



THE WINDMILL

FALL 2023

VOLUME VIII

THE BROOKHAVEN CAMPUS LITERARY ART MAGAZINE

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Fall 2023

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The Windmill is a national award-winning literary magazine showcasing the work of talented and creative individuals from Dallas College Brookhaven Campus. What you hold in your hands is the culmination of countless hours of hard work by students enrolled in journalism, visual communications, art, illustration, and photography courses. Our theme for the eighth edition is *Weird tales of Texas*.

The Windmill staff gathered to read and rate each submission before we decided on the stories and art you will soon explore on the following pages. Each page was thoughtfully laid out, read, re-read and edited for accuracy. We have worked tirelessly to bring these stories to life and make them accessible to your eyes and hands. As you immerse yourself through the surreal and psychological experience of our magazine,

we hope you spread the word and copies of our magazine to your friends or foes! The eighth edition of *The Windmill* was printed by Midway Press in Dallas, Texas, with a press run of 1,500 copies. *The Windmill* was designed and created using Adobe InDesign, Photoshop and Illustrator. *The Windmill* consists of 24 pages printed in color using cyan, magenta, yellow and black ink. *The Windmill* is printed on 50lb offset paper.

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THE ARSONIST

Written by Tabitha N. Tudor

Photo Illustration by Maria Elena Franco & Tabitha N. Tudor

Those Coca-Cola eyes and bubblegum hair
got stuck in my mind and stained my heart.
How do I rid the remnants of a boy
who carved his initials into my skin?
Screaming you're mine and I'm yours
before I could even change my mind.
Before I could decide if this was even love.

It was a game of heart and soul,
a chase of cat and mouse,
but I was never told the rules.
I didn't even know it began.

Did you get bored with me or did I figure you out and
finish the game before you realized there were no moves left to play?
You saw the checkmate and chose flames.
You poured the gasoline
on everything we stitched by hand together as a team,
you couldn't handle losing by yourself,
so you forced me to lose it all.

Throughout it all, I was the one who put out every flame you grew.
Yet, you saw me as the arsonist.

I was exhausted from cleaning up every mess you made,
I just wanted to go home.
But I knew the only way out was through.
So I held my head up high and walked through the belly of the beast,
an arsonist's dream.
A dream we could never escape.

We dragged our own bodies out from the trenches,
yet you were still surprised we both got burned in the end.



CONVERSATIONS WITH MY MOTHER

Written by Tabitha N. Tudor | Photo Illustration by Andrea Olan

You're bored, I'll give you something to do, always have something to do, you should never just be sitting there on the couch like a sitting duck, don't be lazy, the only time you can relax is when you sleep or when you're dead, your room is always a mess, I can barely walk through it, *Ma there's a clear path from the door to the bed and the closet I just have a small room and not enough spaces hovering above ground to hide things from the naked eye*, doesn't matter, you need to change your bed sheets, you're so disgusting how can you sleep in your own filth like that, you need to change your sheets at least every other week, people don't like long hugs, you're too clingy,



go get a boyfriend, you dress like a homeless person, that's why you can't get a boyfriend, you're so needy and bossy you'll never get a man acting like that, you better find someone that treats you right and treat them right in return, never settle for less, he hurts you, you better cut him off and if you need me you know I'll always be there for you mamita, are you hungry, what you want for dinner, I can make you a grilled cheese or some pastelitos, go ask your dad what he wants, that man is a pain in my ass, but I love him dearly, come do the dishes while I cook, the sink is overflowing, you need to do your laundry and take your clothes upstairs, take the trash out

it's full and reeks, you always have an excuse for everything, I work all day and you get to sleep in, all I ask is the simplest thing, it's always "I'll do it later or tomorrow", just stop what you're doing and get it done, do you want some garlic bread, I just made some in the air fryer, once you're done eating make sure to put all the food away, handwashing the pots and pans is part of doing the dishes, you rarely finish anything you start, do you need the car tomorrow I hate driving the truck, I don't care if I have the shortest commute I want my car back, I'm exhausted, I'm going to bed, I don't wanna see anything in the sinks or laundry room when I wake up, love you, *love you too.*



100 Feet Away

Written & Illustrated by Tabitha N. Tudor

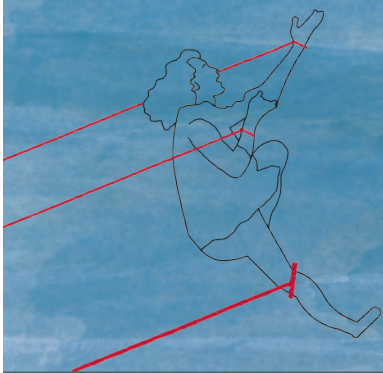
The ocean in your eyes drags me down
Under the high tides
Where the coral stays calm

The gold stripes fly across my head
Soft stones in my heart
Orbiting around schools
Looking up at the light blue ceiling

Your hand reaches down into the water
Rippling the barrier
An inch away
And the sharks pull my strings
100 feet away
I search to find your eyes
You look down where I was
Air bubbles bursting with screams

As your body floats to the top
Screams of fear surround the water you're in
You desperately look around on your way up
You don't see me
But I see your tears
I see your sadness
My heart breaks
As I see yours shatter

I'm sorry you had to love
A person who had to leave
I couldn't stay
I couldn't float



Miss Rona

Written by Princess Chukwukelu | Photo Illustration by Andrea Olan

There once was a time when mankind was free
Free I tell you, free to roam
Then you arrived at a time you were sure we wouldn't see
Striking hard, forcing us to the safety of home

You came so swiftly yes, but you didn't come alone
You brought pain and fear, stripping many of their hope
Even though mercy is what you have not shown
There are few of us who do not sit around and mope

Some people say there are prophecies that foresaw it
That there was no way to avoid what we had coming
Others say we dug for ourselves this pit
That we were the cause of what the world is becoming

It makes you stop to think and wonder
How things could have been if we were grateful for what we had
So while the brave fight and the wise ponder
One can only dream that these times won't remain bad

We are all going through different experiences during these times
The rich are better off and the poor are in anguish
What we need is something soothing like the tune of wind chimes
To assure us we all won't experience languish

Never has the world witnessed something so evil and indomitable
Wishing now more than ever that soon it will be over
Though patience and endurance may seem quite applicable
Nothing will ever be the same because of Miss Rona



Odessa

In a cave of forgotten memories
Ancient stories painted on the walls
Fading alongside the decaying bones
Of animals that couldn't survive
the frozen tundra

The ancient story that still remains
centers around the fairy of Odessa
With shimmering eyes
she could control the most heinous of Viking
for each encounter she bestowed them
A lavender cube
That triggered the happiest memory
As it touched their hands
Seconds later
They met their fate
Death greeted them at the gates
to collect their souls

The lands she flew over
Once filled with human existence
Lay empty till the next time
They dare the fairy
Odessa

Sirens in the mountain

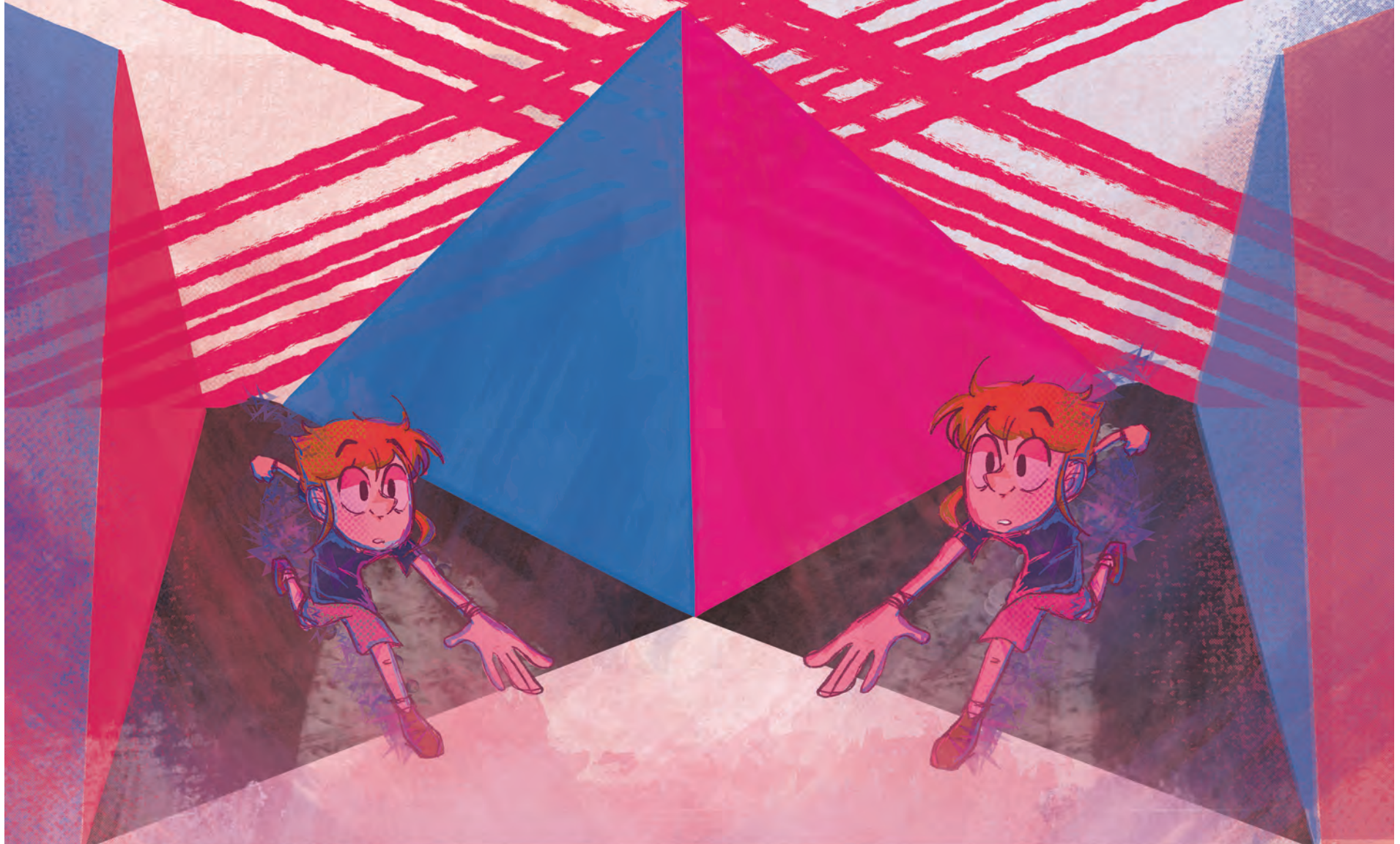
The sirens dim down
The crack in the sky
Crackling to the ground
The stagnant siren crescendos
Fading in and out
The storm takes the stage
with a thunderous applause.

GLITCH

Written by Tabitha N. Tudor

Illustrated by Elizabeth Zuniga Galindo

Time
continues to close
in on me,
I'm claustrophobic in
my own skin,
I don't know how to break in
To the matrix inside my head,
Notes and letters are swarming my brain,
Impenetrable thoughts are exposed,
But I can't decipher what I can't see
In front of me.
Words lost in connection,
The wrong exchange,
Lost in relapse,
My synapses are
Glitching.



Chained Hearts

*Written by Tabitha N. Tudor
Illustration by Elizabeth Zuniga
Galindo*

Eyes are known as the window to one's soul
And when I looked into your eyes
I saw our lives intertwined within
A utopia made for two

As we wandered around this fantasy
We conjured details of our future
That we inscribed to stone
Stuck in time
It felt like we created our tombstones too early
as we blindly bought a steel chain
A chain to link our hearts

For death do us part
We dug each other's grave
Unable to separate our hearts
Our corpses were laid to rest
Near but never apart



Dissolve

Written by Tabitha N. Tudor

As the beats of my heart
Start to slow down,
The pressure of breathing
Gains strength,
A slow inhale,
A slow exhale,
My eyelids gain weight
Pushing blackness into
My vision,
Cement fills my cheeks up
to a frown,
With an audible thud
I felt my heart hit my spine
As I dissolve into my death bed.

Robert E. Howard Days

Written by Trennt Rhea | Film photos by Trennt Rhea | Illustrations by Maria Elena Franco

Tucked away in a small town in the rolling plains of West Texas, visitors from all over the world came to celebrate literary giant Robert E. Howard. Described by attendees as a family reunion, the annual Robert E. Howard Days is held at the Robert E. Howard Museum in Cross Plains, Texas. The event was held April 28-29.

The prolific author Robert E. Howard was known for creating many characters, such as the legendary Conan the Barbarian, and for writing more than 800 poems, including his most famous, Cimmeria. Howard wrote most of his stories at the Howard house, which now functions as a museum.

Hosted by Project Pride, the organization that runs the museum, this year's Robert E. Howard Days marked a special milestone as it celebrated 100 years of Weir Tales, the magazine that published most of Howard's work. The

weekend featured the guest of honor, author and publisher John Betancourt.

Betancourt is a former editor at Weir Tales who revived the magazine in the late 1980s and eventually bought the company. Betancourt is also the owner of Wildside Press, which has 15,000 books in print. "Weir Tales will always have a special place in my heart," Betancourt said with a smile while in front of the Howard house.

"Robert E. Howard Days is a really nice celebration of his legacy and his ability to create characters that speak to people, almost a hundred years later."

- John Betancourt

"Robert E. Howard Days is a really nice celebration of his legacy and his ability to create characters that speak to people, almost a hundred years later," Betancourt said.

Attendees could participate in activities catered to both devoted fans and newcomers. Howard's work was covered in panels and discussions, which examined aspects of his storytelling, his impact on many fans around the world and his influence on the fantasy genre.

In addition to the social engagement with Howard's legacy, the event also offered auctions and walking tours around Cross Plains and around the museum. Vendors offered Robert E. Howard memorabilia or Weir Tales magazines. The Cross Plains public library contains some original Robert E. Howard typescripts along with original Weir Tales magazines.

The walking tours were led by self-described Howard historian Rusty Burke. Burke visited the Howard House before Project Pride began running it in the late '80s and started to go every year. "I was probably one of the people that came here and maybe helped inspire Project Pride to start Robert E. Howard Days," Burke said.

During the walking tours, Burke described every location in detail. Burke described the significance of each item on display, including Howard's 6 foot wide room, Howard's replica suicide letter and the locations around the museum where Howard might have taken inspiration for his work.

The event brought in visitors from Norway, Ireland, France, Russia, Germany and Japan. Patrice Louinet from Paris, is a regular attendee of Robert E.

Howard Days. "The first time I read Howard's stories, I had never read anything like it, and I just loved it. From that, I needed to read more from this guy," Louinet said. Louinet stressed the importance of Weir Tales to Howard's writing. He said: "It was very important because pulp magazines were standardized publications, so they would publish western tales, love stories and detective stories. When you get to Weir Tales, it was an anything goes publication. It was the place for interesting writers to experiment."

One event stood out from the rest during the weekend. At the end of the weekend, there was a poem reading with as many as 20 people reading different poems written by Howard. His most popular poem, Cimmeria, was read in several languages, including Spanish, Italian, French, German, Scottish Gaelic and Latin.

Alex Shanks, who read Cimmeria in Latin, drives every year all the way from Tallahassee, Florida, to Texas just for Robert E. Howard Days. Shanks said: "It's always a blast. Just a bunch of people enjoying Howard's work, and they come from everywhere. The number of people who read the poems and said everything in their language was amazing."



The Cross Plains Public Library displays original Robert E. Howard typescripts and original Weir Tales magazines.

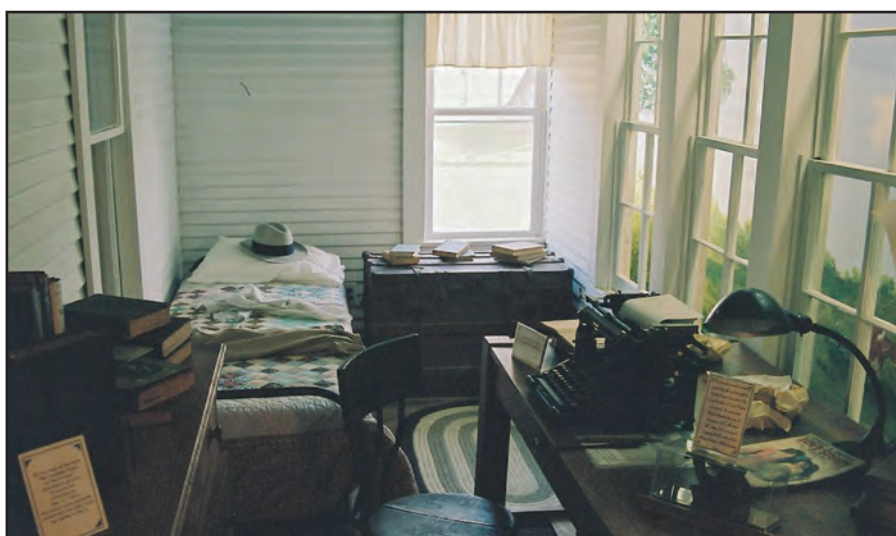


Top: Timothy W. Arney, aka "the dog," reads Howard's poem A Hairy Chested Idealist Sings as attendees watch.

Middle: Robert E. Howard Days attendees wait for food on April 29.

Bottom right: Conan the Barbarian comics sit in boxes, ready to be sold on sale at Robert E. Howard Days on April 29.

Bottom left: Located in the Robert E. Howard Museum, this 6-foot-wide room was where Howard wrote all of his stories



A woman with long dark hair is shown from the chest up, looking upwards towards a starry night sky. A bright shooting star streaks across the sky from the top left towards the bottom right. The sky is filled with numerous stars, and there are some wispy clouds or nebulae in shades of purple and blue. The overall mood is contemplative and serene.

STARFISH

*Written by
Tabitha N. Tudor*

*Photo Illustration by Trennt
Rhea & Tabitha N. Tudor*

I lay lifeless on the ground
Like a starfish stargazing
She walks over
Kneels next to my elbow
Whispers into my ear
"You have one day left"
I blink 5 times
To signal yes
And that I understand

24 hours flash by
She whispers
"Times up"
Her presence
Dissolves into the air

The stars have their eyes on me
We have a staring contest
But of course
The stars won

I say
"Goodbye"
I dissolve into dust
My energy transferring into a new form
I whisper into the wind as I blow away
"I'll be back"

The Stairwell of

*Written by Tabitha N. Tudor
Illustrated by Maria Elena Franco*

Darkness

I walked into an unknown world
And traumatized my own brain

I saw the darkness approaching
Like a translucent cloud
With demons ready to greet me at the forefront
Waiting with arms open wide
A comforting smile
With deception of acceptance

After exploring the different hallways
On each floor
I found myself on the 18th floor
And saw light peaking through
The top and bottom of a door
The light was attractive
I slowly approached the door at the end of the hall
I accidentally stepped on a creaky board
And the dark red door to my left swung open
A shadowy figure with illuminating blue eyes
Grabbed my waist and threw me down to
The 16th floor

I became fearful of the threats
I couldn't control and see
I was stuck in the abyss of illness

The darkness was new and inviting
And I was tricked into thinking it was temporary
As I wandered down the dark stairwell

I was greeted with old and new friends
Scattered across the tall ceilings
Framed with poise
I never knew that each step I took
Was coated in poison
The poison was addicting to my sole
It made me bleed
And crossed into my bloodstream
Cementing my heart in
An Arctic capsule
Frozen filled with numbing pain
And fragile to touch

That was the day I unknowingly met death
They knew I wasn't ready to say goodbye
And say hello to the light
As I continued down the dark stairwell
Each hallway I approached
Had closed doors with frames glowing with dark colors
But I never found a door hiding sunshine ever again

As time passed
I got too comfortable
I shook the hands of death
I accepted the internal fog of darkness
While it intensified my fear of the darkness
Looming on the outside

The Darkroom in the Basement

Written by Trennt Rhea

Photo Illustration by Maria Elena Franco

In the basement of an old college, a man was developing film in the darkroom. The scent of chemicals and the dim orange lights provided the man a sense of comfort as he was heading toward the room where he would take the film out of the canister. The man's comfort was slowly turning into a nightmare.

This room was pitch black except for a dark red light that needed to be turned off. The room had no sound and was suspiciously warm. The room could only fit the man and a counter to place the equipment used for taking the film out of the canister. The dark red light above him was turned off and the man began the process of taking the film out.

An uneasy feeling began to settle onto the man as he was failing to put the film on the reel. Sweat was beating off of his forehead, his hands were shaking and he could have sworn he heard a noise. He had stopped to hear what it was. Silence. His heart pounded against his ribcage as his hands trembled, threading the film on the reel. When he turned the dark red light back on, he could finally hear what the noise was. There was a knock on the door.

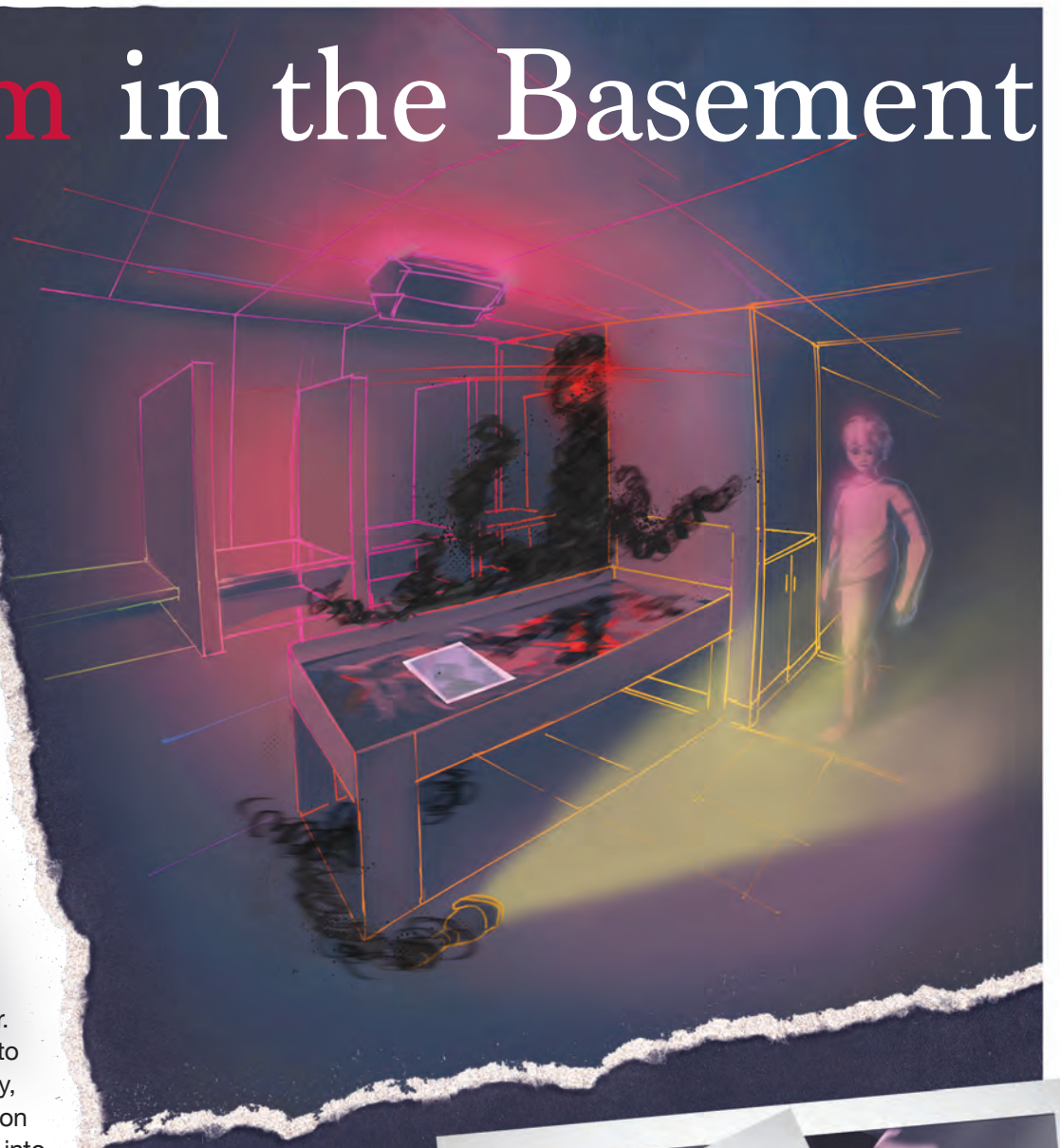
The man froze and his heart skipped a beat. The knocking started to become erratic, almost like someone was trying to break in. Suddenly, the knocking stopped. With a chill up his spine and hairs sticking up on the back of his neck, the man opened the door. As he ventured back into the room, a biting chill pinched his skin. He pivoted his head, lending a gaze which swept only impenetrable shadow. Nothing was there.

After the man noticed he could see his breath, he darted to the door to leave, swearing his mind was playing tricks on him. The man was trying to open the darkroom's revolving door, but it just kept spinning. Panic seized the man's every muscle, and he was frozen again while shadows were dancing on the walls. Suddenly, the shadows on the walls started to drip with water. Roaches and spiders were scurrying across the floor, and the lights were flickering. Everything came to a stop when the man heard a low guttural growl from the corner of the darkroom. The man could feel the growl right beside him, breathing down his spine.

The growl turned into a loud, screeching roar. This caused the man to finally look back into the dark abyss. He was searching the black nothingness of the darkroom when he finally saw it. A large, slender creature with possibly thousands of film negatives attached to its human-like body. Its dark red eyes were staring into the man's soul with malevolence and hunger. Shining in the dim lights of the darkroom, the creature slithered across the floor toward the man.

Panic surged within the man's chest, and was desperately trying to run away from the creature, determined to survive. The creature started to wrap the negatives around him. The man could not move as he was suffocating and his bones were being crushed. The man could just barely make out light shown through the darkroom. All the man could hear was white noise.

The man was suddenly in the developing part of the darkroom, as if nothing had happened. The familiar chemical smell and bright lights gave him a sense of comfort. The man started to carefully inspect his negatives through the photographic enlarger when he started to notice something. Every negative was like a memory flooding back to him and all he could see was dark red eyes.





OUR LAST DRIVE

Written & Photographed by Leonardo Rosas

They drove up St. Vrain Ave to settle in at the Baldpate Inn. Their car was running on E. The sun was beginning to settle. The wind whistled and the pine trees beckoned them toward the Inn's entrance. At the entrance a sign read, "Soups. Salads. Desserts. Welcome home."

This was the easy time in their lives.

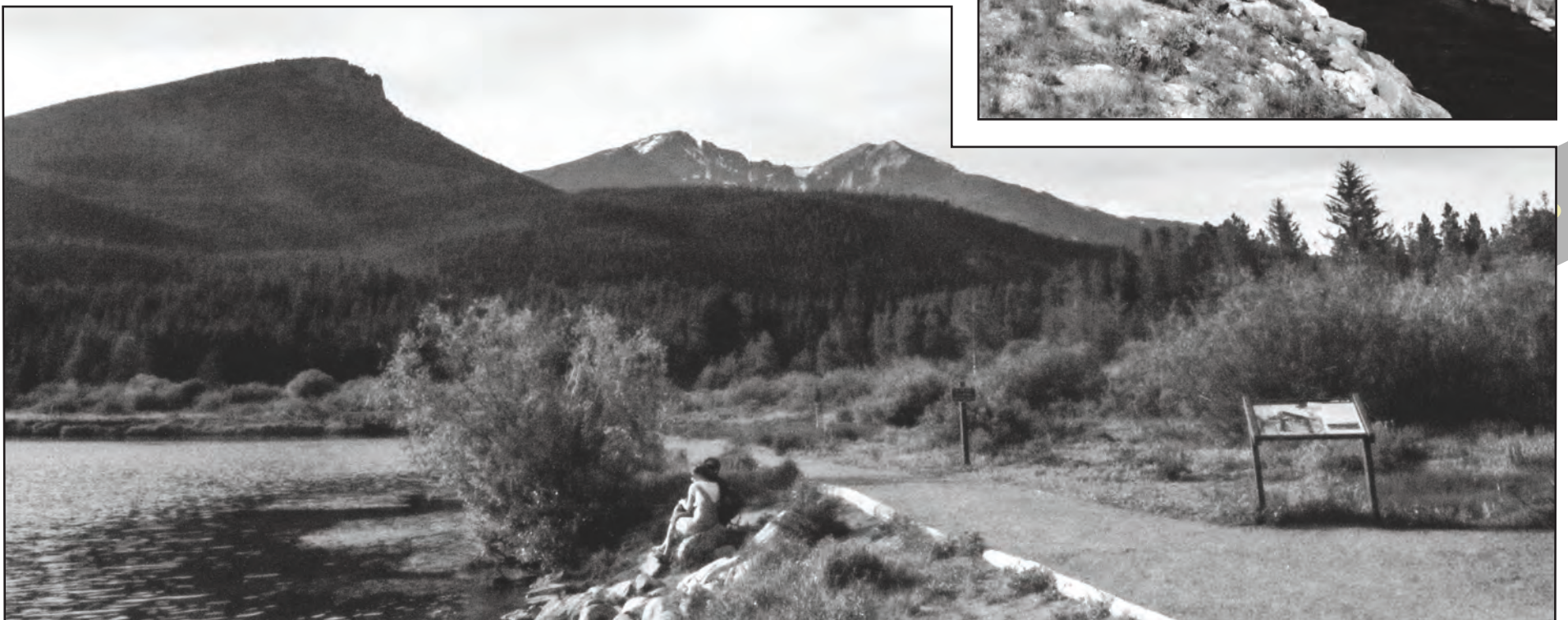
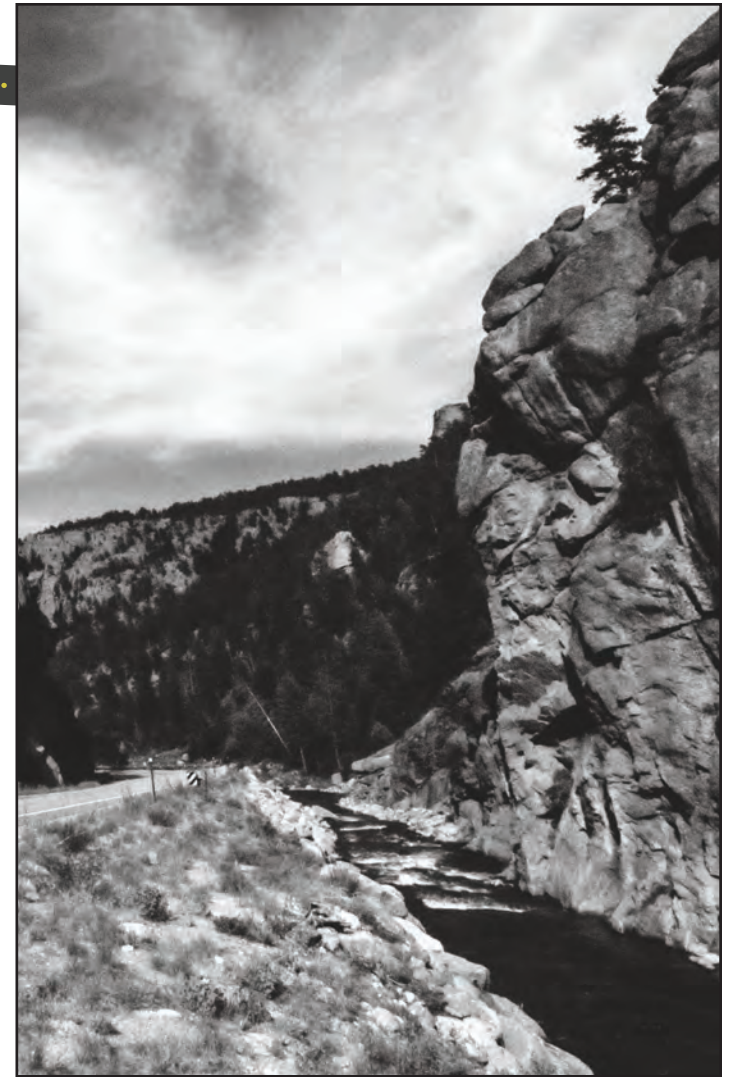
Their room at the inn overlooked Lily Lake and Twin Sisters Peak. She said the view was amazing. He concurred. In his suitcase was his Colt .45 his father gave him when he was 14 years old. He planned to use it when the time was right. She knew of his plans, and she had plans of her own.

They were both tired from driving aimlessly for hours. This spur-of-the-moment road trip they were on was so far a disappointment. They thought they might stay at that inn until they could figure things out.

The next morning they got up early to see the sunrise. Before they left their room, he quietly tucked his gun behind his back and concealed it with his jacket. They walked down to the lake and sat together on some rocks near the edge of the water.

Just as the sun began to rise, he pulled out his Colt .45 from behind him. He felt the time was right. At the sight of this, she lifted her hands, which had been clenched into fists, and opened them. The bullets fell from her hands and tumbled down the rocks into the water. She grabbed the gun and tossed it into the water.

Together they watched the sunrise.



DARK HOUSE

Written by Tabitha N. Tudor
Photo Illustration by Tabitha N. Tudor

I used to be so
scared of the dark, I
would close my door at
night.

However, through the
years I've let so much
darkness in I leave my
door open at night to
let the littlest of
light in.



MIND TUNNEL

Illustrations by Linley Nyirenda





GOATMAN'S BRIDGE

Written by Trennt Rhea | Illustrated by Noah Cervantes

Denton, Texas is known for many things, including ghost stories. One tale has fascinated locals for generations. Goatman's Bridge is one of the most famous ghost stories in the region.

Old Alton Bridge, nicknamed Goatman's Bridge, was built in 1884 over the Trinity River to connect the cities of Denton and Copper Canyon. Old Alton Bridge, named after the abandoned community of Alton, was once a busy ford used by crossing cattle and carriages.

The bridge remained in use until 2001, when vehicle traffic started to shift to a concrete and steel bridge nearby. Old Alton Bridge has since become a popular destination for hikers and people who enjoy nature, with locals calling the atmosphere of the bridge serene during the daytime.

As the sun sets, the ambience changes. The bridge is said to be haunted by the ghost of Oscar Washburn,

a successful Black goat farmer who was known for offering high-quality milk, cheeses and meats. Washburn hung a sign by the bridge that read, "This way to the Goatman." This enraged local Ku Klux Klan members, who decided violence was the only answer.

One night in the 1930s, a mob of Klan members stormed Washburn's shack and dragged him to the bridge, where a noose was waiting. They tightened the rope around his neck and threw him over the bridge.

The Klansmen were at the river's edge when they tried to see what they had done. They could only see an empty, dangling noose above the flow of the river.

The mob then searched for Washburn, racing toward his shack and burning it down with his family inside, a crude attempt to possibly lure Washburn toward them. Washburn was never seen again, legend says a vengeful spirit has haunted the bridge ever since.

As the story goes, if someone knocks on the bridge three times at midnight or turns off their car lights and

honks three times, they will summon the Goatman. There are different reports of what happens next.

Visitors have said they felt they were being touched or grabbed, while others felt rocks thrown at them or saw glowing red eyes in the darkness and other strange lights. This story has since become a popular topic of discussion among paranormal investigators and horror fans.

While there are many visitors, the bridge is a particularly popular destination among University of North Texas students. UNT students Daniel Tober and Jassiah Barnes, have visited the bridge.

Tober said: "I've been there a bunch of times, mostly at night. To me, there is not much difference between going during the day and going at night. The night is definitely creepy, but that's all it is."

Barnes said he could feel the eeriness of the bridge. He said, "The energy surrounding it is quite nice during the day, but at night you can feel something is wrong."

THE WALYGO

Written by Sheree Peart | Illustrated by Noah Cervantes

As the sun begins to set, somewhere in the small desolate town of Stoneridge, in the plains of the Balhaven, a creature known by its guttural sounds lurked in the shadows. Woe to those who wander too far out into the Balhaven.

Many called the creature an abomination of nature, some say he was once a man, but his appetites eroded away his flesh and bones. His guttural cries were the need to feed and restore the flesh that once was. His elongated limbs looked like that of a sloth; pointed at the ends and jagged from where the wrist starts to where the shoulder meets the neck. Some say they resembled gnarled tree branches, but others say it was the remnants of previous victims and the scars they left behind while fighting for their lives before being devoured. Its eyes glowed with otherworldly intensity and its teeth like razors. This creature was known only as the Valygo.

Legend whispered tales of the Valygo's insatiable hunger; some say it likes to eat foxes and snakes, and birds too. Some say he could go toe to toe with a lion. Alligators were matchless and zebras were a snack but most of all it was known by his love of the long horned cows. Some say that the cow's tough skin restores the flesh that sometimes hangs from the Valygo's limbs.

One night, as the clouds sauntered over the moon to give way to the open arms of darkness; and the town entered the shroud of night, a group of four teenage boys ventured into the forbidden plains. Three of the boys were long time friends, they went to the same high school, played the same sports and were told the same stories. Earlier that day they happened upon a young boy who was about their age and liked the same sports and attended a school not too far from them. Or so he said.

"We're going down to the Balhaven tonight. These damn villagers are done scaring us and I'm tired of my mom keeping us in darkness at 7 p.m. because of some stupid myth," Kyle said.

"Balhaven?" the boy whispered.

"See. I told you, he's probably too chicken to come." Jacob snorted.

"Come on, give him a chance. He'll man up when he realizes that there is no such thing as some flesh decaying monster thing. Then we can all go back to the way things were," Ricky said, laughing.

The boy frowned. "Who says it's a monster?"

The three boys laughed. "Everyone." Ricky exclaimed.

"So you coming or what?" Jacob folded his arms across his boney chest.

"He's comin." Kyle nudged the other boy

encouragingly. "We'll be in and out."

"Fine." The boy smiles.

The three boys were determined to unmask the legend that was the Valygo and to set the town of Stoneridge free of its fear. Little did they know of the new horrors that await them.

As they waded through tall grass and climbed over large stones and pushed past rows and rows of dead branches of once proud trees, they approached an abandoned ranch. Decayed wooden fences, thorned charcoal looking plants littered the front yard.

As they approached, they stumbled on a grisly sight of a decomposing long horned cow and its calf chewing the thorned plants that scattered in the yard. Maggots nestled in the crevices of its bellies and dropped when the cow shifted. It's hollow eye sockets staring into nothingness. The moonlight occasionally tried to break free from the clouds to warn them.

The stench of death assaulted their nostril as Kyle, Jacob, and Ricky turned away in horror. Kyle turned to run but was grabbed by Jacob, "We gotta see this thru-" projectile vomit from his mouth and nose. Ricky started to scream as his arms began to slowly decay after he dared to touch the mystery of the living dead that was the long horned cow. The last boy started to laugh and laugh as a guttural sound escaped his belly.

Kyle turned to look in horror as the moonlight removed its veil and thick mucus gurgled in the boy's mouth. His laugh revealed rows of jagged teeth and the rancid odor wafted from his breath. Panic ripped through the boys. The group scattered to escape the shifting boy whose flesh began to fall off as he grew in size.

He moved at preternatural speed. Jacob was the first to go. The other two boys seemed to run on for what felt like the never-ending trail of time.

"Go Kyle! Go! We have to go!" Ricky cried out as Jacob's screams were overtaken by the beast's malevolent laughter. Ricky huffed and heaved as his vision became blurry from the pain of his decaying hand.

Fear pushed the remaining two boys to flee back into the Balhaven's tall grass and its trees in spite of their stumbling and weeping. Their lungs burned as they tried to run to the safety of a cellar up ahead. Kyle looked back as

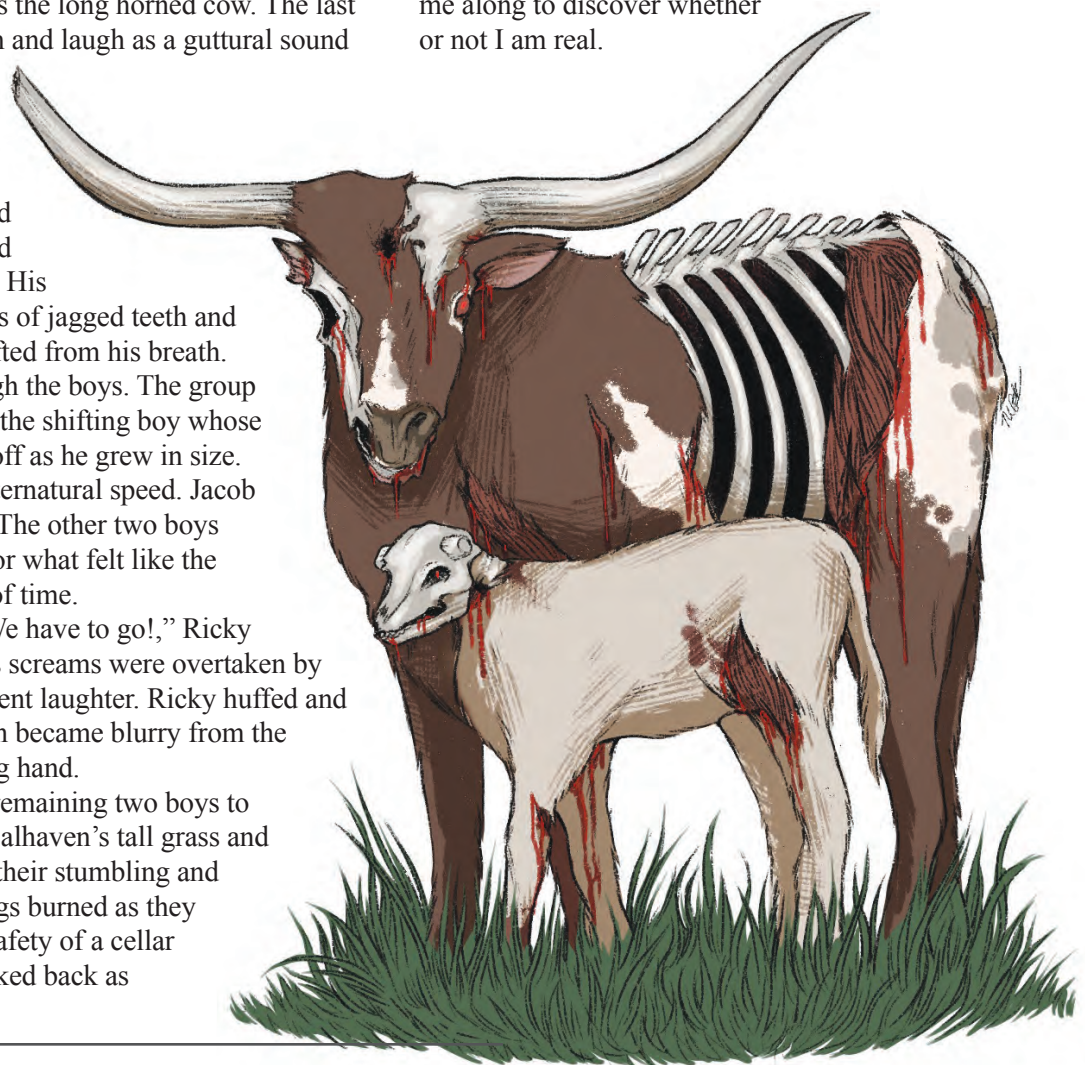
Ricky tripped over a rock that rudely appeared out of nowhere. Kyle dashed to help his friend up, his fingertips brushed against his friend's hand to grab after him before blood splattered across his face. The unforgiving crackling of bones stung Kyle's ears as he tried to make his feet move. One by one, his friends fell by the strength and power of the scorned beast.

"Come on. Come on!" he urged his legs which finally gave way. He flung himself into the cellar, the door slamming behind him which tossed him down the stairs breaking his arm. He shrieked and looked up through blurry eyes at the unbarred door and forced himself up the stairs with one hand to lock it.

Once secured, he rested on the steps. He still remembers the night of the Valygos relentless pounding and mocking laughter. "What's the matter, Kyle?" the boy said. "Am I not monster enough?"

Kyle's mouth thick with grief and blood sobbed uncontrollably as the violent pounding continued.

Days turned into weeks until the townsfolk discovered the grisly fate of the teenagers. Terror reigned supreme throughout the town as the longhorn cows continued to rot and give birth to maggots and silly teenage children invite people like me along to discover whether or not I am real.



Welcome Home



Written by Jimin Park

When streetlights turn on at night
Sunset prepares to go to bed.

“Vroom vroom”
When a car stops,
The garage door laughs with a big smile.

“Clink clink”
When a keyhole is turning left
A puppy’s tail starts to swim.

“Putter-patter”
When a baby steps.
Mom’s eyes are getting busier.

When the front door is opened
The orange warmth in the sky swims into the house.



Brookhaven students score first place in writing competition

Written by Emmy Hardy

During the Spring 2023 semester, Dallas College Brookhaven Campus held a local Creative Writing Contest. Members of the Brookhaven Creative Writing Club were invited by English faculty member Aaron Clark to submit their work. Students in Clark’s English courses were also invited to participate. Contest categories included short story fiction, poetry, personal essay, and one-act play. Students submitted their work by March 31, and contest winners were announced on April 20.

Jimin Park, a Spring 2023 composition

student of Clark, won first place in the poetry category. Kamila Vargas-Gonzales, 2022-2023 creative writing club president, achieved first place in the short story fiction category. Myrka Gisselle Lopez, former Brookhaven 2022-2023 SGA president and creative writing club member, earned first place in the personal essay category. Each first place winner’s work was sent to the Dallas College Innovation Literary Competition, where they won first place as well. The entries were then sent to the national level. Enjoy some award winning writing from our students.

A word with the Author

Q What inspired you to write this poem?

Whenever I turn on the GPS of Google Maps and then hear the sound saying, ‘Welcome Home,’ when I arrive at my house, I feel a sense of comfort, thinking that I have safely come home today. That’s why I named the poem “Welcome Home.”

Q Why did you start the middle three lines of the poem with sound descriptions?

Poetry, unlike videos or music, is static as it conveys situations through words. However, when people read my [poetry], I wanted to stimulate their auditory senses as if they were watching scenes from a movie. That’s why I used onomatopoeia.

Q How did it feel to win first place in the Creative Writing Competition?

The moment I heard the news that I achieved first place, a thrill ran through my entire body, and I felt a strong desire to continue writing various types of writing in the future.

Q What is the overall message of “Welcome Home?”

The surrounding shape of the homes, family members, and the presence of pets...may not exactly match the descriptions I directly portrayed in the poem. Therefore, I think it’s possible that not everyone can relate to [this poem] completely. However, the concept of home is an important sanctuary for people of all generations living in a hectic life. That’s why I hope my poems can be read as a sanctuary that briefly recalls unforgettable warm memories of the past, the cozy life of the present, or the vision of a dream house in the future, providing a momentary respite for the readers.

Ashamed is what I was, Strong is what I am

Written by Myrka Gisselle Lopez

1st
Place
Personal
Essay

From an outside point of view, my first years of high school were mistakably lavish. What else would you think of a young girl who hits the gym every morning at 5 a.m., gets to school early to start on her work, and after the school day heads over to a costly, sometimes luxurious, restaurant to dine followed by a daily visit to where over-priced coffee is served after a long day. It seems like the life of a comfortable and well-coordinated teenager, right? Well, things weren't exactly as they seemed.

The real story behind the scenes of "fortitude" was hidden away to avoid any conflict that would come along with asking for help. I seemed like I was doing better than good to everyone around me but, I felt weak. Behind closed doors, the only physical doors I could call mine were those of a 2015 Chevrolet Cruze.

From the second half of my eighth-grade year until the summer after my sophomore year of high school, I was discretely living in a compact vehicle alongside my father. My father and I shared this wine-red-colored compact car's confined space for nearly three years. We made it our makeshift sanctuary because of our inability to find a residency that would take us in due to my father's poor credit history and lack of money.

The reason why my life seemed so pleasant from the outside was simply that we were trying to survive as hygienically and healthily as we could. We headed to the gym to shower and get dressed every morning by 5 a.m. because my father's job required him to be at his desk by 7:30 a.m. My father's work hours were extensive so every day of the week I arrived at my school an hour and 10 minutes before my first class and left at 6 p.m, two hours after dismissal.

I took advantage of these hours of free time by studying diligently for my classes. After I got picked up, we would head to a restaurant to eat. Thankfully, my father was part of a

program where restaurant owners offered average consumers complimentary food and pocket cash in exchange for a genuine and well-rounded review of their business. This provided our meal for the day as well as a little extra money for our future home. Following our dinner, we would go to a local coffee shop where my father accompanied me while I would finish all my given homework. It was the closest thing to normal we could substitute for the absence of a work area or desk. At the end of each day, we reclined our seats and laid blankets over ourselves, we would talk about the future and silently pray for better days.

After what felt like forever, we finally reached the light at the end of the tunnel and started the countdown of days until the move-in day of our new apartment. As we settled into our residence, nothing but thoughts of thankfulness flooded my mind. I could not believe we had our own bedrooms and a spacious place to coexist. It boosted my confidence, I was no longer an ashamed girl living in a car, now I was a girl who fiercely overcame her adversity.

This tug of misfortune taught me to carry a positive and open mindset because you never know what the person next to you is struggling with. It taught me to approach every individual with an open mind and full of love, reminding myself that they may be in deep need of affirmation. Instead of dwelling on and completely ignoring this phase of my life, I classify it as evidence of my strength. If I can successfully survive in a compact car for years, I can overcome any obstacle life throws. This hardship also taught me to be grateful for life's "obvious" and "small" elements and to comprehend that anything can be lost even without intention. My journey is not to be confused with inferiority nor am I the epitome of a victim. I realize that life presents custom struggles to everyone but, those who approach their adverse situation with resilience are the true victor.

I consider myself a true victor, enlightened by my rocky past with the gift of empathy, patience, gratitude and resilience.

A word with the Author

Q What inspired you to write this essay?

It is no secret that we all experience hardships...It can be easy to freeze the nature of our past back in time, even when it has had monumental effects that pivoted the itinerary of our lives. I wrote this essay to capture a chapter in my life that continues to contribute to my life and bring it to life, not in a sorrow-ridden way, but to embrace the experience and its fruit.

Q What is the overall message of the essay?

More than anything it is a message of encouragement and perseverance.

Q How did the life event in the essay shaped your life path today?

The challenge of losing my foundational home at a young age was transformational in that I learned the skill of trusting the process, the gift of resourcefulness and the habit of grit. These are all qualities I continue to carry with me and put into practice every day.

Q How did it feel to achieve first place in the Creative Writing Competition?

I am deeply appreciative and feel more empowered to continue sharing stories as a method to help others embrace their own, hopefully in a positive way. I also really want to thank my family and friends who stood with me during this hardship and never allowed to lose hope of a better future.

Q What lesson do you hope readers take away from this essay?

For people to realize they are not alone when they face adversity, even when the world and people around them seem unphased.



I won't be in town

Written by Kamila Vargas-Gonzales | Illustrated by Elizabeth Zuniga Galindo

1st
place
short
story

The truck's engine stops rumbling, leaving only the sound of Ismael's chest rising and falling as he lets his body melt into the driver's seat. He opens the sun visor to admire the photo of two children clipped on there, but then his focus shifts to what's behind him. He glares at the worn-down apartments through the rearview mirror, almost forgetting that the trapped heat in the turned-off truck makes it hard for him to breathe. He gets out, the heavy door groans, and so does he. The heat stings Ismael as he walks to his one-bedroom apartment.

As he opens the front door of his place, another wave of heat swallows him, caused by the boiling chicken soup and cooking rice on the stovetop. Ismael sits at the scuffed dinner table facing directly into the kitchen, and his eyes pierce his roommate's back. The only thing standing between them is the wall that doubles as an open bar separating the dining area and kitchen.

"Ay, you scared me, fool!" Martin said, shifting his focus between Ismael and his food.

"Está bien pinche caliente afuera! It's like reaching one hundred degrees, and you're here cooking soup—" Ismael nags his roommate in Spanish and English. He grabs a napkin to pat off his forehead sweat and continues, "I'm sweating my ass off!"

"I don't care if it's too hot outside; I was craving – you know what? I don't have to explain shit to you." Martin turns off the stove's knobs as his eyebrows furrow. "You're always tripping," Martin says under his breath.

No other words are exchanged between them. The noise of the soup boiling and wispy humid air fills the small apartment. They both avoid eye contact. Martin serves himself and Ismael a plate and walks around the open bar barrier to sit at the dinner table with him. They sit across from each other, and Ismael's eyes water as he stares at his plate.

"I'm sorry for lashing out, man. I just – los extraño," Ismael shields his eyes with his left hand and stirs his soup with his right hand.

"I know. I miss my kids too," Martin peeks up from his bowl to see Ismael.

They began eating, and the clinking from the spoons hitting the glass bowls buried the sniffing.

As the sky fades into a dark-blue color, the moon awakens the crickets, and the mosquitos gravitate toward the flickering fluorescent light on the men's balcony. Ismael is leaning against the metal railing, taking deep breaths as he takes his time to observe each balcony's decor in his apartment complex. He puts his head down and sighs as he rubs his forehead, contorting his face slightly in defeat as he takes out a lighter and cigarette from his pocket. He sits down on the wicker chair and sinks his body into it. Ismael holds his cigarette between his lips, trying to get his phone out of his pocket, then takes a few puffs before dialing someone with the contact name Emilia. The phone rings six times, and no one picks up. The phone beeps, ready to receive a voicemail.

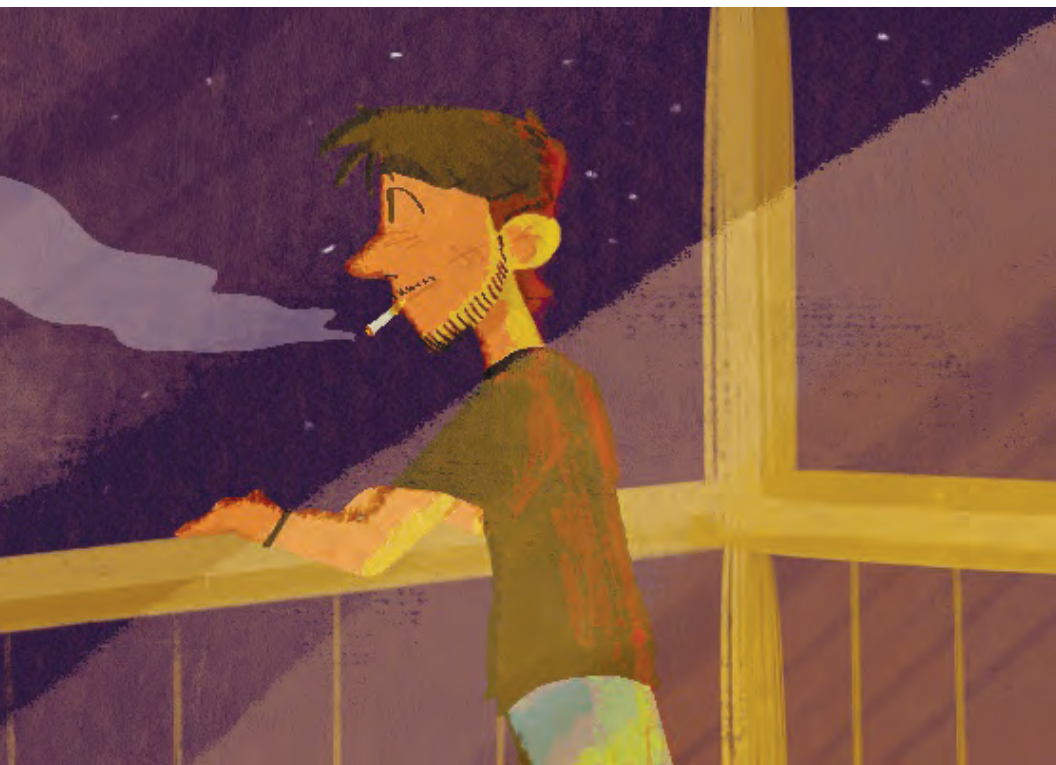
"Hola, Emilia. I just wanted to say goodnight to my kids – I know it's past their bedtime, but – I'm sorry for not calling earlier today. Work really drained me, and to be honest, every little thing pushed me over the edge. A bowl of soup even managed to make me tear up today," Ismael chuckles, taking another puff from his cigarette. "... anyway, I don't want this voicemail to be too long. Tell my kids I love them. Bye." Ismael ends the message.

Martin slides the glass door open of the balcony to join Ismael. Ismael disposes of his cigarette bud on a glass ashtray on the round metal side table, staring at Martin as he sits on the folding metal chair.

"I heard you talking. Was it your baby mama?" Martin says playfully.

"Yeah," Ismael lights up another cigarette, then offers Martin one. "You want one?"

"I thought you'd never ask, fool," Martin smiles and takes the lighter. He takes a long inhale, almost burning off half of the white paper of the



Editor's Note:

This story contains explicit language. It is printed uncensored as it was submitted in the literary competition.

tobacco stick. "I also forgot to call my kids today, ya know."

"Hm." Ismael goes back to observing his neighbors' balcony decor but focuses on a balcony with two kids' bicycles. "I fucking hate being roommates with you."

"Ha. Well, it seems like the best option we both have. We get to avoid being homeless with shared rent while sending, almost, our whole check back to our families in Mexico" – Martin taps Ismael with his shoulder – "where they can bathe in American dollars thanks to us."

Ismael gives a small smile, and Martin smiles back. But as both men look forward, they clench their jaws, and Martin's face slightly crumples for a second before swallowing back his tears, and Ismael's bottom lip quivers for a second before doing the same thing.

"My oldest has her first day of middle school next month, and my youngest starts her first day of 1st grade, and I won't even be there in person," Ismael says, still unable to successfully gulp back grief. He clears his throat and continues speaking. "I don't think I can miss another milestone, man."

"I missed so much amazing shit my kids have done, too...but having a job here in the U.S., earning American dollars, and sending that shit back to them... it keeps their bellies full...so nos tenemos que aguantar. We gotta endure this shit." Martin first says it in Spanish and then repeats it in English.

"We gotta endure this shit," Ismael repeats back.

Both men sit for a moment, taking in the night's breeze. Martin looks at his watch to check the time.

"Well, I'm going to sleep. Another beating awaits me tomorrow." Martin puts out his cigarette bud and groans as he gets up.

"Tell me about it. This damn construction job has aged me," Ismael says.

Martin chuckles as he walks back inside. Ismael stays sitting, looking at his neighbor's kid's bicycles, and then turning his head behind him to see his bright neon safety vest for his job hanging inside the apartment. He stares back at the small bikes and then at the lock screen picture of his two daughters. Ismael takes a deep breath and walks inside his apartment, shutting the glass door behind him.

A word with the Author

Q When did you first come up with the idea for this short story?

I was just observing my neighborhood, and I saw so many people with their neon vests or shirts coming home from work. It reminded me of my family and the labor-heavy jobs they would work. It drained you. I guess I built the story around that damn neon work vest [laughs]. I wanted to share one experience of many unique and different experiences families go through.

Q Are there any parts of your life you drew inspiration from while writing the story?

I drew a lot inspiration from my family and from the neighborhood I grew up in.

Q How did it feel to win 1st place in the Creative Writing Competition?

It felt good. I felt seen. I have to keep going.

Q What would you say is the main message behind your story?

I don't think there is a particular message. It's a story about these men who are yearning for some kind of comfort. They will do anything for their families out of love. I guess to put it short, it's a story about love and how far that love will take somebody. We get to see the effects of it.

