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Mariposa **Literary Review**
Fall 2019 / Spring 2020



**ESTRELLA MOUNTAIN
COMMUNITY COLLEGE**

A MARICOPA COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Expression Is Always in Motion

The shape of expression is an artist who studies the blank page or canvas to discover what appears on that canvas, each new page representing another motion in the artist's constant expression. On these pages that follow, artists have chosen to share their expression: some colorful, some thought-provoking, some highly personal. The point of art is to show one's personality and vulnerability and to share a piece of one's soul to which other souls can relate.

Art brings us together like nothing else can. It makes us unique. It makes us more aware of ourselves and of each other. It makes us more than a single being within a single sphere among every sphere of humanity. It shapes our worlds.

*With the **Mariposa Literary Review**, Estrella Mountain Community College is proud to present an opportunity for artists young and old to bare their souls and offer us all a chance to move with them in their unique and valued*

expressions.

written by Gabriel Hernandez, EMCC student

Literary Review Faculty and Staff Committee

The Mariposa Literary Review Committee is comprised of Annie Buentello, Linda Keyes, Rod Freeman, Joel Arthur, and Jimmy Fike. They met with the students and instructor (Jim Heinrich) of the Adobe InDesign class and took on the role of "client" to simulate a print industry relationship between a client and a publisher. After reviewing design proposals presented by each InDesign student, the committee chose what design elements they preferred (e.g., cover art, color palette, graphics, fonts, etc.) that the students then applied to create the booklet in your hand.

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Co-Editors-in-Chief: Mari Armenta & Justice Clarke; Art Director/Cover Designer: Jocelyn Flores & Daniel Barnard/Maritza Paez; Picture Editor: Franky Ortiz; Copy Editor: Elena Santillana & Anakin Airey; Production Manager: Brandon Sanchez, Chris Ayala, & Chris McDay; Proof Reader: Chrissy Broadrick















For more information, contact the EMCC Division of Arts and Composition at 623-935-8444 and visit estrellamountain.edu/mariposa

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Scar -Fiction

Ronald Caceres

The fogging, dim forest lurks in the shadow, a man slithered with both legs chopped off. He strains himself to flee the forest in agonizing pain and suffering he couldn't bare. Right behind, an anonymous person strolls nearby. A hooded beast glaring at his victim in glowing green lights, in cloths torn to shred and razor edge blades sliding out of his wrist. Scar, the abomination they refer to him as, merely a fiction tale everyone spread about a demon-like, who's thirst in blood-lust and cherish nothing but killing his captives in ferocious methods. His insanity was his sanity. The lugging man wanted to go astray, but Scar clutched his hair and raised him high. The man shrieks in distress, pleading for mercy. All the usual for someone who's about to be put down. Scar slit the man throat, blood gushing and oozing down his neck. He flings the man onto a log and stares straight to his soul,

“Fear Prey” Scar muttered.

The man died looking right to the eyes of Scar, but Scar couldn't handle the notion that death wasn't enough! Scar stomped the man's face, splattering blood over the log, he continues to grab the man and pitch him to a tree. He held on to the man's head and repeatedly bash his face against the log that his face was irreparable. He laid the dead corpse on the ground and went forward to slice up the body parts. He slashes the head off and drill his blades to fracture the bones within. Scar couldn't let go of this vexation and mood of being infuriated. He wanted to run mayhem and chaos to everything he touches. Scar wanted to leave his mark through the souls of his dead predecessor; no one felt that excruciating, remorseful craziness he dealt for merely his entire life! Scar began breathing heavily and watched the blood of his enemy drip off his hand, who was he?

A twig broke and Scar spun his body, spotted a teen girl in white dress who had a birthmark covering half her face. She was smiling while the same, tearing up to see Scar. Centering his position, fearing not even death, she clung onto Scar and embraced him till then, Scar started weeping and hugged the teen girl, hoping for just forgiveness.





Growing Through Struggles

Estrella Hernandez

Devil's Highway -Poetry

Jasmine Moreira

Seventeen,
Full of hope,
Dug and dug,
Just until it was enough,
They said not to go over,
No one said anything about going under,
Terrified of patrol,
“¡La migra! ¡La migra!”
Hidden in plain sight,
It was easier then,
Soaked clothes,
Open wounds,
Surviving off what little water was left,
Devil's highway is right,
Scorched and chapped,
They didn't think they would make it,
They didn't think they would survive,
Several days,
Hope lost,
Until they saw the city lights.



His Memory
Kimberly Styles

Don't Bring a Knife to a Gun Show -Non-Fiction

Pauline Urrabazo

Twenty years ago, life was different. Maybe I am the only person to notice, but I can't help the drama that has happened to everyone. This is not about me or my families. It's not about the neighbors. It's not about the current Chief, or Commander. It's about all of us. We all live in this World, we call Earth. We eat together. Sometimes we eat with strangers and end up being their best friends. Some time in our lives someone catches your eye, or says the right thing at the right time. But for some reason there is a reason behind it. I don't know it, and you don't know it. We carried our lives on. There will be a day when we hear the words. Your heart will stop. Your mind will freak. The clock will not lie. I don't know exactly what it will feel like, but I had imaginary feeling that "I will melt to the ground". I feel fortunate to be lucky to not have lost my sibling or parents yet. I have been to many funerals. I hate it. I do cry for others. I am sad for them. I cry for their animals too. I cried when they cried. Sometimes I cry inside my thoughts. People come and go. I am not afraid to die, just afraid that life will just go on without me. My grandparents are all gone. I wish they were here to see what's happening, but maybe there is a reason for them not to be around.

My life is good. I am not rich nor poor. I struggle some days. My old friends are here and I found some new ones. My parents are older and fragile. Their constantly telling me to be aware of "junk".

I walk the streets of Phoenix, Arizona. I notice the colors on the street are different. The people on the streets are not my friend, but I do give them a friendly smile. I notice everyone walking faster. It seems to me that everyone has an "angry look." They all look like they are wearing black and white clothes. Maybe because I don't know them. Maybe one of them has a gun. Maybe a homeless woman has a gun? Maybe the teenage rebellious girl has a knife for protection? Maybe the kid in the brown station wagon has knife and gun, but his parents don't know? Maybe they know? I know we all know about knives and guns. Do you know about guns and knives? Maybe? The fire truck racing across the town to the call of help. Who know what's happening in Phoenix? It could be happening in Hawaii. I just hope everyone knows that life is different and no matter where you go. The party we go to.



The family reunion. The gathering in the park. The friend's house.

I live with my sister, brother, and my mom. We've been best friends since we meet. We have a lot of respect for each other. We have done and gone through so much together. The lies my father told. The broken toe. The endless roads my parents choose. Their bitter divorce in the eighties. I can see through my looking glass, my eyes I see the torture of guns. I never had a favorite gun and I still don't. My younger years I stayed away from guns. They were not funny to me. I don't own a gun. My brothers own three or four guns. My mom knows how to use a gun. My sister is knowing the laws on guns. My brother uses his gun for food. He's a hunter. He believed in the protection of the guns. He doesn't carry a gun. I don't carry a gun in public. We know the facts of guns. Most people think guns don't have laws to follow. Just shoot anytime you want. Buy a gun. The Constitution knows about the gun! We know it. But why? Do we carry a gun? It's not a toy, rocket, or a symbol of hope. Surely people got the notation, it kills, it hurts and it's deadly! I have my beliefs about arrows, knives and guns. I have a strong belief when it comes to weapons. To shoot a gun for protection in war times. We are not at war at home. Our neighbor can't be all killers? Guns, knives can kill. Know your common sense. I am guessing not everyone has that approach. I am not saying I'm right, and they are wrong.

I would listen to my grandparents on the reservation. Stand up for what's right, don't let people tell you what to do. Go to work. Listen to your elders. Pay attention to knowledgeable one. You have rights to be anywhere. Vote. Listen. Talk when asked. Fight for life. Eat when you're hungry. Don't kill unless you're hungry.

The gun report is awful. The stories are real. It doesn't matter if you're strong and brave it's going to happen. The cities. The rural development. We don't live in the eighteen century. Cowboys and Indians are gone., but the arrow the gun is still here. We don't live on one bullet, or one arrow. It's many bullets and one arrow has no chance. The knife has no cut. The knife could save you? The broken words, promise hills and bitterness of home. The creative arrow is nothing now. We don't have friendly weapons. So next time remember the game, the party, and the gathering. Don't get mad, or glad because next time you go anywhere; don't bring a knife to a gun show. You won't win any more.

I am not afraid... I am marling saying the truth. The twentieth century is loaded with nonsense. I am not going to bring my knife to a gun show anymore!



The Blue Caterpillar

Kimberly Styles

Kingdom Past -Poetry

Devin Thomas

The King rests his rusted crown
On the seat,
Of his Ancient Throne.
As his Lost Kingdom crumbles
The Ghosts of the Court fade to silence,
Their King is ready to come home.
One by one,
The Court disappears from sight.
Lone King,
Fallen Far,
Gives one last look at his Ancient Throne.
Court gone,
Crumbling Kingdom,
Rusted Crown.
Lost to the minds of the World,
The King releases a heavy sigh.
Should one find this Ancient place,
May they learn from the King's mistakes,
And build a Mighty Empire.
With one last bow,
The Fallen King departs the castle gates.
Rusted Crown,
Ancient Throne,
Ghosts of the Court,
Crumbling Kingdom,
All fade from sight,
As the Fallen King passes through
The Waiting Abyss.

LA Riot, My Father's Eyes -Poetry

Ronald Caceres

Damn it, those police are at it,
Killing Rodney King for no reason.
What else can we do, nothing?
We're really letting Compton get trampled?
Screw those police, let's give them a reason.
Let's tear down the convenience stores,
Let's loot every good we can get our hands on,
Come on, let's take some more!
Smash that car and burn this place to hell!
Pop, Pop, Pop
The smoke bomb, blurry and dim,
Helicopter shining its lights on rioters,
The Marines shooting at the people,
Swap Meet is a No Man's Land,
One step and Splat,
You're done.





Syd
Jolene Westerling

Cerebral Palsy -Poetry

Zach Stites

Cerebral Palsy

Some people think that defines who you are.
Some people think that it will define your future.
People will ridicule you and put you down.
They will call you names, mock you and laugh at you.
But, noone has ever done that to me.

Cerebral Palsy

Some people will call it a prison.
People will tell you that it will hold you back.
That you will never achieve your dreams.
People will see you for your struggles, or for your successes.

Cerebral Palsy

The aches, the pains that many people endure.
People fall, bump into walls.
People put you down, or praise you.

My family and friends have always told me
That I can achieve my goals, and win the prize because I have worked hard
And they have supported me all the way and I am thankful for that.

I have Cerebral Palsy, but I do not let that define me!





Corazon Completo

Angelica Hernandez

What's Happening -Poetry

Alejandro Hernandez

We log onto Twitter
Just to retweet a picture
Scroll through the gram
But we neglect our fam
Turn on the TV
To a new crime scene
A crooked cop
And a black man
Shot because of the cell phone in his hand
I see history repeating itself
Loud and angry people
Fighting for everyone to be equal
This is just another sequel
We're mad at the government
For acting like some snakes
If they were in the hood
They'd be looking at an AK
Have we not learned
From the last few years
Probably not
Because our teachers never wanted us here
You in the back
You need to shut up
If you continue this behavior
I'll pull out this gun
The people in suits have made this country weak
The only colors that they like
Are themselves and their money
This is what's happening
In the Land of the Free
Only the ones who've built this place
Still feel shackled and
Can't breathe



Watcher of the Forest

Kimberly Styles



Black and White (Self Portrait)

Melek Holland





Nothing, Arizona
Devin Thomas

Accepting Uncertainty -1st Place Non-Fiction

Joshua Udefo Joshua

I was the first born of a Nigerian preacher and his wife. My actions from then on would be judged as either the advantages, or failings of a pastor's kid curriculum, or so my parents thought. My father's wish to see me carry on our family's devotion to the word was brought to a halt after he was denied reentry into the United States. Separated from the guidance of my father's piety, I was left to construct my own constitution of morality. My mother tried her best to turn me towards the Christian path. Until the age of 16, not even the 2nd coming could have stopped us from going to church on Sunday. I eventually began to question things. I am not sure if it came from true inquiry, or just untamed respite towards a being that was claimed to control all aspects of my life, but in the end, a child whose imaginary friend was once Moses himself, now asserted that enforcing him to attend church was a violation of his first amendment rights.

During the middle of summer, the teens cohort of the church had gathered together to practice a presentation that would eventually be delivered to the main congregation. Spread out across the room, we acted like deer in front of headlights as our instructor spoke to us.

“Adu, I have noticed that we are not completely focused on what the word of God means to us. So, I have chosen Gideon to lead, inspire and empower you through this ministry.”

Gideon was the first son of four boys in a well-established family at our church. He had a charm that was ultimately obnoxious, but delightful to the right people, so he held a high place. He strolled up to our pulpit and said,

“Brotha. Sista. I beg, let us not wear off the remaining hairs off of uncle



Amo's head. We must remember that God is watching! So you must wake up and perform like you have never performed before, Oiya!...we are singing, we are shouting!"

Gideon began to bellow out one of the many calls to praise songs that would cause any Nigerian to perform a mad dash to the altar and give up a "dance

offering". Like popcorn, teens began to jump out of their seats and parade themselves singing, "alleluia to de lord" as they headed towards the mesh of people giving up their dance offering in front of the altar. As I stood there, rocking back and forth to the tune, a tension began to rise within me. I looked forward and saw the ocean of smiles painted across my classmates faces. Their jubilee was strange to me. It was absolute disregard for whatever life was throwing, complimented with what seemed to be an unending passion to achieve validation. I wanted that, but still I did not move. All the seats had cleared except for mine.

Boiling with insecurity, I looked up once again, but this time my sight landed on Gideon's face. He stretched out his hand with a nod of his head, inviting me to be a part of them. And with that, I leaped towards the center aisle, flailed my hands into the air, and began to sing; allowing the culture to consume me.

That day, we threw our hearts into every dance, song and sermon that we practiced. Nothing in the world could have disrupted our concentration. I for one had been overjoyed to find that I no longer felt an insecurity of the future. In my mind, I thought that this faith that I had adopted was greater than any worldly concern. The idea that I would be a part of something larger than all my problems, larger than all my fears and ultimately larger than me gave me a confidence on life that was completely foreign to me.

After the practice, had finished I decided to thank Gideon for granting me a new outlook on the world. Where others had failed to show why delving into Christianity was nothing more than a Nigerian rite of passage, Gideon had delivered onto me a feeling of capability and belongingness. As I strode out of the lobby to find Gideon and express my gratitude, I heard a large commotion occurring in the back of the church. The faintest utterances of Gideon's voice was coming from that direction as well. In my desperate attempt to display my gratitude I quickly charged towards the back door to meet him. I swung open the door, only to be thrust into the middle of a horrendous scene. A homeless man floundered his hands in the air and said,

“Listen man, I've been walking all day. I ain't got nowhere to go, please man for a second, let me just pull out some scraps from that dumpster and I'll leave yall alone.”

With eyes of fire and a demeanor that resembled a serpent before it strikes, Gideon lambasted onto that man, “You dirty rubbish man! We have no food for you here! Oiya, go back to ya gutta and leave this place!”

Confounded by what had just ran out of the mouth of my newfound guide, I became frozen from disbelief. The poor homeless man tried once again, but this time he attempted to appeal to Gideon's Christianity. He said, “C'mon man, we're all brothers and sisters in the lord. Let me just get in the dumpster and search around a bi-....”

With a force of pure hatred, Gideon pulled his leg up and jammed it into the right side of the man's stomach. The man was sent flying. Gideon marched forward,

“I dun told you to leave! Oiya go! Go!” He said

I finally garnered enough courage to intervene. I rushed in between them, glared eye to eye with Gideon and said, “Let him be, he is not harming any-

one.”

At this time the homeless man had retreated while Gideon was distracted. He then replied, “I’m not gonna let him mess up the name of the church. You’re ready to just allow anything to happen to the sanctity of the house, but me no. If you had a father he would have taught you that something as low as a beggar cannot bring down the purity of the church!”

“Oponu po tea,” is what he called me as he left me there to think.

When I got home, I landed on my bed and stared at the ceiling as I tried to make sense of all that had just happened. For a moment, I had an assurance that all the functions of the world revolved around me, and I was finally in control of my own destiny. But then, not more than an hour later, the mentor that promised me all of this, broke central tenets of his proposal with a justification that I wanted nothing to do with. I could not accept denying the realities of the world in order to enshrine and magnify ourselves. I chose from that day on to accept the failings, ambiguities and imperfections of the world as undeniable truth.

In my facing the ugly reality of the world, I gained validation. At least to myself I would know that under my truest understandings of the world I had not simplified it to some enforced story. However, I would have the confidence that I had acted under what I concluded was right or wrong. No matter if that resulted in success or failure.



Woman Sitting
Michelle Lyon

I Miss the Way You Used to Be -Non-Fiction *Brook Miller*

I Miss the Way You Use to Be, but I'm Proud of Who You Are Now...

Before the drugs, the sex, and the alcohol, before you moved out and started your new life, before you left me without warning, why couldn't you just stay at home instead of going to that party? Back in 2010, when it was just you, mom and I living in the apartment, we had so much fun together - do you remember that? I had so much love for you; don't get me wrong I still do, you're my older sister. I looked up to you, you were my role model! You were the prettiest girl in school, you were popular, hell, you were playing every sport there was to play. Then you started trying to "fit in" with the wrong crowd and smoking weed just to try and impress your "friends." I

understand that you had it rough and I know that there were things going on in your life that you couldn't handle alone, but I was right there for you no matter what even though you pushed me away. In the movie *The Breakfast Club*, there was a scene where John Bender pulled out a bag full of weed from his locker and brought it to the library so everyone could smoke and it made me think of you. Here's why.

Growing up people always say that smoking weed can lead you into doing other drugs and I never thought it was an actual thing. Were you smoking the whole time we lived in the apartment, or were there times where you stopped and thought about how it affected you and the ones around you? Knowing what I know now and looking back on what has happened, I don't think you ever took a break. Fast forward a couple years when we moved into our new house with mom and our new step-dad. I knew that you were doing things just to lash out and get back at the parents because you were mad that mom was getting remarried, but I always thought that that's what

teenagers did just to be rebellious. I thought it was normal. Then you started losing weight. I would always tell you that you didn't need to lose weight and that you were beautiful just the way you were but you didn't seem to care about what I had to say about the situation. You were always so hard-headed and you didn't listen to any-

one but yourself and I wish you would have taken the time to listen to what I had to say. I was trying to help you in a healthier way, but I knew that no matter what I said you were always going to do your own thing. I felt like I had to just watch you slowly slip away into a deep dark abyss.

Having to start a new school was a tough transition for the both of us and since you were starting high school and I was finishing my last year of elementary, there was a big difference in things that we both had to deal with. As time went by, I thought you were getting your life on the right track and you stopped doing drugs and starving yourself, but in reality you just got better at hiding it. Coming home from school one day, I remember you were just getting home from work and you went downstairs to your room and you were crying profusely. I came down to see what was wrong and I tried to calm you down. I waited until you fell asleep so I could go back up to my room and as I crawled into bed, I cried. I cried so much simply because I couldn't help you in the way I wish I was able to. You've always been my best friend even though we are six years apart, and I knew that I could come to you with any problems that I had and you knew how to make me feel better. So why couldn't I do the same for you? Still being in sports, you wound up tearing your ACL and your knee was the reason why you had to take time off from doing something that made you happy. After your knee completely healed, you were back in sports and you were back to being the "happy" you that you once were. When you finished out high school, you decided to move out of the house and go live with our aunt who lived in a different state so I began to feel abandoned.

Why did you have to move out? I missed you so much. I felt like my best friend just left me out of the blue. I had to survive moving into yet another house without you, and I had to start high school without you being there too. My freshman year was hell and you weren't there to help me out. I had a lot of anger towards you but I never let that show. Mom had a baby while you were gone and I had to take on the responsibility to take care of him full-time when I got home from school. Half-

way through my first year without you, I found out that you were going to be moving back in with us and staying for a while until you could get back on your feet again. By this time I was so excited. My best friend was finally coming back for me! You didn't have a room at our house so you stayed downstairs in the second family living room. I remember you had a lot of stuff in your "room" but you always kept it clean and organized. The nights I miss the most were when I would go to your "room" and we would blast music and dance like no one was watching. Do you remember that? A few months after you were finally settled in, I came home from school and you were still at home, except this time it was different. I walked into the doorway and I heard you crying. This cry wasn't like any cry that I've heard before, and I heard it coming from down the stairs. I still had my backpack on at the time so I set it down by the front door and I ran down the stairs as fast as I could. The hallway lit up with the light from the bathroom and as I peered around the corner, there you were, curled up in a ball on the floor in fetal position. Not knowing what to do, I sat on the floor with you and I listened to you cry as you laid your head on my leg and I rubbed your back to try and comfort you. You didn't say a word.

Half an hour went by and I knew that I had to start on my homework that was due the next day, but in that moment, I really didn't care. I just wanted you to feel better and I wanted to figure out why you were so upset. My leg was starting to fall asleep when you finally sat up but before I could say anything, you went up the stairs to go get some water from the kitchen, and I decided to follow you. You drank some water and I thought you were done with your crying episode, but little did I know, you weren't even close to being done. You sat back on the floor and I sat with you, but then you grabbed your phone and threw it across the kitchen and we both just watched the phone as it shattered into tons of little pieces. You stopped crying for two minutes and you just looked at your phone laying on the floor and you said, "Fuck, I didn't mean to do that." I went to go pick up all the pieces of what was left of your phone and you began to cry again. I asked you once more what was going on

and you told me that your drug dealer couldn't give you any drugs that day since you didn't have any more money and I was in complete shock. "Wait, what?" I asked. My heart dropped. I couldn't even begin to process what you just said to me. I thought you were done with drugs. I thought you moved out to become a better you, and to live the life that you wanted to live originally. After you were done crying for good, we parted ways in the house and I started on my homework. We never talked about what happened since then.

Two weeks went by. I went to school and it was just like any other day. Until I got home. Mom's car was out front and step-dad's truck was there too. This was abnormal because they usually don't come home until later in the night so I knew something was wrong. I came in the house and our parents said, "Brook we need to talk." I went downstairs to put my backpack away and as I walked into my room, everything that I owned, was everywhere. It looked like a tornado hit my room and my room only. I ran upstairs. You were gone, and our parents were sitting on the couch looking at me with disappointment. I asked them what was going on and what happened to my room and they began to ask me if I had any money with me. I thought that was an odd question to ask, but I didn't have any money whatsoever since I didn't have a job or anything. I explained to them that I didn't have any money at all and then they asked me if I was "borrowing" money out of their change bucket that was hidden away in their closet and I told them absolutely not. There wasn't anything that I needed or wanted to buy at the time and there was definitely no way that I would ever steal anything from my parents or anyone else for that matter. They began to tell me that a ton of their money was missing and I was the only one that they could think of that would even need the money since my sister had a job at that point. Not thinking about the chain of events that had occurred in the past couple weeks, I asked "did you check Brittany's stuff?" they said "No" since there was no need for it and I said "maybe you should because I promise, I didn't take any money."

Four hours after the long discussion with our parents, you came home. You came

home from work and I was crying. All I could think to tell you was that I was sorry but I couldn't exactly put into words as to why I was sorry in the first place. You went down to your room and your stuff was everywhere just like mine was. Our parents were now in their room and they asked you to come up to talk to them. Mom was on the phone with a counseling hotline and step-dad was sitting in his chair just waiting for you to arrive. You went into their room and you closed the door. I sat on the top of the stairs trying to hear as much of the conversation as possible and I couldn't believe what I was hearing. Our step-dad had found left over meth in your blue bag that you use to use for sports. You were doing meth? What are you doing with your life? Trying to be as quiet as I could so I could still listen in, I thought to myself, "My sister is really going to hate me once she finds out that I was the one who told them to go through her stuff," and sure enough, you were furious.

The next day, a cab arrived at our house to pick you up. They were coming to take you to a rehab institution all the way in Florida. My best friend was leaving me once again. I never told my parents what had happened with your phone and your crying episode that I had to sit through, simply because I know that some things are better left unsaid. I tried to give you some space, but I also felt the need to call you and check up on you. You never answered my calls and you never returned any of my letters. Do you still have the letters? You were in rehab for quite some time, but once you were out you were doing so much better! I'm sad that it even had to get to the point to where you had to go to rehab, but you really needed help. I saw it before anyone else did and I'm sorry I didn't tell anyone about it sooner.

Three years later, here we are and you're moved out, living with the love of your life, as well as my two-year-old nephew and you and I talk almost every day! I love you so much and I am so proud of who you've become and what you've had to overcome in order to be the person you are today.

Beige Dreams -1st Place Poetry

Maricella Cantu

The face behind the dawn
Utters evil
You become a junkie,
A Fiend
Watch you as you bleed
It kisses you with beige illusions
And now you sit there
with strange delusion

I Love My Eyes -2nd Place Poetry

Joy Griffen

I don't have flaws.
I love my hair,
My smile,
My skin.
I love my eyes the most,
Because they are broken.
I don't have flaws,
Because I can't see them.





Elemental Harpie

Sean Fryxell

Lessons -Poetry

Payton Alexander

Turn your eyes inward, let them roll back in your skull
See the waves thrashing, know that they will settle with the moon
Brave the tears as they choke you, realize that you can breathe underwater
Run from the numbness, feeling is all you have in the world
Watch your ego dissipate, it feels like flying
when it slips through your fingers
Plant yourself deep within the soil, the life that flows through you
will be taken home in time
Allow them to laugh as they leave you, the hurt will pump blood
through your veins
Learn all the textures of your body,
they were crafted in the image of your soul.
Somewhere in a meadow a man lays crumpled in the tall swaying grass
He is crying and screaming out for the break in his chest
When you hold yourself underwater,
you can hear his voice ringing in your skull
No one can ever make you feel as safe as your mother can
No one can ever hurt your mother as much as you can
The wind brushing the tree's leaves is the same wind that tangles your hair
and brings romance to your cheeks.



You were a million years old when you were born
And when you die you will be little more than a child
You may find your nest among soft pink clouds
You may walk with your father through gates of pearl and ivory
You may close your green eyes for the last time
and open your brown eyes for the first
Your life may end with a period while you exist
only in the memories of others
The truth of this life is that it will never matter
The truth is that if you are singing at 4 o'clock when your
favorite song is playing
Or if you are laughing until you cry at 2 o'clock on the kitchen floor
Or if your heart is beating so hard that it hurts
as you press your lips to theirs
Then you have heaven in your soul
And none of the hell you've gone through could ever damn you
to fire and brimstone
Turn your eyes inward, you will never be blind again.



Web Plant
Biridiana Oblea Duarte

Beast -1st Place Fiction

Britnei Drewniak

Red. It's a color which causes calamity within the peace— a drastic, unbelonging contrast amongst the blanketed heavy thicket: trees and bushes of varying greens, smothered in the impassive malignity of ice and snow. The being of color stayed true disaster, brisk to disrupt clean sheets of snow on the ground and on the branches of life, showing little regard to the path it was digging through the wood. What could be made of the red is a blur of dreadful haste, much representative of prey fleeing from an unrelenting predator. It is alien to the nature which encompasses it, a gradually beating flurry raging against the invasion of red, as if to tell it to get out. The harsh conditions slow the capability of movement, putting the haze of red into a staggering, weak sprint. Through the canopy of leaves shown the dim rays of moonlight past the clouds, casting and dancing rapidly with the movements of the branches and on to the forest floor. Shining down graciously on the figure, it's being became more comprehensible.

A lurid hooded cloak, shrouding the identity of who or what wore it— whatever it was, it was short and dainty, the shape of the cloak and the golden designs elegantly tracing the trim, it could be assumed that the wearer is a female, or a feminine type of creature. Not only was the being keeping a few things a mystery, she kept another: something large in the hands of the cloak wearer, enveloped in the same amount of mystery. Continuous huffs emit fog of warm and exhausted exhale, floating out from behind the hood, flaunting the bitter cold of mother nature. The cold nips unapologetically at the skin of any living being of the forest, taking its toll on the cloaked female and forcing her to a halt in the snow. The gusts of wind carrying light snow travel through the cloak, shivers tickling up the being's spine and goosebumps covering her flesh. Her energy was depleting, and so was her eager intent.

A loud howl soars through the woods, filling the air and replacing the storm with its sheer power! It appears that what is cloaked in red is not the true beast of the thicket. Deep and unlike any wolf or earthly creature for that matter, the howl vibrates strongly through the leaves, moving like a wave as it races towards the girl. Terrified eyes gaze at the coming of a strong wind, stuck in place out of fear. As it hit her, she could feel the ground shake and her body fill with extreme dread; it was getting closer. Motivation sprung to life deep within

her, encouraging her adrenaline drive to its fullest extent, making her body move forward to her destination once more. Her speed was significantly increased in spite of the freezing cold of winter. However, the more she ran the louder the sounds of tumbling trees and trampled bushes became, filling her ears and clouding her vision with a pounding fear of what is to come. Fear is her ultimate drive.

Teasing warm hues of flickering flames— foreshadowing the mere awakening of hope— come into view beyond the scattered, tall trees; a sight that would make anyone grateful to see! Pushing past the last lining of the forest plant life, a castle comes into view: worn but well-kept, evidently lived in, surely! Made of dark brick, the structures which it formed into the castle were awesome, a true sight to behold if given the time to. Snowed-on roofs which meet up into sharp peaks, a castle stories high with bridges connecting various different, and unknown sections to the building. Torches of light accommodate along the multitude of windows on the mossy brick walls. Oh, such beautiful flames of life! Leading to this grand estate was a bridge, sturdy and made of the same brick which the castle is made from, tall torches lining and helping to guide the way to the castle of woe. Only taking a moment to gather the sight of the most notable features, the woman runs over the snow-covered bridge and to the two very large, grand doors. On them were two lion heads, assumedly made of pure silver. With a stuttering breath, a pale, dainty hand reaches out from beneath the cloak, gripping the handle of one of the lion heads, knocking with eager haste. Even here, the vivid red of the woman was out of place.

No answer. Another few loud “clanks” of the metal and still without an answer. Impatience was running through her veins, making her shake in place: she knew that the beast would burst through the trees at any given moment! Looking back towards the dark wood, the top canopy of trees could be seen rattling and falling over from a great distance, a large cloud of steam rising in the air from the same area. It were as if the beast was emitting so much heat that it was smoking— like this beast held the fires of hell within the very core of its being. With the sinking of her heart, another rush bursted into her! A desperate hand banged on the thick wood of the reinforced door repeatedly, the other holding the unknown object. “Please, let me inside!” A young girl’s voice was heard, stricken with the impossible horror of the beast. Before she could manage more words, another earthquake of a howl roars from the forest, so close that it felt as if the howl came from within her. “Oh, please! I am in danger! I am no harm!” The young girl’s voice croaked, throat tensed as sobs break into her

hopeless cries.

The banging only heightened, strings of pleas accompanying them— then it stilled. The wind had died, the voice of the girl disappeared with the storm—everything had once again calmed. A loud creak resonated from the doors of the castle, the light from within inching wider and wider with the gradual opening. Once fully opened, the flame of a lantern shown forward, warmly lighting the steps of the castle and barely reaching the bridge. The maid, with weary eyes, scanned forward, noticing how the snow on the bridge was disheveled and partly melted, melted into the pattern of ungodly sized paws. Taken aback by the sight, the maid began to close the door until her eyes caught glimpse of something on the floor—a hand-woven basket. It's contents of baked goods were spilled onto the floor, alongside a note and a red cloth, plaid with vacillating white stripes. Reluctantly, the well-dressed woman picks up the white letter, flipping it over and reading:

With love!

To: Grandma

From: Little Red

End

Note: *This story was, as you can probably tell, heavily influenced by “Little Red Riding Hood”! It is my own very short horror and mythological rendition. I took inspiration from Cerberus for the wolf, as I wanted them both to be demons of sorts! I also figured that this was a bit of a magical world, since no normal torches can withstand blizzards: they are certainly enchanted!*

Chukar Partridge -Non-Fiction

Trwska Kallye

It was August 20th of 2009. It was our fourth year living in our very first home on Camino Acequia. It was a little beige home with four light blue posts holding the dark brown roof up. There was a black gate leading to the front door. Inside, the carpet was the first thing that jumped out at you. What was once was an unusual light blue carpet, was now an ashy color from the years of constant life moving through the home.

I was sound asleep in my parent's room on the pale blue carpet. Even though the room was pitch black, the vivid gold paint on their walls still managed to shine. The sound of shuffling and quiet whispers woke me at dawn. I didn't open my eyes or move a muscle. The hard carpet under me felt like a dozen soft pillows and I didn't want to get up. Even though I was all but unconscious, I still felt uneasy. That feeling was soon overcome with sleep once again.

The sun shining through the blinds and the melodic chirping of birds finally woke me for good. I quickly shot up and took in the room around me. My parent's room was the most crowded room in the entire house. The king-sized, four poster bed was taking up most of the space. There was a matching dresser at the foot of the bed which left barely enough room to walk between the two. The night stands on each side of the bed were just a couple centimeters from the walls. I couldn't even begin to explain how they got the five-foot chest to fit in there. However, in that moment, the room felt as empty as the day that we were moved in. I could feel the lump begin to rise in my throat as the birds cheerful singing was drowned out by the ringing in my ears.

Weeks before, I recall my father spending an obsessive amount of time on the computer in the kitchen with his feet kicked up and an empty teacup next to the monitor. He loved sweetened black tea and would have a few cups a day.

"Sara, what about Kirkuk?" he asked, rocking the swivel chair under him back



and forth.

“That’s not a bad idea. You’d be close to our family,” my mom encouraged. I don’t want to go to Kirkuk, I thought. School had just begun and I would miss too many assignments. Whatever vacation they were daydreaming about, they could count me out.

The weeks following that conversation, my parents spent endless nights staying up until the sun rose and making plans in hushed voices. They went to bed late and woke up late. One night, my mom had just finished washing the dishes after dinner. We had my dad’s favorite meal of fried rice and bean soup, a staple Kurdish dish.

“Trwska, do you want to come sleep in our room tonight? It’ll be like a sleep over,” she suggested, even though it was only 8:30pm. I looked up at her. My mom was a 4’11” elementary school teacher. She had been teaching for only four years but it had already given her permanent lines on her forehead from stressing over kids during the day. My eyebrows shot up along with the corners of my mouth. I automatically smashed my finger against the power button on the TV remote and replaced the shrill voice of Fran Drescher with silence. What started off as an exciting night, ended in a dreadful morning the next day.

I dragged my leaden legs out from under the blanket. I got up and slowly walked into the hallway, feeling the rough carpet beneath my feet. Every blind in the house was open, inviting the bright sun to pry my tired eyes open. The white hallway was bare. We never hung any pictures up around the house because we were too lazy. I walked into the kitchen and the back of my mom’s wavy, dark brown hair greeted me. She had medium length hair that was always touched up at the roots to conceal her naturally white hairs that she was so conscious about. She didn’t hear me enter the room, so I had to say something.

“Mom,” I managed to push past the lump in my throat. She turned around and I automatically took in her features. Her brows were furrowed and the bags under her eyes were deeper than they normally were. She had smile lines permanently etched

on her face from 39 years of love, happiness, and laughter, but in that moment, there was not a single trace either.

“Is he gone?” I asked even though I already knew the answer.

“Yes. I dropped him off at the airport a couple of hours ago,” she said gently. She glanced up to look at the clock resting above the computer that he was seated at just last night. “He should be on his flight right now.”

I sat down at the kitchen table just as my mom set a bowl of homemade Greek yogurt in front of me. If he were here right now, he would dip a chunk of bread into the yogurt, I thought. The yogurt, bread and cheese that was usually so appetizing made me nauseous. I couldn't push anything past that lump in my throat that wouldn't go away. My mom sat down across from me and we both looked at each other. I looked at the empty seat to my right and my vision got blurry with uninvited tears. His tired, wrinkled face due to twenty-seven years of smoking wasn't looking back at me. I looked up to force the tears back but they rolled down anyway. I heard a chair scraping against the tile and, a second later, I felt my mom's arms around me. The tears began to fall harder and my breathing became shorter.

“I didn't even get to say goodbye,” I wept.

“Because this isn't goodbye, Trwska. It's just the Air Force. He will be back before you know it,” she soothed to no avail. I still wanted my goodbye, or “see you later.”

That night I was in bed with my mom. She was sleeping where my dad normally slept and I was in my mom's usual spot. That was how we slept for the next couple of months so we didn't feel so alone. The nights felt quieter without his incessant snoring, and the days felt longer without his funny remarks and arguments. We ate whatever we wanted because he wasn't there to be picky anymore, but it never felt right.

My mom kept in touch with my dad until he was finally out of the country. After that, she lost all contact until he got settled in at his base and could contact us. It took a few weeks. One night, he called my mom just before midnight. While the sun was setting for us, it was making its way up to join the clouds in Kirkuk.



“Sara, how are you guys? I made it,” my dad’s familiar voice sounded from over the phone.

“Wshiar! We are doing good, what about you? How is it over there?” my mom fired away with questions.

“It is so hot over here, Sara...” I drowned out the rest of the conversation. I thought about saying something to him but all I could think about was how I didn’t even wake up to say goodbye to him. Was he upset about it, too? The next thing I knew, my mom is saying, “she’s right here, say something,” and she shoved the phone into my hand.

“...hello,” I said cautiously.

“Hi, sweetie,” my dad answered happily.

“What’s up, dad?” I asked. He answered me like he always did. He didn’t sound upset. He sounded just like himself. We talked like we always did, as my mom was occupied by something in the kitchen, as she usually was. He finally had to hang up but before he did, he said, “Trwska, you need to look after the family now that I am not there. Can you do that? I love you and I trust you to do it. You are my little girl, but you are strong enough for the task,” my dad said.

“Yes, I will,” I agreed.

“Good, now give the phone back to your mom for me. Bye, my princess,” he finished. I handed the phone back to my mom who has standing over my shoulder because she knew it was her turn again. I felt like the chukar partridge of Kurdistan, flying with the wind through the blue skies of the villages and above the gray mountains. My mom was right; it wasn’t goodbye because I could still talk to him. He even gave me his email so I could keep in touch with him, and we did. Time may have felt slow in the moment but it always flew by, like the flight of the chukar, so I knew I would be okay. He would be back.



Textured Still Life

Melek Holland



Koi

Kimberly Rivera



Beyond