



Oakwood 96



Looking at the  
surface you  
only get to see  
the exterior.  
You have to  
look deeper  
to see the  
beauty that  
lies within.



# **Oakwood**

**Volume 2**

**Number 5**

et al.: Oakwood

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Oakwood is a South Dakota State University production of creative arts and literature. Oakwood is funded by the South Dakota State University Student Association Senate and Printed by the South Dakota State University Print Lab.

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## Table of Contents

John Anderson

- Schoolgirl USA page 1
- A Call From A Licentious Troubadour  
Nearing the Millennia page 2

Patrick Baker

- Perception page 3
- Stall Crawl page 3
- GODBOX page 7
- Foggy Notion page 7

Cami Lovely

- Untitled page 4
- Untitled page 36
- Untitled page 53

Laure A. Blank

- Misty Morning Meditation page 5
- Big Sister page 6
- War is Hell page 49-50
- The Dream Maker page 52

Rachel Skarman

- Free to Fly page 8
- Good Music Never Dies,  
It Just Becomes Classic page 20

Jill Dais

- tim page 9

Glen Enander

- Knife's Point Points-perilous page 10
- The Inverse of Desire page 11

Mike Trout

- Elephant page 12

Phil Germann

- Dawning page 13

D.J. Hupp

- The 1990's Man page 14

Jody Hoff

- The loft page 15
- "made it" page 15

Emilie Hagny

- Fallen Angel page 16
- Nails page 40

Steven R. Juenemann

- We All Knew Someone Like You page 17
- Aurora page 18
- Drought page 18
- North of Worthington,  
Minnesota on Highway 60 page 19

Hyun-K Lee

- After School page 21
- Sweet Song page 21
- Prelude to Spring page 22

Steve Lovett

- Friction page 23

Bob Young

- Untitled page 24

Laura Maag

- Decisions page 25
- Roommates and Other  
Strange Alien Phenomena page 56

Becky Meyer

- Fallen page 26
- Death/Rebirth page 27
- HE Touches Me page 29

Jennifer Fordyce

- Untitled page 28

Cathy Nelson

- Silhouettes page 30
- A Different Perspective  
Observing Harvey Dunn page 30

Brenda Sanabria

- A Resilient Leaf that  
Conquered Me page 31

Mark Stemwedle	
• As the Rower Keep On Rowing	page 32
Cara L. Schott	
• The Poem	page 33
Susan Helfert Shaw	
• Two Theories of Winter	page 34
• Seals	page 35
• Tet Bodybag: Farelli, L.J.	page 37
Cheri Timm	
• Untitled	page 38
Dale Woitas	
• wasted	page 39
April Yost	
• Prairie Rose	page 41
Elizabeth Bright	
• Silverfish	page 42
Maria Gustavsson	
• LOVE ME?	page 43
Courtney Mehlhaff	
• Pieces	page 44-45
Kim Peterson	
• Unanswered Questions	page 46
Laura Zoss	
• The Quilt	page 47-48
Billy Sides	
• Mir'o	page 51
Andy Bommersbach	
• Champagne and Ham Sandwiches	page 54
Kim Paulsen	
• Cup and Jar	page 55
Arlene Hodges	
• Shadows at Sunset	page 57
Lynn M. Yost	
• Conversation	page 58
• The Quilt	page 59-60

# Poetry

## **Schoolgirl USA**

She's the type of girl who kisses the dog that just saved her baby  
brother from a burning building on the forehead because of yucky  
germs.

She's the type of girl who squishes lightning bugs and rubs their  
phosphorescence on her fingernails for polish and then marvels  
at her sense of fashion ingenuity.

She's the type of girl who instigates a game of Truth or Dare on the  
school bus and lies until someone Dares her something titillating  
and quits.

She's the type of girl who paints her toenails that retina-busting-cherry-  
fuck red and keeps the Bible in her potpouried underwear  
drawer.

She's the type of girl who has a different boy's name on every folder  
and discreetly steals away to her room to count the collection of  
class rings.

She's the type of girl who goes out of her way to smile and say "Hello"  
to us losers and flirts with all the boys the week just before  
Homecoming.

She's the type of girl who thinks Philosophy and Mythology are  
perfumes and drinks wild alcoholic concoctions from a Mountain  
Dew bottle because beer is too crass.

She's the type of girl who I love to hate.

Voila', how do you like me now?

John Anderson



## **A Call From A Licentious Troubadour Nearing The Millennia**

My Beauteous Lady, privy and sleek  
You need not shade with powder your cheek

Donning a girdle and crimping Wonderbra  
Outlined eyes with colored pencil you draw

Shampoo, then conditioner and highlights to your hair  
You tweeze and pluck and rub your thighs with Nair

Mudmasks, perfumes, and lotions line your shelf  
Potions, liniment, and elixirs for yourself

Facing the mirror to balm the vertex lip  
With pumiced hand that has softened your grip

Designer labels and ill-fitting jeans  
You count calories to stay within means

With nails lacquered, painted, and trim  
You feast upon a Slimfast en route the gym

Forgo cosmetics, the courtly garb, and such hullabaloo  
It is in your sheer naked essence I best love you

John Anderson

## **Perception**

What is the difference between a hobo and a madman?

A hobo passes out facing east to shake hands with dawn's sun.

A madman drinks himself into a slumber while facing west—amazed that the final frontier exists only in his decaying soul—hoping the morning light will slip into the western night unnoticed.

Patrick Baker

## **Stall Crawl**

Today, on the wall of a bathroom stall, I found written:

I KILL DRUGGIES and POTHEADS!!!

I wonder if the author was boredom.

Patrick Baker



Cami Lovely  
Untitled



### **Misty Morning Meditation**

In morning's gold and pink delight  
When mist her fingers trees entwine  
I come to you in search of me  
At dawning of new day.

Where tree and cloud and water meet  
Where loons their ancient calls repeat  
Here is where I am complete  
Each dawning of new day

Your sparkles dance on blue-green glass  
Your voice a quiet murmur-  
Of ancient tribes, and shifting sand,  
and timeless, endless motion.

This silence is a magic thing  
It heals my soul and gives me wings  
Bad Medicine, my heart is yours  
Each dawning of new day.

Laure A. Blank



## **Big Sister**

I was a pesky 11-year-old when you deserted me-  
taking with you my love and leaving me your side  
of the bedroom, empty except for the lingering smell  
of your perfume and the old maple dresser still  
sticky from your hair spray.

Images of Viet Nam were on the evening news  
and Walter Cronkite joined us each night at meal  
time through the magic of television, with his warm,  
story-telling voice reading us the number of dead.  
The turbulent 60's took innocence out of the living room,  
and you away from me.

I forgave you your absence when you returned  
from college for weekends bringing with you new friends,  
and guitar, and Joan Baez on albums, and Rod McKuen  
in books, and patches we sewed on my blue jean jacket  
that said "peace," and "flower-power," and "stop the war."

Laure A. Blank

## GODBOX

The God box speaks through screens  
television dreams  
The infant structure salutes the will to be controlled  
To see what you are told is there  
missing this minute's everywhere  
Not learning, just memorizing yesterday's codes

You said "I'd like to see the jungle"  
so you flipped to Tarzan  
Soon you'll be 26 with a house and a car and  
You've chained yourself to your chair and best friend  
How much of the talk comes from your end?

Patrick Baker

## Foggy Notion

I'm sure there are spiders underneath these covers  
and other unmentionable creatures.  
Things that remind me of how I am living in fear.

No matter how much bigger I am when compared to all of these  
I still feel the need to rip away my blanket-shield to inspect for damage.  
Leaving myself exposed once again to things that seem beyond my control.

These daytime naps are killing me.

Patrick Baker



Rachel Skarman  
Free to Fly

tim

"is this where n/a meets?"

a guy asks me with a nervous shake in his voice -  
"around front and through the first door," i say with a smile,  
wondering what sorts of drugs he's been doing.  
and the sign across the street keeps flashing  
Cocktails, Cocktails, Cocktails

the rain drips at a steady pace  
off the wall of scott's lumber -  
one single drop at first, then swept away  
down to some unknown destination with all the other single drops.  
and across the street  
Cocktails, Cocktails

I take a sip of my dr pepper  
and a puff from my cigarette and watch a car drive  
with the sign of anarchy painted on it.  
the kid's got red hair and looks as if he could have smoked  
a couple of blunts last night  
and i wonder why he's not stopping - better things to do i guess.  
and still  
Cocktails

i wonder if all these people are here by choice  
or if they're just here making some stuffy, rich judge happy,  
who is right now sitting at home  
on his plush, leather recliner bitching to his wife  
and i look across the street

with my eyes closed

Jill Dais



### Knife's Point Points-perilous

Knife's-point points-perilous. Preview-prick pulls-  
Power; ploys-planned-and-played, /push-pulled/ and then  
Cuts/ and-I-run-the-long-drive alone-in-the-  
Night's-dark-soul; my soul dimly darkens down

Death's door.

Blood's power rip-rips-ripples waves  
Terrors me deep, deeper-down-depths diving  
Below dream's dreaming no-sun-seeing depth's  
Drowning deluge floods my sorrow soaked heart.

Morning's madness maims my mind, mirrors heart's  
Dark damp dismal dungeon. Dream's despair stops  
Sleep. No-rest-found day follows no-peace-found  
Night. No-near-neighbor knows; knife's night's need.

g

and so we explain as our friend Tunks would have us,  
one cannot easily read the above, the one from whom  
it came found no ease as it came to him, its subject:  
terror by knife inflicted from wife to husband, its  
style: repetitive alliteration for the repetitive terror  
filled nights and impossible voice for the impossible  
life, its scene: a small house filled with terror and a  
road away filled with empty darkness, its pain: its  
corporeal and emotive reality, its meaning: . . .

Glen Enander

## The Inverse of Desire

Tonight I want  
To remain lonely.

I do not want your welcome's sweet smile  
To remind me of my sadness.  
I do not want your voice's warm sound  
To reminds me of my solitude's cold silence.  
I do not want your polite's pleasant manners  
To remind me of my hermit's horrid habitation.

Tonight I want  
To look at the rain.

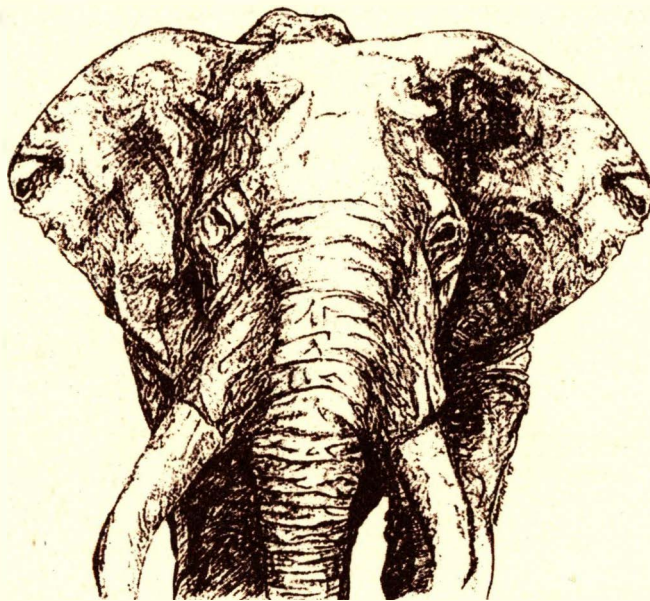
I do not want your bright smile  
To break through the dark clouds.  
I do not want your soothing voice  
To harmonize with patter on the window.  
I do not want you  
To soften my pallid perpetual pain.

O, tonight I want  
To hold you.

I do not want smiles  
To satisfy convention.  
I do not want voices  
To fill the void.  
I want you  
To be—yes be—fully, freely, furiously,  
with me.

Tonight I relive everynight.  
Tonight I dream of desire.

Glen Enander



Mike Trout  
Elephant

## Dawning

"All Glory and honor are yours, Almighty God, forever and ever. Amen"  
- Catholic Mass

The cold morning air soothes  
my warm face,  
and rushes into my lungs,  
refreshing my spirit,  
replacing the stale.  
Above and through the silhouettes of trees,  
the early day mist  
translucently alters the pre-dawn light,  
transforming it into soft pink and purple streaks of watercolor,  
painted by a perfect hand,  
as if to express its joy in creating.  
The shimmering outlines of the distant clouds hail  
the approaching light,  
like trumpets proclaiming majesty:  
calling all to rejoice.  
As the first spears of gold pierce the new sky  
and humble my heart,  
the day begins,  
life abounds,  
and all bow to their Lord's magnificence.

— 09 September 1994  
Phil Germann



## The 1990's Man

"I'm the man that brings you roses  
when you ain't got none." The Rolling Stones

You see this is what I'll do  
I'll jump through ph.D minefields  
I'll drink around the world 7 times  
I'll kick with the kung-fu boys  
I'll work at Billy's retarded brother  
I'll wear these letters on my chest  
I'll quit that rough game rugby  
I'll hoist pom poms on Saturdays  
I'll wrestle tough bulldog steers

You see this is what I'll do  
I'll walk back allies 'til dawn  
I'll talk with the regents' board  
I'll speak in many tongues  
I'll drive two eighteen wheelers  
I'll trim the lawn just right  
I'll vote politically correct  
I'll battle with nature's elements  
I'll write volumes like literature

You see this is what I'll do  
in the nineties to be with you.

D.J. Hupp

## The loft

Gripping the wooden planks  
arranged for easy climbing,  
then standing in the loft-  
and the dusty smell  
of straw and hay  
assaulting my nostrils.

With a flick of a switch  
a dead light bulb laughs.

The flying rat  
scares me so much  
that I almost scream  
out of my head  
when his wings brush  
my face and shock my  
senses with his touch  
and squeal.

I wonder how he felt  
when on his radar  
appeared a hyper  
five-year-old with a  
new fear of the dark.

Jody Hoff

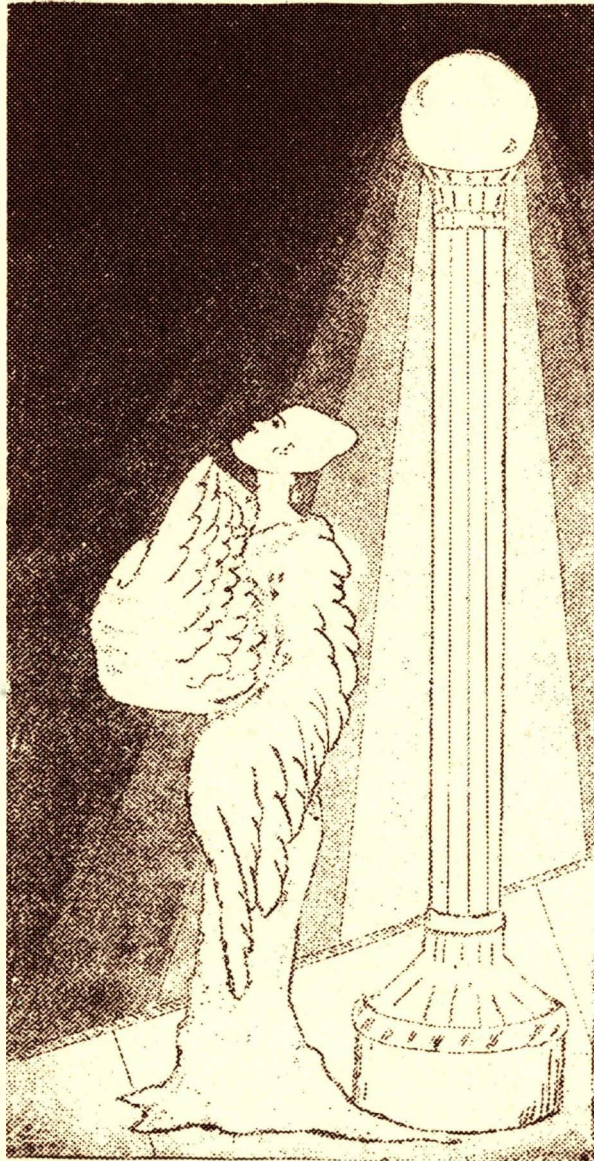
## "made it"

The clock ticking  
slower and slower  
until, gripping the  
desk with both hands,

He stands.  
Then,  
rushing head-first at top speed  
down the hall, 'round the corner  
and through the door marked "boys."

"Wshew!"  
"made it!"

Jody Hoff



Emilie Hagny  
Fallen Angel

## **We All Knew Someone Like You**

for C. W.

The little kids liked you a lot,  
But we could never figure out why.  
Prince and Shadow wouldn't even chase you  
The way they chased the rest of us.

You felt sorry for the birds that hit the window,  
And the snakes that we ran over with our bikes.  
Your thick glasses were taped near the left hinge.  
Your pants had holes in the knees.

You always came out after a rain,  
Knelt down among the puddles  
That formed in front of your aunt's place on the Wuorio Road,  
And tapped the water with your middle finger—  
pat pat pat

"Look! It's still raining,"  
You'd shout, and giggle at the sound  
As you scooped up angleworms with your other hand.  
You wore a yellow raincoat every day  
Until you moved away.

Steven R. Juenemann



### **Aurora**

Looking back,  
I see more clearly—  
The covered Kerr jar at your feet,  
The crescent moon low above the lake,  
The wet grasses up to your waist.

The pale green light streamed on behind you,  
Above the rustling birch and aspen leaves,  
And danced upon the northern sky.  
As you stared, wide-eyed, at the firefly in your hands,  
Your face glowed.

Steven R. Jueneman

### **Drought**

As dust  
Fills all four chambers  
Of a farmer's heart,  
Hot invisible hands  
Wring resin  
From the evergreens  
In the shelterbelt,  
And tip cows  
In broad daylight.

Steven R. Juenemann

## North of Worthington, Minnesota on Highway 60

Something brought you out of the ditch that day  
And led you up the grassy slope to stand  
Salient in such foreign environs:

Some sort of cruel joke evolution  
Has played upon you and all of your kind—  
Quite an evil algebraic problem.

How long would it take a turtle, moving  
At a rate of one foot per minute, to  
Cross a thirty-two foot wide state highway?

What would it take a driver, driving at  
Sixty miles per hour, to stop and lift a  
Reptile from danger to seeming safety?

I guess neither of us will ever know.  
Stoically you stood and watched tires and tires;  
My tires and the tires of the other cars.

I'd never seen a creature so completely damned  
As you were. I'd never known a person  
So completely damnable as I was.

Stafford might have paused and pushed you back to  
The dark sloughy depths from which you had come.  
I looked at you crawling as I drove by.

I looked at you as I drove by, and I  
Wondered if I should turn around to help:  
To see if you had died before a tire.

"Too fast," I mumbled. "I'm driving too fast,  
And it has to be dead by now, I'm sure."  
(I will never outlive that eulogy.)

Steven R. Juenemann



Rachel Skarman  
Good Music Never Dies, It Just Becomes Classic

### After School

All around the desolate cottage,  
Sunflowers scattered.

A Nightingale sings, shaking  
Boughs of lilacs.

Children run laughing,  
Drenched with the evening sunlight.

Behind the lonely cottage,  
The sun pours its last brim of wine.

Lee, Hyun-K

### Sweet Song

The sweet melodies of my beloved  
Flood my heart with blissful breath unrelieved.  
Standing outside the door,  
I saw your eyes glistening with evening splendor.  
Until the sun sets, caressing the moon,  
I hear the sweet melodies nestling my tranquil boon  
And I sleep in peace and in my dreams of  
My beloved.

Lee, Hyun-K



## **Prelude to Spring**

In the blue sky float fleecy clouds;  
The sweet south winds  
Blow along the green hill over the river.

Distant pond-waters peep through the forests.  
Like smoke, the green grass rustles in the fields;  
Larks journey across the blue sky.

Stream-waters lure me with their tender voices;  
The distant mountain is mute.  
Oh, everything seems to be brimming with joy.

Lee, Hyun-K

## Friction

Worn tires slipped and crunched  
over a gravel road and the gears  
cranked with the pushes of  
the boy's feet down through the  
circle motion of the pedals.  
He watched his shadow ahead of  
him make long pumping strides home.

A bark rose guttural and prophetic.  
Loud and vulgar on the boy's ears,  
it came from behind him in a straight line,  
singular, speaking only to him. It snapped  
like the jaws that launched it.  
His heart clutched inside his small chest.  
His shadow became frantic and grotesque.  
The hellhounds were a pack now and their  
howls a chorus.

A stumble or a missed leap  
might tumble a dog, but the pack  
nips on, jaws bounding.

The boy's head whipped behind and  
snapped back.  
He pedalled fast and hard in a clumsy  
small boy way.  
His rubber-soled shoes, smoothed by play,  
lost grip of the pedals.  
The road swayed beneath him and  
he and the bike rolled into the ground.  
The dogs closed on him. He couldn't  
get up, only kick with  
his little legs, cover his face with  
boy arms, twiggs knotted at the  
elbows and brittle in the bone.

Death did not come quickly but in little  
chunks of flesh, ripped and torn from  
his body. Life does not leave a body without  
struggle, it clings  
hard as dog jaws

Steve Lovett



Bob Young  
Untitled

## **Decisions**

I walk the line between Fire and Ice.  
I feel the cool Jade of innocent new leaves  
And taste the blue of fresh fallen rain.  
The angry waters of grey lash out toward the stars  
And laughter cries into the night.  
This is where Heaven and Hell shake hands  
And I  
I watch, think contemplate my past, present and future.  
Screaming for answers and hearing only silence  
Echo through the clouds.  
I walk the line  
And oh, you should see the view.

Laura Maag



## **Fallen**

Red blood upon the grass.  
Tiny flecks left behind fade into brown and mingle with the leaves.  
Smells of must and mold dance with an alien musk,  
a fragrance untouched by time.  
Cold seeps unbidden into limbs  
reaching, searching, finding no trace of warmth left to embrace.  
Wind sings its mournful dirge amongst the trees  
crying out to a season gone too soon.  
Leaves rustle and skip racing ahead before their time  
ripe to press against an earthly pleasure.  
Sunshine hides her face  
ashamed to lift her head for fear someone will see the remnants of a fire.  
Autumn pays with frozen pain for summer's passionate tango in the trees.

Becky Meyer

## Death

Seeking a powerful force mind and body turn upward  
straining to find that which in others beats strong.  
No warm glow lights the grey sky.  
No hot and commanding feeling surges through this empty cage  
which guards internal organs but protects not a holy heart.  
Gone are connections with nature.  
Feelings for something greater quiet.  
Without hope of redemption the essence of man  
seeks its cold comfortless grave.  
The mind turns inward only to meet the sightless eyes of a dying soul.

## Rebirth

Earth and the elements surge together encompassing the spiritless form.  
Wind rages vainly against the uncaring mass.  
The sky parts to reveal blue slivers of light into the darkness.  
Redemption, unheralded, enfolds the wandering soul.  
Life is returned to the shriveled center of this human cage.  
The precious gift of salvation redeems the unloved heart.

Becky Meyer



Jennifer Fordyce  
Untitled

## **HE Touches Me**

I've touched the sun on the bright, white forehead-curls  
of a newborn Hereford.

I've touched the earth in the dark, rich, clinging soil  
of a freshly turned furrow.

I've touched laughter in the damp and sticky giggles  
of a well loved child.

I've touched power and beauty on the quivering, muscled flank  
of a winded quarter horse.

I've touched wisdom in the red-rimmed dewy eyes  
of an aging veteran.

I've touched love on the caressing lips and calloused palms  
of a South Dakota farm boy.

I've touched God in all these things and He's touched me.

Becky Meyer



## **Silhouettes**

Sunset blazing gold and pink in the western sky,  
You weave magical illusions pleasing to my eye.  
Against your glowing colors appear charcoal silhouettes  
Of windmills and of chimneys spewing smoky pirouettes.

In a moment's notice I can see them in my mind,  
Rows of darkened cottonwoods of Chinese elm and pine  
Against chromatic splendor no palette could display  
Create dramatic contrasts at the closing of the day.

Cathy Nelson

## **A Different Perspective Observing Harvey Dunn**

A woman picked prairie flowers,  
but all I saw was the brown earth  
barren and dry and ugly,  
I did not see the bouquet she held.

Two children played on the prairie,  
but all I saw was the dust and toil  
of the virgin ground unyielding  
I could not see the golden grainfield.

I did not see the hope  
blossoming in the prairie earth.  
I did not see the light bringing  
life to nurtured seeds.

I missed it all and walked  
away, then turned , and saw  
it all for the first time.

Cathy Nelson

## A Resilient Leaf that Conquered Me

One solitary, decayed leaf remains clinging  
barely, on the nearly empty tree  
that stands before the window of my room.  
I yawn and patiently await its eventual descent,  
as all leaves are expected to do at the peak of fall.  
Frail, withered looking thing, but I see how it clings so  
strongly, to its beloved branch as if for its own survival.  
Interested, I observe its maniacal fluttering in the wind,  
One strong gust is followed by another,  
making the leaf tremble and quake.  
Yet it continues to hold fiercely,  
as if denying its eventual fate.  
No, this leaf does not want to join its brothers below,  
But all leaves are expected to fall so I continue to stare.  
Rather obsessed now I vow not to move my eyes until  
I see it finally break and fall.  
An hour must have passed but the leaf, after every violent gust,  
would suddenly look as if it was to surrender,  
but then it would only exhaustively tremble  
and return to its original post!  
As if intending to frustrate me, to show me if it  
desired to, it could remain on that decrepit tree  
forever, or as long as the tree could withstand the wind itself.  
So to hell with what the world expects!  
Frustrated, and perhaps maddened by now,  
I impulsively run outside to the tree,  
scrutinize this brazen leaf one last time,  
then proceed to yank it off the limb.  
Finally the tree is bare.  
My heart, as I hold the now tranquil leaf in my hand,  
fills with an incomparable anguish and I feel like the biggest  
cretin on earth.  
What in the world possessed me to do such a thing?  
Repenting, I take it back to my house where I lay it on my bed,  
Fingering the rough stem awhile, the leaf suddenly seems to speak  
to me one last time.  
"You see?" I imagine it saying, "I told you I would never fall."  
Rightly so, only by the forced action of a cynic like me  
did the leaf eventually part from its home.  
Otherwise, I honestly believed it would have bravely fought the  
wind, and remained on that branch forever.

Brenda Sanabria



**Mark Stemwedel**  
**As the Rowers Keep On Rowing**

## The Poem

With a shaking hand she lit a cigarette,  
Why me?  
His smell still clung to her skin, nauseating  
As the act impregnating her brain.

With the click of the lock she was in trouble.  
He dimmed the lights,  
And fluorescent stars shined.  
"Dance with me," was all he said.

He didn't notice her ragdoll limpness,  
Her brain screamed, "Leave!"  
Yet her body disobeyed,  
He wouldn't let her go.

She stamped out her cigarette  
And took a shower.  
Still not feeling clean,  
She cried herself to sleep.

"You must have been willing," one friend said,  
"Or you would have Left."

He wouldn't let her go.

The sand dial has been turned,  
Yet her hands still tremble  
During the flashbacks.  
She feels guilty that she never spoke,

So she wrote a poem.

Cara L. Schott

## Two Theories of Winter

Winter lies fallow deep  
In shadowed ground  
Until the sun turns away,  
Then moves through the earth,  
Closing it down,  
And now rises all at once with blasting wind,

Or,

Winter moves down from the space  
Between the fires above us,  
Falls lightly down from the sky  
A little at a time,  
Slips down into the earth through the blackened stems  
Of what it has killed,  
Taking ice underground.

Susan Helfert Shaw



## Seals

Sleek swimmers seals:  
Klutzy geeks on land,  
Lined up on the rocks for a turn to dive, they cheer and clap for  
each new trick or old,  
Each who dives turns to pronounce himself pleased with himself, his  
form, and the feel of the gray chill cold,  
and they all agree noisily with full  
unbounded enthusiasm.  
They dive and cheer through the dismal day,  
Delighted with something we cannot fathom.

Susan Helfert Shaw



Cami Lovely  
Untitled

**Tet Bodybag: Farelli, L.J.**

When you step on a land mine  
What do they put in the body bag?  
Do they carefully remove the bits of flesh flapping like dead pigs'  
Ears from the blasted sticks of trees?  
What to do about the shards of bone mixed in the mud of the road?  
Would there be a piece left as large as an ear, an arm, or the  
Generous chest lying alone like a piece of dismembered doll?  
Or do they sample the bloody earth of that far place which you now  
Enrich?

What do they put in the body bag—the beloved curve of your cheek?

Susan Helfert Shaw

## Untitled

As summer skies turn gray, and  
autumn crops turn from green to brown,  
I think of you and how our summer days were spent.  
Together on the sand, watching waves  
and excited young children, seagulls and sunsets.  
Moments now only memories.  
Days to be lost with sunny skies and suntans,  
fading forever into the past  
As the water from the lakes turns cold,  
and the leaves begin to fall,  
I think of you.  
As our lazy days together pale, we must remember  
that old friendships should never be forgotten.  
No more memories of us to be made,  
no more quiet laughs on rainy nights.  
As sandals change to much warmer winter socks,  
the birds turn to the south, and the warmth turns cold,  
I think of you.

Cheri Timm

**wasted**

lay in this huge sagging bed every night without a reason to sleep  
for i have accomplished nothing,  
again letting an entire infinite day slip by me untouched,  
unscathed by a genius mind  
in which a lack of direction leads to lethargy  
which inevitably pulls me into unconscious horror dreamscapes  
composed of everyday realworld trivialities twisted  
out of proportion into demons,  
which stab and sting and haunt my cursed soul until i wake,  
unrefreshed at midday and pull my wasted and weary body  
to the kitchen, filling a malnourished belly with dyes,  
empty chemical additive nothingness, meager helpings of non-nutrients,  
silver-wrapped candies melting in my mouth  
in front of madison avenue slickster commercials hawking sugar smack  
and towers of shiny soda cans brightly flashing images,  
messages, logos, mottos, toys, heroes,  
sanitized reality bleached white by dryers and brainwashers  
i cannot resist with eyes glazed over, without will, without purpose,  
without direction, no action, no forces to move this lifeless mass  
huddling braindead on the living room floor  
through daytime, afternoon, evening, late night  
with not a damn thing accomplished,  
but the disappearance of another day, another chance to start anew  
has passed unused before you.

Dale Woitas





Emilie Hagny  
Nails

# Witherington High School Writing Contest

Sponsored by SDSU  
English Club



Witherington High School Writing Contest  
First Place Poetry Winner  
April Yost  
Junior, Wessington Springs H.S.

### **Prairie Rose**

Gently placed in the heart of untamed prairie,  
A wild, red rose in full bloom sways with the calming breeze,  
Releasing her sweet fragrance,  
A single dewdrop glistens in the warmth of the sun,  
Thorns are sharp, poised to fight-  
Stem is crooked, revealing struggle and pain,

Ever so swiftly the autumn breeze whistles,  
Whisking away brown leaves,  
Thorns lose their sharpness,  
Fragrance dulls,  
A sparrow lands; her stem snaps,  
Her day vanishes-  
She blows with the chilling wind forever.

Second Place Poetry Winner  
Elizabeth Bright  
Junior, Rapid City Stevens H. S.

### **Silverfish**

Silver darts  
blaze along the rocky bottom  
of the thick indigo blanket.  
A thousand emeralds  
dance soundlessly behind,  
brazen in the June sun.

Raven black hair strokes the gems  
and dusts them into the shadows.  
He strains his neck so close to the blue;  
the silent waves wrench the shade.

He must not lose the lurid eyes.  
She intrigues him;  
silver flickers through the  
deep caverns.  
Stormy ashes transform  
to shimmering diamonds,  
and blink away.

Enchanted by the silver gaze—  
and when he opens his eyes,  
She is still there.

Third Place Poetry Winner  
Maria Gustavsson  
Sophomore, Groton H. S.

### LOVE ME?

You say that you  
Love the rain,  
But when the rain comes,  
You go inside.  
And you say that you  
Love the wind,  
But when the wind comes,  
You shut the windows.  
Because of that I'm getting so  
Afraid when you say  
That you love me.



Witherington High School Writing Contest  
First Place Prose Winner  
Courtney Mehlhaff  
Junior, Milbank H. S.

### Pieces\*

"Hey, waitress! Over here!" A thin man slouched in his booth. Mavis piled three plates onto her tray and picked her way through the maze of tables and chairs toward him.

"What can I help you with?"

The man loosened his tie. "I've been waiting here for over twenty minutes."

"I'm sorry, sir, we're very busy." As she spoke she leaned over the adjacent booth and delivered the food, then whipped an order pad out of her apron pocket and stood waiting. The man seemed not to notice her apparent hurry.

"I mean, everyone else has gotten their food already and I'm still sitting here!"

Mavis sighed the heavy sigh of a thirteen hour day. "I'm sorry, sir. Can I take your order now?"

He was taken aback by her display of patience and replied huffily, "Well, I guess I'll just have the special since I haven't gotten a menu."

"Anything to drink?"

He ran a trembling hand across his brow and seemed to relax somewhat.

"Coffee, black."

"Thank you, sir. I'll be back with you shortly."

As she turned he muttered, "That's hard to believe." Mavis ignored him. He was only one of the many irate customers she had dealt with in her 32 years as a waitress. She returned to the kitchen and slid the order sheet across the back counter.

"I need a special, Marty. And you better hurry this one."

"You got it, babe!" came the muffled reply. She smiled without knowing it. Marty always had a smart comment for her toward the end of the day.

"Hey Mavis, aren't you supposed to be gone already?" yelled a busboy.

"Unfortunately, yes." She filled a water glass. "But I'm covering..."

The boy slammed a stack of trays down. "Why don't you just go home? Theresa showed up early, she'll take over." He leaned in closer to Mavis. "Her date didn't go very well tonight."

Theresa brushed past him and smacked his shoulder. "Shut up, Barry."

He laughed crudely. "Hey, just because you're not getting any doesn't give you the right to bite my head off!"

"Get out of here, Mavis." Theresa plucked the pen from behind her ear and fastened her apron. "This conversation could get ugly."

Mavis listened to the two argue while she punched her timecard and headed for the door.

"Your purse!" The bulky young man tossed it at her.

"Have a good night, Marty." She stepped out into the brisk air. Seven blocks to the bus stop. Ten minutes to wait. One unwanted advance from the driver and she was on her way home. The streetlights cast eerie shadows on the building as the bus pulled up and stopped. She heard the whoosh of the doors opening.

"Here's your stop, sweetheart." The driver was a crust old man. "Are you sure you don't want to come home with me instead?"

"Quite sure." Mavis stepped off.

"Damn shame." And the doors squeaked shut again.

With the smell of exhaust still in her nostrils she climbed a flight of stairs and cursed the broken elevator. Her keys jingled in the lock of apartment 2D. The first things that came off were her shoes. Those continually aching feet sank into a tub of Epsom salts and she sat back in the overstuffed chair in front of the television.

Mavis didn't mind the comments from the bus driver or the angry customers. The other waitresses she covered for usually showed up late. She was used to the grease-stained uniform and tired feet. She could even put up with her pitifully low salary, even though she was the most experienced person on the job. It was her life. It had been her life ever since she was 19. She knew nothing different.

Her eyes moved from the television screen to the numerous pictures on the wall. Gene had been so handsome in his youth. She thought back to how he had deteriorated in those last months. But that had been a long time ago.

Jesse was living with his wife in the suburbs and they had another little one on the way. Mavis smiled at the idea of five grandkids tearing around the apartment. It would be close quarters, but she loved every minute of it.

Donna was still in... she couldn't remember the name of the country, somewhere in Central America. Her latest letter was lying unopened on the counter. Mavis liked to save reading them for Tuesdays, when she had time to write back right away.

Robert lived in the city with his second wife. They had two kids, one in high school, one graduated. They never visited much anymore. She dried her feet off. Removing her glasses, Mavis reached over and turned out the light.

\* Due to limited space, we are only able to publish an excerpt of Courtney Mehlhaff's "Pieces."

Second Place Prose Winner  
Kim Peterson  
Senior, Brandon Valley H.S.

### Unanswered Question

His life was worthless; it had become routine and plain. The pale man crawled along the moist earth. The moon sighed into the woods, casting deep shadows upon his cheeks, causing the edges of his gray suit to glow against the ebony night. A giant oak smirked as it lifted its massive root, tripping the pathetic creature; and it chortled as his emaciated body crumpled into a bed of wet leaves. The lonely man's shoulders shook; silent tears sank into the earth. Clenching the moist, black dirt in his ivory fists, the creature pressed it against his eyes; stained tears slipped across his quivering lips. He dragged himself a few feet to the edge of a bog and gradually slid into the bubbling, black mud. Lying on his back, the man squeezed his eyelids shut and sighed, allowing the tension to escape from his muscles and sink into the bog.

He was a child again, floating beneath the water-logged dock in his red life jacket. Mother had called him three times already; now she was counting to ten, but he liked the feel of tiny waves tickling his skin, bobbing him up and down. Life was so carefree, there was nothing to worry about, and so many questions yet to be answered. He closed his eyes, savoring the feeling of weightlessness. Mother was shouting now. He had better go to her, but he needed to take one more look. He opened his large gray eyes to gaze upon the silver web woven across the bottom of the dock.

When his eyelids flipped open, however, he stared at a full, cold moon. Its light filtered through leaves and branches to land in patches upon the man's face, into his large, gray eyes— too large for his hollow face.

The mud was sucking at his ears, now. He closed his eyes again, slowly releasing the air from his nostrils. He pictured his office, the stack of papers due next week, the pale, yellow walls, almost bare, except for a plaque, thick with dust, bearing the words "Employee of the Year." Everything had become routine. He would wake up, read the morning paper, and drink a cold cup of coffee; then catch bus #6 to the office, work overtime, and return home to no family to ask how his day was. What did it matter, anyway? Life had no meaning. You are born, you enjoy childhood; then you grow up, and you die.

His eye twitched. Something from deep inside was nagging at him, trying to tell him something. He squeezed his eyes, straining to smother any doubt that might interfere with his plan. All questions had been answered; there was nothing left to learn!

The mud was tickling the corners of his mouth. It held his body in peaceful rest, almost like that day beneath the dock, but not. This felt dead, lifeless.

No, all of his questions had been answered!

Holding his breath, he gazed into the branches. A sparkle caught his eye. He gasped as he recognized the tiny beads of light. A pattern of intricate and simple design stretched between the branches, and in the center sat a spider. The man's dead heart flashed hot and cold, as panic rose to his throat. His mouth filled with mud and water as he struggled in vain to escape the death-lock of the swamp. Mud slid over his large, gray eyes and pulled each finger beneath its dark blanket.

The boy bobbed beneath the musty dock. Stripes of light landed upon his face. Squinting, the boy watched the spider weave its trap.

"Who taught the spider to do that?"

### Third Place Prose Winner

Laura Zoss

Freshman, Artesian/Letcher H.S.

## The Quilt

Althea looked around her bedroom. It was wonderful. She had spent many hours redecorating it, but now it was finally finished. The walls were painted light blue, and the carpet was white. Framed pictures of Althea and her horse Lacey covered the walls.

Althea loved horses. She and Lacey had been competing for years. After much training, they were finally winning blue ribbons in the shows.

Althea loved her "new" room. It was finally completed, a week before ninth grade started. Althea wanted a new look before high school began, and she felt her room could use one, too.

High school was going to be a big transition for Althea. She was going to be attending school in a different building this year. The night before, at dinner, Althea's parents had gone on about Althea starting high school and how their little girl was growing up so fast. It was almost annoying how nostalgic her mother could get.

Althea jolted herself back to the present and her room. She wanted to leave one wall bare so that she could hang Lacey's ribbons in a row across it, but she would have to take down the quilt that hung on that wall.

Althea's mother had made it for her when she was just a baby. There was special story behind that quilt. Althea's mother had told it to her many times. The quilt had a picture of a horse on it that she had owned long ago. The quilt had been made for Althea as a reminder of how much her mother loved her. Althea loved that quilt. It was very special to her. However, it was also in the place where she wanted to hang Lacey's ribbons.

Althea got a chair and carefully took down the quilt from the wall. She tried hanging it on her other walls, but the quilt would not fit on any of them. Althea sighed. She had really wanted to hang the ribbons on that wall. She found a white plastic bag. She carefully folded the quilt and placed it in the bag and placed it on the shelf in her closet. She hoped her mother wouldn't mind. Besides, she was really getting too old for the quilt anyway. It was a pattern made for a much younger child. Althea was sure her mother would understand.

Just then Althea's mother, Elizabeth, called her to lunch. Afterward, Elizabeth asked her if she was all done redecorating her room.

"Yes," said Althea. "I just want to hang up Lacey's ribbons on the wall."

"Oh," her mother replied. "Well, just don't use tacks. I hate to see you putting holes in your walls. What wall are you going to use?"

Althea hesitated before speaking. "Well, I... I thought I'd hang them on the wall above my desk."

Elizabeth glanced at Althea. "Isn't that the wall that your quilt was hanging on?"

"Well, yes," said Althea. "But I took it down."

Then Elizabeth said, "Don't you remember why I made you that quilt? Where did you put it?"



"I put it in a bag in my closet," Althea answered.

"Do you still want to keep it?" her mother asked.

"Of course!" Althea exclaimed. "I still love that quilt, Mom! I'm going to keep it forever. I can still remember how much you love me even when the quilt is in my closet instead of on my wall."

Elizabeth sighed. "I have lots of things to do today. I guess I'd better get started." She rose from the table and disappeared into the kitchen.

Althea looked at her hands. They were tightly gripping the edge of the table and her knuckles were white. She felt so badly. Maybe she should put the quilt back up on her wall, for her mother. But Althea knew that doing that would not change things between her and her mother. It wouldn't make things the way they were before. They could only go on from here.

That night Althea went to help her mother prepare supper. Elizabeth looked up at her as she walked into the kitchen. Althea had to ask. She had to know.

"Mother, are you upset with me?"

Elizabeth looked at something Althea could not see.

"No," she answered. "I guess I just have to face the inevitable. My little girl isn't so little anymore. Althea, you're growing up. I have to face that, whether I like it or not. Here you are, already about to start high school. Time is slipping away from me." Elizabeth looked sadly at Althea. "I love you so."

She held Althea tightly in her arms. Althea knew it would be all right.



# Prose

## **War is Hell**

Laure A. Blank

War is a thief. It robs countries of their history and youth, parents of children, siblings of each other. It snatches innocence and thwarts the dreams of young and old. It is an age-old, incurable, unstoppable disease that maims and kills. It is a powerful, hate-filled 3-letter word. War destroys the environment and ultimately takes everyone prisoner, leaving no one untouched.

Hail Mary, Mother of God  
My Queen, My Lady  
I lay my wings at your feet  
And this day  
Dedicate my service to you

My flying wings  
Are the distinctive emblem  
Of my branch of service

Today this emblem  
Takes on a new meaning  
And a new distinction. . .

50 years later my father carries this prayer with him still. Imprinted on a wallet-sized piece of paper, now yellowed and dog-eared, with creases so settled in that lines are missing and some words barely visible, he keeps it carefully tucked away, hidden in the folds of his wallet.

My father's safe, sheltered, rural South Dakota existence was shattered when World War II became a reality. At the age of 22, his tranquil, serene prairie life was exchanged for a world unfamiliar to him, a world far away, a world at war.

The endless flat land he knew so well was suddenly a far away place and was quickly replaced by endless flights over rugged mountains, oceans, and strange territories. Flack lighting up the night sky was the unjustifiable trade for the starry evening prairie calm.

At the age of 22, a young man's fancy should be taking flight, but not as a radio operator, not aboard a B-24 bomber, not flying deep over enemy territory dropping bomb loads directed at an unseen enemy, a target on a map.

His squadron—The Flying Colts—flew these missions of terror. My father's crew survived 37 sorties.

For nearly all of my 38 years that part of his life was kept in the shadows. They were his memories and he kept them deep inside, locked away, until recently.

Perhaps time truly does help to heal and perhaps 50 years has become a safe enough distance so that now, at 73, he is able to share some of his experiences.

It was just after one of these riveting stories that I decided to ask, "Dad, what would you say about war?" He very quietly and solemnly answered, "War is hell." He meant it quite literally.

In my life, I have never had to know hunger or been exposed to it. In his life, he has witnessed children fighting rats for scraps of food soldiers would throw into the garbage. In my life, I have never faced real terror. In his life, he has lived it.

The war is 50 years behind him now. He is back on the familiar, much-loved prairie where flack does not exist and the stars and the moon set against the black, velvety sky are the only lights that shine in the night.

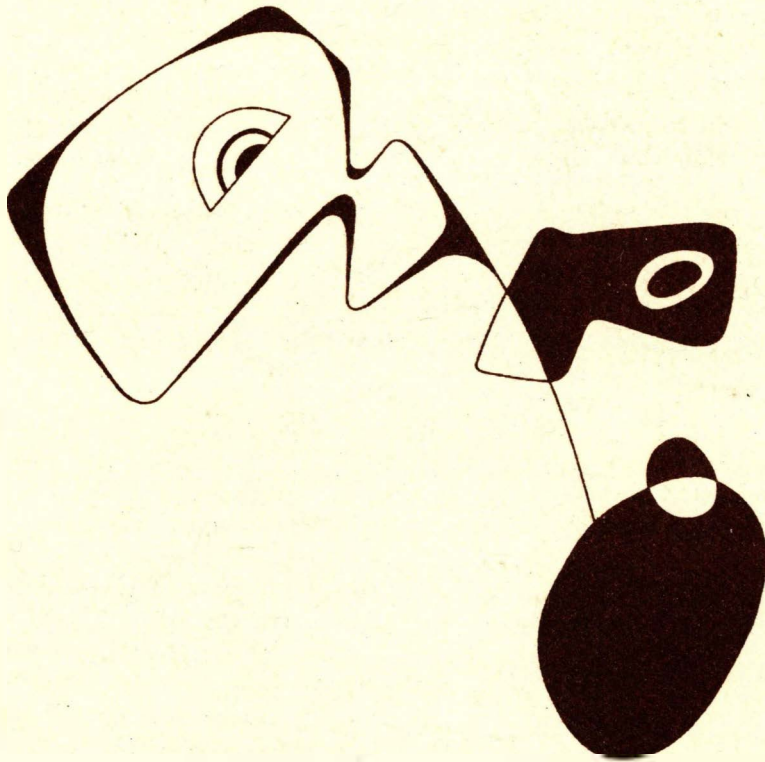
Hail Lady of my heart  
I'll see you upstairs in the sun  
Standing on the moon  
Surrounded by the stars  
Hail Mary

These pieces of prayer were taken from "An Aviator Dedicates His Wings to the Lady." It is the prayer that was recited by the flight crew before every mission.

Do I believe in war? No. Do I believe in miracles? Perhaps.

After all, I am here today thanks to a "wing and a prayer." The wings saw my father safely through and the prayer was always with him. 50 years later, he carries it with him still.





Billy Sides  
Mir'o

## The Dream Maker

Laure A. Blank

There were days that I would wonder when I woke if there really was a purpose in keeping up with keeping on. There was a time when there had been too many of those days. The tedious monotony of my daily life had begun to take its toll on me. I suppose the diagnosis "mildly depressed" would have been scribbled on my chart notes had I seen a doctor. I didn't. Luckily, for all of us, things can change.

The day began like so many others—just another hurdle; just another day. A day just like the last and the one before that. Arriving at the office, I pulled my car into its designated slot for what felt like the one-billionth time. The day was already old and had only just begun.

I was informed by my boss early in the morning that an "artist fellow" would be stopping by to deliver two paintings. The news somehow cheered me.

The artist did arrive and quietly, with almost a shyness, unveiled two breathtaking, extraordinary paintings. As the artist unwrapped his precious parcels my attention was diverted not by one painting or the other, but by the quite, soft-spoken Native American man. He was speaking to me at the same time he was unwrapping the packages, sharing with me tiny glimpses into the story of his life.

The conversation was not short or lengthy—just over too soon. In a very brief period of time I had learned of trials and hardships so much larger than any in my life. Things had never been easy for him. And yet this man made it through these "tests" and was able to not only grace the world with gifts of beauty, but teach others, young boys and girls, how not to make the same mistakes he did, and how to find their inner talents.

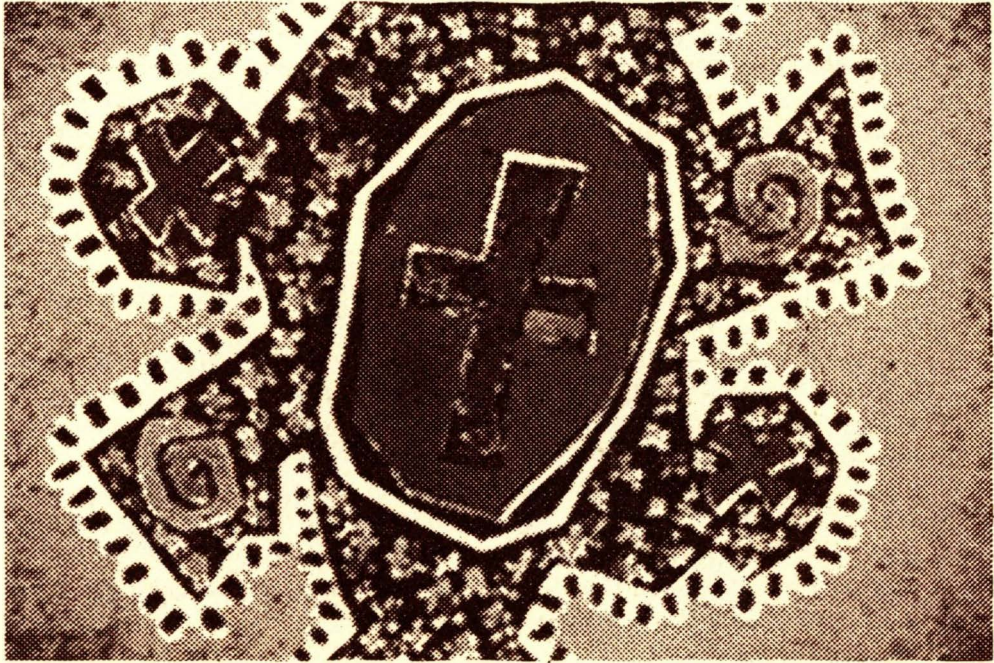
The impact this quiet, talented man had on me was not to be realized until a few nights later when he visited me in a dream. This may sound strange to those unwilling to bend the mind a little or who block out unknown possibilities, but to me it was believable. To me it was a gift.

If you allow a dream to happen, if you open yourself up to the possibilities, then you may be lucky enough to heal the battle scars of the day-to-day trauma of life. You may be as lucky as me and dream of a peaceful circle flooded with light deep in a silent forest, and a carpet of moss on the forest floor colored with the deepest hues of green. And you may dream of a giant rock in the center of the clearing with yourself leaning against it, totally at peace in your surroundings, head tipped back, eyes closed, absorbing the light. You may dream of becoming suddenly aware that the rock that you are perched on is not a rock at all but the shell of a giant tortoise and you a welcome guest on its back. Or you may realize that the light flooding your peaceful circle is light not of the sun. And you may be truly lucky and see a dolphin sailing 'round a quarter moon.

You see, in the dream the artist again visited our office, but brought with him not two paintings, just one. He came to see me and brought with him a gift—a painting of myself leaning against a giant rock, bare feet in a carpet of moss, head tipped back absorbing the light—light not of the sun but of the moon, and seeing with absolute and sheer delight a dolphin sailing 'round that quarter moon.

There were days when I would wonder when I woke if there really was a purpose in keeping up with keeping on. There were days. There are no more. Now when life becomes just too enormous and scary I conjure up the perfect image of a quiet circular clearing in a forest of deep, deep greens and silence and moonlight and tortoises and dolphins and I am at peace.





Cami Lovely  
Untitled

## Champagne and Ham Sandwiches

Andy Bommersbach

I spun slowly with the memory of dozens of nights in my head. In one hand the feel of crunchy warm taffeta wedding dress, in the other a soft moist hand. Circling slowly trying hard to remember when we first began to talk, and why in the world you invited me to prom when I was too young to go. Trying to remember why we ever became such close friends - comrades almost. Must have had similar souls. Perfect allies in the war against small town boredom. My best friend, of all things - a girl.

I remember the "do you believe in God" conversation we had while parked on an unnamed gravel road. Drinking the two or three beers sneaked cautiously from parent's refrigerators. Wondering if I should kiss you...

Bob Seger serenades us as we slow shuffle and slow turn. A tiny slice of my brain is devoted to not stepping on your feet.

I was so infatuated and in love with your hair - a million big, sloppy, ringlets of red blonde fire. "Strawberry blonde," you would constantly remind me. "Flaming red," I would counter. Hair like no one else's in the whole world. I waited too long I think - how could I kiss my best friend?

The gritty tile floor of the Legion Hall is quite content circling below us.

The same hair I distinctly remember being sucked straight back by the wind in the

topless \$ 600.00 Porsche that was my life. No one drove that car but me. Yet there you were with your foot in the carburetor trying to coax the rusty hulk up over ninety. Probably had a

cigarette in one hand; trying to look cool. You never did look very glamorous with a cigarette. "This is the way James Dean died!" I hollered.

I hope this is a long song. You have a happy smell, my arm around your waist now. I paid a dollar for this dance - your new brother-in-law waits smiling in squeaky rented shoes. There seems to be an abundance of squeaky rented shoes here tonight. The church was packed, and not a single bridesmaid secretly complains about how ugly the dresses are - only you could pull a wedding day like this. You are honestly the most beautiful bride I've ever seen. I say it, and you laugh, squeezing tighter - both of us blushing with champagne and ham sandwiches.

I couldn't do it, never did kiss you like a lover. And as the new brother-in-law moves in, our eyes find each other, and I realize that is absolutely, perfectly the way it was meant to be.



Kim Paulsen  
Cup and Jar



## Roommates and Other Strange Alien Phenomena

Laura Maag

It is dark except for the flickering glow of the TV screen. The door creaks shut behind me and I am left in the semi black-out surrounded by crusty, smelly dishes, old shoes, a table piled high with unpaid bills, parking tickets and a half gallon of milk that has not seen a refrigerator since last Thursday. I drop my book bag onto the floor and sigh. I'm home.

I muster up the energy to drag myself and my book bag back to my bedroom before I collapse onto the floor in my usual semi-comatose stage of sleep. Over the half-hearted "glug glug" of the algae and God-only-knows-what-infested aquarium I hear a wheezing sigh.

I freeze, then slowly turn around like a nineteen-year-old caught by the cops at a beer party. "No!" I think to myself. "It can't be!" But it is. "It's a Roommate!"

I smile that smile. You know, the one we all reserve for Shriners when we tell them we can't donate any more money because we just spent our last dollar on drugs and pornos.

"Hiiii? How was your day?"

Not that I actually care, but I'm tired and it seems like the safest, most inane thing to say at the time, so I go with it.

There's a slight movement in the creature as it flips through 45 channels at super species speed.

"Say." It speaks! "Will you take my turn cleaning up the kitchen." flip flip flip "I have a huge test to study for." flip flip flip "If you don't" flip "it just won't get done." flip flip "I really have to study."

I begin to contemplate new chapters for my book, 101 Ways to Dispose of Your Roommate's Corpse. It's a sequel.

I start taking deep cleansing breaths. Inhale, huuuuuah. Hide it under the dirty dishes, it will hide the smell. Exhale, heeeeee. Leave it on the couch. It was not that active in life so no one will realize a difference. Inhale. I wind up passing out.

By the time I have revived myself it has polished off a pizza and two cases of Diet Coke (Diet since it has to watch its ghoulish figure) and slithered to the other side of the couch. I can barely see the cover of a text book peeking hopefully out from under a dozen sofa cushions.

At this time another being I live with steps over top of me on the way to the mildew infestation room.

"I feel like shit," It mutters. "I think I have what you had yesterday."

"Gee," I ponder in my semi-conscious state, "I did not know hangovers were contagious. I should probably alert the Surgeon General."

"Well," Couch It demands, "are you or are you not going to clean the kitchen?" At the same time Hypochondriac It steps on my head as it stumbles back to its lair. My last conscious thought as I curl up into a fetal position and stick my thumb in my mouth is, "If this is Hell I shouldn't be paying 175 bucks a month to live here."



Arlene Hodges  
Shadows at Sunset



## Conversation

Lynn M. Yost

I hate this place, I hate this place, I hate this place—she heard herself repeating the words incessantly in her mind. Washing the dishes, milking the cow, hauling water or gathering buffalo chips, the words dinned in her head, impressing their 4/4 rhythm on her daily chores.

Speechless, she watched her husband drinking his coffee across the table from her, while the silent words boomed like cannon in that confined space, bouncing off the sod walls and

shivering the air between them. He thumped his empty cup down on the bare wood of the table with a noise that made her start. With a heavy, satisfied grunt he rose and donned his jacket (he'd long since stopped bothering to remove his hat). Pausing at the door, he peered closer at her and inquired if she felt alright.

As always, she answered "fine" without looking at him. He nodded once, as if confirmed in his opinion, and took his leave, striding out into the day, shutting the door behind him.

Once again, in his exuberance, he slammed it too hard, and tiny showers of dirt cascaded down from the ceiling, pattering onto the breakfast dishes, into her coffee. Some part of her mind hurled itself screaming against that closed door, hammering it with clenched, furious fists and raging, "I hate this place, I hate this place, I hate this place!" The door vibrated with the force of those imaginary blows, while the sound of her cries racketed about inside the small house like trapped birds, beating the fractured air with tattered wings as she cowered under the onslaught. Outside, her husband's footsteps went bounding away, leaving behind a lilting fragment of a whistled song to come drifting back under the door like smoke.

## The Quilt

Lynn M. Yost

The woman stands silent, perfectly still save for the restless waving of her thin grey hair. Her faded eyes are fixed on a nothing outside the great nothing visible all around her. It is cold, the wind a wet, raw, insistent thing scraping itself against her scaly cheeks. Behind her, a horse snorts and stamps, turning its backside to the wind.

There is no sun, only a pallid worm-grey expanse of sky stretched taut over the small group of people huddled in the lee of a hill. A man is reading aloud from a book, keeping place with one dirty, ridged fingernail. He is a poor reader and knows it, so his voice comes thin and shy and is pulled away on the wind. The others seem not to notice.

At the woman's feet is a small bundle wrapped in a cotton quilt. The print blocks are faded from many washings, many dryings in the sun, until all is a uniform grey, slightly paler than the sky. One corner of the quilt flaps loose, back and forth, like a hand waving. On it are embroidered two bells, a man's name in one and a woman's in the other. A ribbon tying the two bells together may have once been decorated with a date, but it is hard to tell, the corner does not stay still. The woman watches the corner of the quilt, waiting for it to flip back. There is a pause in the wind, and the voice of the man reading comes to her, "... I shall fear no evil, for Thou art with me, Thy rod and Thy staff, they comfort me..." Her forehead wrinkles in concentration. The corner of the quilt lifts, settles.

To her right stands a man. He is stooped and grey, and he holds a stained felt hat in large twisted hands. They look like driftwood, dry and splintered. His eyelids are wrinkled pouches, bunched into a loose squint against the wind. He watches the sky, gaging the weather with a reverent expression. The sky is nearly white now, bleached and dead. Could be snow coming. He is briefly, guiltily glad the frost held off as long as it has. Another week, he thinks, and the ground would have been turned to iron, stayed that way 'til April. He steals a look at the woman. There is a thin line of dirt traced in the crease of her throat like a necklace. He imagines he must not be much cleaner himself. They live in a house of dirt, in a world of dirt, blown by the incessant wind. They stand upwind of the mound of loose earth, and he now wishes they had piled it on the other side of the hole; now it will blow back in their faces when they shovel it in.

The reader has stopped, and is holding the book awkwardly. He inquires whether they reckon a prayer might be a good thing to have now. The woman is studying the quilt corner and does not answer. The man beside her clears his throat and rotates his hat in trembling hands. "I reckon it's as good a time as any," he says softly. He clears his throat again. "Lord, I guess You know evra thing that goes on down here, evra time a sparrow falls off'n a tree they say You know. I guess I don't have to say what we're prayin' about now. We just ask that you look kindly on this one here, and me an' her ma'd be grateful." He pauses, as if waiting for a reply, or perhaps further inspiration. If so, it does not come, and he mutters, "Amen."

The reader echoes, "Amen." The woman does not lift her head or take her eyes from the bundle at her feet. Her hands twist themselves in front of her. A skinny gold band lodged forever behind a misshapen knuckle shows itself through the lattice of her fingers.

The man takes her arm gently, speaking in a low voice, as if to a horse he didn't wish to startle. For a moment she looks as though she might argue, but her features settle into a look of resignation. Every line in her face arrays itself to this expression, worn so long. She allows him to

boost her into the buckboard where she sits, staring straight ahead. She does not hear what the man and the reader do, out of her sight. She does not hear the rustle of the quilt (such a thin one, a body could almost read through it in places), or the sound of cold dirt sliding into the hold, hissing down the sides and pattering gently on the quilt. She does not hear a shovel bite into the mound of earth, or suffer the long, long silence before its contents finally are dropped into the hole. She does not hear two shovels filling and emptying themselves from the heap by the side of the hole. Her mind is on the quilt. It is such a thin quilt.

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## Special Thanks to...

et al.: Oakwood

Jan Christianson  
George West  
Mary Ryder  
Max and Eric @ Joe House

Diane Vanderwal  
Lonell Moeller

All the extremely helpful staff at the Print Lab

## Submissions

If you are currently a student at South Dakota State University (graduate or undergraduate), you are eligible to submit works for the 1997 edition of Oakwood.

When submitting please enclose a cover letter that includes the title of the work(s) you submitted, a current address and telephone number, your major(s), your year in school, and medium and measurement (for artwork). (Please do not place your name anywhere on your literary works. This will insure anonymity during the selection process.)

All types of creative work can be submitted to Oakwood. For written works, we will accept fiction, non-fiction essays, and poetry. For artwork we will accept drawings, prints, black and white photographs, cartoons, floor plans, and black and white photographs of paintings and sculptures. Send your drawings to:

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