







*A Member of The Texas State University System*

# Expressions

Spring 2011

Volume XXV



# Expressions 2011 Student Winners

## *SHORT STORY*

### **First Place**

Family: The Letter of Two Brothers ..... Steven Hatfield, I

## *ESSAY*

### **First Place**

The Day of the Flying Squids ..... Steven Hatfield, I

### **Second Place**

The Great Divide ..... Ian Sisson

### **Third Place**

Never Too Late to Say I Love You ..... Christina Thomas

### **Honorable Mention**

Belief ..... Ian Sisson

## *POETRY*

### **First Place**

The Beholder ..... Leslie McCoy

### **Second Place**

This is My Voice ..... Jaimé Cantú, Jr.

### **Third Place**

I've Always Wanted to Kill Myself ..... Kaprice Mazzagate

*POETRY*

**Honorable Mention**

- Fatherless Child..... Lorne Reggie  
Burned in My Mind..... Kaprice Mazzagate  
A Practice in Reflection ..... Ian Sisson  
Mingling With the Fools..... Kaprice Mazzagate  
In Pieces..... Brandon Skillman

*LITERARY CRITIQUE*

**First Place**

- A Clockwork Orange: The Importance of Choice ... Ian Sisson

*COVER ART*

- First Place** ..... Kwanzaa Edwards  
**Second Place** ..... Victor Medina  
**Third Place**..... Ellyn Shepherd  
**Honorable Mention**..... Pedro E. Flores  
**Honorable Mention**..... Mien Vu  
**Honorable Mention**..... Alfredo Torres  
**Honorable Mention** ..... Robert Taylor  
**Honorable Mention**..... Heather Hussey

*GENERAL ART*

- First Place** ..... Robert Taylor
- Second Place** ..... Jazmond Castain
- Third Place**..... Eduardo Garcia
- Honorable Mention**..... William Thrailkille
- Honorable Mention** ..... Caitlin Thompson
- Honorable Mention**..... Michelle Nguyen
- Honorable Mention**..... Victor Cazares

*PHOTOGRAPHY*

- First Place** ..... Nguyen K. Tran
- Second Place** ..... Victor Medina
- Third Place**..... Leslie McCoy
- Honorable Mention**..... Leslie McCoy

*DIGITAL ART*

- First Place** ..... Kwanzaa Edwards
- Second Place** ..... Heather Hussey
- Third Place**..... Jerry Coriolan





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*Cover Art-Second Place*  
Victor Medina



*Short  
Story*



*General Art-First Place*  
Robert Taylor



# *Short Story-First Place*

## Family: The Letters of Two Brothers Steven Hatfield, I

I suppose that I owe you an explanation of why I haven't written you in the last few weeks. You see, on September 21st, I was killed in a terrible traffic accident. My little car was totaled, and it took them over an hour to pull my battered body from the wreck. My few friends came to my funeral three days later and buried me. They said a lot of bad things about me, spit on my grave, and were glad that I finally left the world. But I'm dead, so what does it matter?

Someone put some pens and paper in the casket so I could write but it is dark and cramped. Thank God they also put some penlights in here too. I'll pass the letters over to someone next to where another person gets buried and have one of their friends mail it out. That's how things work down here.

It's very dark and cold ten feet below the ground. Yes, ten feet; I guess they wanted to make sure I couldn't get out in case I wasn't really dead. Still, overall, the cemetery is a peaceful place. Only the dead can stay so it is a gated community. We do get visitors from time to time, but they only stay a few minutes. I'm trying to push up daisies, but I can't tell if they're breaking ground since I'm on the other side of the dirt. I paid for this plot thirty years ago and now I finally get to use it. At least I can get something out of my investment. I also paid for the plot next to me for someone else, but she decided to stop being a part of my life a few years ago.

My tombstone reads "Here lies the last of the jerks that ever lived; in fact, we're not sure he ever really lived." Every once in a while one of the

people who visit here stops by to pee on my grave as a way to say thanks for dying or something. Who knows why? It just filters down through the dirt and turns into water which the worms really love. Man, there sure are a lot of night crawlers to go fishing, with but I didn't know I was coming here so I didn't bring a crowbar or shovel to get out with. The birds fly by singing my favorite songs and then poop on my tombstone. They use a nearby oak tree to get a good shot.

I asked the guy on the other side of me if he had some coffee or cappuccino but he didn't. I felt kind of stupid since we don't need any food or drink down here. As far as I can tell my flesh is just about eaten up and my skeleton is starting to show. No muscle to pride myself with anymore. Actually, it is hard to tell the difference between the men and women. I hadn't thought about that until I was invited to a dance the other night. I could not tell if I was dancing with a lady skeleton or another guy. Hopefully it was a lady, but, either way, he or she stunk pretty bad. No showers or soap here. You just have to wait until the worms have eaten everything off of your bones.

Overall I'm doing pretty well down here. I think they recycled my car into cans or something. That's about all it was good for. At least I won't have to make any more payments.

Okay, seriously, I'm not really dead. This is all a big joke which, by the way, so is my current life. Something bad has happened and my life has really gone downhill. My finances are in such a mess that I've lost everything except my home, car, and the pets. I've blocked off everything in the house but an area around the kitchen so I won't have to pay to heat the place. I bought two oil heaters to heat the part we live in. I don't want to tell you what happened. Besides, I don't think I can even explain it. I was going to just stop writing you but your letters just kept coming with prayers that you hoped I was okay. Maybe one day I can explain all of this but for now I can't.

I really hope your Christmas is a good one even though they don't let you really celebrate it where you are. God Bless you.

Your Brother,  
Bob

Hey Big Bruddah,

It was great to finally hear from you but the beginning of your letter had more of an effect than you intended.

One of the reasons that I was so worried that something had happened to you and that I would find out too late (if at all) is that you are seventy-years-old and live alone out in the country. Well, except for Daisy May and Putty but they cannot write. None of my letters were getting returned but, given where I live, I am not sure they would have made it here. Then, when I read the first few lines of your letter, I thought that a friend or someone had decided to use that as a way of telling me how you had died. But, soon enough, I realized that it was really you.

But I also realized something serious was wrong. Some of the jokes you were making about yourself in the cemetery were a big tip off. For starters, I'm the jokester making all of the bad puns and one-liners. You do not usually do that especially the kind of jokes you were making about yourself. I realized that you were really crying out and asking for help. Having a Sociology major and a Psychology minor only confirmed what I already knew as your brother. You have always been the strong one. Big brothers usually are. You almost seemed like a another person.

Besides all of this, you also got me with a curveball when you said that you considered just never writing again. I can only attribute that to two things: the seriousness of whatever happened and the country that I live in. (I will not name it to avoid the possibility of this being confiscated). Seeing each other is virtually impossible and there is no guarantee that I would get a letter, so, maybe it would be easier for you to let me believe

you had died.

As bad as things are here, that really made me feel bad for you. But whatever the problem is over there, it does not matter. Do you remember an animated movie from about fifteen years ago called “Lilo and Stitch?” There was one thing in the movie that ended up being the most important part. It was when they talked about “Ohana.” Lilo’s big sister said it then Lilo did. They said that “Ohana” means Family. And Family means that nobody gets left behind or forgotten. There is a lot in that it’s more than just a word or a phrase. It’s an idea-a belief. It can apply to so many people even if the “Family” is not biological. I always remembered that.

We both made the mistake of coming to this land and we got stuck here for a while. Then you finally had a chance to get away. You did not leave me behind. There was no way for me to go. Only you. And both of us knew that when you got back to the “Land of the Free” that things might not be so great at first.

You did not forget me either. You helped me in every way that you could. Then someone – the someone you bought the other plot for – tried to stop you from helping me and that failed. I know you did everything you could have done.

Now the “Land of the Free” has decided to take its toll on you. It’s the way some of them turn their freedom into such Materialism that other people and their lives are totally and completely expendable; even disposable. Money and success becomes a type of god.

Well, I am so glad that you let Family make your decision. Family goes beyond anything tangible; so does God. Even though so many people of different religions and parts of the world use God as their “road to success” with their modern-day Calvinist “Doctrine of Wealth” as it were and others use God as a weapon in their hate, we know better. I have not forgotten you, nor will I, and, no mess that you were put in to or put yourself into will change that. I will write you regardless of how often you

I have not forgotten you, nor will I, and, no mess that you were put in to or put yourself into will change that. I will write you regardless of how often you write. That is why I never gave up. For three months I kept the belief that I would hear something sooner or later even if it was that you had gone to the next world. And even if I never heard back, as long as my letters never got returned, I would know that someone was reading them and you would be alive through them.

We have been through too much for me to believe that this will be the end of you. Just remember how bad things are here and see through all of the superficial crap that is being used against you there. Do not let them win! You are too strong!

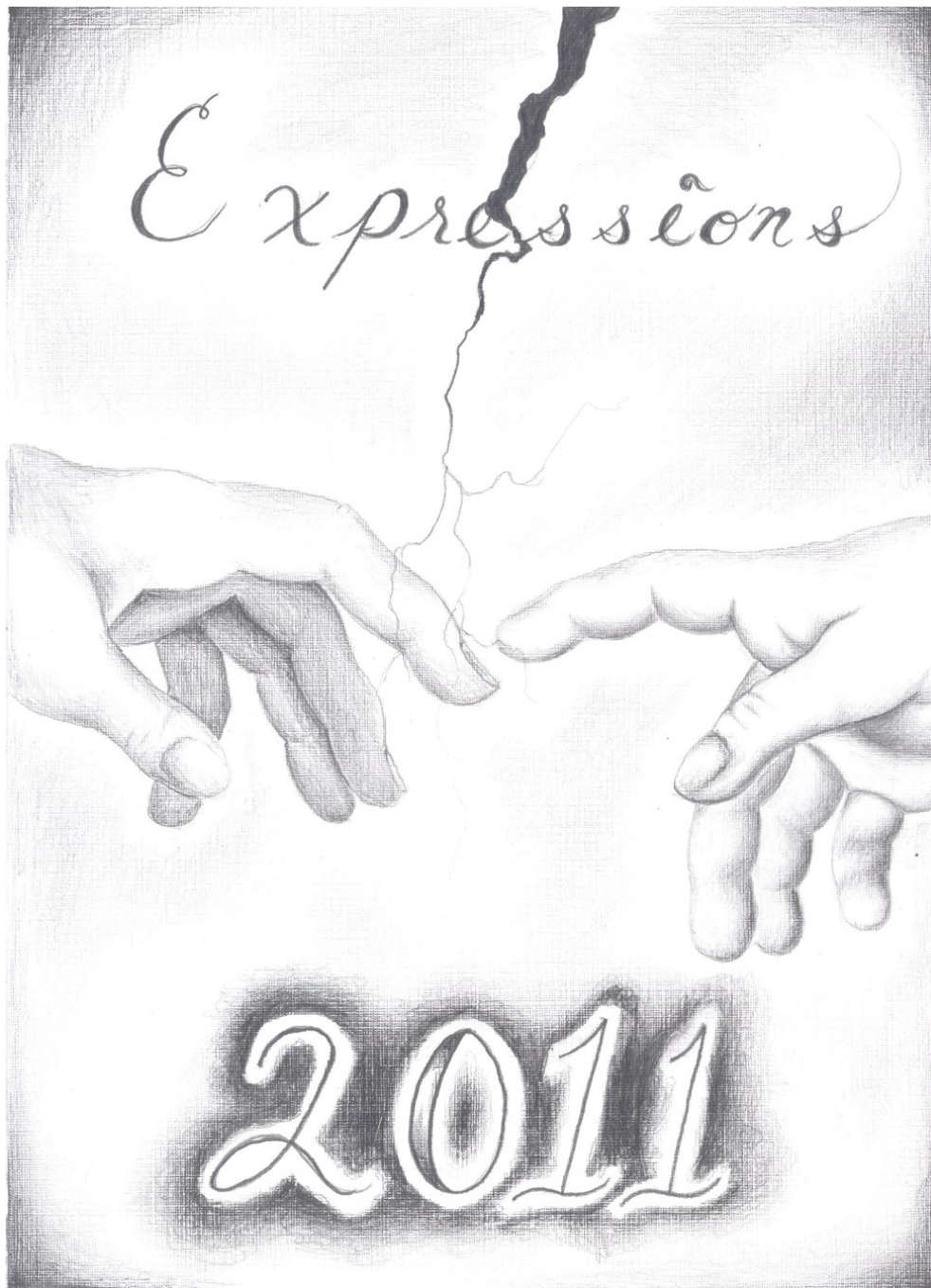
I realize that all of this may seem like a lot. But you know me. Along with all of the bad jokes, I am the sentimental, romantic, optimistic, sappy one too. Besides, these people here have found it very difficult to silence my pen-try as they may. You can kill a person but you cannot kill an idea or a belief. Whether there or here, they cannot stop Ohana. It is something they cannot touch therefore they can neither see now understand it.

I am there beside you, Big Bruddah,  
Steve

**EXPRESSIONS  
2011**



*Cover Art-Third Place*  
Ellyn Shepherd



*Cover Art-Honorable Mention*  
Pedro E. Flores



*Digital Art-First Place*  
Kawanzaa Edwards



*Essay*



*Photography-First Place*  
Nguyen K. Tran

## *Essay-First Place*

### The Day of the Flying Squids Steven Hatfield, I

It was December 3<sup>rd</sup>, and I was fresh out of U.S. Army Basic Training at Ft. Dix, New Jersey. I had arrived-along with a bunch of others – at Ft. Gordon, Georgia for A.I.T. (Advanced Individual Training) to learn my communications job, and, as part of the orientation, we were all told about the “Christmas Exodus.” Hmmm, okay. This isn’t any Old/New Testament thing I’ve ever heard of.

The situation was this: They weren’t going to begin the next group of classes until January and we were STRONGLY ENCOURAGED to take about three weeks of Leave Time-even though we hadn’t accrued a week’s worth -because the more of us Trainees that stayed on the base, the more sergeants would have to stay to keep track of us. If they had to be on base for Christmas Eve/Day instead of at home, life for us would be very....unpleasant. We would pull every detail there was including some they thought up. Needless to say, we all found someplace to be; a couple thousand of us.

Now, during Basic Training, one of the companies in our battalion was females (that’s military talk for “girls”). They were about four weeks ahead of us. We got to meet up with them on Sundays if we said we were going to church. The one I met, Sarah, was going to be a Cook and their A.I.T. also on Ft.Dix. We had been writing each other the whole time and some of us even tried sending Morse Code with flashlights at night; that is until the drill sergeants caught us anyway. I called her to tell her about the Exodus-they were having one of their own, of course-so we made plans to meet and spend a few days in Wrightstown just outside the base. We had a blast, but we both had to continue on our Exodus.

As part of the Exodus we were told about “Military Hops” (no, not a dance) and, even though I was a brand new soldier and had no clue how it all worked, I had decided that after I went from Georgia to New Jersey on a bus to see Sarah, that I would hop my way down to West Palm Beach, Florida, where my mom and stepdad, Dan, were living and next to where I had lived for about a year in Riviera Beach. I was going to surprise them for Christmas. Sarah and I said good-bye and I caught a cab to nearby McGuire Air Force Base. By now it’s the 22<sup>nd</sup> and I want to be in Florida by Christmas Eve.

The way Hops work is this: If there is extra space on a cargo plane going to the same place you want to go, you can fly for free. And by “fly” I mean you are on C-130-type cargo planes with loud propeller engines and you sit with the cargo on fold-down webbing seats. It’s the ultimate in no-frills flying, although they will provide you with a set of ear plugs-which you will need-but the coat is your responsibility and very necessary at high altitudes in the winter. There is no in-flight movie or peanuts and cargo makes for lousy conversation; or maybe I couldn’t hear it from the earplugs and noise. One big downside to Hops is that you often have to wait until they’ve loaded the plane before you will know if there is room for you; the ultimate in standby flying. This and the fact that it was nearing Christmas Eve for them, too, had not yet occurred to me. Moreover, there aren’t daily flights to and from these places. The flights often “Hop” their way to various destinations delivering and picking up things along the way. There is a schedule of sorts that you can get if you know what you are doing-which I didn’t-but I arrived at the base, found the right place, and the conversation with the guy at the counter went something like this:

“What can I do for you?” he said, continuing to work.

“I was told that I could catch a Hop.”

“Where do you want to go?”

“West Palm Beach, Florida.”

He stops in mid-stapling, gives me a quick once-over then puts the stuff down, and, with a smile that said I had a “Newbie” sign on my forehead said, “You’re just out of Basic, aren’t ya?”

“Yes, sir. Pretty much.”

He smiled even more; probably because I had just called him “Sir,” and he wasn’t an officer. I had no clue about Air Force rank insignia, and I hadn’t even looked.

“Let’s see.” He looked at a clipboard and said, “I can get you to Virginia. You’ll have to ask then about anything else.”

“Well, it’s a start. When do I leave?”

“When I call your name so don’t go far.”

“Do I have time to eat?”

“Probably. Go through those doors and keep walking. You’ll find someplace there.”

Well, I ate and then waited....for almost four hours. That’s in Military Time which is kind of the opposite of a New York Minute. But I made it to Virginia and so far, so good-sort of. There weren’t any planes leaving until 09:00 the next morning and I was told to get there as early as possible. I was told where to find a very Spartan \$7.00 room on base (are you sensing a motif here?) and there was even transportation. I slept and got back at about 06:30 which was good because the plane actually left just before 08:00. So far this had been a great little adventure which included learning that some military bases at the same time had vending machines with beer. The next stop was Charleston, South Carolina, and had me remembering the phrase “The best laid plans of mice and men...” when the guy at counter said, “I don’t have anything going out until the 26<sup>th</sup>.”

“But I need to be there before Christmas!”

“Hey, I understand, but, I’m sorry. There are no cargo planes going out until the 26<sup>th</sup>.”

“So I have to stay here for Christmas?”

“Unless you have another way to get somewhere else, I guess so.”

The phone rang and I was left dumbfounded with a jumble of thoughts somewhere between “Oh, s\_\_\_!” and “Go figure!” I was brought out of this by a voice behind me.

“Where are you trying to go?”

It startled me because I didn’t know he was there. I was lost somewhere in Duhland. I turned around and saw a man in Navy Dress Blues with a lot of ribbons and definitely an officer-a Captain-which I would later learn is the Navy equivalent of an Army Colonel.

“West Palm Beach, Florida, Sir.”

“Is Jacksonville close enough?”

“Hell, yeah! Uh....Yes, Sir!”

“How fast can you be ready to go?”

“As fast as I can go over and grab that duffle bag, Sir.”

He points to the window and says, “Do you see that plane out there?”

I looked and out on the tarmac was a fairly small private jet-type aircraft with a Flyboy loading baggage into it. “Yes, Sir.”

“I have some Navy Reserve pilots getting in their flight time and there is one seat open on it. If you can get your bag out there before he closes it, I can get you to Jacksonville Naval Air Station.”

“Yes, Sir! Perfect! Thanks!” I shook his hand-didn’t even think about saluting-and ran to get my duffle bag then ran even faster to the plane.

The guy loading the baggage was just finishing, and, with a strange look on his face said, “Who are you?”

“I’m trying to get to Florida and he said I could go on this plane, “I said, pointing back to the door. Thank God the Captain was standing there obviously anticipating this situation. He gave a thumbs-up.

“On this plane?” he said.

“Yes.” “Why did he say it that way?” I thought.

“Okay.” He takes my duffle bag, puts it underneath,

points to the stairs and says, "There ya go. Have a good trip."

He had an odd smile that I attributed to me being an Army Buck Private at an Air Force Base hitching a ride on a Navy Plane. There's a lot of irony in that. I was right....well....sort of.

I walked up the steps and onto the plane. The pilot did a small double take and motioned to the copilot as I turned left and stepped into the cabin. As I looked for the open seat, what I saw froze me in my tracks. In front of me was a bunch, a herd, a group-whatever the word is-about twenty-or-so sailors in Navy Blues. That's right! I had just walked into a school of Squids and they were as surprised to see me as I was them. It was at that moment that I realized that not only was I a fish out of water, but that Squids could fly. Toto, I don't think we're in Kansas anymore!

There was a small wave (yes, another bad pun) of them looking up as they nudged each other saying things like "check this out!" or "Where did he come from?" along with a bunch of smiles and a few chuckles. I can only imagine the look on my face. Had I been a soldier with even a little time in service instead of a Newbie, this would be no big deal. But I barely had a grip on the Army and there was nothing about "march, run, jump, climb, dig, shoot," that prepared me for this.

I regained my composure-such as it was-and headed for the open seat. A few minutes later the plane began to move. The sailor next to me said, "How's it going?"

"Pretty good."

"How did you end up on this plane?"

"I was about to be stuck here for Christmas and someone got me a ride."

"You look like a Newbie."

"Is it that obvious?"

"No hair, no rank, no ribbons, and especially the look on your face when you saw us, yeah, it's that obvious!"

We both laughed along with a couple of others who were listening. The one across the aisle said, "Yeah, you should have seen your face. Total surprise or shock or something." There were a couple more laughs. "What were you expecting anyway?"

"I have no clue really. He said there was one open seat and I could get as far as Jacksonville. I'll tell you one thing. I wasn't expecting a bunch of Squ... uh, Navy guys." 'Oh! Geez! Man, did I really almost say Squids? Okay, get ready.

There was a short pause then a bunch of laughs. By now there were a few up in their seats watching and listening. Talk about being in a fishbowl. This was an aquarium with wings.

"That's okay, "one of them said. "Just remember one thing Ground Pounder-rocks sink!" Even more people laughed.

About that time the pilot came over the speaker and said, "Okay, guys. The show's over. He's not a Jar Head and we have to take off, so strap in." That got a few more laughs. Obviously this was a conspiracy.

We took off and I learned that the sailor next to me was going home to Tampa for Christmas and I had lived there so we talked a bit. This was a far cry from a cargo plane so I was enjoying the ride and figuring things had gone pretty well all in all. But Fate has a very wry sense of humor and had another moment in store for me.

As we were flying we hit a bit of turbulence. It was nothing major but, about thirty seconds into it, one of them yells out, "Hey, Chief! Is he the one that gets the new experimental parachute?"

There was a roar of laughter and the Chief-obviously a quick thinker with a sense of humor-said, "Well, no. We all get the experimental model. The problem is, we don't have one for him, and, that's a real problem because, if he's in the Army, it means he can't swim or fly.'

I tell you, the plane must have been rocking from side to side from the raucous that went up and I was red-faced and one of the loudest. What a



trip this had been.

The plane landed and in the process I was offered a ride to the bus station. Along the way they offered to buy me a couple of beers at their version of an Enlisted Club. For a short while I completely forgot that I was still on a mission and it was coming up on midnight, the official beginning of Christmas Eve.

They dropped me off at the bus station and I only saw two or three people that were going out to a bus. It didn't look good. Suddenly the thought of spending Christmas in Charleston was looking good compared to this. But Lady Luck was still with me. Not only was there a bus leaving soon-the last one for the night-it was going to West Palm Beach and....it was an Express! You should have seen the victory dance going on in my mind. Well, on second thought, no you shouldn't have. There is nothing about me and dancing that should ever be reserved.

Needless to say, I made it to West Palm Beach, called my mom, and pulled off the big surprise. I had a great time and, on New Year's Eve, I even managed one more Fishbowl moment that was completely my fault. And what's more-true to form-I never saw it coming.

My mom had only been married to Dan for a couple of years. I had already met him but I had never met my stepbrother. He was in town because he played in a rock band that had a gig at a club on New Year's Eve. He was the lead singer and played guitar. He found out that I played drums and made arrangements for me to sit in for three songs. This, in and of itself wasn't the Fishbowl moment nor was the fact that I was fresh and out of Basic; that was part of his introduction. The thing that had everybody pointing, laughing, and talking was what I was wearing along with my Newbie haircut: a camouflage t-shirt that read, "Kill them all! Let God sort 'em out!" The best possible irony was the first song I played: "give Me Three Steps"-totally appropriate from the moment I stepped on that plane. If only the Flying Squids could have seen that!



*Photography-Second Place*  
Victor Medina

# *Essay-Second Place*

## The Great Divide

Ian Sisson

Throughout history a great divisive debate has raged and brother has turned against brother. The struggle goes on ceaselessly. Two titanic forces clash, neither gaining any headway against the other. I speak, of course, of that endless quandary, which are better waffles or pancakes? We all inherently take a side because, let's face it. They're both so great. Now obviously I, a learned and right thinking man, fair on the waffle side of the spectrum. I believe that waffles are better than pancakes for four reasons: texture, organization, certainty, and purity.

First, they are crispy. This gives the waffle perfect texture that far surpasses the redundant fluffiness of pancakes. Second, waffles are a true symbol of order, civilization, kindness, and caring as we know it. The benevolent waffle takes in the syrup refugees and gives them places to stay where they can congregate with one another. It is also much like an ideal communist union where everyone gets his fair share of things, thus creating a perfectly civilized and orderly breakfast food. The pancake, in all its flatness, merely lets the syrup run wild and cause havoc and anarchy everywhere. Then finally in a desperate effort to restore order, the pancake lets the syrup leave and tries to make it on its own. This, however, is a futile effort since the syrup realizes that it cannot survive on the plate and eventually spreads back to the other side of the pancake further saturating it and making it thoroughly soggy, and thus ruins what was once a passable substitute for waffles if no waffles were to be had.

Third, waffles are not trying to be something they aren't. waffles are the same color throughout their being, while pancakes are brown on the outside and white on the inside. Pancakes try to appear different yet fail

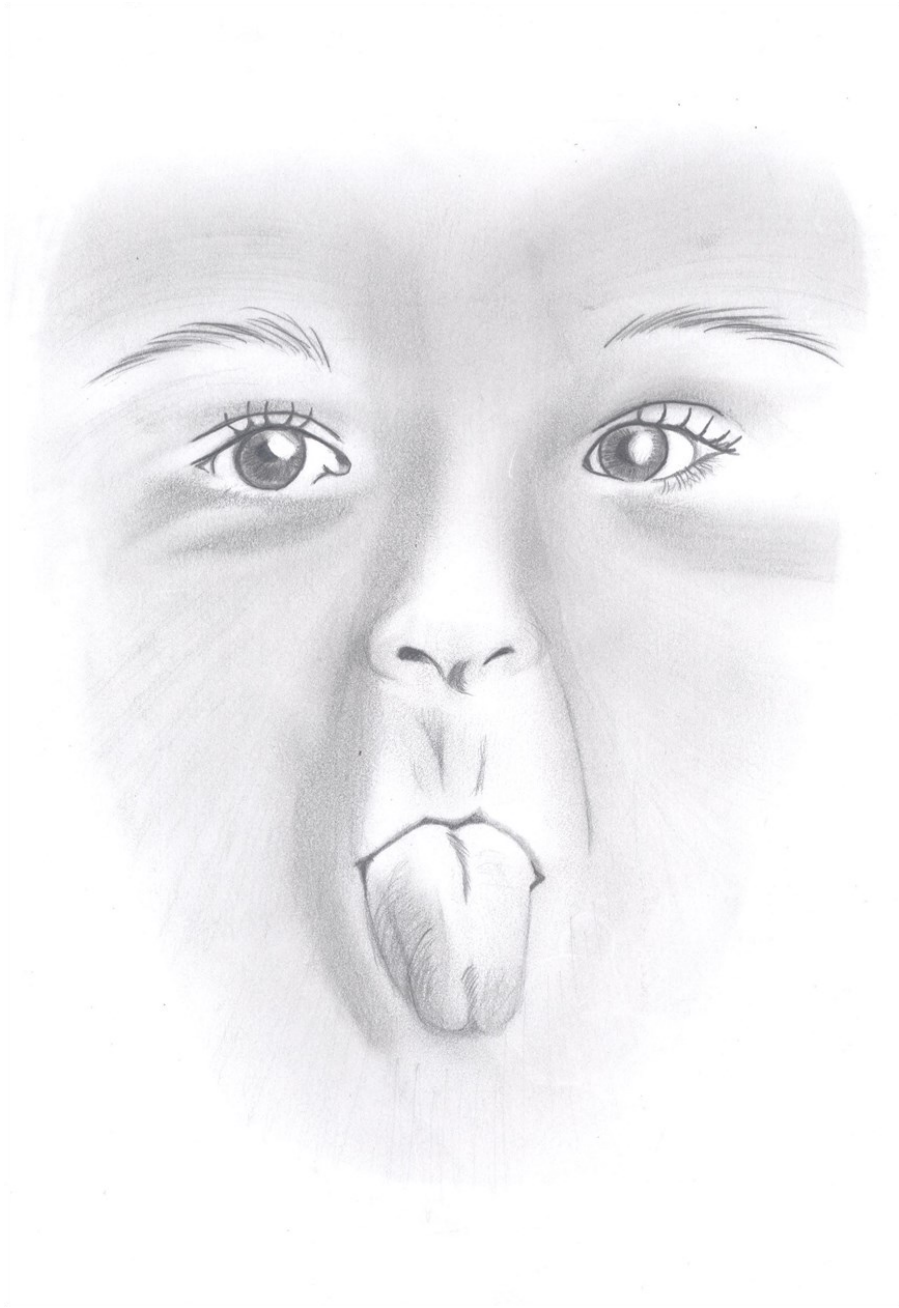
miserably because the disguise only works if one looks at the pancake from the top or the bottom, but at the sides you see its true nature. Why can't the pancakes just be secure with what they are? They need to be happy with themselves, not try and emulate others.

It is true that pancakes absorb the flavor of butter more than a waffle would, but is that due to an inherent superiority of the pancake's or the waffle's? The waffle is strong and capable of great moral certitude when it comes to its identity. The waffle remains uncorrupted by those that would change it from its rightful form, while still capable of embracing the flavors that those who would influence it bring.

The pancake is incapable of retaining its true self when set upon by other flavors of syrup and butter. The pancake ceases to be a pancake so much as a conduit of buttery, syrupy forces that seek to control and overpower the pancake's natural fluffiness by weighing it down into a sodden lump. Sadly, I fear that the pancake simply lacks the strength of character to tell the butter and syrup when enough is enough. Not only that, but the pancake, when overcome by these foreign agents, is all too willing to throw its problems to another of its kind, causing the cycle to repeat ad infinitum. The waffle handles its own problems with remarkable efficiency.

Keep in mind the waffle's texture, organization, certainly and purity next time you wake up and try to make breakfast. You've just woken up after a long, hazy night of partying. Maybe taking that special purple candy you were offered wasn't the best idea? You come across a pancake and waffle mix recipe that someone must've stapled to the inside of your skull because, God, does your head hurt. You think breakfast might be the best decision you've made in awhile. So, you ransack your cabinets and find out you've got just enough for one batch. So, you combine flour, sugar, baking powder, soda, and salt into your mixing bowl. Then you look around for a whisk, only to realize that you're not entirely sure where the one whisk

you have is. Sure, it may have fallen into the abyss when you weren't looking, but it could just be next to the sink with more dried cake batter on it than you could even fathom washing it off, this, early in the morning. You look in your silverware drawer to use a fork, but then notice that someone must be stealing your stuff because all the forks are gone. The only solution now is to use the chopsticks you got from the Chinese place you love so much, the one with the great Rangoon, that you didn't use. You quickly realize that, while a single chop stick is in fact a long-stick-like-impromptu-stirring-implement, it only ranks slightly above a badger when it come to mixing batter. So now you're stirring your batter in just about the most ineffective way possible. That's when you come to a crossroads. At this point the batter you've been completely unprepared to make could become waffle or pancake mix. Now, it's time to choose to change for the betterment of yourself or continue to wallow in this ill prepared, unorganized existence you've made for yourself. Side against the chaos; make the waffle.



*General Art-Second Place*

Jazmond Castain

## *Essay-Third Place*

### Never Too Late To Say I Love You Christine Thomas

On September 11, 1998, I had to attend my father's funeral. I remember standing outside of the small church with the chipped white paint, and cracked concrete stairs, still contemplating whether or not I was actually going to go inside. The reality of my father being dead had not set in. I wasn't sure if I was ready to deal with the unknown emotions that came along with losing a parent. And, I knew that when I saw him, I would have to. As I approached the casket, my stomach in knots, I began to tremble.

My high school sweetheart gently placed his hand on my shoulder and asked, "Are you okay?" "Yes." I replied. Inside, I felt I was walking the "last mile" and that the chair awaited me at the end. And, in a way the old me had died. The little girl with two parents no longer existed. Now, I was a young woman, confused, and scared of the unknown future with no father to lean on, not that he was around much while he was alive. Then, the moment arrived. I was two inches away from the casket. All I had to do was look down. I closed my eyes and took a deep breath. Slowly, I opened my eyes and looked at my father. I gasped. He had been gone for several days by now. His always smooth, chocolate skin had taken on a gray, leathery tone and texture. He looked so stiff in his green United States Army uniform. His shiny, coal black hair had thinned and grayed since the last time I had seen him. He looked much older than the 42 year old man he was at the time of his death. I could no longer hold back the tears I had managed to fight since I first learned of his death. I stumbled to my seat, almost directly in front of the casket where my father lay, and tried my best to control my sobbing. I was shocked by the sudden rush of emotion

I felt over the loss of a man whom I thought never seemed to make time for me while he was alive.

I sat and listened as the minister eulogized a man that didn't, in my eyes anyway, even remotely resemble the father I knew; kind, considerate, and dependable, always there for his wife and children. I remembered wondering if the minister had gotten his notes for all the funerals he had to eulogize mixed up. My grief turned to anger. I felt cheated out of the chance to know the almost God-like figure that friends and family, some of whom I had never met, spoke of.

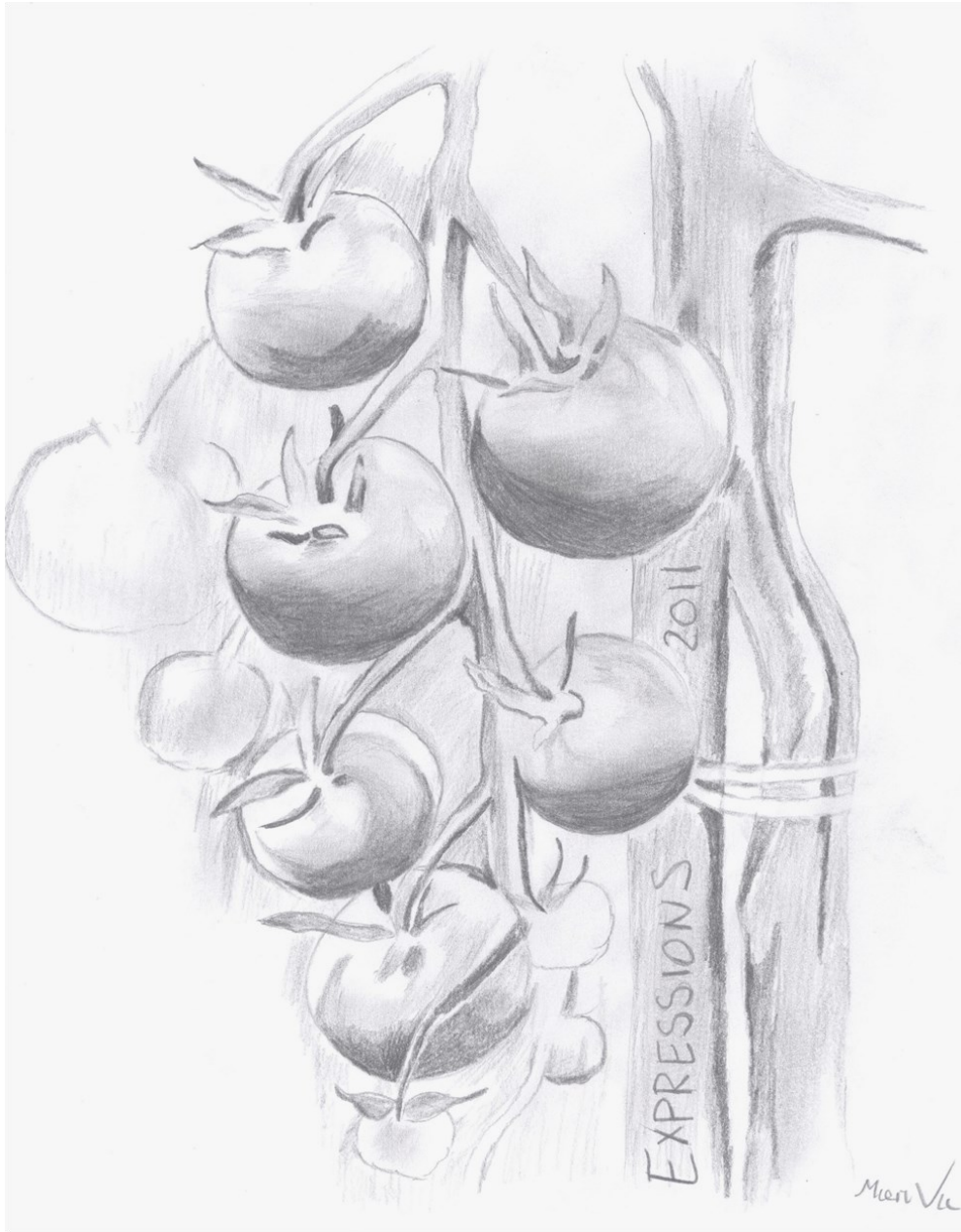
They called my sister, stepmother, and I up to the casket for one final look before they closed the lid forever. I stared at the once handsome man that I was now angry with and felt utterly abandoned by, and realized for the first time that I had his nose. The lid closed and they began to wheel my father down the middle of the church past friends and family. My mother and stepfather were toward the back of the church. I watched as her chin trembled and the tears fell down her face, as they wheeled the body of her ex-husband past her. I remember being angry with her in that moment, too. I didn't understand why she seemed so distraught over the loss of the person she claimed abused her physically and emotionally for years. Her stories of the torture my father inflicted upon her were planted in my head from the time I was a little girl. Her hate for him, over time, had become my own because of the sense of loyalty I felt toward her. I wondered now how true those stories actually were.

At the gravesite, memories surfaced of the three occasions my father tried to pick me up for a visit. Each time I cried until he brought me back to my mother. Once, he sat me on his lap and rocked me back and forth, trying to soothe me. "Daddy loves you so much, and I understand why you are mad at me. I wish you wanted to come with me, but I understand why you miss your mother. She is a great lady." my anger quickly turned into guilt, and regret. I was able to finally see past some of my misguided



anger. I saw the man I had spent the day hearing about. But, it was too late. They placed his body in our family mausoleum and sealed it shut. It was official. My father was gone forever. I would never get the chance to apologize for the part that I played in not cultivating our father-daughter relationship. I turned around, and forever walked away from my father's final resting place. I remember wishing that my final words to him had been I love you instead of "I hate you." I realized at that very moment that I did.

As the years have gone by, I realized that although I may not have known that I loved my father, he did. And I still see him. Every time my daughter smiles, when my niece comes for a summer visit. On really bad days I hear his voice in my head saying, "Daddy loves you so much." I smile and say out loud; "I love you, too."



*Cover Art-Honorable Mention*

Mien Vu

# *Essay-Honorable Mention*

## Belief

Ian Sisson

I have long lived a life of confusion, punctuated by sure fire spikes of transcendental clarity. The thing that has kept me perpetually perplexed is as simple, timeless, and human an idea as any that exists. I have no idea what, the hell, is going on. I am unable to confirm my identity among the myriad facts and information swirling about my mind, as if in some great maelstrom. I've been asked to write about what I believe. This question, like multitudes before it, raises so many more. Chiefly among them, "What do I believe in; what are my beliefs?" Of course, like any respectable metaphorical hydra, that question begat another in its place, which, due to my particular idiom, manifested in the usual way: a semantic's debate. I started pondering the difference between what I believe and my beliefs.

Any writer worth his imaginary friend will say that the tone of a word matters. That there is subtlety and nuance of meaning between two, seemingly, similar words, but in the space of a few letters lays an ocean of difference. During my contemplation of the issue, I came to the conclusion that, to me, what I believe is anything I feel to be true and can vary in importance. I believe that waffles are better than pancakes. I believe Michael Bay is a blight upon the modern day film industry. I believe I've come very close to unintentionally mimicking a segment of a short lived mediocre sketch comedy show for working class people. Well, this isn't awkward at all. I also concluded that a belief is a core value, an idea that clings to our hearts and minds, as inseparable as any limb. I have one, and only one, belief. This was a shocking revelation to me, especially because even the one belief was not readily apparent. It was incomprehensible. How could someone go through life without placing any real value on

anything? Do not misunderstand me; there are things and people I love and hate. I am not an emotionless homunculus. It sounds incredibly callous, mostly because it is, but I place no value on anything. Everything around us is transient. Existence is a fluid state and time is its driving current. For example, the thing I love the most in this world is my three year old sister, Abigail. To me, she represents everything good in this world, a vision of innocence and peace. Time will change that. She will grow up and deal with things beyond her comprehension. She'll have to confront her genetic predisposition to addiction. She will have ample opportunity to create or ruin herself. She will grow old and die. T.S. Elliot said in *The Wasteland*, "I will show you fear in a handful of dust." Dust is a mark of decay. It shows what has been and what will inexorably come. I do not have any fear of this. Fearing destruction is futile. It is assured, and because I know the inevitable outcome, I accept that things will be lost beforehand. I will persevere. At least, that is what I'd like to tell myself. If there is one thing I am certain of it is that I am uncertain

I don't understand why things happen. When I was thirteen my baby brother died, three days before he was scheduled to be born. There was no warning, no explanation. Joseph simply died before he lived. This wasn't my first encounter with death, but it was the first time I'd seen anything so sensationally senseless. I thought that there couldn't possibly be a purpose in all of this. I had a moment of clarity at his funeral, watching the tiny, white casket being taken out of the ambulance. My father is a paramedic of over 25 years experience. It felt right for a boy to get at least one good ambulance ride as opposed to a stifling hearse. I realized then that, even though he hadn't lived, Joseph had forever impacted the world. He sent my step-mother spiraling into the deepest depression I've ever seen, which led to her becoming addicted to various pills. He brought the presence of a certain holy man of Nazareth into our lives. And, though I'm not particularly proud of this, I passed eighth grade

earth science that grading period because of him. I couldn't bring myself to do a project early in the winter break, and after he died, I just could not have cared any less about it. Apparently, I was quite pathetic because, while I should have gotten maybe a ten, I received a seventy on my report card. That never sat too well with me. I've never met Joseph Lee Sisson, but I certainly won't forget him.

Everything we do affects our surroundings. A few years later, my cousin Amber moved in with us. She was nineteen and moved away from her friends and family, and was, easily, the most energetic person I've ever been around. She had Bipolar disorder and always said, "I'm crazy and I've got the papers to prove; all of this and leukemia to boot." Amber almost never seemed sad with her lot in life. I think that as long as she wasn't stuck in a hospital room Amber was absolutely soaring high. She loved the band Hinder and absolutely adored children. I started growing my hair out, in earnest, because she had none. I've donated it to Locks for Love a few times since then. Amber sent her leukemia into remission, only to nearly die from a spider monkey bite. That's right, a spider monkey bit her, in Louisiana. I'll allow a moment for that to process. Her immune system was very weak and the infection made a good attempt, but it was beaten back after a few days in the ICU.

I suppose you could say third time's the charm, though. The leukemia came back with a vengeance. She was being kept alive with treatments for a while. Eventually, the treatments stopped and they sent Amber Mayes home to live the last of her days. They said she had a week, at best. Since she wasn't going to make it to Thanksgiving, it was held early. On the ride to Alexandria, Louisiana, I couldn't help but think that this was the most depressing thing I'd ever done. It felt like a death march. Here was this, formerly, shining young woman, who wanted nothing more than to have her own children and would never get that chance.

When I got there, Amber was lethargic, to say the least. Normally,

she'd be bouncing off the walls with restless energy, even after chemotherapy. She barely had the energy left to speak. I was also overcome with an inability to communicate. There was nothing to say and I had to constantly fight myself to keep from visibly choking up. All I managed to say to her was, "How's it goin', Amber?" to which she replied exhaustedly, "It's goin'." The unspoken, "for now," in that sentence has hung over me for years. Three days later, she went to sleep and didn't wake up. Strangely, that was a huge relief instead of hugely saddening. I was having another moment of clarity. Amber being at peace was so much better than the pain of keeping her here. She'd fought hard for every day, but it was better for her to go.

Sometimes, it all works out in the end. When I was 18, I walked into Renaissance Hospital for weight loss surgery. My weight was out of control and, without drastic action, I would likely have a heart attack before 30. The doctors found something unusual, a Morgagni hernia. This is a hole in the diaphragm and it is often fatal. For those whose anatomical knowledge is lacking, the diaphragm separates the chest cavity from the stomach and intestines. At any time in my life, I could have died from my intestines spilling into my chest. The only thing that stopped this was a thin layer of fatty tissue that had formed in the hernia. The irony is not lost upon me. The very thing that would have killed me, may have just saved me. I couldn't understand why I had this amazing stroke of luck, when others had died so young. It didn't make sense. I was alive against the odds, and Joseph didn't live at all. Amber had to struggle for every breath, and I was allowed to keep living aimlessly. It boggles the mind.

I had a startling moment of clarity afterwards. I had to live, and I mean really live. We are all blessed with each and every day. No matter how bad a day it is, there is someone who would trade for it in a heartbeat. There are people stuck in a rut, confused, and cynical who are waiting to live. They may never get that chance, like Joseph. There are people bent upon

their own self-destruction, waiting to die. Do not take this wonderful gift and pour it away. We're all lost. Nobody knows what's going on here, but that's no reason to not participate. What we do matters. Every action we take has a consequence, for good or ill. My name is Ian Sisson. My belief is that we must live vigorously. There won't be another chance.



*Photography-Honorable Mention*

Leslie McCoy



*General Art-Third Place*  
Eduardo Garcia



*Poetry*



*Cover Art-Honorable Mention*  
Alfredo Torres

# Poetry-First Place

## The Beholder

Leslie McCoy

As I lie in the quietness of my mind,  
I ponder the thought, "Why don't I see myself as beautiful?"  
Beautiful?-That has never been me!  
As the noise becomes quieter and the darkness lies next to me,  
I begin to understand why "beautiful" was never my name.  
I don't know when it started or who threw the first lick;  
But the licks started lick after lick.

The bruises became scabs; scabs became scars all over my heart;  
I mean my face.  
Beautiful could never be my name. I looked in the mirror and I saw what  
they said, "you're so black, look at your head. You ain't smart and you  
think you're cute. Girl, you ain't cute."

I don't know when it started or who said the first lick; lick after lick; the  
burises became scars; scar tissue all over my heart, I mean my face.  
Beautiful would never be my name.  
Beauty, is it really in the eye of the beholder?  
Does that mean somebody else has to see it before me?

Now, I see it! I didn't see it before. It was so much scar tissue all over my  
heart, my soul, and my spirit.

Everyday I started to drag myself to the mirror and grab a tube of  
ointment called "I Gotta Love Me";  
I started to apply it all over the scar tissue.

Everyday something different came out of the tube. One day it was  
forgiveness for the one or the ones who threw the licks.  
The next day it was hope, then strength, then peace, then joy.

Before I knew it, I could see it. I never thought that I could be; I never  
thought that I could see this day-the day that I would be  
the beholder of my beauty.



*Cover Art-Honorable Mention*  
Robert Taylor

## *Poetry-Second Place*

This is My Voice  
Jaimé Cantú, Jr.

As a gamete I travel that most exhaustive feat. I become "we"  
as the ovum and I meet.

A zygote, I am. Developing. Incomplete.  
And on the twenty-first day my heart begins to beat.

Around the fortieth day, electrical waves fire off in my brain.  
I am a miracle. Designed. As if preordained.  
Destined for greatness am I. virtuous. Humane.  
At just an embryo I think not...of the profane

Innocently, I swim as a tadpole in a pool of water, feeding and growing  
into a son; or maybe a daughter.  
I am alive. I breathe. I am cognizant of the coming dishonor.  
So I must speak. Take heed! For I shall soon be slaughtered.

At three months I am but a fetus, yet, I am full of life.  
But now I am troubled, for I feel her conscience, and she deems the knife  
shall rid her of her sorrow and lessen the strife that he brings upon her,  
for that feeling is rife.

O, how I dread that my time has come; a time too soon.  
Outside of me I do not know and, yet, I face my doom.  
Can you not feel me? "I feel you." yet, you presume to entomb me under  
the sun, stars, and the moon-must I importune!?

Hear my cry! I bid you! I am fervent with candor!  
You see the sonography-you know the answer!  
Watch as I dodge that probe, avoiding disaster.  
It is my right to live! As is expressing my anger.

If I had power, there would be no saline to inject.  
No long forceps! No cut at the nape! It is worse than a curette;  
to tantalize one's existence with such disrespect,

so close to the nine months of when one would first incept.

However, my inception began long ago-as the unborn soul-when both cells  
combined-at the act of one's sow.

Conception, they say. The essence of life aglow!  
Or the thought of I by He, who I, he has long foreknown.

O, dear gravid, mightn't you reconsider? The consequences are  
unrelenting, for you will forever seen to wither I can sense your coldness.  
You shiver. Let me be the remitter of the pain he has caused,  
for thy joy I shall deliver.

For I am alive, though, you may have never heard me speak. You must  
endure, my precious one; you must be meek. Think of me.  
I am every part of you. "Unique."  
Do not what you thing you ought; that of which is to unspeak.

Rash, indeed, if you make this choice.  
You have heard me speak. I have declared through my voice that, if I  
should die, then I shall die through exploits-as a human being-through  
honor; my legacy in that, *this* is my voice!

# *Poetry-Third Place*

## I've Always Wanted to Kill Myself Kaprice Mazzagate

I've always wanted to kill myself. And now I am.

It's slow.

...Oh so slow. And the pain

Immense

Intense

Suffocating

Pain

I am falling apart—bit—by bit

Piece—by—piece

I think it started with my heart and progressed to my mind.

And life drains away in the salty sea of tears I cry at your feet.

Below where I kneel—and lean on the stone, cold truth of your  
Headstone

If only you would have had the courage to live...

And give...

To walk me down the path I sometime stumble.

And look, I see you, here, as before.

Yet you are not.

And was that my name I heard you call?

Impossible

But how can anything be possible

At all...on the edge of Insanity

So I cry for you.

But most of all I cry for me...

Because

***I'm Crying For You***



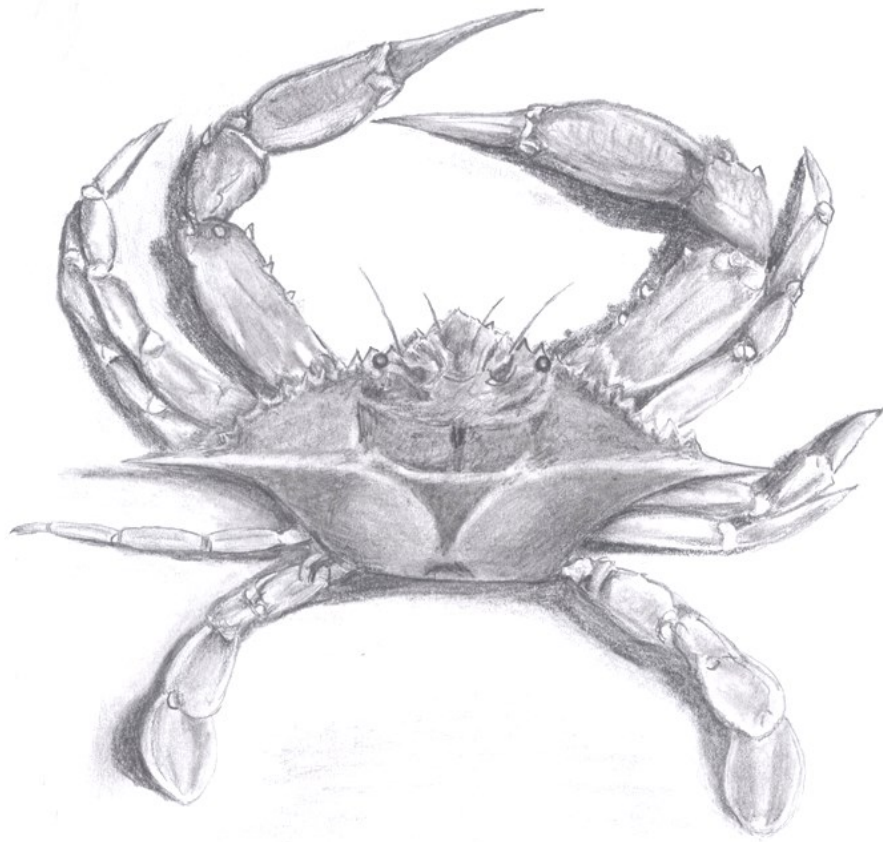
*Cover Art-Honorable Mention*  
Heather Hussey



## *Poetry-Honorable Mention*

### Fatherless Child Lorne Reggie

A million miles apart  
Yet in still close to heart  
Words not heard  
Actions not seen  
Time  
Cherished moments  
Pictures with a different male on it  
A child, a mother  
Maybe even a sister or brother  
But where is my father  
Who acts and resembles me  
Missing another year or two  
Daddy D.....Daddy T.....Daddy Daddy  
But which one is the Daddy of me  
Am I part of the increasing percentage?  
Of a struggling one parent home  
Or another statistic of a father not known  
I yearn for him to stay  
Deep in my soul  
Mom says he loves me  
No.....  
But is it not so  
Thinking of my father a part of me envisions a black hole  
To All fathers when will you stay home?

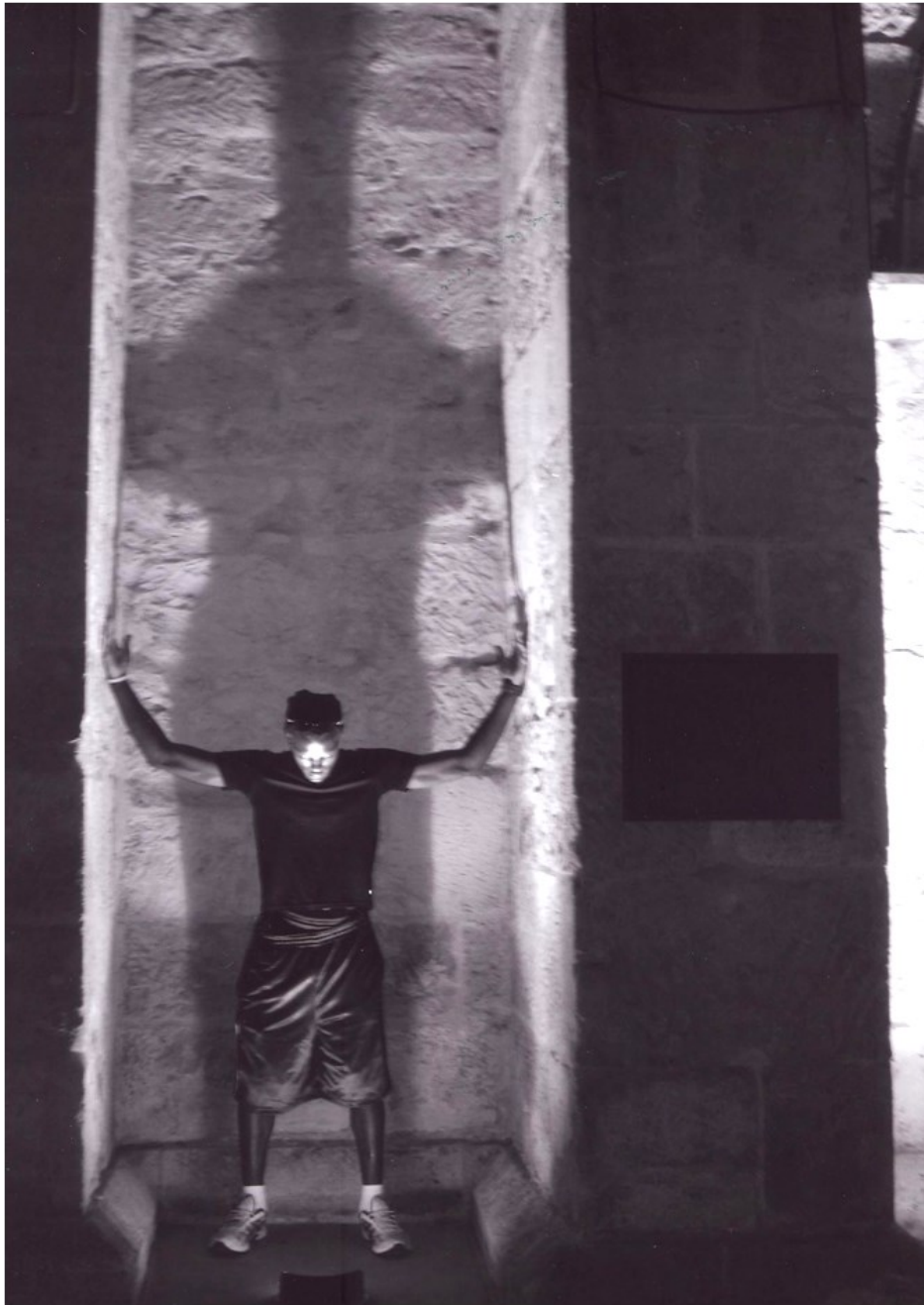


*General Art-Honorable Mention*  
William Trailkille

## *Poetry-Honorable Mention*

Burned In My Mind  
Kaprice Mazzagate

I couldn't sleep last night  
The bed was so cold  
It was eighty degrees in the house  
But I didn't have you to hold  
In the darkness, with cold, cold dread  
I searched through the covers  
I felt for you in the bed  
But I couldn't quite grasp  
It was all in my head  
I thought I felt your body...pressing against mine  
Your breath on my neck  
Our hearts beating in time  
But I woke in a cold sweat  
To find they were just images in my mind



*Photography-Third Place*  
Leslie McCoy

# *Poetry-Honorable Mention*

## A Practice in Reflection

Ian Sisson

I love the way I decided to do a love/hate poem entirely about myself, and I didn't even realize how inherently egotistical this first portion would have to be. Let the tooting of my own horn commence.

I love how totally-flippin' awesome I try and fail to be. Sometimes the entirety of my social interaction in a day will be a complete façade. Yet, it's this façade, representing my full potential, I strive to achieve and nearly always fall short of. One day maybe I won't.

I love my newly discovered dedication. I spent my first semester of college in a constant state of agony from a stomach hernia the size of a melon. Torn muscles screaming, I missed hardly a day and earned a 4.0 in every class.

I love my voice. I've been a singer for as long as I can remember and have often found that my voice stretches far beyond musical notes and half remembered ditties. It is, fundamentally, how I express myself, whether that be in song, speech, or sonnet.

I love my mind. Without it I would be nothing. I'd say it's a strange place at times, what with my obsession with Blue Oyster Cult songs, heaps of esoterica, and the deeper meanings that can be divined from breakfast food.

I love the weird things I end up doing with too much time. I once devised a way to psychologically profile a person through how he made a

sandwich. The inherent truths revealed by cheese allocation and condiment combination were inconclusive at best. This is what I did instead of homework in high school.

I hate how regretful I am. There are so many years I've spent in a state of constantly failing to meet my own expectations, and many more where I just didn't have any at all.

I hate how alone I've become. I have never been sure how it happened but at some point I became a border-line hermit. I had almost no human contact for a year at one point. I barely saw day light. I broke out.

I hate my body. Not in the superficial teenage girl way, mind you. After accruing a laundry list of injuries, then adding a few more for good measure, it's almost as if I've been betrayed by my own structure.

I hate how I live in a constant state of fear. Will I lift too much and add a new hernia to my list? Will the repairs on my others fail, potentially causing some very extreme consequences, a dirt nap for example? I suppose I should be more grateful that I even made it this far.

I hate how stupid I used to be. When I was younger I was caught in a self-fulfilling prophecy of doom. If anything coincidentally went my way I saw in it a great deeper consequence ready to be unleashed on the rest of the world. The list of transgressions was very long, but I was so convinced that it was my fate to be eternally downtrodden. Such self-centered idiocy, I can hardly believe today.

I hate how little I see my family. The glamor of being estranged loses its luster quite quickly. At this rate, a little girl is growing up almost entirely without me. Seeing her only every few months misses so much.

## *Poetry-Honorable Mention*

### Mingling With The Fools Kaprice Mazzagate

Constantly running  
Beating down the path  
No destination  
Never looking back  
Open your eyes  
Open your mind  
Set your own pace  
Ration out your time  
Don't let them fool you  
Grasping at your mind  
Focus on their eyes  
Looking for a sign  
Dreadful intentions  
Abundantly clear  
go for the weakness  
Play upon their fear  
Pushing for endurance  
Looking for the best  
Never let your guard down  
Never take a rest  
Completely continuous  
Looking for a clue  
Gather information  
Decide what to do  
To live you must survive  
Mingle with the fools  
Follow the insane breaking society's rules



*General Art-Honorable Mention*  
Caitlin Thompson



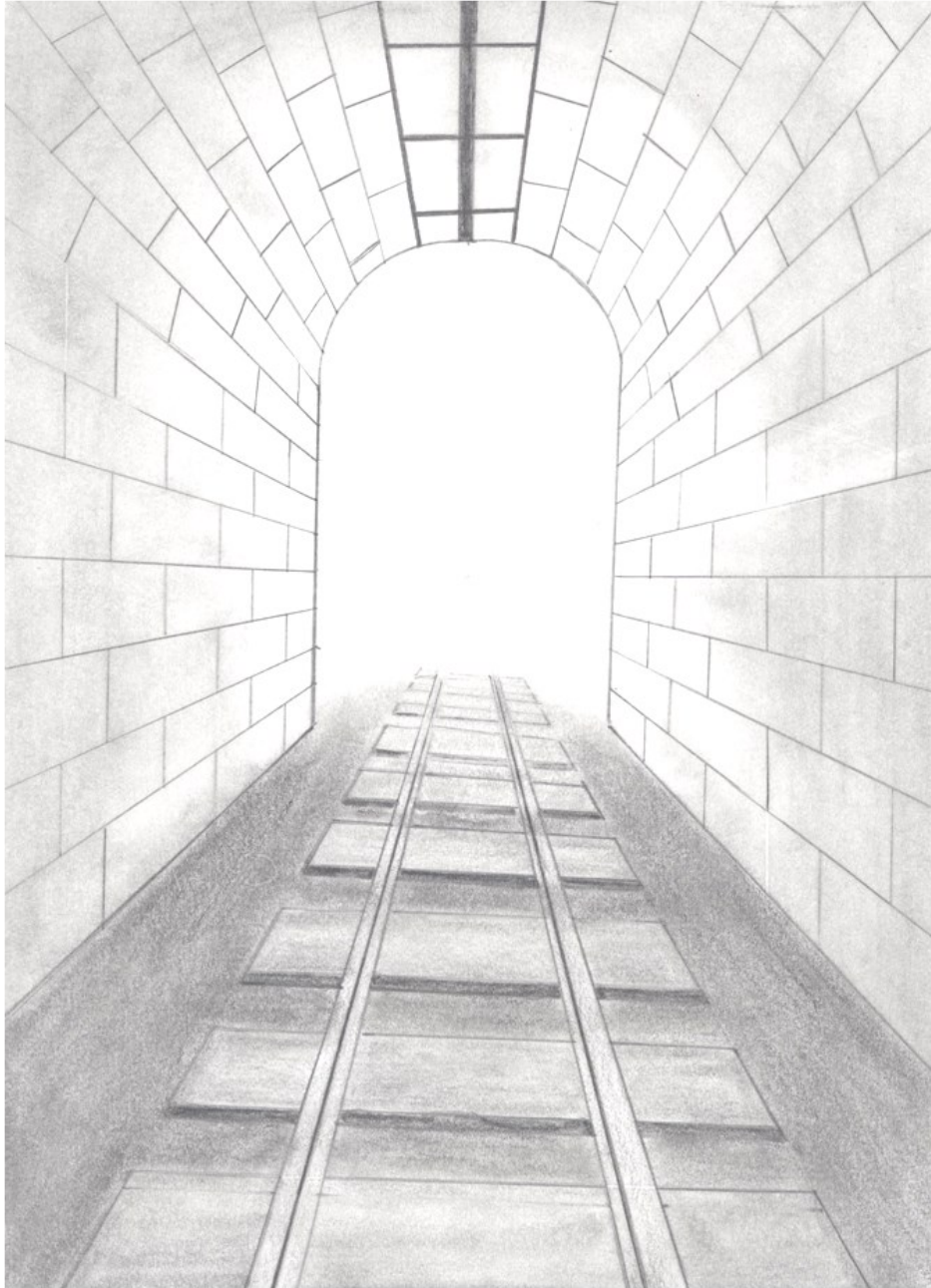
## *Poetry-Honorable Mention*

### In Pieces Brandon Skillman

My broken heart lay on the floor  
    Scattered by the rain  
Couldn't seem to close the door  
    My only feeling – pain  
Cause it was there that you left me broken  
    It was there that we went astray  
It was there that you left me all alone  
    And it's there my heart still lays  
In pieces. . . .

I gave my heart, my soul, my all  
    To one special girl  
Who'd have known I'd take a fall  
    That would end my world?  
Cause it was there that you left me broken  
    It was there that we went astray  
It was there that you left me all alone  
    And it's there my heart still lays  
In pieces. . . .  
Pieces of joy. . .  
    From my memories with you.  
Pieces of hope. . .  
    In our love I thought was true.  
Pieces of trust. . .  
    That I'll never feel again.  
Pieces of a love  
    That has come to an end!

Cause it was there that you left me broken  
    It was there that we went astray  
It was there that you left me all alone  
    And it's there my heart still lays  
In pieces. . .      In pieces. . .      In pieces.



*General Art-Honorable Mention*  
Victor Cazares

*Literary  
Critique*



*Digital Art-Second Place*  
Heather Hussey

# *Literary Critique-First Place*

## A Clockwork Orange: The Importance of Choice Ian Sisson

To first understand *A Clockwork Orange* by Anthony Burgess, one must gain some slight insight into Burgess himself. He was perhaps the personification of a Renaissance Man: an author, poet, teacher, composer, military man and linguist. The initial inspiration to write *A Clockwork Orange* came during the London blackout of World War II when his pregnant wife was assaulted and robbed by four men, causing her to miscarry. It was actually written years later, after Burgess was misdiagnosed with a terminal brain tumor and told he had a year to live. Apparently, there's nothing quite like a brush with impending doom to get the creative juices flowing as he wrote several novels within a relatively short timeframe afterwards. The most famous is the one we'll be discussing today, the dystopian novella *A Clockwork Orange*.

This is the tale of young Alex, a 15-year-old vicious criminal who lives under the rule of an oppressive government. He is, in many respects, just an average young person: clever but foolish, arrogant to the point of recklessness, and always seeking a chance to mock authority. The story is split into three parts, each containing seven chapters. The first act is primarily composed of Alex's life of inflicting as much pain and anguish as he possibly can get away with, as he tells it. Whether that be savagely beating an old man with three of his friends, cutting open a member of a rival gang, or raping a woman in front of her restrained husband. Alex is emphatically not a friendly fellow. However, the initial mayhem of the beginning is not pointless; there is great purpose hidden in these

atrocities. They set the stage for events to come and establish who and what Alex really is.

It must be said that *A Clockwork Orange* is a rather unique work of fiction, due to being written entirely in a made up teenage slang of the future called Nadsat, which is derived from Cockney English, Russian, Slavic languages, words originating straight from Burgess' brain, and just rhyming in general. This experiment in language serves several purposes, primarily acting as a sort of buffer to the near obscene level of violence in the first act, but it also works as a preservative against the passage of time itself. After all, as other works age the language they're written in changes, giving them a dated feel. This can't happen to *A Clockwork Orange*, as it was never part of a modern vernacular. It's true that when initially deciphering this complicated slang, the reader may encounter some difficulties. This is absolutely intentional on Burgess' part. Enough context clues and definitions are given to understand the gist of the beginning, but the dawning realization of the exact, gory details is truly a master stroke.

The second part is where the actual meaningful, literary portion of the show begins. Alex, having finally been apprehended by the police, is now in prison: extremely overcrowded, rife with sexual predators, hostile, wonderful prison. The government decides that they need to alleviate this prison congestion. After all, if they use all that prison space on actual criminals it becomes hard to find room for all those political prisoners they need to shut up. I mean come on; nothing ruins the path to totalitarianism like people speaking out against the regime. So our boy Alex decides to volunteer for the government treatment meant to turn all the bad people good. The deal was two weeks of treatment and then the remainder of his sentence would be dropped. Alex even had the honor of being the first to receive such treatment. The treatment was a simple behaviorist experiment at its core; negatively reinforce an intense aversion to violent actions, feelings, and thoughts by causing a severely painful illness to seize

him every time he saw, acted, or felt that way, then forcing him to view the most horrific acts and footage imaginable, nonstop, for hours on end. And I do mean intense aversion; at one point Alex has to ward off the sickness after thinking about swatting a fly by imagining it being cared for like a pet and fed pieces of sugar. This was first achieved through injections of a chemical. Although after two weeks of treatment, the reaction became an involuntary response not requiring the medication. Thanks, Pavlov!

Let's take a moment to examine the implications of this. The government took away an intrinsic part of human nature from this person. Deny it all you will, but violence is to some degree present in every aspect of humanity. Our literature, music, sex, and even religions all have some measure of violence inherent in them. Not only this, they took away his ability to choose. They turned a savage kid into a perfectly docile, and most importantly obedient, creature. Alex becomes a fleshly automaton, with no free will of his own, on threat of excruciating pain. He was molded into an illusion of goodness directly proportional to his actual animalistic thoughts. This raises a slew of moral quandaries, such as whether or not the choice of righteousness is more important than the act itself.

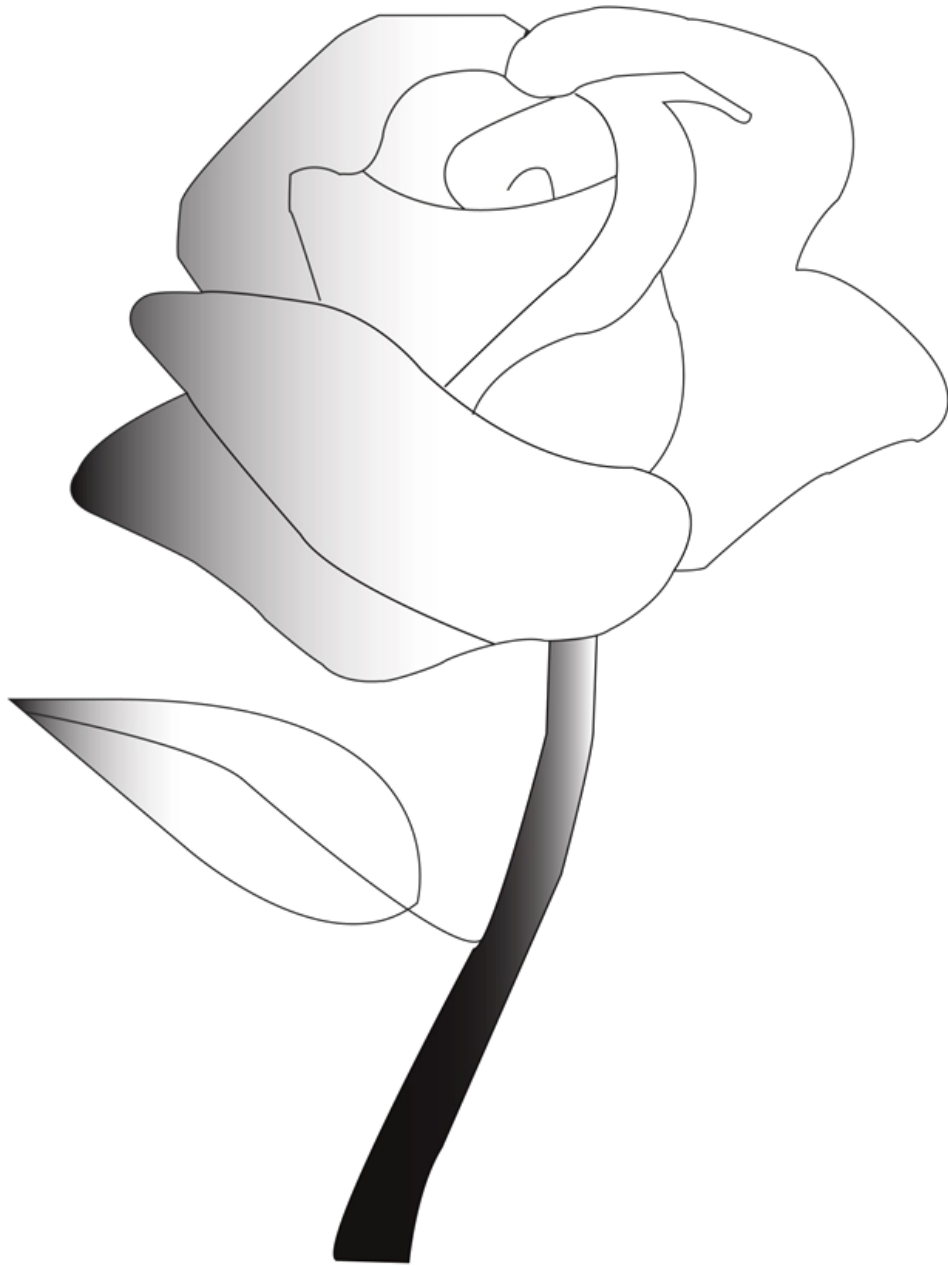
In the final piece of *A Clockwork Orange*, Alex is released from prison and cast back into the society. If before Alex was considered a wolf among sheep, he is now a legless sheep that made a lot of other sheep downright murderous in regards to him. He's left at the mercy of his many former victims, and well, they aren't feeling all that generous. After being unable to re-establish a place in the world, Alex seeks to kill himself, but he can't even think about the act freely. He tried to find some refuge in the Bible but couldn't read it due to talk of smiting, wars, and crucifixion. The story of Alex's plight was used by a group of people seeking to topple the government regime. In part due to the response garnered by his story from the public, the government cured Alex of the malady they had

inflicted upon him.

Here's where another history lesson is required. In 1962, when *A Clockwork Orange* was first published there were two versions, the full version of Britain with 21 chapters and the American version where the last chapter was removed due to publisher pressure. The infamous Kubrick film was based upon the American version, ending with Alex cured of affliction, unrepentant of his deeds, and all too ready to renew his former life. The intended end is of Alex maturing and becoming bored with the savagery of his life. Finally, he seeks to become a productive member of society. With age came wisdom, and with wisdom came the ability to overcome his basic instincts.

*A Clockwork Orange* is unlike any other book I've ever read. It's not a story; it's an experience. The protagonist is so amazingly likeable despite the horrific actions he takes, and the journey of turning him from the monster he was into someone deserving pity is simply awe inspiring. The invented language of Nadsat is wondrous. It's possibly the greatest exercise in language ever written and flows in a nearly Shakespearean manner. Anthony Burgess was truly inspired when he wrote this.





*Digital Art-Third Place*  
Jerry Coriolon



*General Art-Honorable Mention*  
Michelle Nguyen

*Faculty*  
*and*  
*Staff*



Grace Megnet  
Faculty



## *Bottle Tree*

Marla DeCoux  
Staff



Grace Megnet  
Faculty



## *Goat Rock*

Marla DeCoux

Staff



Grace Megnet  
Faculty





*Opps!*  
Marla DeCoux  
Staff



Grace Megnet  
Faculty



*A Flower Among Many*

Kathy Guidry  
Staff



Meagan O'Connor  
Staff

# *The Casualty of War*

Sue L. Wright

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"Frank, no"! My mother's voice was hushed and low. "Don't go out there, he's got a gun."

My father's voice, when he answered was muffled and gruff. "What would you have me do, Mary," he said, "hide under the bed"?

In the next room, I stretched out my slight ten-year-old frame and tried to figure out what had waked me. Whatever it was hadn't bothered my brother, Jim, older than me by two years, for he was still sleeping soundly next to me.

The sound came again, louder this time, through the windows opened wide to let in any stray breezes that might come along to cool off the sultry August night. I heard a man's voice, "Hallooo Frank, come out in the yard," it said. I listened harder. Although I couldn't be sure, it sounded like the voice of old man Manghum who worked for the Beasleys, on their great big farm down the road from our place. I guess he wasn't really all that old; he was probably in his forties or thereabouts, but that's what we kids called him. Old Man Manghum. We had heard whispered rumors that Old Man Manghum was a little touched in the head. Not that he had ever done anything to any of us, you mind, it's just that we would hang around the Beasley's barn some evenings at milking time just to hear Old Man Manghum burst into strange songs. They weren't any of the songs our older sisters liked to listen to on the *Hit Parade* on Saturday nights, either. No, sir. There was one that made Old Man Manghum sound like he was the world's champion stutterer. Kuh, Kuh, Kuh Katie, I'll be wuh, wuh,

wuh, waiting... or something like that.

When he'd spot any of us looking at him through the fence, he'd just turn and look at us, grinning and waving, and motioning for us to come nearer, but we never did. Instead we'd just hightail it for home, pretending we hadn't seen him.

But tonight he wasn't singing. He seemed to be talking to somebody.

"Frank, hey Frank, are you coming out? We've got to do something about it." And then the strange words. By this time I had crept out of bed and gone into the room where Mama and Daddy slept.

I heard him through the open windows. "Frank, they have stolen the blood from under the flag. Hurry."

By this time my father had pulled on his overalls and was stooping to tie his worn brogans.

"I know we've always thought he was harmless, Frank," I heard my mother say, "but how can we know for sure."

I was inclined to agree with my mother. His voice sure didn't sound the same as when he was singing. Tonight, it was hoarse and seemed to have a strange urgency about it.

My mother continued, "You know a lot of folks think he's never been quite right since he came back from the Big War."

They hadn't taken the time to light the kerosene lamp on the dresser in the corner, but by the moonlight filtering in through the window, I could see my father rise up from the side of the bed where he had been tying his shoes.

"Mary," he said slowly, "don't talk like that again. You didn't go to that war; I did, and I'll not have you speak of things you don't know about."

I knew my father had gone to the War in France along with a lot of other boys from farms and big cities, and that he had been one of the

lucky ones who had made it through until the Armistice was signed. I had heard him talk a lot though when he got together with some of his buddies who had gone to France, about those who had not come home, or those like Manghum, who had come back bringing problems with them.

"Mary," came my father's voice, "I've got to go see what he needs. Can't you feel any compassion for the man? My God, he's carrying around a piece of shrapnel, who knows how big, in his brain. A present," he said grimly, from some Hun's grenade."

My father's voice went on in a consoling tone, "But I don't suppose what he's got to say tonight's too serious. I expect this dust and the stifling August heat's got to him. Why wouldn't it, what with working all day when it near a hundred in the shade, and there's not any shade. Or maybe Old Man Beasley's continual nagging and pestering has finally got to him. Don't worry, I'll settle him down and take him back home."

With that my father lightly kissed my mother's cheek, patted her on the shoulder and headed toward the door.

All she said was, "Please take care of yourself, Frank."

He was gone. A few minutes later I heard two car doors slam, and the gravelly-throated Model A started up, whining a little at being waked up this late at night. I listened 'til I heard him turn out of the yard, and heard the crunch sound the tires made when he eased up onto the gravel road. In a few minutes the house was quiet again.

"Son," my mother said, putting finger to her lips in a gesture asking for silence, "get back into bed before you wake the others."

"It'd take an earthquake to wake Jim up," I complained, but I crawled back into bed and soon drifted off into a fitful sleep where flags were flapping in a fierce wind, tearing off the stripes and sending the stars sailing through the air like fireflies on an early June evening.

I was glad when the first light of dawn streaked across the sky outside my window. I rolled over to see Jim sitting up yawning as he pulled the

straps of his overalls over his smooth young arms which were tanned to a light mahogany by the fierce summer sun.

"Gonna be another hot one today," he commented. "Sure glad it's Saturday because when we go into town I'm gonna get me a triple-decker ice-cream cone - one scoop of each, chocolate, vanilla and strawberry. Jim was just two years older than I was, but he was a couple of feet taller. Jim's heart was directly connected to his stomach, and my mother often said he must have a hollow leg. Two of them, I thought wryly.

The sounds coming from the kitchen--water for coffee being drawn into the big cast iron kettle, the slamming of the oven door as my mother slid in the oblong pan holding 18 of her fluffy buttermilk biscuits--told us breakfast wouldn't be long in coming. Jim hurried off to the kitchen to put in his usual order for four eggs.

The kitchen door slammed, and I heard my father's voice. "Mary," he said, "I hope you're fixing a big one this morning. I'm as hungry as a bear."

"Well, Frank, I'm surprised you could eat a mouthful, tired as you must be what with staying up more'n half the night, running God-knows where about the country. Old Rusty was crowing for daylight when I heard your car turning into the yard."

"Now Mary, I think that is a bit of exaggeration, though you might say it was bit past my bedtime when I got home. But I don't think you slept much yourself, Mary. You look a little tired." I could hear the note of affection creep into his voice as he talked to Mama.

"No, not really, I didn't," Mama said. "The first thing, of course, was I was worried to death about you. How could I keep from it; you left in the middle of the night with a crazy man carrying a gun, and..."

"Mary," I heard my father break in, "I wish you wouldn't talk like that about poor old Joe. The man's not crazy, though he was mightily disturbed last night. You know he's a lot smarter than folks around here give him credit for. He reads the newspapers he's a lot smarter than folks around



here give him credit for. He reads the newspapers and he listens to that old radio he's got out in his shack from the time he gets done work in the evenings 'til the blasted thing goes off the air. He keeps up with the news, and he says that things in Europe are worse than everybody thinks. He says it'll not be any time 'til we're back in the middle of a war. And Mary, the strangest thing is, he says if we go to war he wants to go back in the army."

"Frank, he is crazy," my mother said. "Even if he wasn't too old, the government would never take him back with his problems."

"I know, I know," my father said gently, "but was it my place to tell him all that last night? Why, he even wanted to stop at every farm we passed to enlist people to join up with us."

"Frank," Mother said, "tell me the truth. He did have a gun, didn't he?"

"Yes Mary," my father said, "he did have a gun."

"Oh my God, Frank, I knew it," my mother gasped. "Did you manage to get it away from him"?

"Sure I did, Mary," my father chuckled. "I just told him since we were using my car to round up the recruits, that I guessed I was the leader, and the leader ought to be in charge of the weapons."

"Well, however you did it," Mama said, "I'm just glad nobody got hurt. But what did you do with him?"

"Well," my father answered, "I figured he was having a spell of some kind. I know he has them from time to time, and I know when they wear off, he's completely back to normal. I didn't want to risk waking up Old Man Beasley and setting him off in the middle of the night. Poor old Joe takes enough off him as it is. "So," my father continued, "we rode around a little while and Joe began to calm down and get a little sleepy. Then, I ran him into town and asked Sheriff Campbell to put him in a cell for the night so he could sleep it off. I thought he'd be safe there. He couldn't

hurt nobody and nobody could hurt him. After he gets a few hours sleep, he'll forget the whole thing."

"I hope you're right, Frank," my mother answered. "Now Jim, she said, "go see what's keeping the girls. Here I've got breakfast ready and I want everybody at the table."

"Yes, Mama," Jim said, and hurried off down the hall.

Our two sisters were both older than we were and in the summertime, they slept together out on the screened-in porch--just as far as they could get from two pesky little brothers who delighted in hiding their Movie Screen magazines, and who were not above using their lipsticks for Indian war paint. Since this was Saturday, everybody could sleep a little later if they wanted to, because that was the day we all piled into the car around noontime and went into town to buy the weekly groceries and usually do a little visiting.

Just about then Mama pulled the pan of golden biscuits out of the oven and placed them in the middle of the round oak table, which was covered with bright green and white checked oilcloth.

Jim came rushing back into the room. "Hey, Daddy, there's a car turning off the road. I think it's coming here," he said.

Whenever a car turned off the dirt road into the little grassy lane that led to our house, it was for sure the people were either lost or coming to see us.

My father got up and went to the window. "Looks like Sheriff Campbell's car," he said. "Reckon he's come to tell us he took old Joe home in time for milking." Walking out onto the porch, he waited for the old black Dodge to pull to a stop.

"Morning, Sheriff," I heard him say, "you're right in time for breakfast. Mary's just pulled a mighty fine looking pan of biscuits out of the oven, and there's ham and red-eye gravy to go along with them."

I didn't hear the Sheriff's answer because about that time my father

walked on out into the yard to meet him. They stood talking together several minutes, but so low I couldn't hear them from the porch. The Sheriff had a real serious look on his face, and I saw him clasp my father on the shoulder and pat him a couple of times. Then he got back in his car, started the engine, and the car rolled on out of the yard.

My father turned slowly and started back to the house.

"What's he want, Frank," my mother asked, wiping little beads of sweat from her forehead and upper lip with the hem of her apron as she turned away from the stove. "We've got plenty of biscuits and ham and eggs, and about a washpot full of gravy. Why didn't he stay for breakfast?"

My father didn't answer. He just walked on through the room and the screen door to the back porch where the railing held a washpan and soap. Everybody washed their hands out there before coming into the house after they'd been working out in the fields or in the barn. A clean, white flour sack towel hung on a nail to use for drying off.

It seemed like it was happening in slow motion the way he carefully poured clean water into the pan, reached for the soap and began to lather his hands.

"Why Frank," my mother said, coming to the screen door, "what on earth are you doing? I saw you wash those hands a little bit ago when you came in from the barn, and you've been right here with me ever since."

I was curious, too, so I walked out on the porch. I saw him rinse his hands off, but instead of drying them, he emptied the water from the wash pan, filled it with clean water, and began to soap his hands again.

"Why didn't the Sheriff stay and eat with us, Daddy?" I asked.

He didn't answer for a minute; he just kept rubbing his hands together. Finally, he looked at me and said, "It wasn't a social call, son; he came to tell us some very bad news."

"What's the matter, Daddy, I asked, "Has something bad happened to somebody we know?"

"Yes, son, it has," he said, finally rinsing off the second round of soap from his hands. Then he began slowly and deliberately to dry his hands.

When he spoke, he talked real slow, like the words belonged to someone else and he was trying them out for the first time. "The Sheriff found him early this morning when he went to let him out. He was going to drive him home early before Beasley got up and missed him.

"What do you mean, Daddy,'that the Sheriff `found him'; didn't he know he was there?"

"Yes, son," he said quietly, "of course he did. He just didn't reckon on finding him dead."

"You mean Joe's dead, Daddy," I asked, "Was he sick?"

"I suppose you'd have to say he was, "my daddy answered slowly. "I guess he was sicker than we knew. He'd have to be, to take the sheets and tear them up to make a rope to hang himself with."

Joe Mangum dead, I thought to myself. Hung himself in his jail cell! I couldn't wait to tell Jim about crazy old Joe Mangum. This was the first time I had ever heard of anybody in our parts doing a thing like that. This was sure something I'd remember a long time.

I looked up at my father. I wanted to ask him a whole bunch of other questions about old Joe, but something in his face stopped me. I knew better than to ask any more questions because suddenly I was scared. He was using the flour sack towel to catch the tears that were pouring down his face. My father who never cried. I wouldn't even have thought he could. Yes, I was sure this was a day I'd remember a very long time.



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# Expressions 2011

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## Statement of Editorial Policy

The editorial staff of EXPRESSIONS 2011 would like to thank all of the students who submitted work for consideration to EXPRESSIONS 2011 this semester. Unfortunately, not every entry can be published. In order to insure fair and impartial judging and publication selection, the copy without the author's name is sent to the judges. The judges at no time see the copy which identifies the individual author.

The purpose of EXPRESSIONS 2011 is to publish the best entries for consideration. We are proud of the entries published in this issue and appreciate the support of all students, faculty and staff who contributed to and enjoy the magazine.

As the editor, I will make changes to reflect correct grammar and usage to enhance each entry and the magazine as well.

Sally Byrd, Editor

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