, but it's a rush. A thrill. But, you have to sit and wait for it. The waiting is intoxicating. Seductive. Addicting.

You tread, you tread, you tread. It comes to you and before you know it, this powerful force launches you from flat ground upward. This is the up phase. It requires a fluid acceptance to fold and submit to the motion of the horse. Then there is the mid phase. This requires balance as you both are suspended in the air for an unnervingly brief amount of time. Then there is the down phase. This requires absolute strength to hold your position with the concussion of the downward force against you. It may take a few strides to recover, but it will be okay. You can straighten it out in that time.

Don't ponder on how scared you think you should have been and don't critique it just yet; there will be time for that later. Don't dwell behind you too long—the next jump is coming up and there might be a tight turn you need to prepare and balance for.

You tread. You wait. Be patient.

If you can't wait and rush it, your distance will be off. You'll end up chipping it or jumping long. If you chip it, you got too close before taking off. This can cause an awful recoil effect as the horse has to pick straight up. You have to hold on for dear life on the up, lest you get pitched forward, there is no center, and the down is going to be fast and hard. It will hurt. If you are lucky and don't hit the rail and flip, it will take more strides than normal to recover. The next few jumps are likely to be even scarier. But it's okay. You learn from it. Move on. Pay attention next time.

Be patient. You tread. You wait. Don't rush it.

If you can't wait, you may end up jumping long. If that happens, your horse has to rescue you and use more power to get over the fence. You might get left behind or have to hold on for dear life if you are going to stay with your horse. There is no true up, a long, flat center, and a dangerous down. You might hit the rail and knock it at best, or at worst, you won't make it over. Be patient. You tread. You wait.

But don't get lazy and think you can just sit there and do nothing during the wait. You must stay centered, guiding your horse and giving him the desire to go forward. If you push him, but offer no guidance, he may duck out to the side and leave you there on the ground. But, if you are too restrictive in your direction and give him no motivation, he may stop dead and you will go over the fence alone. Be judicial in your guidance and terms of motivation. Work together at the small stuff, on the straight.

There will be times where the distance just won't be right, but it's okay. You trust each other now and know it wasn't on purpose or out of ignorance. Ride it. Cross it. Land it. Move on. Sometimes, the distance will be off because one of you was stubborn. It's okay. Be forgiving to the other, but also humbly accept your fault. Move on.

Sometimes the distance will be off because one of you is tired. Give the other the motivation, but don't forget to tread and wait, for the wait is the break you might need before getting over that fence. You tread. You wait.

When you finish the course, always reward, even if it didn't go as planned. You didn't spend so much time waiting just to be rude now. Be patient. Be kind. No matter the outcome, remember the reason you do this. Wait for the next time, but don't wait lazily. This is where you can become better. Be patient. Embrace the wait.

by: *Desariah Santillanez*

DEATH

Death in America has to change.

It is not the fleeting and the flying,
but the cruelty to the afflicted, the
insensitivity and lying.

We come to this place with hopes and
dreams,
and they are dashed without care to
smithereens.

Though it may be done better than
long, long ago,
improvements still have a long way to
go.

We're people, you doctors, your
mother, your son.

We deserve as much consideration as
anyone.

We've lived and we've loved and put
forth all we had.

We do not deserve to be treated so
bad.

So inconsequential, so trivial, plain,
so empty and soulless, without half a
brain.

We're teachers and builders and
parents, too.

We're singers and skaters and guards
at the zoo.

So stop when you speak to us, look at
our face,
perhaps touch our hand, just extend
us some grace.

Just a touch of comfort, a smile, a
pause,
because now all we're getting is a cold
shoulder and claws.

by: *Shelly J. Till*

TIME

Time is running out.
Years first, then months.
Weeks turn to days; those turn to hours.
When hours become minutes and seconds,
time has almost run out.
It is time to look back.

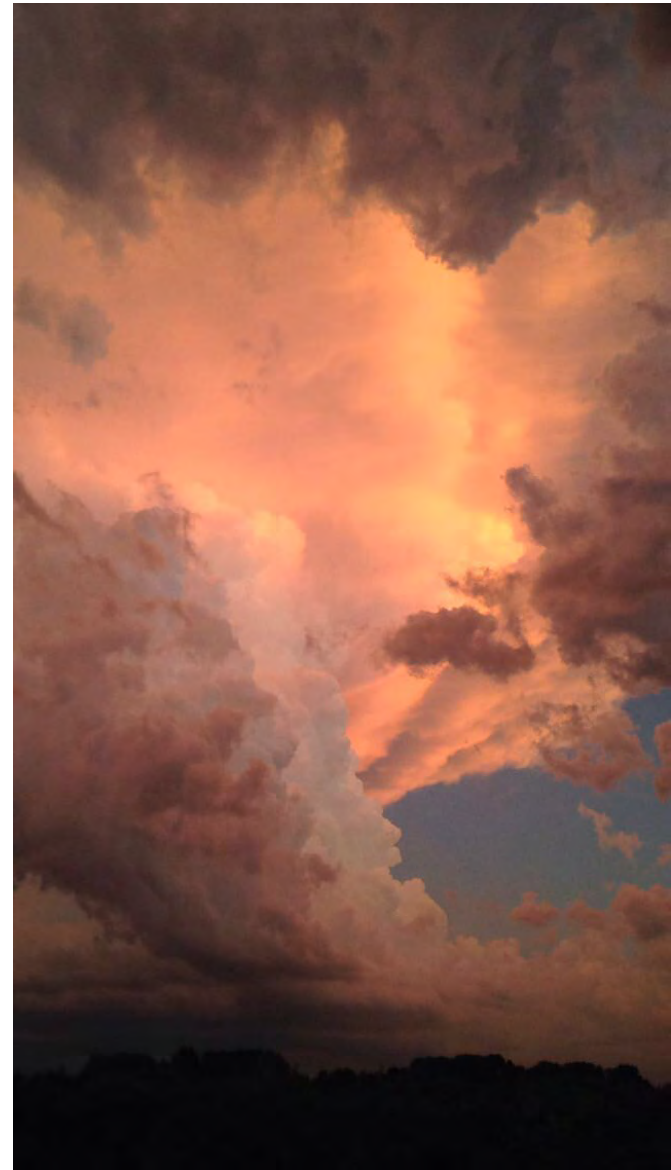
Time lies behind and before me
It runs like grains of sand, passing by,
Slipping through my fingers, leaving its mark on me.

Things and people come and go.
Emotions come and go.
Only impressions left behind,
Impressions on the people and places that we leave behind

Time may wait for no man but it does hold them back.
Limits. Restrictions. Barriers.
All are part of time.
Happiness. Anger. Panic. All part of life.
Life and time.
Always connected, one forever controlling the other.

by: *Ariel LaPlante*

SUMMER THUNDERHEADS



photograph by: *Ariel LaPlante*

U



drawing by: *Tao Ma*

YOSHIKAGE



drawing by: *Tao Ma*

RAILROAD TO NOWHERE,
AND EVERYWHERE



photograph by: *Noah Roseen*

BLUEBIRD DAY



photograph by: *Noah Roseen*

THE ROSE



drawing by: *Rachel MacDowell*

SUNRISE HORSE



photograph by: *Desariah Santillanez*

RED SKIES AT NIGHT SAILOR'S DELIGHT



photograph by: *Trina Weisel*

HEADWATERS



photography by: *Abigail Ritman*

SUNDAY BREWERY



photography by: *Tori Hill*

UNIVERSITY WINTER



photography by: *Abigail Ritman*

DANGEROUS WONDERS



photograph by: *Yin Sankara*

BRIDGE



photograph by: *Desariah Santillanez*

PARIS, THE CITY I LOVE



painting by: *Anastasia Tien Nguyen*

UNWORLDLY WOMAN



painting by: *Rebecca Fitzpatrick*

FOR BYRON

Terror lies in the pathless woods,
Ego dies at the lonely shore,
Society alone intrudes
But deep the sea, so mute its roar.
I fear not Man the less, but Nature more.

What rapture lit your fleets
to frigid death?
What pleasure found your fathoms
desperate doom?
What deep and boundless fervor
stole their breath?
Who brazen, dauntless, flew her
turbid comb?
Why mingle thee with a Nature whom
Atlantis will entomb?

Man marks the earth with glory,
high romance;
Beauty, art, and science breathe
his own;
With song his ancient poets would
entrance
Whose verses fragrant, deep, renowned,
my home.

The sea is monstrous, sordid, angry, chaos,
and alone.

by: *Haitham Al-Twajiri*

SMOKE AND MIRRORS

The medium is a walking stereotype — all bangles and scarves and crystal beads. To be honest, I'm disappointed, but I suppose that when you think something from The Great Beyond is threatening your family, taste gets left by the wayside.

I guess I should take some responsibility for the devolution into cliché; I'm not exactly a friendly ghost.

The four of them — Mom, Dad, Sullen Teenager, and Little Boy — bring her into the living room and stand around awkwardly as she sets out candles, bundles of herbs, and little dishes of incense.

“Are you sure,” Mom pipes up, after a few minutes of pointless bustling, “that we shouldn't be doing this in the bathroom? That's where the most recent...incident...happened.”

(She's referring to the fact that I broke the bathroom mirror three days ago. Apparently that pushed them over the edge).

The medium dusts her hands on her spangled skirt and steps back to admire her work. She's not an idiot. She knows her little shrine would look way less impressive next to a toilet.

“The ceremony needs to be held in the most powerful part of the house,” she explains, “my abilities are strongest in the place where the family gathers.”

Mom and Dad exchange a thoughtful look.

“Then we should be in the den, with the TV,” Sullen Teenager says. She's a brat, usually, but she has her moments.

“Radio waves interrupt the cosmic frequencies,” the medium says, quickly. “Now, come gather around. Roger, perhaps you could turn off the lights?”

“Dad, this is super dumb.” Sullen Teenager is back to her usual self.

“Just do it, Heather.” Dad's voice is tight. He flips the light switch.

With the curtains drawn, the room is dim and smoky. The medium takes Little Boy's hand and gestures for the others to join the circle. She tilts her head back and closes her eyes.

“Hello,” she says, in a deep, misty voice. “Is anybody there?”

I tense. She may be a fraud, but I'm not so far gone that I don't long for human interaction. It's been almost a year since anyone has addressed me directly (not counting screams, expletives, or that pointless, unanswerable question — “is somebody there?”).

I reach out, tentatively, towards the living room, pushing gently against the invisible barrier that separates the living and the dead. I hit the metaphysical equivalent of solid concrete. I curse, even though no one can hear it.

In the living room, Sullen Teenager slits open one of her eyes and stifles a yawn.

It's just my luck that the barrier (which warps and thickens and shifts with no particular logic) would choose this exact moment to become impermeable. Usually it's like wet clay — dense-but-malleable, allowing me to push out and effect change in the real world.

And, okay, the results of that change are... mixed. Even when the barrier is thin as paper, I can't predict exactly what will happen when I reach through. I try to flip a light switch, and a picture falls off the wall. I reach out to unplug the coffee pot, and a lightbulb in the basement shatters instead. When I broke the mirror three days ago, I was trying to turn off the stove. Most people would have given up trying after five years, but most people don't understand how incredibly boring haunting can be.

“I sense a presence,” the medium says, breaking an awkward silence with a passable imitation of excitement. “Yes, something is here.”

Now would be a really great time to make something fly across the room. I push forward again, but the barrier holds firm.

“Are you angry with us?” the medium asks.

I grit my (metaphorical) teeth and focus my concentration on Little Boy; the barrier tends to be thinner around him. This has taken its toll on the poor kid, and is probably why he’s shaking uncontrollably right now and clutching his father’s hand with white knuckles.

Sorry, buddy.

Sure enough, the barrier gives ever-so-slightly as I heave myself against it. The kid’s bedroom light — which he’s left on, again — turns off. No one in the living room notices.

God dammit.

“Do not be angry with these good people,” the medium continues. “They only want to help you.”

Sullen Teenager’s eyes are blatantly open now. She rolls them obnoxiously.

I fling myself against the barrier and — shockingly — it shifts. The force sweeps a pile of junk mail off the kitchen table, the lightbulb in the attic flickers, and a stack of flattened cardboard boxes fans out across the basement floor.

The medium notices none of this.

“You cannot stay here,” she says, in the same fake-spooky voice. “Move on. Move towards the light.”

I fall back, exhausted by the effort of that last push. She launches into a little speech about healing old wounds and leaving the physical realm behind. If I had a body, I’d spit in contempt.

Believe me, I’d leave if I could. I’d rather not be stuck watching the petty, boring lives of whoever happens to move into this “recently-restored suburban home.” But it’s been five years now. If there’s a light to move towards, I’m pretty sure I’d have found it.

The gauzy fraud opens her eyes when she’s finished, blissfully unaware.

“It is gone,” she says. “Poor thing. Died in a fire five years ago. A terrible death.”

I don’t let that get to me. I’m sure she found the details on the Internet.

She packs her things as Dad goes searching for the checkbook. The barrier has thinned considerably, and I use the opportunity to blow out the candle that she stupidly left burning on the bookshelf. I’d dearly love to give her a good shove on her way out the door, but Little Boy is still pale and jumpy. I settle for wafting as much of the incense out after her as possible — I think it’s making Dad’s eyes start to water, and I hate the smell of smoke.

by: *Allison Haas*

PRAY FOR PEACE

In my life thus far, I have found peace once. Knowing my mom is no longer in pain is my peace. My senior year of high school my mom had a routine checkup. Turns out, it was not just a routine checkup. My mom was diagnosed with stage-four breast cancer and it had spread into her brain.

My mom was born and raised in South Carolina. She dropped out of college to marry my dad to and start their family. My mom homeschooled my six siblings and I until we got into high school. She loved going to church and singing gospel songs. My mom was so loving, and she had a great impact on everyone she met.

When the doctor told us they needed to perform brain surgery immediately following her “routine” checkup, fear of death came over me. After her twelve-hour surgery, she was placed into a medically induced coma. It took five months for her to open her eyes. The doctors told us she would not walk, talk or see for the rest of her life. The brain surgery majorly affected my mom, but it did save her life.

She took her first steps a month and a half after the doctor told us she wouldn’t walk ever again. She defeated all the odds. She had to relearn how to walk and talk. As for her sight, she was fully blind in her right eye and partially blind in her left. When I say I am glad my mom is in peace now, it is because even though she was alive, she was not herself. She lost her personality. She became angry all the time and frequently said she was in pain. The brain surgery had affected her brain long term and she lost most of her memories. Trying to teach my mom who I am was heartbreaking and no person should ever have to go through that.

My mom fought breast cancer for a year and a half until the cancer finally took her. I remember being on campus at UMC, just getting out of the shower when my dad called me. I flew home on the next flight out of Grand Forks to Los Angeles. My family was now missing the glue to our family. I wish I had my

mom back. Every time I hear “mom,” I am reminded of her. She was my entire world, and I would do anything to spend even one more hour with her. Knowing she is no longer in pain and she has eternal peace brings peace to me.

My right ring finger has a tattoo of a breast cancer ribbon with a heart in the middle. Having this reminds me of my mom every day. The impact she had on my life and so many other people’s lives was incredible. My prayers were answered and I know my mom is in peace forever.

by: *Adam Connette*

PLAZA CAFÉ

A soft glimmer of color suddenly appears in my peripheral vision. As I turn my head towards the glowing light, I am dreamily drawn towards the vibrant crimson hues of an oil painting. It is entitled, *Plaza Café*, by the Canadian painter, Philip Surrey. As I view the charming images my imagination is filled with sounds of soft, intimate whispers, the chatter of customers sitting at the mahogany counter and the sharp pit-pat of rain drilling the roof of the café. My senses then become flooded with the desirable aroma of freshly-made coffee and the smell of fresh rain wafting through the café's open windows. It was as if a cinema screen had appeared before my eyes. As I continued to view this painting at the Winnipeg Art Gallery, I couldn't help but be sent into a trance-like daydream. It wasn't so much the subject matter of the piece that captivated me, but the feelings, the endless possibilities and wonder it evoked.

The color caught my attention. Scarlet brush strokes illuminated the image. Everything inside the café was colored this way and everything located through the large center window was tinted cobalt and olive green. The melancholic and gloomy atmosphere of the outside greatly contrasted with the merriment and warmth of the café's inside. Dreary, blue splotches of paint presents the idea that outside is an unpleasant storm. Visitors of the café appear to have taken refuge in the dry coffee shop. The visitors are free to dry off, stay and catch up with friends, all the while bathing in the warmth of a relaxing cup of coffee. This color scheme of the piece suggests that the café is a sanctuary, a place where one can escape the hostilities of the outdoors.

What's this? There is a couple sitting at a small table. Are they lovers? Are the cherry colors of the painting reflecting their passion? The man's hand is resting on his cheek, as if engulfed in his darling's smile; he cannot look away from her mesmerizing beauty. The images appear to point out how, despite the terrors (and bad weather, in this case) of the outside world, one can still find safety and joy in a lover's presence.

The contrasting colors between the coffee shop and the outdoors show how even when there are hostilities located outside, a haven can be found someplace as simple as a café. The painting has never-ending possibilities as to what its story conveys, and that is what is so intriguing about it. Many different emotions and ideas are expressed in the painting. One can make their own story, try to interpret the author's meaning or connect the piece to their own life and experiences. The *Plaza Café* is an endless storybook, one where the reader feels as if they have a say in the outcome of the story and can be forever engulfed in its pages.

by: *Tori Hill*

Works Cited

Surrey, P. 1955. *Plaza Café*. [oil on masonite]. National Gallery of Canada. Retrieved from <https://www.gallery.ca/en/see/collections/artist.php?iartistid=5296>

A DELICATE DUMPLING

Inside me, I was screaming over and over because I was just not yet ready to leave my family and friends 9000 miles behind me for a year. This was not what I wanted, and nothing was going according to my plan. I thought about jumping down from my room at the fifteenth floor but gave up after imagining the unbearable pain. I was not ready to die just yet, although all I felt was hopelessness, resentment, and fear for the future me. Outside the window, the world was the same as yesterday – sunny, hot, and peaceful – but inside me, my heart throbbed in an inconsistent rhythm, my mind was in a chaos of inaudible noise, and there was absolutely no peace to be found.

The definition of peace is subjective. Although peace is generally known as a state of being in tranquility, and as a freedom from disturbance, it would not necessarily be true for a sedatephobe. I would define peace as an inner-peace. In other words, peace is found and obtained completely within oneself. I imagine peace as a perfect little dumpling. As for how a dumpling is only complete when there are fillings, peace envelops happiness and satisfaction in life. Occasionally the envelope tears, causing happiness and satisfaction to leak out, and then there is no more peace. Without peace, I am devastated. My priority becomes solely reaching out to whatever that could please me right away. I need to earn my fillings to complete my dumpling again, so I gain happiness and satisfaction through people I treasure. When the fillings are in, and the tear is sealed, inner-peace returns in me.

I lost a friend four years ago from an accident. My other friends and I wished him to rest in peace while ironically none of us was at peace. We were inconsolable and traumatized that our dumplings were squashed at the bottom of our hearts. We thought we would never see the perfect round shape ever again. However as the time passed, we moved on and healed our dumplings in our own respective ways, taking as much of time we needed. By now, I believe that all of us had finally regained inner-peace within ourselves, as how our gone friend would have achieved on his way to the heaven.

Peace has been following the cycle of breaking and resealing within me, and I know that it will continue to do that. For now, my dumpling is perfectly in shape, holding happiness and satisfaction tightly inside. I treasure the firmness of the dumpling, and I will try hard to prevent every piece from falling out from peace.

by: *Yoonhee Cho*

DUM SPIRO SPERO

NO SMALL HERO

We all have our Heroes. When I was
young it was my Dad.
A rock I could rely on, yet soft when I was
sad.

As a teen it was my Brother, a proud
Vietnam vet.
Stories of what he witnessed, I will not
soon forget.

Firefighters and the Police had our
attention on 9-1-1.
It was obvious they were Heroes, so
dedicated, every one.

No doubt in wartime our Heroes,
abundantly, are made.
No question of their sacrifice. This country
for another, I would never trade.

I think of these miraculous feats of
bravery, and strength, and strife,
of facing death and evil, Soldiers returning
home with loss of limb or life.

When you become a parent and your child
has intense pain,
you thank God for the ER Staff and a
Surgeon that's well trained.

Everyday we discover Heroes and it seems
that over time,
Good Samaritans, the Coast Guard, even
Teachers all seem to step in line.

If you look really closely you see Heroes all
around.

Never thought, under my nose, a Small
Hero would be found.

My Son donated "sleeping." He probably
didn't feel a bit of pain.

For him it ended quickly, but isn't it a
shame...

if we don't view him as a Hero, as those to
whom he gifted life,
as Inya, Ann and James so eloquently
express in Thank-you's that they
write...

with tearful words of "Thank You," of
hope renewed and a second chance,
may seem miniscule in comparison, at
initial glance.

So DJ was probably not aware of pain, of
fear, of grief
and not aware of giving anything, his loss
total, complete.

Maybe in your book not considered true to
the proverbial category.

To me? Strong, silent and giving freely
just like any Hero would be.

The gift he gave while not so painful,
maybe not so brave,
gave no less hope, courage or love, to the
people that he saved.

I guess, within the scheme of things, my
Son's gift seems so small,
but then again, there are No Small Heroes
after all.

ORGAN DONATION SAVES LIVES

Your birthday is now approaching. I think
back on your growing years.

I look back on your lovely baby face. I
look back on diapers and tears.

I think of first steps, and first words, your
laughter, so fresh in my mind.

Some days I can almost hear you and feel
you, but fate was so unkind.

All I'm left with are fading memories and
wishes that will never come true.

All I'm left with are shadows of what could
have been, worst of all, I'm left without
you.

But my broken heart's not the end of your
tale. Our loss has turned to some gain.

I think of those that you chose to love even
though you'd never know love again.

I think of your donees, I think of their
lives, their laughter so fresh in my
mind.

Holding their babies and wiping their
tears, lives not ended before *their* time.

Perhaps God's great purpose eludes the
average man or not easily seen through
tear-filled eyes.

What I know is my son gave fate a good
shake, and in the doing so, saved
several lives.

REMEMBERING MY SON

I closed my eyes real tight today,
trying to remember yesterday.

Today you would have been twenty-eight,
but that was not to be your fate.

What was your favorite thing to eat?

What was your favorite Christmas treat?

What was your favorite Playstation game?

I should know this! You played it *all day*.

How much taller were you than me?

When was the last time I bounced you on my knee?

Was your favorite color blue, green, or grey?

Oh, man, I don't want these memories to slip away!

Yes, I racked my brain today,

trying to remember yesterday.

Your laugh, your smile, that pungent Axe smell...

all the little things I once knew so well.

I strained to remember these little things,

but I can still *feel* you with me and that means

everything!

by: *Shelly J. Till*

PEACE

We were returning from our village in Trisuli to capital city Kathmandu. Our vacation was over. I was not happy to be separated from my cousins, but school would be starting in few days. I was about 10 years old then and my younger sister was about six. I had thrown up a couple of times already and Godhuli, my younger sister, appeared almost blue from motion sickness. The distance between my village and Kathmandu was only 100 km. Due to narrow steep hilly roads and snakelike curves, it took six hours to travel from my village to Kathmandu.

There were three checking points in the road. Checking points were army barracks where all vehicles, passengers, and luggage were screened for any weapons. There was a war going on between Maoists and the government. Everyday stories came out about people dying in war, women being raped, or villages being searched. We trusted neither army nor Maoist. My mother was very scared to send us three without any male companion. Before we left, she reminded us not to question any army in checking-posts. She ordered us not to show our irritation to anyone on the way home. My mom was more worried for my older sister who was 18 years old and was very pretty.

Old people and children under 10 did not have to get off the bus for checking. Officers would assist them inside the bus. Rest of the passengers got off to stay in line in the check post. Godhuli and I were very lethargic and sleeping in my older sister's lap. My throat was burning and I thought my stomach would also come out along with its contents. In the first two check posts, the bus driver requested officers to assist my sister inside the bus. In the third check post, the bus driver made a request to one of the officers again. The officer nodded. Later another officer came to check the bus and scolded my sister for not getting off the bus. She was so tired that she answered back to the officer, "Don't you see I have two sick children in my lap?" Her tone of reply was not polite, so a few other officers gathered around and asked what had happened.

I felt so scared and began to cry. The officer explained to the other officers that my sister could not get off because of us. Other officers suggested him to check our luggage in bus. Before they returned, they scolded my sister to keep her tone better. After all passengers came back to the bus, our bus moved forward. I was at ease. We were moving towards home away from army barracks. I knew there would be curfew in the evening like every other day but I felt safe. We crossed check post safely, did not go through any mines along the way and were only few kilometers away from home. I felt peace.

by: *Pratima Thapaliya*

INHERITANCE

My father, my drunken father,
a fool to him and her
is banging on the door:
“Let me in. Let me in.”
I turn my face to Ro’s,
but she must not hear.
My father, my clumsy tea-partner,
continues as
his bottle clanks against the door.
Bang. Bang. Bang.
I turn to Po; my eyes wide, his dark
We can’t do it again.
He says we can’t control him.
It’s all he says this time.
I walk over to the entryway –
Bang. Bang.
After spotting the small stool,
I drag it to the door.
On the highest step I stand on my toes
to peek through the hole;
It’s broken and blurry but I can still see
He looks just like me.

by: *Hannah Rice*

ITASCA STATE PARK SUNSET



cover photograph by: *Abigail Ritman*

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