

# STRUAN



Christ School Journal of Writing and Art  
2013-2014



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## **Blue Jay**

Nature is beautiful in many different ways  
Like when you hear the call of graceful blue jays  
Or see the determination of a newborn fawn  
As it attempts to prance just before dawn.

Nature is life from east to west  
From the shore of the sea to the blue jay's nest  
From north to south where the blue jays fly  
Eating away at the bugs in the sky

Nature is life, but can also be death  
As it takes away the blue jay's breath  
It breaks, it takes, it crumbles, and kills  
Eroding away the mountains and hills

The blue jay's home has now been split  
As its nest falls to the ground and other blue jays with it



**The Simple Levels of Magnification**

*photograph by Zach Pulsifer '17*

## **Wired Charge**

Humans aren't electric  
They need no power source  
No battery to make them tick  
Life their vital force

Maybe I'm a defect  
From the broken assembly line  
My systems are all out of whack  
My heartbeat skipping time

There is but one solution  
A cable, my lifeline  
Servicing the complex gears  
That grind inside my mind

Sparks run through my fingers  
As they dance across the neck  
My callouses grow thicker  
As I struggle with Jeff Beck

The hours that go into it  
Always lead to more  
But frustrating practice sessions  
Are never without reward

Resonating from my amp  
Are genres ranging wide  
From overdriven sizzles and pops  
To clean acoustic slide

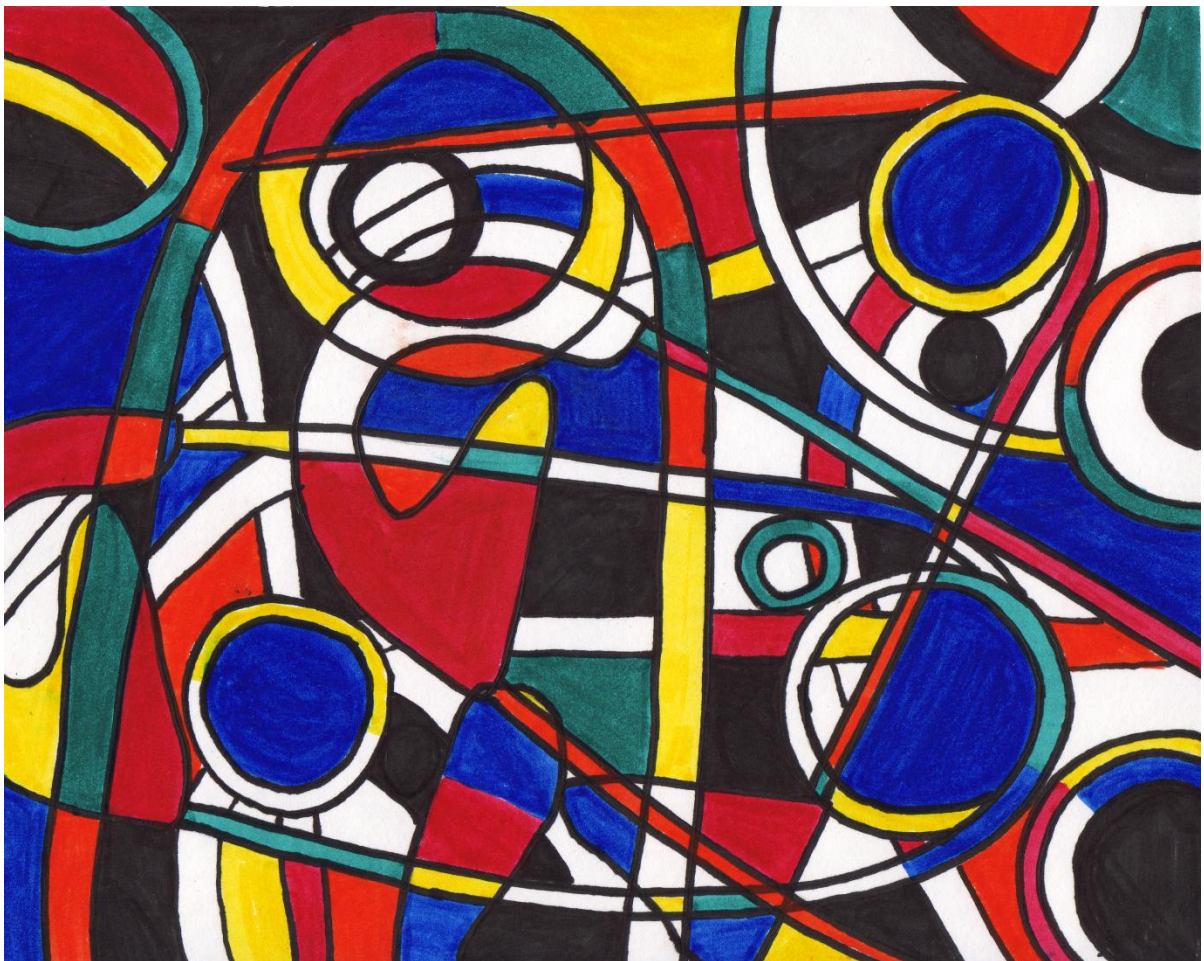
Performance is a challenge  
A test of talent and skill  
Attempting to elucidate the joy  
To others through my bends and trills



Emotion heard so raw and real  
A conundrum it presents  
For blues is sad yet happy  
Both my sword and my defense

The noises are a life force  
The gas inside my tank  
From Hendrix to King to Frusciante  
Inspirations I can't begin to thank

Only through this therapy  
My bluesical expression  
Do I find a place I call my home  
Electric guitar obsession



**Abstraction**

*ink drawing by Christian Nichols '16*

## **The Rock**

The Rock was no ordinary prison. It was a place of exile where the most heinous of villains were thrown to be killed by their fellow inmates or, if they were extremely unlucky, to live the rest of their lives in a hell-on-earth. The Rock was an island in the Pacific Ocean, a relatively small spit of land made entirely of rock. Its cliffs reached heights of several hundred feet and were impossible to climb. The prison itself lay inside caves formed on the sides of the cliffs. From there, a system of tunnels led to one central chamber deep within the caves, lit only through a large, gaping hole in its ceiling. One would not find guards in this prison. There was nothing to guard. The only way out was for a prisoner to take his chances in the ocean. The only signs of life, besides sea creatures and prisoners, were the monthly patrols that brought food and water. To say everyone got a fair share of food would be a lie; the inmates would often tear each other apart, trying to hoard every loaf of bread and bottle of water for themselves. The Rock was intended to break inmates physically, mentally, and spiritually. The Rock created unexplainable feelings of fear. Thinking of it caused people's hearts to beat rapidly and sent shivers down their spines. The most horrifying rumors spread about the place, and many of them were true. The Rock twisted its inmates into something worse than criminals could ever be: they became deranged animals.

The sun's light reflected off the blue waters of the Pacific Ocean. The large, deafeningly powerful waves crashed against the outer walls of the Rock. A lonely man leaned against the jagged rocks of one of the entrances into the prison. This man had no recorded name; any information about him had been wiped from the records, save for the crimes he had committed. In here, he was known as Prisoner 595.

Five years to the day before, the United Nations Security Council had sentenced Prisoner 595 to live the rest of his life on the Rock for the charge of treason. Selling secrets to terror cells throughout the world was a risky move, but in the short time he had eluded detection, he had lived like a king with the millions of dollars he made. As the gavel fell hard upon the wooden circular table, the guards surrounding the room had escorted him to the chopper. After a few hours of flight, the cliffs were visible on the horizon. As the chopper hovered, Prisoner 595 hopped off the platform and twisted his ankle on the solid rock ground. Falling to the ground, he watched as the black chopper, monstrous and intimidating, took to the air and disappeared. He was left only with a little food (dried meat, two loaves of bread and a bottle of water) as well as three changes of clothes. He walked for a few hours through the tunnels and eventually sat down to rest, taking out a loaf of bread to replenish his energy. Before he had a chance to eat, he heard voices in the distance. Following the sound, he stumbled upon a central chamber lit by sun pouring into the cave. Nearly all of the



prisoners were mingling in this part of the Rock. In one corner, a large mass was cheering a fist fight. At certain spots, groups of three or four inmates were playing games of chance using seashells. Prisoner 595 found an isolated place in the shadows and silently wept. He came to the realization that he would spend the rest of his life there. He would become as broken and twisted as the other inmates...unless he found a way out.

Prisoner 595 promised himself that every day he spent on the island would be devoted to training both his body and his mind. He kept to himself and focused on the tasks at hand. Each day began with physical exercises and mental activities including meditating and reciting poetry. He did what he needed to do to keep his mind intact. Each day ended with more physical and mental exercise. The days were long and the nights were longer, but Prisoner 595 never lost hope. He envisioned life as a free man every minute of every day, and realized that nothing was more valuable than freedom.

One night five years after Prisoner 595 was dropped onto the island, the air was warm and the moon lit the sky. 595 spotted a ship in the distance heading towards the Rock. He knew it to be the patrol that brought food and water every month. The ship's horn blew loudly, her guards making ready to row the lifeboats to shore where supplies would be dropped off. The guards were armed with machine guns and combat knives that could skewer a wild boar. The lifeboats were lowered into the water, and the patrols started to make their way to the caves. Prisoner 595 watched and waited patiently for the patrol to come his way.

One of the men came to shore, his lifeboat crashing into the sand. 595's chance had come. He sprinted out of the tunnel and tackled the soldier to the ground. As the soldier stood, 595 kicked his machine gun aside. A man trained in martial arts, the soldier repeatedly beat his attacker, and attempted to slay him with his combat knife. Fists flying, blood shedding, the prisoner was pinned to the ground. Taking hold of a smooth stone, Prisoner 595 slammed his opponent in the head and watched as the man fell, dead and cold. Almost without thinking, 595 switched his clothes with the soldier's uniform. Realizing the dead man did not have a long, scraggly beard, 595 took hold of the combat knife and cut the hair from his face. After finishing the sloppy job, Prisoner 595 disposed of the food and rowed his way to the ship.

"What took so long?" came the voice of a guard on the ship. "And why are you bleeding?"

"Ah, that. Had a run-in with one of the scoundrels. Won't be bothering anyone anymore," 595 replied with a nervous laugh.

The guard nodded and went his own way. Prisoner 595 looked back at the island in the distance. He had made it. Five years of his life had been wasted on that island. Or had they? Through his punishment, he had learned about strength. His mental and physical strength were greater than he had ever hoped for, and they had helped him survive his torment. Prisoner 595 was coming back to life, with his mind intact and his spirit alive. Prisoner 595 returned to his home, the first man to escape the Rock alive.

## **Judgment Day**

Let them be cast down  
The snobs and affluent, those who wear a crown  
Without compassion for the reliquaries of the dead  
Into the inferno, the endless sea of orange and red  
Let the liars and thieves, those who wear a frown  
Let those who preach of hellfire listen to what they themselves have said  
And let them who lead to destruction be themselves led  
Let them be cast down

The nebulous fear of the hinge of life  
Leads nowhere but to war and strife  
When all you have is head and gut  
The gizzard is trustworthy but  
The head with knowledge rife  
On life's troubles its eyeteeth have cut



**Eyes Like Fire, Skin Like Marble**

*photograph by Gilbert Browne '15*



**Quinn**

*photograph by Gilbert Browne '15*

*Yuchen Leng '16*

### **Sonnet**

You said you like to look at the moonlight  
Never thought that we would say goodbye  
Until the day you really said goodbye.  
You said I made your whole life bright.  
In this dark and lonely night,  
You leave my life without telling me why.  
Walking on the endless road, I start to cry.  
The pale moonlight is still as bright.  
I won't forget the day you went away,  
Tried to beg you to stay,  
But you just said, "No."  
Put on my headphones, rock and roll,  
Nothing can ease my aching soul.  
Sometimes you've got to let it go.



**Sunrise on  
a Snowy Morning**  
*photograph by  
Conner Allison '15*

*Andrew Stevenson '15*

## **Bowie**

“Young Americans” played in the background at Slagger’s, and the girl’s patience was thinning. She wondered aloud to a man whose name she’d never learn when it was going to happen. Not that he would know. He said he didn’t know much, and the way he said it made it sound otherwise. While the rooftop’s electrical wires rustled in the gusts of Dublin, their conversation ignited, interrupted only by the alcohol they ordered, though this was made difficult by the half-deaf bartender, who had lost his hearing from a bullet to his left ear many years before. As they spoke, there was an almost-fondness in their tone, that of two friends who hadn’t seen each other since before some war. These manners came not with genetics, but with practice. She began talking about her post-graduation research, which neither of them cared about, and would not care about in the future.

Up on the rooftop of the building containing the bar, two figures emerged from the doorway, cloaked by canvas coats.

As the girl’s monologue came to a close, the song changed to one she did not recognize, which the man assured her was a number one record by a group which she had never heard of before. There was a multitude of things she hadn’t heard of. She was known by anybody who met her as a girl with her head always in a cloud, though which one varied by the day, sometimes by the minute. Distractible, some would say. Others, a nuisance. The man was much the same, but only by marginal steps. His laugh too loud, his outcries too



valiant, his love too unfulfilling. His eyes, however, seemed not to rest, always moving about. The whites were a constant flurry of paranoid snowfall.

Up on the rooftop, it was not snow, but rain that began to fall, softly, its presence increasing slowly. Two friends stood talking to one another, and two strangers sat talking to one another below them. All four discussed the same subject, the difference being the tone. The rooftop conversation was ablaze with argument and recoil, the barside one dimly lit by listless, polite interest. Still she wondered, this time to herself, when it was going to happen. She was tired, she was poor, she was close to eviction.

The men on the rooftop's argument boiled over; a fistfight broke out. The taller one claimed a God-given right to the thinner one's research, something with which the thinner one clearly didn't agree. They had both worked with the girl. It was her research, according to the records, and it was that research they coveted. As they struggled along the edge of the rooftop, neither considered the gravity of their location. Their blood was running too hot.

Below, she stood and walked to the restroom. As she closed the door, he ordered another drink, and waited for her return. He had almost fallen in love with her. On her way back out, he rose to investigate a dull thud he had heard outside. She followed him, and stood silent as he viewed the limp body. The bartender, who had turned away from the window, did not see her draw her gun, nor did he see the stranger crumple. Another body, sodden and unknown.

The bartender wiped down the countertop as she shook the rain from her hair. The thinner one waited patiently as she began to sort through both men's wallets. They were heading for America.



## **Summer Serenity**

*photograph*

*by Conner Allison '15*



**Focused**  
*photograph by*  
*Zach Pulsifer '17*

*Emily Pulsifer, faculty*

### **A Letter to E. B. White**

Mr. E. B. (Elwyn Brooks) White  
Formerly of North Brooklin, Maine

Dear Mr. White,

This thank you note is long overdue. In fact, some folks might say that it's so tardy, it's foolish to compose. You are *dead* and have been since 1985, the year I turned nine. Letters are meant to be read, and you, Mr. White, cannot read. But we are fiction writers, you



and I, people accustomed to fashioning meaty characters with nothing but 26 shapes and a smattering of punctuation marks, so we won't let your *condition* cramp this epistle.

I don't remember when I heard *Charlotte's Web* for the first time, but I can picture how it must have been. It is eight o'clock and my older sister Annie and I flank my mother on the hideous, pineapple-print couch in our Cincinnati living room. My mother's black hair twists over her shoulder in a rope-thick braid that tickles my own blonde curls. One of my legs flops over her round but firm thigh as her voice modulates from bold Fern to anxious Wilbur to slippery, cunning Templeton. She saves the best voice, *her* voice, for Charlotte, the wise, loving and courageous spider. I can feel my mother's body shudder as she struggles to make it through Charlotte's benediction at the fairground. Before starting the chapter after Charlotte's death, she reels us close and plants hot kisses on our foreheads. We are as happy and heartsick as she.

It began something like that, my love affair with your story. When I learned to read – a single, firecracker-bright moment when the shapes on a familiar blue book suddenly screamed, “Are You My Mother?” – I raced through basic readers, picture books and finally simple chapter books until I could absorb *Charlotte's Web* on my own. Oh, what joy to follow your story at my own pace, savoring its humor and pausing to let its quiet beauty settle in my brain like frost. What a relief to trade the uncertainty of my turbulent adolescent life for your supremely complete narrative, and escape from my mercurial friends to the steady characters who live eternally on the Zuckerman farm. I have grown up to read books of many kinds but I have yet to find another story that makes my heart swell as *Charlotte's Web* did at my mother's side, and as it has every time I've read it, first as a kid and later as a mother with two small sons curled like commas around me. I've found refuge in your book, Mr. White, and I thank you for it.

But my gratitude is thicker than that; your *Charlotte's Web* gave me lessons in how to live. How to be a friend. How to stand up for what I believe. How to solve problems rather than surrender to them. How to listen, be patient, share and celebrate. Those folk who thought me daft to write to a dead man might interrupt me here. With scorn they might ask, “You learned all this from *imaginary animals*?” Well, yes. Wise, just, loving imaginary animals. Your book proved that one imagination can feed another, and spurred me to put my own on paper.

You, Mr. White, were a quiet man with the staid reserve of a true New Englander, so I apologize if this letter drips with sentimentality or leans close to hyperbole. However, wherever you are – high or low, Elysium or Sheol – I hope you will accept my thanks. I am a better reader, writer and human being for having read your book.

Sincerely,  
Emily D. Pulsifer  
Swannanoa, NC

## The Senator

Usually, the quiet of the car was never interrupted by the noises outside. It was a bulletproof, airtight beast of a car. Today was different. The outside noise could be heard loudly, as if someone was holding a loudspeaker right up to the window. The driver had a nervous look on his face; he had driven these cars for many years and never heard something as loud and constant as this. Sweating heavily, the passengers were starting to pick up on the mood of the driver. Except for one. He had a small smile on his face and a relaxed posture. As the car took a left and pulled closer to the noise, its source became apparent. The largest crowd anyone in the car had seen was standing across the road, yelling with fervor. The words were unintelligible, but the tone was clear: nobody was coming through their wall of people.

The driver backed out, visibly shaken. Scared by this scene, the other occupants of the car started to worry. Thinking quickly, the driver closed the divider between him and his passengers. Crackling, the driver's radio broke the silence.

"This is EZB-1413. We seem to be encountering a problem."

"EZB-1413, what kind of problem?"

"There is some sort of protest blocking our passage to the destination. Please advise."

"Have you tried going around?"

"I don't think we can get through."

A pause.

"We are redirecting you to a safe house to be evacuated."

Hands trembling, the driver sat there for a second, not able to comprehend the situation. His jittery hands hit the button controlling the divider. When his frightened face was revealed to the passengers, it changed their anxiousness to fear.

"Well, son, why don't we back this car up and get to that safe house the nice people on the radio are talking about?" The calm voice in the back emanated from the senator, an old, grizzled man, who represented Tennessee.

The shaken driver, with his hands trembling and a scared quietness to his voice, answered. "Yes, sir. Right away, sir."

The car started a three point turn as the crowd, massing like molten rock oozing out of an erupting volcano, slowly moved towards them. The rest of the occupants of the car, all young representatives, most still in their first terms, had not been imprinted by the stress of war or office. This led them to be easily spooked, like kindergarteners, with sweaty brows and jittery hands. The driver rolled up his soundproof partition and drove on, the crackle of the radio turning to a whisper.

With the partition closed, the back of the suburban started to heat up.

"Would someone be kind enough to knock and alert our driver to the stifling conditions back here?" the senator quietly asked with an authoritative tone.

Awkward silence filled the car.

"Really, people, we aren't enemies here, but I think we might be if this car gets any hotter."

Awkward laughter echoed through the Suburban and a quick tap to the partition by a diminutive congressman led to the lowering of the temperature.

"Why, thank you very much." Smiling, the senator relaxed into his seat, leather absorbing his weight.

Breaking the stagnant silence, the senator asked the other passengers, "What do y'all have to do with this protest?"

The silence lasted a beat longer. Then the diminutive congressman spoke. "Well, it could be my district. We recently passed a bill that cut several thousand jobs in the car manufacturing industry."

Another congresswoman, tall and lanky, commented, "I don't think that was your district rioting. It could be mine, though. We just cut social security by three percent."

Each occupant expounded on the different reasons people in their district would be going after them. When the conversation had gone around the car, the focus was on the senator.

"Sir, what do you think you could have done that affected this?"

Smiling like a crocodile before it strikes, the senator let a chuckle escape his lips.

"Well, you could say my actions caused this calamity."

His words struck a chord of anger in the group. The dangerous smile, unwavering on the senator's face, held as he spoke.

"The people are there because I invited them."

Jaws dropping, the passengers shifted from anger to shock in an instant. The car, once a shell of safety from the crowd, seemed to be teeming with danger.

"But why?" muttered the diminutive congressman. Others mumbled in anger.

"Why?" asked the senator. "Let me explain. It started last month, after the midterms deposited y'all in some of the highest public offices in the country. I knew I would need to find a way to control each of you. You see, this office I run can get quite stagnant as I wait for each of you to pass every small, fickle bill that comes through your side of the capitol. In the senate, we get stuck over these things even more than you. Whenever y'all's house can come together quickly on one subject, it really rushes the negotiations on our side. Now, I



need each of you to be there for me: if your process is shorter than normal, then you need to extend it, giving me time to pull my majority together. Does this sound like something we can work together on?"

Shocked expressions and angry scowls were seen around the car.

"Why would we have to follow you at all?"

This question came from a new congressman, a tall, proud-looking man, who had come from several years of distinguished military service.

"The mob is mine," said the senator. "What I say, they do. If you would like to not promise to stay with me at this time, I am sure the mob outside would like to hear any of the myriad reasons you provided me as to why they would be mad at you."

The smile of the senator deepening, the others in the car considered this deal, most with looks of desperation.

"I'm with you," the short congressman proclaimed.

Mutters of agreement were heard from all except one.

"What say you, Mr. Jarhead?" the senator chuckled, his smirk changing to a full-on grin.

"I will not have my honor be diminished by you," said the former soldier, his posture straightening and his brow burrowed. "I joined the leadership of this country to reform it, not to further promote its bureaucracy and corruption."

A laugh, starting deep in the chest of the senator, rose to his face, turning it red. Filling the car, now seeming smaller than ever, this laugh made the congressman shrink before it. Like dynamite breaking rock, the senator's laugh had cracked the congressman. The senator saw this as an opportunity.

"Now, Mr. Jarhead, I know you do not have much experience in politics, and that has led you astray. In this battlefield we are on now, it is not about keeping with the rules of engagement or winning the minds of the enemy, it is about moving up. Now, if we do not pass anything, how do we move up? If we pass something that opposes the viewpoint of the people who will elect us, how do we move up? If we do not have support amongst each other, how do we move up? How can we succeed in this profession if we follow the rules that you set? Politics, my friend, is not a profession with rules; it is a game without rules. Every day there is a new threat, a new opponent, one we must face with full-on force. You can be assured that he or she will not follow these rules you've set for yourself. To defeat them, you must not follow *your* rules, but follow *theirs*."

His smirk deepening, the senator sank back into his seat, a small throne in the court the car had become. Knowing well that he was king of the car, the senator was back in his comfort zone and everyone knew it. One with the seat, the resistant congressman, beaten to a pulp by the senator's words, had nothing more to do than check his phone until they reached the safe house. Their destination was miles away, and the car was drained of conversation, every passenger turning to his phone or laptop—except the senator. Sitting on his throne of manipulation, high above the others, he silently reveled in this moment of victory.

### **Don't Wear Hats Inside**

My roommate wears his hat inside,  
And to be honest, I don't know why.  
It does not protect him from the sun,  
It does not look like he's having fun.

I ask him why he wears the hat.  
He responds, "Dude, it's totally frat!"

I bet he thinks he is so cool,  
But in reality he looks like a fool.  
He sits on his computer all day,  
Watching the time fade away.  
Sitting in a dark room with his hat on,  
I think his sense of style is gone.

Oh, well. What can I do?

Hats inside don't make sense,  
That's my point of view.



**Axel**

*scratchboard drawing by Alex Hudak '14*



**Artillery**  
*drawing*  
by Henry de St. Aubin '15

*Liam Pulsifer '15*

### **Russian Roulette**

When I close my eyes,  
I feel warm fingers on my cheekbone  
and a palm below,  
heartbeat pulsing through the fate line,  
mine rushing through my ears.  
Like liquid percussion,  
Or rain on canvas.

Light seeps in,  
Bringing gunmetal and factory smoke irises  
and five barrels against my face,  
tendon triggers twitching,  
chambers spinning *snick snack*

and you pull away,  
warm steel curling around my chin and gone  
without the *bang* I expected.



## Beauty and the Beast

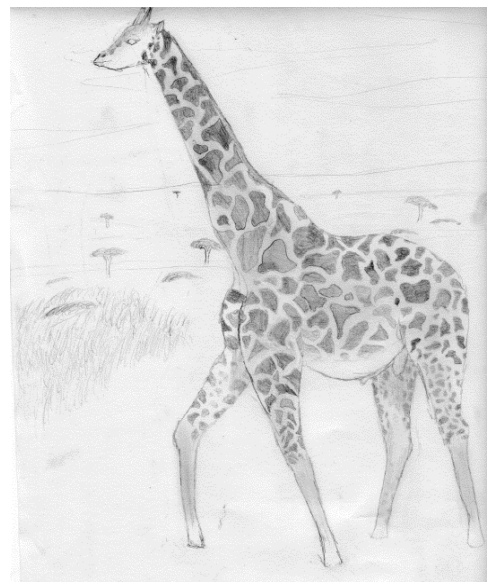
The huge gold sun was ablaze, beaming upon us. The sky was blue and we could see the mist slowly crawling from the forest on the surrounding hills. Despite the fog, my dad was able to point out to us Monte Piano, a famous and cruel battlefield of the First World War. Sweating but determined, we were climbing our way up the grey and steep massif.

We made it to the saddle, and there we were rewarded with a breath-taking view. The mountain range of Italian Dolomites enveloped us, the majestic peak of Tre Cime—today's goal—stood out from among the other giants, its three sharp, snowcapped heads hidden in the midst of a passing-by cloud. My family and I were astonished by the splendid nature: the dirty and dull peaks overlooking everything; the smaller green hills, heaving with the blooming flora; and the meandering creeks, humming their way down off the cliffs.

Frankly, many questions and ideas radiated from this place. Today it is a wonderful hiking destination with an eye-brightening environment, but exactly one hundred years ago it was a gruesome, vicious and frigid mountain, where many men found their final rest. The entrenched areas were set in really high elevations, where the weather is more lethal than any weapon. Imagine how this charming nature must have been loathed by all those young men who had to fight more with winter and diseases than with their actual human enemy.

When I realized all the history this place rattles with, I almost fell on my butt (at least my mind did). My imagination summoned many pictures while I walked through the trenches and tunnels dug in the solid rock, past the cannon and machine gun nests, to which the artillery must have been carried all the way from the valley. My mum used to tell me that hiking in the mountains or standing on the very top of some “*montagna*” made her feel closer to God. It could probably work for me anywhere else, but here, I was trying to recall all the facts I knew about the First World War, putting myself in the role of an Italian soldier, trying to live, excuse me, *survive* in these fierce and all-embracing Dolomites. Such a place can drive your thoughts with a tranquil steady pace, or it can kill you.

This family hiking trip in Italy not only offered me a variety of wonderful views of landscape scenery which I will keep in my mind stored forever, but it has changed the way I regard the world around me. The fact that something feels one way doesn't mean it can't have another side. Arguing only from your solemn point of view may lead to missing the main idea of the story, and even though it could mean a little bit of work on your side, the attempt to expand your knowledge is always worth it.



**Giraffe**

*drawing by Robert Aughtry '18*



**Pelican Dock**      *photograph by Donna Kinney*

*Donna Kinney, faculty*

### **Tidal Rhythms: Wrightsville Beach**

Max held up his palm  
to tell the sea to wait

The wave threw up its foam  
To send him back to shore

Back and forth  
the conversation went

The fierce approach,  
the calm retreat

The deep abyss,  
the shallow list

Sanded, salted,  
rolling, rocked,

The rhythm  
of  
the sea.

## **The Secrets of Donton Hills**

My roommate always woke up early, even on Saturdays when we finally got to sleep in. At 7:00 he loudly pulled the curtains open, and seeing my annoyed, groggy face, he threw his pillow at me, saying, "Wake up, Mickey, you're wasting the day if you spend it in bed." My name isn't actually Mickey, but according to Marcus, my comically large ears make me resemble Mickey Mouse. Plus, Mickey wasn't much of a stretch from my real name, Michael. Unfortunately, after one month at Donton Hills Academy, it stuck, and from then on my name was Mickey.

Donton Hills is located in Nowhere, Georgia. And by that I mean that it is miles from civilization. The days at Donton Hills are filled with difficult schoolwork, and starting my sophomore year at a new school made it even harder. On the weekends we were given more time, but we had nowhere to leave to, no one aside from our classmates to socialize with, and thanks to the administration, no televisions or cell phones. Computers were "only good for schoolwork." Dr. Marty Creech, the Director of Students, was determined that we would find our own amusement, like he did as a teenager, which must've been sometime during the Industrial Revolution.

So far that year I'd spent my weekends studying, sleeping, and exploring the enormous campus. I didn't know exactly how large it was and had never bothered to ask anyone who could actually know the answer because even the seniors who were beginning their fourth year hadn't seen all of it. Even in late September, the heat exceeded 90 degrees most days, and without air-conditioned dorm rooms, it was unbearable to stay inside.

Because I knew Marcus was right, I got out of bed and stumbled out of our dorm. The morning sun, my worst enemy, made me groan and squint all the way to the cafeteria. Marcus and I were the only ones eating breakfast at the time, so we naturally ate together. Though it wasn't even October yet, I was already sick of the food at boarding school. Artificial egg mix and flimsy bacon got tiring after about a week, but I filled my plate nonetheless. By the time we left, people had begun to leave the dorms and fill the dining hall. My buff roommate went to the weight room after breakfast as he always did, while my skinny self returned to our room for a shower. Afterward, I couldn't resist going back to bed, and I slept for a few more hours.

As I walked out of the cafeteria, I was bumped into the door and I hit my shoulder. I turned and saw the laughing face of a linebacker. As a five-foot-ten, 140 pound sophomore, I quickly looked away from the behemoth of a senior. I always tried to avoid bullies and bigger students like him. Violence was strictly forbidden by the teachers, but snitching was strictly forbidden by the students. I learned quickly to stay in the safe places of the school.

I had done most of the weekend's homework during the morning, in anticipation of a relaxing afternoon outside, but I had left one of my books inside the academic building. After lunch, I returned to retrieve it. During the weekends, the building was almost always empty. Students stayed as far away as they could when they weren't in class, and even the professors enjoyed time away from students. A loud yell coming from one of the offices disrupted my peaceful walk through the halls. I snuck down the hallway as quietly as I could.

As I approached Dr. Creech's office, I heard a quivering, mumbling voice mutter something indistinguishable. I reached the door when I heard Creech growl, "He was never

supposed to arrive from Savannah!” The blinds were closed, but looking through the edges I caught a glimpse of a man I’d never seen before. Sweat rolled down his face and soaked the armpits of his shirt. His wide, threatened eyes, darting around the room, refused to meet those of the frightening Dr. Creech. Creech walked into my line of sight, closer to the chair that held the unnamed man. As he glanced toward the door, I gasped and dropped to the floor.

Several moments passed and the door remained closed. Hearing a sharp whimper coming from the room, I indulged my curiosity of what was happening in the office. The man had squeezed himself as far into the chair as he could, while Creech stood calmly in front of him. The man’s shaking hands clutched the arms of the chair with such intensity that his knuckles turned white. He turned his head in an attempt to avoid Creech’s gaze. Creech spoke softly, so softly I couldn’t make out any words, but with every word he said, the man shook more. When Creech dug into his pocket and produced a small revolver, my fear overpowered my curiosity. I prepared to exit the building as quickly as possible when I noticed Creech’s keys sitting on the ground. The master key could open any door in the school. I pulled the master key off of the chain, and ran out of the building, with complete disregard for the noise I was making.

“You’re crazy,” Marcus emphatically stated. “You just saw what Creech does to people who piss him off, and you steal his key? He’ll turn the whole school upside down until he finds it.”

“I know,” I said. “And we’ll return it to him soon enough, but don’t you want to poke around the school? There’ve gotta be some secrets somewhere behind a locked door at this place. This could be the only chance we have.”

“Behind the locked doors is where they keep school supplies and food for the snack bar. You wanna risk expulsion for an extra pencil or some M&M’s?”

“You’re such a downer. There could be some really interesting things that students were never supposed to know. It’s hard to believe that you don’t want to make a discovery.”

“Fine,” Marcus agreed reluctantly. “I’ll go with you, but if we don’t find anything—which we won’t—you’re buying me food for a week.”

“Deal, but *when* we do find something interesting, which we will, you have to streak campus, jump in the lake, and get back to our room without getting caught.”

Because Creech was still busy with his “meeting,” we decided to begin our exploration at his house. We crept to his doorstep, slipped the key into the hole and let ourselves in, closing the door quickly behind us. Based on his furniture, our suspicions were confirmed that Creech was, in fact, a very drab man. His few couches and chairs were gray and brown.

“Look, he’s still a boring old man, no matter what you saw this afternoon,” Marcus said. “Let’s get out of here.” Marcus was breathing quickly, looking across the room as if he expected Creech to be hiding behind a curtain.

“We just got in here,” I said. “We have to be persistent if we’re going to find anything. Come on! I think his office is in the back. He may have a diary or something.”

The office was locked when we came to it, but the master key solved that problem. Unfortunately for us, Dr. Creech was an organized man, with nothing extraneous lying on his desk. His computer was password protected, and the master key did not fit the locks on his desk and file cabinet. I gritted my teeth in frustration, but resisted the urge to yell out. It was a dead end.

Seeing my disappointment, Marcus tried again. “Look, we tried and there’s nothing here. Let’s go before we’re caught.”

“C’mon, he wouldn’t hide anything in there anyway. If he has a basement here, I’m sure that’s where he’d put his secrets.”

The door to his basement was in the kitchen. It was locked, a good sign for my curiosity. I grimaced with each step down. It seemed as though the creaking of the ancient stairs could be heard for miles. It was interesting to see the things that Creech kept out of the way: beach chairs, sleds, barbecuing equipment, things I would have never expected a man like Creech to use. Squinting across the room in the dim light, I was able to see a door at the end of dark basement. I grabbed Marcus and pulled him over to it. My hands, shaking with excitement, struggled to jam the key into the locked door. I finally turned the key and opened the door. My eyes widened and my pulse doubled. I saw the feet first, limp and lifeless. I moved my eyes up to his chest which was full of holes. He lay in a pool of his own blood. I gasped as I recognized the face of the frightened man I’d seen that afternoon.

I tripped as I ran. When I looked up, my heart fell and a knot formed in my stomach. The silhouette of Dr. Creech stood illuminated by the one dim light of the basement. A million questions raced through my mind. *How had he gotten there? When did he bring the body here? How did he bypass the creaky stairs without being heard? Was he here, waiting for us when we arrived?* However, one thought was clear: I had been caught severely breaking the rules, and my captor was a murderer with no tolerance for rule breaking. I looked and saw Marcus, a very tough guy, fighting tears.

\*\*\*

A week passed after Mickey and Marcus disappeared, and no one seemed to know what had happened to them. They were the subject of all gossip at the school. The teachers heard hundreds of questions from students, but if they knew, they wouldn’t say. Dr. Creech continued as usual. For him, the boys were just one more secret to keep in his basement.



**Falling**

*scratchboard drawing by Liam McCann '16*

## **Live for Today**

The thought of having it taken away was obsolete  
The God placed Josh's body six foot below our feet  
The days following were filled with pain and sorrow  
Through it all I was reminded, there may be not tomorrow

When obstacles approach, I can either quit or grow stronger  
Regardless of the agony, quitting now only makes it longer  
I can no more think that I am invincible  
Because to God, each of my shortcomings are made visible

The past is then, tomorrow is now, and legacy is forever  
I must live for now, and nothing material, legacy is treasure  
Never again will I take advantage of today  
Tomorrow isn't promised, I have to fulfill today

I now welcome the trouble and struggles of today  
Because my prosperities will guide tomorrow's way  
No one will bring him back tomorrow  
But in his name, I can chase success today.

-Malik Johnson 9/22/13

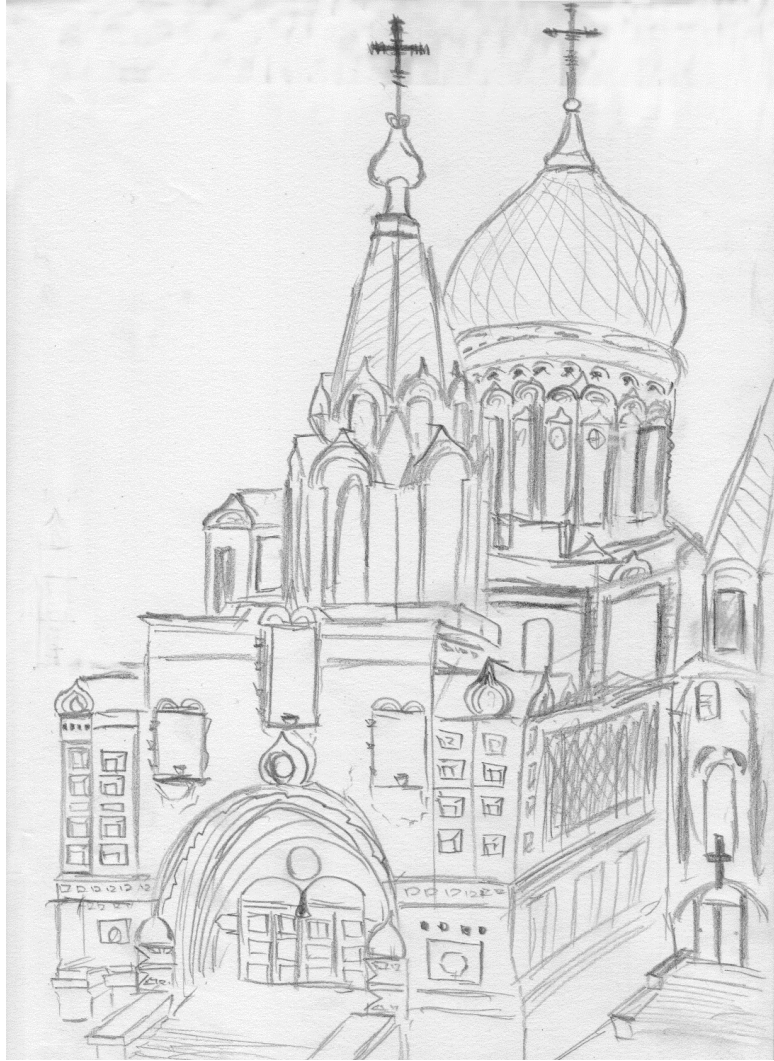
R.I.P Josh Level



## **Cathedral**

*drawing*

*by Shawn Yang '15*



*Jason Green '17*

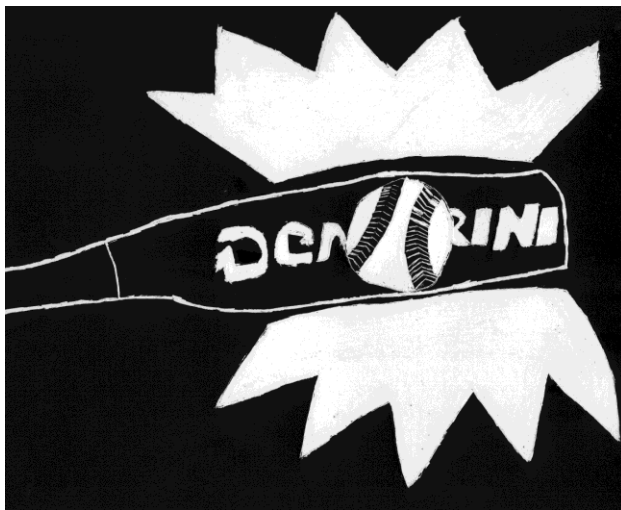
## **The Moment**

As you walk in, the first thing you hear is the muted noise, the voices of thousands of people talking about different things. You enter to see a few dozen other people, all seated sparsely in a room, each in mentally different worlds. You take a seat. All of a sudden, a door opens abruptly and they call out a list of names. Your name is on there. This is the moment you're waiting for as they escort you down a long, dully-lit hallway, along with seven other people just like you. The hallway leads into a small, dark room with one door, eight seats, and a small screen showing the people who were called before you. The eight competitors take their places, and once everyone is settled, the only sound you hear is the muffled voice of the man on the screen. You know very well he will be talking about you next, and you are trying to block out the nail-biting anxiety you feel. You remind yourself, as you calmly put on your equipment, that you've prepared yourself for this and it's time to do what you've

been called to do. The person in white comes in and tells the group to get ready. Prepared for this, you deliberately stand up, knowing you've been selected for this, not because of fate, but because of determination. Suddenly, a name is called. Someone on the end walks to the door and is then told when to walk out into the light beyond. This occurs six more times. Now the only one left is you. You stand up, fully knowing you're next, and walk, almost in a trance, to the door. You step into the almost blinding light for what awaits you.

You hear a voice announcing your name and country as the light becomes bearable, revealing thousands of colors and lights surrounding a pit of water and symmetrical lines. You step up to a block at the end of the pit and see the other seven individuals next to you all spread along the edge, waiting. Once you are ready, you nod towards another man in white at the edge of the pit. He blows a whistle and you step up onto the block. All of a sudden it's dead quiet. You hear a set of words that are all too familiar to you. You take your mark. The next few seconds are the longest of your life. A whistle blares. You spring forward into cold, quiet water that rushes past you. You instinctively kick and break the surface. You are almost in a trance through another person's eyes. You come up and stroke hard and fast. As you breathe, you see, for a brief second, that you're ahead of the rest of the field. You approach the other end of the pit and start to turn through the wall. You flip and feel your feet connect instinctively. You push off as you have more times than you can remember. Your legs burn and your lungs ache for air, but you tell yourself to hold on.

As you break the surface on your brief home trip back, you realize your lead isn't as great as it was. You just allow yourself to do what you've done a million times and hold your pace. You can tell the person next to you is nearing just as fast as you approach the wall. You briefly see the end of the black line and know you are close, although your mind is still blank. Your body is now at the point of no return. The hurt has gone away, replaced with a gentle numbness. Your hand reaches the wall and you whip around to look up at a giant screen, much bigger than the one you saw before. You look for your name and realize you finally accomplished what you set out to do. You leap up, punching the sky. You let out a cry



of joy, and for the first time notice that the colors and lights are people cheering and looking your way. You think of all the times you thought you couldn't go another day, but you did, and you feel a warm sensation as you exit the pit. You walk across the floor of the arena, guided by another person in white, towards a door separate from the seven others'. Dozens of people congratulate you as you walk through the door and into the dark once more.

**Walk Off** scratchboard drawing by Joe Keeler '15



**Mountains**

*drawing by Will Buckner '15*

*Reid Scothorn '14*

## **Mountain**

The  
Silent  
Guardian  
Watching over  
The little town. Stand  
Tall, higher than the clouds.  
Blue is green and green is blue  
Light filters through trees, tall trees  
Hills of stone tower over endless forests

## The Cowboy

I am the last of a dying breed. At an early age I learned how to drive T-Posts, mend fence, work cattle, and many other lost arts. I have had the privilege of working next to some of the best men and getting to learn from them.

My day begins at 6:30. I get dressed and then head down to the barn. As I make the 5-minute drive, I ride in silence with the window down. The smell of fresh air and the rumble of a diesel engine fill the truck. As I pull up to the big red equipment barn, the smell suddenly changes to horse manure.

“What’s the plan for today, Mr. Marshall?” I yell.

“We’re branding calves. Now go saddle up!” Mr. Marshall answers.

Mr. Marshall is a TCU graduate from its Ranch Management Program and the stereotypical cowboy. I walk over to my horse, carrying all of my tack, and heave it onto the horse. Dog is a stout horse with a beach-blond mane. When I’m finished tightening the straps on my saddle, I climb up. We ride down to the rusty red pens where we meet up with the other cowboys. Each is unique in his own way: Barry builds saddles, Jordan rides in rodeos but does day work for us when his wallet’s thin.

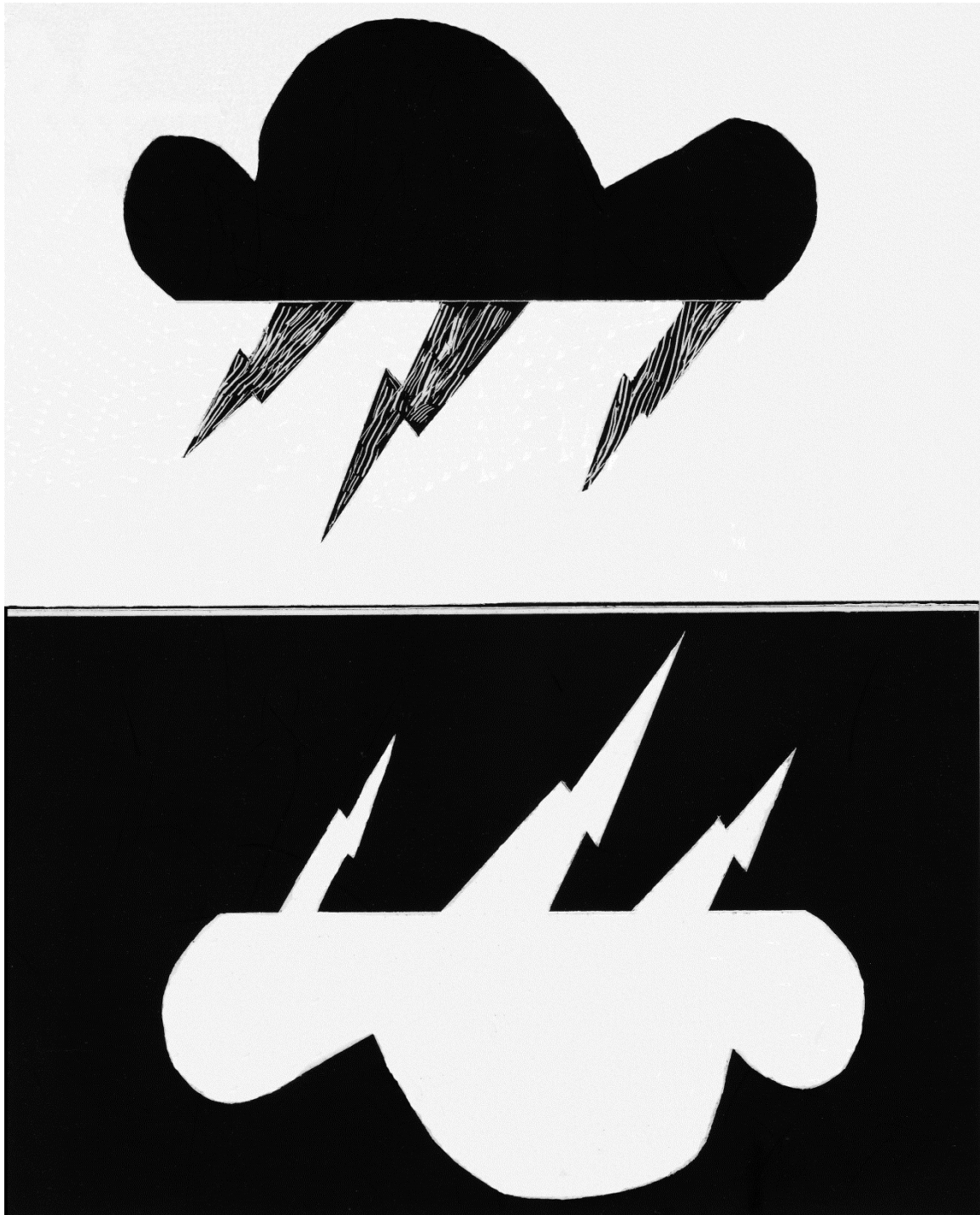
We begin to ride in search of cattle. When God created west Texas, I think that he let the Devil design the wildlife because everything either pokes, bites, or stings as you’re riding through. The cattle jump up and begin to run down the fence, away from Barry and me. We ease forward slowly enough to keep the cattle moving but not too fast to let them scatter back into the mesquite trees. We finally arrive at the pens, rounding up all the cattle and herding them into a large arena.

First, we separate the calves from their mommas, and then the fun part begins: roping, flanking, and branding. Barry usually ropes while Jordan and I flank. Roping is an art that takes lots of time and practice to perfect. Flanking is a two-man job. I lift the rope, which pulls the calves hind legs up, and then Jordan grabs the tail and head and pulls down, bringing the calf onto its side. He quickly straddles its neck and head, making the calf immobile. Mr. Marshall is the self-designated brander, so he gets to brand. We brand, castrate, and tag every calf. Once finished, we run all the mommas through a chute where we give them shots.

After lunch, I go fix fence that needs to be repaired, put hay out for cattle, spray out stock trailers and troughs that might need cleaning or patching. Building a fence is an incredibly hard task to learn; it must be straighter than an arrow and tight enough to play a tune on the barbed wire. After mending fence and cleaning out enclosed horse trailers in the 110 degree summer heat, cleaning troughs isn’t bad because I get to play in the water while I’m cleaning.

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the cowboy is remembered as a man from a John Wayne movie, a man who has never left the seat of his saddle, or one who gets in fights that ends in a draw.

But I'm not that man. Not many people still know how to rope a calf or build a tight, straight fence. Working on a ranch has taught me many tricks to make a job easier, a great work ethic, and how to be thankful for cold A/C. I'm a dying breed, the cowboy.



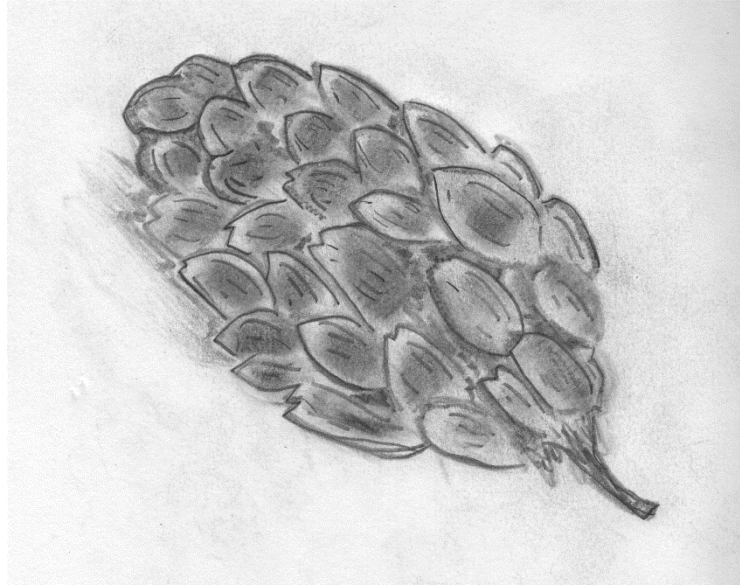
**Thunderbolt**

*scratchboard drawing by Wilson Smith '15*

## **Cone**

*drawing*

*by Jeff Smilack '15*



*Lucas Gaylord '14*

## **Invention of the Letter ‘C’**

I have a proposal to make!  
One that fills me with glee,  
It is obnoxious, ridiculous, useless and preposterous;  
I call it the letter ‘c.’

We have silent *g*’s, *h*’s, and *e*’s,  
Words with five definitions apiece,  
But I feel there is something missing –  
Our language is still too or-din-ary.

We create a new letter!  
Call it letter ‘c.’  
It’s a *k*, an *s*, and a *ch*, combined,  
but really it’s none of those three.

...

No word is safe, no word is sound!  
The letter ‘c’ will violate every word around.

...

Cool, calm, and collected,  
The letter ‘c’ sounds like *k*,  
But for cent, cell, and celery,  
it will be the cause for some dismay.

And just when they think they’ve figured it,  
We’ll give them *jock*, *schism* (siz-uhm,) and *czar*.  
It’ll torture generations of English students.  
Complete chaos.



## **The Toaster**

There once was a young man, and there was nothing that seemed to be unordinary about him. He was five feet, six inches tall, and 130 pounds. This young man's name was Kibaniko. Kibaniko owned a small deli in his village square. He was very proud of his business and had the perfect name for it, too: El san-dwich. Life was good for Kibaniko. He was happy.

One day, a traveling sales man named Mwokaji came by camel to Kibaniko's village. All of a sudden, Kibaniko was losing customers. Kibaniko heard that Mwokaji was selling sandwiches. Angered by this, Kibaniko went to see this man. When he arrived, he was amazed to see all of his customers gathered around Mwokaji, eating his sandwiches. Kibaniko went up to one of the customers and asked why he liked these sandwiches better. The man replied, "This man has perfected the bread temperature!!" Distressed, Kibaniko went to the temple and prayed to the almighty god, Toastado. He prayed for some way to beat his competitor. He prayed for hours, and finally the all mighty Toastado told Kibaniko to go to his deli where he would fix all of his problems.

When Kibaniko arrived at his deli, all of the silverware in his deli began to rattle and come to life. Then a strong wind blew through the deli, thrusting all the silverware into the wall and creating a cloud of clinging metal. When the cloud cleared, there was a strange-looking metallic box with two slots sitting on the counter. The almighty Toastado called to Kibaniko and told him that he had created the "toaster of many types of bread," or "toaster" for short. This small box had the power to bring bread to a crisp, warm outside, yet leaving the inside soft--the perfect combination. Kibaniko was amazed at this creation, yet he could not get it to work. So, with the help of Toastado, he disassembled the toaster and replicated all of its parts to understand how it worked.

To get his customers back, Kibaniko set up a demonstration next to Mwokaji's stand. Kibaniko made sandwiches and gave them out after toasting them; the people were amazed at how perfect the bread was. This humbled Mwokaji, and out of respect for his competitor, closed his stand. After all of the people had gone home, Mwokaji went over to Kibaniko, congratulated him, and left the village to search the world for a device as powerful as Kibaniko's toaster. It is said that his spirit still roams the aisles of SEARS, admiring the great rows of toasters.



**Set**      *ceramics by Cole Curtis '14*

## **Letter to Greatness**

Dear Greatness,  
I look into the eyes of Greatness and say, I will be you.  
I tell him, regardless of the obstacle, I will achieve you,  
There is nothing that will hold me back from seeing you.  
I close my eyes at night and I see you.  
I wake up in the morning and I strive for you.  
I see things other teens are doing and it's not you.  
Every sacrifice I make is in the name of you.  
Some doubt that I will ever be able to touch you.  
Some spend their lives chasing you,  
But I, I'm determined to catch you,  
Dear Greatness.



**Earth Meets Heavens**

*photograph by Zach Pulsifer '17*

## **Any Given Day**

The alarm rang at 5:30AM sharp. Nothing was out of the ordinary. However, that morning, as soon as Mr. Clangdon woke up, he did not give Mrs. Clangdon a kiss, as he always did. They'd had a fight the previous night which evidently carried on into the next morning.

"I still don't understand how hard it is for you to pick up our passports from the bank," said Mrs. Clangdon.

"I told you: I don't keep the key to the safety deposit box on my person at all times, and the bank is not on my way home from work."

"Well, don't expect me to pick it up. I'm out the door before anyone is there to let me in to get the passports, and if I stop on the way home, dinner won't be ready by the time you get home--and God forbid that ever happens!"

"I wasn't saying I wanted you to pick them up. I was just saying it will be hard for me to pick them up over the next few days, given that the Johnson case is heating up, and will have a court date scheduled any day now." Mr. Clangdon poured himself a cup of coffee--NOT a cup of coffee for his wife. Another thing out of the ordinary.

This fighting continued through their first cup of coffee and through their typical oatmeal breakfast. They fought through each of their showers, through Mr. Clangdon getting dressed, and through Mrs. Clangdon putting makeup on.

"Have a good day." Mr. Clangdon said with a hostile tone as he put on his tie and she walked out the door.

"Jeffrey!!" she yelled. "There's some liquid under the car. I think we may have a leak."

"It's probably just melted ice. You should be fine. What makes you think it's from the car?"

"It smells weird, and it's in one puddle."

"The smell is from the car. You've already started it after all."

"I guess," Mrs. Clangdon said as she got in her car and backed out of the driveway.

She took off down the road. She had traveled it a million times, and could probably drive it 20 mph over the speed limit and with her eyes closed, but this time she went about 5 mph under the limit due to icy conditions. Mrs. Clangdon hit a spot of the road that was dry and clear, and because the fight had made her late, she sped up to make up for lost time. What she didn't see, however, was a fierce stretch of black ice right before a bridge that was thirty feet above the French Broad River. She hit the ice and slammed on her brakes, but they failed. Out of nowhere, a car came and slammed into the front of her car, sending her flying off the bridge at breakneck speed.

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“Clangdon and Pierce, Attorneys at Law. How may I help you?”

“Mr. Clangdon? Is Mr. Clangdon there?”

“One moment. May I ask who’s calling?”

“It’s Luke Norris, Head of the Buncombe County EMS.”

“Please hold, Mr. Norris.”

It was 8:45AM when Mr. Clangdon’s secretary walked into his office. A look of concern shrouded her normally bubbly personality.

“Deborah? Is everything all right?”

“The phone is for you. I think it may be important.” Deborah handed him the phone.

“Mr. Clangdon speaking.”

“Yes, is it correct that you are the husband of one Mrs. Sarah Clangdon? That’s what we have on the record.”

“Yeah, that’s me. What is this about? Why are you calling?”

“Mr. Clangdon, your wife has been in a very serious accident off Tunnel Road. You need to come down here immediately.”

The phone cut off. Mr. Clangdon was in shock.

“Jeff? Jeff?” Deborah called out, checking to see if he was okay.

“I’m fine. I...I need to go now,” he said, as if this obvious statement was something he had just realized.

“Well, I should say so! I’ll hold your calls.”

Mr. Clangdon ran down the hall, drawing attention as he went.

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“Get her on a stretcher, now!”

“Should we try to recover the car?”

“Don’t waste your time! Get over here and hold this face mask over her nose.”

Mr. Clangdon walked through the scene of the crash, and tried to get to his wife.

“Where is she? Where are you taking my wife?”

“Mr. Clangdon, I’m Luke Norris. We talked on the phone. Your wife is alive, but we are taking her to the hospital to make sure she’ll stay alive,” Mr. Norris said in a very calm manner.

“Can I go with her?”

“Sure, but we’ll need you to stay here for just a moment while we get her car out so you can get any necessary items.”

“I really think being with my wife is more important than being with her car.”

“It’ll just take a minute. It’s protocol.”

“Okay,” he said, suspicious of this new change in procedure.

Mr. Clangdon went through his wife’s items, hurrying so he could get to her.

“I’m finished. Can I go now?”

“Yes, you may. Do you need someone to go with you?”

“No. I think I’ll manage.”

**Untitled**  
*painting*  
*by Dillon Weir '14*



Mr. Clangdon jumped in his car and, with great speed, headed down the road to the hospital. So many thoughts went through his mind as he went along. “Our last morning together very well have been a fight.”

Arriving at the hospital, he could barely stand to take the time to park his car, wanting so badly to get to his wife. Pushing the lock button on his car remote and sprinting through the parking lot, Mr. Clangdon couldn’t get to the door fast enough. He yanked open the doors, and almost forgot, in his haste, to stop and ask where his wife was.

“We have a Mrs. Clangdon in room 365. That’s on the third floor.”

Mr. Clangdon didn’t even say “thank you” since he was already by the elevator.

“Come on, come on, come on!” he muttered, as if it would speed up the elevator.

Ding!

“Finally!” Mr. Clangdon thought as he boarded. He pushed the third floor button and the door closed. Arriving at the third floor, he ran out of the elevator, and just gambled that his wife’s room was to the left. He ran and ran and ran, swiveling his head like he was a spectator at a tennis game, checking for room 365. He didn’t see it. He planted his foot, pivoted 180 degrees and ran in the other direction.

“Okay, I’m close now,” he said to himself, slowing down a bit to make sure to see the room numbers clearly.

“365!” Mr. Clangdon said as he saw the room. Double checking to make sure his wife was there, he barged through the door. His heart sank.

\*\*\*

“What happened? Why isn’t she conscious?” Mr. Clangdon inquired of the doctor.

“She blacked out upon arrival. She suffered a lot of head and spinal trauma through the crash and the impact into the river,” the doctor, clad in all white, stethoscope by his side, replied.

“Will she be alright?”

“That depends on what happens in the surgery to remove the glass and metal that stuck into her when the windshield smashed. Some of those pieces are pretty close to some vital arteries.”

“Can I be in the operating room with her?” Mr. Clangdon asked, his voice filled with hopefulness.

“I’m afraid not. We can’t risk any outside contamination getting into the operating room.

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The engine revved as the car sputtered to life and flew out of the hospital parking lot. He knew what had happened right when the operating room’s doors opened. He knew as soon as the hats came off. Hell, he felt like he, in a way, had known before he arrived at the hospital

“I’m sorry, sir. We did all we could. Some of the pieces were just too close to the vena cava, which is the main artery to the heart. It’s incredible the piece didn’t pierce it going into her, but, unfortunately it did on the way out. Again, I’m very sorry.”

Mr. Clangdon was sick of that soap opera “we did all we could” bull.

He sat alone in his driveway. The smell of gas filled the car, but Mr. Clangdon didn’t notice. The sun beat down upon him, but the only warmth he felt was from the tears pouring down his face. He stared straight ahead, but didn’t see anything. Every few seconds he glanced, through swollen eyes, at the wilting roses in the front seat, and the note, which read, *“I’m so sorry. Next time I’ll pick up the passports ASAP. XOXO”*



## Vermin

You  
Brood of Adders,  
Band of Weasels,  
Pack of Rats,  
Murder of Crows,  
Sneering Stoats,  
Foolish Foxes,  
Cowardly Ferrets.  
Why?  
Does it give you joy?  
Does your hatred make you smile?  
From whence comes your delight?

I have  
Listened to your arguments,  
Heard you on the street,  
Read your book,  
Seen your signs.  
I still do not understand your rage.  
You stand tall while you crawl,  
You disgust me.  
You say you come to save  
Those who aren't like you.  
Anyone with any difference,  
Man, woman, child  
You punish all for nothing.



**Who Woke Up the Mummy?** *scratchboard drawing by Christian Nichols '16*



**Watercolors**

*photograph by Zach Pulsifer '17*

*Ben Pearce '16*

## **Night and Day**

Not long after the Earth was created, trees stood tall, oceans stretched as far as the eye could see, and the stars were the limit. Nitrus, the creator, observed his creation. All kinds of animals roamed the Earth, even people. The people were clearly the dominant species of the world. Nitrus had made it so they could think and feel emotions. Nitrus made them a civilized species, though there was one thing missing.

In this time, night and day had yet to be created. It was dark all of the time. This made it hard for the people to do anything at all. They weren't built like the panther, whose dark fur allowed it to easily catch prey with the cover of the darkness. The people's eyes weren't like an owl's, with night vision to spot prey in the night. The darkness made it a struggle for the people so they prayed to their creator, Nitrus, over and over again.

Just as it seemed when they were being completely ignored, Nitrus came to the people and spoke. With a great and powerful voice, Nitrus said to the people, "I have created such a land for you, but you are missing something. This all-time darkness is hurting you.

None of you possess any traits that benefit you in this environment, like the panther or the night owl. I know this because I made you this way for a reason. I may not have given you these special traits, but I have given you something far more special than what I gave my other creatures. I created all of you with the power of light. You all know how to think and act. You know how to help each other. You, my people, have a conscience. What you must do to earn the light of day is show me you deserve it." The people looked very confused at this, but happy they'd received an answer from Nitrus.

Weeks had gone by with much confusion about how to earn this so-called "light", especially for one young boy named Tikka. Tikka was there when Nitrus spoke, but he wondered much about what was said. Tikka would often go off into the woods by himself just to analyze what Nitrus meant.

One day, Tikka was sitting on a big rock in a riverbank, doing what he always did, just thinking about Nitrus and what this so called "light" was. Tikka was minding his own business when he heard the crying of another boy in the distance. He went off to find where the sound was coming from. He ran and ran to find the boy from another tribe who was just about his age. Tikka was always taught to avoid other tribesmen, especially any rivals. Tikka was nervous to approach the other boy, but could clearly see he was in serious pain. Tikka knelt beside him and quickly asked what had happened. Tikka could see the boy was in too much pain to talk but he managed to point to his leg. As Tikka examined the boy's leg, he could see a thick piece of wood lodged in it. That was all Tikka needed to know. He quickly gave the boy a piece of cloth to bite on as he pulled the piece of wood out. Then he patched the wound to stop the bleeding. Tikka didn't just leave after that, but made sure the pain had died down so he could talk to the boy about what had happened.

"I was out just trying to fish with my spear when I tripped over a limb," the boy said. "As I fell, a piece of wood stuck me in the leg. You didn't have to do this. You could have ignored my cries, but you didn't. For that, I am eternally grateful." Using every breath he had, he said, "Thank you."

Tikka nodded and smiled and got the boy on his way. As Tikka headed back to his tribe, a glow began in the sky; the darkness wasn't as dark as it was before the accident. At that moment, Tikka realized something huge.

Tikka was in a full sprint back to his tribe, rehearsing over and over what he had to say to his parents and other members of the tribe.

"We are the source of light," Tikka pleaded with his people. "Our actions create the light. Nitrus told us he created us with light, with a conscience, so it's we who must bring the light to the world." He went on and on about how he helped a boy at the river. This caused the people to come to a little bit of an understanding of Nitrus' words. They all talked and talked about how they all needed to start helping people. But what they were most confused about was how a little boy found this out. Some thought he was making it all up, but just enough people had faith in the boy. With just enough people having that faith, the sky lightened a touch more. The people of the tribe noticed this and were in awe because of it.

Even the ones who doubted the boy started seeing the truth in him. The tribe came to the conclusion that it would be best if they started working together to receive what Nitrus had talked about, the gift of light.

Weeks went by. The tribe had been working harder and harder every day, doing things along the lines of what Tikka had done that day, like sharing with other people, caring for the injured or helping others with an everyday chore. Some had even come to help an injured animal. The people started respecting Nitrus' animals and his other creations. They still hunted and did what they had to, but they respected the game and didn't kill it if it wasn't fair game.

The world grew lighter and lighter by the day but the people could tell it wasn't as light as it was going to get. The basics weren't doing it any longer. Helping a friend within the tribe no longer added light. They had to branch out and do something outside the tribe to finish the job, to receive the full gift. And no one had an idea of what to do – except Tikka. Tikka thought back to that day when he helped the boy from the other tribe, and thinking back sparked the biggest idea he'd ever had. It was a long shot, though, and he would have to convince his own people to cooperate fully.

"We have to go to our rival tribe, the tribe that the boy I helped belonged to," he pleaded with the men of his tribe. "We must no longer consider ourselves rivals but friends. People among other people in Nitrus' creation."

One man replied, "I see how this could work, but how do we get the other tribe to cooperate?" The other men agreed with this, and it made Tikka think.

"We trade," Tikka said. "We give them some of our goods. If they see this as a peace offering, maybe they'll even give us something in return."

The man nodded. "It is worth a shot if it brings us Nitrus' gift."

The following day, the people of Tikka's tribe gathered meat, crops they'd grown, and animal hides and set off for the other tribe.

It seemed like the longest hike Tikka had ever taken, but soon enough they arrived. At first, the other tribe seemed ready for a battle with the stare they gave Tikka's tribe. But after they saw the offerings, everything seemed to be a lot less tense. They gladly accepted Tikka's tribe's offerings, and happily presented things like fish and animal bone in return.

As all of the trading was going on, their leader stopped and asked, "Why are you doing this? You are the one who helped my grandson, but instead of expecting something from us, you bring us animal hides, crops, and meat...I do not understand."

Tikka happily responded, "It can't be about fighting or doing things and expecting things in return. We are all people of Nitrus. We are just showing the light that he made us with."

As Tikka finished that sentence, a wave of bright light came across the world, making the sky as blue as the oceans. Tikka, a young boy, had brought out the light in people and finished the gift of Nitrus.

## **Love**

Sea turtle, sea turtle, why did you go?  
What did I do to make you leave home?  
You've been crawling to the ocean for quite some time,  
But I never thought you'd take the dive  
And leave me.  
I tried my best and loved seeing you  
But it's hard to be there when I'm on the moon.  
Oh, sea turtle, you've always been so strong,  
But without you in my ocean, I just feel wrong.  
Your hard shell can protect you when I can't.  
I loved you, turtle, even when you went.  
We both knew the day would come  
When my heart would be thrashed, torn, and numb,  
And you would leave me.

**Seniard**  
*photograph*  
*by Mason Blevins '16*



*Malik Johnson '16*

### **For a Reason**

Opens his eyes the first time for a reason  
Walks for the first time for a reason  
Sees his dream at age three for a reason  
He has the parents he does for a reason  
He fails before he succeeds for a reason  
He becomes stronger through failure for a reason  
He dreams of glorious nightmares for a reason  
His heart breaks often for a reason  
He opens his arms to the sky for a reason  
He opens the Bible nightly for a reason  
God tells him his eyes are open but he can't see for a reason  
And suddenly he realizes, there's no off season



**Chapel**

*drawing by Will Buckner '15*



## **Black Dahlia**

I had a knot the size of a brick in my stomach as I sat in the passenger seat of the yellow Los Angeles taxi, waiting to arrive at the house of Dr. Robert Lee, a 55 year old plastic surgeon who was in need of an assistant. After only exchanging phone calls with the surgeon, I was a bit skeptical if this strange man was someone I would be willing to work for, but I needed the money and there were very few jobs in my field at the time. Just two years before, I was receiving my degree in surgery and looking forward to a bright future of happiness and money, but as I ventured into the real world, I realized that finding a well-paying job was not going to go easily. After several months of searching for a job, I took an internship at a hospital to serve as a surgeon's assistant so I could receive more training. After a few months of training, I began to look for a paying job. That ambition led me to the front steps of Dr. Lee's house.

"Good morning!" he said as he opened the door to greet me. I was instantly relieved when I heard his deep, kind voice. He was a tall man, with grey hair, and a well-aged face. "Why don't we go down to my office in the basement? There is work to be done!"

He led me down to the basement where he showed me his surgery room with all of its surgical tools. He then took me through his office where I noticed a small picture of a woman. After looking at it for a few minutes, I asked, "Who is that woman in the picture?"

He replied, "That woman is my wife. She died tragically in a fire in our previous home. It has almost been twenty years since her death."

"I am so sorry," I said in response.

He gave me a look and said, "It's alright, son, everyone has to go sometime. Now that you are acquainted, our first patient will be here tomorrow. Her name is Elizabeth Short and she is looking to have a bit of work done on her face. Be here tomorrow morning at eight-thirty so we can prepare for the surgery." I told him I would be there, and he led me to the door where I called for another taxi to come pick me up to return home. As I got in the back seat, I was overjoyed that I had found a job, and a good one at that.

The next day, I woke up, put on my suit, and packed my scrubs. I left my home, excited to be working with Dr. Lee and to test the skills I had learned in my many years of surgical training. When I arrived at the home of Dr. Lee, I went down to the basement, and together we prepared the surgical table, sterilized the tools, dressed for the surgery, and waited for Mrs. Short. While waiting, I asked about Dr. Lee's previous surgeries.

"My first victim was a man by the name of Charles Moore. He came into the office for a hair transplant. As soon as he was unconscious, I began the incisions until he was all fixed up. A happy man at last, I sent him on his way. Another victim wanted to have some of the fat removed from her calves. When she was prepared for the surgery, and I had my surgical weapons ready, I went in and reduced the fat on her lower legs to nothing. I took her to her car and she left my house."

Just as I began to notice a few odd things about his stories, I heard a soft knock on the door and then the slow whine of the door opening. Dr. Lee and I both went up the stairs to meet Mrs. Short. As soon as I hit the top of the steps, I saw her waiting for us. She was beautiful, with dark brown hair, a pale white face, and deep blue eyes. She had a slim figure, and was slightly shorter than I. I thought to myself, "This girl could be in the movies."

When Mrs. Short saw the two of us, she walked up to us and said, "Hello, I am Elizabeth, and I am here to have a little work done on my face. If you don't mind, is it alright if you take a bit off my midsection? I am preparing for the movie business and I want to look the best I possibly can." Dr. Lee replied that it would be fine with him; he just needed her to pay him a little extra. After Elizabeth was finished paying Dr. Lee for the surgery, we showed her to the surgery room.

Once we were prepared, Dr. Lee explained, "I am going to give you an anesthetic for this surgery, Mrs. Short." After a few minutes, Elizabeth was unconscious and the surgery began. As Lee started the standard procedures, he suddenly looked up at me. "You know what? I forgot one thing for this surgery. I will be back momentarily." Dr. Lee went upstairs, and just like he said, returned quickly with a small wooden box which was about the size of a notebook. Before he opened the box, I suddenly remembered his surgery stories, and how odd they had sounded to me: how he had called his patients "victims," and his tools "weapons," and talked as if he was harming them, even killing them. That was the moment when I realized what was in that wooden box, and that this kind, likable man was really a psychopath. I remembered his story about his wife and realized that she hadn't died in a fire: he had killed her. Inside the box, just as I had suspected, lay a butcher's knife.

As I sat there, too nervous to do anything, Dr. Lee said, "Time to give Mrs. Short what she wanted: First, let's take off some of her midsection." Skin ripping, blood flowing, Elizabeth Short was being cut in two. I could not bear the sight. While cutting, the doctor seemed to be smiling, as if he was enjoying himself. Finally, with Ms. Short in two pieces, Dr. Lee said, "She should be happy with her midsection. Now let's deal with that face she wanted tweaked." Lee then took the knife to the side of Elizabeth's mouth, and with the flick of his wrist, there was a cut down the side of her cheek. With no hesitation, he did the same to the other cheek. He looked at his creation. "She should be happy now that she got everything she wanted, right?" he asked.

I shook my head in fear; I wanted to leave this godforsaken place, and this insane man. I wanted to go home.

Dr. Lee then said, "Now that she has what she wants, we should clean up this mess." He and I drained the body of blood, and made sure there was little bloodstain on her skin. Dr. Lee gave me one last order. "Take the body to the best hiding spot you can think of."

I raced out of the dreaded house with a body-filled suitcase, ready to get rid of the body and out of this situation as fast as I could. I hurried to South Norton Avenue where I dropped the body in a lot I knew of. As I drove away from the scene, I promised myself that I would never return to the home of Dr. Lee or speak of him again.

**The Hunt**  
*photograph*  
*by Ben Pearce '16*



*Preston Coleman '17*

**The Mystery at Rhett House**

*Drip, drip, drip.* The sound woke me up every day: the dew, settling on the roof of my house, fell through a crack and splashed onto the hardwood floor of my bedroom. It was some sort of an alarm, happening every morning between 6:57 and 7:23. Rubbing the sleep-sand out of my eyes, I stepped out of bed. I was not a morning person, and that morning was no exception. I looked at my watch. “7:02, perfect,” I said under my breath. I normally woke up at 7:03. Like always, I took a twelve minute shower, got dressed, and ate a bagel with cream cheese and berries. All of that took 36 minutes. I stepped outside. It was distinctively cold for an October morning in Beaufort, South Carolina, the town I had lived in all my life. I walked back to my room and grabbed my worn down jacket, an action which added thirty seconds to my morning. I walked out to my cherry-red Prius, stepped in, and turned on the car.

“7:38, right on schedule,” I said. Living alone resulted in a boring life. While I was home, all I said normally was the time. I was fine with living alone; I never had an interest in pets, or girlfriends, or even my parents (but, it was nice to have them down the street).

I drove down Ribaut, took a right turn onto Bay Street which led me to the Rhett House Inn where I had worked for seven months and three days. I looked at the clock in my

car one more time: 7:44, right on time. I reached for the seatbelt but realized I had never been buckled in. A wave of scary “what ifs” crossed my mind. I was glad none of them had happened.

I stepped out of the car, locked it, and approached the 24 stairs in the back of the Rhett House. As always, the first thing I did when I got to work was clock in. I picked up my card and slid it into the machine. The black screen blinking with green letters read, “Cooper, Aiden” and “7:44.” I was one minute ahead of my shift. Knowing that I was normally two minutes early made me wonder why an extra minute had passed. Then I remembered: that stupid jacket.

“Cooper!” a voice yelled from across the corridor.

“Yes, Mr. Nolan?” His voice always intimidated me. After my first manager died, Mr. Emmett Nolan had ruled the Rhett House.

“Grayson’s sick. Can you work the elevator today?” Whatever life I had left in me at that point died. Working the elevator, or pushing buttons for eight hours, was the most boring job I had ever done.

“Yes, sir, consider it done,” I said with sarcasm Mr. Nolan couldn’t detect. After the old, fat man was out of sight, I wanted to scream. Not only was working the elevator extremely boring, it also scared me. The Rhett House had been open for over one hundred years and the elevator had been in service for close to fifty of those. Also, I hated interacting with strangers.

As I walked on the elevator, a middle-aged woman, gray-haired and short, was on the phone. She motioned to the number six to me, and I pushed the sixth floor button. “Yeah, Jolene, but Nell Fleming died here and I’m staying in her room. I’m paying 300 bucks a night for this so bring all the ghost hunting stuff I left. It’s vital!” She closed her flip phone violently as the elevator doors opened. She gave me a five dollar tip and walked out.

“Nell Fleming,” I said to myself. I knew I had heard that name somewhere before.

The elevator landed on the lobby floor, home sweet home, but started moving again. Second floor, third, fourth, fifth. Finally, the machine stopped on the sixth floor. The doors opened, yet no one was there. “Those damn kids,” I muttered. The doors closed, and once again, the elevator reached the bottom floor. No one was in sight, so I walked out. I turned to my left and walked towards the front desk. My colleague, Amanda Johnathan, was sitting there with her orange, curly hair and uniform headband. She looked gorgeous.

“Hello, this is Amanda here at the Rhett House Inn. How may I help you?” she said. I turned and she smiled at me. “Uh, huh. Yes, sir,” I was confused. “You have reservations for this weekend.” I slowly walked closer. “Alright, Mr. Mathis, see you tomorrow. Have a great day!”

“What was that about?” I asked.

“Oh, hey, Aiden. These clients are driving me through the roof.” She pulled the Bluetooth earpiece from her left ear; it had been hidden in her red hair.

“This may sound stupid, but I kinda thought you were talking to me,” I said, shyly. She began to laugh.

“You’re funny. So, I saw Nolan gave you elevators. How’s that working out for you?” she smirked.

“It’s absolute hell. I’ve been working for an hour and only one person has walked through. Five dollars for an hour of work. That’s less than minimum wage.”

“Oh, yeah, I heard about her. Talla Gervais. Apparently she’s staying in Nell Fleming’s room. She’s some fancy ghost hunter.”

“Who is this Nell Fleming?” I asked. “I know I’ve heard my name before--”

Amanda started answering the question before I had finished talking. “She used to live here back in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, before it became a hotel. Her bedroom was on the sixth floor, room 10 today. When she was like, seven, she was standing on the balcony when all of the sudden”—she started to stand up (she always got dramatic when the time was right)--“BOOM! She fell and splattered on the road. Someone said they saw an indentation on the road under room 610, but I don’t believe that.”

“There’s no way that happened. Wasn’t the house built in 1914?” I rarely missed a number. Amanda sat down and started typing on her computer.

“Nope! ‘The Rhett House, built in 1845, was home to the Fleming family of Beaufort, South Carolina.’ It’s 1845.” She knew I hated being corrected, but she loved correcting me.

“Ha ha ha, very funn—”

“Ahhhhh!” I heard an ear-curdling scream that lasted roughly five and a half seconds. Amanda and I stared at each other.

“What was that?” she asked, just as a man ran in, looking like he had seen a ghost.

“Quick! Someone call 911! She’s not breathing!” Amanda and I raced outside to see what the hubbub was about. There she was, Talla Gervais, dead on the concrete sidewalk.

Amanda and I were completely shocked; we were still holding hands when the ambulance came and the medics told us there was no way to bring her back to life.

“Whoa,” Amanda and I spoke in sync.



**Sailboat**

*photograph by Belk McDill '16*

I looked up at the balcony of room 610 and slowly pieced it together. “Amanda, psst,” I whispered. “Come inside, now!”

Once we got inside, I said, “It was Nell!”

She looked confused. “What do you mean?”

“Nell Fleming! You know, room 610? Talla didn’t jump to her death. It was Nell!”

Amanda looked at me like I was a complete idiot.

“You’re kidding, right?” Amanda asked.

“No! It all makes sense! Who was the first person to stay in that room since Nell died?”

“Ms. Gervais.”

“Right! And who just died?”

“Ms. Gervais!” Amanda started to understand.

“Exactly! So, it’s highly possible that Nell pushed Talla over the balcony. She doesn’t want anyone staying in her room!”

“But how can we be sure?” Amanda asked.

“Well, we could stay in room 610 tonight,” I said with sarcasm that Amanda didn’t detect.

“Oh, my god, I’ve always wanted to be a ghost hunter! Let’s do it!” Amanda ran to the elevator, excited. “Aiden, come on!”

After thinking about it for sixteen seconds, I realized it actually could be fun. I ran to join Amanda. When the doors opened, we stepped onto the elevator and Amanda pressed the sixth floor’s button. We faced the doors, not saying a word during the ride up. After what seemed like an eternity, the doors opened and Amanda ran towards room 610.

“Amanda, wait!” I yelled. “We need to stick together!”

There it was, room 610; I had never seen it in person. I turned the knob and the door swung open.

“Oh, my god, Room 610, nice to finally meet you!” It sounded like Amanda was actually talking to the room. She was a weird chick.

We each sat on one of the two beds. “So,” Amanda said. “What do we do now?”

I looked around. “Wanna watch some TV?”

“Sure!” She lay back on the bed as if she owned the place.

Natalie Morales was being interviewed on the Today Show (and I love Natalie Morales). All of the sudden, Amanda staggered to the balcony.

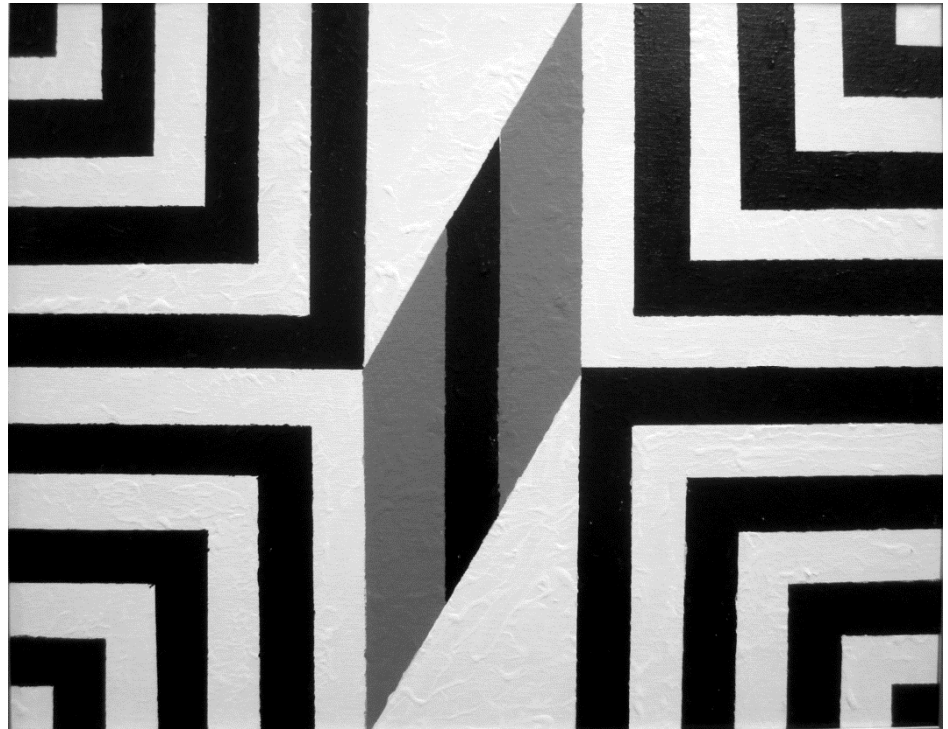
“Amanda, what are you doing?” I shouted, trying to go after her. She put one leg over the railing, then the other. Before I could reach her, she dropped over the edge.

“Aaaaaaah!” I looked over the railing to see Amanda Johnathan’s lifeless body staring right up at me. In that instant, everything went black.

*Drip, drip, drip.* I jolted to life, looking around me. I was in my house. Amanda wasn’t dead. It had been a terrible dream. I let out a sigh of relief, and went back to sleep very peacefully.



**Combining the  
Neutrals**  
*painting*  
*by Wes Reinhardt '16*



*Liam Pulsifer '15*

## **I-81**

Some dreams show themselves in the tail-lights of 18-wheelers in the rain  
Spattered with the grime of a thousand cloudy miles  
And baked by the sun for a thousand more  
Until their forlorn eyes glow a dull red like dying embers in a hearth.

But when the hulking mass of a semi flounders in a summer storm,  
A swollen tide surging from its sides as it plummets downhill in the left lane,  
Those coals thrive--glittering and burning on the wet pavement,  
Reflected a hundred times over in the short time the sky opens.  
Mud asserts itself once more,  
Spitting from colossal wheels until the road and its travelers must come back to  
Earth, seeming the better place for fire and light,  
Until one travels in the rain by night.

## The Six-Word Story

It is rumored that Ernest Hemingway once entered a contest of his own creation, a bet that any writer worth his salt could tell a short story in six words. A little drunk, and supposedly surrounded by contemporary writers at a fancy meal, Hemingway proposed the challenge, which was quickly taken up by his peers. They didn't believe it was possible.

Hemingway sat back, thought for a few moments, then said: "For sale: baby shoes, never worn." He won the bet.

Students in Mr. Kaneft's American Literature and American Novel class were given the same challenge. Here are the results:

"She left him with two choices." *Chalmers Carr '15*

"I didn't get to say goodbye." *Marcellos Allison '16*

"The sun rose just before dark." *Malik Johnson '15*

"Nalgene bottle, on the road, crushed." *Matt Lowe '15*

"I should have kissed her longer." *Anonymous*

"He had never eaten toes before." *Cameron Bailey '15*

"She moaned, his wig fell off." *Quincy Grant '15*

"Men fall, others push, one flag." *Dave Warriner '15*

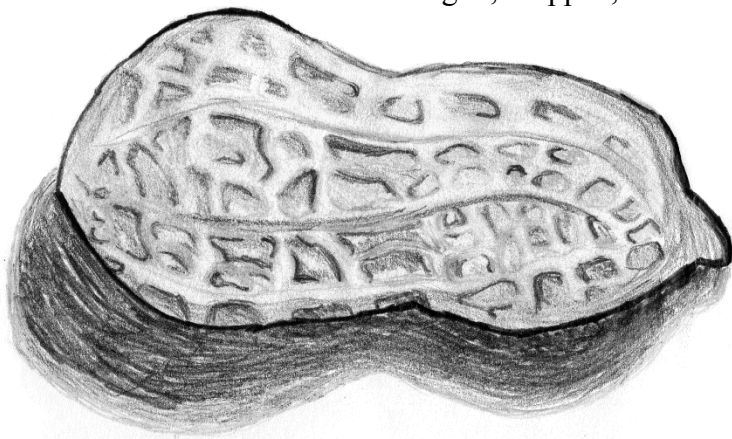
"Old house, burned, murder mystery investigation." *Will Keenan '16*

"Baby shower postponed: please don't call." *Ian Mayers '14*

"Drip! Drip! Cold dark room, forever." *Jack Pace '14*

"Wedding cancelled. Will not be rescheduled." *Forrest Yates '14*

"Sale: French gun, dropped, never shot." *Michael Brazinski '14*



**Peanut**

*drawing by Wilson Smith '15*

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