

# twelvewriters&Kevan

## An Anthology of Prose & Poetry

Composed by the 2013 ADVANCE Creative Writing Course:

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**Instructor:**

Ralph Adamo

**Teaching Assistant:**

Amelia Hall

**Program Director:**

Dr. David Wood

**Assistant Director:**

Ms. Harriette Palmer

**Cover art by Amanda Yates.**

**Back cover art by Allison Walters**

## Katie Assaf

### I Didn't Know I Loved the Sky

I didn't know I loved the sky. It has clouds that are like pillows and they seem so dull but when you wake up you're always happy to see them. And the birds that fly overhead as well, remind me either of dragons or dragonflies, whatever mood I'm in.

I didn't know I liked dragonflies. They look scary when you are up close but when you're far from them you can see a whole group of them, and they're beautiful but loud.

I didn't know I liked noise. It is so much better than silence, silence is sometimes too loud, but regular noise is peaceful. It's all one big circle where silence is loud but noise can be blocked out and is therefore silent. Except for birds, birds can sing whenever they want to.

I didn't know I liked singing. I've always considered myself bad at it but sometimes when I have nothing else to do or am just feeling lousy I'll sing a song, sometimes a real one or sometimes I'll just make up lyrics as I go. I'm good at that.

I didn't know I loved writing. I used to do it all the time but after a while I stopped which was my worst mistake. Fiction takes me away from reality which is good, because reality sucks and fiction is just another way to wonder.

Speaking of reality I didn't know I liked work. If you don't have work you have nothing to do, which is worse than working. I'm sure I will regret that later but right now doing nothing is unheard of because I have so much to do, like writing poetry.

I didn't know I loved poetry until recently. I've always considered myself bad at it but poetry helps me think about birds and clouds. And here we are again at the sky, which still remains as beautiful as ever.

### The Door

On the first day of summer Nick saw it.

He straightened his black vest and walked up to it, pushing an icy hand against the smooth knob that was a door and slowly twisting it.

It was the first day of summer, and like every first day of summer, the door appeared and at least one person was unlucky enough to find it.

Nick knew the story behind the door, and he knew what would happen, but he was so drawn to it, and it was so enticing, that he slowly opened the door and looked into the blackness.

There was a face.

He jumped and stepped back from the door. He knew it didn't matter anyway *-he had opened the door-* but it was comforting to think that he was a little safer, even though he already knew what was going to happen.

They were just rumors, though, and none of them quite described the feeling he had in his chest.

The face looked up at him with a crazed look in its eyes. Its lips parted to reveal three rows of sharp, needle-like teeth.

Nick felt his stomach drop. He couldn't stop looking at the face. Slowly, he stepped into the room, and the door closed behind him and vanished.

"It's the first day of summer," said the face.

"I know," said Nick.

The face smiled and floated closer to him.

"The first day of summer," the face said.

Then Nick dropped into darkness.

A year passed and rumors grew. If you saw a strange door you were not to open it. Of course, there were exceptions.

A little boy called Jack saw the door and just like all others who passed before him, he was drawn to it.

Jack opened the door and stopped inside and there, sitting in front of him, was the face of Nick.

"It's the first day of summer," Nick said.

## **Skeleton Keys**

I'm on a search for skeleton keys  
Walking through tunnels and caves  
Yes, I'm on a search for skeleton keys  
Iron and steel and not caring  
What exactly they unlock  
I'll collect them and then I could say  
I have skeleton keys.

Why have I gathered these damn skeleton keys?  
A curse has been brought upon me  
I cry and I cry and oh god why  
Am I white and bony and please I didn't find  
These terrible keys that unlock the gates in hell  
I've fallen inside  
A hole miles wide  
Because these damn skeleton keys!

## **My Quill**

My quill, made of oak and ash and black dribbling ink.  
My quill, a feathered pen with the down of an angel  
Able to press quick ink onto a surface and  
Draw intricate patterns of beasts and people  
As well as passionate words that strike courage  
Onto children and adults.

My quill, whose writing is delicate but carved  
Alongside knowledge and imagination.  
My quill, which grabs the elements and molds them  
Into lines and stanzas of great phrases  
My quill, which uses diplomacy as its fierce defense  
My quill, which is my friend on days where reality hurts.  
My quill, where when used, can make anything possible.

### **Should I Speak of Nature?**

Should I speak of the leaves?  
Different sizes and shapes of green and red  
Standing upon tan and brown wood  
A nest peeks out from a bush.  
Should I speak of the rain?  
It is a historical wonder and  
A blue drip river from  
The clouds  
Should I speak of the sky?  
Blue then pink then black as  
A sparrow's eyes which also  
Happens to nest in the leaves.

## Ode to Birds

I want to fly like the birds

I want to soar without a care in the world

And preen my blue feathers with my black beak

And glide around the earth.

I would bathe in the rain

And grasp nuts and berries

As well as the feathers of any other bird

Who tried to attack me.

I would feel the wind across my thick wings

And shed off my down in the summer

I would glare at the snakes

With my obsidian eyes and

Shriek at the cats who dared try to catch me

I would sing extra loud for the people nearby to hear

And sing back melodies to children who whistled

I would fly like the birds.

## Amber Bardarson

### Flaws

Always ungrateful,  
Never fully satisfied

We are only human,  
And that's the way it should be.

Soft moon shining,  
The bright sun beams  
But we take it for granted.

Each day is a gift,  
Darkness follows  
And the process starts over

Even our planet is stained  
With the foul aspects of humanity

Yet the shining sun,  
And the green, green grass

Allows for everything  
To be pushed out of consciousness.

## **Perception**

Trees change color based on their mood

Flowers die when they are sad

Human hearts shatter at times

While the animal's mind is free

Earth is the center of the universe

Injuries spill red ink

Everything done is permanent

All people are kind

No child is left behind

We are forever



## Alone

On the first day of summer,  
A sheen of sweat covers the world  
Swimming pools coax us  
To dive into their cool blue depths

The celebration in the animal world  
Becomes calming to hear  
People leave skin uncovered,  
Turning red from the sun's approval

On the first day of summer,  
You crave companionship  
But being alone as the world becomes active  
Is more than all right

Plans have been made  
For you to spend time with friends  
Yet you would prefer a solitary beach  
Over any kind of company

On this day,  
being alone doesn't make you lonely  
On this day,  
The first day of summer

## The Ultimate Fear

When Amber woke up in the white, sterile hospital room she was extremely disoriented. Black spots flitted in and out of her vision and she tried to raise her arm to rub her eyes. There was no response. She tried again, her arm wouldn't move. She tried to twist around and kick her legs, but nothing happened. Panic welled up inside of her as she desperately tried to keep calm. She took a deep breath and looked down at her arms and legs. They looked fine. Nothing bound them and on the outside they looked perfectly normal. This was when the panic really set in. With her breath coming in quick violent gasps, Amber tried to squirm around and regain control of her body but try as she might, nothing happened. Ohmygod Ohmygod Ohmygod Ohmygod she thought. Her heart seemed to pound out a steady rhythm for the Ohmygods to go along with. Ohmygod Ohmygod Ohmygod. Breathing had become difficult and her vision seemed to be failing. Then the doctor walked in. Relief coursed through Amber. He will make everything all right, she thought, he will tell me what is wrong. The doctor fiddled with some complicated-looking machines she hadn't noticed until just then. Then, appearing satisfied, the doctor walked over and began talking to her. She couldn't make sense of what he was saying and when she tried to focus on the words she became dizzy. Then something clicked and she could understand him again. He was gently telling her that she had been in a horrible car accident. A car had smashed into the side of her parent's minivan and the impact had sent the car tumbling off of the road and into a ditch. It had also broken her spine.

She awoke to the yelling of nurses who had rushed into the room after her heart rate had crazily spiked and then plummeted. They all showed signs of obvious relief when she opened her eyes. Then the nurses were sent out and she was left alone with the doctor and her family. Her mother had tears in her eyes as she gently explained what had happened. This time, Amber took the news without passing out. She was a quadriplegic.

## **Potential**

*I am as free as the antelope springing through the grass*

*I am as limitless as time and space combined*

*I am unable to fully comprehend the gifts given to me*

*I am as lucky as any of you*

*I am as ambitious as any of you*

*I am as qualified as any of you*

*I am as talented as any of you*

*I am able to take control of my course*

*I am as powerful as the mighty river thundering through the land*

*I am as diverse as any rainforest*

*I am as impossible for you to figure out as the number of stars in the sky*

*I am as bare as the moon if I allow it*

*I am as talentless as a man who doesn't try if I'm lazy*

*I am completely limited if I listen to society*

*I am as uninteresting as a single celled organism if I want*

*I am made to be torn down by others, yet*

*I am rock solid because I choose to be*

*I am as unbreakable as the heavens above*

*I am anything I allow myself to be*

## **Andrea Colmenares**

### **Five Interesting People**

Mia, a funny and nice person who's one of the most popular girls in my school, who is nice to everyone, and who says random things at random times.

Eddie, a cute and adorable boy who's very sweet, hates school and loves hanging out with me.

Madison, an outgoing and loud girl whose curly blonde hair is impossible to manage and prefers yelling over whispering.

Claire, a once shy girl who barely talked but is now super loud and hyper thanks to yours truly.

Hannah, an obnoxious and hateful girl who thinks everyone likes her but in reality, no one does.

### **The Birthday (Andrea's POV)**

My phone wouldn't stop vibrating on July 4<sup>th</sup> 2018. That was my 18<sup>th</sup> birthday. Everyone was texting me to wish me a happy birthday and to have a great day and stuff. A Particular one caught my eye. It was from an unknown number saying, "Happy Birthday Andrea! You know who I am but I blocked my number so you don't know who this is, haha! Anyways I have something really important to tell you so meet me at 6:30 pm at Starlight Plaza tonight. Be there!" Curious, I started to wonder who it was that sent me that text. After a few minutes, I just shook it off and started watching TV.

Two hours later I went with my mom and my brother to eat at a fancy restaurant as my birthday lunch. As I eating my pasta I saw a boy in sunglasses and a hoodie hold up his phone to me and pointed at it. Confused, I reached for my phone and I realized I had a text. I gasped and looked at the boy again but he was gone. "Hmm," I said to myself. "Strange..." I shrugged and opened the text. It was from another unknown number and said, "4 more hours till 6:30! Can't wait to meet

you at Starlight Plaza! Be there!” My eyes widened and I made a confused face. My brother asked me what was wrong but I ignored him and turned off my phone. “It’s nothing.” I told my worried mom as I continued to eat my pasta.

I spent the rest of the afternoon contemplating who it could be that was sending me those texts. Something I found strange was that the texts seemed like they were sent by different people. The first text was in complete sentences and the second was in choppy, incomplete sentences. But they both said, “Be there!” at the end of the text. Still thinking about the texts, I looked at my clock and it said 6:00 pm. I bit my lip and asked myself, “Should I go?” after about 10 minutes of arguing with myself, I had decided... I would go.

It was 6:30 pm and I was standing in Starlight Plaza. I looked up in the sky and frowned because usually there would be fireworks in the air right now. It was Independence Day, you know. But I shrugged it off and looked around for the mystery person I was waiting for. When, all of a sudden, I heard fireworks going off in the sky. After two minutes I realized that the fireworks spelled out, “HAPPY BIRTHDAY ANDREA” I gasped and covered my mouth with my hands. Then, all of my friends jumped out from behind a bush and screamed, “SURPRISE!!!”

## **The Birthday (Cody’s POV)**

Today was the day! Andrea’s 18<sup>th</sup> birthday party! All of Andrea’s friends and I have been planning this party forever! We were all supposed to send her happy birthday texts and I would send her one that said, “Happy Birthday Andrea! You know who I am but I blocked my number so you don’t know who this is, haha! Anyways I have something really important to tell you so meet me at 6:30 pm at Starlight Plaza tonight. Be there!” After I had sent the text I smiled to myself and said, “Cody, you are a genius...”

At around 2:15 pm, I headed to where Andrea, her mom, and her brother were going for lunch. I know where she was going since she told me. Anyways, I dressed up in a hoodie and sunglasses and snuck in the restaurant. My other friend, Olivia, had gone to the restaurant and was sitting by a table that had a perfect view of Andrea's table. When Olivia saw me, she gave me a sneaky wink, pulled out her phone and then left to go to the bathroom. I walked over to where Olivia was sitting and sat down. Andrea was calmly eating her pasta and then she looked straight at me. Doing what I had rehearsed, I held out my phone to her and pointed at it. Immediately she looked at her phone and I got up and walked away, smiling. Everything was going perfectly to plan.

It was finally 6:30 pm., woo! I was so pumped and ready to surprise Andrea! I had called all her friends and made them come down to Starlight Plaza to surprise Andrea. As soon as we saw her walk out into the open, we readied the fireworks and lighted them up. When they finished spelling out "HAPPY BIRTHDAY ANDREA", all of us ran out from behind the bush we were hiding and yelled, "SURPRISE!!" The look on Andrea's face was priceless! She was so shocked! When she saw me, she gave me a giant hug! She thanked everyone at least fifty times. We then told her how we did it and how we spent like two months rehearsing it. Olivia told her who planned the whole thing and Andrea was so surprised at me. She gave me like ten hugs and said, "Thanks so much, Cody! This is amazing!" I smiled and said, "No problem." And for the rest of the night, we partied...hard.

## **The Worst Fear**

Andrea's worst fear is happening. She's going to die alone. She takes a deep breath and exhales. "I can't believe it..." she mutters. "I'm actually going to die alone." After finishing that sentence, her chest heaves up and then she enters into a coughing fit. Her ghost white hair is brushed over her once energetic and her eyes, full of life, are now dull and worn down by time. The face that had once been such a beautiful tan is now full of wrinkles and soggy. The nurse hears her patient coughing and rushes into the room. At once, she gives Andrea a glass of water

and pats her back. The coughs soon calm down and the nurse sighs in relief. Andrea smiles faintly at the nurse and then waves her away. When the nurse leaves the room, Andrea lies in her hospital bed and stares at the ceiling. Her eyelids are getting heavier and heavier. Without knowing it, she falls asleep and dreams of a time happier than the time right now.

Its July 4<sup>th</sup> 2024, Andrea's 24<sup>th</sup> birthday. One of her friends organized the party and it turned out to be really fun. One guy her age asks Andrea to dance but she politely declines. Then, the dream changes to August 28<sup>th</sup> 2039, and Andrea is over at her friend's house taking care of her children instead of going out on a date that one of her guy friends asked her on. As she rushes to calm down her friend's crying baby, she tells herself that she would rather be alone than to have a husband and children. Boy is she wrong. The night of May 23<sup>rd</sup> 2052, Andrea is with her brother and his family, attending her nephew's graduation from college. She's sitting next to a man who her sister in law set her up with. The man tried to flirt with her but Andrea turns him down since she's convinced that she's too old to date. Now, the dream has changed to December 24<sup>th</sup> 2078, where Andrea is at her house celebrating Christmas alone. She would have been celebrating with her brother's family but he died last year at the ripe age of 81. His wife, who was so upset over his passing, died a few months ago. As Andrea wheels her wheelchair to her little Christmas tree on her kitchen counter, she sighs and wonders what would've happened if she didn't decline the boys offer to dance, or flirted back with the man at her nephew's graduation ceremony. But it's too late now. Andrea's just going to have to deal with it. The dream ends but Andrea's eyes remained closed. In fact, they're going to remain closed, and will never open again. Andrea's body goes limp and her arm falls off the bed. When she was younger, Andrea would imagine her dying moment with her husband and family by her side, gripping her hand. But no, Andrea's story ends with her dying alone. All alone.

## **A Man Who**

A man who smiles faintly at a funny part in his book.

A man who holds his loved ones close to his heart.

A man who kisses his wife and children in the morning before going to work.

A man who yells at his children if they misbehave.

A man who pets his trustworthy dog.

A man who laughs at a joke his friends make, even if it's not funny.

A man who flies planes for fun.

A man who works hard at his job.

A man who complains about his hair getting white.

A man who cooks steak for his family.

A man who loves the outdoors and hosting barbeques.

A man who tucks his children in bed and then goes to sleep.

A man who is always right, no matter what.

A man who is my dad.

## **Rain**

Rain, the cold drops of water that fall from the sky.

The refreshing feel of cool liquid on my face.

Rain, it makes a unique sound whenever it hits the ground.

It also has a unique smell like no other.

Rain, whether there's a lot or a little, it gets the ground soaking wet.

And almost anyone will slip and fall if they're not careful.

Rain, the droplets stick to leaves of trees and fall on anyone who walks by.

It also provides a water source for all kinds of animals.

Rain, not everyone enjoys it.

But I do.



## **For I Will Consider My Bunny Mouse**

For I will consider my rabbit mouse.

For he is a very lazy bunny.

For when he nuzzles my ankles whenever he wants to go back in his cage.

For when he gets a sudden burst of energy and sprints across the yard.

For he is cautious when approaching a larger animal.

For he searches for his favorite food then devours it on sight.

For his ears are so long, he looks a little like Bugs Bunny.

For his bright yellow coat that turns brown in the summer.

For how he can make me and my family so happy.

For how I love him with all my heart.

## Cynthia Jin

### Only a Dream

I dreamed of confessing to murder, and you didn't care  
I dreamed of anger like electricity and fights like thunderstorms  
I dreamed of happiness like starlight  
I dreamed of knowing *your* dreams  
I dreamed of knowing the shadows, and not being afraid  
I dreamed of seeing the light, and basking in it  
I dreamed of blood mixed with blood  
I dreamed of sisters

### For My Parents

My parents have eyes that are polished stones.  
Their eyes hold sharpened daggers and soft feathers.  
Their hands are flat deserts, worn by time.  
On their heads is spilled black ink.  
Their thoughts smooth flowing rivers.

### Fear

Fear looks like the shadows in dimly lit corners  
Fear smells of ash and rust  
Fear sounds like the pound of a racing heart  
Fear tastes of dust and dirt and thirst  
Fear feels like a sickness: desperate, cold, and painful

### Sunday Mornings

On Sunday mornings,  
The echoed yawns of a household follow the trickle of coffee in a pot.  
On Sunday mornings,  
The bedroom floor is treacherous, (you've hurt your toes more than once)  
On Sunday mornings,  
There are bird's nests atop of heads and coal under eyes.

## Phobia

She was not prepared. Sure she knew it could happen, but she never thought it *would* happen. So here she is, and she doesn't know what to do with her life.

A job as a doctor or lawyer is a common goal among her peers, but she didn't want to do that. She didn't know what she wanted until it was too late. Her teachers always said she'd be lucky if she actually found a job she enjoyed, and they were right.

A job pursuing the arts sounds enjoyable, but it is much too late for that. Her parents always said that it was risky and didn't pay much, anyway. She also likes other things, but she doesn't even know where to start with things like those.

She should consider herself lucky; she has a job that pays and a small apartment. But the job isn't permanent and she knows her parents aren't proud. She went to a college, but not the best. Never the best.

The most important thing, she thinks, is that she is not happy. She's lost. She gets up every day and goes to a job she hates, then comes home to eat and sleep and do chores. She's not expecting an epic adventure like in the books she read as a child, but where's the happiness? She can already see it, and average life, an average death. She'll just be another number.

## Definition

I am the sum of my sins.

I am selfish and petty.

I am alone and scared.

I am mortal and fragile.

I am not who I want to be, but I am more than this.

I am more.

I am more than flesh and bone.

I am more than the blood that flows in my veins.

I am more than the worst part of me.

I am more than my mistakes.

## You Don't Have to Be Alone

Two girls sat in the coffeehouse, drinking steaming cups of black coffee. The older one sat facing the window, her blonde hair pulled up in a ponytail.

“What'd you get for number four?” she asked.

“Seven.” her companion answered.

The brunette scrawled the answer down on her sheet of paper and took a sip of her coffee.

“Ugh, too bitter.”

“I told you to get some sugar.”

“I didn't think I'd need any. You know I don't like coffee anyway.”

“But *you* know we have nowhere else to go.”

“That's a lie and you know it. It's just me and my mom back home. We could go there. You could visit anytime you want, for as long as you want. It won't bother us.”

“We hang out over there all the time, Laura.”

“I'm just saying, if you ever need-“

“I don't *need* anything.”

“You keep saying that.”

“Cause its true; I'm perfectly fine where I am.”

“No, I know you Cass. You're not.”

“I am. Why can't you see I'm getting along?”

“How? How are you even getting your money? Where do you sleep?” Cassie sighed and rubbed her eyes before answering. “It's none of your business.”

“It's all of my business. You gotta stop pushing people away, Cassie. You've been through enough.”

“I'm not pushing *anybody* away. I'm not a goddamn charity case. Can we just please stop talking about this?”

Laura sighed and looked out the window. Businessmen were rushing to work as street vendors shouted at potential customers. But unlike outside, it was quiet in the coffee shop, the only people in the building being the two girls and the employees. The brunette eyed the muted,

earthen colors of the walls. Probably intended to be soothing. Too bad they couldn't dissipate the tension between her and Cass.

“Can you please just consider it? For me?”

A sigh. “Fine.”

“That's all I ask.”

## **Ode to Books**

I've always liked you.  
 For you take me to new worlds  
 And I feel the heat of the desert  
 Taste the copper of blood  
 And always do what's right.  
 I know what it's like to lose a brother and burn on the stake.  
 To be the most popular girl in school, and the least.  
 To live through an apocalypse and be a double agent, triple agent, even.  
 To be a superhero, flying through the sky.  
 Ah, you and your white, white sheets  
 I would like to carve my words onto you someday  
 And bleed my knowledge onto your pages.  
 But lately, I've grown to hate you  
 Because me? I've never done anything.  
 And what is life, but day in, day out, school and work?  
 I laugh and laugh when heroes say, between tears,  
 “I just wanna be normal.”  
 Because that's everything I don't want to be.  
 But today, I'll settle for you and your wilted, aging pages.

## **Rain**

In movies, rain is where couples kiss  
 and heroes brood.  
 Heartbroken fools cry, and water mixes with tears.  
 People die, and the water turns crimson.  
 Bubbly young girls dance, and are soaked.  
 But the truth is,  
 Rain is what people run away from,  
 They strip out of their clothes,  
 ice cold and uncomfortable.

Rain is what you shake out of umbrellas and shoes.  
 Rain is the musky smell left on leather.  
 It is a melody, a dream, a nightmare.  
 It is, but isn't, what's shown in movies.

## **A Self-Destructive Wish**

If I had a superpower,  
 It would be shape shifting, and I would live a thousand lives.  
 I would be the girl who was loved by everyone, but belonged to no one.  
 I would be the artist with a notebook full of sketches and head full of stories.  
 I would be the girl who stayed out too late, and the girl who never left her house.  
 I would be the girl who played football with the boys and the girl who's afraid to get her shoes  
 dirty.  
 I would be a boy, just once.  
 My lover would be a girl, just once.  
 I would clean streets with my calloused, scarred hand  
 And drink champagne with my pale, clean one.  
 My tongue would taste the exotic spices of India  
 And glide over the smooth words of the Spanish.  
 My feet would burn on the scorching desert sand  
 And soak in the waters of the oceans.  
 I would be the girl with the sharp, sharp teeth who ate men up.  
 I would be the girl with the wings, that flew and flew and never stopped.  
 I would get drunk on power, I would kill without qualms.  
 And it would be me who overthrows the brutal dictator  
 And stay awake at night with my red stained hands.  
 I would love myself and I would hate myself.  
 I would be too complicated to explain.  
 And one day, I would forget myself and think  
 Who am I? Who am I?  
 Who was I?  
 And I would search through thousands of lives, thousands of names  
 And I won't know.

## **Eric Lin**

### **Rain**

Rain. One of the 3 phases in the water cycle. This magical event occurs when clouds form and precipitate giving us the fresh water we need by leaking it from the sky. The rain supports the life on the ground with all the water it should need to thrive. It cools the hot summer air but not too much as to freeze us all. In the winter, it comes in the form of snow. When this happens, people play in the snow rolling around and building all sorts of shapes. People laugh and play in the rain because it's just something that gives us joy. Many different kinds of people pray for the rain because of the life and happiness it bring. Rain is life and rain is joy, but it definitely isn't sorrow.

## **Dried Ink Pens**

Everyone has that one little issue that they can't stand. Not like a pet peeve but more like something that angers you whether it's a certain person, items, area, etc. I can't stand pens that dry up. Whenever a pen dries, it looks like it still has ink and you just can't use it. This angers me because I'll be in a rush so I take a pen and leave but when I use it later, it's dry and I won't have a pen to use any more. You can still see all of the ink still usable; out of reach; slowly killing me.

It continues to get worse because I'll throw it against the wall just to have it bounce back at me or I would get another pen that's also dry. After I get through a few pens (because I forget to throw away pens sometimes or I just don't want to throw away the pen) I just start screaming and breaking stuff. I'll get even madder if one of the pens is a pen that I really love. In that event, I take something heavier (preferably a rock) and throw it in whatever direction I'm in.

Finally, if worst happens, that being 2 or more of my better pens run dry, I take any pens that are dry, but still have ink in them, and snap them all in half. The result is ink collecting all over my hands because there is usable ink in them. This just ultimately drives me insane because 1. I lost good pens, 2. There's ink all over my hands, and 3. I have to go and get more pens. (Breaking pens really isn't a good idea but it helps to loosen my frustration.)



## **Falling Table**

A table stands beside a gaping hole in the ground  
One of the legs breaks and it begins to tilt forward  
Another hole appears beside the first  
They join to make an even larger hole until  
The table stops falling so it stands on 3 legs alone  
More and more holes join the first making it a  
Single void swallowing everything in its path  
The table falls victim and it plunges into the  
Dark never-ending void. Darkness engulfs  
This ordinary table until it lands but  
How far down, nobody knows  
All that is left is a shattered table  
At the bottom of this black abyss.

## **He Has Left**

I watched him go. His belly was pointed upwards in the water and the life drained out of both of our systems. The entire household seemed to fade away. His fish bowl; cloudy with death as it seemed. I did not know how people dealt with the sorrow that this sort of event brought forth. My mother and father had come to help me give a proper burial. The maelstrom of water circling down the bowl releasing his soul back to the ocean whilst I watched with moistened eyes and puffy cheeks. At first I felt as if nature wanted me to suffer from the pain and sorrow but then I knew that he needed to be released eventually, back to his free world where no one is trying to tame him.

## **Things I Didn't Know I Loved**

I didn't know I loved windows until they let me see the world's light from inside a room.

I didn't know I loved the chairs that give me the support to keep myself off the floor.

I didn't know I loved the walls that block the outside world from the inside realms that I  
live in.

I didn't know I loved my brother who has known me all my life until I realized I don't.

I didn't know I loved the ceiling that has protected me from the phenomenon that is  
weather.

I didn't know I loved food but I learned that that is a lie and I have always loved food.

I didn't know I loved pens until I realized I needed one to write this poem.

## Ode to Rice

The smell of steamed rice making your mouth water  
The filling sensation your stomach receives when you eat rice  
White rice steamed to perfection that goes well with any good meal  
It creates the basis of many traditional Asian meals and cultures  
Rice, the essence of life in many countries and especially in Asian countries  
It is found in many different cuisines but is also eaten by itself  
Rice lives as a creature feeding others around the world with its descendants.

## Hipsters

A lullaby to your average hipster  
The amusement park that has a medley of  
Roller coasters and pompous palaces  
He listens to the laughs and cries of park-goers.

The hipster sits in his titanium  
Coffee shop a galaxy away protected  
From the apocalypse that will destroy all  
Writing his poem about everyone else.

## Gregory Maidoh

### Fear

Fear sounds like the engines of a plane stripping mid flight  
 Fear feels like a plane stalling and falling out of the sky  
 Fear smells like burning gas  
 Fear tastes like vanilla cupcake that tastes like almonds  
 Fear looks like a huge wave coming at you

### A man who

A man who teaches creative writing.  
 A man who is a servant to his kids.  
 A man who is happily married.  
 A man who plays the saxophone.  
 A man who just found out his relative died in Syria in a car bombing.  
 A man who is such a good swimmer he is one with the water.  
 A man who kills another man under orders.  
 A man who committed suicide to evade harsh punishment before being captured by the Allied Forces.  
 A man who is struck dumb by lightning.

### Stoned

Greg's deepest darkest and most scary fear came to past. He was stoned but not to death. He was kidnapped by terrorists and was not heard of for a month. He was later found malnourished and brutally beaten and stoned. He was immediately put in a hospital; his captors unknown. He had 20 different surgeries within the first 4 days. He was bed-ridden for 8 months in a full body cast. When asked about the atrocity, he says it was his worst fear come true. He says he feels like a convict who has finally come out of jail for a long time. H is still scared by every sound and touch. He says it's really hard to adjust back to regular life. Things like his little brother tapping can cause a panic attack. The doctors have diagnosed him with PTSD. He says the physical

recovery is almost done but mentally and emotionally he is scarred for life. Doctors say he will be able to lead a normal life.

## **Perspective**

I was walking down the street when I saw a cute little dog. Naturally I bent down to pet him. He looked like it so after a while I got up awkwardly and saw this woman staring at me and smiling.

I was walking down the street and I turned the corner I see a man bend down to pet a dog that obviously isn't his. He petted and scratched him which caused me to smile. He then got up sheepishly and saw me smiling.

I work as a traffic surveillance watchman. I just watch the roads and streets. Today I saw this pretty girl walking when she turned the corner and stopped. After a few minutes she starts smiling and walks away.

## **Freestyle**

My phone wouldn't stop vibrating. We were hiding from them. They were mean, harsh, and egotistic. On top of it all they were racist. They were Neo-Nazis. They were cold-blooded killing machines. We were in my room on the first floor in the first suite on the right side. We had been chased by them for a couple hours and now we were going to take a stand. I was in the closet with Gerard and Trey ready to pop out at a sounds notice. There were about 30 of us including seven white rebels. At the moment Eric, Marshal, Andrew, Joe, Thomas, and Ben were working on the three windows, two people a window. Allie and Amber were rigging a fragment smoke bomb so that when NN would come it would have blown the door off the wall and kill the first wave of people. As soon as the windows opened everyone who was not doing a job left to scout

and provide protection so we could start the journey to capture Keiser and eventually Morrison. After the first group of people left, Allie and Amber rushed out the window people so they could make a motion-activated FSB like the one on the door. When they finished, my group and I left and they left, and Amber activated the trap and we left for Keiser.

## **Random**

The choir with their open mouths singing loudly and keeping a smile on their face and then the pastor reading the scripture.

The wonderful smell of coffee brewing and feeling well rested because everybody knows the best part of waking up is Folgers in your cup.

Hearing the news anchor talking in a muffled tone because of the low TV volume.

## **Neighborhood**

I live in a very nice neighborhood. It's not secluded like Australia but it is not the center of attention like the football quarterback at lunch. There is less traffic on my street than the road less traveled. Our neighborhood is not cold and hostile like border patrol to illegal immigrants but warm and welcoming like that grandma who always greets you with a big smile, enveloping hug, and hot cookies. My neighborhood is like a family that always helps when you're in a tough situation. There is this one man who I always see with his wife and dog. They always greet me with a good morning and a big smile. I believe they live a little down the road. Every November the neighborhood throws a block party. I have been told it is really fun with good food and lots of games. I've never been to it because I'm always busy with a band festival.

## **Assassin**

The beautiful assassin is very lovely  
She is even lovelier than the turquoise ocean  
What she does for a living, most people would  
Think it's a horror story told to frighten kids  
The sparkle in her eye brings out the humor  
In me. The geek in me leaves when I'm around her  
In the literal sense. The feeling that she gives  
Me makes me want to stir up a pot of gumbo

## **Ode to my Bed**

My bed is my safe haven  
I go to it when I am frustrated or sad  
You provide me a comfy spot to go into the subconscious  
While also hardly ever getting dirty  
You don't take up too much space but at the same time you provide ample sleeping area  
Like Sheldon's spot in Big Bang Theory  
You are my 0,0,0,0

## Holly McGinnis

### Hernando

Hernando is a happy place. It's the kind of place that gives you a 'welcome-back-home' kind of feeling. Hernando is small, but always growing. It's got history next to modern small businesses. There's usually wind blowing through trees full of birds. The tiny clock tower on the square plays a tune on the hour. In the rural parts, Hernando has older buildings, bait shops, and pastures. There's always some kind of wildlife, from horses, to raccoons, to sometimes one of the deer that fill the woods. Most people in Hernando are kind, honest people, like neighbors should be. Hernando has great places to hang out on the weekends without having to deal with the traffic of a real city. Hernando has parks and places for kids to play. It has churches and banks and restaurants. Hernando even has a tiny museum with a log cabin out front. Hernando is proud of its history and the fact it was named after Hernando De Soto. Hernando is a proud little country town, but sophisticated in its own way. It has new growth and its future is looking bright. It always has a Christmas parade and the weekly farmer's market is a big thing. It has movies on the courthouse lawn in the summer and loves to host 5Ks. There are baseball games and horse shows on weekends.

### Daughter

This is how you use the washer; sort the clothes; you can wash all these together; this is how you use the blender; stand up straight, shoulders back; load the dishwasher; vacuum my bedroom while I'm gone please; don't leave your dishes in the sink, put them into the dishwasher if the dishes in it are dirty; help me put the sheets on the bed; lift, tuck; pillows with the open side of the pillow case facing the door; *but it looks better with it symmetrical, pointing the opposite way*; this is how they taught me in nursing school; turn off the computer, no more screen time; if you're not doing anything, can you take the stuff on the staircase up the stairs; this is how you tenderize meat; this is how you set the table; *why isn't the fork on the right, that would just make sense*; this is how you wash the bath tub; this is how you dust the furniture; can you bring in the groceries; *no*; let me rephrase that, please start bringing in the groceries; this is how you be



outgoing; this is how you make a sandcastle; this is how you have fun with your mom; this is how you put a nail in the wall for a picture without Dad knowing; this is how you annoy your daughter I'm guessing; this is how you say I love you

## **A Study on Character**

She's the woman in the coffee shop. She's helping an honor's student on a thesis paper. She's a working mom with rebellious teens at home, but when you've raised three it's not a big deal. She's worked hard for her professor position, and worked herself thin getting her master's degree online with 5 kids at home. One can do a lot during a 2 hour nap lull.

She has dark hair and a long and angular face. She's tan a little; she had Native American ancestors way up on the family tree. She looks her age, no older, no less. She is 44 years old. She has lines under her eyes, not really bags.

Her student is a good one; she's glad to help her. Since college students love coffee (she should know; she has three) she suggested meeting at the local coffee shop. As her student writes and occasionally asks questions, she creates an exam for one of her other classes.

She thinks about her oldest child, Angela. Angela is preparing to graduate from LSU next month. She is going to be a pediatric dentist, and at 24, she is right on track. She thinks of her own college days. She thinks of the newness of married life, the difficulty of taking care of babies, and the stress of trying to go to college. She had dropped out to be a full time mom after 6 months of college. She had to put all her plans on hold. She is glad none of her children have made the same choices she did.

Suddenly, her phone rings. It is Trey, her second oldest. At 22, he is completely independent, but calls to check in frequently. She lets it go to voicemail and answers a question from her student.

She looked up as the door jingles and her 16 year old daughter, Jamy, walks in with her friend. She smiles. Now that Jamy has her license, she goes to the coffee house every day. She goes back to her exam writing; she doesn't want to embarrass Jamy.

"There should be a comma there, honey," she says, pointing to an error in the student's paper. Then she gets up and goes to the restroom. She checks her text messages. There is only 1, from her youngest son, Tanner. It reads:

“Hey Mom! Finished summer math! Booyah! Just read an awesome Bible verse. Tell it 2 u when u get home. Really want to talk to u.” She smiles. Tanner is going to be a pastor, she just knows it. A 13 year old boy can’t be that into Jesus and not have a career in ministry ahead of him. This makes her think of her own rocky faith.

She wasn’t born in a religious home, not any type of religion, not any god. When she was 17 her life changed dramatically. Her aunt Shelby, who she was extremely close to, moved to Kenya as a missionary. She was so disappointed. She had thought her aunt was more sensible. Now it seemed her aunt was just another crazy Jesus freak. Two weeks after Shelby landed in Kenya our character’s dad, Mason, died of a massive heart attack. Shelby was devastated. Our character thought it was stupid, but Shelby said she knew Mason wasn’t a Christian, and she was never going to see him again. Our friend was frightened at the idea of going to hell, so she started going to church. She realized there was so much love, grace, mercy, and purpose in the lives of Christ-followers, and she knew she had to have this Jesus.

Here she is now with her baby boy destined to be a pastor or missionary.

She walks out and speaks to her student,

“It’s 4:15. I think we should call it a day. I’ll answer any last questions, then we should both go home.” The student says she’s just about done and packs up her laptop. Our friend drives home.

She cooks dinner, and at about 6:30, dinner is ready. She, Tanner, her husband John, and their middle child, Madison, sit down and eat dinner. Madison was the genius of the family. Her best ACT score was a 34, and she had a full-ride scholarship to her college. This summer she was going to be a group leader at the academic summer camp she loved when she was in high school. Now, she was talking excitedly and trying to keep her long blonde hair behind her shoulders.

“Madison, we get you’re excited, but will you just shut up?” Jamy says.

“Jamy, we listened to all your outlandish plans about going into the Air Force,” John said. “Why can’t we listen to Madison talk about something that is going to happen and she’s excited about?” Jamy’s face got red, and she slid down in her chair, dejected.

She was glad to have a husband like John. They had been high school sweethearts and had rushed rather wildly into marriage straight after graduation, but through the crashing storms God had helped their boat stay afloat, and now they were sailing on much calmer waters.

As she smiles on her little domestic scene and later completes her full day, you might become increasingly irritated, because you don't know her name. My suggestion would be to ask her; she's the woman in the coffee shop.

## **Daddy**

I always want to be someone you're proud of  
And I'm so glad I'm someone you love.  
I'll always be glad for a father like you  
When I look back and realize how high I flew.

## **Truth**

I have ten large toes that twitch when I'm asleep.  
I am not competitive and don't mind when I lose.  
I am a singer with the voice of an angel.  
I hate swimming and hate to be wet.  
I am always free, with nothing to do.  
I hate music; it is just noise.  
My curly hair falls around my shoulders like waves.  
My blue eyes sparkle in the sunlight.  
My favorite animal is a giraffe.  
My dad is a pilot, and my mom is a doctor.  
My dog is a Great Dane and is truly great.  
My room is tiny and on the third floor.  
All of these are lies, but really what is truth?  
To most people truth is lies they believe in.

## Ode to Cats

Cats have not forgotten the Egyptians' worship.  
 They are proud, vain, little puffballs who casually reject human friendship.  
 They are lithe, agile critters that I admire.  
 Cats are self-pleasing creatures of beauty who love to be comfortable.

Kittens are adorable and teeny.  
 They have tiny paws and love to play with yarn balls.  
 Kittens always sound helpless, even when they're not.  
 Everyone likes pictures of kittens in a flower pot.

Cats are quizzes full of trick questions  
 In a room full of open book tests.  
 To them humans are Martians,  
 But living our houses beats living in a forest.

Whether cat or kitten, whether agile or clumsy,  
 Any felis domestica is cute and fluffy.

## Summer Plumbers

On the first day of summer  
 I really need a plumber.  
 One broken toilet to six girls is definitely a bummer  
 Especially on the first day of summer.

At the beginning of this season,  
 I could really use a reason  
 For all the toilet treason  
 Especially on the first day of this season.

I'm pouring out my summer camp woes  
 From toilets, to ants, to washing clothes  
 At 5 a.m. a hair drier that blows  
 A whole night long of frozen toes.

I like summer camp, I really do.  
 I get to talk to great people, more than a few,  
 And so far as yet no one's got the flu.  
 Most people really don't have a clue  
 How great summer camps can be with people like you.  
 (Just don't eat the cafeteria stew!)

## Shelby McHenry

### Ma

My mother's face which is as beautiful as Demeter's.  
Her good spirit which spreads like a wildfire.  
Her eyes which shine like brilliant stars.  
Her smile which is as bright as the sun.  
My mother's feet with the gracefulness of a flamingo.  
Her love which is stronger than gravity.  
Her heart which beats like a bass drum.  
Her ears which listen like a bat.  
My mother who seems to do everything right.

### A woman who...

A woman who stands tall.  
A woman who bows.  
A woman who speaks.  
A woman who is quiet.  
A woman who is adored.  
A woman who is hated.  
A woman who is voluptuous.  
A woman who is petite.  
A woman who has beautiful hair.  
A woman who has split ends.  
A woman who grows.  
A woman who shrinks.  
A woman who has kids.  
A woman who is infertile.  
A woman who is married.  
A woman who is widowed.  
A woman who is she.

## Elizabeth

The screaming finally stopped after what seemed like forever. When the screaming stopped, I knew another life had been tortured and taken. I slowly opened the door so as to not disturb Master as he cleaned up. I stood at the door until he beckoned me to him. I walked quickly because Master hated waiting on anybody, especially the servants. As I walked closer to the operating table, I see the victim was a young woman who looked to be in her early twenties. There was something unusual about her that I couldn't place my finger on. She didn't look dead although she had no pulse and she wasn't breathing. I was so intrigued by her appearance; I didn't hear what Master told me to do. Just as he realized I hadn't been listening, he raised his hand up to strike me but before his hand reached my face, her hand lashed out and stabbed Master in the eyes. Master cried out in pain as she pushed the scalpels, which were just in her body, deeper and deeper into Master's eyes. I stood there in shock uncertain of what to do. As Master fell to the floor he started to bleed but not just from his eyes. He seemed to bleed from every one of his pores. It wasn't a trickle either; blood was flowing, soaking through his clothes forming a puddle on the floor. A faint chuckle snapped me out of my concentration on Master. It was coming from the woman who had just killed the only person who I knew. Only now, she was dressed in a see-through black dress without any of the pain and discomfort Master had just put her through showing. As she laughed in delight, she felt my eyes boring into her wondering how and why she killed him. So she began to tell me the story of how many years ago, her and Master met at a party. They were both drunk and decided on Master's house as the closest and easiest place to stumble to. Back then, Master was a lot more inexperienced in his work so he shouldn't have tried this experiment tipsy. After Elizabeth, as she told me was her name, passed out on Master's couch, he developed an idea to create the perfect woman. He carried her down to the basement and immediately put her into a deeper sleep. As he began his operation, he realized that he had mixed the wrong chemicals together. As he tried to correct his mistake, Elizabeth began to glow a dirty green color. Then all of a sudden, the tiny incisions he had made disappeared and Elizabeth began to wake up. As she tried to grasp where she was, something inside of her lifted her body and carried her away. Her body took her back to her house. She floated in through the window, collapsed on her bed and slept. She woke up a week later with a vengeance. Elizabeth told me she spent the next 10 years getting stronger and learning how to use her new powers properly. Then story time was over; she grabbed Master's motionless body and flew out the window. I couldn't do anything but stand there. I had never heard anything like that and now I had no one to take care of me. I sat down and began to think.

## Worst Fear

It happened. Her Nana had passed away. All her mom told her was that she was at the hospital, dead. Shelby dropped the phone and stood in shock. When her emotions finally kicked in, she fell to the floor vomiting until she was empty and crying until she was numb. Her mother arrived home and found her on the kitchen floor lying in a pool of vomit. Every day, Shelby sat in her room staring at the blank walls, occasionally eating. She felt as if because her grandmother was gone, she was too. Finally the day of the funeral came and Shelby got up extra early that morning to pray about everything, constantly asking God “why?” He seemed to almost immediately respond in her head saying that it was time for her Nana to join him in Heaven and leave earth. Shelby began to cry but tears didn’t come out, instead it was blood. She asked her Father “why?” He told her she shouldn’t be crying over such a joyous occasion and that she need to stop crying at once. Then she heard her Nana’s voice, sounding like the sweetest sound, calling her saying that regardless of what Shelby thinks, everything will be fine. Her Nana began to sing their song:

“I just called to say I love you.  
 I just called to say how much I care.  
 I just called to say, I love you.  
 And I mean it from the bottom of my heart.”

This is what made Shelby discontinue her weeping and smile. Later on at the funeral, Shelby got up and sang the song to her Nana, making it feel like old times. She walked up and told her she couldn’t wait to see her again and to tell everyone “hey.” Nana seemed to smile in her sleep, acknowledging everything Shelby told her.

## Ode to Sleeping

Sleeping is heaven on earth.  
 Sleeping is my escape from the cold harsh world.  
 Sleeping lets me experience all the ‘what ifs.’  
 Sleeping gives me the life and energy to go on.  
 Sleeping brings me a certain high  
 Sleeping is as if you were dead to the world with a beating heart and working lungs.  
 Sleeping is amazing; I wish I was asleep right now.

## The Superhero

She had a look of disgust on her face as she made a frozen coffee for one of the college brats that are always in there. She obviously has something she would much rather be doing. She is about to take her break when a very impatient woman walks in. Being the only one on duty, she is forced to stay at the register. However, instead of taking the order of the impatient woman, Karen ran to the back, bypassing her coworker. By the time he reached the exit, Karen had disappeared. She had run off to go answer one of her many superhero calls, but she felt as if this one would be very different. As she begins to take flight in her bird mobile, all her internal sensors and alarms go off. Something wasn't right but she couldn't worry about it just then. So she ignores them and continues flying. When she is about five minutes from the cries of help, she presses her button to change clothes but nothing happens. She presses it again but still nothing happens. She lands her bird mobile in the alley right behind a little restaurant and gets out to see why her clothes wouldn't launch. She opens the door and as soon as she gets out, someone grabs her and puts a knife to her throat. She giggles and explains that she is a superhero with inhuman powers they never want to see. He laughs, amused at the crazy lady with the very nice car. Karen begins to count down from ten, her eyes turning black as she gets closer to one. Sadly, the "robber" doesn't see this happening and ends up melting into a clear liquid, which Karen proceeds to consume. Once she is done feeding, she gets back into her car and presses the button once more and her suit flies onto her. She runs into the restaurant and sees a woman being beaten senseless with a plate. Karen yells for him to stop or prepare to die. He takes her for a fool and walks up to her with lots of cockiness. He asks her what she could possibly do, and she tells him it would best if he didn't find out. He takes this as a challenge and raises the plate to Karen's face. She easily deflects his blow and breaks his arm. As he is crying out in pain, Karen rushes over to the lifeless body of the woman and clears her head. She is going to revive the woman with the lives she has taken. As she begins to whiten her eyes she feels something on her head. It isn't painful, but she's curious what it might be. She takes a few seconds to regain sight and sees it is the same man trying to hurt her. She laughs, not feeling any pain, and stands up to face him. He stops hitting her once her eyes begin to turn black. He turns to try and run, but by then she had already liquidized him. She walks over feeds and then clears her eyes. She turns back to the unconscious woman and whitens her eyes once again. She slowly puts life back into the woman, reviving her to an even healthier state than she was in before. She looks at the woman and asks if there is anything else she needs. The woman replies that she has never felt better in her entire life and thanks Karen. Karen feels the gratitude emanating off of the woman and walks out of the little restaurant. She gets into her bird mobile and flies off into the sky prepared to save anyone else in need of help.



## Character Study of Home

She was one of the prettiest places in the daytime. The sun always shining, flowers always blooming. Nobody knew she had a dark side. When the sun went down and the moon came into view, this was when everything went wrong. She shook with anger and despair. She felt it was unfair that the other people could sleep peacefully while she was kept up by different painful noises. Helicopters, police cars, motorcycles, and ambulances all roamed her at night. What upset her most is that she knew they didn't care. They didn't care that she never slept or rested. She had made it up in her mind that one day they were all going to pay. She was going to get revenge when they least expected it.

## Ten Words

The statuesque of the mosaic blossomed  
Making me grimace in disgust and anger  
It seemed to reiterate itself every day  
I tried my hardest to quell my anger

The momentum of the grandfather clock  
Chilled my spine and made me rattle and shake with fear  
I came to the conclusion that I don't like clocks  
My thesis was proved, clocks are evil objects.

## Morgan Ross

### Books

My books live in an array of honeycombs  
the hard, square stones on walls  
incased in the solid bark of a great oak  
My books listen like the ears of a mute  
the silent shifting sands that reveal great secrets  
that can become the key to open souls  
My books' words are ravens in snow  
the flowing waves in the Pacific and  
graffiti that litters the sides of buildings  
My books' truths are in the deepest pits of hell  
and in the holiest place in the sky  
embedded in the morning wall in Israel where God even may cry

### Rain

Some say for rain, rain to go away and come again another day  
but what if that other day is today  
may rain, rain forever stay  
Rain which makes the trees and bushes seem to turn gay  
happy that life is now being replenished and renewed  
may rain, rain forever stay  
Rain, which washes lives and memories far, far away  
outside of our thoughts so all we think is gray  
may rain, rain forever stay  
Rain, how it trickles through the darkness that is day  
rain, which can shine brighter than the sun  
may rain, rain forever stay  
Rain, and how it's spit from the sky  
making it look like the sun often cries  
may rain, rain forever stay  
Rain, the way it hits the gray concrete making it turn into clay  
washing the tainted crimson tattoos of the fallen souls away  
may rain, rain forever stay

## The Tree

McNook attracted me to the tree  
a barren tree, drained by the stench of death  
A tree of many stands lone as a guardian, protector  
spindly limbs sprout and explode from inside  
some breaking, some bringing new life  
A bird's nest is hidden in its bowels  
long forgotten  
So beautifully terrifying  
words only can describe  
but pictures do it sin  
Looming and standing, its many arms reaching out  
the fingers tipped a bright green  
forming a crumbling green shell  
but nothing grows inside  
The tree was struck by lightning  
but it grew around its wound  
the spot where struck still black as coal  
leaking into the rest of the tree until all you can see is ink  
Branches, shadows splashed over twirling jade that adorns a sky of ash  
The pungent stench of wet, decaying wood breezes through the air  
lulling the dead back into a peaceful sleep  
away from the sorrows of the world  
Caring, protecting  
but in silent, still there  
never moving, only the wind and birds making sound  
Even after a storm, no water drops  
the life that is given to this tree is given out  
bringing the dead back alive  
if only for one moment  
to be remembered  
The tree is the only one who'll forever remember  
in silence  
How could all this life, this death  
this peace, this fury  
this beauty, this repulsion  
come from one single seed?  
We never realize how much a single tree can see  
so much life, yet so much death  
somehow becoming all four seasons  
Trees are the protectors of the dead  
the guardians of the graveyard  
the rememberers of the forgotten  
I don't know the dead's names  
their lives, their stories

even when they died  
 but somehow  
 I feel like they know mine  
 Leaving this haven I wonder  
 How many others have followed my path?  
 Dreamers, stargazers, the girl next door  
 Wandering, wandering far, far away from real life  
 And seeing this tree  
 Standing on that stump  
 Feeling the branches  
 Talking to the dead through the magical essence of the tree  
 and finally open their eyes and truly see what the world really is

## **The Blurred Truth of War**

Children, some young some old  
 become cattle and sheep  
 herded into a slaughterhouse by their elders  
 crippled, starved, and beaten till the verbal poison courses through their veins  
 and ignorance of life is engraved in their souls  
 These children, now fully grown in body but not mind  
 become feathers falling from metallic birds at flight  
 backs poofing into orange bubbles  
 falling the child-minded feathers onto a tarnished ground  
 Hard eggs follow the soldiers from the sky  
 ejected from the metal birds that fly  
 creating puffs of grey and red paint that covers the horrifying landscape  
 A snapshot of the new age  
 on a painting with paints made from the spilled blood and liquid rage  
 showing the greatness of humanity  
 at the cost of children  
 From the eggs, fire reaches out to touch, to dance  
 the soldiers, ever so child-minded jump right in  
 their screams echoing across the ruined view  
 of skyscrapers that were stepped on by giants  
 and rivers dyed with the bark from the blackened trees and the dripping night sky  
 Other children's bodies do a wild dance  
 moving in jerked motions  
 the ever so quick pitter-patter of silver rain droplets  
 making them quiver and shake  
 A silver eel with puckered lips is held by a child with a mask  
 spitting out a green fog  
 making other children fall into a deep sleep  
 not moving  
 just sleeping

their ignorance keeping eyes wide open with fear of sleep  
Fear of silver rain droplets  
Fear of hard, eggs coming from the sky  
Fear of the dancing fire  
Fear of the giants who step on their great skyscrapers  
Fear of the silver eel with puckered lips and the gas that follows  
Fear of the demons that their ignorance has created  
Fear of being wrong

## Lauren Sakryd

### Things I didn't know I Loved

I didn't know I liked going barefoot,  
And feeling all sorts of different textures on my feet.  
I didn't know I loved hearing old stories,  
And hearing about what it was like way back then.  
I didn't know I loved to read,  
And be transported to new worlds.  
I didn't know I liked to sleep,  
And get lost in my dreams.  
I didn't know I loved the cold,  
And be able to curl up in a blanket.  
I didn't know I loved to bake,  
And to whip up different concoctions for my friends to taste.  
I didn't know I loved all my friends,  
Until one had to move away.

### Voices of Life

Never rely on someone else; don't let your tongue hang out; always say please and thank you; be independent; don't mix the lights with the darks; use your manners; don't ever leave something unattended in the toaster; if you love your job, you'll never work a day in your life; no pancakes, you slept in; don't cuss; close the door; never let anyone disrespect you; if you want something, make it yourself; always call; keep your cat away from my food; take care of your pets; go change, your clothes are too small; this is how to act like a lady; don't let anyone bring you down; put that book away now; stop quoting things; this is how you make meatball stroganoff; I thought I said to stop quoting things; *Cállate la bocca*; if you quote one more thing, I'm going to smack you.

## Rain

Little droplets of water  
Falling from the sky.  
Most people hate it,  
But I think it's beautiful  
In small quantities.  
The sight of it, falling from the sky,  
And then being blinded as it falls in my eye.  
It leaves behind a beautiful smell.  
Sometimes, it brings along some wind,  
Rushing through and tussling hair,  
Or tickling a nose.  
The sound of rain falling,  
It sounds like a babbling brook,  
Outside my bedroom window.

## Home

I come from a small neighborhood that branches off a very busy street. I live next to the park, and I can see the pool from my side door. My neighborhood is very modern. I live on the corner of a three-way intersection. There is an abandoned house right next to mine that the owners refuse to sell, and there is another house right across the street that no one ever lives in for more than two years. It's very quiet and peaceful, which can be nice. However, the most exciting thing that happens is when someone goes down the road too fast, which causes all the houses to shake. There are only little kids in my area, with the oldest being 10, so there's no one to really hang out with, unless I invite my friends over. All in all, it's a pretty boring area; nothing ever stands out to anyone, except the group of girls that scream 'your wheels are spinning! Just like your mom' to random cars that pass by. However, I can't really complain because a) they're my friends, b) I invited them over, c) I started it, and d) it's my lawn. But hey, no matter how boring this place might be, it's still where I came from, it's made me who I am, and I wouldn't change it for the world.

## The Man Who Was Alive

A man who has a heart of gold.  
 A man who never forgets anyone.  
 A man who always does what's right, no matter what.  
 A man who has lost so much, yet still is cheerful.  
 A man who never gives in to peer pressure.  
 A man who doesn't leave anyone behind if there's a possibility of saving him.  
 A man who doesn't let anything get in his way.  
 A man who speaks his mind.  
 A man who has had his heart shattered so many times, yet still retains his original goodness.  
 A man who is wise beyond his years.  
 A man who knows that everyone is important and shows it.  
 A man who would risk everything just to save one soul.  
 A man who acts like a child.  
 A man who is incredibly clever, yet so thick.  
 A man who helps fix things and make them better.  
 A man who is completely contradictory.  
 A man whom everyone trusts.  
 A man who never stops running.  
 A man who doesn't ever give up without a fight.  
 A man who is impossible.  
 A man who has seen so much, yet always has room for more.  
 A man who doesn't like endings.

## Ben

The boy who acts like a man from the forties.  
 The boy who holds himself like a soldier,  
 Who is tall like a mountain.  
 The boy with the obsidian hair,  
 Who has eyes like polished iron.  
 The boy with a smile that can lighten the mood.  
 The boy who never does me wrong,  
 Who always makes me smile.  
 Whose strong arms are my haven.  
 The boy who helped pull me through dark times,  
 Who knows that we're not promised a tomorrow,  
 So helps make the most of today.  
 The boy whose heart I stole,  
 And who holds mine.  
 The boy who is mine.



## **Jasmine**

For I will consider my dog, Jasmine.  
For day by day, together we would play  
For I would run down the hall into my room,  
and she would follow at a slow trot.  
For we went everywhere together.  
For I had always loved her, even though I was just a little tot.  
For if I had wanted to play dress-up, so would she.  
For if I was asleep, she would lie down next to me.  
For even though she is gone,  
My memories will help her live on.  
For my beautiful dog Jasmine.  
For my Best Friend.

## **Rain, Giraffes, and Macaroni**

I huddled from the rain beneath my umbrella,  
Feeling the resonance of the rain on my shield.  
I stared at the pure majesty of the rain,  
And I remembered my childhood, a time long ago.

I was on a nature walk and saw a giraffe.  
I looked down at the macaroni in my hand,  
And tossed one at it victoriously.  
The onomatopoeia I heard was amazing.

## Allison Walters

### My Mom

My mom whose voice is ice on a burn, cool and soothing  
Whose eyes are priceless blue sapphires  
Whose hand is a soft chair for me to rest mine in when days are rough  
My mom whose lips are rose petals fluttering gracefully as she speaks  
Whose arms are home  
And whose nose is thin and strong  
My mom whose lap is a cushion that continues to be sat on, even after fourteen years  
Whose ears are dry sponges, ready to absorb all I have to say  
My mom whose smile is a wildfire, spreading to everyone that sees it  
Whose tears are a cage, trapping you in a helpless state  
My mom who is my hero

### Buster

For I will forever consider my dog Buster  
For he always came back when he left the house  
For he protected me from any harm caused by my siblings  
For he had a unique bark similar to that of a seal  
For he almost always knew the perfect time to cross the street  
For he got this scared look in his eyes when we discovered that he had done something wrong  
For he walked confidently, despite being slightly overweight  
For he was lazier than me, but could still be very playful  
For he slept so peacefully on me  
For he never feared another dog no matter how mighty  
For he loved me unconditionally no matter what I said to him

## Things I Didn't Know I Liked

I didn't know I liked running and the freedom that comes with it, the way my hair flies out of my face and tangles itself into several impossible knots

I didn't know I liked asparagus or being forced to try it when I was nine

I didn't know I liked being alone, the sound of silence ringing in my ears

I didn't know I liked crying and the weight that flies off of my shoulders when I do it

I didn't know I liked change and meeting new people, doing new things, making new memories

I didn't know I liked the taste of ice cold water more than anything I've ever tasted, even if it does taste like nothing

I didn't know I liked pain, the way it reminds you that you're still alive and that you do have control

I didn't know I liked a challenge, sitting in front of something with a blank stare and a mind full of nothing until what you've been searching for finally comes to you

I didn't know I liked voices, the way the sound of one can change your mood in an instant turning one thing to another but also having the power to make things worse

I didn't know I liked sleep, forgetting everything around you and unconsciously thinking of impossible things, usually forgetting them when you wake up

## **Dream Catcher**

I rest my head on a cloud and gain the power  
To see the unreal in a truly real way.  
With my face still and unmoving as a scar,  
My mind races far past all possibilities.

I watch a fire burn to ink before me  
And become a wolf standing tall and alone,  
But these reveries of mine are a circle of time,  
And a hand comes to wake me. My dream is gone.

## **Sunday Morning**

Sunday morning is the sight of my alarm clock that tells me it's noon  
And the feeling of a video game controller in my hand as I compete with my siblings  
It's the feel of the trampoline beneath my feet that comes and goes as I jump  
And the thought of a relaxing day  
Sunday morning is picturing myself at school in 24 hours and wishing Monday wasn't on its way

## Ode to Shopping

I walk through the maze of many distractions  
That is commonly referred to as the Mall.  
The displays and shining lights lure me,  
And I am lost in the beauty of shimmering fabric.

The smell of pretzels dances around me  
As I pass the regal dining hall,  
And the flowing dresses tempt me,  
But the news their price tags bring is tragic.

I walk to the beat of the cacophony  
That rings through the maze forever.  
My feet might tire, but I still desire  
To feel the sensation of a purchase on my arm.

So I walk on strong and determined,  
Not stopping now, not ever,  
Just trying to find one true love  
Without doing my wallet too much harm.

## Rumors

“So, I heard the rumor,” the boy told her.

“Oh, did you?” she said, “and what did you think?”

“Well, I thought what I always think of rumors. Is it true?”

“I can answer that for you...”

Then, someone came and danced in between them. The boy found his way back to her.

“So?” he said.

“It’s true. The rumor is true.”

“Oh, really?!” He suddenly had the energy to dance again.

“Yes. And since it’s about me, I’d say I’m a pretty credible source,” she answered.

He smiled. “Well, I’ll be right back, okay?”

She nodded and watched him find his way over to his friends.

“What was that about?” her friend asked her.

“I told him. He knows now.”

“Oh my gosh! I wonder what he’s gonna do!” her friend gasped.

“Nothing,” she replied, “He probably won’t do anything about it.”

“Don’t be so negative. I’m sure he’s really happy now. Everything will work out perfectly!”

“Yea. Because that’s how everything works out. Perfectly.”

## Amanda Yates

### I Didn't Know I Loved

I didn't know I loved the sea until I witnessed its beauty in real life and not just pictures.  
I didn't know I loved nature until I was hopelessly trapped in it, but I learned to love it.  
I didn't know I loved Baton until I felt it in my hand where it was destined to be and stay forever.  
I didn't know I loved writing until I picked up my pen and let it guide me into a realm of fantasy where it is all my own and I am the queen.  
I didn't know I loved singing until I found the courage to let the melody flow.  
I didn't know I loved swimming until I conquered my fear of drowning.  
I didn't know I loved softball until I let the fear of striking out blow away.  
I didn't know I loved the feeling of joy until I forced the misery out of my life.  
I didn't know I loved being unique until I realized being a misfit is something I can do with friends.  
I didn't know I loved winning until I felt the painful fear of losing.  
I didn't know I loved a lot of things, but I know now what I didn't know then.

### My Grandparents

My grandma, Nini, takes care of my great grandmother, Meme. Recently, Meme had to have back surgery, so naturally, Nini was the one to help her prepare and take care of her afterwards. Nini packed all of Meme's clothes that she would need and brought them to the hospital while Meme was in surgery. Meme got out of surgery, saw the clothes, and said, "Oh no dear! I only wear silk, and I don't wear red because it isn't really my color." As a result, Nini went back to Meme's house and repacked her clothes, but only this time, she made sure there was only silk and no red. Then she went back up to the hospital only to hear that Meme wanted a new chair. Nini went to go out of the hospital room door to go get a new recliner when she heard, "Oh, Carol, dear. I want to pick it out myself." So after Meme recovered enough to be released from the hospital, Nini carried her around Miskelly's because Meme wasn't strong enough to walk. Shortly after they picked a chair out and bought it, Meme told Nini, "Oh dear! This chair is horrible! Carol, take me to get another one."

## I Am

I am a dreamer who dreams with all of her heart.  
 I am a person who is as free as the butterfly fluttering in the garden.  
 I am of originality in all that is real.  
 I am of being true.  
 I am of being kind to everyone, kind or unkind.  
 I am a girl who loves to write the deepest of thoughts on paper.  
 I am a sister, aunt, daughter, and a friend.  
 I am everything my enemy tries to be.  
 I am a fan.  
 I am a diamond.  
 I am a girl that tries to be all she can be.  
 I am a girl that will make mistakes.  
 I am someone who will never be perfect, but who is?  
 I am a believer of god.  
 I am strong, with my strength coming from courage and knowledge.  
 I am beautiful in my own strange way.  
 I am what they call unique.  
 I am a dancer, twirler, and much, much more.  
 I am a writer with everything behind me.  
 I am not ashamed of my life.  
 I am proud of my past, present, and dream future.  
 I am a bunny.  
 I am not rich, nor am I poor.  
 I am myself.  
 I am Amanda, and Amanda I am.

## Rain

Druppety Drop Druppety Drop  
 The rain comes crashing down.  
 It is the way of life.  
 Melted Snow; Tears of Nature.  
 Rain is racing precipitation.

It's raining cats and dogs outside.  
 When will it ever stop?  
 I look at the windowsill  
 To see two drops racing.  
 Which one will win? Which one will fall?  
 The speed of the rain will tell it all.  
 As they race the druppety drop race.



## Not Just a Myth

The waves were crashing against the shore tempting Amanda to go back for just one more wave. The waves never reach this high and she wanted to take full advantage of the way they were right now. But she knew she couldn't. Then again, Amanda reasoned with herself, one more wave never hurt anyone. And anyways, my sister isn't supposed to be here for another ten minutes. Eventually, she concluded that it would be for the best if she just surfed one last wave for her training today. She began to walk back to the seaside when all of a sudden; she saw a glimmer in the water. It wasn't that far out, so Amanda being the naturally curious person she is, went to follow it. Since she was only half way to the shore, she had to race to the shore and dive in, forgetting everything: her surfboard, her lifejacket, and her goggles. She surfaced only for a couple of seconds to get a deep gulp of air and silently crept back underwater.

When Amanda could hold her breath no longer, she was forced to resurface to get another gulp of air. As she was doing this, she saw the glimmer again, only this time; it was going towards a cove's shore. Amanda dove under once again, only this time, she knew she had to swim faster. She did what she thought was impossible and held her breath for two and a half minutes and in one dive, saw a cave under the cove's shore from, spotted the glimmer go into the cave, and reached the cave. She entered the cave not thinking of the air her body so desperately needed. When she realized she was completely out of air, she started to frantically search for air, looking everywhere she could. She even looked for bubbles as a source of oxygen! She finally broke the surface of the still water as silently as possible and had to restrain herself from taking a loud gulp of air because she realized that her head was not the only one in this strange pool of water. When she emerged, she had immediately realized she was in the presence of another being. The being looked of about sixteen or seventeen at the oldest from what Amanda could see, and the being was also a female. Amanda took a quick glance to search for some land but only saw water and cave walls. She decided to approach the young female and try to converse with her. Knowing she had to be silent as to not alarm the young woman, she began to silently doggy-paddle towards her. She realized she didn't know what she would say, so she concluded to just ask about a glimmer. Then she continued to swim. When Amanda got close enough to the young female, she said, "Excuse me, but I was wondering if you have seen any glimmers around here."

In the coldest voice Amanda had ever heard, the young female exclaimed, “You did not see me. If you tell a single soul, you will not be living and neither will that person.” This young female had a demonic glare in her red eyes, and she must’ve picked up that Amanda wasn’t going to respond. She said, “Good. So I suppose you understand. Now, human, remember what I said.” And with that, she dove under.

Amanda followed, but the young female was too fast. Amanda did catch a glimpse of her whole body; however, she disappeared before Amanda could even process what was going on and what the young female was.

Amanda decided to head back to shore in vain hope that her sister stayed behind and waited for her. When she reached the seashore, she gave her sister a call and told her she was alright and she was just catching another wave, and she went to a bus bench. All of a sudden, Amanda realized that she had just seen a real live mermaid, the creatures of her dreams.

## **Ode to Singing**

Singing is a starry night that never lost its magic.  
 It goes on and on-an endless tunnel.  
 Singing is eating, and you need it to survive.  
 Singing is a shelter  
 In which I go to hide.  
 Singing is a hobby.  
 Even a career for some,  
 But not many will make it  
 In this harsh world of the melody.  
 If I don’t make it,  
 I still won’t ever stop.  
 I’ll continue singing on.  
 I’ll sing all day.  
 I’ll sing all night.  
 I’ll sing until the drum  
 Until the drum stops beating  
 Its Bumbady Bumbady Bum.  
 Singing is a life jacket  
 In which I need to survive.  
 It keeps me afloat  
 When I’m not in my boat.  
 Singing is the key.  
 Singing is the key to life.

A key to happiness and joy.  
It sits still like a little rock.  
Sturdy and strong holding its ground  
Upon the mountain top.  
Singing is an everlasting river  
Flowing through a field.  
It cuts a way for me to travel  
On a stormy day.  
Singing is a waterfall  
Crashing down and causing crowds  
To want to be more like you.  
They'll travel in the same path  
Just like the water once did.  
Singing is a dream of mine.  
It is a dream of many.  
But how many will make it?  
Will I survive the cold hard life?  
Like that of a singer's?  
Singing is a lion  
Powerful and mighty.  
A lantern that lights the way  
On a tip-top reality day.  
Singing is a refuge  
And I'm the refugee.  
Not strong enough to stand alone  
But never too weak to fall.  
Singing is the beating of  
The rain as it falls down.  
It calms the angry,  
Wakes the dead,  
And makes us feel all dreamy.  
Singing is the blowing of the wind throughout the trees.  
The howling of  
The beauty of  
The nature of a human.  
Singing is where I go  
When I'm forced to stay in reality.  
It harbors me  
Like a boat in the sea.  
It's something I'll always love.

## Contributors

**Katie Assaf** goes to Westdale Middle School in Baton Rouge, Louisiana and has been writing little stories and poems ever since she can remember. She has a website called SoaringQuill where she puts all of her stories, including the ones in this book.

**Amber Bardarson** is 14 years old and on her way into 9<sup>th</sup> grade at Houma Junior High School. She is a first year student at ADVANCE. She enjoys sports, especially cross country, swim team, and cheerleading, and plays the French horn. She lives in Houma, Louisiana and wants to be a dermatologist when she grows up.

**Andrea Colmenares** was born on July 4, 2000 in Kenner, Louisiana. She lives in Slidell, Louisiana and goes to St. Margaret Mary Catholic School. On the ACT, Andrea scored higher than 90% of most high school students in English and Reading. She's going into 8<sup>th</sup> grade and is planning to go to Northshore High School in Slidell. Andrea's hobbies are writing, reading, singing, listening to music and hanging out with her friends. She likes writing stories where the character's names aren't realistic. For example, she has a bunny named Mouse. Andrea currently lives with her mom, dad and brother in Slidell, Louisiana

**Cynthia Jin** was born in Virginia and raised in many places, from Massachusetts to Florida to Louisiana. She considers Shreveport to be her home for the time being and is going into her freshman year at Caddo Magnet High School. She might be classified as cynical and socially awkward by some, but only the latter is true. Reading and coming up with stories is one of her favorite pastimes.

**Eric Lin** (b. 2000) is a Taiwanese American going to the 8<sup>th</sup> grade as of the 2013-2014 school year. He lives in the small city of Beaumont, Texas. He has come to the Advance program for Young Scholars in order to improve his abilities in writing. Eric lives in a family of four (Mom, Dad, and his brother, Sam) and he attends Marshall Middle School where he is an A honor roll student. He plays the trumpet, participates in the FPS program (placed 7<sup>th</sup> at the state competition), as well as the TMSCA program (placed 12<sup>th</sup> at the state competition), is fluent in two languages, and took the SATs during his 7<sup>th</sup> grade year, scoring 85% higher than the average high school student in math.

**Greg Maidoh:** I was raised in the little city of Houma and born on Louisiana on January 31, 1998 which is also known as the day the Earth stood still. I like to play the saxophone, football, and basketball. I go to school at Vandebilt Catholic High School. I will be a sophomore and it will be my third year at the school. This is my third year in the ADVANCE program. This year I came with my sister, Bube, and she is taking Algebra 1. I have a five-year-old brother at home.

**Holly McGinnis:** This is my first year at Advance, and I survived! I'm from Hernando, Mississippi, forty-five minutes south of Memphis. I am fifteen years old going into the tenth grade in the 2013-2014 school year. I've always loved to write, and this class has been awesome!

I didn't really like to write poetry before this class, but I've grown to love it. I hope you enjoy what I've written as much as I enjoyed writing them, that is to say a lot! The piece entitled "A Study on Character" may one day turn out to be a full book. "Summer Plumbers" was a prompt that turned out to be the best poem I think I've ever written. I was fed up with the toilet issues in my suite (and the other suite in my RA group!) and plumber rhymes with summer, so a poem was born. I also love cats and my daddy, so those two poems came to be. Happy Reading!

**Shelby McHenry** is a first time student from Missouri City, Texas. She is 15 years old and attends Lawrence E. Elkins High School. She will be a junior this upcoming 2013-2014 school year. She plans to go to either Baylor or Xavier University and major in pre med. She has really enjoyed herself at ADVANCE this year and plans to come back for her last year.

**Morgan Ross** was born somewhere in Kentucky on December 22, 1999. She moved to Baton Rouge on Memorial Day when she was just two years old, and has lived there ever since. She is currently thirteen years old and going into 8th grade. Morgan goes to University Laboratory School, which in her opinion is, "a place full to the brink of good people, amazing teachers, good sports teams, and crappy lunch food." She hopes to transfer to LSMSA in 11th grade, and after graduating, attend MIT. She plays trumpet for her grade band, and hopes to join the marching band in 9th grade. Morgan dreams of building a muggle-version of Hogwarts somewhere in America or Europe as a home and school for war refugees, abused children and orphans.

**Lauren Sakryd:** I'm fourteen years old, going into tenth grade, and will attend Haynes Academy for Advanced Studies. I live in Harvey, Louisiana, which is a suburb of New Orleans. I've been writing for about half a year, and love doing it! I publish my work on Wattpad, where I am currently working on a book titled *A Light in the Dark*.

**Allison Walters** is a 14 year-old "1<sup>st</sup> year" at ADVANCE. She is a total diva, and her hobbies include: shopping, watching *Mean Girls*, eating Frootloops, and going to Taco Bell. This upcoming school year, she will be a freshman at Ursuline Academy in New Orleans, Louisiana, her hometown. She hopes to attend LSMSA in Natchitoches, Louisiana for her sophomore through senior years of high school, and her dream job is to be a Neurosurgeon.

**Amanda Yates:** I was born in Mississippi thirteen years ago. I was only a toddler when my parents decided to pack up and move to the Gulf Coast. Ever since, I've been living there with my two sisters, Haleigh and Hannah, and my parents, Amber and Keith. I have the dream of going into theatre and singing, but my backup plan is marine biology. I want to go to college at Griffith University, Gold Coast Campus in Queensland, Australia. I like to sing and twirl baton in my free time, and I was on a softball team last softball season. My favorite color is turquoise, and I find inspiration in that color because of where I find it. I decided that I liked writing when I was seven because I had just learned how to write neat and quickly, and I always found time to write. Soon I became addicted to writing, so much so that people were unable to pry the pencil out of my hands!