

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA CROOKSTON

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Address all correspondence to
Inspired Art Journal
University of Minnesota Crookston
2900 University Ave.
Crookston, MN 56716

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PI-KU CONTEST

Aria Kapsner	1	First Place
Elsa Whitney	1	Second Place
Iqra Ishtiaq	1	Third Place

EARTH WEEK 6-WORD STORY CONTEST

Sam Simmons	49	First Place
Hailyanna Sundeen	49	Second Place
Colleen Kastanek	49	Third Place
Kelsey Torgerson	49	Faculty/Staff Winner

PREFACE

EARTH WEEK 6-WORD STORY CONTEST

Dear Reader,

Thanks for picking up the seventh issue of Inspired! It's my pleasure, once again, to introduce this volume. We begin soliciting submissions for our annual issue in January, which is not a particularly cheerful time of year. School is starting after the holidays, daylight is in short supply, and the bitter cold of the deep freeze is intensified by wind whipping down from the north. This past year, Crookston's "January" lasted almost four months. It was well into April before we even felt a hint of spring.

It's November, now, and we're already seeing flurries of snow. So as I sat down to organize the works in this volume, it seemed fitting to consider the natural cycle of the seasons. We begin in spring, with the winners of the first-ever "pi-ku" contest. "Pi Day" is celebrated each year on March 14th, and a "pi-ku" is a kind of haiku that takes its form from the celebrated irrational number: 3 syllables-1 syllable-4 syllables.

Near the center of this volume, you'll find the winners of the third – third! – annual UMC essay contest. This year's theme was "Water," and, unsurprisingly given our state motto, many contestants wrote beautifully and meaningfully about summers spent on the shores of a favorite lake. The first-place winner of the contest, however, reflects a little more critically on the topic of water and the means by which it can be protected and conserved. Her essay is an important reminder to us that our natural resources are not infinite and that they not only deserve, but require, our protection.

The six-word stories in our final contest – written for Earth Week – also revel in the joy of nature while still reflecting an important warning. We Minnesotans revel in the natural beauty of our state, even in its most inhospitable moments (see, for example, the several photographs in this volume of spectacular winter skies). Climate change, however, threatens to turn our seasonal cycle to chaos, and to drive out many of the unique native species that live here. Already this fall, we have seen historic flooding in the city of Grand Forks – due purely to rainfall rather than snowmelt. We would do well to pay attention to the warning.

by Allison Haas

First place

Cast. Wait. Strike! Reel, reel. Grin.

by Sam Simmons

Second place

You're dying, we're thriving, I'm sorry.

by Hailyanna Sundeen

Third place

ATV ditch ride. Terrified hen pheasant.

by Colleen Kastanek

Faculty/Staff Winner

Together, we can save dying Earth.

by Kelsey Torgerson

say and gently touch his rough skin, as white flame burst from my hand. The flames quickly char his flesh and disappear.

I order the other soldiers to move forward. After a few hours of travel we enter the ruins a town and dark figures lurk in the shadows. I stop and order defense formation.

“Angela, you know better than this,” a dark figure says.

“I do, but there is rot growing in your land, Sanity.”

A dark figure come out of the shadow showing glowing crimson eyes under the hood and says, “They're small and powerless; therefore, not a problem. A real problem will up raise if I just let you enter without resistance.”

*

“I'm sorry, Sanity but...,” Angela says, before charging forward and shooting white lights towards Brutal Sanity. Black flame quickly covers Sanity's body and the light is consumed. He runs towards Angela with claws ready. Angela dodges his claws, but she turns to see black flames flaring towards her face. Brutal Sanity's cold eyes stare. White flames cover her body quickly. The black flame stop moving like hitting a wall. Brutal Sanity acts quickly to attack with his claws. Angela is too slow and his claws touch the white flames. White and black flames burst out burning a reaper and angel to ash. Angela backs off.

Brutal Sanity charges with two snake-head-like gauntlets and slugs her in mouth. Angela quickly shoots at his right leg. Angela spits blood out of her mouth, as the rounds burn the skin on Sanity's calf.

“It been a long time since I've seen my own blood,” she says and smiles.

“Same. I'm going to have to try. Please live,” he says and smiles. His eyes lock onto her. The reapers and clan-members run away from Brutal Sanity.

“Funny, I was going to say the same thing,” she says as the angel and her clan-members run away. Angela stands up straight and pulls out a machine gun. White flame forms full plate armor covering her entire body and wings. Brutal Sanity gets low to ground as five barbed chains snake from under his coat. Black flame forms long robe and tentacles under it. Both weapons are covered in the flames. After few minutes of fighting, both of them are tired and beaten on the ground. The ground around them is covered in ashes of the ruins of plants and animals. All the flames finally die out.

Angela laughs and says, “I call this a draw, do you want a drink with me?”

“Same. I'm sure the Rat Hole just finished brewing some wine,” he says and laughs. Brutal Sanity drags himself up and lifts Angela up. Both of them start walking towards the Reaping Tunnels. There is no one else around them.

“This is not over,” she says.

“I know, I'm enjoying myself.”

by Austin Walker

PI-KU CONTEST

First Place

Apple pie
loves
ice cream and me

by Aria Kapsner

Second Place

Twilight's dusk
Stars
Twinkles of light

by Elsa Whitney

Third Place

Butterflies
dance
in blooming Spring

by Iqra Ishtiaq

BITTEN ON THE BUTT BY LOVE

Jimmy il gatto, il mio amore, la mia tragedia.

(Jimmy the cat, my love, and my tragedy).

Interesting way to start off a story, but this is not your typical travel story. And Jimmy the Italian cat was no ordinary cat. Meeting him forever altered my life and my derrière.

We've all heard the saying "love hurts." However, on my first trip to Italy that particular saying took on an entirely new meaning. On our first night there, we immediately drove from the airport to Lake Como. While in the area, we decided to stay the night at a quaint little working farm. The farm was incredible. Breathtaking views. Amazing wine. Delicious food. Welcoming locals. One of the welcoming houseguests was a feline by the name of Jimmy.

Now I am not a "cat person," and unless someone reads this to him, our dog (Maxxi) has no knowledge of my international feline fling. However, the Italian air just does something to you. I would have never let a cat come close to me back home in Minnesota. But here, amongst this magnificent countryside, I just felt free and uninhibited! I let my guard down and let Jimmy in, by respectfully, letting him onto my lap. For the short time we had at that farm, my entire lap belonged to Jimmy. It was his and only his.

Sadly, our romance was cut short as a new day dawned, and my husband and I departed to our next planned destination. I searched and searched for Jimmy to say goodbye, but he was nowhere to be found. It was as if he knew I was leaving and that sometimes, saying goodbye is easiest from afar.

But Jimmy the Cat left me more than fond memories. You see, unbeknownst to me, while having one of our "lap love" sessions a tick came off of Jimmy. And Jimmy's tick so lovingly, and affectionately, bit me on my left butt cheek. It wasn't until my second night in Italy that I realized I had been bitten by something. Whilst in the shower, I noticed an itchy welt that I assumed was from a mosquito. The following morning, I asked my husband to inspect my bitten butt. He too, agreed that it looked like an infected mosquito bite. However, by the end of the same day, the welt got bigger and bigger and started to turn black in the middle. We both knew that wasn't a good sign.

Sleeping that night was nearly impossible as I began to get sick, also...my booty was on fire. Whatever devil bug bit me, literally injected "hellfire and brimstone" into my buttocks! On the following morning, my husband concluded it must be a spider bite. But he, nor I, knew what type of spider it was. What we did know was that at the rate the bite was changing, as well as my condition, we needed to go to a doctor and fast. Luckily, my obsessive compulsion to

FOUR CORNER EMPIRE: BLACK AND WHITE FLAMES

On a stone throne with a Norse mythology book in my hand, I read in my gray world without lights of gods and goddesses full of emotions and defining traits. All useless and illogical for leaders of thousands. I stare at the curved ceiling with skulls of humans, fur-kin, and other things hanging from it, like popcorn on string. I hang my arm with the book down and smile with ten crimson red fangs. A large pile of books tumble down. My door opens with a gust of wind moving my black and silver fur. Reapers drag a shouting human into my throne room. He is loud.

An imp enter the room and says, "Sorry, for disturbing Brutal Sanity, Black Flame Reaper. This skin-kin was caught stealing food."

The sound of chain rustling echoes in the halls as I walks towards the human. It yells insults towards the Imp and begs for mercy. I lift my hand up and place it on his forehead. A metal snake-like skull hangs front of its crying eyes. Black flames flare up, engulfing my hand. It is covered in black fires melting its skin as it yells.

I say, "Its who can't follow rules will be killed. Is there any other things I have to deal with?"

Razor Claws looks at the small pile of ash and says, "Yes, Angela, the White Flame Angel, is marching towards the territory border. She is marching towards the skin-kin town."

*

Houses and buildings are burning with white flames. The mountain breeze is moving my long black hair. The sand hitting my black t-shirt and blue jeans. Ash piles scatter on the ground, as wind carries it around. My soldier has a gun pointed at a man with his hands behind his head. I hold my hand over my face, preventing the ashes from hitting my brown, blue hued eyes. The man is yelling loudly and is annoying. I walk over to the man.

He says, "Your conquest of land is about to end. The reapers will end you."

I hold my hands flat and manifest bright white flames and say, "I'm not here to conquer, mite. I'm just going to burn everyone and everything in Four Corners then leave."

"You're lying to yourself. All humans desire power and land," he says with a grin on his face.

"I don't care about land, worth, or power. I only desire to burn all evidence of the old world and promote equality for all species. You're failing my test," I

POEM TO NANA

Face to face, heart to heart
Our eyes met, our eyes smiled
We held hands, I heard your voice
From your hands.

Tell me how did you
Make it through this life
Without the sounds?
If only could we both sit down,
In awe, closing our eyes,
hearing melodies
That mesmerize,
Now imagine me
Pieces of Chopin's.
Then I, on stage bowing down to
Your generous applause. You, Nana
The only one stood up.

The hands that worked so hard
Tenderly knitted each strand
Of hope, to make your house
A home.
Sweeping and brushing away

Shames, wiping down
Loneliness, pruning the thorns of
Anger, watering down
Tears, sowing the seeds of
Patience.

How did you laugh at life
While I could only sigh in life?
Stories of your pages read so unfair,
mostly.
That night I found a hope
When both your arms folding
Praying, in solitude found in God,
Who had made your heart
From steel.

You taught me silence is a must
So I could write what's in the past
So I could breathe and pause.
Breathe —until the day God meet
us both
Again, you and I, Nana
We'll have a long talk.

by Edna Chiclana

plan every minute detail of our trip actually paid off. As I had hospitals logged in my phone for each location we'd be staying. Quite unlucky of me, I have a weakened/compromised immune system as I battle with two autoimmune chronic illnesses. So safe to say I was getting sicker faster than anticipated. The first doctor I saw had NO clue what bit me; there was no tick or remnants of a tick in or around the site of the bite. Let me say that again, there was no tick or remnants of a tick in or around the site of the bite! So, with no solid proof of anything else, and broken communication on my side and theirs, they treated it as a spider bite. I started antibiotics right away – which did nothing for me. I just continued getting sicker and sicker, and the bite got worse and worse. In total, I went to three different hospitals throughout Italy. During one of those visits, after dropping my pants so the doctor could inspect the bite more closely, he stepped back very abruptly after exclaiming “Mama Mia!!” By the end of our trip, I could strip down to my bare essentials with no hint of shame or shyness. On my last visit to an Italian hospital, I met and saw an English speaking Doctor. I felt hopeful as he started me on a new medication that he said would definitely work. My husband filled the prescription right away. And I began taking them promptly as I was now sporting spots all over my body similar to a Leopard; with a black hole on my butt that was just a red itchy welt a few days prior. But spotted, sick, and armed with the new medication, I boarded a plane and returned to America. As I arrived in my home state of Ohio, I reached a critical point of my illness and begrudgingly had to go to yet another hospital. It was there that I was told that a tick had bitten me. The Infectious Disease Doctor whom they had to call in, notified me I was severely suffering from Rickettsia Spotted Fever. Jimmy was the only animal I had come into close proximity with during that trip. I shook my head in disbelief. No, I thought to myself. Not Jimmy, MY Jimmy wouldn't do anything to hurt me. However, I was wrong. My Jimmy...My Love...was also My Tragedy. A tragedy that could be retold as simplistic as this:

While in Italy, there was a Girl.
The Girl who met the Cat.
The Cat who had the Tick.
The Tick who bit the Girl on the Butt.

Being bitten on the butt by love is hard to get over, but it did teach me a valuable lesson. Be careful who you *let into your heart, and onto your lap!*

La Fine.

(The End)

by Nikki White

ALONE WITH ME

I look in the mirror, and what do I see? A tightly wound ballerina bun, that generously complements this side of me. *I love these earrings...* I think to myself as I continue to stare. Please just anti-age me already- Detoxify this reflection that used to be a simpler, younger, version of me. I turn my back to my reflection, but it hasn't left me. Drifting outward and floating by. I take a deep breath, and in a sweeping motion, let it out. Startled, the bubbles disperse and the water dances across to the other side. To my surprise, here I am again. Slightly less hopeless, a little bit helpless, still me, only me. The water covers my body, and it feels like warm satin melting against my skin. The ritual that ends my day, leaving me forgetful and soft, silky and smooth- My sacred and oh so deserved, bubble bath.

by Gwendolyn Robinson

their longings were secret, their pain kept hidden away. Then again, perhaps the answers would have been obvious, if we had only known them better.

But we all knew loss. We had all felt want. And we understood, then, that none of us were safe.

Spring came slowly that year, snow and ice melting to mud. Temperatures rose with fits and starts until we had whole days above freezing, until the brutal cold of winter was nothing more than a memory.

But even as the days lengthened, we could taste the killer's breath in the briskness of the spring breeze. It was not gone. It hid deep in the damp earth, watching us from behind the golden veil of summer warmth, laughing at us under a cloak of chilly autumn fog. It was content in its knowledge of our souls, and it waited.

by Allison Haas

Because, Paul insisted. She heard something outside in the darkness. He had gone out with her, earlier that evening, to search for it.

“For what?” the police asked, skeptical.

“A child,” Paul told them. “Crying. She must have gone back for it after we went to bed.”

Paul was released two days later without being charged, as there was no sign that Sarah had not left the house of her own free will. Under normal circumstances, we would have been outraged. But the cold had closed us in on ourselves. We whispered our speculations in private, shut our doors, adjusted our thermostats, and piled extra blankets onto our beds: actions belying the fear we couldn't bring ourselves to voice.

Claire Davidson was the last to die. She disappeared from her bedroom on a snowy evening in early March. Claire was the mayor's daughter, sixteen and pretty. We huddled in front of our TVs and watched as the police tore the town apart searching for her.

When they found her she was frostbitten and half-delirious, stumbling along the highway five miles outside of town.

As they loaded her into the ambulance, Claire begged the police for help. There had been an accident, she told them. People were hurt, badly. Police searched every road within a 10-mile radius and found no trace of any kind of wreck.

In the hospital, Claire became sullen and uncooperative. For twelve hours, she laid in her bed, staring at the window, silent tears streaming down her face.

The hospital security cameras caught everything on tape. At 1:00 that morning, Claire rose from her bed, shrugged the dressings off her frostbitten feet and hands, and crept out of her room. The hospital was understaffed, and no one stood between her and the emergency exit that had, inexplicably, been left propped open.

Like Sarah Singer and Maria Sorenson, Claire died in a snow bank. Police said it looked like she was heading back to the highway. The same highway where, two years earlier, a car carrying Claire's sister and her boyfriend had spun off the road and into a tree, killing everyone inside.

We understood, then, what we had been too scared to acknowledge earlier. Winter knew us better than we knew ourselves. We were not special. We were just as vulnerable.

Jackson Fischer had a runaway mother and a father in prison. Sarah Singer had, two weeks before her death, lost her first pregnancy. We did not know what it was that Larry Ritter, Maria Sorenson, Cheri Langmeister, and Bob Ibbotson had wanted so desperately that it drove them out into the cold. Perhaps

I LEFT MY SON IN THE CAR...

This is the first time I have ever written those words down. The memory of that day still haunts me while awake and when I sleep. I can still feel the heat of the day. Hear his cries as I walked away from the car. And the feeling of utter despair for help...

I needed help, not just that day but many days to come. I suffer from Postpartum Depression, and it is a condition that (at times) makes me feel like I am nothing. If I am nothing, then no one will miss me if I just walk away and never come back.

My son was just a baby, maybe six months old. And that day I awoke to feeling a bit off, just not “right.” When he cried it shook me to my core. I just wanted it all to stop. His father came home from work, we argued, and I informed him I was leaving to go to the store. I just needed a break. A break from it all; the baby, his sisters, the looming unending household chores. I will never forget what my husband said to me. After informing him I was going to the store he responded, “take the baby;” I pleaded, and even cried – I did not want to take him. I didn't want him. It pains me to write these words, because one day my son will read it. But I need someone who may not know how severe Postpartum Depression can become to read this. You need to know I did not want my precious baby and only son; I simply did not want him!

I drove into a Speedway gas station with all the windows in my car rolled down. Pulling in beside a pump I turned the car off, and I sat there. My son was screaming in the backseat and I felt no urge to comfort him. I felt nothing. I then got out of the car and walked away. I am sure people were looking at me, judging me, cursing me (and with every right) because what I did was *WRONG!* But I was in crisis and didn't even know it.

That Speedway in Ohio saved my life though – both our lives. Because unbeknownst to those bystanders, less than a mile from that Speedway was a bridge over a river. And while stopped at the intersection I made the resolve to drive my car off that bridge. However, for some strange reason prior to going through the light and reaching the bridge, I decided I needed gas first. The Speedway gas station is located at that very intersection where I awaited the traffic signal. So, I pulled in, left my infant son in a hot car and walked in to pay for gas. Oddly enough I felt at peace, soon I knew all the pain, turmoil, stress and anxiety *would be over*. Finally, I walked back outside to pump the gas. When I arrived at my car, I locked eyes with a stranger at the pump behind me. They looked at me as if I was THE most despicable human being, they'd ever

seen...suddenly I realized the gravitas of the situation. I SNAPPED back – as if a light switch was turned back on. It felt like I was on “pause,” and someone pressed “play.”

It was right then, in that precise moment that I realized for the first time I made a huge mistake. A mistake that put my only son, our little prince, in danger. I immediately yanked the car door open and took him out of his car seat. He was *dripping in sweat!* Suddenly, I began to cry, sobbing – but in that Speedway gas station I held my son tighter and closer than I had ever done. I apologized to him, over and over again saying, “mommy is sorry, mommy is SO sorry!” A swirl of emotions overtook my body all at once; *joy, disappointment, fear, and regret.* But I FELT SOMETHING! To some this may seem miniscule, however, when you suffer from depression and the low is so low...to feel anything different is indescribable. I put my son back in his car seat, gently this time, carefully cradling his head. Singing to him and making funny faces. I drove out of that gas station and right over that bridge. I never once looked at the river; I kept my eyes on the road and my heart on my son.

*

I wrote this story to warn any new mom or established mother – if you have any signs or symptoms of Postpartum Depression *PLEASE* seek out medical help! There are so many great therapists, counselors, women’s and moms’ groups that can help. When I finally saw a therapist and told her this story, I cried again, harder than I had previously. She gently placed her hand on my shoulder. Handing me a Kleenex she explained that I was at a point of crisis that day and was not myself. Yes, *I did put my child, my baby in danger,* but I am NOT A BAD MOTHER. Like so many mothers I didn’t know how to handle all the emotions, needs, demands, and responsibilities that come along with motherhood. With all the changes, I didn’t take care of myself properly. Basically, I was a ticking time bomb.

Mommas, I implore you, *defuse yourself,* talk to someone. Take time for yourself to reset. Don’t make my mistake because the outcome could have been devastating. It could have been fatal, and I know that now. If you read this and are still judging me, I get it. I do. Trust me I do, and I understand your disdain. As I said in the outset...that day continues to haunt me. Do I still make mistakes as a mom – absolutely. However, I hold *that* day in the forefront of my mind, so I NEVER *fail* or *fall* that hard again!

by Nikki White

THE FROZEN

It began, as such things usually do, with people no one much cared about.

Larry Ritter was found dead on a frozen morning in mid-January, wearing only his underwear and a pair of snow boots. He had been drinking, the police decided, and had accidentally locked himself out. It was a reasonable enough assumption given the circumstances of Larry’s life, except for the fact that the door to his trailer was unlocked.

Maria Sorenson was next. She disappeared from the Prairie Hills Nursing Home and was found two days later, half-buried in a snowdrift at the northern edge of a wheat field. Mrs. Sorenson had dementia, a dead husband, and children who lived far away. Her death was ruled accidental.

Of course, we talked about it. After church, or in line at Wal-Mart, we said the same things every time someone mentioned the cold:

“Awful, isn’t it?”

“Be careful out there.”

But the warning was a ritual. We had families, and solid front doors, and central heating. We didn’t think it would happen to us.

Jackson Fischer was a tough, ragged fourteen-year-old from the same trailer park as Larry Ritter. They found him miles away from his own front door, fingers frozen to his father’s shotgun.

The police talked of drugs, of some unspecified “trouble at home.” Never mind that Jackson’s two sisters had been with him that night. Never mind that they, too, had heard unexplained noises outside. We dug deeper into our denial, and dismissed their warnings as teenage hysteria and maladjusted grief.

February was relentless. First, Cheri Langmeister was found in a vacant lot with mascara smeared across her cheeks and her toes bloodied by a pair of impractical shoes. (She was a regular at the bars downtown, but no one had seen her that night). Then Bob Ibbotson, another Prairie Hills resident, wheeled himself out of a fire exit and died of exposure only a few yards into the parking lot. (Bizarrely, no alarms were triggered). And finally, Sarah Singer died in her own back yard, curled in a snow bank while her husband slept obliviously not forty yards away.

We sensed the pattern, but we didn’t want to recognize it. So instead, we sneered at Paul Singer’s alibi and demanded to know why his wife would have voluntarily ventured outside on a night when the temperature dipped well below -20.

MIRROR

Looking in the mirror
The image is free
Is that the reflection I want
Staring back at me

All the moments in your life
You can reminisce back
The trail left behind
The past in the past

Are you one to give
Or do you take?
How do you serve others?
Is it a sincere smile on your face?

Do you have any patience?
Are you honestly kind?
Do you give to charities?
Have you donated your time?

How did you respond
When challenges were in your face
Did you handle it with poise?
Did you use any grace?

How do you treat others?
Could in you they confide?
Do you shake your head at deceit?
Or spread tall tales of lies

Do you look down at your plate,
grateful for the variety?
Have you laughed at those,
who have less than society?

You've been given many chances
To make the right choice
Did you stand tall for what you believe in?
Did you speak your voice?

Looking in the mirror
Is it really the image you want to see?
Are you going to change it?
Or just let it be?

by Carrie M. Jude

MY DIAMOND LAKE

Diamonds everywhere. I can see them blinking at me from the cabin window, calling to me to splash into them, to hear my kids' laughter as they throw handfuls of them at each other. The sun, moon and water make them, and we feel like they are just for us.

These aren't diamonds made from carbon. They aren't manufactured. You won't find them in a jewelry store. These diamonds are created new, each day on the lake we love. We swim in them as they warm under the sun's bright light. The water glimmers and invites us to bask in it. To float, to fish, to skip rocks and enjoy all that it is. To cool off, to relax, to laugh, love, build and discover.

The diamonds are ever present in my memory. Their brilliance reflected on the lake's surface as soon as the sun peaks over the horizon or the moon blinks into the sky. The lake always inviting no matter my age. When I was young, I would build sand castles near it, see how far I could swim, and yell to my family to watch me play. At night, we would sit on the dock and watch as the stars appear so we could make wishes upon them. They reflect with the moon on the water's surface – waving to us hello and good night as the water ripples from the breeze.

Now, like the water on our lake, I see reflections. I get to see my babies enjoying the sand at the edge of the water and the depth as they wade in. They dig up rocks with their toes from the sandy floor and find the flowers and weeds that make it their home. They slide into it. Jump into it. Chase the frogs, fish and each other. I see reflections of my memories being remade in our lake by my own kids.

I smile with the thoughts of times with my grandparents, times with my parents, times with my brother and friends as we soaked in all that the lake could give us. I smile at the sandy beach and the trees that give the water shade on a hot day. I smile knowing that I get to share this place with my husband. I smile knowing my boys will grow up loving this lake as much as I do. I smile at the diamonds.

by Erin Bone

THOSE SLIPPERY FISH

There are two activities that exist solely to be done with my grandpa: mini golf and fishing. Now I am competitive and terrible at mini golf. So, by default, my favorite grandpa/granddaughter activity was fishing. There's this little pond tucked back in the woods behind our house. We would sit in this little alcove which I proudly knighted "our hideaway." I would be the warrior princess and my grandpa would be my champion in shining armor. The hours flew by down at the pond: talking, laughing, and "drowning worms" as he would always say. Sometimes we would take a swim or manage to catch a whopper. Those fish were always slimy little buggers, flopping and flipping until we dropped them back in the water. We would relax there, with the summer sun glistening off the surface and my grandpa's laugh echoing through the treetops. It seemed as if the clock had stopped and we could live in our hideaway forever.

But even those gorgeous summer nights are not immune to time. Years passed, we aged, and our spot became lonely and unused. My grandpa is no longer able to trek down to the water and his fishing sports now have to make room for a lawn chair. His effortless smile hides more often than not. Any talk of knights and princesses faded with the setting sun. Our life conversations have turned into short chats or not at all. And things are not as they once were.

I recently walked down to our hideaway. The overgrown brambles had wrapped themselves around the log that had once been my throne. Rain and runoff had carved ravines, leaving the roots and rocks naked and exposed. The most recent storm had sent gale force winds, adding to the destruction. The sun refused to venture out from behind the clouds, and even the crickets were silent. I stood in the clearing, looking around at the wreckage, but not seeing what was before me. In my mind's eye, I was seeing the sun rays bouncing off the pond and my grandpa's smile as he catches a walleye. I was reliving my warrior princess combat and casting the line into the clear blue water. I was listening to the frogs croak and my grandpa sing along with them. And I am thinking that maybe our hideaway will last forever after all.

I do not think I will go back to our hideaway. I do not need to. The memories made down by the water are what matter, not the lonely echo it is now. Those summer days are not gone, they still live on inside of us. And things may not be as they once were, but our hideaway will remain. Warrior princess and her champion, tucked in a special place in my heart. Along with the all days we had, full of sunshine, water, laughs, and those slippery fish.

by Mikayla Jones

Chinese custom. When I came to America, to my surprise, I found some Chinese restaurants here provide hot water with tea to customers, as if to indicate that they are authentic Chinese restaurants.

However, drinking very hot beverage will easily harm our oral mucosa, and lead to increased risk of oral cancer. Therefore, I am no longer keen on drinking hot water. But in China, if you are thirsty and eager to drink water in a restaurant, waiters will still serve you hot water. I guess you will be helpless at that moment. I hope one day they will offer clean ice water for customers, just as American restaurants do.

by Xiaojun Wang

THE CHINESE AND HOT WATER

When I met one of my American colleagues for the first time, she took a cup of water from a water dispenser and handed it to me. Noticing it was a cup of hot water, I said with a smile, "Thanks, but I don't drink hot water." She was surprised because she thought all Chinese people drink hot water.

Indeed, most Chinese people prefer to drink hot water when they are in an office or at home, with tea leaves or dried chrysanthemums, scallions, etc. added to it. They like the herbal taste with special flavors, and many even believe that those herbs have mysterious effects, such as anti-cancer, beauty enhancement, figure slimming and so on.

When I was young, I lived in a village in Southern China, where the villagers drank water from a self-dug well. They could not afford tea, so they didn't have to boil hot water for tea. In rural areas, only people in higher social class such as those who are working in a school or the government had the habit of drinking hot water.

After I left town and went to college, I bought a thermos as other students did. Every day after dinner, I walked to the room specially designed for boiling water beside the dining hall and filled my thermos with hot water, then went back to my room. At night, I would make a cup of hot tea and put it beside my homework. At that moment, my feeling was that I really left my primitive village where people drank well water and became a civilized modern Chinese person!

With more knowledge gained in college, I found out that in ancient times the Chinese people did not drink hot water. Actually it was the one of the reasons that so many people died young. However, they didn't know the contaminated water and poor sanitation could cause a lot of diseases. They thought that the death was a punishment for their wrong-doing by God.

About 100 years ago, some educated Chinese people started to learn scientific knowledge from the Western world. They got to know that bacteria in water could cause a plague to spread, and boiling water is a cheap and convenient way to kill the bacteria. At that time, the Chinese government had limited resources to provide clean water for people. So they had to repeatedly recommend people to drink hot water. People who graduated from colleges understood it, and these are the ones who worked later for the government or schools.

After decades of hard work, most Chinese people have finally developed the habit of drinking hot water. They are so used to it and take it as a long-standing

HOUSEHOLD WATER USAGE 1920-2019

Obtaining water was labor intensive for my grandmothers. They pumped it from the well and carried it 200 feet to the house. Now, as availability of potable water dwindles, in part because it is inexpensively and infinitely available to inefficiently designed homes such as mine, I challenge myself to use water as prudently as they did.

Great Grandmother's backbreaking work of scrubbing sheets on a washboard in the 1920s was minimal compared to carrying water to the house in unwieldy wooden buckets, heating it on the wood stove, and pouring it into the washtub. Her arms ached by the time she scrubbed the front steps with the used wash water, then carried the remainder to the garden.

Grandmother felt fortunate to have a wringer washer. Still, she carried water to the house. Grandpa installed an electric pump and Grandma could sit for a minute and massage her tired arms while her galvanized buckets filled.

Then water came into the house! Dad buried a pipe below the frost line from the well to the house and water came directly to the kitchen sink. Mom filled the wringer washer with hot water from the tap. The wash and rinse waters were used only one more time as they drained through a pipe that ran along the side of house to irrigate the garden. Mom did not carry water.

A few years later, Dad installed a commode in the hall closet. Its waste water ran to the septic system that had been excavated several hundred yards from the well, house, and garden.

Six years later Dad installed an automatic washing machine in another closet. With that plumbing upgrade, he routed all household wastewater to the septic system and buried a separate line from the well to irrigate the garden. Not one drop of water was reused.

My home is not designed to reuse one drop of water either. When an affordable, reliable, legal, and safe greywater reuse retrofit (Santos, Taveira-Pinto, Cheng & Leite, 2012) becomes available for my home, I will purchase it.

Obtaining water is not labor intensive for me, but I feel an altruistic responsibility to use it judiciously to facilitate its continued availability. I have explored other ways to return to my grandmother's water usage paradigm with the added requirement that the water I reuse is safe, and safely returned to the soil. To that end, I

- use less water by choosing clothes and furnishings that require less cleaning;
- replace my worn-out appliances with water efficient models;

- use non-toxic cleaning products so I can reuse my wash water on landscaping and houseplants;
- prepare simple-to-serve meals with reused cooking liquids;
- collect the 30 to 60 gallons of condensation water that my furnace or air conditioner generates each week and use it for cleaning.

In 2019, as I carry plastic buckets of condensation water up from the basement mechanical room, I recall that in the 1920s, my grandmothers had aching arms.

References

Santos, C., Taveira-Pinto, F., Cheng, C.Y., & Leite, D. (2012). Development of an experimental system for greywater reuse. *Desalination*, 285(C), 301-305. doi: 10.1016/j.desal.2011.10.017

by Colleen Kastanek

As I sit there silently, I observe Christmas decorations that fill the walls and archways and gifts surround the Christmas tree standing in the corner of the living room. On the tree is blue and white garland and several cute tractor ornaments with an angel on top. Meanwhile, the rest of my family sits around the table, conversations becoming heated over the topic of work.

As we thank my grandma for the food, we help clear the table and wash it, so that the cards we are going to use won't get greasy or dirty, and share time together. Not only is boisterous laughter and squeals heard throughout the house, but the delicious scents of fondue mushrooms and oven-roasted chicken. A family sits around a table talking and enjoying each other's presence. From the fabulous desserts to tractor ornaments, the entire house is filled with an appetizing aroma and a friendly atmosphere.

by Danielle Duerksen

HAPPY CHRISTMAS

Deep fried mushrooms, boisterous laughter, and little squeals of excitement all come from a little farm not too far from a small town in rural Minnesota. Inside the farm house, smells of delicious oven-roasted chicken and deep fried mushrooms permeate the air. Someone might say "Ouch!" as he/she puts his/her fondue sticks into the pot of hot oil while oil splashes on his/her hand. Throughout the meal, I hear many different conversations and shared laughter coming from the dining room. Christmas at my grandma's is by far the best way to spend time with family. We laugh and share memories with one another that will never be forgotten.

During the meal, oven-roasted chicken, deep fried mushrooms, and breaded cheese balls, sit on each table in large bowls. I feel the warmth from the breaded mushroom as it sits in my hand, as well as the grease that runs down my arm. As I bring the mushroom closer and closer to my mouth, it begins to water uncontrollably. Once the mushroom hits my tongue, the warmth permeates as the grease oozes out and sends happiness throughout my body. I get excited because I see even larger bowls that are holding heaping amounts of cut up pork chops, steak, meatballs, breading, chicken, and shrimp. After stuffing myself silly, the warm chocolate chip cookies are savory and gooey-- a great way to end the meal.

Getting to touch the gooey cookies as it leaves my mouth while my hands are full of this addictive chocolate, is my favorite way to eat cookies, and it keeps the youngsters saying "Mommy, can I please have another one?" As the magnificent Dutch apple pie goes around the table, the cinnamon-covered apples and sweet scent of the dough fill up my nostrils as I inhale deeply. Wait! More is on the way. Not only do the desserts smell amazing as they fill the house, but also the refreshing crispness of the fresh, cold winter air that shoots through the house as the squealing kids go in and out to play.

They are excited to have snowball fights and slide on sleds down the giant snow pile, which brings back memories that my cousins and I had created. Yelling and laughter fill the air as they pick teams for a snowball fight. After a short while, arguing is an issue about who has gotten hit and who has not. While I stare at the snow, I squint my eyes because the sun is extremely bright against the white background; but the snow is really pretty with the shimmering of each snowflake acting as glitter. Looking at the kids play, their red cheeks, brings goosebumps throughout my body, even though I am currently sitting underneath a thick fleece blanket.

I'VE FELT THE FEELING OF RIDING ON A CLOUD

I've felt the felt the feeling of riding on a cloud
the freeing air
the exultant made sound

I've felt the feeling on running with the wind
Though someone robbed it from me
And now all that's left
Must be faced with an insincere grin

It's harsh truths
Brought me back to reality
Of a once made promise
That turned out not to be

Though through it all
I know much now
Of the bitterness and anger
That for some is very profound

I came back stronger
Now alive and free
I don't have to worry
What bitterness would have done to me

I've felt the feeling of a whirlwind embrace
That joy that will stay forever on my face
It left its mark, its stamp facing down
I will forever know the feeling of riding on a cloud

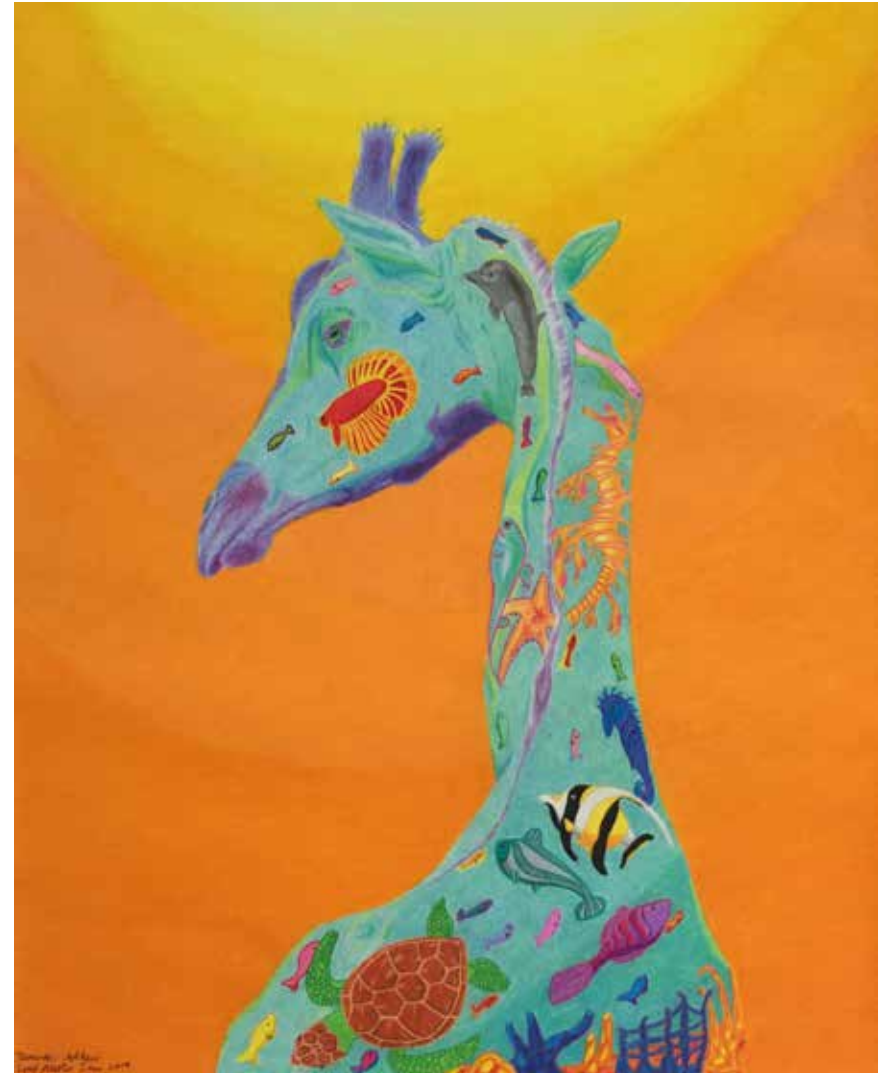
by Carrie M. Jude

BELIEVE
(cover image)



photograph by Saba Shafiq

LAND MEETS SEA
(colored pencil on paper)



drawing by Vanessa Robbins

PEACE IN CROOKSTON



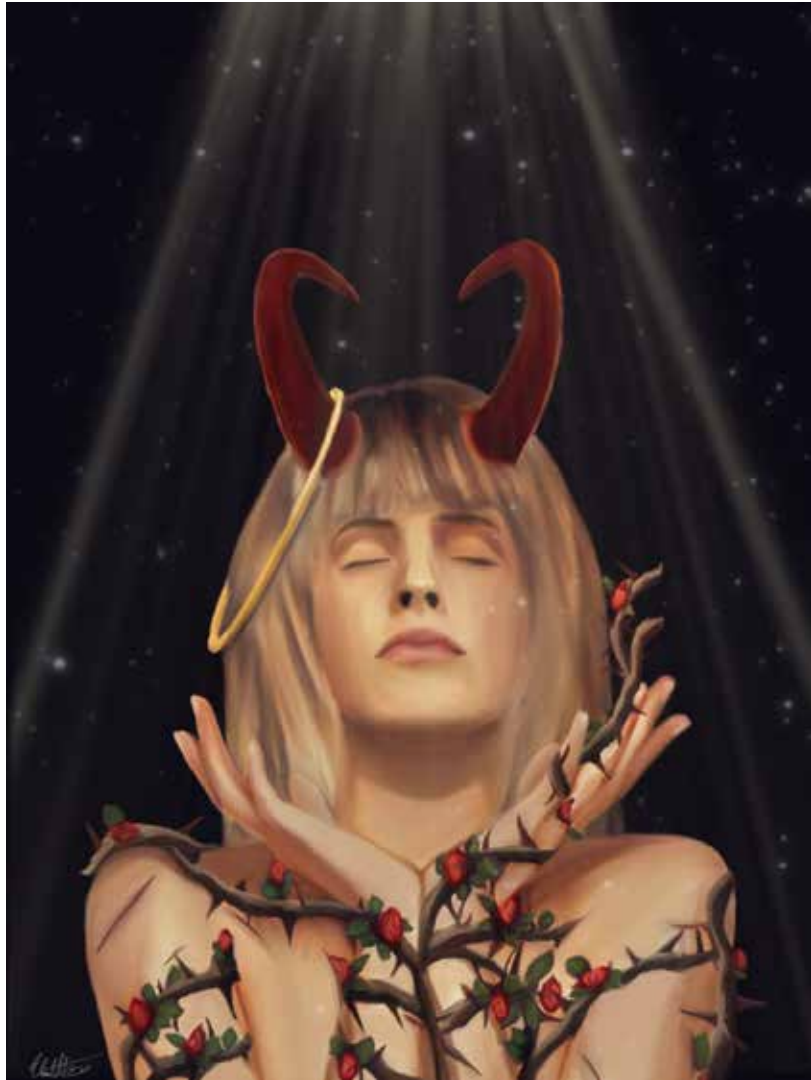
photograph by Hee In Moon

INTERNATIONAL SPACE STATION MOON TRANSIT



photograph by Ian Timberlake

FOUND



digital oil painting by Elsa Whitney

TE ANAU, NEW ZEALAND



photograph by Ryan Ratcliff

NAVY PIER CHICAGO



photograph by Priyanka Singh

CAMPING AROUND THIEF RIVER



photograph by Hee In Moon

TECHNOLOGY OF COFFEE

(colored pencil, burlap, found object)



collage by Lauren Wallace

NIGHT VIEW IN SEOUL



photograph by Hee In Moon

CHERRY BLOSSOMS

(pencil on paper)



drawing by Darin Viken

BEAUTY OF THE WORLD



photograph by Hee In Moon

WINTER SUNRISE



photograph by Madison Olson

CONEFLOWER



photograph by Madison Olson

SAVING SOULS
(marker and paint on paper)



drawing by Mikayla Lacher

BROADWAY AND BEYOND
(graphite pencil on paper)



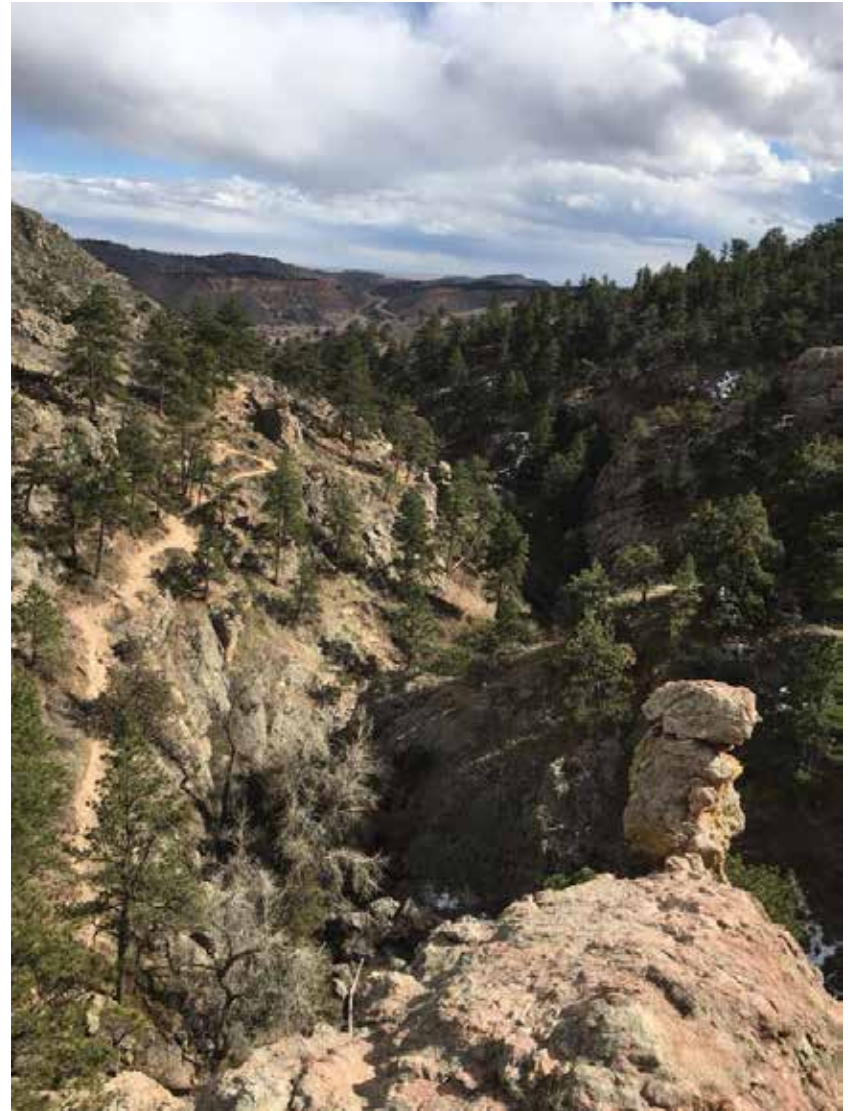
drawing by Vanessa Robbins

LIGHTHOUSE



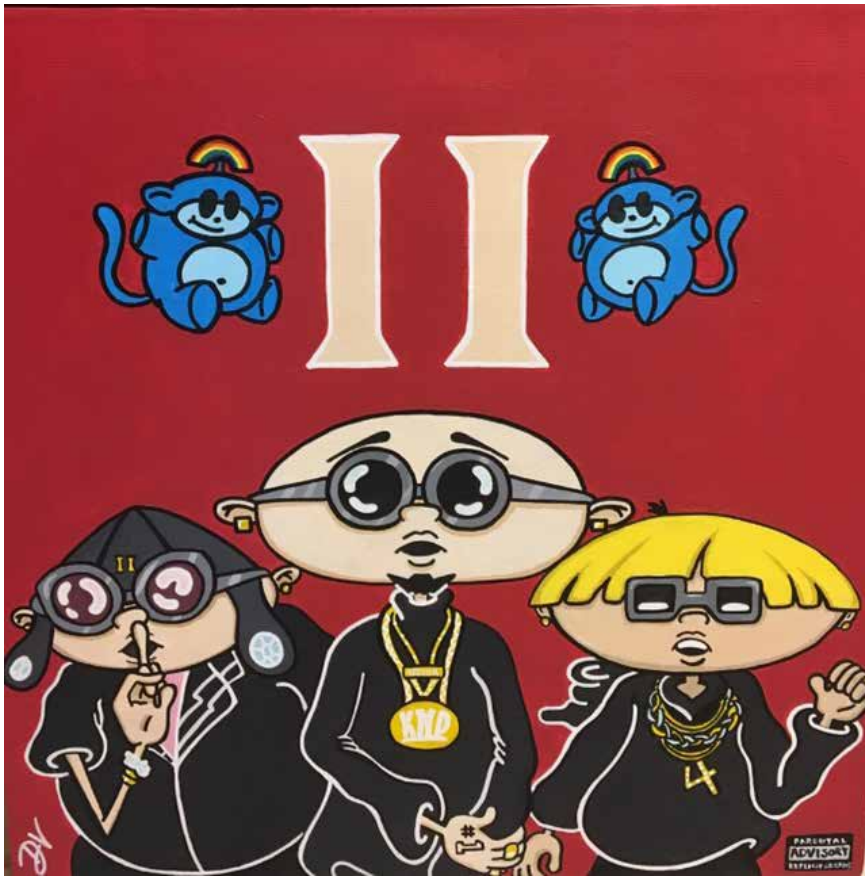
photograph by Priyanka Singh

SKY ABOVE, EARTH BELOW



photograph by Jordan Thompson

K.I.D.D.O.S.
(acrylic on canvas)



painting by Darin Viken

TONGARIRO ALPINE CROSSING,
NEW ZEALAND



photograph by Ryan Ratcliff

PROMISE
(pencil on paper)



drawing by Darin Viken

SWISS ALP IN THE CLOUDS



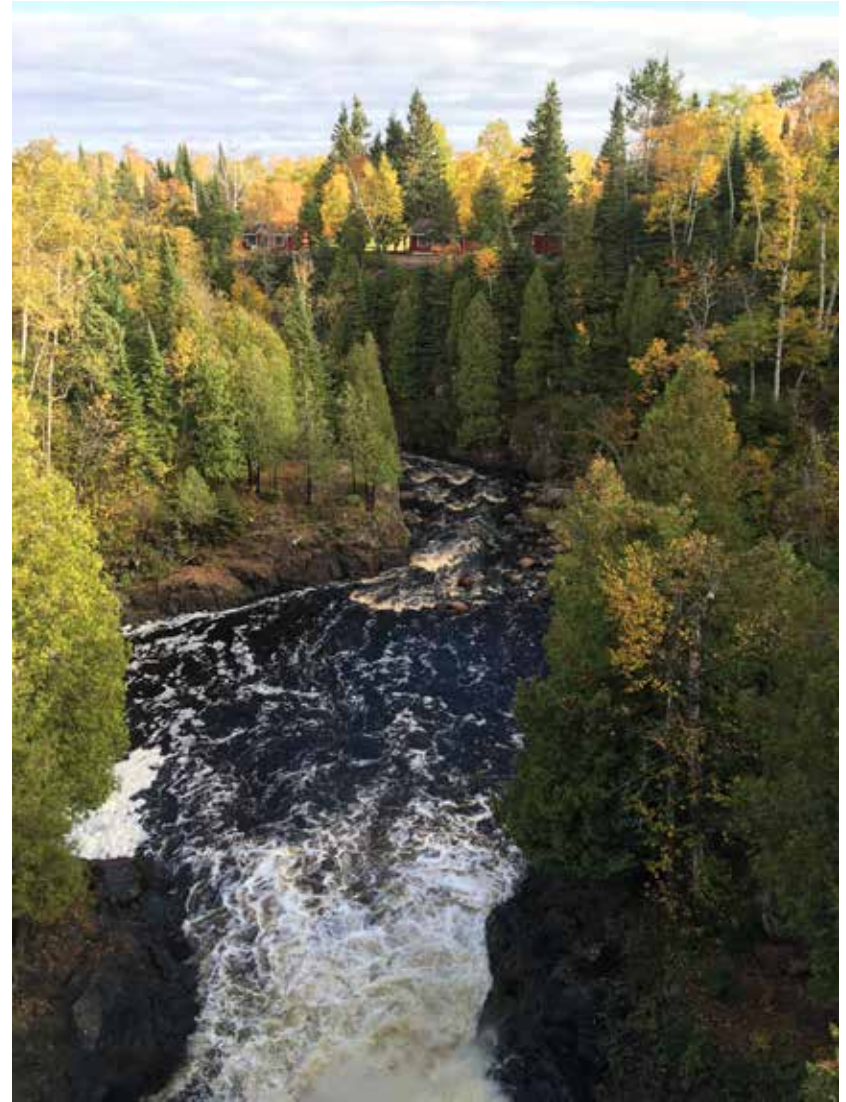
photograph by Ian Timberlake

NORTH MINNESOTA BIRCH



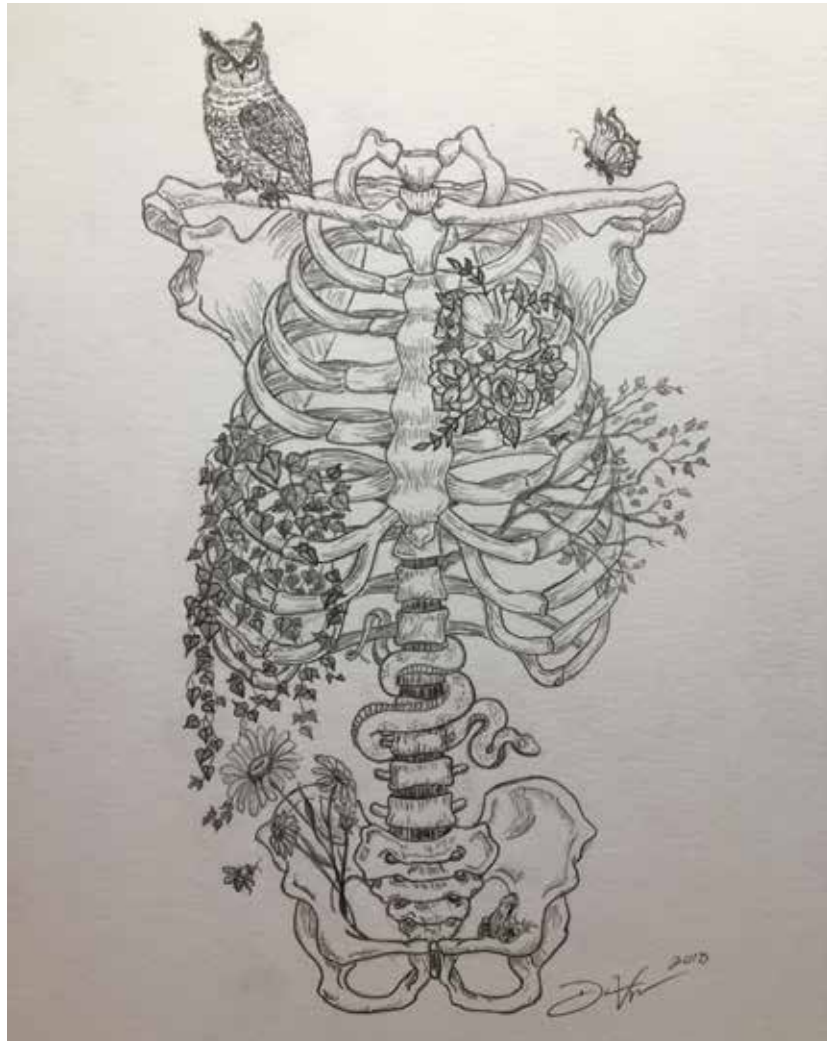
photograph by Ian Timberlake

DULUTH, MN



photograph by Priyanka Singh

FLORA AND FAUNA
(pencil on paper)



drawing by Darin Viken

TREE OF LIFE
(mixed media on canvas)



collage by Sarah Giese