The Novice Staff

Managing Editor
Emma Knickelbine

Art Editor
Miranda Chase

Staff Member
Anna Hall

Faculty Advisors
Erin LaBonte
Emilie Lindemann

Cover Art
?

Editorial Focus
The Novice is a space for innovative and thought-provoking creative work by emerging and established artists. Published at Silver Lake College in Manitowoc, Wisconsin, The Novice seeks to create dialogue across the literary and visual arts.

Why The Novice?
Ernest Hemingway wrote, “We are all apprentices in a craft where no one ever becomes a master.” Readers and artists connect through the pages The Novice to partake in the pursuit of lifelong learning. There is always more to learn about the human experience; we are all novices.

Submission guidelines for future issues are available at www.thenovicejournal.com

This publication made possible in part through contributions to the Silver Lake Fund.
Gateway
Dr. Connie Woythal

Open the door
just a crack
Let the light in
Let it shine

Open the gate
just the latch
Let the flowers grow
Let them bloom

Open the window
just halfway
Let the breeze flow
Let it blow

Wide open now
wider still

Home
Megan Baradic
Northern Wisconsin
Isabella Scheibl

Tall pines stand alone,
A gust of quiet and cool wind blows.
Tall pines gently embrace,
With a tap on the shoulder and a caress on the face.
Their love drifts off with the breeze,
Sailing away from tall pine trees.
The pines’ hiatus enforced by the peace,
Until shifting air will again make loneliness cease.

A Letter
Carmen Santa Anna

This is just to say
The sun is settling down
With water all around.
The mountains real up high
With trees up to the sky
So sweet and pure
Oh’Hale the dryness of the land
Which is now all taken by man
Forgive me
Socioeconomic Segregation
Kaye Solander

Where I’m From
Dayonna Stokes

Where I’m from, gunshots are like birds chirping.
Where I’m from, jealousy is the cause of funerals
Where I’m from, staring in admiration is assumed as there is an issue
Because aggression and insecurities are taught to be normal
Where I’m from, getting in free before 11 is more important than checking your kids homework
Where I’m from having the best hair and shoes is more important than having the best grades
Where I’m from, the smell of pine sol and loud music means clean up time
Where I’m from, Reading statuses are more important than reading books.
Take a look at my point of view, because where I’m from it’s hard trying to be a better you.
Where I’m from things don’t change, they only worse, and looking in to the mirror you realize you have to put yourself first.
This is where I’m from.........
Throwing Frogs Over the Fence
Sarah Grosskopf

The early morning sun glared off the surface of the water. The hunter waited, watching for any sign of her quarry, a movement, a shadow, a splash or ripple, her impatience growing as the deadline approached. She dragged her seventeen-foot pole along the edge without splashing. The wide, flat net moved sluggishly through the crystal-clear water. The sun was already hot, and the night had been hot as well. Just the kind of weather that they loved. There should still be more than she had already caught, and she could not abandon the hunt until every last one of them had been removed.

A small dark shape shot forward, zipping through the water like a splash of lightning. She leaned on the end of her pole to move the net quickly enough to intercept it. The amphibious creature possessed surprising speed and agility in the water, but the experienced hunter was well-versed in its wiles. With one sweeping motion, Sadie caught the creature on the end of her net, lifted it out of the water, leapt backwards three paces, and catapulted the astonished frog over the pool fence towards the pond.

Sadie Marx, the certified pool operator at the Twenty-Nine Pines Resort, looked across the outdoor swimming pool one more time. July had recently brought an end to June-bug season, thankfully. Hundreds of the insects would clog up the skimmer baskets, squirming and crawling when she pulled the baskets out to dump them outside the fence behind the building. Still, the fat beetles floated stupidly and were easy to scrape off the water with a net. The sudden end of June-bug season brought the immediate onset of frog season. Frogs darted craftily out of her net’s path. They were very good at it. And if she didn’t throw a frog over the fence quickly enough, it would spring off the net and if she didn’t throw a frog over the fence quickly enough, it would spring off the net and send her scrambling across the pool deck, around the chairs and under the brightly umbrellaed tables on all fours, frantically trying to catch the little beast in her bare hands before it hopped back into the pool.

Only five minutes remained until the recreation center opened. Sadie walked around the pool one last time. Another dark shape floated near the edge on the other side. It did not move when she approached with the net. The creature on the end of her net, lifted it out of the water, leapt backwards three paces, and catapulted the astonished frog over the pool fence towards the pond. Only five minutes remained until the recreation center opened. Sadie walked around the pool one last time. Another dark shape floated near the edge on the other side.

Once satisfied that all of the frogs had indeed been removed, Sadie replaced the seventeen-foot lightweight aluminum pole on its hooks on the side of the building. The hose was still running in the indoor pool. She had just backwashed the two giant sand filters yesterday and the water level in the pool was still low. Sadie would let the hose run as long as the building was empty. Swimmers had a tendency to complain that a hose running in the pool made it cold, although there was no possible way that leaving a hose run for half an hour would cool off one-hundred-and-thirty-three-thousand gallons of water by more than one degree.

Hannah, the condo front desk receptionist, was already unlocking the glass front doors. Charlie, the middle-aged and deeply tanned groundskeeper, wandered in. With him wafted the scent of new-mown grass. His stained jeans, T-shirt, and baseball cap contrasted sharply with Hannah’s business casual. Charlie was built like a grizzly, but possessed the heart of a teddy bear. Unlike the other members of his department, he had never been heard to use strong language. He mumbled a greeting and blinked confusedly, the indoor fluorescent seemingly midnight blackness in comparison with his accustomed sunlight. Despite this handicap, he persevered his way towards the vending machine.

Sadie, in her drab gray maintenance uniform and brown pony-tail, leaned on the reception desk for her usual morning chat with Hannah. Hannah always did most of the talking and seemed glad for the company. Sadie did not mind; she was better at listening than making conversation anyway. Hannah signaled the beginning of a lengthy rant on one of her pet subjects with a deep breath when the front door creaked open. Victoria, a timeshare owner and regular pool user, breezed in.

Though tottering downhill from late-middle age at breakneck speed, Victoria favored trendy new fashions in clothing. The results often made her look older than she really was. Victoria was extremely friendly and always well-meaning, but her loud and blustery manner tended to annoy the victims that she cornered into a conversation. Today, however, she seemed troubled. At the very least, extremely confused. She held her oversized bag of pool items tightly and glanced back through the glass doors towards the parking lot with watery hazel eyes.

“Good morning,” Hannah greeted. “What’s the matter?”
“I hit a frog,” the older woman admitted in a gravely voice that indicated years of smoking, despite her tendency to preach about new health trends for hours to anyone who would listen. “In the parking lot. I was driving in, and it just came flying out of nowhere, smoking, despite her tendency to preach about new health trends for hours to anyone who would listen.”

Hannah gave Sadie a sideways look. She had witnessed the morning frog-removal routine before.
“That was a Lesser Northern Flying Frog.” Sadie strangled a fit of laughter into a horrified gasp. “They’re a critically endangered species.”
“A what?” Victoria glanced at her car again, and then turned back towards Sadie and Hannah. The receptionist also studied Sadie carefully. She lacked any knowledge of frog species and could never tell when Sadie was serious.

“A Lesser Northern Flying Frog,” Charlie repeated in a soft voice. Until now,
groundskeeper had been squinting at the vending machine as if the fate of humanity rested on his decision. “Flying frogs are extremely active around here just before eight o’clock. I see them all the time between the pool and the pond.” He was extremely shy by nature, but did possess a sense of humor and a secret dislike for people who talked too loud. Victoria had cornered him more than once. “Is the frog okay? You didn’t hurt it, did you? You can get in trouble for that. Since they’re endangered. There’s a pretty big fine.”

“I’m afraid the poor thing isn’t okay at all,” Victoria squeaked in embarrassment. Her oversized handbag rattled nervously. “Oh, I didn’t mean to hit it. What do I do now?”

Sadie leaned in close and whispered just loud enough for everyone in the room to hear. “We won’t tell if you don’t.”

“Really?” Her voice arched with tension. “I don’t want to get anyone in trouble.”

“Don’t worry about a thing,” Sadie assured confidently. “I’ll take care of it. Which car is yours?”

“The red BMW.” Victoria waved grandly towards a vehicle that was at least fifteen years old and had certainly seen better days.

“Just be more careful in the future,” Sadie warned seriously. “I might not be able to help you next time.”

“I will,” Victoria promised, thoroughly shaken by the incident. She hurried through the door into the swimming pool area. Victoria had been looking forward to doing her exercises in the outdoor pool and was extremely anxious to get as far away from frogs as possible.

“Want to see what a Lesser Northern Flying Frog looks like?” Sadie grinned at Hannah, whose reaction to frogs was the basis of many hilarious anecdotes.

“You know I wouldn’t touch a frog with a ten-foot pole,” Hannah whined. “I have a seventeen-foot pole you could borrow.”
Nature: A Haiku Collection
Susan Schum-Knickelbine

Moonlight glows through trees.
Wolf howling eerily to pack.
Dinner is close by.

Owl waits silently.
Rabbit screeches frantically.
Hunger satisfied.

Spirit soaring high,
Exhilaration mounts,
Diving down to earth.

Spanish moss hanging
From old cypress tree branches.
Rain drops shimmer down.
Flashback
Shannon DeGrave

Lightning pries open tree-ribs
into a glowing, live-ember wound.
Decimated and desiccated,
its lungs are burnt-out and black.
Autumn leaves shrivel, disintegrate,
and I remember so much,
oh, so much.

Inside a Moment
Dr. Connie Woythal

I learned to wait without telling time
I learned to watch without expecting anything
I learned to listen even when sounds were asleep

From waiting I found the value of a moment
From watching I found the beauty in the mundane
From listening I found the rhythm of nature
Darkness Dwells
Miranda Chase

Darkness Dwells
In the deep
Within ourselves
So we cannot sleep

In Hollow Lands
Dale Van Minsel
“Come on, Jut! This is the opportunity of a lifetime! We’re never gonna get another chance like this!” I inched toward the alley’s mouth, hoping he’d catch the perfectly valid reasons for my hurry. Lord Fillingren wouldn’t stay out of his mansion for long. And, of all the nobles in Zaarden, his pockets remained the most pick-able.

Jut stacked his crate on top of another. “Calm down, Hackney. Give me a sec. I am at work, you know.”

“This isn’t work. This is family bonding time.” I ignored Jut’s pronounced eye roll. “Except, shockingly, I never seem to see much actual bonding.” I waved a hand up at the wall of the grocery store, an austere gray brick square just like every other building in the city. “I mean, let’s be honest. You don’t even get paid.”

Jut glared at me, or maybe through me. Honestly, it’s hard to tell sometimes. Regardless, he sighed patronizingly, as he did every other time I’d ever said anything funny. But, funny, to him, is annoying. “I get a roof over my head and food on the table.”

“Which most parents give their children for free,” I pointed out.

He sighed, settling the crate more securely on top of the other one, even though they were both empty. “Fine. Many do.” He furrowed his brow, hands pausing on the wood, his eyes held there as if by some sense of duty. “I’ll see if I can get out of work for tonight, Hack, but I doubt it. Dad doesn’t exactly like you, and now he just assumes that every time I go out I’m with you.”

I said cheerfully as Jut climbed the stairs up to the store’s back entrance. “I think I’m making progress with the old badger! I mean, he actually grunted at me the last time I was here. That acknowledges my existence. That’s gotta be a step up!” I tapped a finger on my chin. “I just have to figure out how to train him properly.”

Jut ran a hand through his dark hair, his hand paused on the doorknob. “Train… you don’t train a person, Hack. You train animals.”

“That’s how you know you’ve done it right,” I said, smirking up the stairs at him. “When they don’t even realize they’ve been trained.” I held my cheerfulness on my face as Jut opened the door and turned to go in.

“Train,” Jut’s dad shifted just out of my frame of view, but if it’s possible to hear someone scowl, I certainly did. His voice, normally low as a broken foghorn, jumped up a few registers. “You will stay here.”

Jut folded his arms, leaning against the wooden counter as though he’d already figured everything out. “You don’t like that I can make my own money doing something else.”

Jut’s dad shifted just out of my frame of view, but if it’s possible to hear someone scowl, I certainly did. His voice, normally low as a broken foghorn, jumped up a few registers. “You will stay here.”

Jut folded his arms, leaning against the wooden counter as though he’d already figured everything out. “You don’t like that I can make my own money doing something else.”

Of course, as soon as the door clicked shut behind him, I scrambled out of the alleyway and around to the front of the store. The solid bricks of the walls were classic and everything, but I was grateful for the recent movement throughout the city to put windows in the storefronts. It helped me figure out which ones I wanted to “patronize”, and, naturally, I could see everything that went on within. I’m not creepy, but there’s something about standing outside, looking into the warm light of a building filled with more things than I’ll ever own in my lifetime. It brings things full-circle to me.

But, I suppose lots of things do that. I’m a lunatic, after all. And, I find that lunatics are really the people who have most of that circle already figured out. Everyone else is just on there way there.

I came up just to the edge of the building, shying away from the patches of light the windows threw onto the sidewalk. They slid and shifted with the customers inside, light bending and changing as if it were moldable, like clay. Combined with the dots of streetlights along the sidewalk, it was actually sort of pretty. But it made it plenty hard to sneak.

Someone opened the door, and through it, I heard a huge, bellowing, “What?”

If there’s one thing Jut’s father is good for, it’s shattering moments. I snuck my way to the door through a puddle of light, catching the corner with my foot before it completely closed. I kept as much to the wall as possible, listening in through the smallest open slit my foot would allow.

“I’d like the rest of the night off,” Jut repeated. “I’m going out.”

“Like hell you are!” his father groused, tossing a clipboard on the counter. He eyed several customers who were looking their way. The poor souls shut their mouths and went right on shopping. Jut’s father growled, “We’ve got a big day tomorrow.”

“Catering the Lindesen’s wedding. I know. I’ll be here tomorrow.”

“We need to prepare. Tonight.”

“No, we don’t. We have everything ready.”

“You will not leave this shop. I need you here.”

“You don’t. All I do is stand there and tell people where to find things.”

“You’re in customer service! It’s an important job!”

“It’s not,” Jut snorted. “It’s just your way of keeping me here. Because you know I’d rather be anywhere else.”

Jut’s dad shifted just out of my frame of view, but if it’s possible to hear someone scowl, I certainly did. His voice, normally low as a broken foghorn, jumped up a few registers. “You will stay here.”

Jut folded his arms, leaning against the wooden counter as though he’d already figured everything out. “You don’t like that I can make my own money doing something else.”

“You aren’t making money,” his father said, in a suffering tone that seemed well-used. “You’re stealing it.”

“You never discouraged me from that.”
“That’s because someone’s got to even the field between the nobles and the rest of us,” he barked. “Just not you.”

Jut’s eyes flashed, and though his arms were still crossed, his muscles tensed.

“What not me?”

“You may be an adult, but that doesn’t mean you can take care of yourself.” Jut’s father marked something on his clipboard, eyeing the counter inventory while speaking. “Leave it to Hackney. He’s one of those types. Anyway, he’s obviously homeless and jobless, so quite frankly, he has nothing better to do with his time. You do.”

Jut’s silence was scarier than any words could’ve been. I imagined his clenched jaw, his steely eyes, the look he always got before he finished something.

In this case, his father’s delicate emotional balance.

There was a rustle, and Jut turned toward the door. I stepped aside, removing my foot so it clicked shut, but through the window, I saw Jut hang up his apron beside the counter. He opened the door a crack, but turned back to his father. “I’ll be back late,” he said. “The money I make tonight should buy us all a nice Sunday dinner. In the morning, I’ll bake the cake for the Lindesen reception. Goodnight.”

His father said nothing, too furious to force out words. His rage nearly boiled out of his pores. But Jut was worse, somehow: Quiet. Contemplative. Deadly.

I didn’t even bother to run back around the corner into the back alley, didn’t try to convince him I hadn’t heard. It struck me as an insult to his intelligence, pretending I wasn’t an eavesdropper.

Sure, I could see his father’s point. I just saw Jut’s a little clearer.

He shoved his way out the door and fixed me in a stern glare. I accessed my charisma, whipped up a smile, and sauntered off down the street while my mind chewed on what I’d just heard. Maybe, in there somewhere, I’d find some answers.

Not likely, but certainly possible.

In his heart, I’m sure he knew that I was right.
I hold a basket betwixt my knees; it is filled with sweet fruit, halved pears and apples.

My hips are full and soft, like the skin of an orange that gives to the pressing thumb.

Whole nations could roll within my womb, but I would not know, these breasts are chaste.

My breasts are grapefruit, sweet and pliable, but make bitter by prudence.

I am a goddess untouchable to men, too many thieves have sifted through these branches,

now all are barred entrance. This fruit ripe, falls from the stem and ferments in the late August heat,

in Demeter’s hand.
Whoosh
Dr. Connie Woythal

Wind chews the skin off your face
On a blustery winter day
Wind sneaks through the door
Allowing the ghost to enter
Slamming the door

If you try to capture her
She will swirl, twirl, and flit
Away laughing at you
Dumbfounded by her tricks

If you try to ride her
Take caution
She will drop you
While she watches you
Flip flop plop

Wind grabs you in her cloak
Blinds you with her darkness
And vanishes as quickly
As she arrived

Don’t try to bottle her up
She cannot be made captive but
She can catch you
Just wait and see
Over Emotional
Isabella Scheibl

It is very rare for you to get phone call from your cousin. He barely ever calls, even for holidays or birthdays. When he does call, the conversations usually last around five minutes; long enough for him to tell you that he is continually swamped with work at the lab where he has been employed for the past five years and he is currently looking for other places to work part-time so that he will have more free time to devote to his genius pursuits. If you manage to get a few words in edgewise, you tell him that you are the same that you have been for a while. You have the same job, you live at the same apartment, and you follow the same routine. Every day. In all honesty, your life could be described as mundane by some, and yet, you are more or less satisfied.

However, less than an hour ago you answered a phone call from your cousin. As you listened to him talk, you began to feel something you had not felt in a while: excitement described as mundane by some, and yet, you are more or less satisfied.

As you listened to him talk, you began to feel something you had not felt in a while: excitement. Evidently, all your cousin was doing with the suction cups was taking your temperature and blood pressure. You hold back a sigh as you watch your cousin stuff everything except a beaker into his briefcase. He hands the beaker to you with nothing more than instructions to “Drink quickly.” You push away all doubt as you down the liquid in one gulp. To your cousin’s credit, the orange liquid is tasteless and only slightly thicker than water. Your cousin then hands you a small notebook with a pen and asks you to go for a walk and record what you see. You readily accept the notebook and have already walked two blocks up the street before you realize that you forgot to ask about the purpose of the liquid. Oh well. I guess it’s better to be surprised, you think.

You have walked almost four blocks when you notice the first signs of something happening. The kids playing a game of tag on the nearby playground seem to suddenly change. They don’t change color or shape, at least not that you notice, but they somehow seem different to you. They appear happier than they did a moment ago. You are oblivious to their smiles, yet somehow you are aware of the joy radiating out of them. You can’t help letting your own smile form as you witness your first glimpse inside human beings.

This must have been what your cousin was talking about! Your cousin’s serum enables you to not have to guess others emotions by listening to their verbal explanation or by watching their actions to deduce how they are feeling. Instead, you are able to simply see everything that they feel. In that moment the weight of this realization strikes you fully. Your cousin’s invention could change the world as you know it! You want to rush back to tell your cousin what you’ve seen, but you also want to absorb some more using this unique perspective while you have the chance. You look at the joyful children one last time as you continue down the street.

You are still walking fifteen minutes later. You have already passed several more people, but the feelings you see in them haven’t really surprised you very much. As you take another step, something startles you as you pass an ally. If it weren’t for the cloud of feeling that surrounds the man hunched against the wall, you would have missed him completely. There is a pitiful look on his face, but it’s not the look that stops you mid-step. As he reaches his hand out you sense an overwhelming amount of greed in him. His greed is a longing for something more than money. This deep coveting is the force that stretches his hand further toward you and what compels you to stay where you are and continue to watch him. Then you start to see something else. A flash of, could it be, agony? This agony is accompanied by a wave of the darkest despair you have ever seen. It all makes sense to you now. The longing is for something to distract himself from the agony that you can see is seeping into his very being. In essence, he seems as if he is wrapped in such despair that no amount of friendly smiles or spare change offered by those passing could rehabilitate him. You shudder. Truly, one of the most terrible things to endure is watching someone suffer when you can do nothing about it. You begin your
walk home as you swallow down your guilty feelings for being so incapable of assisting this man.

As you near your apartment, you see a lady walking down the other side of the street. She is wearing a work uniform, but you see her mind is elsewhere. The brisk pace she is setting could almost disguise the turmoil that writhes inside her. She is confused, afraid, and on the verge of panicking. Shortly before, something was severed in her heart and now she is so immersed in the thought of it that she can see nothing but the tears burning behind her own eyes. You find it unnerving how well you can see her unshed tears.

You hear a commotion to your right and turn to see a man running toward her. He reaches the woman and starts talking quickly. He waves his arms wildly in a way that would be comical if he didn’t seem so completely devastated. He is a mess of sadness and fear. You can’t see what his fear is, but it must be enormous because he is terrified. The raw emotion displayed by the two overwhelms you and you feel the need to turn away. When you reach your apartment door, you glance back over your shoulder to see the two embracing tightly. Their negative feelings have dissipated and they are both suddenly calm.

Your cousin rushes down the hall. “Well? Did it work?”

You turn back toward the door and step inside. You walk out of the entry way and past your cousin, who seems to be no more than a surging pillar of trepidation, excitement, and anticipation all intertwined together to create a tidal wave of visible feeling. By the time you have traveled through the hall and into the living room, you are almost to the point of collapsing. Settling down into the couch you stare at the black TV screen. Your cousin sits down too, but after a moment he jumps up again and paces back and forth. The blur of color is too much for you and you close your eyes. You hear your cousin stop pacing. He then steps closer to you.

“Did it work?” Your cousin asks loudly and urgently. “I need to know if it works!”

What can you say? How can you begin to describe your day? How can you describe every human emotion you have seen from purest form of joy to the darkest form of despair? You sink further into the couch just thinking about how much you have witnessed and the empty notebook that remains in your pocket.

“Did my invention work?” The question is now pleading.

Oh my. Does it work?

Losing pencils
      is a sort of lottery.
Toss in one pencil,
      find another
half-chewed – on the wrong end
      in the music building,
or a Ticonderoga
      unsharpened
      in the back of ENG 220.
There are duds, a G-2
      brand-new, crisp ink, lost
For a generic good-for-nothing
      but embossing ghost tornadoes.
Should I leave this pencil
      un-claimed on the floor?
      Let the losers weep.
My mind starts to stir… her eyes open… it is all blurry.
She reach for her glasses…. It is all still blurry.
This is how I make her see life.
There is no escape for her. No way to describe the world to her besides:
Everyone hates you
No one wants to talk to you
No one wants to look at you
These are the messages I give her. These are the messages I tell the world.
Next she tries to get up but I weigh her down like a ton of bricks.
“We are not leaving bed today” I say. You are not allowed to move.
You are not allowed to get up, not even to take your meds.
I keep going. Telling her she is not enough.
She starts to break and listen to me. She can’t hear anything besides me. Only me…..
I am the only voice she ever hears.
“Adella, who will you choose?”

I flinched, glanced to the left away from my friend, and noticed Mama looking down her long thin nose in our direction. That very expression teased a desire to touch my face, to reassure myself that I did not take after Mama in form or attitude. I was able to resist by clamping my hands together, for one could not behave so at Sir Langley’s castle. His dinner parties offered renowned meats, sweet delicacies, and most important of all, agreeable connections. An excellent location to launch the most important decision of my future.

“Oh, Lottie, I’m sure I hardly know.” Shaking my head caused a silver comb to slide and my hair to loosen. Robert, the handsome one, so stately and dark haired—his eyes held a depth that seemed to have swallowed the night. Nicholas, the first man’s opposite, sported blond curls and bright Mediterranean eyes that reminded me of pleasant summer days wrapped in warmth. He also held some allure. These two were the last of a long list of suitors that Mama and Papa had agreed upon for my future nuptials. Neither of their holdings were exceptional, but merely agreeable. Wealth and title did not hold the same weight with me as did excitement and interesting conversations. Mama and Papa’s cold halls and hearth had nothing to do with lack of material gain and more to do with the heart. I wished for a roaring fire and laughter that split the silence lingering in our family gatherings.

I willed a smile to assure a warm welcome and smoothed my dress one more time. Appearance meant everything. Someone entered who garnered the men’s attention. Robert turned toward her and brightened. To my surprise, Joan Carlson, a young woman none of us seemed to know well, approached the very men I was to compare. She was not to be ignored. I measured the expense of her outfit against mine. Would Joan’s too graceful movements. I wished for a more important event. Though what could be more important than my entire future? I could not express my desire of my heart when I’d finally figured out which one he would be? My fingers toyed with the lengthy gold chain hanging about my neck. Wrapping and coiling the links around and around my fingers. Lottie touched her gloved hand to mine to still my nervous motions. Oh, not so, for she pressed a tightly folded paper into the palm of my hand. My glance lifted to her face, questioning.

Lottie leaned toward me. “Read this and your choice will be decided swifter than a hummingbird takes flight.” Since I’d never seen one land, or leave from anywhere, what did I have to compare that too? Lottie and her birds. I shook my head and felt the comb slipping further.

Lottie’s attention settled upon Robert the Dark, as we’d called him for several years now. Excitement pulsed my blood. Did she mean that Robert should be my choice? I’d never be bored with him, I’d wager. Heat reached my cheeks, until I noticed how Joan had singled him out, leaning closer than appropriate, while her stare captured his attention.

“Oh, Adella, you are as white as snow.” Lottie’s glance followed mine and blood drained from her cheeks as well.

Bless her, she did mean for Robert to be mine. How fortunate to have a friend to love me so faithfully when the possible man of my dreams was distracted by such a girl. I offered my friend a smile when she glanced my way again. We both turned to followed Joan’s too graceful movements. I measured the expense of her outfit against mine. Would or did her family offer more dowry? I knew I should have worn my blue silk, but Mama would not agree and wished me to save that vision of loveliness for a more important event. Though what could be more important than my entire future? I could not express the emotions bubbling inside, for proprieties sake, though they strangled my throat wishing for release.

Sir Langley’s dinner guests were seated at last and servants poured red wine and delivered fragrant roast goose and other delectable dishes to the long table. Candlelight glowed and murmurs of friendly conversations surrounded, yet my appetite disappeared altogether. My parents were seated next to the host where they could peruse my interactions. Did their scrutiny cause my fingers to shake or was it the fall chill seeping inside the castle doors and windows or was my final choice for a husband—required by my parents this night—to blame? Across the table from me sat the last two suitors rating approval for my future matrimony—just as Mama and Papa had requested. I fumbled and dropped the folded paper Lottie had claimed would direct, no—aid my choice. I pretended not to notice as the gentleman next to me glanced down as though eager to assist me in any way that he could.

Uneven shards of flickering candlelight sparkled through the crystal goblet I gripped uncomfortably tight. Joan batted her eyes and looked with longing at Robert. Her easy calm certainly caused my confidence to flee. Desire to capture Robert’s dark attention grew inside me with strength. But, was I more beautiful and witty than my competition? I took a sip of the dry wine that I detested and watched over the lip of the glass, allowing my attention to shift from left to right. A choice needed settled by midnight.

A servant dutifully served soup, attending to my bowl, before he moved on to the next guest.
“Which one, Adella?”
Jerking in my seat, I nearly spilled the contents of the goblet over my gown. I choked to swallow my wine from the scare she’d given me. Finally, I gained control of myself. “Lottie, surprise is the most excellent contributor to an exciting evening.” Joan’s laughter floated across the table. I knew that we would never look at surprise in the same way again. I arched my eyebrow at Lottie, in the direction of her frown.

My friend recovered her expression and now showed only a pleasant disposition, though her eyes were darker blue from the storm she concealed inside.

“The note?” It was then that Lottie noticed the man next to me observing us. I nodded toward the floor, but it was too late. A child’s hand grabbed the missive from underneath the table. Robert’s brother! He fled as fast as his crawl would allow, bumping and moving over the dinner guest’s feet. Lottie sighed before turning to take her seat, leaving my unanswered questions concerning the note lodged in my heart.

I would have laughed if I were not so concerned about what the message revealed. I watched the commotion spread, as ladies and gentlemen jumped with surprise along the length of the table. Everyone looked to the floor and angry expressions flared on the most docile of the matrons. My silver comb fell into my soup and my hair slipped free and swung into my face. I gasped and leaned back.

A burst of laughter from Robert and Joan assailed me, as they leaned nearer to each other and shared the joke between them. Unfortunately, the direction of their attention disclosed that I was the object of their humorous bond. My humiliation seemed complete.

I noticed the empty chair where Nicholas had sat. He must have fled the table, ashamed of ever revealing interest in someone such as I. Even the man next to me—who’d been so intent to pay attention before—turned his back. I would have liked to have hidden below the coverings of the table cloth except people were still peeking below and kicking their feet as they waited expectantly for another possible attack from some wild unrestrained youth.

A spoon scooped my hair comb from the soup bowl and the servant wrapped it inside a napkin before handing it to me. I turned, ‘twas not a man servant at all. Mediterranean eyes smiled into mine, void of mockery and arrogance. Warmth, acceptance, and respect seemed to gaze into my eyes. Another burst of laughter across the table heated my cheeks with a fiery passion. I would have torn my attention away from Nicholas, afraid of what emotion would replace his esteem, but those blue orbs turned to ice when he sought the object of my discontent. Laughter stopped and an awkward silence prevailed.

Robert’s little brother slipped free from beneath the table and Papa snatched the cuff of his collar. The poor boy tripped and spun around to face his captor with fist held high.

Papa snatched the missive from the boy’s hand. None too gently though he bore the Langley name.

“Sir, that is mine.” Nicholas reached for the object of everyone’s curiosity.

The only sounds now were a soft cough and some impertinent chewing from the man seated beside me. Papa hesitated, peered at Nicholas for too many moments. Finally, he handed the paper over.

Nicholas gave me a look I could not decipher. He unwound the missive, slowly. Too slowly. Another layer opened. I wanted to snatch the note and read the mystery inside. Something in Nicholas’s expression caused me to pretend more patience than I felt. All eyes continued to watch Nicholas’s handsome face and his hands, wishing to ferret out any clue to solve the mystery of the moment.

Before I knew what was happening he bowed his golden head and bent his knee. Only one more fold needed released. He singled me out to observe the hidden message. My heart thudded. Would he hear the heavy beating? He handed me the missive with the quietest strength I’d ever witnessed. Expectation woven into his gaze.

I took his offering with careful fingers and tilted the angle of the paper so that the man beside me would not see the precious script. Intent on respecting this man whom seemed clothed in honor, I carefully opened the page.

I treasure you now, will treasure you always, if you but accept my hand in marriage. The warmth of my love for you is like a fire that will never go out. Sincerely yours, Nicholas

I gasped. When I’d considered my first choice for a husband, Robert’s appeal drew stronger. He seemed lofty and unattainable. I’d thought that he’d be a prize to win. But not so any more. As I glanced at the dark and handsome Robert, I realized how very crooked his nose was after all. How his nostrils flared in an ugly fashion when his mocking laughter split the air. How had I never noticed before? My heart finally settled on this important choice though both comfort and excited nervousness battled within. I lifted my gaze into the Mediterranean warmth that I’d truly sought all my life. I took his hand in mine and smiled my wholehearted agreement. Like a match striking a flame, my very being warmed to the future I felt ready to begin.
April 16th:
I notice so little.
The world is a stifling place, choked with ambition, the souls of human beings forever running, hamsters on their wheels, demanding their rationed wages for the hourly toil.
I never tire of running. But I do begin to tire of rations.
What is the world if not a place where we can learn to share?

May 11th:
It’s not likely I’ll ever know how much thinking I do in a day. Neurons are constant – their purpose as clear to them as mine is muddled to me. They have a purpose, and they deliver.
Somehow, I’m jealous of neurons. Does that make me jealous of me?
The sea whispers to me. I can hear it hundreds of miles away. The life is new there.
Old, nearby, lurks in the shadows, waiting to spring back out, like a predator stalking its prey.
But, even the prey knows better than to walk backwards into the grip of what’s behind.
That’s why we only see them bounding forward.

June 10th:
I dropped my pen in the ocean today. The waves pushed it back into my waiting hand, living fingers of water rushing and swirling around the plastic and around me.
More and more, I see the things around me.

June 28th:
There are two sides of me: the side that cares, and the side that’s human.
Humanity begins to look like less.

July 2nd:
When I walk past the sea, I can hear voices whispering to me from within the waves. I listen to them. They seem to possess a knowledge of the past that I do not.
I wonder when the waves started to speak. There’s something truly profound in what they say, but thankfully we haven’t translated it yet.
The mystery remains.
July 5th:
Here is not there. If I look for it, will I find it? What is it? Who shows me the way? Who lays the path before my feet?
Sometimes, I see birds in summertime and I fancy I could be one, too. To spend one's whole life singing, invisible until a flash of bright-colored feathers, would be my lot.
I cannot hear the sea any longer. Its message remains engraved deep within me, my heart stamped with a signature all its own.
Those birds don't fly at night. Unless they're migrating.

July 10th:
I see a white cloud over my head; closer, closer than I've ever seen. If I reach out to touch it, it's too high up. But it never looks that way.
Did I leave the sea, or did the sea leave me?

July 14th:
Here is not there.
The more you say it, the more truth you find.
Within yourself?
Doubtful.

July 19th:
Crickets in the night sing the best lullabies. To those who hear, they lead you home, they tell you the secret to (unintelligible smear of dirt obstructs most of the page).

July (unreadable):
My place is not here. Here is not there.
I have rejected their ways but they haunt me still. The sea is no comfort now. I cannot hear the call, and so I must walk, blindfolded, yearning for water, led by a whisper from deep within the sea, something that pours from the eons-old cracks in the sea floor, cracks in the Earth going down who knows how far.
I beg for water. On a blue day.
A blue week.
A blue atmosphere.
The birds who sing in the nighttime aren't heard. Beaches bear no mark once the tide comes in.

Except for the wandering footprints embedded on my heart, seared onto the insides of my eyelids. Impossible to ignore. Excruciating to forget.
Begging for water.
The sand shifts between my toes.
I have my very own rainbow: a naptime zuihitsu
Emilie Lindemann

A branch brushes against the window,
& I imagine a future where we remember the scent of lilacs,
the way the maple tree’s leaves moved all together--
one green umbrella
through the window from my perch on the sofa during baby’s naptime.

In the refrigerator, slices of watermelon hang on, rindless.
Our future selves remembering the sugar maple in the front yard.

The body is so different// from when you are thirty, she says: roots, trunk, branches.
My husband says it will take forty gallons of sap to make one gallon of syrup.

Some installations come with birdsong.
Rabbits and squirrels
scurrying in a 50-foot radius.

I have my very own roots, my very own canopy, my own trunk of a torso,
and I take it everywhere I go.

On the radio, men from a coal mining town have no opinion.
No opinion, though they have noticed warmer summers, warmer winters.
Will the sap {we’ve never collected} come earlier each year?

I only have a vague outline idea of trees,
like geometric patterns in my adult coloring book inspired pink notebook.
//I have my very own rainbow.

Where do monarch butterflies sleep
and why?// My {imaginary} four-poster bed is sinking,
its mattress mildewed and malleable.

At night, we read books about inter-species communication and the physics of rainbows.
Your toddler hand gets tangled {momentarily} in the colorful threads.

When we see a butterfly up close, you call to it
and thousands of gently fading lilacs answer:
Slight nods and blinks. Panicles moving in mauve unison.

A lilac yoga mat unfurled on the humid carpeting when it’s naptime again.
I have my very own rainbow, and I take it everywhere I go.
The Video Game Girl
Deandre Hale

She had skin like a goddess
Beauty like a flower
And a temper like a mother after a long work day
She was amazing
But let’s face it
She was only another face
Place in to your delicate
Catalogue
Judging her only by her beauty
She had the personality of a queen
And yet you made her feel Inadequate
Saddest part of it all
is you slow ate away at her love for the world
killing all her thoughts screaming finish her
This was not another game
That had a develop plot line
She was not a character for you to miss you

She was the controller
And you mashed on her buttons till she was to damage to work
And I remember the days she used to smile
Now on the inside she is a
Cataclysmic apocalyptic battleground
She became a rose with to many thorns to grab
But I still reach even though I know I’ll bleed because
She’s worth it
Her heart became an iron wall
Not able to grow a single wall flower
She become barren unable to produce
You destroy he
It was all because of a pair of diamond earrings: it halted in the middle and ended before The End.


“Here you are my sweet!” Exclaimed The Man, pushing a dozen red roses into her palms. The remainder of a thorn poked gently.

A smile brightened the weary blue eyes, worn down by the difficult year.

The Man grinned a toothy grin, his tousled brown hair covering the worry lines on his young forehead. The etchings of hard times slowly melted away in relief, hidden beneath the mop of hair.

His idea has worked. His green eyes shone as he threw his strong arms about the slender lady. She felt so delicate, but he knew she was strong. His love, his life. His wife. There was no money for her favorite perfume, but he loved the smell of soap that clung to her after she’d scrubbed away the days’ worries.

As they slowly parted, he gently but firmly nudged the delicate box into her free hand. The black velvet felt soft on her roughened hands. She glanced up at him, questions bouncing in her lovely eyes. He nodded eagerly, barely suppressing his delight as he watched in anticipation.

With hands that shook she gently laid aside the scarlet blossoms, much too fine for such a drab room. The bright color shocked the poor house into silence, the vivid hue almost a sin.

Long thin fingers, described as elegant by The Man, tore at crumpled tissue paper in apprehension. A gasp was uttered upon the box’s opening, the sound echoing throughout the stunned building. The fine tissue paper floated to the floor, forgotten.
The Man watched as the heart shaped face paled, giving stark contrast to the brunette hair. The blue eyes lost their lustrous sparkle, returning once more to strain. The lips became a thin white line as she uttered, “James, I cannot.”

February 15th, 1924.

It was too early for respectable people to be up and about, yet a young man with tousled brown hair and hazel-green eyes could be seen shouldering into the harsh wind, hunched against the cold. His shoulders carried more than the worn brown coat however, and he hunched against more than the chill. Passersby could have noted worry lines on a face much too young for such marks.

Suddenly, the shoulders straightened, filling out the coat once more. The gait became more steady, and a bright toothy grin showered its brilliance into the dull morning.

A slim figure watched The Man’s alteration with shadowed eyes knowing she was the cause for his burdens. The grim-darkened windows fitted her mood as she thought of her husband’s tedious day working the mines to earn money. She knew he was lucky to have work. It was such a waste!

The Woman at the window abruptly turned away, wrenching her stare from The Man to gaze upon too-bright flowers. With a sob, she suddenly crumpled to the floor in a heap, staring in distress at the small box which lay opened, taunting the dim lighting with its sparkle.

The Woman knew she would never wear those diamond earrings.

February 14th, 1925

It was a sunny morning; the end was here much too soon. The clear skies laughed at the earth, and the dirty gravel crunched as people approached in sorrow.

A line of folk dressed in morbid black gathered outside the solemn church doors, waiting for The Woman.

Seats were eventually taken, voices murmured regrets, glances were directed at The Man who lay in a cheaply crafted coffin at the front of the church. It was such a shame that such a young man was taken, someone said. Another agreed that mining was simply too dangerous and in these times it was expected. Sad, but expected. And there was nothing else to say, for this was life and this was death.

The Woman entered at last, shocking the church and its inhabitants into stark silence. She wore a gown the shade of red roses, much too bright for such dark surroundings; astounding at a funeral. A gentle perfume wafted as she moved, hints of clean soap mingled with lilacs. As she sat, a single tear fell, shining and glinting like the diamond earrings which hung from her lobes. She whispered, “Happy Valentine’s, James” and could almost see the boyish face smiling back at her as she gladly accepted his wonderful gift. And that gift, dear reader, was more than earrings. It was the gift of true love. For while it halted in the middle, the end was not The End.
Contributor’s Notes

Alexandra Brendemuehl is a Silver Lake College alumna with a Bachelor of Arts degree in English and history. She is the program coordinator at the Manitowoc County Historical Society, which allows her to share her love for history. Alex loves photography and traveling with her husband, Jon.

Sarah Grosskopf graduated from Silver Lake in 2017 with a double major in English and History. In her spare time, she enjoys reading, writing, and playing the piano.

Emma Knickelbine, a student at Silver Lake College, hails from Denmark, Wisconsin. She is double majoring in English and history, and she enjoys reading, writing, biking, and wilderness camping. She likes many types of writing, but fantasy has always been her personal favorite.

Erin LaBonte is an associate professor of art at Silver Lake College. She is an advocate for education and public arts. In her free time she works in her studio and enjoys traveling.

Susan Marlene is published in Splickety Love magazine and www.christiandevotions.us and also writes fiction and nonfiction. She is a member and co-founder of Pens of Praise Christian Writers and a member of American Christian Fiction Writers. She is a wife, mother, and grandmother whom you may visit at www.susanmarlene.com and https://facebook.com/author.susan.marlene.

Daviantae McFarling is a twenty-year-old sophomore from Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Art is his major, however this is his first year in digital photography and first time ever learning how to take quality photos. He intends to take what he learns throughout the semester and actually purchase a camera and continue to do photography, doing some freelance work and pursuing a hobby that he will enjoy.

Catherine Minter is a junior at Silver Lake College, majoring in psychology graduating spring of 2019. Art has always been a passion for her and poetry is an outlet. She always looks forward to sharing her works with the community.

Dr. Connie Woythal is a member of Silver Lake College’s adjunct faculty for the Psychology Department. Along with teaching and writing poetry, she enjoys singing and other creative endeavors. Dr. Connie resides in Plymouth with her husband.