

Ink

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Elizabeth Gardiner

What Comes to Mind

Thinking back to the past
we had our shares of hardships and laughs
taste the blood in my mouth
my lungs they burn "there's no way out"
feel the pain head to toe
what is it that I have to show
the choice was mine, I've had enough
take me home this road is rough
I'm not your tool anymore
throw me down on the damn cold floor
wash my hands in the sink
permanent stains like blood red ink
a wasted life so displaced
pull the trigger to be erased
grab that gun from my hand
you're the salvation I cannot stand.

I Wish I Could

I Wish I Could
Have Faith As Strong as God's Will
Have Trust in My Own Purpose,
Have Strength to Keep Me Proud.
I Wish I could Believe,
In Those Who Say They Love
In Destiny to Keep Its Course.
Oh How I Wish I Could Believe,
For Those Who Are Drowned
by Their Sorrows and Fears,
Which Linger in The Heart And Simmer In The Veins;
Believe that God's Word IS God's Will.
Believe that We Can All Contain Ourselves From Sin
And Hold Ourselves at Our Own Standards,
But all Faith Is Broken
and All Patience Is Lost
And I No Longer Believe!
My Soul Is Torn by Deception
and My Heart is Overwhelmed by PAIN...

Starry Eyed

Saya sat quietly along the shoreline staring intently at the dim figure walking toward her. She ignored the cool ocean water lapping at her tail, pleading with her to come back home. The blues, purples, greens, and silvers of her scales pulsated as if they could breathe.

“You shouldn’t be out here like this, someone might see you.” The figure said to her as he approached.

His voice was a smooth and clear and had a tinge of a posh accent to it, though Saya couldn’t quite place it.

“Who would hurt a delicate thing like me?” She asked.

“Anyone with eyes,” he answered, “once they see what you are, especially if they know what you can do.”

Saya grinned at him. He was tall and slender with a head of loose brown curls. He was dressed, as always, in a pair of blue jeans and a loose gray fitted shirt. But it was his eyes that managed to surprise her every time.

His eyes were a dark green and reminded her of some jewels of the same shade she found in an old ship once off the coast of Spain. There was something about them that made him seem the tiniest bit inhuman.

“Only a monster would hurt a mermaid,” she said, “hello Ezra.”

He smiled and sat down in the sand beside her.

“Hello, Saya.”

“Are you sending up a new star tonight or am I just lucky to have your company?”

“Well, being that I am a Star Maker, you should be very lucky I’m even talking to you, you know.” Ezra teased.

“You Star Makers,” she laughed, “you’ve always got your heads in the clouds. I do believe that mermaids outrank you on a scale of one to mythical beings.”

“True,” Ezra said, “but only because we Star Makers are smart enough not to be seen by human eyes. Haven’t you ever

heard that saying ‘curiosity got the mermaid caught and nailed to the bow?’”

Saya smirked and began to fiddle with her necklace. The various sea shells strung together shifted around her collar bone and the smallest sea anemone Ezra had ever seen extended its tiny arms.

He touched the tips of the tentacles and they clung to his finger.

“I’m always amazed by the things that one can find in the ocean.”

“They’re nothing like what’s up there,” Saya replied, “I’d give anything to be up there.”

“Well then,” he answered, “let’s go.”

“What? Seriously?”

“Seriously,” he said as a thick white cloud billowed over the water, “your chariot, fair mermaid.”

Saya laughed as Ezra scooped her up and gently placed her on top of the cloud. She dug her fingers into the fluffy white folds. “It feels like a sea cucumber!”

Ezra laughed and the cloud lifted upward. When it stopped, Saya could no longer see the beach. The sky around her twinkled and she fought back the urge to reach out and touch one of the glimmering lights.

“Welcome to the stars.” Ezra whispered to her.

“They’re beautiful. I just want to touch all of them!”

Ezra laughed and reached for the nearest twinkling light. The small diamond like jewel seemed to grow brighter with his touch.

“Every star has a story,” he said. “This one is yours.”

Saya looked confused. “What do you mean?”

“What I mean is that this star is for you. I brought it up the day after I met you.”

“I remember that day. You were floating on a cloud just above the water and then you fell in after I said hi.” She laughed

“First off, I was just minding my own business when you popped up out of nowhere. You scared me half to death. Proper greeting techniques aren’t important to mermaids these days?” He teased.

“We have more important matters to think about actually.” Saya replied

“Oh yes, like combing your hair or sinking some poor guy’s ship?”

“Hey, proper hair care is a must! You never know when you’re going to meet a sailor. As my luck would have it, I met a Star Maker.” She said.

“Well then, I’d say you have better luck than most.”

Saya smiled at her Star Maker and he kissed her on the forehead. He handed her star after star and told her their stories until the early morning lights invaded.

The cloud descended back down to the beach and once again, Ezra picked Saya up. She wrapped her arms around his neck and he carried her into the water and both attempted to prolong the inevitable goodbye.

“Until tonight, Star Maker.” She whispered to him.

“Tonight,” he said with a kiss to her lips.

Katherine Barskey

At Dawn's Repose

In golden light at dawn's repose,
drawn from wisdom all she knows.

This other being, not quite I;
enraptured quiet subtlety.

In muted hours, much she shows.

This inner answer seeking those
words that only fate has chosen.

In this I seek the answers by
the golden light of dawn's repose.

No more will I belie the throes
of knowing, before where I had froze,

In word, in being will I shy
From lack of thought under this sky.

And for the seeking, my heart glows
in golden light at dawn's repose

Sean Lynch

America Was a Lady Birthed of War

America was a lady birthed of war

With dagger 'tween teeth, with gun hand in hand

Shot dead Her Mother, relived for daughter

With legacy of violence, slaughter

Slaughter clean herself, death and slime and slaves

I Sold Your Heart for Crack!

The other day we met in City Park

We spoke candidly and you adored me

That was the day that I stole your heart

And then I took it down to the pawnshop

I sold your heart and then I bought some crack

I sold your heart for crack! I sold your heart for crack!

Met you the next day, told you go away

I so could not remember you at all

Christopher Furry

My Experience in Iraq

My experience in Iraq was both the same, and radically different from anyone else who was there in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. When I arrived in Kuwait on August 5, 2009, it was 104 degrees at 1:30 in the morning. By that time the war was winding down and there was optimism that this would be an easier deployment. Being my first deployment I had no idea what to expect but I felt it that it would be anything but easy.

My 12 months in Iraq were spent in the Diyalah province, near a medium sized city called Baqubah. The Diyalah province covers most of north-eastern Iraq and borders Iran to the east. When my brigade was there it was still the most hotly contested place in Iraq, likely because of its proximity to Iran, and we experienced near-daily mortaring from the neighboring city. The mortars were so regular that we didn't even always run to the bunker when the alarm went off, if the alarm went off. This led to some situations that were without a doubt dangerous but to us they became a little humorous. Once, when the alarm went off for the third time that day, we ignored it and kept working because all of the previous mortars had flown all the way over the FOB (forward operating base) and it took a ridiculous amount of time to get accountability and wait for the all clear. This time however, the mortar landed just outside the protective wall surrounding the ammo yard and detonated with enough force to knock a few of us

off of our feet. No one was injured in the blast but it scared the hell out of us, and also taught us that the bunker might be the best place for us when those alarms started going off.

When I was watching the film *Iraq for Sale* I was really trying to remember what my experience was with contractors in Iraq, and then I heard a soldier on the screen say “If you’ve never heard of KBR, then you’ve never been to Iraq” and it started flooding back. KBR ran everything, from the laundry that was never quite clean, to being directly involved with our CLP’s, or combat logistical patrols. They provided our water, our fuel, and our food. When we went out on convoys every third truck was a KBR truck, and although they accompanied us under our protection, the drivers did not attend our pre-mission briefs. The importance of those briefings was threefold, we learned each truck’s call-sign, our marching order (the order of the trucks in the convoy), and we learned what the road conditions were, which directly correlated to how likely an attack was. This was exceedingly dangerous because that meant that the KBR drivers didn’t know whether or not routes had been cleared prior to the convoy.

My primary mission at FOB Warhorse was ammunition; I worked at the ATHP (ammunition transfer and handling point) as an ammunition specialist, which is basically a warehousing position, and as the ammunition stock controller. I was responsible not only for assisting the rest of the ammo platoon with the in-yard work of storing, maintaining, issuing, and receiving ammunition, but also for all of the inventory control and paperwork involved.

While most of my deployment wasn't necessarily difficult by most standards, the difficulties of being constantly in danger and working 12 plus hours a day seven days a week wear on you quickly. I did, however, lose friends as nearly anyone who went to Iraq did. The death of a soldier is possibly the saddest thing I have ever experienced, especially the death of my friend Erin Mclyman, who was killed by shrapnel from a mortar explosion. I have never done anything as difficult as attending a military funeral in a combat zone. The ceremony is much like a normal funeral in the beginning; people come to the podium and talk about the person and their life, while a photo montage is played. Near the podium is the traditional Soldier's Cross, which is the boots, rifle, dog tags, and helmet of the fallen soldier. However, after the speaking is done any resemblance to a regular funeral ends there as the soldiers company assembles into formation for roll call. The company First Sergeant calls the names of soldiers in the company who respond with "Here, First Sergeant". After three names the First sergeant calls the soldier's name, unanswered obviously, three times, the third time he or she calls the full name and rank of the soldier and immediately, as if in response, the firing of the 21 gun salute begins. The sharp, harsh report of seven rifles firing 3 rounds each in unison rings out and immediately following the third round the slow, heartbreaking strains of taps, played on the bugle, begin. It is something I will never forget, and something I never want to see again.

My time in Iraq taught me a lot, both about who I was, and what I was made of. My time in the military is, after the births

of my children, the accomplishment in my life I am most proud of. I believe that my service in the Army, and my deployment, made me a better, more mature person, and hopefully a better, more productive member of society.

William Mitchell

For Sensei

I remember you. I mean how could I ever forget?
After all that that said and showed and taught me, us all.
I remember that first day, I donned that robed but with that white
strip,
A belt reflecting myself, clean and pure, yet unlearned, and
nervous, and unsure of myself.
Yes, those were the days, with the soft mat under our chalice feet,
roaring a *Ki!* from within our heart.
Those days we ran and tumbled and sparred, it was all fun and
games, yet, to me, to us all,
It was so much more.
You took us children, small and scared, and made us into
something more.
And whether you know it or not, thanks to you, I met my first love,
many years later.
So long I have grown with you, these years seemed more like a
lifetime.
And you have made this scared little boy a brave, brave man.
Without you, hell only knows what I would have become, but not
what I am today.
I remember all those days fondly, the calluses on my feet, the
katas, the running and rolling and the games.
I remember it all.

Yes. And even without you here today. I. Will. Not. Forget.

So Sensei.

I just wanted to say one last thing that I never got to tell you until it
was too late.

Thank you.

Lauren Marade

Newton's Law

By Newton's Law

Glass, like confetti flies

By Newton's Law

Tires, like banshees cry

By Newton's Law

Disrupted Earth, and bark of tree

By Newton's Law

I gasp for air; can barely breathe

By Newton's Law

Metal bends and twists

By Newton's Law

Raw skin and lips

By Newton's Law

Gravity won't be defied

By Newton's Law

I should have died

Katherine Barskey

Last Days

“I’m curious,” Jake asked, out of the blue, “Have you ever done something and known—just known—that it was the last time you’d ever do it?”

“Like, forever?” Sam asked.

“Yeah. Like forever.”

A dark eyebrow rose in response, “What brought all this on?”

“Just musing on the fragility of life, is all.”

“That’s deep.”

Jake groaned and smacked his forehead in frustration, “Shut up. Just shut up! I am trying to have a moment here! One moment in which I say something somewhat poignant and you just stand there and look awed and then we can both go back inside to the lame-ass dance you insisted on dragging me to.”

The two boys were meandering around the school grounds—technically not something they were allowed to do, considering how late it was and that the dance they were attending was confined to the auditorium and the small hall space in the front entry—but both boys felt that the less the faculty knew about what students did at school dances, the better.

They walked side by side, elbows and shoulders brushing occasionally in the lazy way of friends who had known each other for far too long to care about personal space. Jake was flushed with the cold, eyes heavenward, whereas Sam had a haphazard grin on his face as he attempted to make shapes in the newly-fallen snow with his footprints.

“Okay,” Sam obliged, because it was rather nice of his friend to have agreed to come with him (school dances sucked, and no arguments or forced attendance from his father would make Sam think otherwise), “You wanted your moment—please

continue.” He looked up from his shapes on the ground to tug on an errant lock of Jake’s inky hair.

Jake scowled, “It’s just... we’re here at this dance thing, right? And yeah, we’ve ‘been-there-done-that’ but I was just thinking, you know? That this is Senior Prom. This is seriously the last time we’re gonna do this dance thing.”

“Oh God, don’t tell me you’re upset about it?”

The halfhearted glare he received prompted Sam to zip his lips and throw the key—an old joke between them for when Sam wouldn’t shut up.

“Of course I’m not upset about never having to come to another stupid dance! What, d’you think I like having to drag your sorry ass around with me at every school function we’ve had since Freshman year? Not to mention the fact that half the school thinks we’re already married or something at this point!” Sam valiantly made no sound, but his silent laughter was enough that Jake just had to punch his shoulder. “Dude. We were voted ‘cutest couple’. It’s in the goddamned yearbook!”

He calmed a bit, “My point is—no, I am not upset about the lack of school dances in my future. I just hate the finality of it all.” Jake paused, letting a puff of air into the night like smoke, “Senior year, you know? Everyone’s moving away to different parts of the country, all the stupid stuff that mattered for four years, like what lunch day it was and who sat in the seriously disgusting-smelling seat in the Chem lab—none of that is going to matter anymore. Like, I can go into Ms. Neely’s third period Calculus class on the last day and know that I will probably never enter that room again. It’s a frightening thought.”

Sam was beaming at him, and Jake just knew he was going to be teased, “Frankly, the idea of never going into a Calculus classroom again sounds like a freaking miracle to me!”

Jake sighed, resigned, but smiled fondly, “That’s cause you suck at math.”

“Oh totally.”

And it was as if the matter had settled. They continued along the snow-covered grass in the field beside the track, admiring the stars visible past light pollution and enjoying the companionable silence. Jake was almost relieved at his friend's response. He'd asked for a poignant moment, and gotten something...maybe not so fragile, but it was real.

The truth was, Jake didn't know how to feel about the change—everything changing, drifting apart. The inevitable distance that would come between two best friends who had been through everything—high school, break-ups, parents, pain and loss—together and managed to come out of it as thick as thieves and then some. Some days Jake would look at his best friend and wonder if they couldn't just go on like this forever, Sam and Jake watching crap TV on Saturday mornings, or starting food fights only to hide under the lunch tables and laugh, or standing here watching the streetlight flicker from across the track field of their school when they should be drinking Kool-Aid from Dixie cups and dancing to lame R&B.

“Should we go back?” Jake asked, eyes flicking from Sam's face to the open sky and back. He liked the way the dim light reflected off of his friend's glasses. They were the dorky pseudo-hipster kind that made him look a bit like a Harry Potter wannabe.

Sam made a face, groaning, “Urgh...God, probably.”

They turned around, unhurried, “Think our friends have noticed that we left?” Sam muses.

“Rosa, I'd bet. She makes it her business to notice what everyone around her is doing.”

“Or isn't doing! I'm, like, ninety-nine percent sure that she started half the rumors they have going about us being an item—just because we didn't invite her to Disneyland last summer. Jeez, if I'd have known how much that one would backfire—”

They were halfway across the grass now, lazy steps bringing them onto the football field that was in the center of the gravel track.

“Why is it that people always think we’re together?” The thought was Jake’s, though he froze a bit when he realized he’d said it aloud. He flushed embarrassedly, “Despite our protests I mean. We’re not, I dunno, making out behind the bleachers or anything! We’re just...close.”

Sam shifted nervously, eyes resting anywhere but his friend’s face, and he let out a nervous laugh, “Well gee, Jakey, you’re not propositioning me, are you?” His own attempt at humor only made Sam more uncomfortable, “Just kidding, dude!” he laughed some more, “I guess it’s just cause we go to dances together and stuff, always hanging out. But ultimately people are people, right? They’re going to think what they want, so just let them!”

“It doesn’t bother you? That others think that way about us?” Jake’s impossibly dark eyes are turned on Sam and it displaces him.

Sam bites his lip, “Not really?” It’s phrased as a question. They continue walking, and suddenly Jake hates the silence. He hates the awkwardness that has set over the moment—their moment—and he’s thinking about how these are the last days, and maybe this could be the last time he and Sam are walking across the field at night and now it’s ruined by Jake’s totally awkward comment, and wouldn’t that just suck—to have this moment sullied forever by the trussed-up opinions of others.

They’re in the center of the field now. It’s almost like a sign saying ‘Speak now, Jake, or forever hold your peace! You wanted the perfect moment—well this is freaking it!’ But instead Jake just clenches his fists and keeps walking.

It’s just like every other part of his life, waiting for the perfect moment and then watching it go by. All Jake can think about is how this is the last time they will walk on this grass probably forever and he doesn’t want to sully it but he wants it to mean something.

They’re three quarters of the way across the field, and it’s not as perfect as the middle, but it’s better than nothing, and Jake

grabs his friend's arm and pulls him to a stop. The awkwardness slips away as Sam's eyes slide over to meet Jake's and suddenly it's like every fond look across the remote on Saturdays, and the way Jake's shaggy hair would sometimes tickle Sam's nose when they hid under those lunch tables. Sam's eyes are questioning, but not really. He gets it, like he gets Jake—always has.

But Jake wants clarification, "I don't think it's funny," he starts carefully, "What people say about us being together. And it does bother me when they assume that we're dating because we're not."

Sam's voice is thick, "I know—"

"We're not," he continues, "But I maybe want to be."

It's out now, and no amount of hemming and hawing, or backpedaling can make that fact go away. Jake finds he doesn't want it to. Sam still looks a bit nervous—they're in uncharted territory now. Where before they'd only played the halfway pretend-game now it was like a real tangible thing, visible and unavoidable.

Sam laughs, but this time it's real, "Okay," he says, "Yes, okay."

They're three quarters of the way across the field to the light of the open door that leads back to Senior Prom and it may be one of the last days they have, but it's also one of the first.

Catherine Wilson

Blinking Light

I can see them coming
In that blinking light.
They all want the same thing.
But who doesn't, right?

I know I look good
They say I'm the best they've ever done
But who can blame them
They just came to have some fun

I have a small room in the back
they aren't putting up a fight
They're just looking for a good time
In the room next to the blinking light

Emily Jackson

Silence

Their presence brings death
And you will not know its face
Silence is coming

You will not see them
As they hide in the shadows
Silence is coming

You are not alone
You have forgotten something
Silence is coming

It is like a dream
Everything stops making sense
Silence is coming

In the darkest hour
All hope is lost, they are here
Silence will find you

Lauren Marade

Persephone

A burden of love so heavy, he sighed
A glittering girl among the flowers, he eyed
Sick and maddened with love, was he
Over the girl in the field, the lovely Persephone
A plan was laid to capture his reluctant bride

Back to Hell, with stolen maiden by side
She cannot to be found, though Demeter tried
The bountiful harvest vanished with a mother's scream
Where in Hell is Persephone!?

The remains of summer in cinders, hides
And winter's clutch, with her fate coincides
Food of the dead; six simple seeds
Curses the woman, now a damned Queen
The summers are freedom, but in winter denied
When in Hell, is Persephone!



Leather by Simon Anuszczyk



Khadije's Petals

Khadije's Petals by Frank Davis



Photography by Catherine Wilson



Art by Alejandra Rolon Lopez

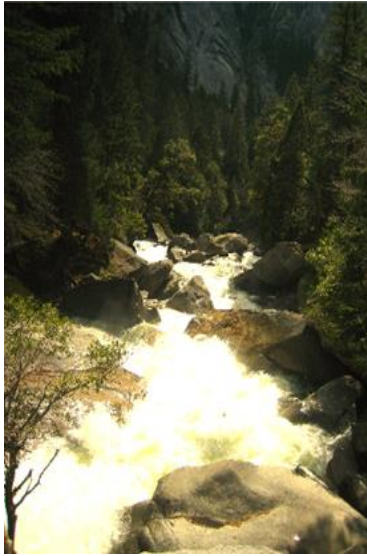


Cling by Mary Kate Dec

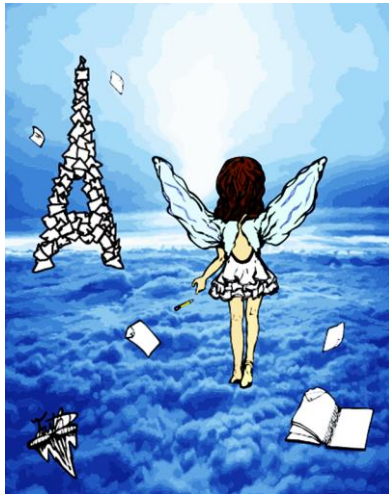


We Do Not Sow

We Do Not Sow by Emily Jackson



Photography by Alejandra Rolon Lopez



Paper Dreams by Breana Vales



Family Adventure by Erica Pina

Disordered

“I am on tonight,
you know my hips don’t lie,
and I’m startin’ to feel you, boy...”

I’m screaming, but only on the inside. My vision blurs red, then black as I bite my lip sharp and try to hold back the stinging tears, my eyes squeezed tight shut.

“Mom,” I finally manage to whisper.

“Wha-? Oh, honey, are you okay?”

I shake my head. The rhythmic swing of the music is sensual and soft, but it stabs at me deeper and harder with every drumming beat.

“Let’s get outside. Is that what you want?” Mom asks, anxious. Through my still-blurry eyes, I see that her brows are raised and cocked with real concern.

I swallow hard and nod frantically. Mom’s hand is on my shoulder, and she walks me out the automated glass door into the scorching heat of the parking lot. The song is gone now, but the memories still rush in like a river unchecked. I’m crying now. I never used to cry like this, but the more I try to forget, the more pent-up feelings I let out when the dams burst. Mom leads me over to a bench in the shade of the building and holds onto me like I might disappear. Thoughts rushing, I manage to feel a twinge of embarrassment. Fifteen-year-old girls are NOT supposed to bawl like babies outside of a Rite-Aid. In fact, most fifteen-year-old girls I know are way over going shopping with their mothers, but I don’t like staying home alone. The house creaks, and I think too much about what happened last time I told my mom I didn’t feel like going on a shopping trip.

I calm down and manage to catch my breath about ten minutes later. Mom gives me one last squeeze.

“How about we save the detergent run for later?” she asks, grinning half-heartedly.

I manage to find my voice.

“Yeah, that sounds good.”

We pile into our mini-van – an oven in the summer – and blast the air conditioner.

“Can you tell me what it was this time?” asks Mom after we cool down a bit.

“That song . . . The Shakira song,” I murmur, my voice cracking in the middle. I can’t say the name. It’s too close to the lyrics.

“The one they were playing in the store?”

“Yeah.”

“Oh, wow...” whispers Mom, and I know what she’s thinking. How can you avoid a song?

At home, we eat my favorite chocolate chip ice cream in silence. We both want to talk, but we don’t know where to start.

“Do we have to call Dr. Berger?” I finally ask Mom.

“We probably should,” she replies. “She wanted to hear how you were doing this week anyway.”

“OK,” I agree. And then I ask, “Can you call her for me?”

“Oh, honey, of course I can,” says Mom. “I’ll do it right now. Hold on. And take your pills!”

Mom heads upstairs to make the call, and I get a glass of water from the sink for my four-times-a-day-no-exceptions. Medication. What they give to the messed up people. And even though it’s been six months since I came home from the hospital, that’s what I am. Messed up.

“Dr. Berger said she’d like to see you today,” Mom tells me as she walks down the stairs.

I sigh. “Of course. What time?”

“In a half hour. Go get ready.”

The car ride over is uneventful and still quiet. Before I know it, I’m sitting in the calming blue waiting room of Dr. Katherine Berger. Soft piano music twinkles from a stereo, and I

listen, fairly content with a bit of a post-cry high until Dr. B is ready.

She asks me if I'm planning to go back to school in September, and I tell her Mom and I were thinking about the Notre Dame Charter Academy. It's an all-girls school with smaller class sizes and nobody from my old high school to ask questions I'm not ready to answer. I guess I used to have a lot of friends at school. I used to be really good at my classes, too. Now, I'm friendless and have to catch up on over half of ninth grade.

Dr. B says that the Academy sounds good to her. Small talk is over, and she's ready to get down to business. She asks me what was going through my mind when I had my attack at Rite-Aid today. My attack. Like I'm the one who owned it, instead of it possessing me. But I tell her. I remember.

The walls of my house's living room are white, and that's the last thing I'm looking at before I decide to take a nap. It was warm that day – late April – and I'd just finished taking standardized tests at school. I had to wake up early that morning, and I was really tired. Mom had asked me if I wanted to go with her to the bookstore after school, but I said no. I'd rather sleep. I stretched out on our warm, soft couch and conked out.

“Hel-lo, beautiful,” says the voice.

He was medium-built but strong. The voice, for some reason, was pitched funny. He was bald but had tufts of gray beard along his face. Wild eyes that never seemed to focus. Maybe in his fifties? Ugly as anything. Disgusting really.

“GO THE F--- AWAY!” I hear myself scream. “WHAT ARE YOU DOING? I'M F----- ASLEEP!”

“Oh no, beautiful,” he replies in what he must think is an alluring voice but is actually kind of squeaky. “You're wide awake.”

He moves to pin me down, but I sprint away from him. The door, the door. I have to make it to the door. Heart pounds hard; movelegsmove! But there's another man at the door, and he

pins me against the wall and pinches my arm with a needle. I get my wish. I'm asleep again.

The next few weeks are a blur to me now, but at the time, they dragged on forever. In all, there were three men at my house that day. The police report later said that they'd picked the lock in hopes of finding something worth stealing. They found me.

One of them liked Shakira music. A lot.

I wake up naked and spread-eagled in a hallway that sounds like a wind tunnel. My arms and legs are tightly bound with a rope that looks like a nasty, old garden hose. I'm cold, and when I find that I can't move to cover the goose bumps all over my body, I cry. I feel so small right now and so exposed. How long am I alone before they remember? An hour? Two? They enter through a door, making jokes the whole way. One of them spits. Another carries a boom box, which he plugs into an outlet.

I'd planned to wait until I was married, or at least until I was eighteen and in college or something. In all of fifteen minutes, it's gone, three times over. I scream the entire time. Shakira plays on the portable stereo. One of them holds a knife to my throat in case I try anything.

"I am on tonight,
you know my hips don't lie,
and I'm startin' to feel you, boy..."

I cry like a baby when they finally leave.

I don't know how long they keep me in that hallway. Weeks? Months? When the police find me, I'm thin and sore all over. I can't even move. I'm hospitalized for a long time. Mom visits me, which makes me happy for the first time in what feels like forever.

Dr. Berger knows all this, but I guess I hadn't mentioned the part about Shakira music before. We talk, and music exposure therapy gets added to my treatment plan, which already includes talk therapy, anger-management sessions, and PTSD help among other things.

I do what I can to put what happened in that hallway behind me, but I don't know if I'll ever forgive the three men who sent me to hell. I can't reclaim all I lost in those months – not my virginity, security, friends... or any chance I had at a normal life. The list goes on. The worst part is the haunting. Right now, I can't go a day without remembering. Those men might rot in prison, but me? I'm rotting in my own mind – trying to cope, but so easily pushed over the edge. Every day, I swallow pills along with my anger, pride, tears, and fears, but I still have so far to go. Will I ever be able to go to college like I wanted to? Have a family of my own?

It's time to go home now. Mom and I walk out to the car. There'll be chicken for dinner and chocolate chip ice cream for dessert.

“Hey, Mom?” I ask. “Can we pick up that soap on the way home? I have some stuff I need to wash out.”

Jacob Zentner

Spun Around With You

To spin around the sun with you
Has brought me life and love anew
Of all the journeys I have made,
This one has had the greatest view

I've seen the brightness of your smile
And the flare of your grace
I've felt the heat of your touch
And your warming embrace

Life, I'm told, needs light to exist
Gifted from the sun, they insist,
But I say it's your love for me
Giving me the light to persist

I've seen the light in your eyes
And the core of your love
I've felt the pull of your heart
And the reason thereof

As we spin together, I see
You're the one with whom I should be
So take my hand, I beg of you,
And spin around the sun with me

*Written for my cosmic companion, Cristal Reyes, on the anniversary of
our first orbit together, March 24, 2014*

Mirrors

“Look Blaze!!! I can see my reflection!”

“Yes Ivy. That’s called a Mirror, you silly thing,” came the brown haired boy as he patted the purple haired girl. She stared into her reflection and blinked, tilting her head to the side. “What are you thinking, Ivy?”

“Mirrors show much in people. They can show you what you look like, how you feel, and what you’re hiding on the inside,” she said with a cheerful grin. “I mean think about it. If you feel guilty, and you look into a mirror, you can feel it pouring out of your body and rebounding on the mirror making you feel worse. When you cry and look into a mirror, you cry harder. When you feel confident in your look, or just confident, you smile and continue to stare at yourself in a happy manner. If you’re angry, you want to punch the mirror, and watch the glass shatter and blood trickle down your knuckles, making a pool of beautiful red blood on the counter or sink. Mirrors tell a lot about a person,” she said with a soft giggle and smile.

Blaze, the brown haired boy, couldn’t understand why his childhood friend and longtime crush could say something so deep and still look and sound childish. “Ivy.....?”

“Look Blaze! Look into the mirror! We look happy, don’t you think?” She said pointing at their reflection. She could see the worry on his face in the mirror.

He chuckled, and wrapped an arm around her shoulders, and smiled into the mirror. “Yes we do.”

Breccann James

A Tiger Does Not Change Its Stripes

A tiger does not change its stripes.

A leopard doesn't change its spots.

A zebra cannot change its stripes.

Tis the nature of the human being;

That is different because

We have a brain;

Filled with language unlike any other.

Filled with thought, a way of thinking like no other;

To let it all comes down to this;

Genetics?

How can this be?

Genetics.

Nature.

Nurture.

Nature vs. nurture.

Which one will come on top?

Can a zebra really change its stripes?

If not, then can't the zebra change how it feels;

About those stripes you say are bad?

Can it not change?

Change like a magician's hat!

Turn rabbits into doves;

And zebras stripes to battle wounds.
Which tell a story
Of a man,
Who once was guilty!
Of being a human;
In a Humane existence.
He changed his stripes
For the first time.
But no one can tell how long it will remain
O Lastly!
Because the rest of the story;
Has not happened yet!
Till death do we part?
The story remains;
Of the little zebra that could
And conquered his stripes.
But that does not mean it can never come back,
Just overcame,
At the midst of adversity,
He overcame!

Christopher Holden

Better Days

(Inspired by Tupac Shakur's song Better Dayz)

When the times are dark it's hard to keep on pushin
Not sure which way to turn when you need solutions
I stay cynical-and doubt they'll make it
I raise an eyebrow at the route ya'll takin
I know what it's like I used to have a list of homies
Til they flipped and dipped and hope I forget they owe me
I'm just speakin my mind when these thoughts are written
You did me wrong, Fuck-off, you are not forgivin
To those in day class or night school
Stick with it cuz education is the right tool
To set us free from poverty's ball-and-chain
Cuz being broke has got us goin all insane
Turn off the T.V. get off your ass and fight back
For a spot on the path to success the right track
We got no time to weep in sorrow
Work today and Better Days is what we'll see tomorrow

Better Days is not what we want it's what we need ,

Failure is not an option we must succeed

As you read this I hope these letters stay,

In your mind cuz it's time to see Better Days.

Better Days is not what we want it's what we need,

Failure is not an option we must succeed

As you read this I hope these letters stay,
In your mind cuz it's time to see Better Days.
If you have a dream you better go for it
Even if you end up with nothin to show for it
Life hasn't really turned out the way I planned it
But still I rise and I'm still standin
There will always be people who'll try to put you to shame
I refuse to listen and I suggest you do the same
From the top down bottom up we need an overhaul
Obeying facetious politicians should not be protocol
I represent people for peace like John Lennon
For evil to cease existence we gotta stop sinnin
I know it's much easier said than done
To be alive and old instead of dead and young
Most of us are born into a disadvantage
Better take control of all that you can manage
Before you lose your mind and go ballistic
Strive for Better Days or become another statistic

Better Days is not what we want it's what we need,

Failure is not an option we must succeed

As you read this I hope these letters stay,

In your mind cuz it's time to see Better Days.

Better Days is not what we want it's what we need,

Failure is not an option we must succeed

As you read this I hope these letters stay,

In your mind cuz it's time to see Better Days.

Max and Coraline at Sunset

As the setting sun begins to cast its gilded rays into the windows of Max and Coraline's apartment, the soft tune of indie rock songs being played in the back bedroom begins to stir Max's curiosity. He recognizes the playlist as her "getting all dolled up mix" and wanders down the hall to find out where she's going. Softly knocking on the frame of the open door, he peeks his head into her room.

"Well, look at you" It was the first time in months that Max had seen Coraline all gussied up. "I almost forgot what you looked like under your usual layer of paint, or without your hair held up by sketch pencils."

"Hey, top-knots are chic, Max. Hold up a sec, I need you." she realizes. "My T-Rex arms can't get this damn zipper up!"

God, she's beautiful, He thought to himself. They'd been best friends for eight years. She was his constant, never fleeting spark of passion which afforded him the confidence to misuse lesser women. He was like a box of matches, sparking up for every dame he rubbed up against, and then burning out just as quickly. He loved and discarded every single one of them. This horrified Coraline.

"Oh, Coraline, you're not wearing this one again, are you?" Max asked tentatively as he zips up her dress for her.

"What was your first clue?" Coraline replies. "Why? What's wrong with this one, Max?" She says as she grabs her eyeliner off the vanity. The mahogany wood is covered in cheap containers of makeup from the drugstore down the street, and a row of unused designer perfumes in fancy bottles along the mirror next to a small golden picture frame. An unlit pair of candles in bronze sconces covered in several layers of dust hang on either side of the mirror; the one on the right acting as a tie back for the curtain she uses as a makeshift closet door.

“It’s just... fine, really. I mean you look fine.” He says as he leans against the vanity, twiddling with a guitar pick in his pocket.

“What’s wrong? I think it’s nice.”

“Yeah, it’s nice enough.”

“But?” She asked, growing more insecure by the second.

She faces the mirror, running a checklist. “My bra straps aren’t showing, and there’s no visible line from the torture device designed to tame these curves of mine.” Pleased enough with the sight, she turns to Max

“So... what!? You have to tell me or I’ll kill you after de-tagging all the Facebook pics from the art show. It’s your job as my best friend to tell me, even though technically, I didn’t even ask you.”

“Well, you would have asked me eventually, I mean look at me, I’ve got my shit figured out.” He says running his hands through his elegantly disheveled sandy brown hair. “Besides, I’m the best thing you’ve got to a three-way mirror.”

“And so much cheaper too, babe!”

“Hey now, watch out, she’s spittin’ fire!” His lips curl to a smile as he watches her admiring the dress in the mirror. “Your hair is too damn big.”

“Well, we can’t all be as genetically blessed as you, or have the luxury of spending 45 minutes strategically mussing up our locks, now can we?” she playfully smiles as she finishes her makeup,

“Never seen someone put so much effort in pretending not to care.” she says into the mirror. “Maybe if someone didn’t spend so long in the shower, it wouldn’t be so big. You know the steam makes my hair frizz.”

“I’m just messing with you!” He laughs, taking a step closer. “I like the big hair, its retro. But, seriously, we gotta to do somethin’ ‘bout this dress.” He says, mindlessly tracing his fingers across her side-seams. The silky layers sliding between his fingers brought him back to the last time she had worn it. They had snuck

off to enjoy the last bit of summer and they ended up in San Francisco. He had finally gotten up the courage to make his move. He remembered the way she smelled in satin, and how gentle spiced floral notes danced about his nose. She was all dolled up just for him and he wasn't about to go back home without making sure she knew how he felt. They had dinner on the Wharf and held hands as they walked along the boardwalk. They checked out all the tourist attractions along the pier, and didn't correct the vendors that called them a beautiful couple. He remembered how soft her cheek felt against his collar bone as they pretended to watch the sunset on the bay. The streaks of red-orange blazing through her auburn hair gave her a luminescent aura drawing him to her; he knew that if it was ever going to happen, it had to be now. In a sudden act of valor he pulled her in closer. He'd never forget how tender her lips were, the sweet-spiced flavor of her lip-gloss, or how it was suddenly infused with her warm salty tears falling from her cheek onto his.

“Like what? She said, her cat-eyes meeting his gray-blues in the reflection of the mirror; snapping him out of the memory. As she watches him staring into the mirror, his steady gaze on her makes her feel so vulnerable. Can he see through me? She dares to think, what if he knows it's all a façade. What if he knows that I'm just another insecure ninny not looking to ruin her best Sunday dress?

Coraline could feel her flesh growing warm as she contemplated how his strong hands could possibly be that gentle as he fiddled with the fabric at her waist. Though it was an uninvited gesture, it was not entirely unwelcomed either. She wished it could be simpler, that she could be braver, and that they could just be together and no one would get hurt. But that has never been her experience. Thinking about all possible outcomes, in all potential scenarios, she has determined that the reality in which they live in is not the one in which they'd ever get the happy ending.

“Maybe you think I look too good, and don't want me going out without you.” She quips as she opens a peachy hued lip-

gloss, perching herself upon her vanity pedestal just out of Max's reach.

He tries to come up with an answer. He'd never want her to know that he felt that dress was special. He'd never want her to know that he wished it had been just for him.

"It's almost perfect, but something is missing." A loaded response. Her steady gaze upon his reflection in the mirror burns right through him. He pulls at his collar and unfastens the top button's chokehold. Running his sweaty palms across his sweater vest and down his crisp blue jeans, then pushing up his cuffed sleeves over his elbows.

"It's just not as fun as you are." He says. "Look at this closet! It's full of nice things that you never wear, most with their tags still on. They're all hidden in the back."

"Like the basement of the Louvre?" she smiles and in a near whisper said "Well, I guess I just never want to spoil a great outfit on a dull day."

"Don't be stupid, you know you deserve more than that, and I'm not always going to be around to remind you."

"Of course you will, life is so dull when we're apart."

"Dull is better than make-believe"

"Since when!?" she replies hoping that this is just their usual playful banter.

"Since it stopped being enough for me, Coraline. It's time for something real, time to grow up. Clearly, you're content to pretend like San Francisco never happened, and that's not a game I can play. I need to start looking for another place." He says turning towards the door.

"I just..." she breaks, "please don't go, Max." she says, turning around on her pedestal to face him.

"Is there any reason for me to stay?" He stops in his tracks and turns to face her, standing much taller than before.

His intense eye contact pierces her armor. Until now, she'd been able to busy herself with doing her makeup, which allowed her to remain stoic. She knows Max could identify every nuance of

every facial expression she made, often giving her the impression that he could read her thoughts. She averts her gaze from his direct eye contact, and anxiously straightens the small golden frame on the vanity containing a souvenir meant for tourists exploring new territory; a memento of what could have been.

“You know, that was the last day I can remember that wasn’t dull; our trip to San Francisco. That little photo booth on the Warf. Remember how the only cash we had was a twenty, and we got \$15.50 back in quarters?” she laughs with a bittersweet sigh. “All that’s left now is this half a strip of photos.” Her glossy eyes beginning to buckle. “Please, don’t think that it didn’t mean anything to me, Max; it did. And you mean the most to me of anyone.”

“Then why can’t you just get over whatever bullshit excuse is holding you back?”

She quivers under the pressure to be honest. The nature of their relationship had always been kind of tricky. It wasn’t really until Coraline’s high school sweetheart cheated on her during their first year of college that anyone began to wonder if she and Max would get together. They danced around the subject a lot, mostly in jest. San Francisco was the first time anything had ever happened between them. She was so furious with him for ruining what they had. She couldn’t wrap her mind around how they had gotten in this mess. Things used to be so simple. Her thoughts were racing, but her mouth remained paralyzed by a deafening silence.

“So, after all these years, you’ve got nothing to say on the matter? It’s really quite simple, you want to be with me, or you don’t?”

“I do...” she stops herself, what she wants isn’t the issue. “I just don’t think it’s a good idea.” She reluctantly finishes as a tear rolls down her cheek. “This isn’t fair! I didn’t ask for you to kiss me! You did that! You ruined what we had! Just threw our friendship away like you weren’t the most important person in my life! After eight years, you’d just reduce me to another sexual conquest? I know how you burn through women like they’re...”

“Like they’re not you, Coraline!” He cuts her off, he’s had enough. “I’ve loved you since high school, but what was I supposed to do for six years while you were dating that dick-head!? What he did to you, that’s not me! I didn’t hurt you Coraline, he did! And I’m not him!”

“All that time? I didn’t know it was all along, I thought... I mean, you got flirty after Danny left me, but I thought you were just trying to make me feel better...”

Max began to pity Coraline. If you could only see yourself like I see you. “I can’t believe you’re the kind of girl that would make me pay for his mistakes. He’s ruined you; you’ll die alone if you can’t even trust your heart with your own fucking best friend. You know what kind of man I really am, but you have no idea what a strong woman you are.”

She shakes her head letting his words sink in. “I had it wrong the whole time?” she whispers, trying to figure out when everything had gotten so pear-shaped. “Just stop, stop doing this to me.”

“Doing this to you!? I’m doing this to you...” He huffs as he shakes his head “I’m not the one that is too afraid to say ‘I love you,’ that’s you. I think when we kissed, you panicked. You panicked because you feel the same way I do, but if you say it, or even think about it too long, it becomes real, and that scares the hell out of you.”

She is sobbing softly as he takes the other half of the photo strip out of his leather bill fold where he had kept it safe as though it were a valuable document. It was the only proof he had that she could have felt the same. Now, it just reminded him that she couldn’t; she wouldn’t allow herself to. She was too scared of getting hurt. He realized in that moment that he was just another thing she tried on, and put in the back of her closet, never clipping the tags off in a declaration of genuine intent to keep. She’s never seemed so weak to him before, he pitied her in that moment. He puts his half strip of photos down on the vanity, and leans down to carefully cradle the side of her face as he wipes a tear from her

cheek with his thumb. She was after all, his best friend; out of habit, or commiseration, he was inclined to console the sad state of a broken woman she had become.

“I want you to stay,” she whispers to him

“We can’t go back to the way it was, no matter how much you wish we could. It’s out there now, there’s no going back.” In a moment of solace, she says to him “I just want to try something,” and carefully cranes her neck to plant a tender kiss on his lips. But, he knows it’s just a consolation prize; tentative kisses like that always mean goodbye. It’s just a desperate attempt to keep him around to no avail. Nevertheless, it’s a parting gift he’s willing to take, toxic as it may be. He takes her into his arms and breathes her scent in deeply as if he were trying to bottle enough of it in his memory to take with him.

Lingering there for a moment, Max finally opens his eyes. The late summer’s sunset on the pier had burned her image into his mind, leaving only the negative, and as time turns his back on Max, he is left with the cold shoulder of autumn to cry on. He’s not sure when everything had gotten so dark. He doesn’t remember the sun’s rays growing any fainter, in fact, he didn’t notice at all until suddenly it was black. Funny how things change so insignificantly from one instant to the next, yet after a certain amount of time you realize everything is different. Max and Coraline had been friends for so long, he always had just assumed eventually they’d be together. He’s not really sure when that stopped being an option. But that’s the very nature of time; it’s comprised of the fleeting moments that carve out a life. Max contemplates what his is shaping into as he let his eyes adjust to the darkness. He has let her shape him in irreversible ways, and it was time to remove himself from the lathe that she had used to so crudely chip away at all he could have been. And with the smell of spiced floral notes dancing upon his nose, and the taste of sweet-spiced lip-gloss on his lips, he whispers “Good bye my dear Coraline, it’s time for me to go.”

Five

Can you hear them? I'm sure you can. There are five of them. Five girls. Five muffled screams all ringing into the calm, cool night air. Can anyone hear them? No. Can anyone see them? No.

Perhaps I should put them out of their misery? No. I feel like I need some fun. Perhaps I should cut them? Yes.....perhaps I shall. Come here my precious little ones. A lashing for each of you. One. Two. Three. Four. Oh don't worry my darling. I won't forget you. Are Number 5 are you not? You're the most special to me.

Perhaps they should be given a great honor. They are tied up, so how can they resist me? Five girls at my disposal. How can I resist?

Contributors

Simon Anuszczyk. My name is Simon Anuszczyk and as I write this I am enrolled in my sixth semester here at Woodland Community College, and my second semester at CSUS. I am the Associated Students of Woodland Community College Senator of Mathematics and Science and I enjoy tutoring Math at the tutoring center here on campus. When not doing homework, I can usually be found practicing jazz or reading a good book. I plan on majoring in Mechanical Engineering.

Katherine Barskey is honored to have been in charge of editing Ink this year and helping further the creative community on campus. She is active in local theatre and loves performing at the historical Woodland Opera House. Katherine loves to write and hopes one day she will write something meaningful that is worth reading.

Mary Kate Dec. Born and raised in Livermore, California, Mary Kate has fostered a love for verbal and visual creativity since childhood. She recently obtained her Bachelors of Science in Psychology (Biology Emphasis) from UC Davis and is currently a part-time student at WCC. Her work is often inspired by her experiences as a psychology student, both in and out of the classroom. Mary Kate plans to attend nursing school in Texas this fall.

Frank Davis. Frank is many. He is a philosopher-weightlifter, runner, a long time scholar of the complexities of social problems, the pedagogy of the aloof, the debate of peanut butter versus butter-butter vis-à-vis pickled carrot jam and all that, on top, and more...well, not really, he's none of those things. Frank is just a dude who lives life, wants to work in the medical field and desires to write and make art.

Christopher Furry was born in Sacramento. In 2007 he enlisted in the US Army, he served in Iraq from 3 August 2009 until 29 July 2010 as an Ammunition Specialist. In 2013 he was medically

retired due to non-combat related injuries he received while on active duty in Iraq. Chris is married to Sabrina Furry and has three children. He is currently attending Woodland Community College on the Vocational Rehabilitation Program through the VA. His short term goals include finishing an Associates degree in elementary education and transferring to Arizona State University to obtain a degree as a secondary school History teacher. His long term goals include teaching American history at the high school level.

Elizabeth Gardiner. Besides art and photography, poetry holds a special place in my heart. I'm able to condense my feelings into small symbolic poems. I'm not good with biographies so I'll end this with a cheesy saying. No matter what, believe in yourself and you can do anything!

Christopher Holden. I love to write hip-hop songs and compose poetry. I plan to make a career out of writing while climbing the educational ladder to become an English professor, because it is what I am good at, and we should all get paid to do what we're good at. Hip-hop and writing are some of the highest forms of self-expression, and I encourage everyone to engage in a positive form of self-expression. Attending Woodland Community College has helped perfect my craft as a writer, and I would like to personally thank Ms. Theresa Schmits for helping to metamorphosize my writing into what I always knew it could be. And thank you to those involved with Ink Magazine for allowing my voice to be heard among my fellow students.

Emily Jackson. I'm not an artist in the traditional sense of the word art. So what is my 'art'? Well, I sew. I started making my own embroidery hoops which are made from a wooden embroidery hoop covered in fabric with a felt applique that I hand cut. Currently, I am working on a series of hoops of all the Game of Thrones house sigils and my House Greyjoy hoop (the squid) is featured in this magazine. Eventually, I hope to sell my work on

Etsy, but, for now, I have to concentrate on my classes at Woodland Community College as I hope to transfer to a four-year college in two to three semesters.

Breeann James. I have always loved art, literature and anything that requires thought, movement and a voice. What better way than a poem shall I say. Poems have inspired change and change inspires poetry in this symbiotic relationship. All my life I heard the phrase “a Zebra cannot change its stripes,” implying that we as humans cannot fight against our own inner nature. That we cannot change it but I hope this poem changes that view in some way. Equips all to think and feel in their own right. Life is ongoing things do not just end but we can overcome again and again as long as we keep fighting.

Alejandra Rolon Lopez. My Name is Alejandra Rolon Lopez; I’m currently attending WCC and hope to transfer to Sac State by spring of 2015.

Sean Lynch, along with writing poetry, composes music. He is a resident of Woodland, CA, and enjoys the musical stylings of Opeth and Gustav Mahler.

Lauren Marade. Age 24. Aspiring costume designer, avid people watcher, and a lover of storytelling.

William Mitchell. I am an aspiring writer. I love to write all manner of things and am working on novels of my very own, but for now I have lots of poetry to share.

Erica Pina. I am a 25 year old self-taught artist working out of Colusa County. I'm a commissioned artist who has been doing portraits for the past several years. I like working with pencil and color as well. My main focus is drawing historical figures, loved ones, family, and animals. I have a strict attention to detail and no job is rushed or hurried. As I grow I want to improve my pencil skills. I will continue to expose my work and create something that will live forever.

Silvia Marquez Ramirez. This is currently my second semester attending Woodland Community College and my major at the time is in English/Literature. Though this poem is not one of my latest or most compelling works, I still consider it to have a great deal of depth. Since I am an aspiring writer all I can ask is that I have the opportunity to provoke thought/perspective in the minds of others.

Liz Urias has been writing for as long as she can remember and doesn't plan to stop anytime soon. She is an avid daydreamer and a prolific procrastinator. She would love to travel but finds it much more enjoyable to be a recluse – unless there are elephants. If there are elephants then she is totally there. She resides in Woodland with her co-captain in procrastination and fellow daydreamer and if she were any happier, she would burst.

Breana Vales. Art is very therapeutic to me. When I feel the need to de-stress, I can just pick up my pencil and escape to another place. However, I am just starting to use programs for computer assisted design to add another component to some of my drawings. As working out is another must for me, I enjoy designing workout attire as well as special occasion dresses. I love to put a spin on them and include some aspect of marine life in the design as well. I'm still deciding between pursuing a career in the nutrition field or being involved in some facet of the design field in the fashion industry.

Jeff Wata is a student at WCC.

Catherine Wilson is a student at WCC.

Jacob Zentner. J Alexander Z has been attending WCC for several semesters now while working full time at a fuel delivery company in Sacramento. His greatest passion is writing prose for himself and composing poetry for his almond blossom, Miss Reyes. He also enjoys a good brew from time to time.

Ink Staff



**Katherine Barskey, Lauren Marade,
and *Simon*
*Anuszczyk***



Thank you all for another amazing year at *Ink Magazine*! It was truly an honor getting to read/view all of the lovely submissions

turned in by our talented students here at WCC. The literary arts are an important part of celebrating culture and diversity here on campus, and I am happy to have been a part of making this magazine a reality.

-Katherine Barskey, Senior Editor



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