



Handwritten signature or mark in the bottom right corner.

Agate 2022

FACULTY EDITORS

Dr. Shelly Jones
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STUDENT EDITOR

Rafia Umar

ON THE COVER

Front: “Boat by the Shore” by Tristian Wellman

Agate (ág-it): a fine-grained crystalline mineral that forms in cavities in volcanic rock. Agate is prized for its beautiful patterned colors, and its hardness makes it ideal for delicate carving.

**2022 SUNY DELHI
STUDENT WRITING CONTEST WINNERS**

First Place:

“Ship in a Bottle” by Mike Jones

Second Place:

“Unwanted Scars” by Rafia Umar

Third Place:

“Value” by Halle McIntyre

STUDENT ART CONTEST WINNERS

First Place:

“Architecture as Language” by Rafia Umar

Second Place:

“Nirvana” by Clarissa Lewis

Third Place:

“Sunny Whiskers” by Elizabeth Longueira

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Special thanks to Linnea Goodwin Burwood, former Dean of the School of Liberal Arts and Sciences, Joyce Shim, Dean of the School of Liberal Arts and Sciences, Provost Thomas Jordan, and President Michael Laliberte for their continued support of *Agate*.

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Ship in a Bottle
By Mike Jones

a ship sets sail
no destination
a one-way voyage
Flag overhead
Sails full of wind
waves crashing
wood creaking
skies are blue
A lonely crew
one sole ship
a one-way voyage
around the bottle
a cork overhead
a ship in a bottle

Value

By Halle McIntyre

Trigger warning: emotional abuse, gaslighting

Growing up, my mom always told me to give without expecting anything in return. She raised me in a way that made me so empathetic and understanding of the situations of those around me. She never failed to remind me that there is always someone out there less fortunate than I, and that if I were to ever see someone down, to pick them up and make them feel whole, as she would hope anyone would do for her children as well... And so I did.

He was only 6 years old when his mom passed away, and his dad was in such bad health that the hospital was practically their second home. He has four older sisters and one older brother. They talked occasionally but were not all that close, as they are much older than him. His dad didn't care much about what he did, when he did it or how, but he did have stable family friends that acted as his parental figures for quite some time. He *just* needed a shoulder to lean on when the world was crashing down on him, or at least this is what told me. This is what he wanted me to believe.

It was in seventh grade when we exchanged our first words. We were in the hallway between the main staircase and the entrance to the library at a small school in the town of Lansingburgh, located in Upstate New York about 20 minutes from Albany. His name was D. He was about as tall as me, with short dark hair in a style that I had never seen before. It was short all around, besides in the front, where it was longer and resembled a beehive. He had olive skin and small crooked teeth. He smelled of cigarettes and weed, with a slight hint of Axe body spray. He wore the same few outfits pretty often. His green eyes laid low and were filled with so much emotion that everyone around so easily mistook for scared, and in need of help. But these eyes said so much more; these eyes were not looking for help, they were looking for the next victim. This would be a girl with a kind heart and an open mind. Someone who would be so easily manipulated, and used over and over again until there was nothing left to take.

Over the course of a year, we became closer and closer friends and eventually began dating. We would hang out everyday in, and after school. He would do things like switch his lunch periods to be in the ones in which I was placed, and would do the same thing with his classes. He would show up to my study halls unannounced to 'surprise' me and would walk me to each and every class. He got so mad when I would talk to my friends, sometimes so mad that he would punch walls or smash his phone. One time, he even smashed mine. I always understood though, because after all, *this is* what it meant to be in love, right? He loved me *so* much, and that is why everything that I did made him angry.

November of 2018 was the first time it happened; It was a Wednesday morning. D and I had a sleepover the night before at my house so that we could get to school together the next day. I had woken up before him on the couch and went into my room to check on him. He had been laying face down with his phone tucked under the pillow. This was strange to me because it was typically on the floor charging while we slept. I picked it up slowly from beneath the pillow to avoid waking him up. I was going to plug it in to charge for a bit before it was time to leave for school, but I noticed that there were messages from an unsaved number filling his notifications. A feeling of intuition had crowded around me. My stomach sank to the floor. I unlocked his phone and the screen had already been opened to the messages where I would see him

inappropriately texting girls in which I used to call my friends. The one message that stuck with me was the one that read “Don’t you date Halle? Lol.” He replied with “Nah.” I wondered how he could do this to me. I woke him up and began to question him. All he could say for himself was “what?” and “huh?” I made him get up and leave my house immediately. When I knew he was gone my brave face quickly faded away and I began to cry. Later on he began to blow my phone up with excuses, and when that didn't work it was “I’m sorry...” And when that didn’t work, he moved to ‘This is all your fault’ and ‘You made me do it.’ This wasn't the first time that he did this, or the worst, but June of 2019 was the last.

As time went on, I began to notice that things around me would change everyday. My friends no longer wanted to be around me. I would go to sleep and wake up every day feeling so angry, and so empty because I could never understand why. My family and I would fight so often. It was never like this before. I began to try new things, even though I never exactly felt ready because he would beg me to until I finally caved. My grades were at the lowest they had ever been. Everyday, I had felt ugly and worthless and there was rarely ever a day where I could go without crying. My guidance counselor at school would even call me to her office at the most random times, just to ask me if I was okay. I began to hate myself and my life.

I thought I was going crazy. Gaslighting by definition is “manipulating someone by psychological means into questioning their own sanity” and this is exactly what D did to me. He would tell me that I was cheating on him or make jokes about it when I never did anything to ever make him question my loyalty. He said it so much that I slowly began questioning whether I did or not and if I just couldn’t remember doing it. He would tell me that I would smoke and drink all the time because he knew I didn't like it and he was doing it behind my back. There would be days that I would ask my friends if we did and I just forgot. It was always the dumbest, smallest things that he would make me feel insane over and it was all because he was speaking from a guilty conscience.

Things continued on for about another year and a half, but it only took one very specific moment for me to see the truth; for me to realize that I was done. I was in the car with my mom on the way to my (now) stepfather's house in Saratoga, but had stopped at D’s house to return some things to him, as we had been fighting earlier that day and I really wanted to be done with him. I was just recently beginning to make decisions for myself, and he didn't like that. I walked in the door and he was visibly intoxicated. He had drunk nearly a whole bottle of honey whiskey by himself and his bedroom door was completely smashed into pieces. I watched him as he pitifully tried to clean up the mess he had created, once he realized I was standing there. No words were exchanged. I tossed his things onto the floor and walked out the door. I got back into the car with my mom and immediately began to sob. He began to blow my phone up with words like “I hate you. Why are you doing this to me? This is your fault I’m like this.” He told me that he can’t believe anybody could ever love me. I had 200 missed calls by the end of the night. “I cant keep watching this happen,” my mom said, as she pushed back my curly hair and wiped my face clean of tears and mascara. “Nobody is worth this type of pain. EVER. Why stay with someone who makes you miserable more times than they can ever make you happy?” she said.. And that is when I realized.

I realize that it wasn’t every person and everything changing around me; it was *me* changing. My friends and family didn’t hate me, they saw that I was trapped and tried to help me out, but it was far more complicated than that and they could see that, so they were giving me

space. I was not angry at them, I was angry at my abuser, and at me, for ever letting go of myself like this. And so I left. After two years of this behavior, and a year of getting cheated on everyday, I finally left. I stopped feeling guilty, I stopped giving in, I stopped going back. I left.

Studies show that “nearly 1 in 11 female highschool students have report experiencing dating violence in the past year,” and that these rates are significantly higher among minorities as well (Preventing Teen Dating Violence | Violence Prevention | Injury Center | CDC." *Centers for Disease Control and Prevention*. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 05 Mar. 2021. Web. 08 Sept. 2021.) Being both black and a woman, reading this statistic is very intimidating, and had encouraged me to join many groups such as the SAEDA (Student Activists Ending Dating Abuse) program practiced across the nation, to work with professionals to learn the signs, and how to advocate against them early on. We learn these things in an attempt to stop the abuse, and lower these statistics. This is not only for yourself, but for friends, family, or anybody in need of help.

Though oftentimes I still feel the effects of this experience two years later, I would not go back and change it if I had the chance. I like to think of this experience as one of learning and growing. I know now what I like, and what I don't in a relationship; what behaviors I should and shouldn't tolerate from anyone. I know that I can be friends with whoever I want, I can wear whatever I want and I can make my own decisions. I've learned that anger and control do not equate to love, and that when someone does love you, they would never do things to intentionally hurt you or jeopardize the relationship. Someone who loves you will treat you with care in every single way possible, not abuse you [this includes physically, emotionally, verbally, sexually, financially, etc.] I've also learned to never let go of my true self for anybody. Anybody who deserves my time, will love me for who I am, nothing more and nothing less. And finally, it is people like this who will do and say things to make you feel like you are the problem, but you are not. I learned my self-worth and to be careful with my own heart, as I am something very special.

Nirvana
By Clarissa Lewis



Like Mother, Like Daughter

By Halle McIntyre

Life is like a movie in a way. Everyone around us is a character and we all play our own roles in the lives of ourselves and those around us. Some people are main characters and some belong more in the background. Some characters develop over time and some just never change. People can play many roles in the lives of themselves and others in a lifetime. Oftentimes these roles will overlap. We perform these roles everyday. My roles in life are many. I am a big sister, a little sister, a daughter, a student, a girlfriend, a best friend, a cousin, a goddaughter, an aunt, a granddaughter, and so much more.

My mom has been my best friend for as long as I can remember. In the worst of times and the best, if you asked me about my relationship with my mom, the answer always remained the same. Until I was about nine years old, it was always just her and I. She had gotten pregnant with me when she was 19 and raised me primarily by herself since the day that I was born. I don't remember much of the beginning, but for this, I am especially grateful. In a way it was like we grew up together. From our early morning Dunkin runs everyday before she would drop me off to school, to the days that I would stay at work with her and drive her absolutely nuts, to me sleeping in her bed every night because "she" needed company, it was always just the two of us. I loved my mom and my mom loved me. We were the main characters in each other's movies.

When I was nine years old, it had seemed that our relationship was changing, but not necessarily for the better. It was in 2011 when my mom met him. His name is Mike. He's about 5'6 with a higher pitched voice and a belly that sticks out a little bit over his jeans. He always wears a fedora and sometimes he wears glasses too. A few months after my mom met him, I realized that my life was changing. It was being flipped completely upside down. We moved in with Mike and I was pulled out of the school district that I had known my whole life and thrown into somewhere foreign. I didn't know anybody at school, and things at home were not the best either. My mom was still the main character in my life, but I had no longer been hers. Not too long after, she was pregnant with my little brother, Ryan, and now he was her main focus. I despised him all the way up until the day he was born. Then, I decided that it would actually be pretty cool to be a big sister and that I actually loved him, but I still hated our living situation. Mike was so rotten to my mom and I could never understand why she put up with this, or why we had to live with him. I was a scared, angry little kid with emotions that I was unable to express. My mom and I began to fight almost everyday. We couldn't be around each other for very long at all without there being tension. My relationship with my mother continued on with its highs and lows, even after she had left Mike and we moved back into our old home. Some days we would act as friends and hang out together, other days it was like a war broke out between us.

Very early on in 2019, it was the same thing again. My mom had met a man named Luke and began dating him. This was especially hard for me because I wanted my mom to be happy, but she spent every waking moment with him and things were moving so fast. It had seemed as though she had forgotten all about me. She was always at Luke's house 45 minutes away with my brother, while I stayed home alone. Luke had a son of his own as well (Weston). In April of

that year, she took me out to lunch at Buffalo Wild Wings to tell me that we were moving in with him. I remember that day so clearly. I told her that I would not be coming with her and that she must be out of her mind. After all, I barely even knew Luke, and not for nothing, but our situation with Mike traumatized me. Soon enough, I realized that I was out of options when it came to places that I could move to, as my relationship with my dad has never been the best and I was only about 15 years old. They bought a house 45 minutes away from home and my mom's father (my Poppy) from Tennessee had moved in there with us as well. By October 13th, 2019, they were married. My mom had never been married before this. In February of 2020, we found out that my mom was pregnant with twins and on August 6, 2020, my baby sisters Charlotte and Victoria were born at 29 weeks. At this same time, my cousin Sayge had moved in with us because their home life with my Aunt Jess (their mom) was terrible. Before we knew it, our four bedroom home was housing nine people and five cats and dogs. Nobody has their own room except for Poppy, which is really our half-finished basement with a bed and TV in it. My mom grew more and more stressed out and I grew more eager to leave the house. It seemed as though every single day my mom was screaming at me and vice versa. I was the closest to her, the only person who helped around the house and yet I would receive all of the backlash. This was so much stress for everyone in the house. Occasionally we would have our good days, but my relationship with my mom was the worst it had ever been. Once again, I hated our living situation. Move in day for college could not come any faster.

Today, I am in college. I have been for two months now. Move in day was rough. The day was long and tears were flowing every which way. My mom and I have never really been good at showing each other emotion in person so there were many things left unsaid but I could tell she was trying her best. A few weeks had passed by since move in day and I noticed how differently things had felt between us. It was so good. We would Facetime everyday, sometimes a few times a day. We still do. Talking to my mom and my baby sisters everyday really helps me get through the days here at college when it gets lonely. She sends me with money or groceries whenever I need them. She tries her best to keep my worries to a minimum while I'm here and we both make the effort to let the other know how much we miss each other. This is especially important to me because though I am in touch with my dad, my mom seems to be the only one of my two parents making this effort and checking up on me daily. I hadn't felt this close to my mom in years. Studies show that "out of 14,500 college students across the U.S., three in five said their relationship with their parents had improved since they started college; a quarter of these students said that the relationship was "much better." (Wong, A. (2019, September 23). *How college changes the parent-child relationship*. The Atlantic. Retrieved October 21, 2021, from <https://www.theatlantic.com/family/archive/2019/09/how-college-changes-parent-child-relationship/598630/>.) The article states that the reason behind this may be the geographical distance perhaps aids in children having greater appreciation for their parents, and vice versa. I believe that this is exactly the case for my mom and I.

I learned that this type of relationship with my mom was something that I never wanted to let go of ever again, which led me to the idea of initiating permanent change. After all, we only ever get one mom. I put all my pride and feelings of previous hurt behind and I wrote my mom a letter. I addressed it "Marti Kjelland" with a small heart that I drew to follow. I used a purple pen because that's been her favorite color for as long as I can remember. "Dear mom," it read. "I am writing this because I want you to know how much I love and appreciate you. I see all of your hard work, I really do." After this, the words just began to flow. I let her know I've noticed

how drastically I think that our relationship had shifted and that we shouldn't let this slip away again. I let her know that I'm sorry for our time wasted and why sometimes I acted the way that I did. I wanted to know if she felt it too. My eyes welled up as I wrote. They felt warm and after a few seconds I could no longer see what I was writing. Tears piled onto the white paper. The straight blue lines on it began to bleed into the white parts. The purple ink followed. My brain seemed to have been moving much faster than my hands. These words came straight from my heart. I wrote a page and a half before I decided on a break. Finally, I took a deep breath and set the pen down for a few moments. I wiped my eyes clean of tears and mascara and forced myself to the bathroom where I could rinse my face with cool water. I would return to my cold, wooden desk chair to finish up the letter, seal and stamp it. I concluded the letter by telling her that I was proud of her just in case nobody had ever told her. "Please write back when you get this mom. I love you," it read. The walk to the blue mailbox on campus was a long one. The air was crisp. The tip of my nose was especially red and chilly. I did not remove my hands from my coat pocket until it was time to open the box. I slipped the sealed envelope through the narrow space and pushed the letter down the chute. Instantly, I felt afraid. I was afraid of what she might think when she saw it, or how she would respond. I was so relieved at the same time. I wondered if she felt the same way. I took a long breath and began back on my journey to my room across campus.

I felt as though the action that I had taken had aided me in developing the character traits that I can use for the rest of my lifetime. I was maturing. I realized that with age, my role as a daughter changes too. I am capable of being just as much a help to my mom as she has always been to me. She does almost everything alone in our nine person, five animal household, so I figure if I can help from a distance and whenever I come home, that I should. Our dynamic was changing; It was shaping, developing and maturing into something beautiful. I've learned from growing up this way and experiencing these things, that one's role never needs to stay the exact same. If something needs to change to make something else better, as adults this is our responsibility. We need to develop as time goes on, much like the characters in a movie, to keep the plot going and the relationships changing.

Though I am still in the process of seeing how well the outcome of this story will be, it appears to be working out so far. My mom took her free time (which she tends to lack) to write to me back. At the very end of the letter, she included the lyrics from the song "I Hope You Dance" by Lee Ann Womack, a song she used to sing to me growing up. The envelope also included a mad libs for us to send back and forth as something fun and silly to do together while we are apart. Through the ups and downs, my mom will always hold the title as my first best friend, even if it's not always visible to the naked eye.

Keep Swimming
By Nancy Willow

In elementary school
you biked to the city pool
every summer day
to practice holding
your breath
under water.

Little fish,
I know you are already learning
about glass slippers,
glass ceilings,
and other things you don't fit
into
or under.

Soon you will move
from the pool
to the glass bowl
- despite the promise of many-sized ponds -
and circle swim
its reflected stories
for years

practicing,
practicing.

But one day,
listen now,
one day
- and not too late -
you will discover

it is not the glass
that will break
but your heart

not your breath
you wish to hold
but yourself

not a pond
you will call home
but the sea.

Oh little fish,
keep swimming,
keep swimming.

The deep end of every ocean awaits.

Houghtaling Hollow
By Rhonda Engel



Sunny Whiskers
By Elizabeth Longueira



Hidden Heart

By Damon Keefer

The love in my heart brings a smile
You bring love as well as,
Your smile is warm and bright
While you hide yourself from me.
If you can bring me a smile
Can I bring you happiness?

While you wear a mask
I see through the cracks,
The tears that show through
Bring the truth.
You cling to happiness
Like it is your life line.

I pull you up,
Back from the tears.
I hold you while you drop the mask,
I see your true smile through the tears.
You feel safe and warm,
I feel safe and loved.

Thank you
For letting me be true

Me, Myself, and I

By Christian Robinson

They congratulated me. I don't think I deserved their prideful gaze.
It felt like I had just done the bare minimum but was being cheered.
Others had worked harder but here I was receiving the utmost praise.
It didn't feel like they were talking about me.

People I had never spoken to said hi to me as I passed by.
But all I could respond with was an awkward wave
They looked happy to see me, but deep down I felt like they had the wrong guy.
It didn't feel like they were talking to me.

Everything felt wrong. I had grown in the past few years but did it even matter?
Was I myself? Were they flukes? When would they realize?
I looked in the mirror and tried to comfort my thoughts so scattered.
But there I was. Maybe they were talking to me...

No
Opened door
There I was
Hunched over
My skin was fair yet plastic.
My eyes white but blinding.
I stood up and looked over at myself
I unhinged my jaw.
My teeth were so sharp
Piercing like needles.

They *definitely* were not talking about me.

Truck at Hanford Mills Pond - East Meredith, NY

By Jacqueline Madden



Alone for Days
By Patrick Twomey



Trials and Tribulations

By Rafia Umar

The world has gone blank
Everything is blank
My speech is blank
Blank space.
I'm not making any sense that's what it feels like
when all hope is lost
When there's nothing left to fight for
Tell me I'm wrong
Prove it to me
Let me see it again
Again, as the same girl I used to be
The girl who always smiles and laughs
Like life is about all cupcakes and rainbows
With the same innocence in her eyes
I've seen it all
Tell me I'm wrong
Prove it to me
Life is hard.
Privileges have gone wrong
Today, I sit in an open space
I stare into the sky,
I wonder what it feels like to be up above
The birds must really be free.

Big Stretch

By Tristian Wellman



A Friend Like You

By Mikela Peters

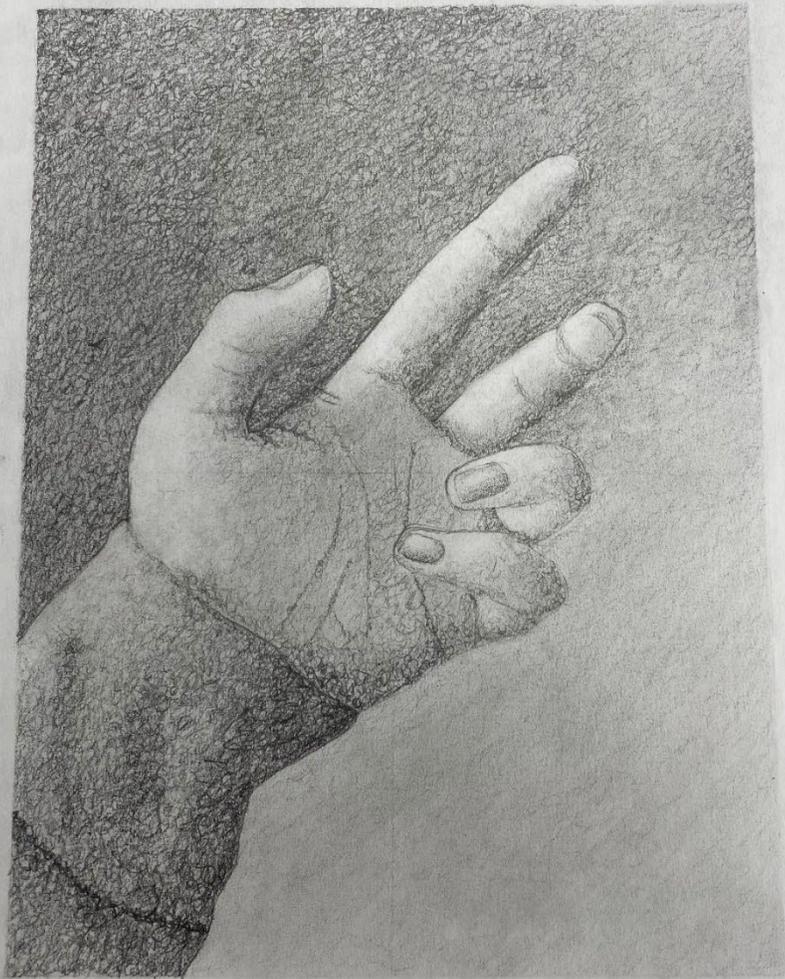
When pretend comes to an end,
my trust will mend
with a friend like you.
One that is true.
Your smile is so bright,
it makes everything seem alright.
Every time life turns the page,
our friendship will grow and always age.

The Strength of Sand

By Alexis Schwarz

I am made of sand
I build walls and add shells
I watch the waves creep closer
Always ready to wash me away
But where they knock me down
I will add a tower
And where their fires mean to scorn me
I grow strong, solid, turned to glass.
I am made of sand
And no matter how hard you may try
I will never fade away

Contour Rendering
By Trinity Hartson



Trinity Hartson

modified contour rendering

2/7/22

Choices

By Halle McIntyre

From the time that I was young, my mom had always told me that “life is about choices.” Though seemingly self explanatory, these words actually have a far deeper meaning than I had ever imagined when she first began to tell me this around age 5. This maxim has been said in my family for generations before this and passed down to my mother and her generation along the way.

My favorite thing about these words is that the meaning behind them always remains the same, leaving little room for misinterpretation. Some people make terrible decisions their whole lives, while some like to say that they only do the exact opposite- That they only make well throughout decisions based on knowledge. The majority of people in the world fall somewhere in between these two things but regardless, it is without a doubt that every person is in control of their own lives and their own decision making skills. Life *is* about choices.

When my mom says this, she means that though life is crazy and always unpredictable, it is our responsibility as humans to take action whenever it is necessary and that good choices are key to building a successful life for yourself. (My dad and I aren't close enough to discuss our philosophies regarding life and choices, but I believe that he shares this same viewpoint.) These choices mold our lives into what they are, and though life may throw obstacles in our pathways each day, ultimately, as humans, we are responsible for our own destinies.

The quote “life is about choices” can be tricky when looking at where (and whom) it originated from, as this is not only a quote, but rather a fact of life. An article written in 2014 (*Life doesn't just happen*. Good Choices Good Life. (n.d.). Retrieved December 11, 2021, from <http://www.goodchoicesgoodlife.org/choices-for-real-life-real-living/-life-doesnt-just-happen/>.) was based off of a previously conducted psychology study. The facts pulled from the study had shown that from the time that we are born, there is not really very much about us humans that is really determined forever. The way we look at things, how we choose to express ourselves, our feelings about certain things, the friends and family that we choose to associate with, our financial status (sometimes) do not have to stay exactly the same from the day that we are put on earth. Everything and everyone is affected by choices made by themselves or others around them.

This saying “life is about choices” wasn't necessarily created for the sole purpose of being a maxim. Being a maxim plays a huge role in the way that it's used. Many people (like my mom) use these words as ones to live by, while many just see this phrase as the cold, hard truth. Since the psychological study behind life and how decision making affects everyone (and even before,) this phrase has appeared in various different writing pieces across the world. There are many quotes similar/with similar meaning. For example, the saying “only we are in control of our own destiny” or “every choice you make, makes you.” Anybody at any time (or in any place) could use this phrase and many have been since the beginning of time really- so it is difficult to say where exactly it began, or who exactly says it now. Though it is confirmed that this phrase has been very widespread for a long time now and that in many different cultures, people make

decisions according to that culture and its values (Choi, A. S. (2014, October 21). *How cultures around the World Make Decisions*. ideas.ted.com. Retrieved December 11, 2021, from <https://ideas.ted.com/how-cultures-around-the-world-make-decisions/>.)

I believe that throughout my lifetime thus far, this quote has impacted me greatly and affected the choices I've made as a human being. This quote has helped to shape my mentality when dealing with situations- both big and small. This mindset has helped me to avoid the mentality of being a victim constantly and accepting the fact that I am responsible for myself (and myself only.) As every person does, I make mistakes and I learn from them, but I will never say that I didn't expect certain outcomes from certain actions of my own. If everyone thought like this, I believe that people/society as a whole would be a lot more susceptible to take accountability for their doings- wrong or right. I use this maxim all the time today as a young adult. I plan to keep it this way and pass it on to my children when I have them someday as well. I believe that this phrase was first said with good intention. People born into bad situations with good decision making skills (and other factors) can change their lives around for the greater good with enough action and vice versa. This maxim helps to regulate my life, how I act and who I am as a person.

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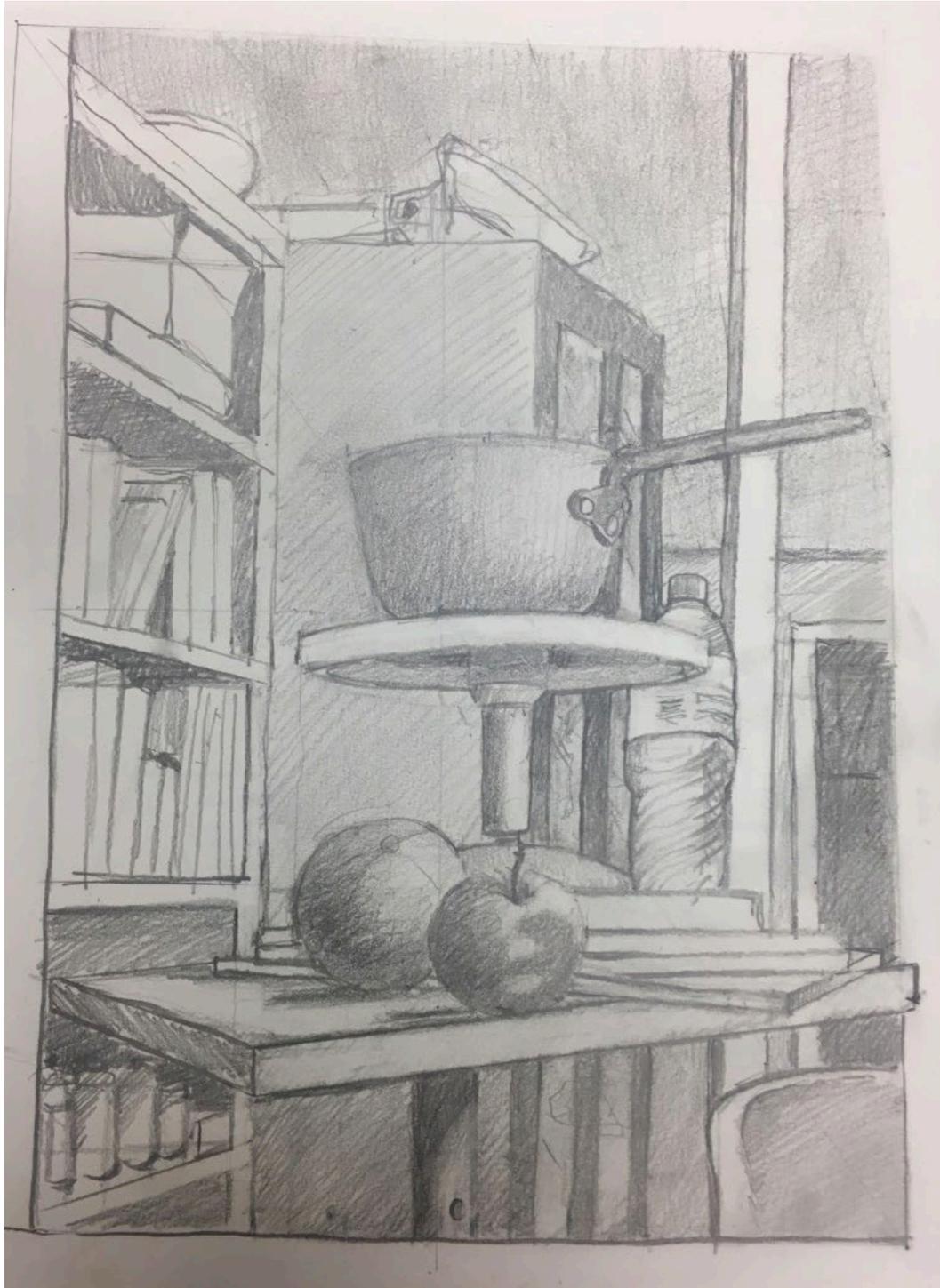
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Happy Thoughts
By Tristian Wellman



Art Center Still Life
By Rhonda Engel



Unwanted Scars

By Rafia Umar

She puts the blame on me
I told her I was a fighter
And whispered to her, "You might not be ready for this fight"
She came in with her scars and bruises
She said, "I might not be but with you
I can be anything"
As seasons change and each day unfolds,
The appearance of the girl I knew fades into the dawn,

I'm like the traffic light that knows its colors,
But with you I'm losing myself,
The anchor tied to our ship is unsteady
and is ready to dispatch,
Our encounter was a detriment towards my charisma
With you, I thought I could see a new horizon,
Face my demons, fight my darkest fears,
I let my guard down,
Yet she puts the blame on me.

Cherish Every Sunset
By Madilyne Kupris



A Field of Golden Memories

By Gina Haddad

I drove past a field alive with sunflowers.
It took me back to a simpler time, my childhood.
The earthy smell of plowed soil filled my nose,
the spongy feeling of the damp dirt on my small feet.
As I ran between the rows, laughing
while smiling, after my cousins and sister
prickly green leaves brushed my cheeks and caught
in my tangled hair. It was a maze
of green stalky stems and their leaves.
I was small in stature compared to the towering plants,
although I couldn't see over them
I could see the flowers and all their sun kissed beauty
large seedy centers adorned by a crown
of yellow, red, orange, purple, black,
small and large, all in their own unique design, petals.
As the years passed, they left that farm
with the horse pastures and that field
where the sunflowers no longer grow.
If you drive by today it's just a barren field.
But my soul and small footprints are buried deep in the soil
where we used to tread and the sunflowers bloomed.

A Hundred Jointed Legs

By Miriam Sharick

The other night, while turning in, I had an unpleasant shock. On the rack over my bathroom door was hanging a pair of Bermuda shorts that I intended to wear again this week, and while I was moving them over a little, a centipede ran across the fabric.

I'm scared of centipedes. They can bite, and I'm told that the bite can be painful, even for this common flat brown species about an inch long. I also know that centipedes prey on small invertebrates in soil and rotten wood and that they use venom to subdue their captures. I never want to find out how painful their bite is or if I'll have a bad reaction to the venom. But I had to overcome my fear and collect the little beast in order to release it.

I have no personal animosity towards centipedes; in fact, I have much tenderness to most of my small arthropod fellow travelers on this planet, and I go out of my way not to hurt them. You see, I know what they are: long-bodied centipedes and millipedes; jumping spiders, cellar spiders, garden spiders, and wolf spiders; flat sow bugs and curled-up pill bugs; red velvet mites; and vast numbers of insects. The only critters that I smack without remorse are mosquitoes, other biting flies, and ticks.

I find arthropods fascinating, and I want my Zoölogy students to learn to think likewise. No matter how they feel about spiders, for instance, my students learn to tell male from female so that they don't automatically kill them; I want them to look a spider in the face (that's how you sex them, by looking at their front feeler mouthparts, where females have slim tips for food handling and males have swollen tips that double for copulation) and say, "How do you do, sir?" or "How do you do, madam? Let me escort you outside." I don't let my students touch the spiders I bring into the lab as scientific specimens for observation, because, even though I'm sure a spider smaller than your pinky nail can't bite anyone, I don't want to imply that risk is acceptable. The same holds true for centipedes: I want students to develop a healthy and safe observation technique without the automatic revulsion that all those waving legs and feelers and mouthparts seem to generate, even in me.

So I had to get rid of this centipede in my shorts without accidentally releasing it on the bathroom floor. I surely didn't want my cat to encounter it; she would try to play with it, as she does with other such visitors, and this one could hurt her. I keep plastic amber pill vials all over the house just for collecting and releasing unwelcome arthropod houseguests without hurting them. For some reason the one I expected to find in the bathroom wasn't immediately handy. Neither was the vial I expected to find in my bedroom. I soon found one in the living room, uncapped it, and set it on the bathroom floor. Then I carefully removed my shorts from the door and set them on the floor. The centipede did not run across the leg or the seat as I moved them; it had to be in a pocket. And it was. And I swear my heart skipped a beat even though I was expecting to see it exactly as I did. Now I had to manipulate the open vial in the pocket in order to capture the centipede without losing it or hurting it or being bitten. It took me a few hand-trembling moments, but I caught it. Phew. But I didn't want to release it outside in the middle of the night, and I didn't want it to die in the vial, so I opened the vial again and quickly scooped in some moist houseplant soil, so the critter would at least be comfortable overnight. And so

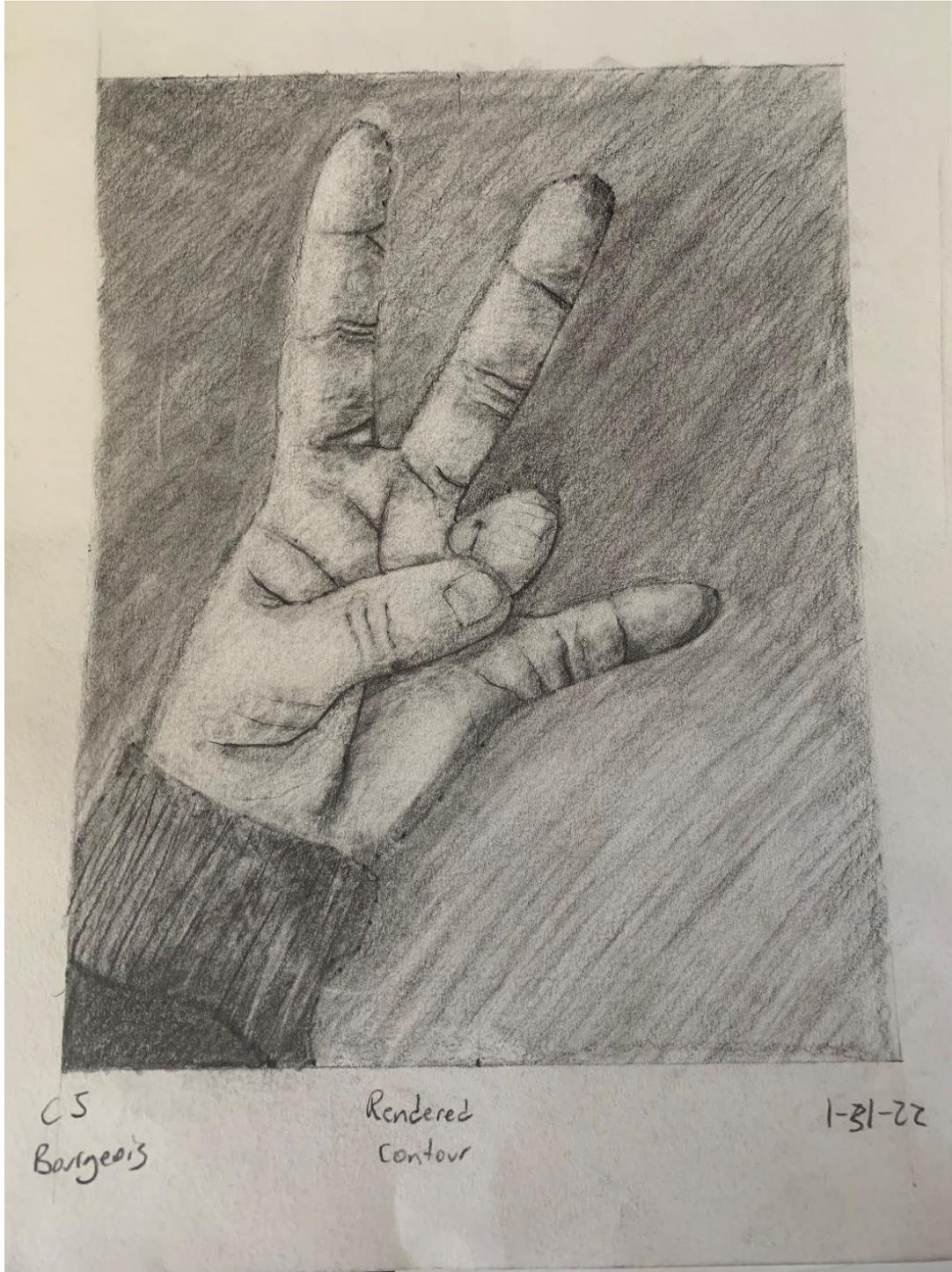
would I; the thought that a centipede might have been running around my apartment was more than unnerving.

The next morning I tapped the vial to check on the centipede's health, and it ran through the bit of soil, to my relief. Now I could let it go. As I carried it to the front door, a sow bug crawling across the linoleum in the entryway caught my eye. That bug I could safely pick up, so of course I did, and I popped it into the vial with the centipede. I bribed my cat with treats not to follow me outside and shook the vial out into the little flower garden next to the steps to the parking lot. The centipede ran through a couple of evasive S-maneuvers and disappeared into the foliage. The sow bug slowly found its footing and was still deciding which way to walk when I stopped watching. And I made sure that every room in my pad had a pill vial handy. I never know when the next centipede / sow bug / moth / hornet / beetle will show up that needs my compassion.

Architecture as Language
By Rafia Umar



Rendered Contour
By CJ Bourgeois



You Will Always Be

By Shasta Fletcher

As I sit, beside the deep deep blue sea...
My one wish is for you, to sit with me...
You are gone now, but not your memories...
They will forever be a part of me...
You left this world way before your time...
There was no reason, nor any rhyme...
The rain is falling upon your cold stone...
How could you, leave me so alone...
Those years have gone by much too fast...
But, the memories were meant to last...
You were my future, now you are my past...
If, I had known you were going away...
I'd have told you what you meant to me...
In my heart and soul, you will ever be...

The Four Winds

By Donovan Church

Trigger warning: suicide, mental health, drug abuse

I often see rainy days like today and don't think much of it. But today is different. Moving into college was a rollercoaster of emotions for me. I felt sad, excited, and a little nervous. But it was a reminder, a reminder of why I am here, which much like today's weather can be foggy at times. But not this day. This day I can remember like it was yesterday.

Late October can often be full of cold, wet, windy days. This day was no different. Like most thirteen-year-olds I was playing video games in my small room, screaming, laughing and without a worry in the world except beating the opponent. Nothing could get in between me and my game. At least that's what I thought until the unthinkable happened. This was out of the ordinary. Normally when I have my headset on I'm unable to hear my surroundings. That moment is when I knew something was serious. A light murmur from the other room caught my attention, but it wasn't enough to pull me away from my game. But as I continued to play on, the sound got louder and before I knew it, sounded like a noise my ears recognized. But for some reason I couldn't think of what it was. This raised my curiosity. As the sound got louder and my curiosity grew, this feeling in my gut was telling me something. I couldn't just listen anymore. I had to investigate. Was it a laugh? A conversation? Whatever it was I had to know. I opened my door that was connected to my brother's room which then led to the rest of the house. And there he was, lying down in his bed. When I walked in, I noticed him slip something under his pillow. I now knew what the murmur I had been hearing was. With eyes red, tears were running down his red face. "What has happened to my brother?" I thought to myself. Our eyes locked. I didn't know what to do. I had never been in a situation like this before. He was the older brother by four years. It was always him helping me. I questioned what to do for a split second. Then I approached him lying in his bed. I asked him when I had gotten up to his bed, "What is wrong?" That's when he dropped his head into his pillow and clenched his eyes shut. The tears ran down the side of his head. He began to speak in a cracked voice. "Everything is crashing down."

I had never seen my brother like this. My immature thirteen-year-old mind could barely comprehend what was happening. He then said, "I don't want to be here anymore," as he put his clenched fists to his eyes and rubbed the tears away. I hugged him and held him tightly. I could feel the back of my throat start to get scratchy. I spoke to him in a light toned voice. "I need you bro. I can't do this without you." There was a moment of silence. He hugged me tighter as I started to cry in his arms. I backed away and noticed something on his arm. I spotted several slashes on his wrist. Blood was falling from his arm onto the bed sheets. It was at that moment I realized what he had tried to hide from me. I noticed the knife from under his pillow. I asked him to give me the knife and that I didn't want him to hurt himself anymore. He handed it to me with confidence. He realized he could trust me at that moment. We traded a few more words and I managed to calm him down. I was terrified at that moment. The fear of losing my brother was so much more important than winning any video game.

I walked down the long hallway leading to the rest of the house and greeted my grandmother as she was walking out of the bathroom. I choked up. It was almost impossible to

tell her without breaking down in tears. “Nana.” (The name we've called her since we were young.) She responded, “Yes, darling. What is it?” I showed her the knife and explained to her the situation as best I could. She reassured me he would be okay and to go play outside with my friends. But how could I after what I had witnessed?

I went outside and went to a quiet place, a place I often went to when something upset me or made me angry. I sat there for the next few hours and just thought, thoughts that a thirteen-year-old shouldn't have to think about. I then remembered something that had barely crossed my mind originally. My brother and his girlfriend had just broken up. That along with the fear of losing our mother to drugs must've pushed him to go as far as to hurt himself. Later that night it was cold and windy, so I walked home, crawled in my bed and fell asleep.

The day after was strange, I was quieter than normal, to the point my friends asked me if I was alright. I didn't know how to respond so I stayed quiet, kept to myself and before I knew it they were laughing and being childish thirteen-year-old students again. The bus ride home was quiet as well. My best friends I always talked and joked with whispered in the back as I sat with my head against the seat, gazing out the window. When I stepped off the bus I noticed something out of the ordinary. No one's car was in the driveway. It crossed my mind but I didn't think much of it at first. Later that evening the door opened. It was my brother and grandmother. I asked where they were coming from. They both were silent until my grandmother spoke up. “Your brother's school.”

His social worker had noticed the cuts on his wrist and spoke up to the administration. They were sending him away to a psych ward, called Four Winds. Watching my brother pack his bags is still a blur to me. Just looking at him, I could almost see right through him. I could see the pain on his face clear as day. He was later diagnosed with Bipolar Disorder and Depression/Anxiety. Nearly one in five people is diagnosed with a mental health condition. The signs he was giving were an example of what to look for when someone is in distress or having thoughts of harming themselves.

This became more clear to me now that I am a young adult in college, but it was fascinating to realize, even as a thirteen-year-old boy I noticed a few of these signs. Three months later my brother arrived home. Four Winds helped diagnose and medicate my brother as soon as possible. He was put into groups with similar kids, which helped him open up about his issues and illnesses. His main takeaway from Four Winds was how to live and deal with his mental illness rather than push it to the side. He was always a little different after that but all that mattered was that I had my brother back.

Research conducted by the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) has found that “Many mental disorders are caused by a combination of biological, environmental, psychological and genetic factors.” (<https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/publications/looking-at-my-genes>) Growing up my brother and I both faced many trials. It makes perfect sense that my brother was diagnosed with mental illnesses. Not only are these illnesses genetic, we also grew up in a rough environment. Our mother suffers from the same disorders as he does, so what separates me and my brother from having the same illnesses? Could it be because we had different dads? I couldn't find any research to back this up besides genes coming from both sides of the family tree. We both faced neglect and psychological abuse from our drug addicted mother. His father wasn't really present in his life, and mine wasn't present at all. We relied on our grandmother for

everything. She had her own problems with mental health and alcohol, but at the end of the day, there was a roof over our heads and food on the table, and that's what matters.

Looking back on it, I can't say I'm not thankful for the things my brother and I endured. My brother is in his last semester before receiving his bachelors in Human Services, owns his own apartment and is working a fulltime job. To say he is a role model to me is an understatement. I give credit for a lot of my success to him. Growing up all we had was each other and I think that's what makes us so close to this day. And here I am, on a cold rainy day in college with the reminder of why I am here: to do what my parents couldn't academically, reverse the cycle of bad parenting and neglect and promote mental health awareness. Today, it may be foggy outside but the reminder of why I am sitting here, a student in college with drive and aspirations, is clear as ever.

Rip Van Winkle Monument
By Jacqueline Madden



Diaspora
By Rafia Umar



The Simple Things

By Jamie Ford

One of the most life-altering experiences I've ever had was my first ever camping trip in West Virginia. I had never been camping before, as I believed that my fleeting years spent in Fleischmanns amounted to about all of the outdoorsy adventures I would engage in during my lifetime. It wasn't until I moved into my uncle's home in York Springs, Pennsylvania, that my assumptions would be challenged.

My first and closest friend, Matthew, was the person I spent most of my time with after starting at my new Pennsylvania high school. Matthew was tall with a large build, but his smile made him more welcoming than intimidating. I liked him almost immediately and I attribute that reaction to the pink flower crown that he wore, and the way its hues almost blended into his ginger hair. It just so happened that we had common interests; our friendship was fated, I believe. Although I knew him well, I never expected him to be the camping type. I could tell that his mom, Sue, was. I knew she took her children on many trips. She even led the escapades for her daughter Emily's girl scout troop!

Needless to say, when I was invited to go camping with them, I was excited to say yes. The car ride was long (about 5 hours). It didn't help that Matt's brother-in-law, Noah, revoked our music playing rights very early into the trip. Yet somehow we survived the ride and we watched as the flat terrain of Pennsylvania transformed into lush, green mountains. The air was fresh, cool, and crisp when it hit our faces. The flat terrain we knew was transformed into an open, rocky campground that we pulled into. The grey clouds alluded to rain, and although we rushed our two-tent setup, the inevitable downpour left our sleeping tent the faintest bit sticky. I didn't mind it, though; that was only the beginning. After a night of somewhat plentiful rest atop the memory foam "mattress", we set off on a plethora of endeavors. A hike up the Seneca Rocks mountain (a 1,568 ft elevation) was our first mission, as we all are avid hikers. I almost instantly lost myself in the sights, soaking up the faint breeze and gentle streams of light through the thick trees. Dirt stained my hands as I anchored myself on tree trunks that had been moistened with the morning dew, and sticky moss caused me to momentarily recoil every time I scaled a larger rock. Somehow, though, I didn't mind it. I was determined. The sight from the viewpoint was enough to make it worthwhile. Before us was a green expanse, rolling mountains coated in a variety of verdant hues and dwellings so tiny, the humans appeared like ants. We had the option to hike higher, scaling the more dangerous unpaved rocks. I followed Matt's sister, Emily, her husband Noah, and their Charles spaniel Aspen up to the very top. The breeze grew stronger, yet not enough for me to fret. Instead, I gazed in awe at the green expanse all around me and came to realize just how beautiful our world is.

It was a day's worth of hiking, but we did not stop there. The next venture took us underground, half a mile into a cave that was lush with running water, blinded fish (as fish go blind from the exposure to the pure darkness,) and stalactites and stalagmites that left us all awestruck. No words could express the beauty of those natural mineral deposits, the way they grew up or down and would eventually meet somewhere in the middle. Coarse rock had been smoothed by years of water pressure, and our fingertips were graced by the icy sensation of the streams and drops of water. Even when our guides momentarily exposed us to pure darkness or

warned us of the slippery terrain we would trek, all of us were left speechless, reminded of how much life truly passed us by. In many thousands of years, some of the pillars of deposits would meet in the middle; it was a miracle we were able to lay our eyes upon some similar unions.

I've come to learn that the world itself is beautiful. It wasn't until I was forcibly drawn away from my phone, stranded in a new place with no cell reception that I truly opened my eyes. Suddenly, I had no desire to look at my screen. Instead, I wished to survey every sight I came across, even staying up an entire night to watch the twinkling of stars and colorful streaks of the milky way galaxy grace the clear night sky. I realized that we all tend to live in the moment; so much so, that the world changes before our very eyes and we miss it. Had it not been for that camping trip, I would have forgotten what pure joy lies within the simple things all around us. Though that endeavor was only a short weekend, the memory has stuck with me every single day.

Radial Tree

By Elizabeth Longueira



NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

CJ Bourgeois is a Golf and Sports Turf Management student.

Donovan Church studies Construction Management at SUNY Delhi.

Rhonda Engel developed the curriculum for Freehand Drawing and Ceramics as part of her Master's thesis and has taught art at SUNY Delhi since 1993.

Shasta Fletcher is a first year student in Liberal Arts and Sciences.

Jamie Ford is a Freshman in the Nursing program here at Delhi. "I love to write and often utilizes it as an outlet of self-expression. Professor Olson recommended that I submit one of the pieces I was proud of during my first semester."

Gina Hadd is a Veterinary Science student and will be graduating in Spring of 2023.

Trinity Hartson is from Saint Regis Falls NY and is currently a freshman in the Mechatronics program.

Mike Jones is a senior in the Architecture BT program.

Damon Keefer is a fourth year architecture student. "I love writing short stories, but I thought I would try writing some poems."

Madilyne Kupris is an Individualized Studies major. "I love taking sunset photos because I enjoy looking at them and I know other people would too."

Clarissa Lewis is a Veterinary Science major. "If anyone would like to support my photography journey, feel free to follow me on Instagram at @clarissasclicks."

Elizabeth Longueira is a Veterinary Science Technology major.

Jacqueline Madden is an Office Assistant I in Facilities Staff and Faculty Mailroom.

Halle McIntyre is a first year nursing student.

Mikela Peters is a Veterinary Science student. "I love creativity things, such as writing, drawing, Cricut crafts, and diamond paintings."

Christian Robinson is a first year Liberal Arts and Sciences student. "This is a free verse poem, about self-doubt and what it means to be myself."

Alexis Schwarz is a first year student in Early Childhood Education at SUNY Delhi with a love of writing.

Miriam Sharick has been teaching and/or tutoring Zoology, Botany, and half a dozen other science courses at SUNY Delhi since 1992. She lives in Delhi with her cat and has two grown children and two grandchildren. She loves to fish, garden, sing, read, do crossword puzzles, and make jam.

Patrick Twomey is a student in the Construction Management program.

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Tristian Wellman is a senior in the BT Architectural Design and Building program.

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