

Inspired Minds

LITERARY
MAGAZINE

"UNWRITTEN"

A TALON STUDENT MEDIA PUBLICATION

VOL. X

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Inspired Minds

LITERARY
MAGAZINE

A TALON STUDENT MEDIA PUBLICATION

"UNWRITTEN"

VOLUME TEN
NOVEMBER 2024

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Editor's Note

I was given an amazing opportunity to be the magazine editor for the Talon. When asked for a topic, I thought about the moments in my life that shaped me. We all go through moments and experiences in life that shape who we are. It could be something small like a simple conversation with someone or something big, like failing your first two semesters in college like I did. Those experiences made me who I am today, and that's what I wanted this theme to be about.

So I chose the prompt, "Unwritten" because it's all about those moments that shape us, the possibilities we don't always see, and the decisions that lead us down different paths. We all plan for big things to happen for us in life that we are so certain of, however the only thing certain is uncertainty. That's the beauty of life, it's full of surprises.

The students who submitted their work took this idea and ran with it. They shared their stories, thoughts, and creativity through poetry, prose, art, and photography. Some pieces are from personal experiences, while others are "what if" moments. After a lot of careful reviewing, our submission committee picked the pieces that best captured the theme. I hope you enjoy reading and seeing these moments that shaped us, and maybe even think about your own unwritten stories.

Stay inspired.

- Dylan Shacklett

Disclaimer: Inspired Minds accepts submissions from a wide array of faculty, staff, alumni, and students. The views and opinions expressed in this publication are those of the individual authors and do not necessarily reflect the views or positions of Inspired Minds, Talon Student Media, the Creative Writing Club, or any person affiliated with these organizations.

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And To All The Students And Staff

Who Made This Magazine Possible



AMPERSAND

Calista Segura

Sometimes it's the
Words left unsaid,
The hesitant first breath
Letting the whisper
"And one."
Slip off of the tongue
To answer the question
Which begs
"Are you done yet?"
With
"No, I've only just begun."
The battle is far from over,
I can't count how many
Times I've turned to take up arms
Against the
Broken concrete before me
Only to trip and
Scrape my knees into a bleed.
Over the years, I tried to fight fire
with fire
Until I finally realized that with
Each scuff, instead of a sword,
I could use my sleeve's cuff
To wipe the tears from my eyes
And let myself feel the waves
Wash over me as I waited

For the night to give way
In a gentle fade of
Dark to light; for eventually
It always seems to settle back into the
shimmer
Of dawn when the sun rises upon the
water.
But even still I have yet to conquer
sinking
Face first into the hardened pavement,
Thus, the hope remains
That one day I'll fully favor
Floating along with the chaotic soft
Found in the sea.
If you look hard enough,
Nature speaks to the idea that
There can be progress,
Even in silence,
When there is a war
Within your mind.
Sometimes it's the little things
That yield small victories,
Like learning from a butterfly
That you can still succeed
While healing from past scars
And tattered wings.

MOMENTS IN TIME THAT DEFINE WHO WE ARE: RESILIENCE

Abigail Smith

I have never doubted the definition of Resilience; the ability to withstand and recover from difficulties has been the climax of my family's biography before I was born.

I would be rich if I counted how often people have told me, "I think differently than those around me."

The question is, when did that statement become my reality? What moment in time defined the shift in perspective?

My father's kidneys began to fail the second he took his first breath, and in his words, ever since, he has been surviving on "borrowed time."

From a young age, I understood that the yellow pill bottles on the counter were a reflection of his daily battle; however, my brain fought with the reality of his circumstances for as long as it could.

To me, he was the epitome of strength.

One random day in high school, I sat at an old desk and watched as my teacher exhaled a shaky breath she took seconds after answering the phone. I felt the atoms shift under my feet and swallow me whole; before she could utter a word, my body knew the call was about my father.

If I were to close my eyes today, I could feel the piercing cold air on my skin, smell the sterilization, and see the empty hospital lobby I found myself in after that phone call.

My hand clutched my phone as my friends gossiped about their minuscule high school days, and in the blink of an eye, it all shifted for me.

As my friends talked about their crushes and gossiped about the girl in their fifth period, "they just couldn't stand." I sat in a hospital lobby waiting for the verdict on my father's life.

It was clear that I could no longer relate.

My father survived that day but would spend years in and out of the hospital before receiving a transplant seven years later.

OUT OF PLACE
Emily Everitt



However, being a teenager never felt right again.

Sharing the latest gossip suddenly didn't taste right on my tongue; talking about a crush felt pointless, and settling into simple was never as relaxing as it was before I experienced the brisk air of that hospital lobby.

Defining moments are often not followed by fairy dust and shooting stars. Instead, they are the moments that feel like shedding a layer of skin as you understand the bigger picture.

I used to be okay with simple, but it is impossible to live the "Once upon a time" fairytale you used to believe when you get a taste of reality.

Resilience is power, but it is also hardships.

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WRANGLER

Gavin Rider

The hardtop was off. An almost unbearable summer heat was just barely beat by the wind cutting through my white 04 wrangler. I had dreamed of owning a jeep since I was a toddler riding shotgun in my dad's black 94. I flew down 80 going 70, (just about all I could squeeze out of a 6 cylinder doing its dang best to pull 35 inch tires), as I looked over to the passenger seat and chuckled to myself.

"What?" she smiled and asked, and the sky seemed more blue the second she spoke.

She always asks that, and I always respond "it's nothing," and breathe out peacefully.

But it wasn't nothing. Next to me sat the most beautiful girl to ever breathe, the freckles across her nose reminding me exactly of the way the pines cover the hills that encompass Mineola. The blue and green mixture of her eyes are the same color of Lake Cypress where I would fish with my Great Grandpa. Her hair was long and flowed like the Paluxy in Stephenville where I spent my first year in college.

I always chuckle because after 21 years, it seems every place I had ever been, leads back to her.

DO NOT PUT FLOWERS ON MY GRAVE

Victoria Bradley

Do not put flowers on my grave,
My mother used to say.
I will not see them,
Will not smell,
Will have no friends to show and tell.
Let me touch their petals now,

Let me hear you tell me how
Much you love me,
How much you care.
Do not put flowers—
I am not there.

ANOTHER DAY

Joseph Hamm

Your hair is like a sweet summer breeze
Flowing gently in the wind.
Your eyes likewise are bright and radiant
Like the sun.

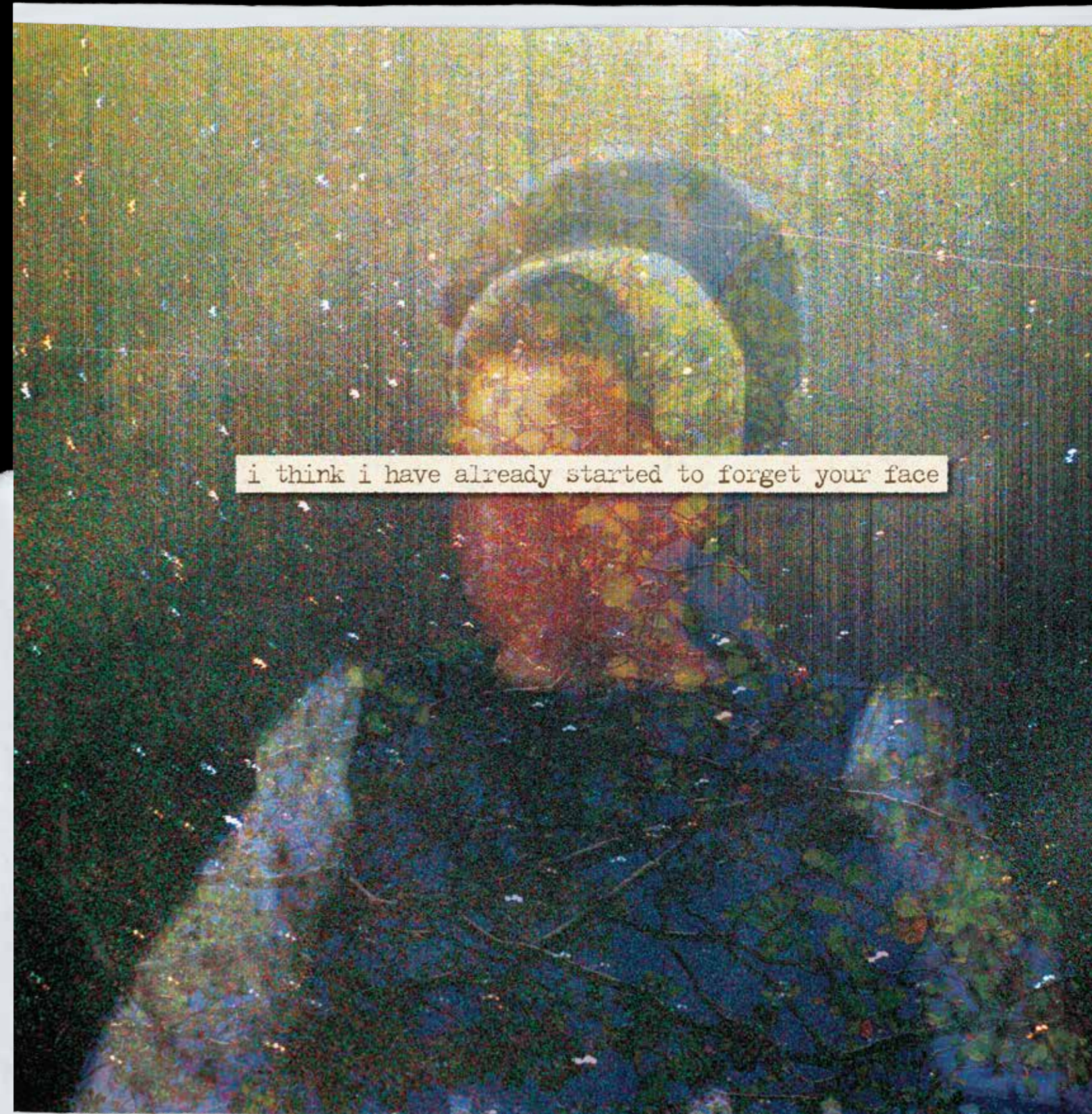
No wait.
That doesn't sound right.
Your eyes are emerald green,
Not unlike a comforting brook or stream.
And your hair, your hair is...

No, no, no.
This is awful.
A collage of foolish phrases.
Utter gibberish.

It is best,
I believe,
To wait till another day
To say how much I love you.

IMPERMANENT

Karleigh Yancy



ECHOES OF WHAT I DIDN'T SAY

Nicholas Henriksen

I sat on the edge of my bed, staring at the floor. The room was quiet, but my mind was anything but.

You shouldn't have said that.

I rubbed my temples. "It wasn't that bad. I had to tell her how I felt."

Yeah, but not like that. You know how she is. You know what she needed.

I sighed and ran my hand through my hair. "She wasn't listening. I had to make her understand."

And how'd that work out?

I leaned back against the wall, staring at the ceiling. My chest felt tight, like there was this weight pressing down on me. Her face flashed in my mind, the words I'd said to her echoing back—sharp and jagged.

"You twist things," I muttered. "It's not all on me."

Maybe not all on you, but enough. You could've been kinder, more patient. You know she's been going through a lot.

"Yeah, well, I've been going through stuff too!" I snapped, like I was actually talking to someone in the room. "She wasn't the only one hurting."

So that's why you lashed out? Because you were hurting? That makes it okay?

I closed my eyes. The guilt crept over me like a shadow. I had loved her. Hell, maybe I still did. But everything between us had felt wrong lately, tangled up in misunderstandings and words that never seemed to come out right. And every time I tried to fix things, I just made it worse.

She wasn't asking for much. Just a little reassurance.

"And I gave it to her!" My voice rose, even though no one was here to hear it but me. "But she kept pushing, doubting everything I said, like nothing was enough."

Maybe it wasn't enough. Maybe you weren't enough.

That one stung, and I sat there, quiet. The lump in my throat was hard to swallow.

"I tried. I did everything I could."

But you gave up in the end, didn't you?

"I didn't give up. She left."

Because you pushed her away.

That hit me like a punch to the gut. I wanted to fight it, argue back, but deep down, I knew it was true. I had been defensive, angry. Instead of listening to her, I shut her out, too scared to admit I might be wrong, too scared of feeling weak.

"You think it's easy," I muttered. "To always say the right thing, to be the perfect boyfriend."

No one asked you to be perfect. You just needed to be better.

I stood up and started pacing, like moving might clear the mess in my head. I couldn't stop replaying that last conversation—the way her voice cracked when she said, "I can't do this anymore." I had wanted to pull her close, tell her I didn't want to lose her—but I couldn't. My pride kept me still.

You didn't even say you were sorry.

"Why should I have been the one to apologize?" I gripped the back of the chair, as if holding it could keep me grounded. "She was wrong too."

Maybe. But does it matter now?

I stood there, breathing heavily. No, it didn't matter who was right. What mattered was that she was gone, and now all I had was this hollow ache and the endless loop of my own thoughts.

You miss her, don't you?

I slumped back down onto the bed, my head in my hands. "Yeah," I whispered.

"I do."

Then why didn't you just tell her that?

"I don't know," I muttered, my voice breaking. "I don't know."

HEART OF SPIRIT HEART OF FLESH

Zane Douglas Beshirs

It is by the shadows that some lights are seen. The moon is one such light. She is so rightly portrayed as a woman, for the light shone on the moon is that which guides men through the blind nocturne of their cold and lonely path strewn with sodden mud and leaves.

Through the endless night, the man shuddered against her cold body. They were together now in their nocturnal embrace, each seeking a warmth that was not found. The spirit of the man and his wife could not come together in spirit nor in truth. All they could do was shudder at the intangible distance between them, though they lay so close together. The chill of the night's breeze was dampened by the blankets she had brought and by now the campfire was a warm skeleton of blackened logs resting on newborn coals. He was like the glowing coals, before just a dry and rotting memory of a long gone familial tree, now out of death the coals came smoldering, to new life. He felt her next to him. She had a presence that praised him with comfort, but they could not touch. In honesty, how would they come back together again as they used to, her skin kissed with the blush of daisies and her impatient lips accepting the embrace of his. Her hair like brown amber twined and spun with sunshine. He remembered, he saw, he kissed, he loved, he longed. The dress she wore when he first saw her billowed in the gentle wind on the rocky plain of her home. She sat and sang by the bubbling creek. The voice of the creek sang a sweet harmony to her musings about the creek, her home, her kin; her heart. Still beating. He called to her in her language:

Dear songbird please do stay
Listen to my heart my love
Do not startle away
Like the doe and the dove

I am no hunter
Please do not stray

For you have captured my heart
And broken my will
Like the dawn breaks the day



VOIDZ
Hanna Barron



EMPTY RECIPE CARDS

Katherine Robinson

A little bit of cinnamon
A dash of allspice
A can of pumpkin
You must mix it just right

The recipe cards are empty
The knowledge is all in her head
The only way to learn Grandmother's wisdom
Is by listening and cooking with her instead

HAPPY BIRTHDAY

Joseph Hamm

Perhaps I somehow missed your heartfelt toast
Among the swarm of others' festive praise.
For surely from the one I love the most
A thought was spared of me today of days.

Or maybe you've the mind "save best for last"
And I must simply bide my time and wait
Yes that of course must be what here has passed!
My clock it reads 11:58

It could be reasoned you simply forgot.
A momentary lapse; While that is bad,
Still better that scenario and not
One where I mean nothing and never had

No matter the cause, I now know the truth
You didn't wish me a happy birthday.

BOHEMIA IN THE MET

Nixon Gorka

At seventeen years old, I had never been to an art museum and had certainly never experienced overwhelming emotion at the hand of a piece of art. In all honesty, I didn't think such a reaction was real.

Yet as I stood in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, completely still in front of a painting that seemed to swallow me whole, I was proven wrong. More than 18 feet long, *Böhmen Liegt am Meer* by Anselm Kiefer afforded me that overwhelming feeling and proved it wasn't the work of Hollywood but simply the product of a good piece.

I had dragged my feet walking into the modern exhibit. It was by a friend's request, and I was simply going along. Modern art had never been my specialty, and the sun-soaked gallery seemed to be the one thing between me and lunch. As a student of history, it comes as no surprise that the earlier works were what I came to see, but I will admit I was acting like a child- my arms crossed and foot tapping. That was, of course, until we turned a corner and found ourselves before a road, huge and desolate and lined in poppies. My friend remarked about the Hopper painting on the opposite wall and left my side, leaving me alone before the road.

The poppies were painted in abstraction, dripping from the canvas like blood. It only made sense to me. Poppies for the fallen, painted in the color of their blood. It wasn't grotesque, though. There rather was a distinct and hopeless longingness to it, a reverent remembrance, and it was an emotion that overtook me. I looked to see its name; I thought it would be a disservice to not know it.

Bohemia Lies by the Sea.

The translation stood before a blurb about the painting. It described its representation of longing for a utopia that will never be found, like how Bohemia (landlocked and once devastated by the Nazis) will never lie by the sea. The explanation of the painting, its evident emotion, struck me directly in the heart, and I stood there like an emperor at the sharp end of a friend's blade.

As I said, I am a student of history, and I am too familiar with the story of Bohemia's land. I knew Bohemia, the struggles it has faced, but seeing it in front of me in the form of a never-ending and poppy-lined road made it all too real to me. In the seconds I stood before this painting, it seemed I had learned more about Bohemia and its history than ever before. I had taken history classes, I knew the logistics of everything from the Hapsburgs to the Soviets, but in that gallery, I found myself in a field, the wind stirring the poppies, staring out at a road surrounded by desolation. Upon my shoulders, I held the heaviness of Bohemia's history as I walked toward an end I would never find. And in my heart, I felt that hopeless longingness that was the product of a devastating generational history. I may have known the logistics of everything, but history is not just facts and numbers. And many, like me, are quick to forget that. History is also built of unwritten memories, of things passed down from one to another, and sometimes it takes a piece of work like Kiefer's to remember that. One that masters the art of storytelling, that bridges history and art, past and present- all intertwined to educate and impact us for an eternity.

IT'S HAPPENING

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Seven

He was the first man to ever hold me.
He left this world when I was seven,
but I see him every day when I look in
the mirror
at the green eyes, he gave me.

Ten

I got off the roller coaster breathless
with wobbly legs.
He rode it with me because I was
scared.
I absentmindedly grabbed his hand as
we walked towards my family.
I know he's not my dad, but maybe he
can fill in until I see mine again.

Fifteen

I walked him to his car which was
parked in my driveway.
He grabbed my face with both hands
squeezing my cheeks together like a
fish and kissed me.
I laughed in his face.
I thought it was the most romantic
moment ever.
We never kissed again.

Eighteen and Nineteen

It was wild and toxic
and I loved it.
He could've shot me and I would have
been the one to hand him the gun.

He left faster than he came
leaving behind scars that I didn't
know were there
until the only place I saw him was
in my dreams.
Or maybe my nightmares.
I'm still working on getting rid of the
scars.

Twenty

He crashed into me like a wave when
your back is turned and you least
expect it, and the ocean sucks you
under its magnificent blanket of water,
swirling you around the bottom floor;
you have no control over your limbs,
and for a moment,
you wonder if you'll ever return to
the surface,
and in another moment,
you wonder if you even want to.

One Day...

I hope it's pure and calm.
I hope it's slow and steady and sweet
I hope it's not a wave that sucks you
under its strength,
but one that greets the shore, while
you're
standing on the beach under the
moonlight.
A gentle wave that barely covers your
feet as they sink in the sand
with each passing kiss of the water.
Again and again and again.

LA LUNA Calista Segura

When I look at the Moon
I see the eyes of my
Mother and brothers.
No matter how far apart
We may be,
We are still connected
By that space rock
Surrounded by the planets flecked
Between it and the white
Speckled stars which
Are scattered across the sky.
When I find the Dippers
I hear the twins' jests
Teasing me because
I could never quite find them
When they were dimmed
By the city lights.
"I can see them now."
I whisper under my breath
Every time I walk
About after sunset
And they shine above
The pine trees
Ever so clearly
Out here in the country.
Whenever the planets align
With the Moon in sync,
I feel my mother's arms
Around me as she tries to see
Which one I am pointing to
By leaning in
To get a glimpse
From my point of view.

I picture her smile
As I turn to see her finally
Finding Jupiter, Venus,
Or Mars shining amongst
The stars.
Whenever the Moon glows
Bright orange or pink,
I remember the moment
When the sparkle gleaming
In their eyes became the Moon
To me.
Hung high in the blue,
The Moon was glowing a
strawberry hue
As I called
My family outside
To gaze at its beauty
On a warm summer's night.
Atop our neighbor's pickup truck,
We tried to peer
Through his old telescope
But it didn't work quite right,
So we had to settle for
Admiring simply with our sight.
To my family,
Whenever I miss you,
I look at the Moon
And
Whenever you miss me,
If you look there too,
You'll always find me
Looking back at you.

148,299 MILES

Gavin Rider

148,299 miles but the odometer stopped in 2012.

I fire up the tan Ford I grew up in, crayon marks in the backdoor paneling from me and my brothers. My mind fills with memories. My dad used to drive us from Mount Pleasant to Winnsboro, halfway to Mineola to meet my grandma to spend the night. With the engine roaring, and 96.9 blaring, we were treated with the best A/C in a car we ever felt. We would stop at the dairy queen, adorned with a black painting of an outdated representation of a "Winnsboro Raider" on the side of the building. We would hop out of that tan ford, our nostrils filling with the scent of tall East Texas pine, as my grandma came to take us the rest of the way to her home in Mineola.

I'm grown now, my dad long since gave the tan truck to me.. The suspension aches from almost 24 years of dedicated service. When I get home, there's no brothers to greet me, only a dog looking for love and a cold beer.

But when I look out the window, it's still the same old Ford, rugged and strong, the crayon marks are still there. I don't get 96.9 where I live but 101.4 suits me just fine. The A/C doesn't blow but the windows crank down and let the pine filled air in.

And when I look in the rear view mirror, it's still the same kid, just many years down the line. It was a long hard journey to get to where I sit, but it was a rewarding one.

When I drive past that Winnsboro Dairy Queen, I smile.

The memory persists.

LONG WAY FROM HOME
Faris Ebrahim

THE THIRD GROOMSMAN FROM THE GROOM, WHO MISSED THE SLOW DANCES CHAIN SMOKING

Hannah Sunshine Johnson

Tonight, with his face inches from mine, shouting words indiscernible over the music and the jumping and shuffling of feet all around the bride and groom, I think, I could love him. Then I hear the thought after it's been had, and momentarily I distract myself from what he is saying...

"...I wanted to go on a baseball scholarship, but I got hurt. Basketball isn't bad, but..."

...to chastise myself.

No good can come of that, I tell myself.

In a few days, when he still has not used the number he made me put in his phone, I will look up his name and see his stats.

No good can come of that, I will tell myself as I scroll.

I will see that he is over six feet tall, and notice that the facial hair I memorized under a strobe light is new, and looking at his body in a jersey, I will remember him asking,

"Do you lean more towards anxious or depressed?"

Something in me will soften. When I check my empty messages, it will harden again.

"Do you like coffee?"

"I do, do you?"

"No, but I'd drink some with you. No, I mean it."

And then for the first time, I will admit that his nose was a bit odd, and that the nicotine on his fingers was actually not so compromisable as I told myself.

But tonight, his face is still inches from mine as he leans over, arms crossed, to hear my answers to his questions over the sounds of mutual friends and college roommates and other people's family members. From here, he is perfect. From here, I can't even see the yellow stains on his fingernails or where a baseball cracked his nose in the third grade, because I can't see anything beyond the way his eyes do not leave mine, and how they stay just inches from mine when he talks and when I talk. After we toast the bride and groom, and I imagine other versions of ourselves wearing their clothes, I distract myself from his hand on my lower back, a move so predictable and rehearsed it feels like neither of those things, guiding me to a table where we will talk until the send-off, and the words he speaks...

"...If it's your favorite, I bet you can recite some of it... No, I want to hear it... Fine, then. When we get coffee."

...to chastise myself.

No good can come of that.

And it doesn't. Nothing comes of it at all.

THE WATER BIRD ON LAND
Macy Maxwell



CHEVY SQUARE BODY

Victoria Bradley

He fiddles with something in his sandpapery hands. The Chevy rattles down the county road. It is covered in ice. It is filled with potholes. Usually, he's messing with an oily cigarette. Just like dad used to. Today he snaps his pocketknife open and closed. Just like dad used to. Click. Click. Click.

Yesterday he was doing the same when I saw that hound crossing the blind street. Austin did not slow down. I reached out and yanked the wheel. The screeching tires almost drowned out my holler. Austin cursed under his breath and slapped my white knuckles off the wheel.

Today I press my face to the frosty window because it cools the bruise and takes a bit of the sticky swelling from my cheek away. I see that dog again. He is plastered on the snow. I reckon the snow would be wet and uncomfortable but since the dog is dead it is a soft goose-down blanket.

THE DAYDREAM WALL

Maria Genusa

I passed the days with flowers to smell,
But I never planted a garden well.

I passed the days with words in my mind,
But I never wrote—a pen I could not find.

I passed the days with music in my ears,
But I never danced in all the years.

I passed the days with love in my heart,
But it was only a dream with no start.

I passed the days with dreams in my eyes,
But I had nothing over which to cry.

I passed my life with this daydream wall,
Because I never got up to live at all.

WHAT COULD HAVE BEEN

Kaitlyn Thomas

In a world where love was unknown,
Suddenly, your wings appeared,
Glimpses of devotion never shown,
Comforting me through all I feared.

An incomparable, caring soul,
Gently calming my anxious mind,
Silently longing for you in that role,
Wishing you had been my guide.

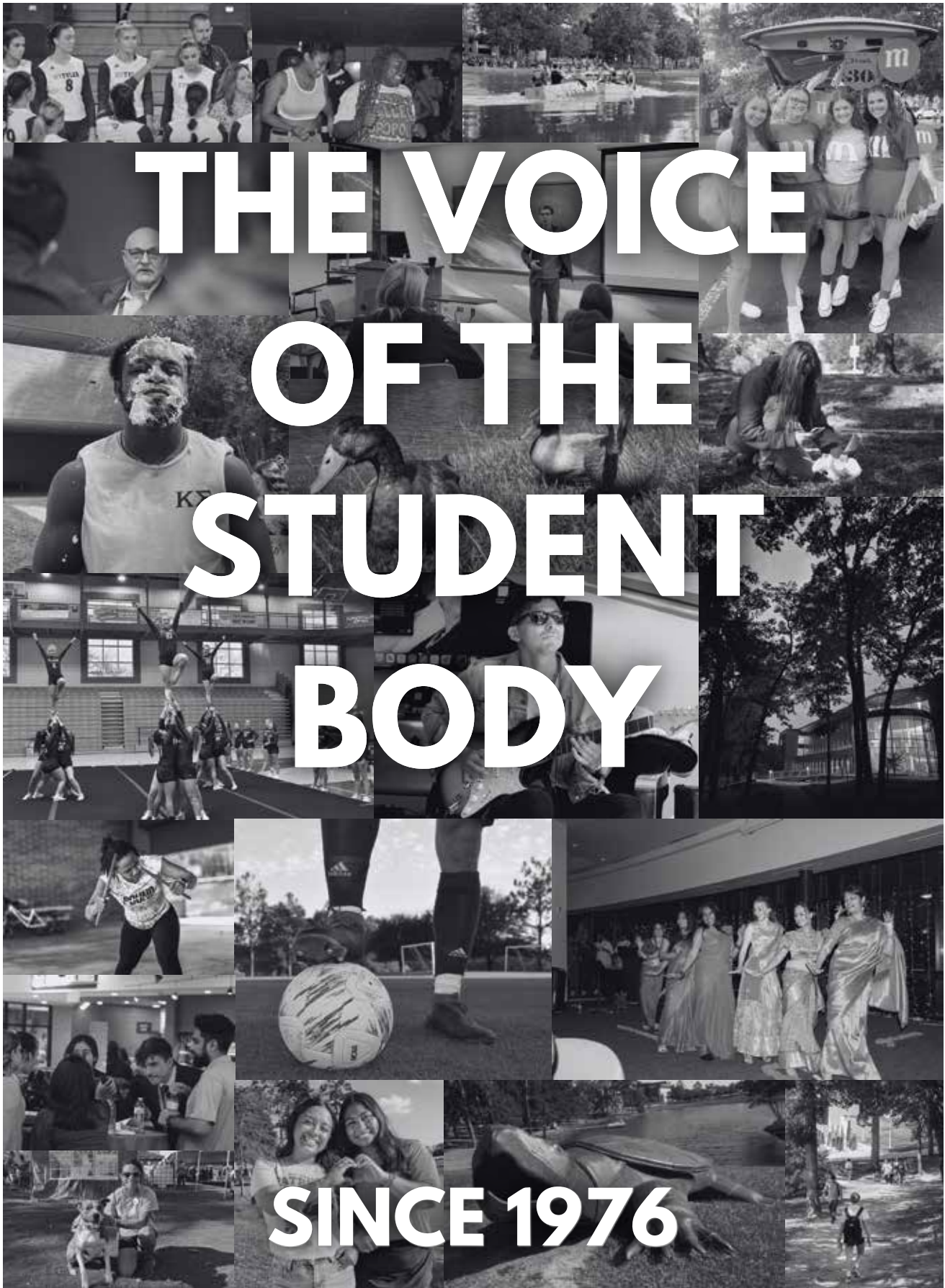
Each moment shared feels bittersweet,
Mirroring what could have been,
The story I long for, torn at the seams,
Pages of dreams that never begin.

If only fate had been kinder,
You could have been mine.
Daily, I feel the soft, sad reminder,
The flaw woven in my tapestry's design.

While I do not have you as I wish,
I am eternally grateful you are here by my side.

Though the unwritten moments, I will
always miss
Deep in my heart, they will never subside.

ONE LAST TIME
Emily Everitt



SINCE 1976