

COLLAGAGE

A JOURNAL OF CREATIVE EXPRESSION

ISSUE 17 • SPRING 2013



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ISSUE 17 • SPRING 2013

PUBLISHED BY THE MTSU HONORS COLLEGE

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

As I step down as Editor in Chief and prepare myself for life after graduation, I look back fondly on the experiences I've had over the past four semesters with *Collage*. I will always be appreciative to everyone for welcoming an outspoken art major into a role that has allowed me to grow both socially and creatively. I've learned so much from my time with this publication.

I would like to take this opportunity to say how very proud I am of everyone who was involved in our Fall 2011 & Spring 2012 issues. Both the staff and submitters were essential in earning *Collage* our second Gold Crown Award. We are fortunate to have such a talented student body that we would achieve this prestigious national award twice in *Collage* history.

With that said, I am pleased to present to you the 2013 Spring *Collage* issue.

I hope you enjoy it as much as we do.



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EDITOR IN CHIEF

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sometimes i get tired. i get so, so, so lazy and just drift away. i think about september and how you'll finally be back into my sights. we all drift, but this time i think you've drifted too far. everything looks different now. even you. even me. i've let my hair grow long and even longer than i had ever imagined. hair like weeds twisting and knotting every thing in its grasp. except you. never you. you slipped away as you always do. but its not like that is unexpected. i don't blame you. but sometimes i think about how you used to

follow me
past the tree line and
thicket of honeysuckle
every smell and every
but the undeveloped
ings you spoke of
every thing but
though but as always
selectively picked
exact moment to drift
, drift away. and fur-
denial i slipped but
don't blame you. you can't
with wings when it decides to fly.



SCORN A THING WITH WINGS

JACQULYN SWANSON

(BLOCK PRINT AND COLLOGRAPH PRINT)



ANTIQUE
MARIAH SELITSCH
(PHOTOGRAPHY)

THE BATTLE IN THE GARDEN

TERRY COOPER

(POETRY)

The lilac and the buttercup
were fighting over dirt.

The wrong track and the left corrupt
were fighting for the earth.

The lilac struck the first blow
and the buttercup excited
returned a shot that made it known
the garden was divided.

For weeks they fought
and cursed
and bled.

And when I thought
that one was dead,
A twitch would come
that hung my head.

The season came to its end
and there upon the ground
the lilac had the other pinned,
his petals strewn around.

As he began his killing blow,
there came a thunderous sound.
Something bellowed from below,
something underground.

It sprang from the soil
with eyes fiery hot
and crushed them both with little toil—
The forgotten forget-me-not.



KELSEY IN A PAINT FACTORY

NHU DUONG
(PHOTOGRAPHY)

COFFEE

KAITLYN HAWKINS

(POETRY)

Do you still hate black coffee?

I would imagine you do.

But maybe you've grown

Since then.

Maybe you've grown accustomed

To the bitterness, the ability to

Discern with ease the lackluster grade

Of the coffee, or to tell when

The coffee was burnt.

I imagine you sitting there, looking out

A window, seeing the morning as

It is still new to another day.

Fog gently migrates across the ground,

And you sit there, waiting for a sound

To tell you ... what?

What is it you are waiting for?

I imagine I will never know.

I would pretend, though, that

As you sit there drinking your

Coffee—is it still with cream and sugar?—

That you are looking for me,

Or remembering me; remembering

Those last few years where we actually

Got along.

Separation is hard, more for

Me than you, I think.

You were always the strong one.

I can see it, even now, the face

I find I miss—and I'm still amazed

It is yours—sitting before a

Window pane. I imagine you

Wearing your time-honored expression

That is carried with you always,

Feigned interest and a small

Half smile, betrayed ever so slightly

By those eyes that are always

Miles away.

That face always amused me ...

And how fares that face?

The one that should be

So like mine?

Was I right? Do you sit in front of

Window panes, drinking your

Black coffee?

Do you think of me? How I teased you

About that coffee, coffee that

Grows cold in your hands.

Even now I'm sitting by a

Window—why is it called a

Window pane?—and I

Imagine that I can see you, sitting

By your window

Coffee mug in hand, as steam migrates

Before your face.

THE IRIDACEAE AND LAVANDULA

NICOLE WARD

(CREATIVE NONFICTION)

Mistress Mary, Quite contrary,
How does your garden grow?
With Silver Bells, And Cockle Shells,
And so my garden grows.

-Tommy Thumb's *Pretty Song Book*, 1744

My grandmother's home was always a magical place. She lived just far enough away that it was a destination, an exotic place away from home. It was a place set apart. Making the long and winding drive through the backroads of the wild woods surrounding her, my eyes would catch glimpses of blue sky peeking down through the green canopy above as I pressed my head against the warm glass of our van. We were almost there. Pulling into her long rock drive, I could feel the rain-made rivets causing the car to dip and sway. She is outside to greet us with her arms open. She smells like lavender and face cream. She is so lovely.

I've never met someone who reveled in beauty as much as my grandmother did. To know her was to know a garden in constant bloom. Her house was built on a slight hill, and my grandfather had carved her a terraced lawn to perch her castle upon. The front sides of these gentle slopes were an array of floral delight. Each section, thought out and planned, was growing wild in the Tennessee sun. My favorite was always the irises, the bulbs transplanted from my great-grandmother Frye's garden. Their long, graceful, green stems exploding with silky purple at their peak, a symbol of our home. The grassy strips between the gardens were soft and green. She would often set up a sprinkler on the top tier, and we grandchildren would prance about in the glittery drops of water. They were prisms of oxygen, light, and magic, shimmering against our young skin. A horse would whinny in the barn, and the dog would bark at our happiness. I would think I was in one of my fairytale books.

Inside, her living room featured a large rock wall and built-in bookshelves. The shelves were packed to capacity, filled with pictures of her trip to Hawaii, gardening books, and family albums. My grandfather is on the couch watching a Western.

She is in the kitchen, and it smells wonderful. She sets the tin of pretzels on the table to tide us over until it is ready, and she goes to her bathroom. I make the trip to follow her, my little feet padding on the gray carpet. I pass the hall to the front door no one uses, past the cutting room that is littered with scraps of fabric. Large looming rolls of plush designs lean against the wall, waiting their turn to be used, to be handcrafted into something beautiful. Her hand-sketched portrait is on the wall. I pass her sewing room, the large loud serger resting in the corner. I know that tomorrow I will sit in her lap, and she will guide my little hands around the needle; we will create something together. I turn left into her bedroom, her bed piled high with soft things. Left again and there she is, standing at the double sink. She looks at me in the mirror and smiles. It smells of lavender in here. Her jewelry, bath salts, and lotions litter the counter; they are signs of a life lived in this place—her life lived in this place. She is all things graceful. She smiles, and we go back to the kitchen with the others. I was small, and I was learning.

The drive out to her house is different this time. The turns are familiar, but the glimmering green canopy is gone, and the trees are stripped bare. The young beeches seem to be dancing wood nymphs, flitting between the established trees. They are shivering in the cold air, clinging to their leaves like a happy memory. They must know their value. We are quiet and all in black. I do not smell the lavender in this place. A prayer, and then she is gone. Flowers are piled high, and hugs are exchanged. Where is the happy green of my childhood?

I am at home again. I light a candle and grab a book. My chamomile tea is steeping in the kitchen. I am alone, and I am sad. I'm sorry I didn't make the trip through the tunnels of green light to your secret garden in the woods as much when I got older. I should have; I know I should have. I don't know how to make it up to you now, beyond becoming what you said. I will be your smart girl, Granny. I will work hard, like you did. I will fiercely love those that I care for, like you did.

“ THE JOY WILL SPROUT AGAIN, JUST LIKE MY GREAT GRANDMOTHER'S IRISES IN MY FRONT LAWN WILL, PLANTED THERE BY MY FATHER WHEN THIS WAS HIS HOME TWENTY YEARS AGO. ”

Her last summer with us was one spent trying to make her comfortable. She could not be at the home she so dearly loved, the one she grew herself, so we attempted in vain to make her at ease with us. My older sister would bring over things to sew and spend time with her at the machine. Oh, my lovely sister, how I see so much of Granny in her—the same sense of self, and the same easy beauty. I don't have the same ability with my hands that Tasha does, so I would sit with Granny and talk. One day we were sitting in the living room, and she just looked at me and said, “You are my smart girl, Nikki. You are so smart. You are going to do well for yourself all on your own.”

I will find beauty in the tender stems and curves of the wild flowers, like you did. I will work to earn every single thing I receive, exactly as you did. The joy will sprout again, just like my great-grandmother's irises in my front lawn will, planted there by my father when this was his home twenty years ago. They are sleeping in the cold ground now, but soon enough they will eat the soil and drink the sun. The night comes, and I lie down in my bed. It is her old brass bed. My sister has lent it to me till I am on my feet again. I lie under my parent's quilt, the weight of my family memory pressing down. It is a happy weight, and I am quiet again. My candle smells like lavender, and she is here. ■

GRANDMA'S VIOLET VAHZ

ANDREA GREEN

(POETRY)

She can't recall the color of her memory. It was a moment long ago when she was fresh and adorned with the feeling of new. Perhaps the memory was a pale pink, like the dusty fraudulent flowers her grandson brings her. She places them reluctantly in her favorite porcelain vase.

Not a vase, but a vahz. Given by a suitor and once filled with the sweetest buds, it now houses velour violets and doeskin daisies. It sits out of place in the center of a scratched wooden table. The table is an heirloom haggled for her from a flea market man who sold it for "A buck! A buck! Ev'ra thin's a buck!"

The wobbly legs held still by a stack of *Life* magazines. Underneath the vahz, a tea-stained doily. Once white and lovely, the dainty doily sits recoiled, as each weekend, round and round the vahz does go, where it stops only children know. Tea time is a sad affair. But once it was different. If she closes her eyes, she

might remember. Perhaps the time was bathed in the color of the sun. A time when she was the age of new. No hand-me-down heirlooms or cloth flowers. A time before the plodding and prattling of tiny tots chanting, "a buck, a buck, he say ev'ra thin's a buck!" Now, in her three-quarter room, with her circulation socks

and her gummy white porcelains swimming in a cup, she tries to recall the color, the smell, the touch. Yet she knows that as they did to her suitor's violet vahz, the years fracture and fissure everything they touch. So sitting gravely beside her haggled heirloom, she stares at her dusty bouquet and tries desperately to recall the color of her memory.



PHOENIX

JOSHUA PETTY

(OIL ON PANEL)



LEGS IN PARADISE

STARLING SENSING

(PHOTOGRAPHY)

BED SHEETS

JOANNA WILSON

(POETRY)

Daybreak caresses us with a rosy glow

Peeking through my curtains

Saying good morning

In that silent unspoken way.

A sigh singing chords of happiness

Drifting from the rafters

Floating gently down

Landing softly on my pillow.

Where I lay my head

And thoughts swirl into the air

A never-ending procession

That ceases at your touch.

A warm embrace between you and I

Entangled together

Ensnarled in another

Intertwined as one.

Upon that soft surface

Supporting us

Carrying us

Away from here.

And into my dreams

Of the past, present, future

Always a harmony of

Today, tomorrow, forever.

But always of today

A tune of one day at a time

Coming back again each night

But first I must pull myself away.

Untangling myself

Throwing covers aside

Leaving you for now

My empty, lonely, comfortable bed

But always with promises of returning

Only to face today, tomorrow, forever.



RIVERBEND
JENNIE SCHUT
(OIL ON WOOD)



THE WOLF AND THE SEVEN YOUNG KIDS

CHRISTINE CRAFT
(WATERCOLOR AND INK)

AGAIN, THE DOCTOR'S OFFICE

TRACI CRUEY

(POETRY)

I watch a small bug skitter around the room,
trapped, desperate to escape.

The man with healing hands walks in and
squashes its hope.

Sterile rooms, white coats,
they all say the same thing:

my future child
stepped on too many cracks,

an enemy pushed too many
pins into the back of a doll,

I fell back
and never sprang forward.

Lay on heat, stick on electrodes,
inject needles into sensitive parts,

let fingers poke and prod and
“Does this hurt?”

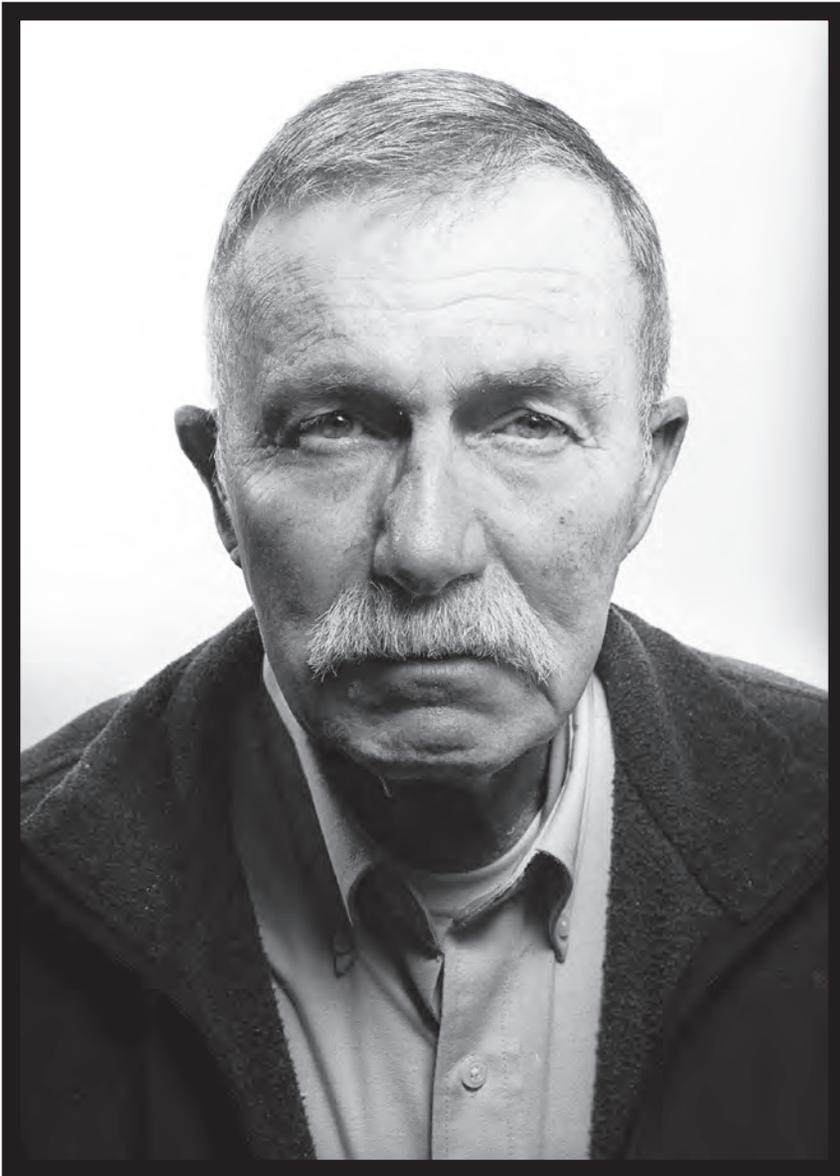
Fidget and shift, but there's no relief,
trapped, desperate to escape

these bones that will not support me.

HOW TO TEST DRIVE A PICKLE

RACHEL WARD
(PHOTOGRAPHY)





HUMANITY
WILL GRONĚS
(PHOTOGRAPHY)



MYSTERIOUS DISAPPEARANCE

AARON LEWIS

(OIL ON MASONITE WITH RESIN)

MANHOOD

TREY FRENCH

(POETRY)

What does it mean to be a man?

Is a man genteel; or is he

Qualified when of age? Is he

Stoic, a bearded craftsman—or

A suited marketeer? May he

express Himself, or must he remain dumb?

A man is simple, profound, and direct.

A man is short, tall, and thin and wide.

He is bearded and he is shaven. He is

Sentimental and he is a lover. He is also

Tough and stern. What is a man who doesn't

Love? He is not a man.

If a man desires to prove his manhood,

He need only ask for socks for Christmas.

EDEN
STACI TOMLINSON
(POETRY)

I will meet you in the garden, beyond the window,
where time for us flows backwards towards the moment of our meeting.

That which hath been is now and that which is to be hath already been.

In the garden where before and after have been erased
and only here and now exist between us,
I will wait with you for the moment of realization
when the knowledge of Good and Evil comes secondary
to the knowledge of you and I as one.

Wait with me now, in that moment, just before,
when the air thickens and becomes a solid, tangible thing,
when the knowledge of what lies ahead stands between us leaving no room for return,
and in that moment all power of reason is removed
and only the power to act remains,

Look into my eyes in that moment, just before,
and I will show you something different from the shades of moments past
or the promise of moments future.

I will show you a truth, rare and fleeting, that exists in this moment only.



UNTITLED
PATRICK CASEY
(PHOTOGRAPHY)

Je t'aime, un peu, beaucoup, passionnément, pas du tout.

Here in the garden, they are one and the same,

un peu, beaucoup, passionnément, pas du tout.

Da mi basia mille

un peu, beaucoup, passionnément, pas du tout.

In the garden, time flows backwards towards the moment of our meeting.

Stay with me here in the garden, beyond the window,
where you and I alone descend into the shadows of Creation.

That which hath been is now and that which is to be hath already been.

Lead me not from the shelter of the garden into the valley of our own Destruction.

Lead me not through the window from the garden

where the truth that existed in its shelter shatters like so many shards of glass.

Je t'aime, un peu, beaucoup, passionnément, pas du tout.

THE CRYING CANDLES

TAFFETA CHIME

(FICTION)

Jake's boss told him that he was a lucky intern. "We're covering a subway accident outside of Shanghai. Our normal field photographers are either sick, on vacation, or on my nerves. You up for it?" Almost before Jake knew what to say, he was boarding a plane for China. Jake graduated from a prestigious journalism program last year and was ecstatic to land a graduate work-study with such a big-name online magazine like *The Witness*. He knew many of the reporters and photographers traveled abroad for international stories, but he didn't think he'd be traveling for at least another year! Though his legs were throbbing by the end of his fourteen-hour flight out of Detroit, he was clutching his camera bag excitedly in his lap.

"Come on, kid," Ellen said, taking her suitcase out of the overhead compartment. "Xiao Meng is waiting for us."

Ellen Guthridge was a long-time reporter for *The Witness* and was one of the best-paid writers on staff. Jake was thrilled to be working with her, short-tempered though she was. They were met in the airport by a group of Chinese journalists, the leader of which was Wang Xiao Meng, who was like Ellen's counterpart for *The Witness's* sister journal in China. Her English was superb, and though Jake thought she didn't look to be much older than fifteen, he knew she was a resounding force in the journalism scene of Shanghai. She smiled wide and shook hands with Ellen. "Welcome, Ms. Guthridge. I trust your flight was fine?"

"Other than the questionable Moo Shoo Pork, everything was fine." She motioned to the photographer and said, "This is our photography intern, Jake Till."

"Mr. Till," Xiao Meng greeted with a handshake. Jake gave her a pursed smile and a nod. "Well, let's take your things to the hotel, then we'll get right to work."

Xiao Meng made hailing a taxi look so effortless, like the taxi was expected to come to her the whole time. Jake noticed it when she got a taxi for the hotel but also when she hailed one for them the following morning.

Jake and Ellen sat in the back seat, and Xiao Meng took the front seat so she could navigate with the driver. "What do you know about the accident?" she asked them when the car started to swerve through traffic.

"We've heard that the casualty rate is up to twenty-eight and that the accident was caused because of track malfunction, is that correct?"

Jake pointed his camera out the window and took as many pictures as he could. The energy and newness of everything outside was calling out to his lens, and it made his ears tune out the conversation between the two reporters. Before he knew it, they were pulling up to a subway station that had been roped off with caution tape. Xiao Meng handed them press passes and umbrellas before they exited the taxi. But when Jake stepped out of the taxi, what he noticed was not the site of the report but something just beyond. "Miss Xiao Meng, what is that?"

Ellen and Xiao Meng stopped their conversation and looked in the distance to what directed Jake's gaze.

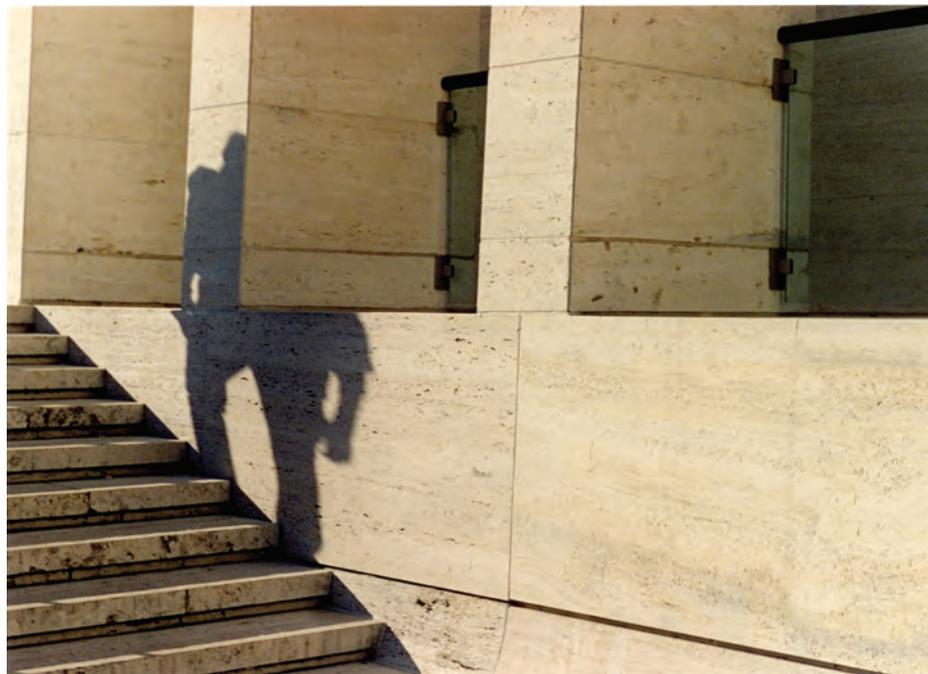
"That's the temple. Many people are going to pray for the victims of the accident."

"Can we go up there?" Ellen asked anxiously, turning quickly to their Chinese guide.

"With your press badges, you can go practically anywhere you please. Follow me."

As they trailed behind Xiao Meng, Ellen leaned down to Jake and said, "Good thinking, Jake. Maybe we can get some heart-wrenchers to show a different side of the accident. So far, it's not turning out to be a very interesting story."

Jake's mind churned as he watched Ellen jog a little to catch up with Xiao Meng. He was proud of the praise, but he wasn't quite sure what it was exactly that she was praising him for. Still, he pressed up the stairs and through the crowd, letting his camera lead the way. (CONTINUED ON PAGE 15)



UNTITLED
PATRICK CASEY
(PHOTOGRAPHY)



UNACCOMPANIED

BRITTANY WYNNE

(PHOTOGRAPHY)

GILLS

ARI CONSTANTINE

(POETRY)

I stumbled from the top of the hill
that my tribe still calls its home.
I rolled
into the waters of a different ocean,
a place much wider and bigger than me.
I see fish in place of hunters,
life in place of food;
I hear tidal waves and hurricanes,
no longer my mother's drums,
and I, myself, begin to mold.

I found an alcove under the waves
(a space that belongs to me)
I carved maps of my imagination
into the rocky walls with my fingernails.
I befriended whales and octopi
to sing and drum against my home,
to fill my space with sounds that echoed
so I would always remember them.

These secrets I've kept, some even from me,
but now I write them all here, for free:
you cannot fault a solar flare
for not knowing how to dim,
perhaps I wasn't born with gills
but I will learn to swim.

(CONTINUED) The temple was actually several buildings, and each building could be entered through a courtyard, a long row of stairs, and an open area filled with large pots of embers. The rainy air was filled with ash, and Jake was amazed at how many people there were. He could hear many people crying, others chanting, some yelling at the top of their lungs out of anguish. People would take some sticks of red incense, burn them at the tips, bow a few times in all directions while waving the incense in front of them, then pray before throwing their sticks into the pits of cinders. There were so many people praying that the water on the ground was red with the incense remains.

Jake could hear them as he wandered around the entrance of the temple. He looked at the candles the woman had placed in the holder. There were Chinese characters written on the sides of them, and he wished he knew what they said. He could hear Xiao Meng translate the question for the woman.

With the red wax running down, he couldn't help but think the candles looked like they were crying, too. He snapped a photo. "Don't you take picture!" the woman yelled. She stood from her seat and started toward Jake again, her eyes filled with tears. Before he knew it, she was in front of him, crying wildly.

Her quivering face haunted Jake. Xiao Meng spoke to her again in Mandarin, placing her hands on her shoulders and trying to calm her down.

But she only stared at Jake with eyes that pierced him. Rain and ash fell around them. Jake just now noticed that a crowd had formed around them, and the crying and chanting had stopped. All eyes were on them. The woman started yelling in Mandarin. Jake's heart pounded.

Xiao Meng finally said, "We need to get out of here."

As the three of them rushed out of the temple courtyard, Ellen said to Jake, "This was a great idea! You've gotten some really good field exposure now."

When they returned to Detroit, Ellen had written a tear-jerking story about a young woman and her ailing mother who was going into town from their small village to see a doctor when her life was cut short by the subway accident. She was among the hundreds of those who died in the accident that many think is a government conspiracy. Jake's boss hailed it as *The Witness's* best story of the year, and Jake's picture of what had come to be known as "The Crying Candles" was nominated for a photography award.

He turned in his two weeks' notice as soon as he heard the news. ■

OTHERS AROUND THEM LOOKED ON IN CURIOSITY, TRANSFIXED ON THE FOREIGNER AND ON THE GIRL WHO COULD SPEAK WITH THEM.

Others lit thicker red candles, prayed over them, and placed them in candleholders above a rectangular pit of ash. Jake watched as one young woman did this, and he quickly snapped her picture as she stood, her hands together and tears streaming down her cheeks. She heard the camera snap, and her eyes shot right to him. Her expression was shocked and intensely hurt. Jake was looking at the image on his camera when he heard, "You get out!" He looked up and saw her walking toward him and waving her arms. "Leave! Now!"

"She speaks English!" Ellen said excitedly. She pulled out her recorder and started toward the woman. "Excuse me, ma'am. May we talk to you a moment?"

Others around them looked on curiously, transfixed on the foreigner and on the girl who could speak with them. "You go away! This is not for—for news!" Xiao Meng came quickly and started speaking Mandarin to the young woman. It seemed to calm her down, though she still stared at Jake.

Ellen coaxed her and asked her to sit with them. "Why are you praying here today?" she asked the woman when they were sitting together in the courtyard. Jake stood far off, afraid that he might further insult the woman. She was quiet, and her eyes were locked on the young photographer. He tried to look away from her. "Miss? Did you know someone who was killed in the subway accident?"

"This is my prayer! Not for you! Not for picture!" Ellen came running after her, throwing her voice recorder in the woman's face.

"I'm so sorry," Jake said, startled and a little scared.

"My mother was good woman! He was just go to work! It was a normal day for her! She was beautiful—and strong! But she—he needs me to be strong for him—her now." Her tears caused her voice to wrench, and she struggled to speak English. But she wanted him to understand her pain.

BRIGHT IDEA
CHRISTOPHER HAMRICK
(PHOTOGRAPHY)



FROM HUMBLE BEGINNINGS

A LIFETIME OF CREATIVE EXPRESSION

Written by **KATHE TRAYHAM**

KATHE HOLBROOK

was feature assistant editor for the November 1971 and January 1972 issues of *Collage*.

Collage was still in its infancy in 1972, and being assigned a maintenance building space was an afterthought that made it seem we were of low priority. It was, however, ours and it was on campus and gave us room to think and write. We said we were glad we were off the beaten track.

Through *Collage* I learned to write to a deadline. I learned how to do a "rescue" when a non-staffer's article fell through at the last minute. Editor in Chief Teena Andrews would look around and say, "Okay, then. Who's going to write that?"

I feel sure they let me have more space than I deserved because I would shrug and say, "I can do that. Yes, by tomorrow." The willing, hoping to become able.

My news writing courses under Dr. Edward Kimbrell required that I write for *Sidelines* once or twice, but writing for *Collage* was just for me. The best part of my education was learning to make the brain turn from writing "straight" news to writing magazine format features for *Collage*, then the spoken word for radio production courses, then heading for an upper-division English course with Dr. Beasley and writing academic English again. In other words, I dared not forget my audience.

That was the best possible training. By 1974, I was writing for broadcast news as a producer at WHBQ-TV in Memphis. I had been the first woman studio technician in that market and became the first in television news management there and at WVUE-TV, New Orleans, in 1981. By 1983, I had been writing strictly for broadcast for more than 10 years when *ABC News* hired me as a producer for *World News Tonight* in its Washington bureau. I was one of two women producers.



IN THIS PHOTO

1972 COLLAGE STAFF

Frank Reynolds retired the day I arrived in May. I watched, along with a crowd of admiring *ABC* employees, as he said his last goodbyes and left the building. Peter Jennings would do the broadcast from Washington instead of New York for a while.

In addition to Jennings, I worked across the hall from Carl Bernstein of Watergate fame, covered the Reagan presidency, Tip O'Neill's congress, and Walter Mondale's campaign for president in '84. I produced straight news, "bounce" pieces, features, profiles and other short format news.

In 1984, a presidential campaign year, I was on the road for 181 days, a single mother of a six year old. And, sadly, I was in the bureau, staring at the live feed from NASA as the Challenger shuttle disintegrated before our eyes just moments after its launch the morning of January 28, 1986.

I remarried and soon decided to stay at home with our eventual three children. For six years, I co-authored a humor column that appeared in local weekly newspapers in Northern Virginia. Then came ten years of technical writing for a law firm (including writing its radio ads) and finally my current job as the head of



promotion and fundraising for an international charity. In between, I've coauthored a book about the experience of breast cancer called "*Can You Come Here Where I Am?*" (E.M. Press, Inc., 1996) and had my poetry set to music in the Diane Benjamin choral oratorio, "*Where I Live*" (Yelton-Rhodes Music, 1999).

I have made my living writing, and not a day has passed that I didn't use what I learned at *Collage*.

Collage is all grown up now and celebrating its 45th birthday.

“ I HAVE MADE MY LIVING WRITING, AND NOT A DAY HAS PASSED THAT I DIDN'T USE WHAT I LEARNED AT *COLLAGE*. ”

There's no comparison from early days to the mature publication of today, and yet we managed to practice and polish our art, even so. Naturally, I'm expecting great things from those who embrace it as their white space today.

NETWORK NEWS: LIFE IN THE TRENCHES

My first day as a network news producer was the last day in the building on Desales Street for *ABC News* anchor Frank Reynolds. We crossed paths only in the hall, and he was quiet and dignified and wore an overcoat with one hand stuffed in a pocket on his way out, even though it was May and the days in Washington, DC were warming. I was sad not to have the opportunity to work with him.

I was not quite 31 and had made it to network news from locals at Memphis and New Orleans, a feat actually harder than I could have imagined. There were more NFL players than network news producers. That's still true today.

For the first three months, I worked without a day off, assigned to produce news pieces for every ABC News show with presence in Washington except *Nightline*, which meant *World News Tonight*, *Good Morning America*, *This Week with David Brinkley*, and *Weekend News*. The assistant bureau chief looked me in the eye the first day and said, "Don't worry, we're going to give you plenty of time to ease into it," a blatant lie. I was immediately doing "pieces" with Carole Simpson, Charlie Gibson, Bill Greenwood, and Brit Hume, among others. Day three I was putting pieces on the air solo, and for six weeks there were no days off.

Reynolds' departure meant one thing especially important to me: with the absence of a Washington anchor, the broadcast had moved to Washington temporarily and Peter Jennings' daily presence helped me adapt to network as he adjusted to being sole anchor. I had barely gotten my feet under me and my heart rate under control during broadcasts when Frank Reynolds died that July. The obligatory announcement carried more ripples with it because he had kept his cancer secret from all but his closest associates.

On that Saturday, I was working once again for *This Week with David Brinkley*. David wanted a piece on Frank's funeral for Sunday—no copy, just a natural sound piece. They were out of producers, but by then I had worked the weekday evening news enough to have Sam Donaldson vouch for me. For no apparent reason, he told them, "Let Kathe do it." On his word alone, they gave me the Frank Reynolds farewell piece and the best editor in the business. When it aired, we watched Brinkley's face from the booth. He was leaning on one arm with the other elbow up and a pen in his hand. He gave a slight nod to the monitor as the piece ended, which was the sign that he was pleased. Sam Donaldson blustered, "I told them you could do it, and I was right!"

On Monday, we had the regular 10 a.m. meeting for editorial staff. I had just been informed that the Senior Producer at

World News Tonight had told the bureau chief he wanted me on that show full time and was prepared to pull my salary into his budget to get me. This would mean a raise and at least the presumption of weekends off most of the time and an end to my 80-hour work week.

We left the meeting and I heard someone say, "Peter wants to know who did the Reynolds piece for *This Week*."

"Tell him I did," I said.

A year later, Peter was mostly in New York for the broadcasts. I rarely interacted with him except over the phone in the 10 a.m. daily meeting unless he was in the Washington bureau for a special event. He was in Washington on Friday for a weekend social event, and I had to talk to him about a piece for that night to make sure the top of it didn't step on the intro he wanted to do.

As I left his office, he said, to my back, "You did the Frank Reynolds piece." It wasn't a question. I turned around to face him.

"I did."

He was looking at his script. "Good piece," he told me. ■

BELOW Kathe during her college years. BELOW (FAR RIGHT) Kathe in 2012.





AT SUNDOWN
DARBY CAMPBELL
(PHOTOGRAPHY)



CHATOYANT SILK
KRISTINÉ SHARP
(PHOTOGRAPHY)

MISTAKES

ROBERT ALLEN

(POETRY)

He was never there,
putting miles between us.
Driving as fast as he could,
Away from his mistakes.
He called,
But I didn't really listen,
A stranger unwelcome,
A ghost creeping in our home late at night,
"I hate" was all he said,
But I knew it was a lie.
He loved the TV and his car,
And that other girl,
And his booze,
He crushed those cans and my dreams,
His words left scars,
I'll never forget,
The person you were.

She was alone,
Raising us,
I knew she tried,
But she could only patch the holes
that he left,
She covered everything up,
But her tears washed away the
makeup,
And the beer washed away her care,
The dishes, though, never got
washed,
Just like dinner never got cooked,
And laundry was never done,
Problems never got touched,
I ran as far from there as I could,
When he came back.

The shouting never stopped,
I spent forever holding back tears,
Alone in my bed,
With a homemade cake,
that I made,
On my birthday,
that no one celebrated,
But why show love to their mistake,
I'm the one that broke this place.



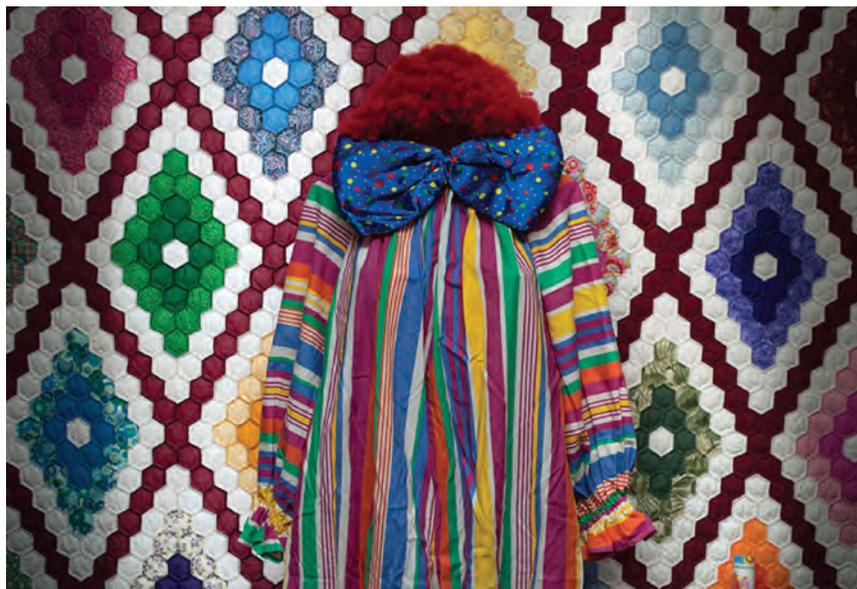
A MOMENT

GABRIELLE THOMPSON

(PHOTOGRAPHY)



BOUNCE
SEAN PIETZSCH
(PHOTOGRAPHY)



CLOWN
SARA HILL
(PHOTOGRAPHY)

BROTHER
AMANDA GAMBILL
(POETRY)

We were invincible:
Me, in my light-up shoes,
And you, with your mud-caked Power Rangers.
We climbed cedar trees—
the best kind for climbing—
We ran through fields of grass,
picking chiggers for Mom.
We made chocolate milk with mud
and came home, faces red with laughter.

That day,
when it was pouring rain,
We thought we were invincible.
We screamed, terror in our lungs,
Running between cars, looking,
Searching, anywhere,
To find our car,
Our place.

You grabbed me, held me close.
You didn't shield me from the rain—
not even a little—
We didn't find the car,
But you held me,
and I was safe.

Later,
we grew like those cedar trees
that we fought so hard to climb.
Branches spreading different
directions—
it wasn't noticeable at first—
until you were just my brother,
and that's all I knew.

We were young,
we were free.
We were different, so close
so close.

We were not so invincible after all.

THE GOOD WIFE

STEPHANIE SMITH

(FICTION)

Mr. Fisher was a well-to-do young man that took pride in having married a delightfully charming looking girl. Her fiery red hair and sea-green eyes were a rare kind of beauty, and her alluring smile stole the heart of all of Mr. Fisher's gentlemen friends. When they would walk their Schnauzers through their quaint neighborhood, the men would always say to their wives as they passed by:

"Look, there goes Mr. Fisher again with that beauty." And the wives' huffy responses were always: "Why, yes. The grey must've been magnificent too in its time, but it can't hold a candle to the black one anymore."

The husbands were so captivated by the striking redhead that they were oblivious to the burning glares of their wives as they continued on their way.

Yes, Mr. Fisher's wife was exceedingly beautiful, but she was also exceedingly dim. Mrs. Fisher was so dim that more often than not she would remain as silent as her Schnauzers except for an occasional "yes, dear," or "of course not, darling." This particular feature of the lovely Mrs. Fisher only made her even more attractive to Mr. Fisher's friends, who couldn't seem to find a way to get their petty wives to shut up.

Naturally, the wives of Mr. Fisher's friends were jealous. They would become green with envy when they visited the beauty salon for a trim, and the barber would continuously praise Mrs. Fisher's satin scarlet locks. At the dressmaker's shop, the wives could be seen pushing out their bottoms and sitting a little more erect than usual while Mrs. Fisher was fitted so as to give a more advantageous view of their feminine figures.

"Why, Mrs. Fisher, what a comely shape you have."

"Oh, Mrs. Fisher, you are blessed with such attractive curves."

"You have a wealth of bosom, Mrs. Fisher."

Yet nothing boiled the blood of the wives quite as much as the

friendly salon hosted at a different gentleman's abode each week. Where they wished to use this time to argue with their husbands, the husbands were more interested in flirting with the glorious Mrs. Fisher. The wives would try to regain their husbands' attention by laughing falsely at their jokes told to Mrs. Fisher, who was too dim to laugh that they might as well have been told to the dogs for all she understood. The wives of Mr. Fisher's friends gossiped bitterly about the darling girl.

"She may be slightly handsome, but that girl is certainly as dim as her dogs."

"Just like her old grey pooch, she won't be that fine-looking forever."

The wives smirked their satisfaction at having insulted the oblivious Mrs. Fisher without her even realizing it. However, the husbands did notice.

"Yes, dear Mr. Fisher. What would you ever do once you have aged and Mrs. Fisher's beauty fades?"

The men mumbled their agreement.

"Oh, why yes." Mumble. Mumble.

"Whatever would you do, Sir?" Mumble. Mumble.

"Do tell!"

Mr. Fisher put his hand to his chin to think about this for a moment. He blinked. He hmmm'd. He scratched his bottom.

When the answer finally came to him, he raised his eyebrows in delight.

"Why, I would trade her in for three young ladies, naturally."

Mr. Fisher proudly smiled at the wisdom of his response and his friends mumbled approval while Mrs. Fisher poured some more tea into their partially drank cups. The ladies sneered, and Mr. Fisher's friends looked down into their laps in shame at having been overheard, but Mr. Fisher appeared unconcerned, confident that his wife was too dim to understand. She did seem unaffected by the conversation. The men carried on, and Mr. Fisher addressed his wife:

“ YES, MR. FISHER'S WIFE WAS EXCEEDINGLY BEAUTIFUL, BUT SHE WAS ALSO EXCEEDINGLY DIM. ”

"Dear, you should bake some of those biscuits you made last time and hand them out."

Already passing around a tray of the cookies, Mrs. Fisher nodded a "yes, dear." Everyone ate greedily, and biscuits quickly disappeared off the platter. Pleased with Mrs. Fisher's surprising foresight, Mr. Fisher hummed in delight while he devoured his delicious snack.

"My dear, these biscuits are tasty. What would I ever do without you?"

A sly smile formed on Mrs. Fisher's face as she refilled the tea cups again, and to the surprise of everyone in the room, she replied:

"Yes, I know. It would take more than three girls to replace me." And she returned the leftover biscuits to the dogs' dishes where she took them from. ■

"I'm fine," you said.

I'm fine.

Why did I believe you? Fine. It's a word to be sighed out in anger, to describe that which deserves compliment, to let those around you know that you're okay, that you'll survive. You did survive, but you weren't fine. I knew that, so why did I believe you?

Fine [fin]

1. *adj. person.* A lie.

It all started with a question, the beginning of most arguments. It was a question that I didn't answer, didn't want to answer. And, like most arguments, I don't remember the question that ignited the conflict between us. I keep trying. That's when it went wrong. I could have just answered, but what was the question? Was it as simple as "How was your day?", "What did you do?", or "Whatcha doing?" I think it was that simple. I could have been the one to say "Fine." I could have told you that I had taken a test in history. I could have told you that I was writing a paper on a poem that we'd read in class that day. I could have just answered, but I told you that I was stressed. I didn't want to talk. I asked if it could wait until later. I don't think I even really heard your question. It was too simple. But you heard my answer.

I sat in shock. I sat watching, watching as your face morphed into a red and contorted mask. Screams reverberated through the floors, the walls, the glasses in the cupboard.

Selfish.

The only word I remember from your rage is selfish. I had been selfish. You'd merely wanted to talk, to keep your mind from pondering your own day, because you were crumbling inside. Crumbling. I didn't even see.

Selfish.



KIM IN AN ASYLUM

NHU DUONG

(PHOTOGRAPHY)

I'd been selfish. Too selfish to even give you a one-word answer that would have kept your tears inside. A one-word answer to a stupid, silly question could have kept you from mumbling, "I'm fine."

I tried to approach you, to hug you, to console you. Your hands, moist with sweat and tears, just pushed me away. Your mask was still firmly in place. "Leave. I don't even want to look at you. Go!"

No.

My single scream, a command. Your wrists were latched in the shackles made by my desperate fingers as I backed you into your bedroom and forced you to sit.

"What's wrong, Mommy? I'm sorry. I love you. I was just getting frustrated. Tell me what's going on."

Again, you demanded that I leave, tears silently sliding down your cheek. I let go of your wrists and pulled you into my arms, but you just sat there, teeth clenched, nose dripping. We sat in silence, minutes ticking away too slowly. Daddy was there, too. Then he left. We hadn't eaten yet.

"You can go now," you said with tears still seeping from your eyes. Then you said it for the first time, the first lie of many.

"I'm fine."

"I'm staying."

"Why?" you asked exasperatedly, anger trying to re-enter your voice.

“Because ... I’m scared,” I whispered back to you. I was scared that it was happening again. You’d threatened me with your history and scarred wrists a hundred times over since I was a small girl. Why would you plant that fear with such deliberation into a child’s fragile heart? Why?

“Of what?” Your anger escalated.

I could barely get out the broken whisper to say, “That you’ll hurt yourself.”

I didn’t understand your reaction at first. I didn’t understand the flash of shock quickly followed by the softening of your face. You reached over to grab my hand.

“Honey, I’m fine. Promise,” you said, sincerity drenching your voice. “I’m sorry I scared you. I’m fine.”

Fine.

“ I LET GO OF YOUR WRISTS AND PULLED YOU INTO MY ARMS, BUT YOU JUST SAT THERE, TEETH CLENCHED, NOSE DRIPPING. ”

All I could do was continue to stare into your still-glistening eyes. I could see my mommy again. I could feel all of your care, worry, and love. We’d both started at the sound of the dogs barking and the front door squeaking open.

“There’s your father with your food. Go eat. I’ll be fine.”

“You’re sure?” I asked, voice trembling with hesitation.

“Yes,” you chuckled with a smile. “I’m fine. Really.”

“Okay. Love you,” I pulled you into a tight hug, afraid to let go. Tears threatened to spill from my eyes, but I held them in. I wanted the fear to be gone. I wanted so desperately for the truth to be coming from your lips.

I left.

I’d believed you.

Three bites of a greasy burger. Three bites while I sat on the couch, turning on the TV. Three bites were forced to feed my hungry stomach for three days. For the next three days, my stomach would be tied in knots as I choked down salty tears.

Daddy had gone to check on you.

You were fine! I’d believed you!

“WHAT IN THE HELL DO YOU THINK YOU ARE DOING?” My father’s scream might as well have been an explosion, piercing my chest, tearing through my heart, and reverberating through my trembling hands. The walls were crumbling.

Crumbling.

I don’t remember the walk down the hall. You were fine. My eyes fixed on the empty orange bottle tipped over on the bed. Xanax.

Fine. Daddy was clawing at your clenched fist.

No.

“HOW MANY DID YOU SWALLOW?” Daddy was screaming. You were shaking your head violently, fighting, crying out.

“No,” you started growling as you fought to pull your fist to your mouth.

The clatter that followed was as loud as firecrackers to my shocked ears, despite the continued yelling. The little white pills seemed to have floated down to the floor.

“How many?”

Too many. Ten on the floor. You’d just filled the prescription a few days ago. I’d been with you. At least thirty should have remained. Twelve. You’d swallowed twelve.

Too many.

“We have to go to the hospital!” I was fighting your flailing limbs, trying to get my arms around you to pull you up. Your breath reeked of scotch. I turned to your side table. There was a bottle and an empty glass. “Now! Daddy, help me!”

He stared back at me, jaw clenching. I knew what he was thinking. Hospitals were too public. People would see, would talk. You could lose your job, and we couldn’t afford that. I saw the fear begin to rise in his eyes. “Daddy! Please, help me,” I was crashing. My sight was blurred with tears, and my arms ached from the quake shaking through them.

Fine. I’d believed you.

“Come on. Let’s go,” Daddy gingerly held the tops of your arms and pushed you towards the doorway, but you continued to fight. I couldn’t read Daddy’s face. It was a face void of all emotion, except the eyes. His eyes blazed with anger. He’s still angry. To him it was another one of your stunts, but to me it was another betrayal. You’d think by now I would know better than to trust you.

“No,” you mumbled. “I just want to sleep. Let me sleep. I’ll be fine.”

“You’re going to the hospital. Now stop fighting,” Daddy’s voice was like gravel, but his face was still a statue. He was staying in control. I was not.

“I just want to go to sleep. Please, I just want to sleep and never wake up. Please, honey, please don’t save me. Just let me sleep.” The tears were streaming down your face and I saw the desperation in your eyes as you pleaded to me.

I just want to sleep and never wake up.

How could you? How could you ask that of me? How ...? My breath caught and my tears broke through the dams of my will, bursting through like a raging river down my throat, drowning me. But you only saw the few tracing a path down my face like the drops of a gentle rain.

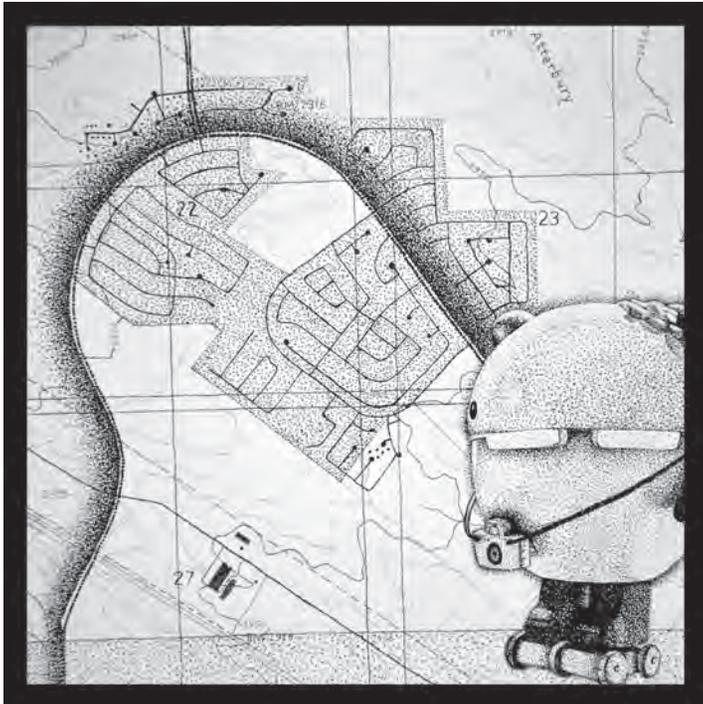
Crumbling. (CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE)

(CONTINUED) “Mommy? Don’t you want to live for me? To see me grow up? I want you there,” My voice broke from the river rushing inside.

“No. I couldn’t care less. I’ve seen enough. I’m done,” your voice was filled with hate and anger, but I could see your eyes drooping. You were getting weaker, more stoic. But your words held their own strength.

Done.

It was a blow to my stomach—the final push that brought the rolling thunder of my sobs and the storm of the raging river breached the surface.



GREETINGS (FROM ATTERBURY)

KATIE SCOGGINS

(PEN AND INK)

“Daddy?”

He picked you up brusquely and practically threw you into the car. The whole time you had weakly beat your fists against him, trying to struggle with nonexistent strength to escape to your self-proclaimed death.

Done. Fine.

Daddy and I fought with you all the way to the emergency room door, but your knees were collapsing from the weight of your weakness. You were no longer coherent, and the filled waiting room just stared. Daddy was barely whispering to the desk attendant, and she nodded in understanding. We were rushed back before I could yell at your entertained audience to avert their hungrily bored eyes. “She’s fine,” I whispered towards them as we entered through the double doors.

She’s fine.

After we reached your room, it was a blur of white lights and the constant beeping of alarms. 52 over 35. 46 over 32. 39 over 27. Every thirty minutes there was a new update to tell me you were one step closer to your wish. You were one step closer to death. They wouldn’t do anything. The doctor just stared at you with judging eyes. She recognized your name. You referred patients to her. The nurse just stared at my comatose body with pity as I huddled in the cold chair, patting my shoulder on every pass. Daddy just kept trying to wake you, to sit you up. They told us that you couldn’t lie down, especially on your side, or your blood pressure would continue to drop.

“I’m cold,” you said in a shaking voice each time you awoke, but they wouldn’t give us warm blankets for you. We were helpless. I don’t remember the time passing or the morning coming. I just remember the red numbers on the monitor and the relief of seeing them rise. It was a Sunday. There would be school tomorrow. Just another day. You were alive and awake. The psychiatrist was with you. He was with me.

“It’s not your fault. You know that.

She’s going to be okay. You just have to remember that you’re not a trained therapist. You couldn’t have stopped this.” He had very gentle eyes and warm hands, but they still couldn’t soothe the raging river inside.

Selfish. Idiot. Suggesting. Believing. Idiot. Not fine. No. Selfish.

My fault.

They took you away from me by an armed guard and drove you to the mental hospital. Spruce. That was where they took you to protect you from me. I could have been your murderer. It was so close. I’d incited your anger, reminded you of your options, and believed your obvious lies.

Selfish.

“Hey, girl. You okay?” my friend asked Monday morning. “You’re looking a little spacey,” she laughed. I hadn’t slept yet. I couldn’t sleep. The truth of what had occurred haunted me. Could I tell her? My best friend? Could I tell her that I’d attempted to murder you, my mother, out of selfishness? I saved you, but would that really matter to her? Would she understand? Could she tell that the guilt was drowning me?

“I’m fine. Just tired. You know me. Study before sleep.” Lies.

“Give yourself some breaks, girl! You need them.”

“I’ll be fine.”

Don’t believe me!

I was crashing, crumbling. I felt the hopelessness rising and the guilt tightening its grip.

I’m fine.

Fine [fin]

1. *adj. person.* A lie.

2. *adj. person.* Description of self that implies that one is in pain and secretly hopes to not be believed.

But I’ll survive. ■



**WE CHANGE WITH THE
PASSING OF EVERY SUN**

AMBER LELLI

(BRONZE SCULPTURE)



BACKBONE TO BACKBONE

LANEY HUMPHREY

(STONEWARE, ACRYLIC, CLOTH, AND ROPE)

DRAIN
TARA ROSS
(ACRYLIC ON WOOD)



 **WHY I WRITE**
KRYSTA LEE FROST
(POETRY)

I don't know why I do it
because I will never be able to
map the riverbeds of your scars
with lines or light,
acrylics or apertures.
And my predecessors have done it so gracefully
that there are no cobwebs
in the corners of rooms,
or dust in the vocal cords
of someone who spent his whole life
saying goodbye,
or even the echo of a single sigh
in a mirrored room,
because everyone in the world would sigh at once
until the sighs drew nearer and nearer
and held hands in a chorus,
and noise would become silence once again.

Like the night I heard the girl across the street
crying so silently, and I listened
until she became the night itself,
until she became my lullaby.
So tell me why I do it
when my antecedents have done it with their eyes closed
as they played their typewriters like pianos
and oh, have I always wanted to love a pianist
to see their fingers curve
against the keys,
to feel their fingers play
the keys of my spine
in scales and riffs,
and not be able to tell a difference.
Because in a world where noise becomes silence becomes noise,
why should I have to?

And tell me why I can't throw away your letter
even though I have dreamt of you
trying to keep the words on the page
because you knew I would not write back.
Why can't I tear it to pieces
when I have pressed my fingertips to its edges
so many times they have wilted like flowers,
and the letters have bled into each other
as if they were never meant to form words
like *sorry*, or *promise*, or *love*.

And that's why I do it.

THE OLD GRAY MARE

ANDREA GREEN

(FICTION)

The child was late again.

The piano teacher glanced at the Steinway Grand nestled between her grandfather clock and the front door. Just like the timepiece, the piano had been in her family for generations. She had always admired the instrument for its beauty, but now that she was older, she appreciated it for its craft. It was sturdy, simple yet elegant, and most importantly, it was from a generation that understood hard work and respect.

She never played anymore due to her condition. At times, she thought she could hear the eighty-eights calling her name, begging her to free them from years spent in the dark. It wasn't until she began teaching again that she had opened the cover. She wasn't fond of the job, but she needed the money. If only the little children would be prompt.

She loathed when they were late. This new girl had never been on time. As a woman of moderation, she hated very few things. Hate was a strong emotion, and she was brought up in a house of respect. She knew that to hate something was to turn from it completely. There was only one thing she ever admitted to hating, and that was tardiness. In all her seventy-nine years she had never once been late. She had a fondness for punctuality. More than a fondness—she mandated it. After all, promptness was common courtesy.

She never could understand how these young people squandered so much time. It was disrespectful. When she was younger, people knew a thing or two about respect and hard work. Why, she had started to work as soon as she could hold a broom. If there was anything she ever needed or wanted, she toiled the earth for it. Her hands, disfigured by arthritis, were living proof.

At the reflection of the years spent with her hands upon a rake and her stocking soiled with Texas caliche, the arthritis was reawakened. She closed her eyes as they filled with tears and the thundering pain settled in the hunches of her disfigured knuckles. The only way to ease her suffering now would be a strong hot toddy and a good night's sleep.

The chime of the clock reminded her it was only four, and she knew the bourbon bottle was long gone. "Darn that girl!"

As her hands ran a circular course over her eyelet apron, she tried to pull back her tears. She would not let that little girl see her cry. She was a Halfmann and would not be seen blubbering like a tot. She had work to do. If only the child could keep a schedule.

Ivory's daddy had taught her about time and schedules early on in her life. He had been a cotton farmer, spending sun up to sun down in the fields. He wasn't a well-read man. He had never been properly educated but he knew a thing or two about class and respectability. He was sure that his daughter, Ivory May Halfmann, was going to be something. That's why he made her learn the piano, a respectable instrument if there ever was one. Two hours a day, every day. She knew the art of Beethoven and Liszt. If she wanted to hear music, she made it. If she wanted to have a new dress, she sewed it. She had a good work ethic, and most of all, she had respect.

"Kids today don't. I tell you, Chopin, they don't."

“ THE PIANO TEACHER OPENED THE DOOR AND STOOD WITH HER GNARLED HANDS UPON HER HIPS SO AS TO SHOW HER AGGRAVATION. ”

Chopin was her Ragdoll cat, she had found him in one of her barns after a stray dog had taken to him. Chopin had half a tail, no left ear, and made a whooping sound when he purred. The vet had told her she might as well put him down because of his age and the cost of fixing him up, but she wouldn't hear of it. She had never had a pet before and she thought a great deal of Chopin. They understood each other. When her hip went out last fall, he had developed an odd limp. When she was bed-ridden with a nasty bout of bronchitis, he sat beside her wheezing away. They were suited for each other.

At the chime of the clock, he began his mid-day ritual. In his well practiced routine, he started to run a course between her stocking-covered legs.

"Now, Chopin, I can't tend to you right now. That child should be here soon. Lord knows she's already forty-five minutes late."

The cat was unaccustomed to being denied and attempted a fierce meow to achieve his goal. "You think whooping at me's going to get you some attention, do you? I couldn't pick you up if I wanted to. Look here."

She showcased her curled appendages to the cat, but he paid her no mind. Instead, he limped toward the front screen door and rubbed against it until it gave way.

Just as Ivory was about to latch the screen, the sound of tires upon her dirt road beckoned her to her front porch. Ivory shuffled toward the entry and watched as a black SUV barreled down her drive.

"Look at that, Chopin. I believe the child's finally here."

The piano teacher opened the door and stood with her gnarled hands upon her hips so as to show her aggravation. She knew the child would have an excuse, but she wanted her to know she had been waiting for quite a while and was none too pleased. Ivory glanced across her yard as the child bounded up her drive. She tried to hide it, but couldn't help smirking as the little girl

struggled to carry her heavy school bag so as not to make the acquaintance of a swarm of wasps that resided in a mesquite tree. The wasps had been there for some time, and every day the girl came for her lesson she had to carefully maneuver around the tree so as not to get stung.

The child stopped short before ascending the steps toward the house. She smiled apologetically and said, "I'm so sorry, Misses Halfmann. I told Daddy I'd be late if he didn't hurry! But he said you wouldn't mind. I told him. I swear I did."

Ivory didn't respond but merely looked up toward the glossy black vehicle that had already made its way onto the paved road. She waved in response to an indifferent arm flung sloppily from a half closed window.



She wasn't surprised by the father's response. The man couldn't even get out of his car and tell her he was sorry for bringing his daughter late. It was no wonder the child had no respect. Ivory looked down at the girl, then turned and slowly walked into her home. As Ivory turned to open the torn screen door, the child began to realign her satchel and ascend the steps. Ivory turned abruptly and questioned her. "What *are* you doing?"

"Huh?" The girl remained on the bottom step, confused and a bit frightened by the woman's abrasive tone. Ivory was a strict teacher. She was stern and never wavered in her rules, but she had never been hateful. Ivory smiled, pursed her lips, and repeated the question.

"I asked you a question, Nova Prisco. I said, 'What-are-you-doing?'" The proper response to a question you don't understand is 'Pardon' or perhaps 'Excuse me.' You never ever say 'Huh.'"

As the elderly woman glared at the child, she thought how beneficial it would be to teach her a lesson in respect. A fine tuning in manners would do the girl a world of good. She watched as Nova pondered the question. Ivory knew she wouldn't know what to say. Children never knew what to say when an adult questioned them. They got scared and lied. Always lied. She had never told an untruth. She had been a good, respectable youngster.

After a moment of silence, the blonde-haired girl looked directly at the elderly woman and stated, "I'm following you into your home so you can teach me the piano. Just like we do every Tuesday and Thursday."

The piano teacher and the student stared at one another, neither speaking until Chopin's off-key purr broke the silence. Nova smiled at Ivory, gave her dusty sneakers a quick tap to clear any traces of trapped pebbles, and walked happily into the house. Ivory stared after her and closed her eyes in temporary defeat. The child had wit. She had to give her that. Ivory would never tell her, but she envied her.

PEARCY'S STORE

SUSAN TENNESSEN-OWENS
(PHOTOGRAPHY)

Nova had all the modern amenities that wealth could buy. Ivory had never known wealth. Her family had a few heirlooms like the piano, the clock, a set of silver, a few pieces of porcelain, and acreage. She looked towards the fallowed fields and tried to remember a time when everything her eyes touched had belonged to the name Halfmann.

"Misses Halfmann. I'm playing the sonnnnng. Are you cominnnnng?"

Ivory's eyes sprang open as the banging of her piano keys hit a succession of missed notes to "The Old Gray Mare."

They had been working on the song for over two weeks. Ivory knew that if Nova hadn't been late so often she would know the song already. She walked impatiently into the house.

"Misses Halfmann," Nova rotated on the piano bench and faced her teacher. "You don't seem very happy today. I mean, you're never really happy. But today, you seem sad. Why?"

Ivory squinted at the child as her arthritis started a second assault on her hands. She could tell her the truth. She could tell her that she was in agony. Her hands were hidden in her apron. She could bring them out and show them to the girl. But would she understand? She was smart, but she was also so very young. How do you tell a child what it will be like when her youth expires?

Ivory used to have an able body and mind. When she was young, she would spend hours with her fingers spread across the black and white keys of a piano. With a feather-light touch, she could make the room transform from that of a dusty Texas ranch house to a European concert hall. Now, instead of music, she spent her days watching Chopin scratch his remaining ear or hunt for mice. She lived on social security and the modest remnants of savings she had left. Only a few years ago, she had been forced to sell the remaining acres of land just to keep her lot. Her two great loves were gone.

"Bare fields and no music."

Nova stared at her piano teacher and watched as a solitary tear rolled down her face. Before Ivory realized what the child was doing, Nova ran to her, put her arms around her waist and told her, "Misses Halfmann, I love your house and your big piano and your funny looking cat. I think you're the best teacher I ever had. I'm sorry I was late."

With amazement, Ivory turned to watch the girl as she skipped toward the piano. Nova returned to the sheet of notes and then continued her cacophonous assault. This time, as the incorrect notes hit Ivory's ears, the pain in her hands began to ease. ■

HOMESICK

NATHAN TILTON

(POETRY)

For birds, that circle above the crashing surf
For dogs, friendly regardless of whom they meet
For cats, loafing about the streets of their domain

For the kapichi, and the predictable “good morning”
For the bus driver, and the shortcuts to nowhere
For the simitchi, and the sudden conversations

For the sun, and the shade of autumn clouds
For the bazaar, and the chaos of an iskele
For the mosque, and the poignant calls to prayer

For a language that sounds like poetry
For a people whose passion is addictive
For a nation discovering its identity

For the city that will soon become
Memories

For Istanbul

KAPICHI: A groundskeeper for an apartment or certain set of apartments.

SIMITCHI: A stall vendor who sells simit (Turkish bread).

BAZAAR: An outdoor marketplace, usually consisting of closely packed, covered stalls.

ISKELE: A port, or dock, though usually implies one used for public transportation.



FLAWED (A FAILED ATTEMPT AT ESCAPE)

TRAVIS BLY

(EARTHENWARE AND CLAY)

EXPENDABLE

TRAVIS BLY

(EARTHENWARE AND CLAY)





UNTITLED
 JOY MCCRARY
 (OIL ON MASONITE)

IN MEMORIAM

JENNA PRICE

(POETRY)

The air bites this morning;
 past heat barely lingering in the peeping rays.
 Pale forms below shiver slightly,
 covering more of their limbs against the chill.

I envy them. Standing tall and proud, but exposed,
 I have no shelter against the cooling days.
 Whispering “sorry,” full of sorrow;
 never is this easy for me.

Cutting off my vibrantly green leaves from my core,
 reserving strength for winter to come.
 The green morphs to yellow and orange,
 sunlight eliminating chlorophyll and leaving carotenoids.

Green rotted away,
 and brother yellow here to stay.
 A third, red, joins their plight,
 anthocyanins manifest through a reaction of sugar and light.

My friends covered in these colors too as
 pale creatures smile at us, bright flashes and “ooh”s heard below.
 They do not understand our pain;
 interested only in superficial beauty.

I weep as they fall;
 their flight to the cold ground a tear.
 The pines laugh, branches rustling,
 mocking us; they will never understand.

Green unearths yellow, red made by reaction
 and brown, like my bark, dead and silent.
 This transformation is a steep price to pay
 for my life.

I retreat into my depths as the snow draws nearer;
 knowing that the leaves are gone but will return.
 And I’ll repeat this in the decades to come.
 And I’ll weep, again.

I whisper “sorry” on the wind,
 skeletal branches sway and creak for a moment.
 I know what to expect and yet, still,
 each time I watch and mourn anew.

I WENT

KATLYN KRUEGER

(POETRY)

I went.
I took off and left this city of frowns and disinterested eyes.
I took a walk,
nonstop,
and trusted my feet would know where they desired.

I drove
until my car blew into the air black and red pieces of itself,
and I left it burning on that road.

I stole that kid's bike;
He never rode it ever anyway.

Plus,
a bike should be ridden for how it is made.

Fast. Efficient.
Jumping curbs and ditches,
dodging cars and skipping through intersections.

The stupid tires blew.

Feet. They don't fail you.

Yesterday

I found a bridge
and walked over it and slept under it.

I dreamed of you,
all of you,
back when we agreed to love.

After one week
I found a newspaper that had blown into a bush.

No search party for me.
No article "Girl disappears from society."

Nothing.
Of course there isn't.

People disappear every day.
Some are invisible but have chosen to stay.

I'm not sorry I let you down;
I'm sorry I let you in.



A year passes by.
What is my name?
Nobody says it. Nobody knows it.
I forgot last night when a cop caught me sleeping in a bush.
What I do remember is that
I left. I went.

What does it mean to have a home?
Home is a place where you are stuck.

But I am a slave to
no one.
My heart is nowhere,
so I go.

TRANSITIONAL

DANIELLE KIRK

(PHOTOGRAPHY)

COLLAGE

A JOURNAL OF CREATIVE EXPRESSION

MIDDLE TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY • MTSU BOX 267 • MURFREESBORO, TN 37132

ABOUT COLLAGE

Collage is a semiannual production of the Middle Tennessee State University Honors College. All submissions were reviewed anonymously and selected by a student editorial staff. The materials published by *Collage* do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the *Collage* staff, Honors College, MTSU student body, staff, or administrators. All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced or utilized in any form without written permission from the editor or adviser of *Collage*. Inquiries should be addressed to *Collage*, Middle Tennessee State University, 1301 East Main Street, Box 267, Murfreesboro, TN 37132.

SUBMIT TO COLLAGE

Collage accepts submissions year-round. Submission forms and guidelines are available at <http://capone.mtsu.edu/collage>. Creative work, such as art, photography, short stories, essays, short plays, song lyrics, and poetry, may be submitted digitally from the website or may be turned in at the *Collage* office, Honors 224, between the hours of 7:30 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. Submissions are accepted from MTSU students and recent alumni.

POLICY STATEMENT

Collage: A Journal of Creative Expression is an arts and literary magazine featuring top-scoring submitted work chosen by a volunteer staff in a blind grading process. The staff attempts to choose the best work without regard for theme or authorship. Although *Collage* is a publication of the University Honors College, staff members and submitters are not required to be Honors students. Staff members are selected each semester from a pool of applicants and must have at least a 3.0 GPA and two letters of recommendation.

COLUMBIA SCHOLASTIC PRESS ASSOCIATION AWARDS

GOLD MEDALIST CERTIFICATE – 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011 and 2012

SILVER CROWN AWARD – 2007, 2008 and 2011

GOLD CROWN AWARD – 2012 and 2013

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Each semester the *Collage* Faculty Advisory Board selects four submissions to receive Creative Expression Awards, one from each major category: art, photography, poetry, and prose. Literature winners receive the Martha Hixon Creative Expression Award, and visual winners receive the Lon Nuell Creative Expression Award. Winners receive \$50 awards.



PROSE

FINE CHELSEA HARMON



ART

WE CHANGE WITH THE PASSING
OF EVERY SUN AMBER LELLI



POETRY

WHY I WRITE KRYSTA LEE FROST



PHOTOGRAPHY

LEGS IN PARADISE STARLING SENSING



**MIDDLE
TENNESSEE**
STATE UNIVERSITY

