

# HAUTE DISH

The Arts & Literature Magazine of Metropolitan State University

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Fall 2018 - Volume 15 Issue 2

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## **Categories:**

Poetry, Fiction, Creative Nonfiction, Memoir/ Personal Essay, Photography, Studio Art, and Digital Storytelling.

## **Who May Submit?**

Current students, plus staff, faculty and alumni of Metropolitan State University are all welcome to submit their work for both the Fall and Spring issues.

## **Deadlines**

Fall Issue – April 15

Spring Issue – November 15

## **For more information,**

visit our website at [hatedish.metrostate.edu](http://hatedish.metrostate.edu) or email us at [hatedish@metrostate.edu](mailto:hatedish@metrostate.edu)

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## Editor's Letter

Hello Metro State Community (our readers, board members, staff and contributors):

Thank you for contributing towards the success of Haute Dish and the contributing artists within these pages.

I have had the privilege of being part of Haute Dish since the beginning of Spring 2018 but my history with the publication precedes my time at Metro State as a student. I have been picking up Haute Dish issues on my visits to the Dayton's Bluff Library since 2014. Upon my admittance to Metro State, I contacted Haute Dish immediately to join as an Editorial Review Board member and eventually moving into the Business Manager in Spring 2018 then Managing Editor for this Fall 2018 edition.

Like me, often times, Haute Dish is one of the ways that people are introduced to Metro State and its creative collegiate community of students, alumni, staff and faculty. Metro State is unique and diverse and Haute Dish is a reflection of Metro State's rich and vibrant culture.

This issue has been one of learning, in my role as Managing Editor, and transition for Haute Dish. It takes a village and this publication would not be possible without the help of faculty, staff and students to keep it going.

Thank you for this wonderful opportunity.

Mai Xiong

# W e d d i n g   S e a s o n

A m b e r   B e r g s l i e n



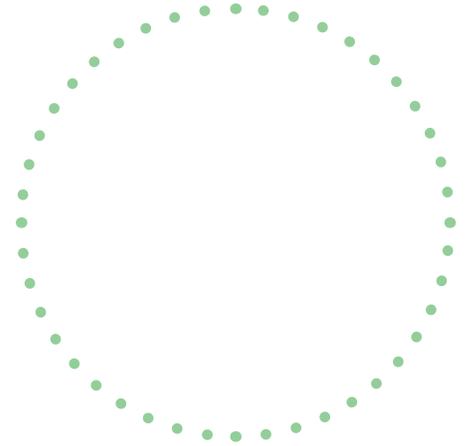
# Estes Park Mountains

Elizabeth Todd



# Ebb and Flow

Megan Bauer



The ebb and flow  
of the world around me  
on deck at the ferocious sea  
life giving and taking  
healing and erasing

It's the calm and the chaos  
that we try so hard to capture and describe  
but are caged by our feeble minds  
and the limits of our imaginations

Our tongues are twisted  
and arms are tired  
yet our feet always carry us along

The world is simple and complex  
and I haven't quite figured it out yet

# It's Raining Rocks

Betsy Salvatore



# Going North

Brandon Hall

Every few springs when deciduous trees are filled with new buds and the mellifluous song tunes of the Cliff Swallows and Wrens signal the transition from a muted frigid winter to a warmly painted springtime, I cruise north on Highway 169 to the modest town of Haypoint. I am here to spend time with my grandfather. I am here so I can escape the roar of the honking cars that fill the metropolitan roadways.

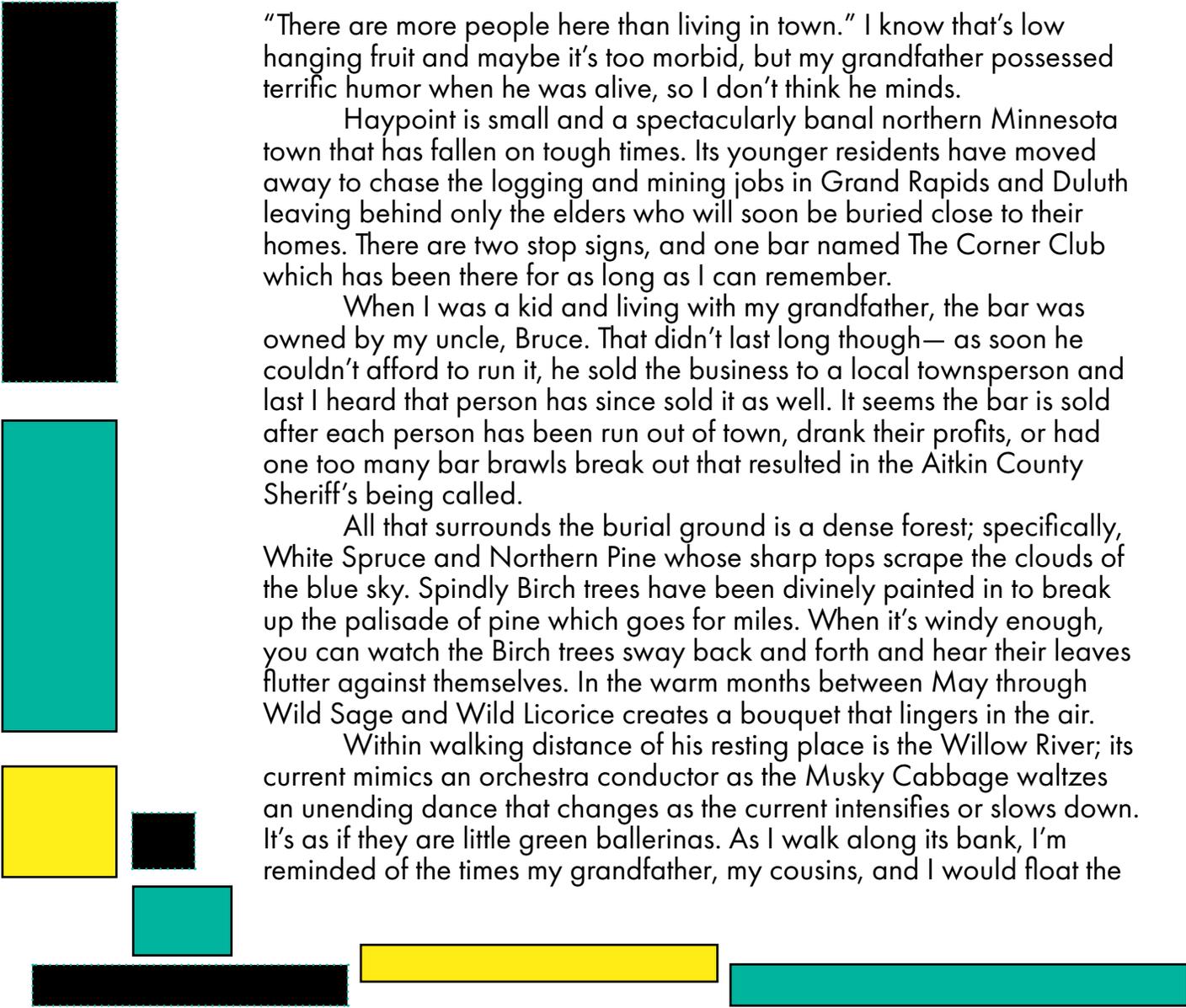
As the fog is still rising from the ground, I stop before a chained entrance that guards a dirt road. I remove the chain and drive through. While I make my way down the dirt road, I turn off my phone and turn the knob of the radio down. I look out the windows as I pass row after row of my grandfather's plot mates. When I see the Baltic Brown Granite monument with his name, I park my car and shut the engine off.

Before I exit the car, I sit in silence and listen to the Northern Flicker mine against the tree he is making a home in. After I've heard the reverb of his beak hitting the tree, I leave the car and stand in front of my grandpa's resting place. I sit down at feet of where his burial plot ends, and I vent to him.

When I am here, I enjoy a calm which eludes everywhere else in my life. My pulse slows, and my hearing heightens to the point of hearing the snap of branches as they fall from trees or are walked over by the woodland fauna. While I confide in him, I tell him what I have been doing since I've last been here and admit I miss him and wish he was here to help me through my days.

Soon enough I begin to feel like I am talking his ears off, so I cease, and run my hands through the sandy grass that covers his dwelling. I observe the cars passing by on 169 and count them in my head.

Each time I'm here can't help but repeat the same joke to him,



“There are more people here than living in town.” I know that’s low hanging fruit and maybe it’s too morbid, but my grandfather possessed terrific humor when he was alive, so I don’t think he minds.

Haypoint is small and a spectacularly banal northern Minnesota town that has fallen on tough times. Its younger residents have moved away to chase the logging and mining jobs in Grand Rapids and Duluth leaving behind only the elders who will soon be buried close to their homes. There are two stop signs, and one bar named The Corner Club which has been there for as long as I can remember.

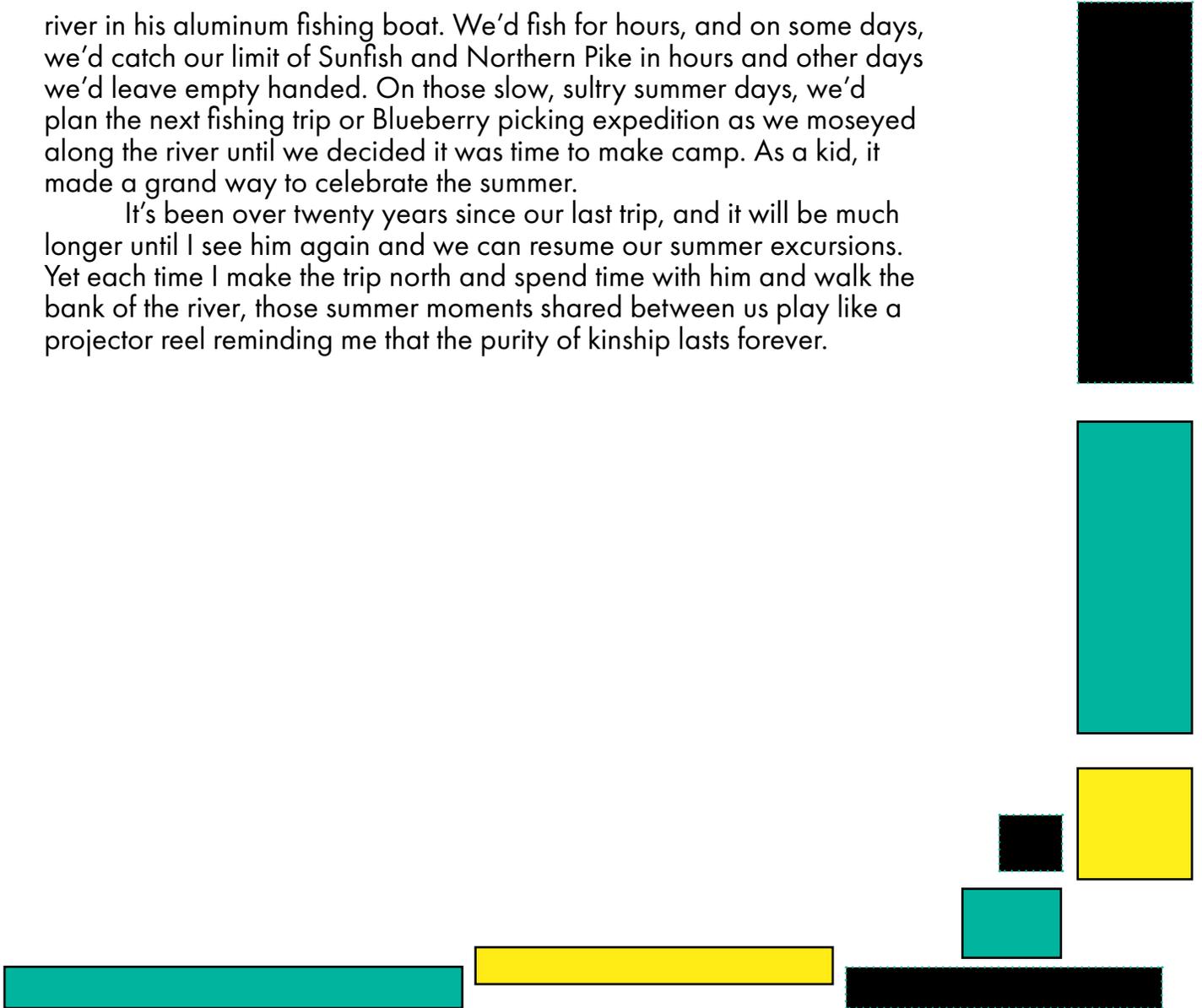
When I was a kid and living with my grandfather, the bar was owned by my uncle, Bruce. That didn’t last long though— as soon he couldn’t afford to run it, he sold the business to a local towns person and last I heard that person has since sold it as well. It seems the bar is sold after each person has been run out of town, drank their profits, or had one too many bar brawls break out that resulted in the Aitkin County Sheriff’s being called.

All that surrounds the burial ground is a dense forest; specifically, White Spruce and Northern Pine whose sharp tops scrape the clouds of the blue sky. Spindly Birch trees have been divinely painted in to break up the palisade of pine which goes for miles. When it’s windy enough, you can watch the Birch trees sway back and forth and hear their leaves flutter against themselves. In the warm months between May through Wild Sage and Wild Licorice creates a bouquet that lingers in the air.

Within walking distance of his resting place is the Willow River; its current mimics an orchestra conductor as the Musky Cabbage waltzes an unending dance that changes as the current intensifies or slows down. It’s as if they are little green ballerinas. As I walk along its bank, I’m reminded of the times my grandfather, my cousins, and I would float the

river in his aluminum fishing boat. We'd fish for hours, and on some days, we'd catch our limit of Sunfish and Northern Pike in hours and other days we'd leave empty handed. On those slow, sultry summer days, we'd plan the next fishing trip or Blueberry picking expedition as we moseyed along the river until we decided it was time to make camp. As a kid, it made a grand way to celebrate the summer.

It's been over twenty years since our last trip, and it will be much longer until I see him again and we can resume our summer excursions. Yet each time I make the trip north and spend time with him and walk the bank of the river, those summer moments shared between us play like a projector reel reminding me that the purity of kinship lasts forever.



# New Main Winter Skyline

Elizabeth Todd

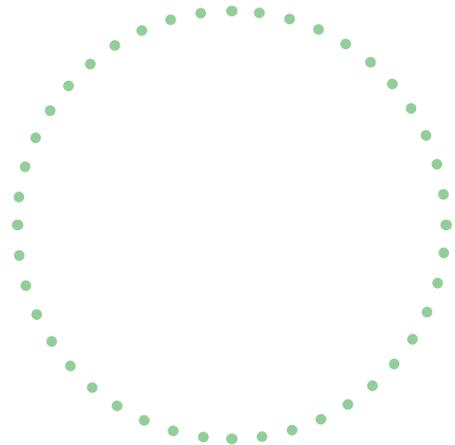


# A Man Who Tamed Owls

Farrah Al-Humayani

I fell in love with a man who tamed owls  
Whose scowl I deplored, but oh help me  
Lord, whose muscles rippled like clean linen  
Sheets I shook in the air before tucking  
Under my mattress, all so I could be the mistress  
He met at midnight to burn time with.  
But once the candlestick lost its stamina and  
Melted into a puddle, I would wake up muddled  
Only to find him gone.

For adventure was the temptress I never was.



# Art in Architecture Here and Abroad

Kimberly Niosi



# Cold Burn

Farrah Al-Humayani

**1**

Sometimes, an emotion whips past me like a comet.  
It flings by just for a fleeting moment  
and I, unprepared, do my best to reach  
up into the sky, into its deserted home where it has traveled  
alone for eons, and grab it.  
But it comes and goes so fast and sometimes,  
I miss it.

**1.5**

I feel numb much of the time.  
I wonder if others feel like that too.  
How do I know that I feel any less than you?  
Against what do we measure our own souls?

What does a comet consist of?  
Dust? Ice? Minerals? Tears?  
Is there some exotic being, colossal in size  
from whose eyes comets fling when in dismay?  
And if so, does this titan have the power to stir up a  
whirlwind in me, and what's more,  
keep it there?

When a comet is on its way to earth,  
before it know the brutality of our atmosphere,  
does it see others like it  
and give them a half-smile  
and a brief wave?

**2**

Or sometimes, I snatch it from its dark home,  
clutch it in my hand, my fingers turning blue  
as its icy surfaces bleed into my clenched fist.  
I get a cold burn.

# The Men's Room

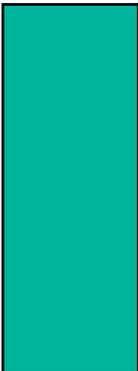
Elizabeth Wadsworth Ellis



A woman I knew would ask the men she dated to break the taboo. "Take me to the Men's Room," she would say with deep motive deeper than the porcelain walls. "Break the code. Show me the men's room,"

"Sure," they would say, "but why?"

To lift the veil of secrecy she wanted to catch men with their metaphor down in the sanctum sanctorum of the men's room. She found gender there, yes, in the men's room, but not affection nor even proof it exists. In the Women's Room women study themselves in the mirror for flaws, vigilant, and constantly on the lookout for imperfections that need cover-up. They get real close up.



In the women's room a woman once flipped her bra down at her, in front of her. "'You like 'em?'" she asked, referring to her breast-job. They looked like miniature bowling balls to her and not at all like the soft comfortable pendulous posture of breasts. She did not tell her that. She knew it was not what she wanted to hear.



In the dating days of her single years after a couple of drinks she'd look for a phone and call previous lovers. She was needy and desperate and they knew it. "When the phone stops ringing," Vasilikos wrote, "you think no one remembers you." Ethel Waters said, "Today or any day that phone might ring and bring good news."



This friend kept two pillows on her bed, and the sheets laundered, just in case.



"Women expect too much from us," men told her, "and they're stupid to hang on," like the cat that wandered into a man's house and refused to leave even when the man threw a bucket of soapy water on it. (Animal Watch, Washington Post, May, 1999.)



And yet, men said, their love of women was their weakness.

"What do you want?" She asked them. "That's the problem," they all said. "I don't know."

"In this world," Renoir said, "there is one awful thing and that is that everyone has his own reasons." These men looked for someone to take them as deeply and as seriously as they took themselves and Frederick Faber agrees, "There are few things more consoling to men than the mere finding that other men have felt as they feel."

She never met a man without some private pain or grievance.

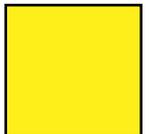
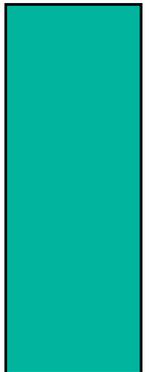
She gave them warm sudsy baths by candlelight. "After you have washed somebody else's face you feel that you know him better," Heywood Brown (1888-1939) wrote. This ablution, this ritual cleansing, made her feel she knew them, but afterward they got up and left. Their visits were spotty.

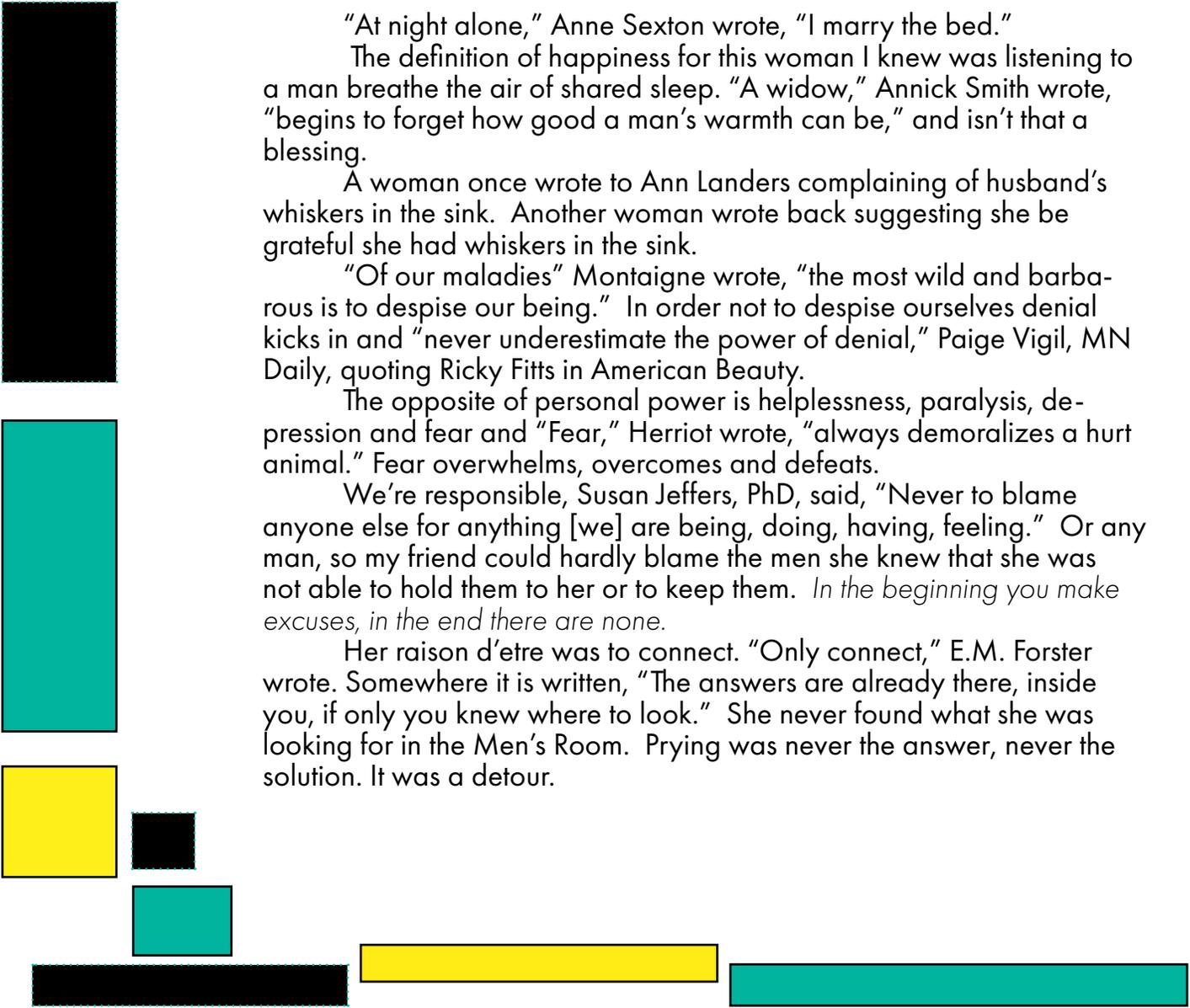
Her stereo was good enough and the beer was chill enough, but in spite of or because of trinkets she had engraved with their names Will Campbell wrote, "We hate the people we have wronged."

"As for the woman," Courtland Milloy wrote, [Washington Post, 2001] "who thinks that going to bed with a man will make him love her well, that may be the biggest joke of all."

"Men!" a woman complained. "All they want in sex is dessert, not the full meal deal." "Yeah!" she answered. "And they don't wanna do preparation or cleanup after."

"Few pleasures in this world compare with snuggling up," James Herriot wrote of his wife when he came in from the cold and she was warm in slumber. Veterinarian Dr. Schoen said, "There's something about touch that goes far beyond mere pressing of flesh...for a few flickering moments, the two creatures are forged together in an explicable bond. Contact induces great peace and calm in the animal."





"At night alone," Anne Sexton wrote, "I marry the bed."

The definition of happiness for this woman I knew was listening to a man breathe the air of shared sleep. "A widow," Annick Smith wrote, "begins to forget how good a man's warmth can be," and isn't that a blessing.

A woman once wrote to Ann Landers complaining of husband's whiskers in the sink. Another woman wrote back suggesting she be grateful she had whiskers in the sink.

"Of our maladies" Montaigne wrote, "the most wild and barbarous is to despise our being." In order not to despise ourselves denial kicks in and "never underestimate the power of denial," Paige Vigil, MN Daily, quoting Ricky Fitts in American Beauty.

The opposite of personal power is helplessness, paralysis, depression and fear and "Fear," Herriot wrote, "always demoralizes a hurt animal." Fear overwhelms, overcomes and defeats.

We're responsible, Susan Jeffers, PhD, said, "Never to blame anyone else for anything [we] are being, doing, having, feeling." Or any man, so my friend could hardly blame the men she knew that she was not able to hold them to her or to keep them. *In the beginning you make excuses, in the end there are none.*

Her raison d'être was to connect. "Only connect," E.M. Forster wrote. Somewhere it is written, "The answers are already there, inside you, if only you knew where to look." She never found what she was looking for in the Men's Room. Prying was never the answer, never the solution. It was a detour.

Swiftcurrent Lake,  
Glacier National Park  
Amber Bergslien



# Into My Woods

Carolyn Hall

The dog's steps quicken, pulling me firmly along. His excitement is palpable, contagious. Even in fourteen below, I am not cold, so bundled am I. The air, if not for my neck warmer pulled up over my nose, would be thin and sharp to my lungs, but my covered mouth and nose warms it first, so I am good. The dog possesses only his winter coat, but it is Siberian Husky fur. Years of breeding for this type of cold shows in his obvious lack of discomfort. If anything, it is true pleasure he seems to be experiencing. It's like the rest of the year his is sleepwalking and with the cold he comes alive, like a Direwolf or Whitewalker — with the winter comes life. You'd never guess he was twelve. If one human year is like seven dog years, that makes him eighty-four dog years old. Impossible. He looks and moves like a pup.

Once he's pulled me through the grounds of our neighborhood water pump station, he gives a firmer tug and quick leap upward, over the hump in back of the station grounds which we must hurdle to get to the wood's illegal trailhead. This is no officially sanctioned entrance, no parking lot nor paved trail, just a narrow dirt opening, now covered in hard snowpack.

He pulls up short, and the branches of the smaller understory trees snap against the arms of my jacket. He yanks first left then right, working with all the intense sniffing of a perfume tester over each and every yellow-sprayed patch, be on snow or tree trunk, each individual sample notifying his olfactory senses which canine left a message, be it acquaintance or stranger. None friend. New to this place, he has no friends here. Even his canine stepbrothers back at the house are more like foe, so territorial and hostile are they to him. Quite sad, as he is a gentle gem of a dog.

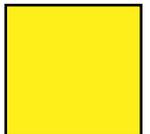
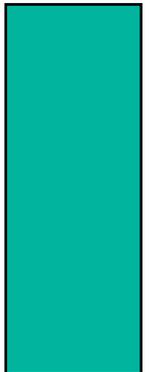
Even though I know we are within the city limits, the sounds fall

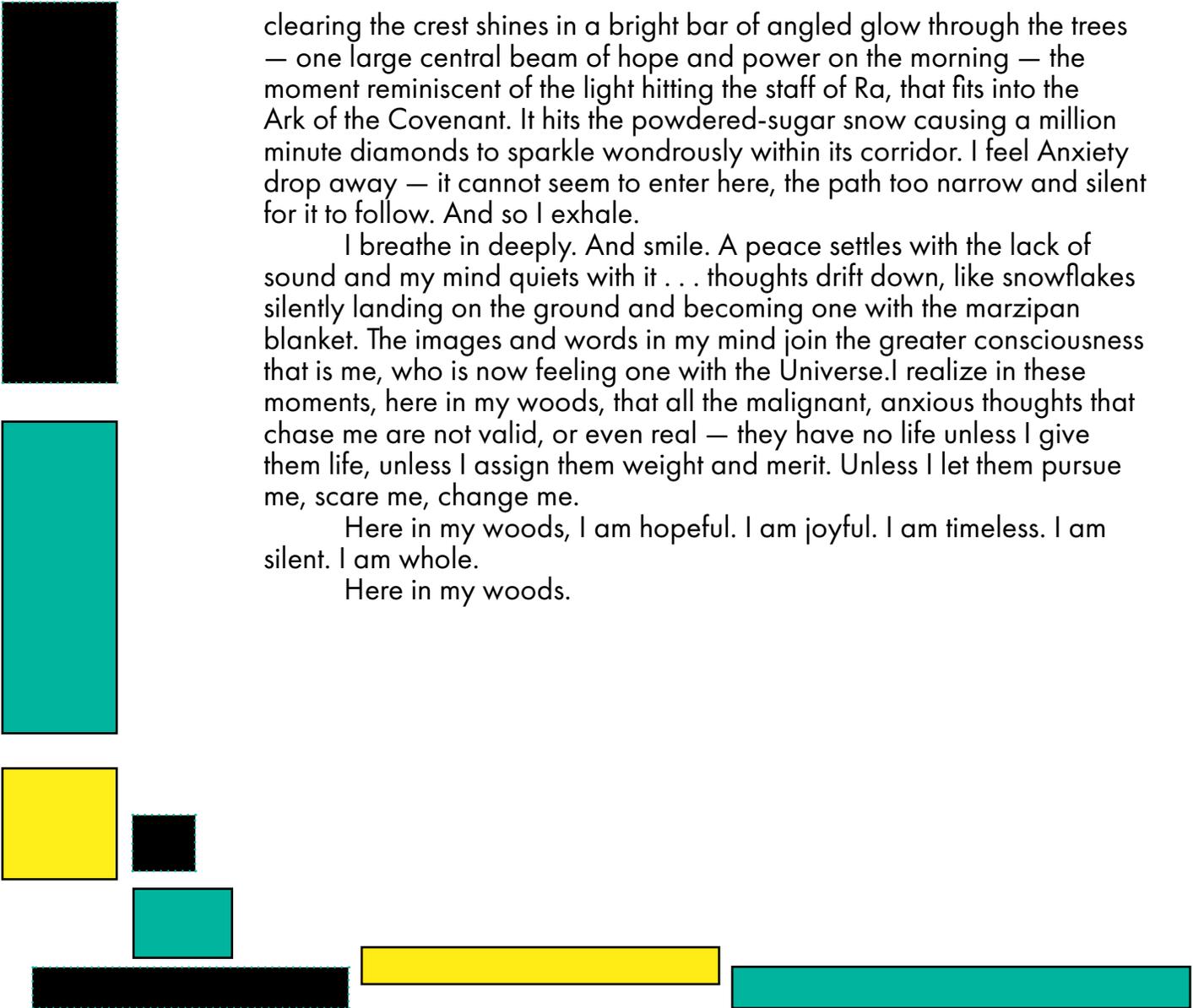
away when I step over that dirt threshold, like I'm within a glass dome in a Stephen King novel: my own private snow globe. My steps push through the new snow with a squeaking that can be both heard and felt through soles of my boots. A totally natural and satisfying scrunching sound, the closest thing which compares is the highly alien and distasteful sound of large styrofoam packaging being broken into pieces. It's odd how two completely disparate things make a similar sound. But once through the trees, when I stop and stand still, a silence envelopes me like a cloak of invisibility. I feel outside of myself, a voyeur into nature's universe.

In my day to day life, outside of my woods, the tendrils of anxiety constantly slip around the edges of my brain like a stalker in a dark alley. I can sense it watching me as if behind a dark corner. When I turn to see it, to call it out into the light, it skitters further back into the shadows where I can't view it's face, it turns when I turn. I constantly feel it following me, just out of range, constantly reaching its malevolent fingers like snaking vines sliding around my heart and giving it a slow, mean squeeze, until it persists as a constant pressure, like I'm on my back with an elephant's foot on my chest, pinning me to the earth.

One finger worries for the future, for all that might happen or not happen. The second finger ruminates through the past, berating my actions and choices. The third finger counts through the major players in my life, handling them all like worry beads, while the fourth finger finds fault with my every quality, defying me to ever change. And finally, the fifth finger questions my minute contributions to life, the universe and everything.

But here, in my winter universe, all is white snow and outlines of black trunk and branch, both standing and fallen. The morning sun





clearing the crest shines in a bright bar of angled glow through the trees — one large central beam of hope and power on the morning — the moment reminiscent of the light hitting the staff of Ra, that fits into the Ark of the Covenant. It hits the powdered-sugar snow causing a million minute diamonds to sparkle wondrously within its corridor. I feel Anxiety drop away — it cannot seem to enter here, the path too narrow and silent for it to follow. And so I exhale.

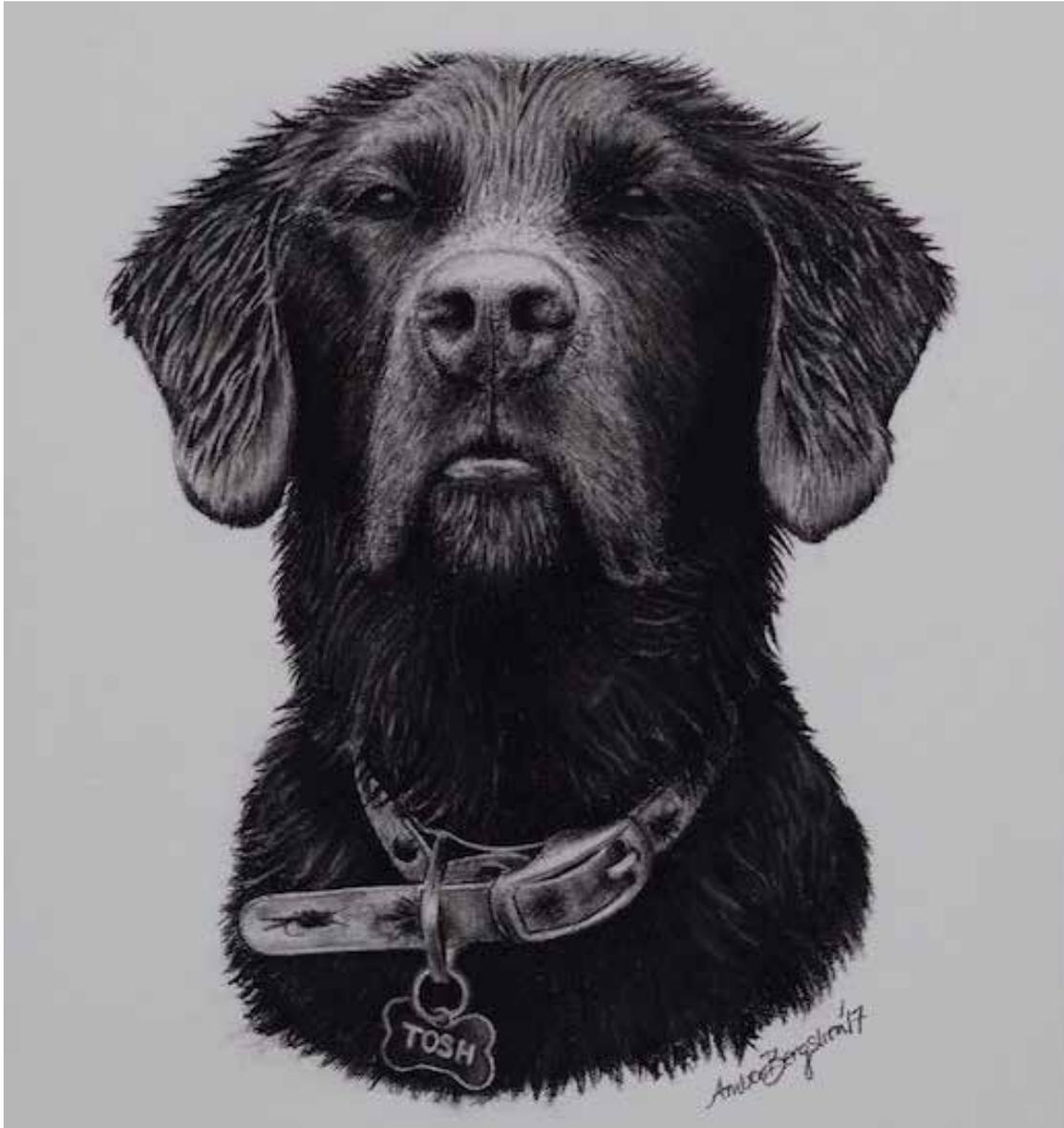
I breathe in deeply. And smile. A peace settles with the lack of sound and my mind quiets with it . . . thoughts drift down, like snowflakes silently landing on the ground and becoming one with the marzipan blanket. The images and words in my mind join the greater consciousness that is me, who is now feeling one with the Universe. I realize in these moments, here in my woods, that all the malignant, anxious thoughts that chase me are not valid, or even real — they have no life unless I give them life, unless I assign them weight and merit. Unless I let them pursue me, scare me, change me.

Here in my woods, I am hopeful. I am joyful. I am timeless. I am silent. I am whole.

Here in my woods.

# Man's Best Friend

Amber Bergslien



# R i v e r

Shannon Rowley - Mahaney

This is the moment I decide to leave.

I knew before I had made up my mind that today would change everything. Peter sits across from me; the fire is really beginning to burn in the center. He takes a long hit from our poorly rolled joint, passing it over the fire to me still holding the smoke in his lungs. I light the remainder of the ditch weed and inhale. It's coming to me now; I can feel it forming in my mind.

"I need to get out of here." I exhale the thought.

I am not some hoodlum. Peter isn't a juvenile delinquent. We are in our thirties. Peter is a lawyer. Me—I was someone up until today.

"Yea, I think I will go tonight." I nod and pass it back.

Peter nods slowly in time with me. "Where will you go?"  
I shrug. "Anywhere but here."

++++

The spot here is perfect. I remember finding it years ago, a few days after I became nothing. I had packed my bag that night, like I told Peter I would, and I left. I drove as far as I could in a direction I knew no one would be. When I couldn't drive anymore, there weren't roads where I was, I started walking. The spot was perfect.

You would have hated it.

I think that made it more perfect. A small river bed. A mountain backdrop. Out there I could smell fresh air. You always preferred the city.

I unpacked my tent, and marked the spot on the map. In a few days I would leave to get the things I needed. This would be my new place in life. A place where being nothing wouldn't matter.

++++

You stand there in the doorway, your arms folded. I hate when you do that, you know I do. You are trying to power struggle. Blocking my exit, telling me that I need your permission to leave.

"Don't do this." I gesture to you.

"Don't do this." You gesture back.

I stand straight up, leaving my half packed bag on the bed. "You have a reason I shouldn't?"

You don't say anything. I hate that too.

"I didn't think so."

++++

Peter slaps my shoulder and laughs. "We did it, friend, college is over. We have the rest of our lives ahead of us."

This is the day I meet you. I don't know that yet. "No, I have my life ahead of me. You head to law school after this."

"Peter! Ethan!" There is Kelsey, Peter's one and only. You're right behind her. I wave in time with Peter and you two join us.

"Congratulations." Kelsey plants a kiss on Peter's lips, then follows it with one on my right cheek. "You two are free."

"I am free. He chose a high paying career that wants you to be properly educated," I remind them.

You laugh. "Your career doesn't require you to be educated?"

"Not at all, I merely did all this as a formality."

"What career is this then?"

I grin and press my thumb to my chest. "I will be the mold of young minds."

Kelsey interrupts, "He is going to be a high school teacher."

You do that eyebrow thing, you know the one. I thought it was cute then. I would learn to hate it. "You don't have to graduate college to teach?"

"You do," I correct her. "I just don't have to be educated. Two very different things. I am Ethan." I hold my hand out to you.

"I had a dog named Ethan once," you say.

"I bet he was better looking than me."

"I'm River." You take my hand and shake it firmly.

"Really? Which one?"

Kelsey tells me later you thought I was funny. I guess that's only charming for so long.

++++

Propping my feet on the handrail of my small cottage, I notice there is a screw coming out. This world is imperfect I guess. Before I can stand to fix it I hear a voice. Her voice. A voice I will eventually fall asleep to, every night, for the rest of my life. In this moment though it annoys me.

"Excuse me, can you help me?"



I shake my head. "This isn't a ranger station, I don't have a phone. There is one a few miles to the east." This is the first time I have spoken to someone other than Peter or Kelsey since I left.

She keeps walking closer to me. "I know you are not a ranger station. I fell, I think I broke my arm."

I look at the arm she is holding. There is a lot of blood. A break through the skin. The calloused part of me, the one that retreated here to lick my wounds, that let hate fester into a hard shell, that part wants to turn her away.

"Please." She takes a few more steps towards the porch.

I barely nod and gesture for her to follow.

++++

You are yelling at me now, something about how I don't actually care about anyone but myself. I'm not listening. I know this speech, you know this speech. It's the same one I gave you when you said you wanted to date me. I told you that deep down I am a cruel and selfish person. You didn't believe me then. You do now.



What's more is you are talking over my show. I spend my week grading papers and listening to teenagers tell me life isn't fair. Mostly I tell them they are right and it's better to learn it now. I have one great joy in life. At the end of the week, Friday at 7 o'clock, I sit right here, on this couch that I bought second-hand from Peter, and watch 60 minutes of badly choreographed fight scenes acted out on a green screen. This is my escape, and you are talking over it. It's not an accident.

I turn up the volume. You walk out. I think this was definitely the beginning of the end.

++++



She thanks me as I lift her into my Jeep. I lied. I did have a phone. I used it to call the ranger station. They said to bring her to them; they would take it from there. I wrapped everything up before I took her over. That first aid training really paid off. I got most of the bleeding to slow.

"I'm Emily," she explains when I get into the driver's side.

I give her a quick look, to let her know I heard. You always said you never knew if I was listening or not. But I don't respond with my name. It doesn't



matter, I am certain, in this moment that I will never see her again anyways.

"Talkative, I like it. I have always said that people are too quiet nowadays. I am glad you beat the stereotypes." She laughs at her own joke. I will come to learn that Emily talks a lot, even more when she is nervous, and in quantities and speeds that put an auctioneer to shame when I don't respond.

That first day was painful for me. She told me about everything, her childhood, the day she graduated college, how she thought she was going to change the world. She realized the world didn't want to change, so she gave up. She is younger than you. Something about her reminds me of you. Her hope, I think that's what it is.

++++

"This is it," you tell me. You are sitting at your desk. I made it for you by hand, a housewarming gift when we bought that place on Maple. "I am going to be a county social worker."

"Why?" I ask.

You roll your eyes. "So I can help people."

"Yea, I get that, but why?"

"You help people."

"No, I talk at kids for the very self-serving purpose of ensuring competent human beings run this world when I retire. Although I have my doubts such things are possible."

"What made you such a cynical asshole?" you ask for the millionth time.

This makes me smile. You know what's coming next. "Because, my love, I need to balance out the good you put into the world." I kiss your forehead before I leave.

I love this moment for some reason.

Your laugh fills the room as I walk away.

++++

From the front of the church the faces all blend together. This wasn't my idea. I know you would have hated the fuss. Your parents are to thank for this circus act. I can only think, staring at the mush of flesh in the pews before me, they don't know, they have no idea this was my fault.

I see sad smiles encouraging me to speak. They think I am heartbroken because



I have lost the love of my life. They think we were perfect. I know this because I have heard the same line about a million times since you left.

"I am so sorry, I know you two were so happy."

Were we? If we were, I had a really fucked up way of showing it.

++++

"Ethan?" She is standing on the porch, her arm in a cast.

I look at her from the top of my book. I read a lot now, still history. "How do you know my name?"

Her smile is painfully hopeful. "I asked the ranger. I wanted to come by and say thank you for helping me that day."

"An awful long walk for a thank you. You could have sent a letter." There is that asshole in me.

The gusto leaves her face. "I guess it was. Long walk back too. Well, thank you I guess."

Your voice creeps into my head, reminding me that even if I am not a good person deep down, I can pretend to be one on the surface. "Do you want a beer?"

++++

I wish I could forget this part. I call you. I drank too much. "Can you come get me? I don't think I can drive."

"I thought you were gone?" You sigh.

"I shouldn't have said the things I did. I shouldn't have left. I am an asshole, I know this, you know this. Somehow you have still loved me all this time."

"I still do."

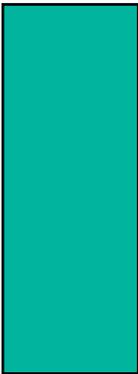
I rest my head in my hand and stop the flow of words threatening to burst out. I want to tell you to run. I want to tell you I am not worth it. I'm not, we both know that, but you are stubborn. Instead, I speak from my heart.

"I love you too. I am very sorry. I can't promise I will be better. I can tell you I will try to remember that I love you more than I hate myself. Yea?"

You laugh. I know it's the real deal. "We can work with that."

That really was the end. You never made it to me. That asshole who wasn't man enough to call for a ride like I had made sure of that.

++++



After the church, we put you in the ground. This is the moment I became nothing. I am no longer your husband, not your future ex-husband, I am not your friend or your lover. I hadn't realized that you were my whole life until you weren't here. Sure I could have still been a teacher, but why? If I don't need to provide for us, why would I? If I can no longer see the future, why would I take the time to make sure the next generation is useful?

More than anything. I need to be nothing. Nothing can't hurt.

++++

"I know you are hurting, I know you see nothing in this world for you." Kelsey is standing next to the late 90's Buick I will leave in. "She would want you to continue to exist. That may not be in any form we recognize for a while, and that's alright. But she would want you to exist."

I don't answer. We both know my unspoken plan. I did pack that gun you told me I had to get rid of the day we moved in together. I hadn't then. It was hidden in the safe in the garage.

"Do what you have to, but don't do that." Kelsey pulls me into a hug. "You are the biggest asshole she had ever met. You were also the person she loved unconditionally."

++++

Today is the day I become something again. I pretend I am not happy about it. You would know better. You could always see hope trying to make its way out of me. I still don't know why you fought so hard to make me a good person. I am glad you did.

Emily has known about you for a while now. She has never asked me to move on. We talk about you often, or rather she asks questions and keeps pushing until I give her details. Every day it gets easier to talk about you.

After three years of her walking out to me as often as possible, I asked her to stay. She moved in a while ago, the cabin is too small for the two of us really, but she has never complained.

Today I am going to marry her. Peter has been cracking jokes all morning about how it's a shotgun wedding. It is I suppose. The cabin really won't be big enough for the three of us. If it's a girl, Emily wants to name her River, after you—you are the reason we met after all. I think she, much like you, is too good of a person for me.

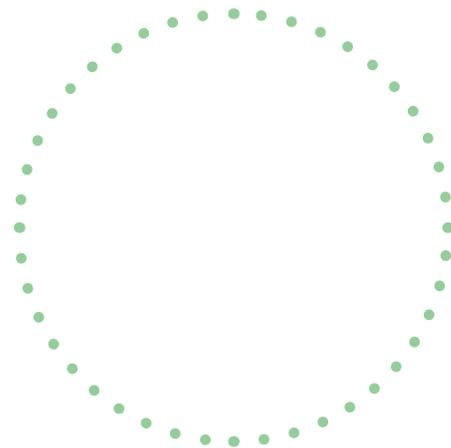
# Small Town Goodbye

Ben Houtkooper



# Apologia

Jonathan Hiatt



I could pick anything and think of you—  
 A shirt, a cup of coffee, or the blue  
 Pen you use to court your inner muse.  
 Would I but slander you if I refused  
 To silence critics' claims, much to their ire  
 That one cannot trust those who are touched by fire  
 And, thus, assert that you of "addled" mind  
 Are far less capable or less refined?

This stain upon your personhood was wrought  
 By perjuries against which you have fought  
 To render useless: legalistic notions  
 Of sanity and psychotropic potions.  
 Demur—you're qualified a dangerous threat!  
 Assent—and you will aid them and abet!  
 Miss Dickinson knew all too well much madness  
 Is divinest sense, coupled with sadness.

O measured verse! of mine which freely flows  
 With ease, let it at once be fain to show  
 Lucidity and cogency of reason.  
 Should my defense of you be acts of treason,  
 My verse ere long shall be immortalized  
 Lest minds so touched by fire be despised.  
 And may such mortal beings be uplifted:  
 When God proclaims them one and all as gifted!

# Minnesota Nice

April Carlson

The N on my tennis shoes stands for Nice...

The nice that can only end in I-C-E

And it emits no warmth at all

A nice that politely declares,

"You and I are far too different,

So I'll use pleasantness to

Disguise who I am from who

You seem to be and, more

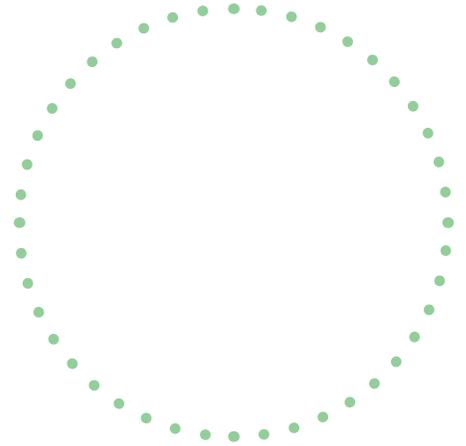
Crucially, from any judg-

Ments you might make." It

Is the Nice that lets me run far

Away from you while standing still

Nodding and smiling at your anecdotes



# NYC Harbor Moon

Betsy Salvatore



# Let Me Be Frank With You

Amy Dahl

The light from the TV flickered in the small, dark living room, casting shadows on the old man asleep in his beat up La-Z-Boy, the anchorman silently reporting his news of the day being ignored. The air was stale with the sickly sweet aroma of old pipe tobacco and the worn leather chair creaked and groaned as Frank shifted to a more comfortable position, his joints protesting almost as much as the chair. He pulled the threadbare blanket up tighter under his chin. The brown and red fabric caught like velcro in the bristly stubble that covered his face.

An explosion of glass shattered through the silence of the night, jolting Frank from his sleep. "What the hell?!" he leapt from the comfort of his chair and the mini macaw, Izzy, sprang to life as well; wings beat at the bars of her cage, cries of "Hell! Damn!" piercing the air. Clutching his blanket close, cloudy eyes darting around wildly as though he was in the middle of the war and the enemy was upon him. But Charlie wasn't invading his living room – only a large chunk of an old paver stone that lay in the middle of the room surrounded by shards of glass.

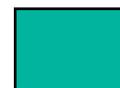
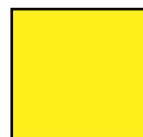
The last dregs of sleep released their hold on his brain as he stumbled over to assess the window. Gnarled and twisted hands slammed onto the windowsill when he came face to face with the damage. "SON OF A BITCH!" Laughter from a dark figure rushing down the alley caught Frank's attention and he leaned further out of the broken window. "Come back here, you little shit!"

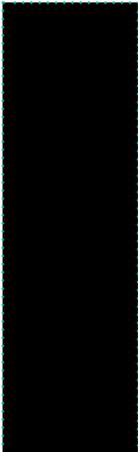
"SHIT! SHIT!" Izzy's neck elongated and her eyes flashed brown for a quick moment – she didn't want to be left out of the fun. Pain shooting through his hand pulled Frank's attention from the fleeing miscreant – it seemed the only thing he was going to catch red-handed tonight was the large piece of glass that was now protruding from the middle of his palm.

The first sight of crimson overwhelmed him and the neighborhood faded from his vision to be replaced by jungles full of blood-soaked bodies with missing limbs. Their cries for help rung in his ears and he reeled backwards, feet tripping over a landmine hidden in the jungle floor. Bile and what remained of his dinner rose up thick in his throat as he hit the ground ass first before rolling onto his back, arms flung up to protect his face from the explosion he knew was coming. But it never did. Gasping for air, he opened his eyes, dropped his arms and realized he wasn't in the jungles of 'Nam but safe in his home. The blood from his hand pooled from his palm to run in rivulets down his wrist before hitting the floor in random patterns. Some of it had been smeared by the fall like a Rorschach test and took on the faces of his battalion.

Frank reached up and grabbed an old shirt that had been tossed carelessly over the back of his chair, wrapping it around his injured hand before getting back to his feet. He couldn't do this. Since the war the sight of blood always sent him into a whirlwind of memories that paralyzed and tormented him with images of his past horror. He needed help and it was time to make one of his good-for-nothing neighbors do something other than destroy his property for a change and help get this damned glass out of his hand. There was no way he'd be able to do it himself.

Holding his hand up by his heart, he ambled out of the house. Each foot was placed with deliberate care on each step as he made his way down to the sidewalk. The only light other than his own piercing through the darkness came from next door. Of them all, Julie was the one he minded least, so it was in that direction he headed. They had never really spoken – Frank hadn't associated with anyone in years – but she'd always had a kind word for him or a smile when they passed each other. The others either ignored him or, like tonight, taunted him relentlessly.





He shuffled down the sidewalk, left foot scraping on the concrete as it struggled to match pace with the right. A car backfired from the alley and Frank damn near dove for cover before he remembered again that he was in tree-lined suburbia and not overseas. Regaining his fragile composure, he covered the last few feet to Julie's door and knocked; knuckles striking the wood with the same abrupt curtness Frank displayed on a daily basis. It took several moments and he was about to give up when the door finally opened a crack and one tired, green eye peered warily out at him.

"It's late, Frank. Everything alright?" Julie pulled the door open wider to reveal that she was still in her scrubs and probably hadn't been home long. She wasn't exactly fond of the crotchety old man who spent his days screaming at kids to get off his lawn, driving down to the police station to complain about too much noise on their street and, in general, being a nuisance, but she always tried to be polite.

"No, everything isn't okay. Some little shit broke my damn window and now part of it is in my hand!"

"Okay. But what can I help you with, Frank?"

He shut his eyes for a moment, the words of help catching in his throat. He was a soldier, dammit, and soldiers didn't need help from anyone. He unwrapped his injured hand and thrust it at Julie, eyes snapping open.



Julie looked at the offered hand and sighed. It had been a long night at the hospital and she had a date with Chinese takeout and shitty TV, so she resented the presence of Frank on her doorstep at this moment. "Why don't you call the police and file a report? They could get you to the hospital, too, and get you all fixed up."



"I ain't got no damn phone!"

"Frank, I --"

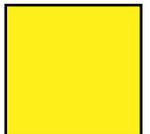
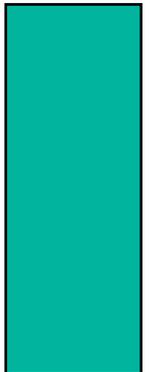
"And you got thousands of dollars for something as stupid as a trip to the ER? 'Cause I sure as shit don't. Aren't you a nurse or something? Why don't you just do your damn job?" Frank hid the fear that flashed briefly in his eyes at the mention of the word hospital and chose instead to hold onto the rage that kept him going all these years.

Julie glared at the insults and she seriously considered shutting the door in his face even if he was injured. But something in his eyes stopped her from slamming the door and she stood there, deliberating with herself for a moment.

Blood fell from Franks hand, hitting the top of his shoe. The color drained from his face, his vision blurred and his tired, old body swayed like the limbs of a tree caught in a storm at the sight of it. Suddenly, he could smell the jungle. Charred bodies, napalm and Agent Orange mixed in with the earth and rotting leaves. These smells were carried through the thick humidity and could choke a man. "Look, lady, you gonna help me or not?" his eyes pleaded as much as his voice and he battled to keep himself in the present moment instead of his past.

Slender fingers pinched the bridge of her nose in exasperation and Julie nodded. She couldn't, in good conscience, leave him here on the verge of passing out. It was her duty to care for everyone that needed it, and this old man so obviously did. Pushing away the resentment that had been building, she put on her game face and became the kind, compassionate nurse people like Frank needed. "Yeah, come on in, Frank. Let's see what we can do."

Julie stepped aside and Frank walked through the doorway, doing so with care-





ful steps and furtive glances at Julie and her home as if to ensure she wasn't just a kind faced enemy waiting to ambush him as soon as his guard was down. Her living room was designed like his, but was full of light and warmth instead of the oppressing darkness Frank shrouded himself in. She led the way into the kitchen and motioned him towards a chair at the small table. "Have a seat, I just need to grab a few things."



He did not take the offered seat and chose, instead, to inspect his surroundings. Curious fingers picked up the badge on the table. Her face was kind in the photo, the smile reaching her eyes and reminding him of his late wife. Pained, he dropped the badge and shuffled over to a wall of photos, squinting to get a better look at the memories displayed there. Julie, happy and smiling, had her arms around an older man dressed in full army greens, ribbons and medals covering the breast of his coat. The corners of Frank's mouth pulled downwards, jealous of the peaceful look on this man's face. He reached out towards the picture.

"That's my father," Julie said, her arms full of medical supplies. Frank jumped at the sudden sound of her voice, dropping his hand guiltily and moving to sit down, not responding.



"Retired as a Lieutenant Colonel after 35 years, but still considers himself part of the Army." She smiled, looking fondly at the picture of her dad and sat down next to Frank. She spread a clean towel on the table, organized her supplies, and reached a hand out towards him expectantly. "Were you in the service at all," she asked, trying to draw him out of his shell.



Frank merely grunted, unwilling to talk and thrust his hand out for her to take. He kept his eyes carefully averted, focusing instead on the photo on the wall to avoid another panic attack. Julie carefully removed the glass from his hand and

began to clean the wound.

"This cut is a lot deeper than I thought. You need stitches, Frank. I can drive you to the hospital if yo—"

"I told you I ain't going to no damn hospital!" Frank slammed his good hand on the table, causing Julie to jump. He turned his eyes from the picture to her. "Just stop talking and fix my damn hand!"

"Hey, you asked for my help, I'm just trying to give it," Julie said, scrubbing the antiseptic wipe across his palm a little rougher was necessary. Frank yelped in pain and the two sat there, glaring at each other for a moment. Julie caved and looked away first, dropping her eyes to his hand and sighed.

"Just wrap it up and I'll go. Don't need anything more from you."

"Please, this needs m—"

"Dammit, are you deaf? I said no!"

He yanked his hand from her grip and shoved back from the table, knocking the chair over in his rush to stand. "I don't need your help, I'll do it myself." Snatching some bandages and his shirt from the table, he hobbled to the door. Forgetting his injury, Frank grabbed the handle roughly "Motherfucker!" Tucking his belongings into the crook of his arm, he switched hands and swung the door open so hard that it knocked a perfectly round hole into the wall behind it.

Julie stood, mouth agape and hands spread in shock as he stormed out. She crossed the floor in several long strides. "Have a great night, Frank," she yelled before slamming the door closed.

# Javelins Fly in Estonia at Saber Strike

Ben Houtkooper



# Debt Threat (A villanelle)

Cameron Klotzbach

It's not a missed call, it's a missed threat  
A trap I've fallen in through procrastination  
This is an attempt to collect a debt

There was crack and snap when the wall and my hand met  
A dumb bet, a forfeit, due to this drunken altercation  
It's not a missed call, it's a missed threat

The white cast on my hand begets skin sweat  
Can't pay doctor bills, I'd rather invest in inebriation  
Relentlessly attempting to collect a debt

The debt was sent to this collection cadet  
Militantly pursuing coerced compensation  
It's not a missed call, it's a missed threat

My panicked breath scrambles through a lit cigarette  
Fatigued eyes concede lies about sleep deprivation  
Perpetually attempting to collect a debt

Each call is a soldier, drawn bayonet.  
"Reject call" is my bunker, protection from decimation  
It's not a missed call, it's a missed threat  
No end to this attempt to collect a debt

# What I'm Left With

Megan Bauer

the only thing I like about my life is you.  
but you're not even here.

so what does that leave me?

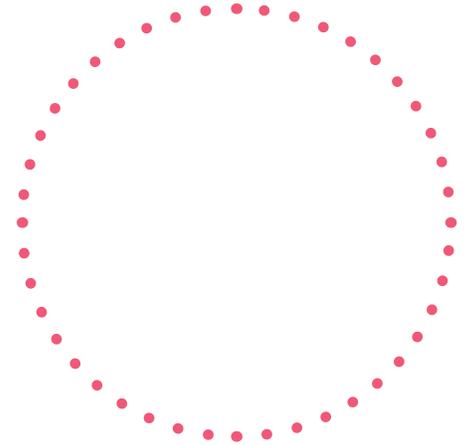
decades of regret and stormy ghosts,  
mistakes without resolution,  
a script without an ending  
and eternal writer's block.

strangers with names next to mine on a family tree  
weekends spent alone in July,  
a dead end job,  
and no hobbies.

i wish i smoked or drank  
or was okay destroying myself like that  
so there'd be nothing left.  
but something in me wants to live  
deep inside  
and i've been trying to find it for years  
but all the soul searching is just a waste of time.

i wish my existence was appeased by  
just being, but it's not.  
i need something to live for  
that's not you.

cause you're not even here.



# Grainbelt

Amber Bergslien



# Sticks and Stones

Aisha Ali

I watched the raindrops chase each other down the cold pane of glass on the school bus window, following the race with the tip of my finger. That one! I thought. I leaned my head on the metal sill and waited to see which raindrop would reach the other end of the front seat window.

I heard the loud in and out breathing of sleeping sister beside me as we rumbled away from Minneapolis through the streets of downtown St. Paul. The kids behind us sang songs, bickered and shouted, played hand clapping games, and chattered about their favorite Yu-Gi-Oh! cards.

“Stop it! You African booty-scratcher!” a kid behind me shouted.

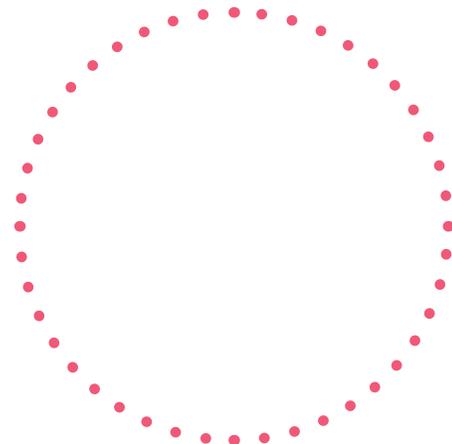
“Oooh” the kids hummed with naughty awe. The bus hushed to quiet shock.

His friend’s eyes widened as he bristled, “No! You’re the African booty-scratcher!”

“Hey! Cut it out!” The bus driver shouted at the kids.

The two dark-skinned boys glared at each other; they slid to separate sides of the bus. They fidgeted in their seats, guilty for using sticks and stones too big for their palms, sharpened by someone else with a smaller heart.

The bus paused at a stop light. My raindrop crashed into another and raced out of sight. My breath fogged the window corner as I sighed.



# Number 7 (for Laurie)

Bonnie Holliday

I never imagined you a Mother,  
a Bearer of Life.

As sister or as a Sister

You were (always)

Done and decided.

Cast and set free (released).

Yet (now) you are a Creator,

a Bearer of the future.

Fulfilled in Time.

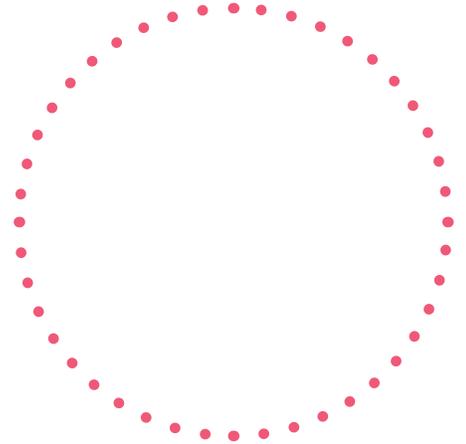
Your Perfection (yet) waiting to be revealed,

As you yourself were small perfection,

Held in my small mother hands.

Gazing at you (knowing) you as the last.

And at last.



# CONTRIBUTORS

**Farrah Al-Humayani** received her Associates of Arts degree from Saint Paul College in May of 2017, shortly before graduating from high school in June of 2017. The PSEO program offered her the chance to get all of her general education done early on so that she could jump right into the subject matter she is passionate about—writing—directly out of high school. Farrah is currently enrolled as a Creative Writing major at Metro and feels that her view of the literary world is expanding daily. While she is open to writing and reading any genre, her favorite is fiction; more specifically, Farrah loves fantasy, romance, and dystopian novels. She has also ventured into the worlds of poetry and memoir.

**Aisha Ali** was a Nursing student at Metro State this past May 2018. She has a passion for photography, creative writing and stories, in general.

**Megan Bauer** is a student in the social work program at Metro State and will graduate in 2019. She has had a life-long passion for writing and has recently become particularly intrigued by poetry.

**Amber Bergslien** graduated in August of 2016 and holds a BS in Accounting. This is her second year submitting as alumni since her graduation. In her spare time, she is an artist who is passionate for the outdoors, art, unplanned adventures, dark chocolate, and a good cup of coffee. When Amber isn't busy bean counting, you'll most likely find her drawing or exploring northern Minnesota.

**April Carlson** is poet who does some things sometimes. Her introduction is WS Merwin's poem, "April".

**Amy Dahl** is currently in her first year at Metro State University working towards her Bachelor's in Creative Writing. She is previously unpublished, though she has been writing and collaborating on story ideas since the age of 15. Amy lives just outside the Twin Cities with her husband, 3 kids, and a handful of pets.

**Bonnie Holliday** is a senior liberal arts major who remembers life before the Internet. She is into books, languages, history, religion, music, and writing. Her influences include growing up in rural Minnesota and being the eldest of six sisters and a brother. While she looks forward to life after Metro, she will always be a student.

**Brandon Hall** is a Senior at Metro State enrolled in the Creative Writing program. I'm currently working on my first book, a memoir about my father. I look forward to graduating in the fall of 2018. When I'm not writing I'm spending my time collecting music and books.

**Carolyn Hall** is a creative writing major in her senior year (if going by credits needed to finish). She is also pursuing a minor in research and information studies. Up to this point in life, she's been a fiction writer, but this semester she's been exploring memoir and creative non-fiction via the personal essay. It has been a very cathartic experience, even if at times, painful.

**Jonathan Hiatt** is a senior at Metro State, majoring in English literature. He enjoys writing poetry and creative nonfiction, playing drums and percussion, and anticipates the upcoming fourth season of his favorite television show, AMC's *Better Call Saul* in September. Jonathan anticipates a May 2019 graduation date.

**Ben Houtkooper** is a student of the College of Individualized Studies where he is pursuing a degree, focusing in Communications Leadership. His more than 20 year long career as a military journalist has taken him to dozens of countries, as he helps to tell the stories of those serving.

**Cameron Klotzbach** is a junior at Metro State and a Computer Application Development major. He enjoys sports, music, movies, reading, and writing in his free time.

**Kimberly Niosi:** "As a student here at Metropolitan State University, the realm of Visual Arts is very expansive. Studying drawing and painting, to textiles, to digital art, to sculpture, to photography as an art form. I have learned that art is all-encompassing, it's visual, including color, scale, and form as well as an understanding of architecture. It's mathematical, for example having an understanding of the Golden Mean and the Fibonacci Code. Art is scientific, having an understanding of tensile strength, chemical reactions in response to different variables when dyeing textiles for example. I am grateful to professors like the director of the program Erica Rasmussen for her professionalism as well as the technical exploration for a greater understanding. As part of my education, I have traveled abroad to London, Milan, Iceland and Amsterdam to study both art and architecture and even to compare and contrast both classical drawing and painting as well as architectural similarities. Being a lifelong practitioner in the field of design and fine arts is absolutely exhilarating. I am so excited to begin my journey to pursue my MFA."

**Shannon Rowley-Mahaney** age 30. Born in Burnsville Minnesota, a current resident of Minneapolis Minnesota. Attending college full

time and working towards an Education Degree, with a possible minor in writing. A submission of this kind has never been attempted before. Shannon is married and has been for four years, almost five, Amber (the wife) is to be accredited with making this submission possible as she has always pushed Shannon to leave that wonderful, however not productive, comfort zone.

**Betsy Salvatore** is a May 2017 alum of the Technical Communication and Professional Writing Program, and past Haute Dish layout designer. She works as a Training and Communication Specialist at the University of Minnesota and is enrolled in their M.Ed. Curriculum and Instruction in Learning Technologies Program.

**Elizabeth Todd** is a Graduate Student at Metropolitan State University, currently in the Psychology program. She has a BA in writing and a MA in Liberal Studies and currently works in the Information Technology (IT) division of Metropolitan State as a Content Producer and Editor for the university website. In her free-time she enjoys reading classic literature, watching Netflix, scrapbooking, and playing video games. Her main career goal is to break free of freelance writing and be successful enough to write novels and research reports full time.

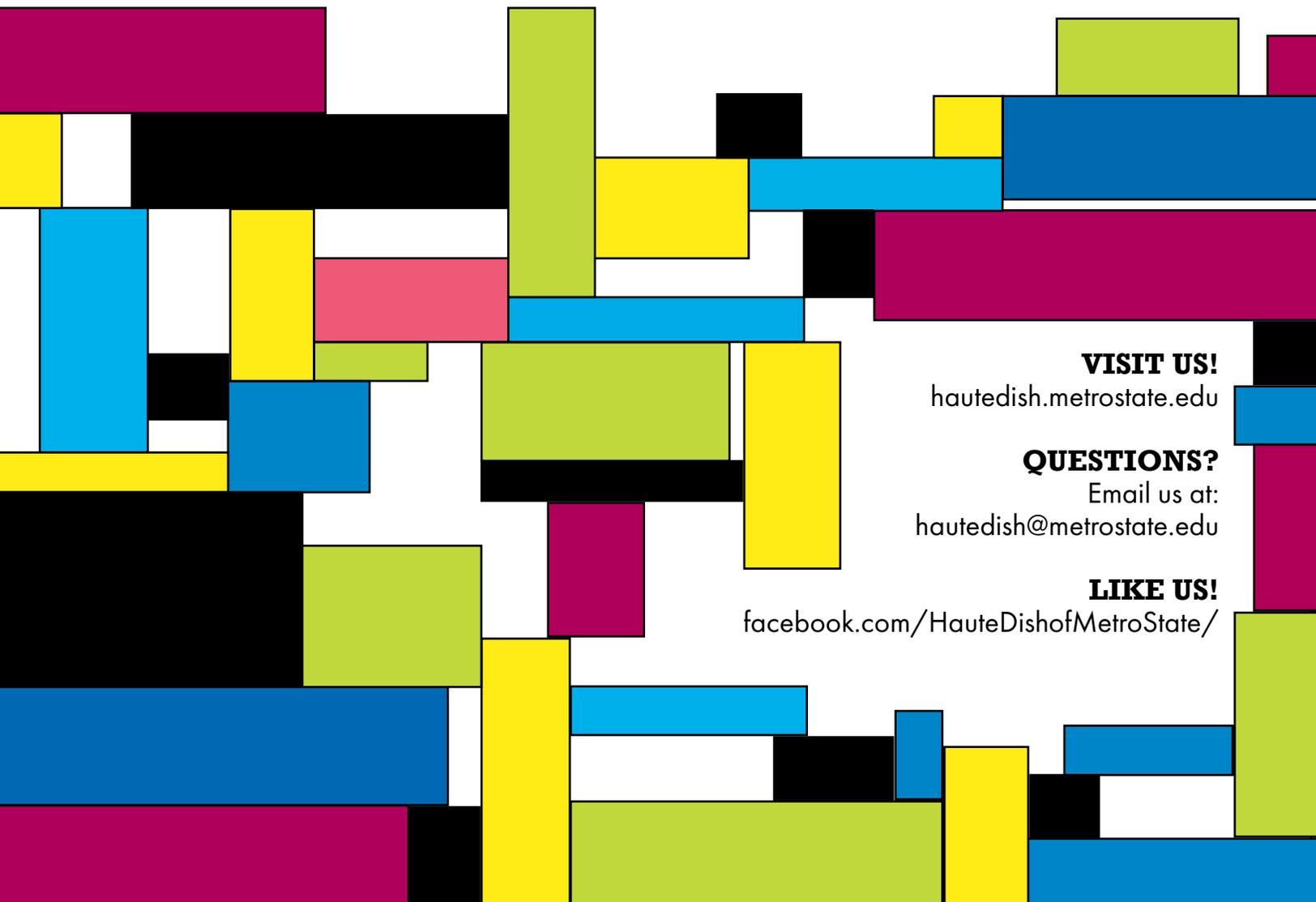
**Elizabeth Wadsworth Ellis** is a Metro State alumni and graduated with a BA in Creative Writing. She is a letter writer and a baby boomer; born in Minneapolis, living in St. Paul. Her column *The Good Wife Works*, was published for ten years by a weekly newspaper here in the Twin Cities.

**Haute Dish** is published two times a year, Spring and Fall semesters, and is dedicated to showcasing the literary and artistic talents of students, staff, faculty, and alumni of Metropolitan State University.

**Categories** include: Poetry, Fiction, Creative NonFiction, Memoir/Personal Essay, Visual Art (Photography, Illustration, Focus on Metro), and Digital Storytelling.

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**DEADLINES:** April 15 for FALL ISSUE & November 15 for SPRING ISSUE



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