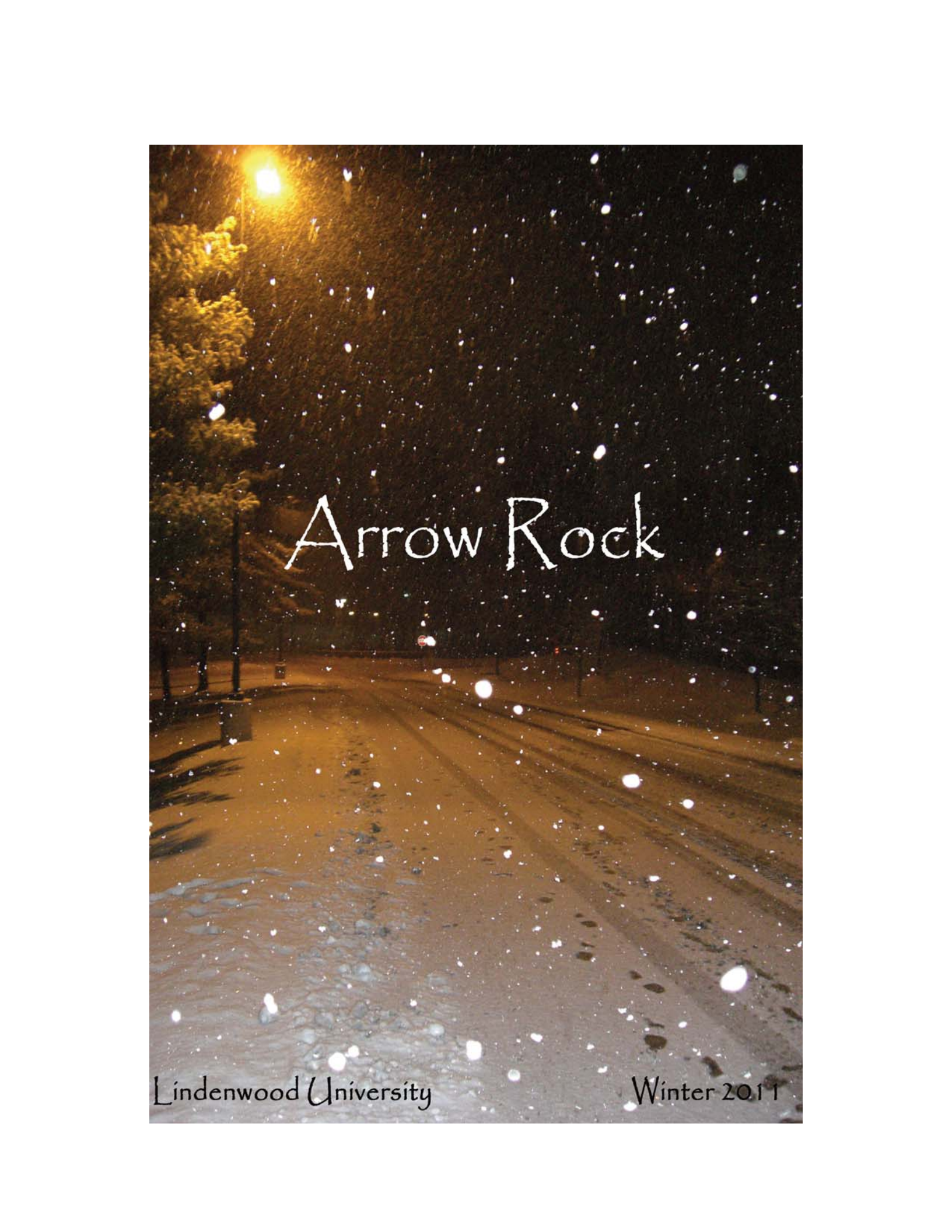


A night photograph of a snowy street. A street lamp on the left illuminates the scene, casting a warm glow. Snow is falling heavily, creating a bokeh effect of white dots against the dark sky. The street is covered in a layer of snow, with some tire tracks visible. The overall atmosphere is quiet and wintry.

Arrow Rock

Lindenwood University

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Enjoy Issue 2!

Arrow Rock

Issue 2

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ARROW ROCK LITERARY JOURNAL MISSION STATEMENT

Arrow Rock is committed to promoting and providing a mature environment for Lindenwood University students to publish quality short fiction, short nonfiction, poetry, essays, and artwork, while showcasing the integrity and individual talents of each writer or artist.

The staff and contributors of *Arrow Rock* strive to produce a literary journal that interests and inspires.

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Poetry



SARAH CRAWFORD • JUMP

The sharp steel blade

cuts through

cold ice

curving in

curving out

vaulting up

in space

and landing

•

MAC HAMILTON • WANNA DATE?

I am a date machine on Match.Com.
I see the frogs I think I can turn into princes.
I like to tell everyone that I like bubble baths,
and long, moonlit walks on the beach in the rain.

I like for my men to know I like dark chocolate,
and that I have raised three awesome kids.
I like them to see my glamour shots,
and for them to know that I enjoy line dancing.

I change my username from month to month,
sometimes using “pookiebear” or “STLcitykitty.”
And then other times I get serious and use
names like “ru_looking_4_luv.”

I am outgoing and attractive and “curvy” to boot.
My friends say I have a great personality.
My perfect match must make me laugh,
and honesty is the most important thing in a relationship.

I want everyone, including my competition, to know
that photos are a must, and winks won’t be returned.
It’s also important that my future soul mate not smoke,
drink moderately, and is “spiritual, not religious.”

I don’t believe in astrology, and my income is none of your
business.
But I need to know yours, before we can go any further.
I want an educated man, and a “few extra pounds” won’t
matter.
I am happy and content alone, but want some “extra spice
in my life.”

I just read Nicholas Sparks’ newest, which I absolutely love,
and relish reading while sipping coffee, or a nice Merlot,
both at the same time. “Sex and the City” is must-see TV.
I am comfortable in jeans or formal attire,
ready to travel at a moment’s notice,

if I can get off work at my very important job
of VP of an IT firm - one that keeps me very busy.
So I don't and won't have much time for you.
Interested? Let's meet at Starbucks,
at my convenience.

Next.

•

LAINE SCOTT • WHAT TRIALS

A raven's nest,
Hid in a tree,
And there the birds,
Who made it be.

The father sits,
The other flies,
Tries to avoid,
A stranger's eyes.

But here I am,
Looking 'round,
Their secret dwelling,
I have found.

At once, they fight
With inbred hunger.
Their hidden place,
Is safe no longer.

But they don't know,
What fate awaits,
For never I,
Disrupt their gates.

Don't worry so,
Darkened spirits!
But who am I,
To say they'll hear it?



DAN BURKHEAD • REFRIGERATED ENLIGHTENMENT

The sound my refrigerator makes
Is the sound of the universe
Humming beneath my bed -
The tinkling of distant stars
Whispering the secrets of eternity
To leftover pizza.

I always knew there was something
Transcendental in that cheese.

•

THE COMPLICATIONS OF POETRY, A LA POETRY

Here I'll write a poem,
Just to see what will come out,
Though I've really nothing that needs to be said.
It has to have a rhythm,
This thing I'll call a poem,
Or its readers will all doubt
What the fuss is all about,
And it won't matter what falls out of my head.

My hand will write the lines,
And my pen will lend its ink,
And we'll just go off on a tangent from there -
And I'll waste away my time
Writing rhyme that follows rhyme,
While I try to sit and think
Of a message on the brink
Of subtle relevance and pointless hot air.

A moral it will need,
And an observation too,
Based on something worth noticing in our lives.
If it cannot plant the seed
Of some higher mental creed
In the minds of all those who
Come to read it, and then do,
Then what point is there in this that I contrive?

And length's another thing
That should be contemplated
As I continue on with this endeavor.
If it takes too long to bring
This whole thing to an ending -
Or its readers aren't sated
With an end too soon stated -

Then poetic fame I fear I'll gain never.

But now that I am through
Listing off what should be done,
I've nothing more that can be added, I fear.
This is of ample size too;
So without further ado -
Although it's been somewhat fun -
If objections there are none,
I think I'll just stop and end this thing right here.



TABITHA PARKER • Navel

a depression that marks the point of attachment
of fetus and mother; useless or excessive, a pit
at the blossom where being navigated
could hardly move

no, not merely this
but also: New Brunswick,
North Dakota,
Nebraska, or

resembles a caveman
a short distance or close to
being clean, trim beneath the dust
that cannot be changed

the part of the body connecting
a relatively narrow
kiss and caress
very close

•

DEBORAH ANN HERZOG • TRANSPARENT

My daily prayer in high school was,
“Dear God, please make me
invisible today.”

I pushed my way through the coffin halls
reached for the door knob slick as ice
that stood between me and Mr. Wells
felt the dried pyramids of gum
on the underside of the wobbly desktop
slid into the chair that held me against my will
fifty minutes of torture in the green room every day
I obsessed over the face of anonymity, and
hated those jocks trimmed in school colors
the games they played
“Bobby Jones is a monkey today”
no, I wasn’t giving them a chance to mock me
always did my homework, and
carried a pile of books on my hip
couldn’t stop my pounding heart
when Mr. Wells peered over those wire-rimmed glasses
with those gray stone eyes
so I slouched a lot and learned to block his view
by holding my chin in a sweaty palm
clicking my ball point pen in steady rhythm, as
I drew my brows together and
practiced that thoughtful look, while
thumbing through my biology book
like I was looking up the answer, but

I was happiest when the bell announced
I had made it, anonymously
through

•

JUAN SEBASTIAN CORNET ARCE • **BALLAD TO A WOMAN**

Winter floated in the air when she came
Yet summer flourished for me all the same,
Because by order of some godly whim
Sunlight blazed in this fairy without kin.

Each smile she gave was a rose born in May;
For me, them, or the rest, I cannot say.
All I dare affirm, avow, and decree
Is that she alone lapped my heart in glee.

Because no sunlight appeared on that day
She just had to turn into a sun ray;
And whatever eyes were coming her way
In guilt and disgrace were glancing away.

All of her words were musical sonnets
Twinkling in and out like pretty comets,
But it was her smile, by the great Heaven,
What cheered me that sad morning at seven.

I ask how it is that all about her
Sounded exactly like lovely Wagner?
What prophet of music and poesy
Envisioned her coming in prophecy?

Wish that I could hear all of her prayers
In the name of us all, sinful players.
How blissful it must be to wake to her smile
So sunny, loveable, and free of guile.





Here I lie in this state of stupor. Morphine? No, please don't fill me with any more of that. I'd like to tell you that I don't even feel pain. There's no need to send me out with a body full of further numbing. And my mind? Well, unless you're the eye in the sky, you don't even know what I'm thinking.

Yes, I heard the barbershop chorus or the Sweet Adelines come sing to me last Saturday. And yes, I heard some girl, or maybe a boy, singing "In The Garden" and "Mary Lou," (that name sounds familiar) when she/he visited last Tuesday. I think it was Tuesday, but may not have been. What do days of the week matter to me anymore? Did they ever really matter?

I'm not sure I want to wake up. I'm not sure I want to remember my last sleep. It's out of my hands, really. All I know is, that, either way, it's gonna be an adventure. Someone brought in the little Shriner man that I used to keep on my dashboard, and I wasn't able to tell them that while I knew it didn't mean anything to them, I appreciated the fact that they knew it was central to my very existence, when I was still able to function in this form. But now that I think about it, did any of it really matter?

Someone once told me that I'd most probably see a light. But, so far, it's just dark. Even my dreams are monochrome. There was some guy who once wrote about "the *nada*." Maybe this is it, but I don't think so. I think there is still more *nada* to come.

"Up the hill, soldiers," the officer yelled. "There are a lot of dead bodies here on this beach. They need to be cleaned up. And somebody's gotta do it."

Were those bodies friends of mine, or were they just soulless corpses who were getting in the way of a greater good? And who was that person who has wiped my behind for the last few weeks or months, and made sure that I had at least a little nutritional nourishment? Could it have been a fellow

soldier, come back in another form, to give me my just reward and to thank me? Or was it someone I had met since then that cared enough to still want to keep me around for a little while longer, for whatever reason?

“His toes are starting to turn purple.”

“He looks like he’s ready to go.”

“He had a good life, he was a good man.”

A good life? A good man? What did they mean by that? All I ever did is what I was told to do. If that’s being good, then I guess my life was a success. Or was it? Could I have done more? Or, could I have lived it the way I wanted, instead of how I was just told to?

Well, in just a few minutes, I’ve decided once these “souls” leave the room, I’ll know, once and for all. I’m curious. This may sound funny, but I think it’s gonna be a blast!



Broken glass flew in all directions. The small blond-haired boy watched the sunlight sparkle through the shards of the bottle that had just exploded against his scarred wooden baseball bat. A slight breeze bent the patches of grass around him and carried away the dust that his tattered red Converse sneakers had kicked up.

He reached down into the 50-gallon oil drum turned trash can and produced another amber brown, red labeled Budweiser bottle. He lifted the empty vessel to his eye level and peered through it at the rolling hills of slowly dying grass.

The brown of the near autumn grass turned a lighter shade through the amber bottle's lens. The boy tossed the bottle high into the air before shattering it with another smooth, precise swing. The sunlight burst through the shards as they tumbled through the air. A single, jagged piece of the glass flew to strike the boy across his left cheek. He stumbled into the red dirt and gravel that surrounded him as his hand flew to his face. He felt the warm drops of blood beginning to form along the cut, and pulled his hand away for a moment to watch the red liquid run down his hand. The boy pushed himself off of the ground and wiped his bloody hand on his torn blue jeans as he cast about for something to bandage his cut. The grass encircling the oil drum was littered with empty shotgun shells and discarded copies of Auto Trader and Playboy. Grabbing the faded red cover of the closest magazine, he tore out some of the inner pages and pressed them to his still flowing cheek. The boy held the pages tightly to his face to stem the bleeding as he surveyed the scene in front of him. A flash of light caught his eyes as he tossed the now useless paper back into the weeds.

A golden coin with a smiling sun on its face lay in the dirt where the faded red Auto Trader had previously resided. The boy reached down to the ground and lifted the coin from the shadow of the garbage can into the light. As the sunlight hit

the coin, the smile on the sun's face widened and warmth spread from his hand, up his arm, and filled his entire body with a glowing sense of peace and contentment.

"I am always with you."

The words resonated in the small boy's head as he held the coin at arm's length. He felt no shock when he heard the words, only stillness in his mind and heart. The sun's smile returned to its former scale and the heavy warmth that had filled the boy's body faded to a soft tingling. He became aware of the sound of a vehicle approaching. The boy turned to see his father's faded blue pickup truck speeding toward him. He coughed at the cloud of dust that enveloped him as the truck screeched to a halt. His father, tall and dark haired, his face streaked with dust and grease and clothes dirty from farm work and smelling of sweat and diesel fuel, leapt from the vehicle and yelled for the boy.

"Get in!" he half sobbed, his face red and eyes swollen with tears.

"There's been an accident, your mother . . ." his voice trailed off, choking back the sobs he didn't want his son to hear. The boy looked at the coin he still held in his hand and placed it deep in his pocket before running and jumping into the cab of the truck before his father, who climbed in and mashed the throttle, blotted out the sun with a cloud of dust from the spinning tires.

* * * * *

The wind howled bitterly through the bare branches as it carried the lily white snow to the earth. The footfalls of the small girl were barely audible above the gale as her yellow snow boots crunched into the quickly piling powder. She imagined her footsteps painting a giant river behind her as she weaved in between the trunks of the cottonwood trees so tall they seemed to her to be touching heaven. Snow melted on her rosy face as the flakes struck her cheeks and trailed

down her chin into her bright red scarf. As she traveled further along her path, she noticed a small form fluttering in the snow near the base of one of the naked cottonwood trees. She approached it and kneeled on the ground. A small sparrow with a broken wing lay struggling before her. The little girl cupped her mittened hands together and scooped up the frail creature.

“Don’t be afraid, little thing!” she intoned to the sparrow.

But the little bird was afraid. It still trembled, and with a desperate burst of strength it flapped its broken wing and lifted itself from the girl’s hand into the wind. The currents of air carried its tiny body away and tossed it against the rough bark of one of the cottonwoods. The girl watched the sparrow fall limp and disappear into the snow at the base of the trunk. She sat down hard on the freezing ground, a tear running down each cheek as it mixed with melting snow. She sniffed hard and drew the back of her tiny fist across her running nose. The girl stayed still as snow began to build up in the folds of her jacket. Her lips began to chap as she remained motionless, seemingly oblivious to the cold wind that whipped her face.

A heavily bundled figure approached her from behind and scooped her into its arms just as she had lifted the sparrow.

“Sweetheart! What are you doing? It’s too cold out here for anything as little as you!” her mother cooed to her as she hefted the little girl on her hip.

The girl said nothing in return, only tightly hugged her mother’s neck and buried her face in her shoulder as she was carried back along the river of her footsteps toward home.

* * * * *

The young man watched the thousands of glowing lights reflected in the bay as he rubbed the golden coin in his right hip pocket. Even at three a.m. the city was still bustling. Sirens and horns carried their shrill notes across the early

morning air as the young man retraced his journey in his mind back to the present. Some ten feet away from him stood a young woman wearing a red dress and yellow sandals. A beautifully flowing brown sparrow with a crippled wing was tattooed upon her neck, and a small diamond in her lower lip sparkled as she turned her head toward the young man. She watched the streetlight above his head reflect off the shiny scar on his face as she wondered how he had acquired the mark. The pier on which they both stood was bare save the two of them. The young man felt the pull of the woman's gaze and turned to face her. He stared back at her green eyes, and began to walk slowly towards her, his thumb still tracing the lines of the sun in his pocket. As he walked in her direction, the young woman felt none of the fear that usually accompanied an approaching stranger. The world in her eyes had taught that even familiar things weren't to be trusted, but this scarred stranger stirred no trepidation in her. The young man stopped before her, took the young woman's hand, and without a word placed the coin from his pocket into her palm. He closed her fingers around the sun in her hand and lightly touched her shoulder before returning to the skyscrapers he had come from. The young woman who had lived out her life to that point in uncertainty and fear traced the lines of the face on the coin as it glinted from the glare of the streetlight above.

"I am always with you."

The coin smiled.



This excerpt comes from the eighth chapter of a novel currently being written.

The book begins with Alana, a 17-year-old girl from our world, putting on her grandmother's ring and being transported to a different world.

Upon her arrival she is discovered by Mathan, her companion for the story, and informed that it is her duty to help save his country from a usurper, using the magical abilities that she now possesses through her grandmother's ring. Alana resists, disliking Mathan's cold manners immediately. He tells her that she either helps him, or he won't reveal the information he has to help her return home.

Reluctantly, Alana agrees and they set out on their journey north to stop the usurper, Tameo. They travel together under the guise of a young married couple.

Just before this scene opens they have defeated a group of soldiers sent to capture or kill them and bring them to Tameo. Wielding magic against the soldiers and riding for a full day has left Alana tired. She and Mathan are now trying to find a place to sleep for the evening.

* * * * *

Just as the sun was falling below the trees in the west and Alana was nearly falling off her mare, Risa, from exhaustion, she and Mathan came around a bend to find the road intersected by a small dirt track off to the right.

Mathan slowed his gelding, Geer. Alana was grateful that Risa saw fit to do the same, since she couldn't get the reigns to work properly.

"There is probably a small farm down that lane," Mathan said, looking over at her. Alana noted distantly that he seemed concerned, his dark eyebrows coming together over his emerald eyes so that a small vertical crease formed

between them.

"Okay," Alana said slowly. Her tired mind wasn't working correctly; she couldn't quite grasp what Mathan was trying to tell her. She blinked sluggishly, waiting for him to get to the point.

"We should see if they could harbor us for the night," Mathan obliged. "You're not going to make it any further this evening."

"Oh, right," Alana nodded, fighting to keep her eyes open in the deepening gloom of dusk.

Alana watched Mathan look at her for a moment, an assessing expression on his face. Then he dismounted, and walked over to stand by her left foot.

"Can you dismount?" he asked. Alana blinked at him. Of course she could dismount, but she didn't know why she should.

"Why?"

"If you don't, you're going to fall off Risa. Come down now, please."

Sighing, she kicked her foot out of the stirrup and swung her leg over Risa's back. Unfortunately, she did so a little too forcefully for her stiff body to handle, and she suddenly found herself toppling backward toward the ground. Or rather, she would have, except Mathan was standing in the way. Instead of just falling off, Alana wound up falling on top of him, knocking both of them over in a very large, very tangled and winded clump.

"You are quite possibly," Mathan groaned from somewhere beneath her, "the clumsiest person I have ever met."

"Sorry," Alana mumbled as she tried to sit up. Her efforts were met with a grunt of pain from Mathan. "Sorry," she said again.

Deciding the best way to get up was to roll off of Mathan, Alana flung herself to her right, hearing Mathan groan again as her elbow hit something soft.

Once she had managed to roll herself over, Alana clambered

to her hands and knees, then to her feet. Looking around, she saw Mathan was still on the ground.

"Why are you still down there?"

"I have the strangest feeling that it might be safer than trying to get up."

"Why?" Alana cocked her head to one side.

"Because I am fairly certain you managed to hit every tender spot on my body just now."

"Every tender spot?" Alana raised her eyebrow wickedly. Mathan blushed a deep burning scarlet, his whole face, from the base of his throat to his hairline, right up to the tips of his ears, turning a dusky red color. Alana couldn't help herself. She threw her head back and laughed.

"I don't understand what's so funny," Mathan complained as he clambered to his feet, sounding strangely like a teenage boy.

"I just managed to make you blush," Alana told him, poking him in the chest with a finger, her laugh having subsided to giggles.

"You act as if that's a trial of some kind," he replied, absently rubbing the spot where she had poked him.

"Well up until now I'd never managed it."

"Yes, well. Shall we try and find our way to the farm now, if you've finished laughing at me?"

"I wasn't laughing at you," Alan replied, taking Risa's reigns from over the mare's head and leading her toward Geer. "I was laughing at the fact that I made you blush."

"Well perhaps you can postpone celebrating it until after we've convinced whoever owns this land to allow us to spend the night in their barn?"

"Oh fine, if you insist. Lead the way."

"I need your hand." Mathan said, making Alana stop in her tracks again.

"What?" she asked, blinking up at him a few times. Now that the adrenaline from falling had worn off, her head was back to feeling muzzy and she had trouble processing this

demand.

"I need your hand," he repeated, extending his own, "to keep the farmer from seeing the ring."

"Oh right." Alana replied, realization dawning through her tired haze. Slowly, she held out her pale right hand, and Mathan carefully wrapped his large tan fingers around it. Alana hoped it had gotten dark enough now that he couldn't see just how much she was blushing.

"What did you think I meant?" Mathan asked, looking down at her as they walked the dirt track.

"I . . . don't know," Alana mumbled.

"Are you sure?"

"Yeah. It just caught me off guard, that's all."

Mathan didn't say anything, so the silence elapsed as they walked. It was getting darker with every step they took, and as it grew darker, more noises started drifting to her from the forest. It had gotten so dark after a time that Mathan and Alana had started discussing whether he should risk making some light of his own. Just as they were coming to a decision, they stepped from the woods into a large clearing that held several structures, light flickering in the windows of the two smaller buildings.

Alana tried to make out the details of the buildings, but didn't have much success. She could tell that they were small, one story structures, and made of wood without a foundation. They looked rectangular, with maybe two or three rooms each.

"At least they're still up," Mathan said, leading Alana and Geer toward the larger of the two houses. It seemed that the darkness settled more deeply around them with light in view.

To Alana, the last of the walk to the cottage seemed to drag on almost as long as that walk to the Bahati village a few nights before. She stumbled enough times that Mathan finally seemed to grow tired of it, because he released her hand and wrapped his left arm around her waist, pulling her close enough that she could lean on him to keep from tripping and

wrapping his light cloak around her shoulders.

Alana wanted to protest, but as had happened so many times before, she was too tired to manage it. Instead, she found herself sagging against Mathan's lean side, working as hard as she could to keep her head up. Besides, the night was becoming chilly and she found comfort in the warmth from his body and his cloak.

At long last, they were at the door of the larger cottage. It stood under a small porch held up by two beams. The whole structure was the rich brown of stained wood.

"Stand for a moment," Mathan said, carefully disentangling himself from Alana and helping her lean against Risa's side. Alana watched blearily as he walked to the door of the cottage and knocked sharply three times. He stepped back and waited for an answer.

It took several moments for the answer to come. The door was cautiously pulled open by a silver-haired man holding a long knife in one hand while shielding his body with the door.

"Who is it?" he growled, glancing over Mathan suspiciously, then out to where Alana stood with the horses.

"My apologies for disturbing you sir," Mathan said, "but I was hoping you might have room in your stable for my wife and me."

"Benat, who is it?" asked a creaky woman's voice from behind the door. Another face appeared behind the man's, a silver-haired woman, the owner of the voice. She looked at Mathan then saw Alana.

"Benat, you old fool. Why are you keeping this poor couple on their feet? Can't you see the girl's about to fall over from exhaustion?"

"And how are we to know whether to trust them, Meerta?" Benat asked her.

"Do they look like they could ransack our farm, all on their own and half dead with weariness?" Meerta replied sharply. "Now quit your squawking and take the horses."

After a quick moment and a swat from Meerta, Benat did

as he was told, muttering as Meerta turned back to Mathan and said, "You best take your wife, dear. I don't think she can walk, and she certainly won't be able to climb into the loft. Best carry her into the barn. We'll put you up in one of the empty stalls. It's warm enough now that you two should be fine with a thick blanket. I'll fetch that. Go on, get your wife." And with a wave of her hand toward Alana, she bustled back into the house.

Mathan came back to Alana as Benat relieved her of Geer and Risa's reigns.

"Come dear," Mathan said to her, "Do you think you can walk?"

"I—" Alana started to say, but at that moment, Meerta came back through the door of the cottage with a large blanket over one arm and a lamp in the other hand.

"Why is your wife still standing?" she demanded, her dark eyes flashing at Mathan.

Mathan, ever knowing when not to pick a fight, turned and placed a hand on the small of Alana's back.

"What--?" Alana began to ask, but was stopped when Mathan scooped her legs into his other arm, tucking her snug against his well-muscled chest. She squeaked in surprise.

"I'll apologize profusely later," Mathan breathed into her auburn hair, as he turned to follow Meerta and Benat toward the barn.

"Mmm," Alana sighed against his shoulder, too tired to scold him, as she should. Instead, she snuggled deeper into Mathan's warmth, and listened to the crunching of his boots on the path.

It took a few minutes for Benat to make a bed out of the straw in the barn that met Meerta's satisfaction. While she fussed, Mathan continued to hold Alana against his chest. It went on long enough that Alana finally dozed off. She only reawakened when Mathan set her down on top of the blanket-covered straw some time later.

She began to mumble something, but Mathan shushed her,

saying, "Go back to sleep. Benat's taking care of the horses. Meerta insisted that I stay with you. Rest now. It's been a very long day."

Alana didn't protest. Instead, she moved until she was comfortable, still snug against Mathan's side - he insisted that Meerta was still fussing around and watching them - then fell into a deep, dreamless sleep.

* * * * *

Alana woke slowly the next morning, blinking several times in the bright sunlight streaming in through an open window somewhere nearby. It took her a few moments to understand where she was. Bit by bit the events of the previous day came into focus. She remembered leaving the Elderberry Inn in Gressings, stopping for lunch and practicing her magic with Mathan, the soldiers attacking, Mathan fighting the leader and winning, leaving the clearing, and even most of the ride that afternoon. The events of the previous night were less clear however, coming only in fragments through a fog of Alana's exhaustion.

She remembered coming to a farm and asking for shelter. After the walk up the dirt track though, things became hazy. She had a notion of an insistent older woman, a warm blanket, being carried to the barn, but none of the images seemed to fit together.

While she was trying to sort out her jumbled memories, Mathan's square-jawed face appeared around the side of the stall in which she lay. Seeing that she was awake, he stepped into the stall. Alana noticed that his clothes were very wrinkled and his black hair had been smoothed down with water, so that now it clung to his forehead instead of falling into his dark green eyes like normal. There were bits of straw on his breeches, but not his tunic.

Seeing his rumpled state, Alana thought for the first time of what she must look like, having spent the night on a pile

of straw after a day of riding and falling in the dirt. She could just imagine how tangled her own wavy hair must be, the dark circles under her own pale green eyes, the smudges of dirt on her pale cheeks, blotting out some of her many freckles. She tried to sit up, but found that moving her arms and head was nearly impossible. Now that she thought about it, just blinking up at the very tall Mathan took a significant amount of effort.

"Let me," Mathan said, coming over and helping her to sit up. Alana tried to fight the blush that spread up her neck and cheeks from needing Mathan's assistance, but she knew it was useless; her fair skin was already bright red.

"How are you feeling this morning?" he asked once she settled against the wall of the barn.

"Like all the dumb clichés there are about being weak and tired," Alana replied with a huff; Mathan raised an eyebrow. "We have all of these overused sayings in my world about a person being tired. There are tons of them. There are ones about kittens, and overcooked noodles, and burning candles, and more. And I'm pretty sure all of them apply to me at the moment."

"Well, you did perform a large amount of magic yesterday, then rode for half a day after that. I'm not surprised that you are tired. I would be tired. I am tired."

"Well that makes me feel so much better, especially because I can clearly see how weak you are." Crossing her arms over her chest was slightly less dramatic than she'd been going for, since it happened in slow motion.

"Now I know you can't be that tired," Mathan replied, a mischievous tone in his voice. "You are being sarcastic again." Alana's eyes narrowed in her patented glare.

They probably would have kept up their bickering if Meerta hadn't fluttered into the barn then, calling loudly, "Good morning!" She came to stand in the door, beaming down at them while holding a steaming breakfast tray of sticky rolls, preserves of some kind, and porridge with a cup of water on

the side.

Now that she was more awake, Alana got the chance to really look at the little woman. She was shorter than Alana, probably standing no taller than her chin, with a mass of frizzy gray curls tucked under a blue kerchief. She was thin, though not brittle looking. She looked as if she'd seen plenty of lean times, but had held her own. She moved in a sort of shuffling flutter, her arms tucked in close to her sides, her feet hidden by her dove blue skirt. Her grey eyes were bright with cheer, and she seemed completely oblivious to the fact that Alana was still scowling ever so slightly at Mathan.

"And how'd you sleep, love?" Meerta asked Alana, coming over and placing the tray gingerly on the girl's lap.

"Well, thank you," Alana replied, surveying the breakfast.

"Good, good," Meerta clucked, stepping back. "You gave us such a fright last night, you were so tired. Your husband never did tell us what happened."

Alana glanced up at Mathan, trying to take a cue on their story from him, but he was as still-faced as ever.

"We've been traveling to Elida," Alana said carefully. "We'd stopped to rest the horses and eat a midday meal when we were attacked by a roving band of soldiers. They nearly killed us both, but thankfully, my husband is an excellent swordsman. We managed to flee, but the excitement was just too much for me after so many days traveling."

"Oh my!" Meerta gasped. "Well I'm pleased you got away. We're happy to help you. Benat and I know all too well what it feels like to be attacked by soldiers. A group of them came through the other day. Took the little that Benat and I had laid away, and our cow too. Don't you worry, though. You're safe here. They got all they could already, no need for them to come back."

Meerta patted Alana's hand, then turned and flitted out of the stall. And suddenly Alana found that she no longer wanted to eat.

"Mathan," she whispered, looking up at him, "We should go."

Now.”

“You’re in no condition to travel.”

“But we can’t take anything from them!” Alana insisted. “They’ve already been ransacked by Tameo’s people.” Her voice had gone a little hoarse. She felt a prickle in her eyes and a lump form in the back of her throat.

“Alana,” Mathan leaned forward, placing his hand on hers, “be calm. I already planned to compensate them for taking us in. I promise. Please, stop worrying. You need to eat and to rest.”

Alana looked at Mathan, searching his face, only inches from hers. It took a moment, but suddenly Alana became aware of how close he was. For some reason she found this more uncomfortable than any of the times they had pretended to be married. This was real proximity, not the show they put on for everyone else. She felt the blush burn her cheeks and saw in his eyes the instant that Mathan realized this.

He jerked back, almost snatching his hand from atop hers, a ruddy tint burning on his cheeks again.

Alana stared at the tray on her lap, sure that she was evaporating the water with the heat coming off her face. Looking at the food again made her stomach rumble. Remembering how hungry she was helped Alana put aside her misgivings about taking food from Meerta and Benat and she began to eat. She was half-finished with the porridge before she remembered to ask Mathan if he’d eaten.

“Yes,” he replied, “I ate while you were still sleeping.”

“Oh, okay.”

As she was finishing off the last of the sweet roll, Meerta appeared again.

“We should get you out into the sun,” the older woman said. “It’ll do you good, help your strength to return.”

Alana nodded, her mouth still full of sweet bread. When she’d finished chewing, Meerta looked at Mathan and said, “Now then, help her up.”

Mathan bent down, lifting Alana under the arms as she slowly stood. It took a few moments, but eventually she was on her feet, though Mathan had to keep an arm around her waist to prevent her from falling over. Now that she'd eaten, Alana was feeling slightly stronger.

"Come on you two," Meerta called from the main part of the barn.

Alana took cautious steps, testing to make sure she wasn't going to collapse with each one as Mathan held her firmly around the waist with his left arm and grasped her right hand in his, supporting most of her weight.

They eventually made it to the door of the small barn, and Alana began to feel a little steadier. Looking out, she saw that Meerta had laid a green and yellow blanket under a large walnut tree growing between the cottage and the barn. Mathan helped Alana over to it and settled her softly, so that her back was against the trunk of the large tree, facing the rows of trees that took up the entire back half of the clearing.

"Meerta, what do you grow here?" Alana asked, once she was settled.

"We grow nuts. All manner, as you can see," the other woman answered, flapping her arm toward the rows of trees. "Now I've got washing to do. You just rest. Mathan can help Benat with some chores. Go on then boy." Mathan brought her a small book of Mascarán poetry he'd brought with them, then went to help Benat and his son. Alana was left to her own devices for the time.

The day passed slowly, Alana spending the majority of it under the walnut tree, moving with the shadow of the tree, reading poetry off and on. Meerta seemed to have been right about the sun. She felt her strength trickling back slowly as she watched the birds flit between the branches of the trees in the grove. She wondered what kind of trees they were. Almost all of them were flowering in varying shades of pink and cream, clouding the air with a strong perfume when the wind shifted toward her.

Turning her gaze to the rest of the farm, Alana could see a small paddock, two cottages, and the barn she had been in. Alana figured that before it had been stolen, the cow must have lived in the paddock. Now there was a brown goat and a couple of grayish brown sheep cropping the late spring grass, occasionally bleating at each other.

The barn was small, just large enough to shelter three or four animals on a stormy night and hold some hay or straw in the loft for the year. Both of the cottages were simple buildings, each only one room, with a small chimney on one side. It was a small farm, but it had an overwhelming sense of peace and cheer about it. It was a well-loved place, Alana could see that in how clean and well kept everything was.

Sometime around midday, Alana nodded off, dozing in the warmth of the sun filtering through the branches of the walnut tree. Meerta, bringing her a meal of bread and cheese, woke her sometime later. Alana ate it gratefully, then went back to resting and watching the farm.

By the time the sun was touching the tops of the trees on the western horizon, Alana felt almost normal again. Benat, Mathan, Meerta, their son and their very pregnant daughter-in-law joined her on the blanket for the evening meal of more sticky rolls and vegetable stew. Afterward, Alana carefully stood and helped Meerta and the daughter wash the dishes in the small basin inside her hut.

Once they finished, she went back to the barn and, after saying a quick good night to Mathan, settled in for the night. Laying her head on the soft blanket-covered straw, she began to drift to sleep with the scent of the nut trees wafting in through the open window above her head. As she fell asleep, Alana's thoughts turned strangely to the moment that morning when Mathan had leaned close, the soft caress of his breath on her cheek, the golden flecks in his green eyes glinting in the sunlight, the sudden realization of his nearness. Before she could think about it any more, sleep came.

Extremes have always fascinated humans. Quotidian life passes by as a monotonous routine, only corrupted by things that are out of the ordinary. Bizarre natural wonders are one of those odd creations that catch people's sight. Multitudes crowd places like the Iguazú Waterfalls and the Grand Canyon to admire, and even question, the enigma of these wonders; as they do so, however, they forget to realize that the median is their only possession, one which they will be allowed to keep until the extreme comes to claim they once more.

Beauty presents itself in many different ways; it is always changing but remains still throughout time; beauty persists and never perishes. The agitation of the roaring waters is overwhelming. Magnificent waterfalls take over. The platforms, built on top of the water to allow visitors, lead thousands of them to the edge of the abyss. The supremacy of the water, as it continues its endless torture of recycling itself, can remind humans of their powerlessness. The waterfalls seem to swallow the people who vanish behind the enlivening curtains of water, but as thousands are taken out of sight, thousands emerge time and time again. The waterfalls impregnate the permeable humans with their energy, and leave them tired and thirsty for fulfillment.

The desolation allotted to the Grand Canyon finds itself, as the waterfalls do, taking people's breath away. People reunite to contemplate the solitude of this formation of stillness. A vast mass of rocks extend to what seems to be the infinite and even further. The landscape is quiet yet grandiose. The only things that disrupt the silence are people's thoughts that roar as thunder. Quietude can be uncomfortable while beholding many mysteries. Quietude, although enigmatic, might reveal the fundamentals of noise. The path that escalates from rock bottom to the top is painful to some, and impossible to many, for it is known that all that goes up must

come down but the opposite of this is not law.

As people gather in admiration, agitation and stillness in their physical forms oblige humans to evaluate and rethink their certainties and their doubts. Water can both bring life and wash it away. The lack of activity though is the presence of death, and there are not many things that embody the antithesis of life as well as rocks do.

Water falls as rocks rise. But as water comes back up, rocks create depressions. Waterfalls and the dusty dry canyon could not exist together, but it is the lack of one that gives the other a place, and the presence of one that makes appreciating its opposite easier.

The imposing characteristics of these natural landscapes go beyond their physical beauty. Their majestic presences constantly remind humans of how small they are. People are leashed to, and must abide by, the will of uncertainty. Their occasional contemplation of the extremes should help them to appreciate the everyday beauty that is to be found in the negative spaces. After all, life is not really anything but the juxtaposition of death, but it is where ends meet that really should matter.



In our everyday life we attach labels to things, adjectives, and emotions in order to address them. The words we use for emotions are known to be too broad. This appears to be the same when referring to adjectives. We, however, take for granted our certainty and clarity when referring to things such as a “chair” or a “piece of art.” We fail to realize that we have never actually defined a word; we have merely associated an arrangement of letters to a nameless inanimate object and then created many other words in an attempt to explain what each of those words that we have used mean. Inaccuracy leads to misunderstandings and yet, instead of learning about the things we are surrounded by, we are taught ignorance and approximations. It is by the very way we are taught to speak that we learn associations rather than meanings.

Part of the process of growing up involves learning to speak. This is an ongoing process that normally begins early in a child’s life. Parents or guardians try to teach a language to a child in the simplest way: they show the child an object and assign a word to it. When the child, then, hears a certain word his or her memory retrieves what his or her senses have collected about what that *one* object that goes by that word, looks like; meaning that when the child hears the word “chair” he or she might think of a thing with four legs, a seat, and back support. Oversimplification is what leads to an inability to deal with complexity. Oversimplification leads to confusion.

Love and hate, such opposite feelings, do not only go together but may also turn into each other. There is no way to measure words like those, or to even know what someone means by them; we can only estimate. Emotions are too complex, too relative, and too arbitrary to be accurately described; the true feeling goes beyond words and cannot be captured in a simple combination of letters.

Adjectives, in the same way, do not really exist in them-

selves; they are instead determined and dictated by many different circumstances such as culture, time period, and personal preferences. What is beautiful to someone may be hideous to another. In fact, beauty is just a concept, an idea, something far from being a tangible thing. It is because of the lack of international standards that people strive to use words that are flexible enough to embrace all the things that could possibly be meant by it. In the attempt to do so people deprive every single word of a true meaning, leaving behind a word so vague that it means not too many things, but nothing at all.

Human beings have always relied on that which can be assured to them by their senses. In an effort to dominate their surroundings, they are eager to assign labels to things. Doing so seems to be easier than defining a feeling, since an object can only be itself and nothing more. It is then that things stop being things and become “chairs,” “tables,” and “pieces of art”. Conflicts erupt as people realize how inexact definitions are. Some definitions, although debatable, do not have a great relevance in everyday life. Though it is true that there is no clear definition of what a “chair” is, and there is no exact agreement on whether or not a stool, a bean-bag chair, or a car seat can really be considered chairs, it really would not make a difference either way.

Some other definitions, however, do matter. Marcel Duchamp, a French artist, was someone who pushed the definition of “art”. He then redefined the meaning of that word while being rejected by it. He created a controversial “piece of art” known as “The Fountain,” which was merely a urinal turned upside down signed with the pseudonym: R. Mutt 1917. He was, then, denied admission to an art museum, which claimed to be open for anyone to submit their artwork, on the grounds that it was not art. Just like almost everything else, people can see art and they can touch it, but they are unable to define it.

It is for the sake of simplification that things end up being

more complicated than they need to be. People tend to believe that it is easier to understand what something means if an example is given; however, that example can only represent so much of what is being explained. One thing, although it cannot stand for every single possibility, may very well define the way in which a person thinks of something. As people wander through life, assigning labels to objects, meaning is lost. Learning to speak is a process that few people really go through. Before people can start giving definitions instead of descriptions, before they can mean something instead of relating concepts, we need to realize that everything varies from country to country, town to town, person to person. We must agree that everything we face brings a storm of possibilities into our lives; how we think of each one of those possibilities will make all the difference. We need to forget the dictionary and the picture books. It is time to start giving life some real meaning.



ISSUE 2 CONTRIBUTORS

Juan Sebastian Cornet Arce

...for as long as he can remember, his passion for stories and love/hate relationships with his imagination have been a constant in his life. Still, not until he watched "Pink Floyd: The Wall" did he try his hand at writing. After five years of mind-numbing schooling, penning embarrassing "novels" that boasted far more adjectives than characters, parental conflicts, hopping on trains all across Europe, rewriting the same novels to resemble actual literature, jealously reading his favorite writers, going to college in a foreign country, telling society to find some other fool to mold, and falling in love with girls that either lived on the other side of the Atlantic, stood him up, or were engaged to be married, he believes he is ready to try his luck at becoming famous.

Rocio Barcellona

...was born in Argentina in 1990. She moved to the United States four and a half years ago, when she was 15 years old. She is fluent in Spanish and English and attended Webster University for a semester before transferring to Lindenwood University where she is currently majoring in Psychology and Criminal Justice. She is in her junior year.

Dan Burkhead

...won the 2009 Jean Fields Award for his poems and still likes to brag about it. He vows never to take himself too seriously (the one cardinal sin of poetry, in his opinion) and hopes you'll remember his name when he inevitably becomes a literary phenomenon known the world over, which should be just any day now.

Sarah Crawford

...is originally from Belleville, Illinois. She is a senior pursuing majors in Dance and K-12 Education. On campus, Sarah works on the grounds crew for her Work and Learn job. Off campus, she works as a house/pet sitter and flower bed maintainer for anyone who hires her to do so. One of Sarah's photographs was published in the 2001 edition of Page One, Belleville West High School's literary magazine, but this issue of Arrow Rock marks the first time any of her written work has been published.

Maxwell Fosmire

...is currently a sophomore Music Business major born in Enid, Oklahoma. He enjoys spring, the word serendipity, and sunsets, among other things.

Mac Hamilton

...earned both his BA and MFA in Writing and will enter the University's Ed.D program this year, with an emphasis in Adult Education/Distance Learning. He hopes to continue to write for enjoyment and publication, and teach at the college level. He also writes a lot of funny stuff on Facebook.

Deborah Ann Herzog

...graduated in September 2010 with an MFA in Writing. She is an academic advisor and records evaluator, as well as adjunct faculty teaching English at a metro east community college. She continues her passion for writing poetry and non-fiction. Arrow Rock is the first journal to publish her creative work.

Kathy Hoormann

... graduated with her BA in English Literature. She reads constantly and has a variety of interests including animals, mythology and astronomy. She is currently working on her first fantasy novel for young adults.

Tabitha Parker

...is currently working on her thesis to complete her MFA in Writing. She enjoys reading, editing and humanitarian work. She is training for her fourth degree black belt in Tae Kwon Do.

Laine Scott

...is currently a sophomore who enjoys writing. She does not know what she wants to do with her life, but she will figure that out eventually. Hopefully, she can write professionally. Obviously, she is an English Major.

Arrow Rock is currently accepting submissions for Issue 3. Please email your poetry, fiction, creative non-fiction, photography or other artwork to ArrowRock@Lindenwood.edu.



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