

A collage of student photos arranged in speech bubble shapes. The bubbles are of various sizes and colors (yellow, blue, white) and are scattered across the upper half of the page. The photos show diverse students smiling and interacting. A large yellow speech bubble in the center contains the title text.

# VOICES

of Black Hawk College

***Spring 2015***

The logo features a stylized yellow flame or bird shape above the text "Black Hawk College".

Black  
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## Poem inspired by Elista Fisher's Idea

By Kyle Pannier

Driving back home from work,  
it was a gloomy Friday night.  
Snow was blowing in my sight.  
I was focused on being safe.

Strolling along ever so slow.  
My eyes were glued on the road,  
praying I wouldn't need towed.  
A few more miles I told myself.

Suddenly popping out of nowhere,  
a monstrous deer standing before me.  
Fearing if he is going to flee,  
or if I need to take action fast!

Only two options now,  
braking and sliding  
or coasting and riding.  
The choice is nerve-racking.

The expression on the deer's face  
looked as if he could possibly cry,  
thinking "oh shit I'm going to die."  
His life was now in my hands.

Gripping the wheel tightly,  
I missed him by nearly an inch  
because he refused to even flinch.  
That was a close one!

Easing up my grip a little bit,  
my hands were dripping sweat.  
But I'm not there quite yet.  
I keep fighting on home.

## A Rainy Notch

By Molly Roland

I never would have taken a ride from him, not on a normal day. But today was not a normal day, and it was raining buckets outside. For bullshit reasons beyond my immediate control, I found myself having to walk home from the library, in the cold October evening rain. If only I had bought that piece of shit car when I had the chance, I would not have had to deal with him. Now, don't get me wrong; on any other day I would have taken sugar plumb joy in my actions, but today I was wet and I was not wearing my usual attire.

My neighbor John had drove by at just the right moment and offered me a ride home. I succumbed to my miserable state when I climbed into the passenger seat of his Durango. I've always known John to be creepy, in the most dangerous of ways. He was the kind of creepy that most adults failed to notice; the kind of creepy that camouflaged itself behind a friendly smile and a neatly groomed lawn. My own parents never minded John, and my Dad befriended him some time ago. But I knew better. John was smart, and hid his seether well, but I was also smart and I hid mine better.

I usually planned the outings of my inner demon child with more precise timing and well-marked longitude and latitude. I almost always plotted out my devious courses with scrutiny, like a detailed mental map or atlas, complete with a color-coded legend, and a plan B and C just in case. But John threw me a curve ball, and took advantage of my drenched and discombobulated lack of preparation. God damn him!

Of course he offered to give me a ride home; what kind-hearted, God-fearing, upright neighbor wouldn't? I, the teenage neighbor girl and daughter of his fishing buddy; walking in the torrential rain while cold and shivering appeared to be in need. He asked me where my parents were, which was ridiculously stupid on his part. I already knew that he had been invited to join my folks on their fishing trip up north, of which he declined. I played along anyway and told him that they were out of town and wouldn't return till tomorrow. I could have called him out on his bullshit, but I didn't because as they say: *when life hands you lemons*. He glanced over at me with a smile and said

"Oh, I'm so sorry to hear that."

He wasn't sorry, he was elated, or at least his seether was. I could tell by that far off and hungry look in his eyes, and I knew at that moment that I was going to have to play ball with this jackoff. I had already given John a pass because my Dad was so fond of him, and he hadn't attempted to enact his festering lust out on anyone that I knew of. John wasn't even on my radar yet, but I suppose *when life hands you lemons*; you make dead lemons.

As we pulled onto our tree lined street, John asked if we could just stop off at his house for a second. He said he was coming home from the vet with his dog's insulin, and the mutt desperately needed its shot. He told me I could come in, and he would get me a towel. I could have drenched myself again and made a dash to my house down the block, but I hate the rain. I nodded at him and thought: *sure, let's go ahead and do this*. We pulled into his attached garage and it smelled like a mix of oil and lust. I was relieved when he shut the overhead door; I didn't want anyone to see us, or more importantly, me.

I instantly scanned his kitchen when I walked in. I wanted to make sure the knives were still on the counter, and they were! When John walked down the hall to the bathroom I realized the dog was not making an appearance for some reason, and then I remembered that he had put his dog down a few weeks ago, I had heard my parents talk about it. I slipped a small paring knife out of the butcher block and slid it into the back pocket of my semi-soaked jeans. I knew this disdain pervert was up to no good, it was the same as smelling a fart in a car for me.

A moment later, John returned from the bathroom holding a syringe in his hand. His zipper was undone, and I could make out fleshy tones in the gap. I hid my glance by peering through my wet strands of hair; I didn't want him to know that I knew. He had other plans with that syringe, but so did I.

"Jessica, I'm going to run downstairs to get a towel out of the dryer. Can you come down too? I could use a hand holding Bandit down while I give him his shot."

Those were John's last words. Well, his last *real* words. I followed him down those stairs, but he darted around the corner pretty quick. When I took the last step onto his concrete, yet freshly lacquered basement floor and turned to follow him, I already had that paring knife in my hand. John came at me like a ravaged and caged animal.

His member was fully erect and poking out of the zipper gap in his khaki pants. When he tried to grab my hair, I darted and grabbed his junk instead. Then with one clean jab of that knife, he was on the floor and blubbered like a fool. I was fast. I yanked that syringe away from him and lodged it into his neck. Before a drop of crimson touched the floor, I had grabbed that towel we came down for and choked the living shit right out of him. He never knew what happened.

He had it coming, I mean really. I had actually wanted to add a notch to my belt of sinful things for some time, but just not today. Oh well, my Mom always said that things happened for a reason, and I am fairly certain that I just did the world a favor.

Now, I look at this mess on his floor and I am pissed off and happy at the same time. I have to discard of this tampon of a man in a manner that will not cast shadows of guilt upon me. Ha! Who am I kidding? It is thundering like crazy outside and the whole neighborhood is shuttered in their houses watching football and drinking beer. How wonderful that John happens to have a chipper shredder in his workshop out back! Plus, this shiny floor and nearby drain make for good clean-up. I guess I'll just wipe my prints off this syringe and place it in his hand, and then I'll act all disgusted, sad and surprised when I hear about that drug addiction he had that no one really knew about. After all, accidents do happen. One should never use a chipper shredder while all gorged out on, well, whatever was in that syringe.

## Riddle 1

By Amanda Gordon

Some suck me whole,  
Nevertheless, I leave you  
    wet wherever I go,  
My emanation bothers you not,  
  
Longing to have me in,  
    your mouth

some shuck me slow.  
wanting more with each  
    taste you get.  
for you eat me without  
    thought.  
your breadth of my song seals  
    your fate.

## Riddle 2

By Amanda Gordon

I was created in the beginning,  
Found in many forms,  
Adam's Ale ambrosial to all  
    who taste me,  
Bringing fear to some,  
Love me or hate me matters not,

all known breath originated  
    from my existence.  
wandering far and wide is my  
    home.  
I am your weakness for you  
    won't live without me.  
I bombard one's life with the  
    panic I can birth.  
in the end you will always  
    come to me.

## Anglo-Saxon Riddle #1

By Taylor McAden

Quiet and still I sit,  
Always only in darkness,  
A pale and pallid look,  
Adorns my mournful face,  
Watching, like a lonely wraith,  
  
Loved by so many,  
I am nature's lantern,

Making not a sound,  
My dim, dreary light within,  
Blank, yet filled with peace,  
Gazing down on the meadow,  
Waiting in the silence and  
    dark,  
Yet so lost and void of life,  
A noble servant to the night.

## Anglo-Saxon Riddle #2

By Taylor McAden

Vivid memories of those loved,  
I am covered in stark reminders,  
  
I have been witness to teary eyes,  
One day I will offer sleep,  
I am where those left behind,  
For those who slumber below,  
  
We will meet one day, you and I,

Now vanished into this vastness  
    that is me,  
In names now drenched in  
    sorrowful solitude,  
And to tactful goodbyes,  
To every sentient soul,  
May visit and leave their love,  
In their four-walled beds,  
    breathing no more,  
When a whisper calls your  
    name, to say it is time.

## One Second At A Time

By Jessica Tucker

The time she spends looking at me parallels the time she wishes he was home; sometimes she wills me to slow down, but most of the time she hopes I will go faster. As soon as he leaves, she just starts counting down the seconds until he will be home again.

I've known Katie for twenty-three years, but I've known her family for one hundred and fifty. When my previous owner passed, I was passed too, passed down to Marcus Decker, Katie's father. I watched Katie grow up and learn her letters and numbers; I watched over her on nights when her bed didn't feel so comfortable, and the couch seemed more fun for a campout; I've seen her smile and laugh, and I've observed the pain of a heart broken a few times; these compile the times when she barely even looked at me except every hour when my chimes would go off. I watched over Katie until she found a place of her own. She would come home to visit occasionally, but she never stayed for much longer than the weekend. She had her own life. It wasn't until her parents decided to sell almost everything they owned and travel around that I once again found myself watching over her, except now she hardly takes her eyes off me.

"One more week," she whispers to herself as she glances at the calendar and then back to me. "One more week and he will be home."

"He" would be referring to Kevin, Katie's husband, who is in the army. He was deployed a year and a half ago and rarely gets to come home. Katie's life has become a series of moments either with Kevin or waiting for Kevin to come home. The last time he was home was three months ago, and I wasn't sure if Katie was going to be able to let go of him.

It was late January, and it was very cold out still. Katie would often come in the door with rosy cheeks and a red nose, shiver for a moment, then take off her boots, hat, scarf, and gloves—then look at me. This time though there was anticipation in her eyes—Kevin was coming home tomorrow. Katie didn't sleep much that night; the excitement of seeing Kevin made her giddy, and she wanted everything to be cleaned up for him. His plane was due to get in quite early, 6 a.m., and once those two walked in the door together, Katie looked to me with begging eyes to slow down.



“I love you,” he whispered.

“I love you too,” Katie replied with yearning eyes. He picked her up and she just melted into him—two destined puzzle pieces that don’t fit anywhere else except together, and whenever they had to pull apart, a little more of Katie’s heart went with him. They spent the whole day holding onto each other. Even though it was very cold outside, there was an abundant amount of warmth in the heart of the home. When Kevin was there, the whole atmosphere was different; Katie was like her joyful child-self again; she was full of spunk that lit up the whole room.

“You ready to eat”? she called from the kitchen; something she’s wanted to do every day Kevin has been gone.

Kevin didn’t reply. Rather he quietly snuck into the kitchen and grabbed her waist from behind then kissed her neck. She smiled and let herself fall into him.

“Yeah,” he whispered in her ear. She giggled and slowly turned in his arms to face him. She rubbed her nose against his, then slowly kissed him.

“Yeah?” She whispered back as she continued to kiss his face. “I love you.”

“I love you too.”

That night, not a whole lot of eating happened. Kevin was home for five days, each day pretty similar to the previous. On his last night home, Katie rolled over onto Kevin and whispered in his ear.

“I’m pregnant.” Kevin’s eyes became big as his jaw dropped in the purest surprise.

“You’re what?” he gently whispered back.

“You heard me Daddy,” Katie winked back.

Kevin had no verbal response, except to pull Katie even closer. That night was one of the happiest nights in both their lives. When the day came when it was time for him to return, Katie’s eyes didn’t cease to pour out the sorrow contained in her heart.

“No,” she whispered in his arms, “please, no.” She looked to me, pleading me to cease moving, but her plight was to no avail.

“I’m sorry,” I tried to tell her; time can be so cruel. They didn’t let go of each other the whole way to the car, and I can only assume the same was true until he had to get on his plane. As Katie walked back into the house alone, her eyes were directly on me, no doubt counting down the seconds till Kevin would be home

again—roughly 10,368,000 to go. However, Katie was now also counting down till new life would enter this world.

Three months later, Kevin was home again. Katie had grown into her sixth month of pregnancy. Kevin couldn't keep his hands off of her tummy, constantly whispering loving words to his son.

"You're doing a good job, Mama," he said to Katie. Katie blushed, and put one hand under her belly and the other on top. Kevin place his hand onto hers and kissed the center of her tummy.

"You gotta take care of Mama when I'm not here, okay little man? I love you!"

Katie looked up to me with hope in her eyes; for the first time in a long time, she wasn't wishing to speed me up or begging me to slow down, she was simply okay in the moment, taking life one second at a time.

## **The Light of Choice**

By Amanda Gordon

I dive so deep, deep within my hole,  
Hiding from the Light that exposes my soul,  
My veil of darkness and ignorance hide me please,  
From the all-powerful Truth demanding my release,  
The Light forces me to see all that it created me to be,  
As well as the prison I've built for my eternity,  
Should I dwell here where as all is well,  
Snuggled up safe within my prison cell,  
Or do I go with the Light so pure, so bright,  
Lighting my path within the night,  
Wait, the Light choose me for I had a choice as I heard His voice,  
He loved me with agape love that was given from God above,  
The darkness you see had to flee,  
The day he hung on that tree.

# The Plan

By Emma Levich

Silence filled the room. Emotional tension was exchanged through disapproving eyes. Physical contact in exchange for comfort was nonexistent. Neither one of them had the courage to say what needed to be said. John's fingers drummed nervously on the kitchen table as the clock above his head echoed throughout the kitchen, ticking away slowly. Ava's fingers found solace at the tip of her mouth, as she gnawed on the skin around her nails; it was the only action that saved her from the burden of her angry thoughts spilling out into the thick air that stood still between her lips and John.

A third round of tears began to collect in the corners of her eyes and spill down her cheeks, but they weren't noticed until they hit the table and splattered their salty composition against the smooth, wooden surface. Her gaze met the floor beneath her feet, while John's attention focused on their bright, orange kitchen wall. Deep down, they both knew that there was only one solution to this dilemma. They had come to a dead end in their relationship, and there was nothing to turn back to now; the reality of the situation hung over their heads like a dark rain cloud that followed them wherever they went. They ignored it at first for days, for weeks, and eventually for months, but there was no escaping it now. A lone bottle of wine stood in the middle of the table, its green glass reflecting against the dim light that hung over their heads. As Ava reached for it, John's finger drumming ceased.

"If you have any more wine, you're going to give yourself a headache," he warned as she brought the bottle to her lips, and took a generous gulp.

"I'm not too concerned about a headache, given the circumstances" she shot back, wiping the corners of her mouth with her sweater, the red wine staining her gray sleeve cuff.

"Ava," he sighed, "We are not going to break up. Please stop saying that, ok? We're going to figure this out, I pro--"

"Figure what out?!" she exclaimed, interrupting his empty promise, "We have been trying to figure it out for the past *three months*, John, and I'm leaving in *two weeks*. What exactly are we going to figure out in two weeks? Please, enlighten me, because you seem to be under the impression that everything is fine." She knew that her tone of voice would only makes things worse, but

there was really no point in sugar coating the truth anymore. John reverted back to his quiet state for a few minutes, as silence filled the room again. Ava's fingers returned to her mouth.

"I just don't understand why you have to do this. Why can't you put this off a little longer?" he finally asked, barely above a whisper. He knew there was no point in asking, that the deed was done and that she was really leaving in two weeks; but there was just a tiny fraction of selfish hope left that floated around his mind and lingered in his thoughts. He loved her, but not enough to let her go. Letting go meant uncertainty, something John was never fond of. There always had to be a plan, a focused, structured plan. Without a plan, he was vulnerable and uncomfortable, worried that the love for adventures overseas would replace Ava's love for him and their comfortable Washington D.C. apartment.

"John," she spat out his name as if it was a song she was tired of singing. She took a mental pause before continuing, staring down at her ruined fingers, "John, if I wait to do this I'm going to be waiting for the rest of my life. Don't you understand? I'm not willing to put this off any longer. Since the day we met, I've told you all I want to do is travel, and teach, and live abroad and... I finally have the chance to do that!" she exclaimed in a rush, her words becoming less enunciated the faster she spoke, each new sentence laced with a heavier dose of red wine and anger.

Beads of sweat collected above her lip as they usually did when she got riled up, but she ignored the facial precipitation and kept her stance. "You know this is something that I've always wanted to do, and that's not to say that this relationship hasn't been the most amazing two years I've yet to have but... I can't give you what you want. I can't give you any more of my time," she said as pushed herself away from the table and fled to the bathroom, slamming the door. She left John behind with nothing but a broken heart and an orange wall.

"And I can't give you any of mine," he replied to the empty chair, as his words echoed against the newly painted kitchen wall. His gaze turned towards the orange shade, but regretted that choice as he squinted his eyes against the bright, citrus color. *Orange*. Out of all the colors in the rainbow, John returned from work three nights ago to find Ava had chosen orange as the new kitchen color. He hated it, but he didn't mention anything at the time. He hoped that his care-free attitude would be one last shot to show his wild-at-heart girlfriend of two years that he can also

'be wild'. But orange was never the plan. Orange came out of nowhere.

The plan was to go down to the store and pick a color, and paint the kitchen together. It was one of the many things that had been planned to be done together before Ava left the country, a useless effort on both ends to mend the bond that was disintegrating before their eyes. Although it was John's idea, he regretted it now. Not only was he stuck with a hideous, orange kitchen wall, but he began to hone in on Ava's qualities that he never liked: she was too spontaneous, never stuck to plans, was always all over the place, and was always changing everything last minute. He used to find these attributes appealing, a spontaneous ball of energy to counterpart his strict and tame lifestyle, but now they were just annoying his existence. Now she was off to Thailand, to teach English for a year, uncertain of what will come her way afterwards. She just never had a real *plan*.

His face grimaced as he thought of the night he came home to tarp and newspaper covered floors. The smell of paint filled his nose before he even stepped inside, and once he found Ava on a step ladder with a partly slathered orange wall behind her, erasing the calm blue that was there before, his stomach dropped.

"Don't you love it?" she had asked, her big, round, hazel eyes hopeful for his approval, "I thought it'd be a nice surprise so... surprise!" she threw her arms up as if she were presenting the world's biggest treasure.

"Wow uh, well it's definitely bright" was all John could muster at that moment. His brain was too busy fighting off raging emotions of disappointment and betrayal. She didn't even care enough to stick to the plan he had so carefully constructed.

After a few minutes, John snapped out of his resentful gaze, and turned his attention back to the situation at hand. The fact that he had no desire to chase after Ava while she hid in the bathroom was a definite sign that could not be ignored. The bathroom was Ava's damsel in distress tower, so to say, always to be rescued from by John. He was good at being calm during their arguments, and usually persuaded her to come and talk out their problems, but not this time. This time, there would be no rescue mission to get Ava to talk anymore. He was no longer nervous, like at the beginning of their conversation, but rather accepting of the situation. Perhaps he was never nervous to begin with, but just anxious to break the seal of their already broken relationship.

He looked up at the orange wall one more time, its too-vibrant shade suffocating his vision, and turned his head away from it with another deep sigh. Orange was not part of the plan. And neither was Ava, at least not anymore. He pushed himself away from the table, grabbed the empty wine bottle, and tossed it in the recycling bin. Tracing her steps to the bathroom, he prepared his words formed a plan for the cut-throat decision that was about to be made.

“Ava” he stated officially, without emotion, “Ava, come out” he demanded. It was an order, not a plea. He rubbed his eyes and ran his hands through his short hair, another sign that he had succumbed to the stress of the situation. The door clicked, as a teary-eyed Ava appeared, her cheeks now stained black from the mascara that slid down her face. Her eyes were all puffed and red, the edges of her lips still stained a violet shade from the wine. She parted her lips as if to say something but nothing besides a cracked whimper slipped out. “Ava,” John said, more softly this time, a half-ass attempt to spare her anymore pain, “This is just as hard for me as it is for you. But we both know that this wasn't part of my plan with you”.

“I know” she squeaked, too tired to argue back. “For once, I have a plan too, but you don't fit in it anymore,” she admitted. Silence filled the room yet again as she stared into John's mocha-brown eyes. They had turned cold and dark since the beginning of their catastrophic night, no longer warm and playful like the ones she fell in love with. He returned her cold stare with pursed lips and furrowed brows, unable to come up with anything else to say. Only the echo of the clock ticked away in the distance.

## Like No Other

By Elista Fischer

He is the stars in the sky  
And my sun in the night.  
When I'm lost, He will guide.  
He fills my heart; gives me life.

When I'm fallen He gives hope;  
Faith when desperate on my knees.  
He forgives without question.  
And kindly, He loves me.

His grace is none other;  
Holy and divine.  
He is true, he is just,  
But of all things, He is mine.

## The Heavy Burden

*By David Beebe*

Don't they know that the papers quickly gather,  
How quickly the search for whom their after,  
Thinking if they frighten, it'll appear faster,  
The money.

Don't they know how I hard I keep going,  
to avoid the hole that's constantly growing?  
Yet still no mercy will they be showing.  
The money.

I feel heavy with all that I can't yet afford,  
working to find a zero balance, maybe more,  
yet nothing seems to be working like before.  
The money.

And the baby is crying and getting loud,  
and the pierce shrills of hunger surround,  
mountains of nothing, all piling around.  
The money.

Just need to make it till the end of the week,  
Eyes of searching, lips without words to speak,  
Seems luck is off hiding while I desperately seek.  
The money.

I see the bills and mountains of debt,  
I try to not worry, but it's hard to forget,  
about living, no surviving, yep that's it.  
The money.

I look in my account like a faded mirror,  
I keep searching for solace, see it clearer,  
yet in anger I smash both and cut my finger.  
The money.

The blood drops on the one dollar bill,  
a slaving for freedom, yet this makes me ill.  
How can you love what you hate, and still...  
The money.

If time is money, then I'm doubly poor,  
no way to get both back, just learn to ignore  
and all of contempt you have builds up more ...  
The money.

Borrowed time for borrowed money, I guess  
Loans for living , no surviving that's right, yes  
Find a penny... you cynically confess:  
"That's good luck"  
The money. Never enough.



## Winter

By Jessica Estes

They say, "Winter is the season when everything dies"

But I don't see it that way.

And as I walk out into the blackness of the night,  
I can hear the soft pitter patter of the snowflakes on my coat,  
And I can hear the high pitch of coyotes howling in the far off  
distance.

But that's all I can hear.

It's so peaceful and still in the winter.

I agree with those who say, "The best thing about summer is that  
everything is alive"

But I also agree that sometimes everyone needs a break.

A little time to stop and collect your thoughts.

A time to be quiet and at peace.

I look up at the bright moon and see the mist as I breathe in and  
out.

They say, "Winter is the season when everything dies"

But I just don't see it that way.

## Daddy's Little Girl

By Amanda Gordon

The light of the moon shone through the cracks in the blinds  
as I lay on my side facing the light, hoping for sleep to find me  
before the sound of my bedroom door creaking open, allowing for  
the unwanted visitor to slither into my room, was all that could be  
heard in the still of night. I longed for the sun to never to go away,  
for in the light all is exposed. It's in the shadows where the  
demons lurk, preying on those laden down by the guilt of their own  
sin. Oh, how they whisper such sweet bitter lies, captivating that  
hidden chamber of secrets that unleashes the evil within.

This night was different. I knew it would be even though I  
woke that morning like any other. I got out of bed, never looking  
in the mirror on my way to the bathroom to take a shower. I  
always took showers in the morning and at night, as I could not  
stand the stench that would linger on my body. I made sure all  
marks were hidden and never wore my long red hair up off my

shoulders for that would lead to questions I was afraid to answer. Girls in the 6<sup>th</sup> grade can be so cruel, especially when trying to hide their own marks of shame. “Miranda, why write on yourself? Your ugly enough or were you just trying to play connect the dots with all those nasty freckles?” “Why don’t you do your parents a favor, Miranda and just kill yourself. Nobody would miss you anyway.” These were the echoes of my peers that were being driven into my very soul as infallible, resolute truth told by those in the shadows. Grandma would always tell me that I was different. *“You’re so grown for your age darling and those girls in your class are just jealous. Miranda, you’re so beautiful.”* Grandma said as she tried to brush the stray strands of hair away from eyes. *I jerked back so afraid of what she would find behind those so called beautiful locks of red hair. Oh, how I wanted to just blurt out everything and crawl into her old, fragile arms and never leave. Grandma’s house was never safe for me, for I couldn’t trust myself to contain the dirty, little secrets that rule the night.*

However, at breakfast there was nothing. There was always something as Mother normally could not stop talking, but Mother just stood there sharpening one of her kitchen knives, staring off into nowhere. On a normal day she would talk of things such as, what we wanted for dinner not that me or Father would ever answer, but she would rattle on ideas as if we did in fact give her a catalog of suggestions. I use to think she would talk just so there wouldn’t exist that heavy silence that gagged you the minute you opened your mouth to breathe. She would flutter around day after day, pretending to be oblivious to all around her as if her life was everything she ever dreamed it would be or did she forget the many sleepless nights I endured listening to her getting beaten and tortured not only by Father but whoever he would invite over for the night to participate in the evenings endeavors. Didn’t she know where her husband snuck off to at night even though his car never left the driveway? Did she not smell the overpowering familiar stench of his sweaty body climbing back into bed next to her, still trying to catch his breath from the events of moments before? How lost she must be in the shadows or just too afraid of the light and all that it held, all that it would expose. Either way, what a miserable existence we shared, but we shared it. We were not alone in our pain, no matter how hard he tried; he could not take that from us. Father sat reading his paper, drinking his coffee, waiting for 7:30am to come, making his daily escape to the

job site. He was a strong, distant man just like grandfather, swinging a hammer in one hand and a beer in the other that helped condition the man he was. I hated his face. I hated his hands. I hated the sound of his voice and was relieved that morning I did not have to hear him berate my mother over and over until he felt her morning dose of humiliation was sufficient to withhold until he got home.

I kept my eyes closed as sleep abandoned me and the creaking of the door opening began resonating throughout my room. I could hear him breathing as his footsteps drew near. I dare not turn over for I was petrified at what I would see. I felt his hands slowly pulling back my blankets until my pajama covered body was the only thing showing, as he wasted no time removing anything else that could potentially inhibit him from accomplishing whatever he wanted. I crept deeper and deeper within myself, to my secret hiding place where there was no pain or fear. I was strong. I was beautiful. I was brave but mostly safe in my secret hiding place. Pretty soon I no longer felt the throbbing pain between my legs or the monstrous grip around my throat, wrists or whatever body part that could be beaten while used as leverage.

Wait! Stop, please stop!! Don't come in here, was all I could think as his hand slid across my mouth imprisoning any scream within my body that would try to break free from his grip. I could hear her coming. I could hear her sobs over the sounds of him on top of me. What was she thinking? Doesn't she realize that he will kill her if he saw her in here, watching. Did she not know that I am protecting her for if I wasn't here, I know he would have killed her long ago? She was all I had, and as long as I was here for him, he would leave her alone. She would be safe. My heart raced wildly as I could not hold my breath much longer, nonetheless his hand pressed harder ensuring not one atom of oxygen would invade my lungs. Normally he would have let up just enough for me to take a gasp of air but not tonight. I opened my eyes looking toward the door beyond the flesh that covered my body to see Mother just standing there, motionless, as if time only stood still for her, encapsulating her in that moment. What was that in her hand that glistened in unison with the moonlight? I could not make it out as everything began to fade away, becoming distorted. It was hard to keep my eyes open as I knew it would all soon be over.

Then it happened. She moved so fast, so quiet. Father had no idea what was behind him as he was focused on the task at hand until it was too late. Then there was the blood. There was so much blood as I kept an eye on the blade that was navigated by my mother's trembling hand, dig into his flesh, making its way across his neck. For the first time I looked into his eyes as he lay on top of me, watching every ounce of the life God had given him leave his body, descending to its eternal home. The weight of his hand was no more as it slid from my mouth. I took my first breath of air not afraid of the night or the demons that were lurking in the shadows, enraged at their defeat for they could no longer prey on the weak. We were neither weak nor dead. We were free. We survived.

## Sangria

By Victoria Viren

To my right sits a delicate glass,  
Blown with a subtle swirl and lined with a gold lip.  
Within the glass is a lively ruby red,  
Promising to loosen the tension of a long day.  
Small bubbles slowly form to the walls of the glass,  
Sparkling in the light from a single lamp-lit room.  
The sweet, rich aroma accompanies every sip of citrus filled  
Spanish wine.  
As the night grows longer, my glass grows empty.  
My worries begin to disappear as the ruby red promise is kept,  
And I'm reminded of the warm comforts of summer.

## Ghost Girl

By Erica Melchin

I stand at the edge of activity, watching them flutter back and forth  
Smiles and laughter, bright and vivid  
I am paralyzed  
People brush by me, I tuck myself in tighter  
They don't even look  
I am a ghost to them  
They say something, the crowd chatters along  
I open my mouth  
Courage finally comes  
I comment, watch for reactions  
A slight glance, a nod  
They return to themselves, subject changes  
I look at the floor  
I was a whisper, a slight distraction  
I am a ghost to them  
They move away, and I move too  
Not quite with them, but with nowhere else to go  
Boys notice, flirt with them, make jokes  
Hair flips, hands on hips, skirts swish, lips part  
I stand to the side, unnoticed  
I am a ghost to them  
In desperation I slip away, move through the crowd, head down  
I look for refuge, a place to be apart  
A corner, in shadows  
I slip down, sit there, watching as they all move around each other  
in intricate dance  
My friends move along, never looking back  
I am a ghost to them  
Instead of being lonely, I will be alone

## In That Somewhere

By K.L. Mackey

She hit the ground running, with no idea what she was running towards or from. Everything from before touchdown was a blank, with only a strong sense of urgency remaining. All she could do was run, she'd think about the rest later.

Her surroundings were a blur as she ran. Maybe it was a corn field, or wheat, or some other tall plant that had grown and decayed on the other sides of the broken down fence that lined the dirt road. Maybe it was dusk or dawn, one of those in between times where the light is just far enough away that you couldn't tell if it was coming or going. Above her the sky was a blank abyss that she knew would swallow her whole if she looked into it. It didn't change as she ran. Sunrise never came or the sunset never finished.

Minutes, hours, or even day's worth of time, she had no idea how long she ran before the house appeared. It was, like its surroundings, broken down and decaying. A large wooden fence blocked part of it from view, but even that was cracked and crumbling with the gate busted from its hinges. She ran through into the yard and finally slowed down.

The yard could have been beautiful once. There were statues that had worn down with time until their features were indistinguishable. Patches of wilted flowers and rose bushes lined the path and surrounded the statues and the bare weeping willow trees that stood sentry. She turned her gaze to the house. It had once been a nice place, even through the decay she could see that. Splotches of white paint remained, dingy and dirty, mixed with the warped patches of boards that made the exterior. Several windows were broken, others caked in layers of grime. The porch that lined the front of the house sagged, and as she climbed the stairs onto it, groaned painfully.

The door to the house was warped and stripped, like the rest of the house, and the window that adorned it just above her head was nearly black with filth. The handle was tarnished, and screeched as she turned it to open the door.

The inside was no different from its exterior. Time had not been nice to the house, though she could still feel, if not see, what had once been here. Toys scattered along the floor of the first room she entered. Dusty picture frames hung on the walls and

lined the mantelpiece of the fireplace. Looking over them, she could make out the shapes of who had lived here. A man, a woman and eventually three children, most likely girls based on the number of dolls there were in the scattered toys.

A sound pricked at her senses and she turned. It lingered, welcomingly, and drew her from the room. She followed it down the hallway and into the kitchen, where a radio on the counter crackled out a familiar tune. She reached for it.

“Unchained Melody. I always liked that song. Don’t you?”

She whirled around to find a woman in the doorway.

Cropped brown hair, soft blue eyes and a kind smile disarmed her and she stared as the woman walked to the counter and began to fill a coffee pot with water. “Sit with me for awhile.”

She didn’t argue. She simply followed the woman to a table across the hall. The woman poured the water into a brewer and soon it was boiling and the rich aroma scented the air.

“I wasn’t quite sure, but I was expecting you. You’re the only one who would come here after all,” the woman said as she sat down.

“Where are we?” she finally asked, as she joined the woman in sitting down.

“Somewhere. Nowhere. A memory. A real place. Asleep. Awake. Anything. Nothing,” the woman chuckled. “We’re here. That’s all. Everyone comes here at some point. Drink your coffee.”

“But where is here?”

“Some place that won’t be for long. It’s already begun to fade. The faces and forms have left the yard and walls. The trees and flowers have wilted. All that remains is in this room.”

“Why?”

“A mystery, isn’t it?” the woman smiled again, sipping her coffee thoughtfully. After a moment She did the same. The taste was bitter, but underneath, sweet and comforting. “Sometimes things remain until someone lets them go.”

The woman stood up and the song changed. “This old house had seen a lot of years, but now its time to move on. Finish your coffee, it’s time to go.”

“Go where?”

“That remains to be seen, doesn’t it? Who really knows where we’ll end up once we leave.”

She drained the cup of its coffee as the woman headed for the door. Hurrying after her, she could catch glimpses of what the

house had once looked like. They didn't stay, however, and once she looked directly at them, the spots were decayed again.

She caught up with the woman at the door. "I'm glad you came to see me. But now we go our separate ways. I know...."

The rest of what the woman said was drowned out by a loud buzzing noise. She groaned and slapped the off button on her alarm, wondering why it was going off at 8:00AM instead of 10 like usual.

Then she spotted the black dress draped across the back of her chair and remembered. In the casket today would be a woman who had once had cropped brown hair, whose soft blue eyes were shut and who would never smile kindly again.

She took a deep breath and sat up. There had been a dream, but she couldn't remember what it was. Strangely though, as she crawled out of bed to get ready for the funeral, she felt something shift. For the first time in years, since the diagnosis was first made, since the surgery and chemotherapy treatments, since hope began to fade as the situation worsened, and since the day the cancer finally won and her mother had left her life...

For the first time, she felt peace.

## Time

By Elizabeth May

We spend our whole lives  
Trying to be on time  
Trying to get the right timing  
Trying to make time  
Once one finally learns  
To manage time  
There's no time left



# The Words I Didn't Know How to Say

By Kayla Gasper

I was falling for you in November  
And didn't realize I loved you until December.  
It saddens me to recall,  
But I remember it all.  
The warmth of your hand as it perfectly fit mine.  
You calling me sunshine.  
Long hugs, pulling me in real tight,  
Being in your arms felt so right.  
Talking until we fell asleep at night.  
Never having a single fight.  
Somehow, it still crumbled.  
I should've said how I felt, instead of mumbled.  
The words that didn't come out,  
Making our love die like a flower in a drought.  
It is all now in the past.  
What we had blossomed so fast.  
Strangers turned into lovers.  
Sitting across turned into cuddling under the covers.  
Small talk and coffee turned into a big, fancy dinner.  
Beautiful fall turned into the longest winter.  
Those three little words were all it would've taken.  
I wish you could've read my mind like a book, not being mistaken.  
You left, and I was too late.  
December Ninth was the date.  
I will never forget that day.  
The day that is making me pay  
For the words I didn't know how to say.

## Depression

By David Beebe

Truly, no one knew what it was like for him; though some did.  
Yet no matter who knows, only he can know firsthand, and he did.  
Depression, it's a monster. Kept him up at night; stared at him.  
Always smiling, mocking. Whispering hopelessness; he listened.

He would sit and lay awake, sitting in a posture of recoil and defense.  
It didn't make sense. The creature couldn't sleep. So he went defense.  
The monster would spin a gun like Russian roulette, horrible game.  
Yet every time the spin would come to him he'd shake his head no.

The creature so dark with fangs licking would smile at him and nod.  
Shrugging his shoulders, he'd play the waiting game. And still nod.  
Yet this man finally got tired of his sleepless nights and succumbed.  
He signed the papers to the creature and started to devise a plan.

If suffering had to be ended, then maybe others suffered too.  
Maybe he would birth bliss from grief in other's lives too.  
Everything good would be against his troubled agenda, everything.  
Yet he needed to find a way to seal off the good and evil from himself.

He researched, studied and planned. No one would understand him.  
He just needed to stop the shrill noises that kept gnawing at him.  
Over and over they would ring out and cry, like a nursery rhyme.  
'Ashes ashes we all fall down' was the stanza over and over again.

This man found the day. Locked himself in the tiny temple of solace.  
He muffled the horrid cries, his colleague trying to keep him from solace.  
He let go of the handles. Allowed his mind to fade white; emotions at  
ease.  
The plane, the deaths of so many... his death; this man found his peace.

## The Meeting

By Brittany Berhenke

She'd been waiting for about an hour and he still hadn't  
shown up yet. The waiter had been around four times, checking  
on her all but full glass of water. She'd considered a mug of hot  
chocolate, but her wallet decided otherwise.

The bell on the door rang without stopping, customers  
cruised in and out while she sat staring at her hands. The smell of

pancakes and eggs wafted around the restaurant as snow blew against the windows. Families crowded almost every table, chattering away and laughing as though the major snow storm outside didn't exist.

A young child at the table across was staring at her. She tried to smile and realized it probably looked like a painful grimace; she never had been good with kids.

"Mommy, look at that girls clothes!" the child leaned towards her mother and said. The mother shushed her child and turned her attention back to her plate of chicken strips.

A quick rap at her table brought her attention back to the task at hand. Though she hadn't seen him in over ten years, she knew his face. He stood awkwardly and stuck out his hand as though their meeting was some sort of business arrangement rather than a reunion.

She watched as he sat down and laid his pea-coat down beside him. His manicured hands flipped through the menu. His impeccable facial care made him appear ten years younger than he was, but his voice gave him away.

"Are you eating? Have you already ordered?" He asked while folding his menu closed. He struggled to make his eyes meet hers.

"Well, no. I'm sort of on a tight budget these days," she stammered. She thumbed the threads on her flannel jacket and stared into her water glass.

"I can get you something. It's the least I could..." his voice trailed off, realizing just how absurd he sounded. Buying her dinner couldn't make up for a lifetime of distancing himself from her.

"I'll take some waffles, I guess," she said with a shrug. She could feel the embarrassment crawling up her cheeks. The night wasn't going how she had planned. In her head she had envisioned a cheerful, tear-filled reunion with apologies galore. So far she'd checked her phone at least six times, and the clock hadn't moved an inch.

"So, can you believe we're finally here after all these years. I stayed away for so long... I didn't think you'd want to see me again." He stirred his coffee obsessively, as if the cream and sugar were never mixed. She assumed it was a stress induced habit, and was relieved he was somewhat normal like she was.

"Well, yeah, I don't know. I figured after my mom died, I probably ought to find you," she said. She regretted it, knowing that it sounded selfish and pity-seeking. "You know... this doesn't really feel right, I think I should get going."

"What? Was it something I said? I'm sorry, I know this isn't easy but we can work through it," he said, the panic in his voice becoming evident.

"Nah, it's okay. We tried, but we really aren't the same in any way. I don't want either of us to end up bitter or disappointed, so it's probably best if we go our own ways," she said. She stood up and wiped her eyes.

"Wait!" he said and jumped to his feet.

She could hear his voice break, but she promptly turned and walked out of the restaurant without another word.

Outside the restaurant was a whirlwind of heavy, wet snow. She stepped inside the street side payphone and contemplated who to call or where to go. Her plans to meet up with her dad and maybe get him to help her out had all but gone to shit. It was clear that he was well-off and had his life together. She was just a simple kid at seventeen, living day to day in abandoned buildings and under the occasional bridge. Their lives just didn't fit together.

Before Karen could make dial out, a loud rapping on the phone box startled her, causing her to turn around and drop the phone. Outside in the snow stood her dad, motioning for her to let him in.

"Come on, we should really talk. There are things you need to know," her dad said.

Karen found herself mesmerized by the snowflakes on his coat. So much so that she quit listening to him altogether, and forgot about calling for a ride.

Once again Karen sat opposite her father inside the Denny's diner. She stared at her waffles as though they'd leap up and bite her; her throat felt like it had been sewn shut.

"Karen, I know I'm the only dad you ever knew, and I wasn't even really there," her dad said, stirring his fourth cup of coffee. He stirred and stirred, and Karen wondered what he hoped to accomplish with all his stirring. She began to sense the conversation was taking an unwanted turn.

"What are you getting at?" Karen asked. The diner seemed empty, conversations and silverware had quieted. All Karen could hear was the steady swoosh of her own pulse.

"I'm not really your dad, Karen. I don't know who is, either. I'm sorry." He'd stopped stirring his coffee and made eye contact for the first time since their meeting. "I was there the day you were born, but I'm not your biological father. I thought you might need to know."

Karen felt her eyes betray her as tears made their way down her cheeks. All the years she spent searching for her father, only to find out that it had been a lie. She had no family left, and she thought of what her life was destined to become; day after day of scrounging for food and somewhere warm to sleep.

"Well, I guess there was no reason for us to meet up, was there?" Karen said. Again she found herself standing and preparing to turn around and leave.

"I'm sorry. I won't stop you this time." said the man formerly known as her father.

## Sunken Boat of Cocoa

By Victoria Viren

Boats scattered, reflecting their sails and white shapes on ripples  
of water,  
Anchored to the brackish river floor ---  
Rocking to gentle whispers of the wind,  
And collecting humid heat bouncing off palm trees.  
Beautiful boats carelessly float,  
Except for one.  
Sitting half sunken, swallowing water through its cracked body.  
Sun bleached and faded, with rusty propellers.  
Unclaimed by its owner. Left to collect barnacles,  
And host its ghostly deck to wandering fish.  
Pelicans perch on the surfaced railing, as it no longer sways to the  
wind's lullaby.  
I can almost hear its memories echoing off the tide,  
Splashing against the dock,  
Singing the song it once sang.  
But, today the sunken boat sings a different tune.  
One that brings new life to the Cocoa bay.

# Untitled

By Alexa Thompson

He grew up with a passion,  
Not ones like you and I,  
But this fire inside to kill,  
He loves to watch people die.

His father taught him the rules,  
Only to kill people to whom it was owed,  
He would plunge a knife into their chest,  
And watched as out their blood flowed.

He sought victims based on their crimes,  
A vigilante you may say,  
He watched them to learn their routines,  
So he could pick the perfect day.

He would catch them when they weren't looking,  
Pop a needle into their vein,  
Inject a vile of sedatives,  
And begin to inflict them with pain.

He covers the room with a clear wrap,  
And sets up his tools for execution,  
Shows them why this is their fate,  
For he wants retribution.

Dexter is your neighbor,  
Your local crime-fighting friend,  
But watch your back closely,  
For he could bring you your end.

# Freedom

By Alexa Thompson

I was sixteen and naïve,  
I thought it was normal,  
That's what he made me believe,  
That's what I thought I deserved.

The first time he did it I cried,  
He apologized and promised never again.  
But of course he lied,  
This was a tale as old as time.

After a while it didn't faze me,  
Until someone else saw the signs.  
This gave me the opportunity to be free,  
And so I left for good.

Bruises on my arms,  
Scars that could not be seen,  
Some would never understand the true harm,  
My sun went down for good.

I justified him putting his hands on my skin,  
I made excuses for his behavior,  
But these lies I told myself wore thin,  
And I finally accepted the truth.

Here I am at twenty-two finally coming clean.  
Telling my story for the first time.  
The real me is finally being seen,  
And it doesn't feel so bad.

## My Type of Therapy

By Carrie Amos

Every now and then I like to unwind,  
I go to Skin Deep when I can find the time.  
There's something about the sound the gun makes;  
The buzzing is music to my ears, that's usually all it takes.

We start with an empty canvas, and put a picture on.  
Once the first poke happens my frustrations are withdrawn.  
I love bright colors, but black and white will even do  
Just as long as I'm sitting in that chair getting my next tattoo.

For some people it's alcohol, drugs, or even pills  
Myself, I turn to ink to satisfy all of my thrills.  
It is my body, so please just leave me be  
For there is no way I could ever stop with only three.

## School Days

By Cassie Amos

The sound of the shell casings hitting the floor,  
Sent everyone panicking, heading for the door.  
Children were hiding wherever they could,  
Teachers were locking classrooms just like they should.  
Children were crying,  
Bullets were flying.  
Blood was starting to stain the floor.  
The sound of gunfire echoed the halls once more.

The sound of sirens could be heard in the distance.  
Back – up was coming to offer assistance.  
Parents were gathering, awaiting the news,  
Imagining themselves in their children's shoes.  
They wondered what would push a kid to such extremes.  
Taking children's lives, and ending their dreams.  
The reality was setting as bodies were brought out,  
And lives were changed forever without a single doubt.



## In Solitude

by Taylor McAden

Ever since the very start, “the girl in the black raincoat”,  
Is all that I’ve been to them,  
My shabby yet precious raincoat, dark as a moonless night,  
It keeps me safely hidden, obscured from their curious sight.  
Alone I stroll, in solitude,  
This lonesome path, scarcely travelled,  
Disappearing for days at a time, and yet I hear them talk,  
Asking, “Where has she gone? Could she be dead?”,  
No, not quite, at least not today.  
I escape to the depths of the forest, seeking refuge to get away.  
I am not dead, only silencing the chaos, the static,  
Constantly ravaging my head.  
“The girl in the black raincoat,” they say,  
“Such a strange, wayward spirit she is.”  
A strange one I am, indeed.  
The evergreens, more so than schoolmates, became my closest  
friends,  
So I escape here in the pouring rain, for somehow my soul it  
mends,  
Sometimes I wonder why it is, no one’s dared to follow me,  
To see just where it leads, this remote path of mystery.  
Perhaps if only for one day, they’d choose to tag along,  
They’d bask in the misty serenity, the peace so abundant here,  
And at last they’d see why I, the girl in the black rain coat,  
Hold this place so dear.

## The Leaf

By Jessica Estes

One very cold morning, I leave my branch,  
And fly into the wind.  
I flutter softly to the ground,  
And with the next gust, I'm off again.  
I fly down a hill and next to a dog,  
He sniffs at me, barks, and down the sidewalk he jogs.  
And again I'm off.  
I flutter again a top a big hill,  
The view of the country is so nice,  
I wish I could stay still.  
Though autumn won't let me stay,  
Again I am off, away, away.  
This time I land again on the ground,  
And feel myself being raked all around.  
I get pushed together with others just like me,  
And suddenly I hear a girl screaming, "wee!"  
I like where I am not, I wish I could stay,  
And thankfully autumn lets me stay another day.

## The Streets

By Amanda Gordon

Here we go another day on the streets,  
It's a place where you never really sleep.  
One eye open, one eye closed, dare not make a peep,  
For it's just another night alone on the dirty, dark streets.  
Bones crack and moan from spending the night upon cold stone.  
Glares from the people passing me by, I no longer cry;  
My heart grows colder with each day that drifts on by.

Here we go another day on the streets,  
I stumble to my feet, beginning the search for something to eat.  
Should I dare dine this morning out of the garbage can,  
Or maybe I haven't missed Hope's breakfast van?  
Hope does her best to do her part, it's just tough when hard is my heart.  
So, in my alley where I found it to be safe,  
I stay close and decide to dine on Johnny's Pizza's waste.

Here we go another day on the streets,  
The sun is setting high in the sky, bringing the heat,  
While a skittish John approaches for his morning treat.  
I handle him as I always do, my head in his hands,  
Being pushed down, I knew what my mouth was to do.  
I am twenty four and should be so much more yet,  
Here I kneel, nothing but a whore.

Here we go another day on the streets,  
There's a twenty in my pocket, I'm ready to flee!!  
In the familiar sting of the needle I thrive,  
Pushing in its contents, I pray to die,  
For it's the closest place I can hide, from the pain haunting my life.  
I feel Him course through my veins,  
I sink back onto the blood stained couch that belongs to him that  
gains.  
He does what he wants to the flesh on my bones;  
He can't have my heart for it's made of stone.  
Fed with more dope he keeps me there, as his friends come  
paying their fare.

Here we go another day on the streets,  
I am raped, beaten and bruised, thrown from the car in the old city  
creek.  
I lay there as the water washes my wounds, barely able to see,  
Except for the light of the crescent moon, that hung so low,  
As if it were coming to take me home.  
I knew right there as air began to leave, laying in that creek,  
Death will soon find me, granting me freedom from the streets.

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# Winner of the Thomas Batell Scholarship Award

## It's Now a Wonderful Life

By James Garlock

Most of us will never really know what our lives could have been had we not made certain decisions. My life would have been very different if I had followed the same path as my high school friends. My alternative history would have been very different had I not started attending Black Hawk, our local community college. I am requesting the Thomas Batell Essay Scholarship to continue college.

Without community college, I would have probably been arrested for committing violent crimes because, like my friends, I was an angry young man. My criminal record would have ruined my attempts to have a good job paying a livable wage. My personal relationships would have been affected. My friends would not have been there for me while they were in jail; like them, I had a child out of wedlock. This would not have been a wonderful life.

However, during my freshman year in high school, I decided I was going to go to college. That decision meant that I had to be one of the first in my family to graduate from high school. I worked hard to successfully complete all my high school classes and even enrolled in dual-enrollment, sitting in the front row because statistics show students sitting there do better in class. Whereas most high school graduates only have to overcome financial barriers to college, I had to also legally become emancipated from my mother because she refused to provide tax information for my college entrance forms. Being emancipated meant I also had to get a job.

In order to attend Black Hawk College and further my professional abilities, I have worked jobs that required me to know additional computer systems and to have skills beyond menial labor. Since attending community college, my acquaintances have changed; the people with whom I associate are now more career driven than becoming "inmate of the year." Because of selecting Engineering Technology as a major, I joined the Engineering Tech

Club and quickly became its President. Better yet, I am now a participant in Black Hawk College's Passport to Leadership program. My success in college gave me the confidence to seek visitation rights for my daughter so I can be a father to her, a blessing I did not experience.

In all ways, I am a non-traditional student. While the current trend is for smaller families, I am the youngest of six children. After overcoming several obstacles, I am starting community college at age twenty-three. I am one of the first in my family to graduate from high school and the very first to attend college. It is evident that I shall graduate from Black Hawk [community] College with my A.A.S. degree in Engineering Technology.

Because of a near campus job, new associates, intellectual stimulation, time with my daughter, and a career path, I am now a happier young man. Since enrolling at Black Hawk College, it is now a wonderful life.

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## Inspired by Spring

By Erica Melchin

The tulips are in bloom  
Little splashes of red against the funeral home next door  
A gutter cuts between them  
Spraying water over the pavement  
Leaving little puddles for me to step in as I rush out to my car  
I don't see the red  
I don't see the puddles  
But they sit there with the white gutter, waiting to be noticed  
The beautiful with the ordinary.

## Suspended In Eternity

By Taylor McAden

Once so full of vibrant life,  
My journey had only begun,  
The world, graced with my presence just 14 years,  
When my ghastly fate I couldn't outrun.  
But please, don't think of me that way,  
Of the terrified little Susie, tossed haphazardly away,  
As the unfortunate victim, never again to see the light of day.  
My spirit lingers among you all,  
Very much alive in this way,  
Protecting all of you from harm,  
I smile upon you every day,  
Wishing to be part of your lives, though I know they must go on.  
Mom and dad are growing older...  
How could a decade have passed me by?  
My sweet sister Lindsey's all grown up now, unlike I.  
She's grown into a lovely lady, now older than me,  
While I am but a spectator, suspended in eternity,  
My heart, it aches with sadness,  
For what can never be,  
But I hope, in my absence, life's joy-filled moments,  
Will make you think of me.

## Dinner Time

By Kyle Pannier

As I sit here and feast  
on what once was a beast,  
I wish I could just savor  
this magnificent flavor.  
It may not be nutritious,  
but it is certainly delicious.  
Quite the opposite of leafy,  
it's big, round, and beefy.

Perfection is what I think,  
keeping a little bit pink.  
Smashed between two buns  
while doused A-1,  
every single bite  
is better than alright.  
Thank you God a lot,  
that burger hit the spot.

# The Word Love

By Leah Maertens

## *Love*

Is a word everyone speaks of  
And is thrown around with no meaning.  
But no one sees how intervening  
This one word said can be to your life.

## *Strife*

Or bitterness is what's left.  
You stealing my heart was theft.  
With that one word I believed you.  
I wish I could undo  
Those few years.

## *Tears*

Are the only thing you gave me  
And now I am free  
From the trap you set.  
And all I can do now is try to forget  
How I was treated.

## *Conceited*

Is what you are  
And by far  
You were the worst mistake.  
I am finally awake  
And much stronger  
And the words you say  
I will listen to no longer.

A collage of student photos arranged in speech bubble shapes. The bubbles are of various sizes and colors (yellow, blue, white) and are scattered across the upper half of the page. The photos show students in various settings: a man in a blue shirt, a woman in a pink shirt, a woman in a light blue shirt, a woman in an orange shirt, a woman in a yellow shirt, and two women in the foreground. The background is a solid blue color.

# VOICES

of Black Hawk College

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6600 34th Ave. • Moline, IL