

A close-up photograph of a lit candle in a metal holder. The candle is white and has a bright, yellow flame. It is surrounded by dried leaves and twigs, creating a rustic and warm atmosphere. The background is dark and out of focus.

Voices

Spring 2017

Voices is produced each fall and spring semester by students enrolled in Journalism 139 under the direction of Professor Molly Sides, with magazine design and layout by Professor Scott Fustin.

Submissions are accepted from current students, alumni, faculty, and staff. All submissions are assessed anonymously, and current student winners in art, prose, photography, and poetry are awarded prizes. Acceptance, publication, and awards are based on artistic quality as perceived by the student editorial staff.

The views or opinions expressed in this magazine are those held by the artists and authors.

Current and past issues of Voices, submission forms, instructions, and deadlines are available at rvcvoices.com.



Cover Art

Candle on the Ground by Dawn Kennedy

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FEATURED AWARD WINNERS

Maybe, One Day by Matthew BaptistProse
Gallery Space for Lease by Emily HankinsPoetry
Eye of the Storm by Erin Hays Art
Candle on the Ground by Dawn Kennedy Photography
Adolescents on Horseback by David PinkPoetry

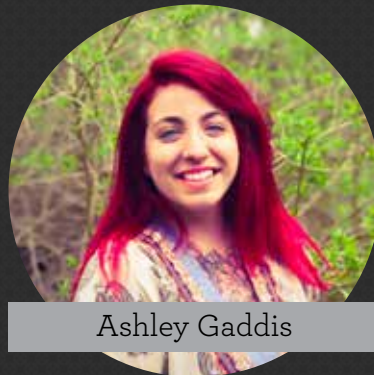
The Staff



Zachary Wharton



Alex Williams



Ashley Gaddis



Shayla Garcia



Rachelle Broomfield



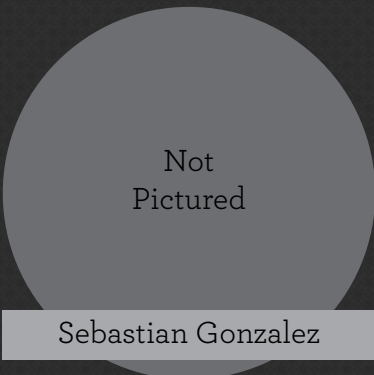
Emily Hankins



Peter Schalow



Matthew Baptist



Not
Pictured

Sebastian Gonzalez

Looking for Spring

by David Pink

Cold dogs the sun over winter's snow,
Every stop sign's a rusted blood clot.

Going nowhere, outside Fargo,
My eyes stencil the landscape

With a lone aspen: sign of the last Cross
Roads, of the maculate deception: choice.

Winter's everywhere: graying hair,
One eye cloudy, one clear; a dark star

In template on the bar door—shadow
Of a last aspen leaf still lingering

Like these clouds hanging
Over the influence of a river

Running under snow; any metaphor
For return, anything that leaves home

Only to come back again,
Like rain, something inevitable,

Like our song on the jukebox,
Or, by God, forgiveness.

Untitled

by Mary Rudney



Our Longest Goodbye

by Karissa P Faler

I shook.

My fist clenched at my side.

Mom told me with such a calm voice,

Almost as if I was a scared, caged animal.

But she didn't feel the weight in my chest.

My breath caught and liquid fire scorched my throat.

Teeth grinding.

I told her I wasn't surprised,

But I was.

My stomach heaved when I said "What now?"

I wish I came to see you more.

I wish I cherished you more.

I know I couldn't have changed this,

But it is so hard to watch you get so confused,
that you cry.

Even though your anger is worse.

Unforgiving and sharp tongue, I cannot blame you.

Grandma, I love you.

I don't ever want to introduce myself to you.

I don't want to look you in the eye when you ask me who I am.

That will be the day I lose my name in my mind.

But I love your quirky remarks,

And your unapologetic voice.

You remind me of where I came from.

How I got so obnoxiously loud.

How I became so strong and outspoken.

Why I walk so proud.

I wish you could understand my pain.

I wish I could take yours away.

I can only look forward to our many wonderful hellos.

I try to remind myself that every day is a fresh start,

Even though this will be such a long journey.

But what I hate the most is that this will be our longest goodbye.

And know that even when you forget this world and everyone in it.

I will always remember you.

City of Die

by John Tuttle



Maybe, One Day

by Matthew Baptist



Though Raymond Brosky had felt physical pain many times in his life, in the technical sense, he had never actually been in a fight. He had been hit, kicked, pushed, tripped, thrown at, around, down, and into all sorts of unsavory things. He even had the scarringly memorable experience of a malicious bb shot to the nipple. Yet, he didn't know the first thing about how to conduct himself in a fight. Most High School boys would expect a fight to be one boy engaging another in fist-to-cuffs until one of them concedes to the other. What Raymond did was more like an amateur surfer getting tossed effortlessly by a raging tsunami. Or maybe a bit more like playing dead to a lion and getting eaten anyway. Either way, there was never actually a fight. There was what the other kid intended to do to Raymond, and then that happened.

Raymond Brosky never went by Raymond. Throughout his sixteen years of trying to survive the social food chain, his peers had managed to come up with copious assortments of colorful nicknames of the least clever variety to address Raymond. Gay Ray, Ray the Gay, Gay Bro, Raybies, and the list goes on and on. One could say a sort of theme developed over time. His Mother, however, commonly addressed him by her given title of, "Little Shit."

"You're such a Little Shit," and, "don't be a Little Shit," were heard often at the family dinner table. Raymond felt that it sent mixed signals.

His Step-Dad, on the other hand, would always accidentally call him by his older Step-Sister's name, Renae. He would then immediately get annoyed at Raymond for somehow

making him do that, and follow up with "you know what your name is." Raymond's teachers called him Ray. Ray sometimes liked his teachers.

Growing up, Ray enjoyed his academic success immensely, especially the positive attention and affirmation he received from his teachers that he yearned to receive at home. He desperately desired the approval of his peers and so he was prone to overachieve and try too hard to impress others. This became an obsession, resulting in painfully awkward social ineptitude and embarrassment. He was teased relentlessly for his general clumsiness, like the time he answered "vagina" instead of Virginia to a question in front of his fourth grade class. Regardless of how he tried to mimic the behavior of his peers, it never elicited the laughs he desired, only exacerbating his torment. During a particular recess he put his finger through his pant zipper to simulate a penis in order to share in a chuckle with Chuck Holmvik. The result was Rapey being added to his list of nicknames. As far back as Ray could remember, he'd always been the outsider, ostracized and ridiculed for being different, yet never understanding how or why.

Ray was always a runt even among the runt community. The scrawnies thought he was a twig and even the shrimps called him Preemie. Ray was his Mother's only child and the younger of him and Renae. His Mother saw him as the perpetual baby that she wouldn't nurture. As a consequence, Ray was never allowed to pursue any tactical choices of extra curriculars in life that he thought could aid him strategically with his social dilemmas. Karate could possibly impress his peers, or maybe make them

reconsider their aggressions. At the very least, it could allow him to kick some much deserved butt. Football, the sport of champions and gladiators, could give him a cool factor, maybe get his social life off of life support. He wasn't athletic in the slightest, but he had significant experience running from spiders and taking hits to the stomach. To Ray's dismay, his Mother signed him up for little league baseball. He involuntarily became the unofficial mascot of Pearl's Antique China. He was known as The Brogina. Ray never left the bench. Not after the incident in left field when he caught an easy fly-out with his face. It cost them the game.

"What a panzy," Ray overheard his Step-Dad grumble.

Ray had always loved the other usual boy stuff like guns, ninjas, superheroes, and eventually boobs, too. He always made it a purpose to conduct himself in an agreeable and accommodating manner to the other boys. He feverishly tried to avoid confrontation and apologized for everything. Yet despite all this, he simply couldn't figure out why the bullseye never seemed to leave his back. Ray felt as if he had a 'kick me' sign embedded permanently to his aura, visible and inviting to the world. He some times fantasized about some other victim taking his place, a real dweeb, not like him. Someone like Erquel or Screech. He wouldn't even feel bad about it. Hell, I'd even help, Ray would jest to himself; anything was fair game if it led to obtaining his freedom from this dull and merciless act.

Yet hormonal instinct caught up with Ray one fateful day in sixth grade, on the bus ride home from school. Like a cornered, frightened animal left with no alternative, he stood up for himself after a few boys kept stealing his favorite Jackie Chan baseball cap. This was not an act of courage by any means, but the budding of a future mental disorder rearing it's ugly head.

Ray snapped when one kid spit on his hat just as he placed it back on his brown haired head.

"Why do you always have to be such an asshole!?" In a fit of animalistic rage, Ray headlocked the loogie hawker and shoved the phlem smeared cap in the bully's face.

"Lick it! Lick it!" Ray screamed, wild and wet-eyed, his voice cracking unexpectedly. After all, he had a reputation of embarrassing himself to uphold. Unfortunately for Ray, this only resulted in his cap being thrown out the window somewhere on Colfax Avenue, a mile or so from his house. The rest of the ride was pleasantly uneventful as Ray reflected on what came over him. He smiled thinking that it actually went quite well, all things considered.

The next afternoon, shortly after Ray arrived home from school, he was ding-dong ditched by the loogie hawker and his goons. There was his favorite Jackie Chan baseball cap greeting him at his feet when he opened the door, covered in dog poop.

Ray had become synonymous with cynicism by fourteen, his freshman year at Jackson High. He felt weighted by too many incidents, pranks, and traumas to count or bare. He never grew fond of picking spit-balls out of his hair, or cleaning milkshake out of his shoes. He was tired of his homework being stolen or being tricked into an elaborate public rejection only to be laughed at. He was fed up with being tackled during touch football when the gym teacher wasn't paying attention. He had become a veritable real estate agent of the inside of every trash can, every locker type, every jock's sweaty armpit, and even between the enormous ass cheeks of Bill Fischer. Ray wanted his dignity back instead of saying "Thank you," to wedgies. He didn't want to be singled out anymore. He most certainly wasn't looking forward to the next time he'd be pushed out of the boy's locker

room, naked, into an occupied gymnasium, surrounded by square dancing freshmen.

His first two years of high school were his most memorable and nightmarish years to date. By now he had become a farce of himself, a contradiction between an obsession to fit in but a refusal to do so. He had accepted that he was weird, peculiar, different, or whatever label felt most appropriate by the labeler at the time of labeling. Fascinated by history, he adored wearing large, frock coats and accessorizing with enormous buckles, buttons, and various sashes. He was fond of top hats, bowlers, and fedoras. He wore ratty, old military jackets and knee high cavalry boots and once, but only once, an Irish kilt. Ray opted out on a backpack, but instead was never without an old briefcase of his late Father's; a sort of secret security blanket he was too psychologically damaged to grow out of carrying around. Although he was anxious of large groups and public oration, Ray was mesmerized by the theatre and often dressed up. He looked like anything but the ordinary, sixteen year old, high school boy he so desperately wanted to be seen and accepted as.

On Ray's worst of nights, he would glare menacingly down at his outstretched wrist. His teeth grinding, breathing erratically, a butcher knife in his opposite hand held intently where it could do the most harm. X marked the spot where his tears fell to his bare wrist. His body always frozen in motion, but his mind reeled with why not and what if,

"No one would even care," he wrote in the margins of his notebook so many times he made it cliché. He couldn't decide what was more cowardly, allowing himself to live like this or not allowing himself to end it. He resigned himself to the belief that this was his life now and forever. There was only one way out of this drama, let alone an end to the social landfill that was his tenure at Jackson High. His life was

like a wildlife show now. Every day: eat, shit, get eaten, repeat. Rerun after rerun, unless he just flipped the off switch, easy-peezy. Real life was a bad gag delivered by a stooge who's act never seemed to end. He just wanted the show to be over already, but lacked the conviction to deliver the punchline. Whether he was looking down at his reflection off the kitchen knife, or looking down at the pavement of his driveway from the roof of his house, he would just stand there, staring. Like a macabre mannequin shockingly poised until he became lucid and quietly drifted back to the safety and solitude of his room. He couldn't do it. He would never do it. He knew he would never do it, and that made him feel more ashamed.

Ray would often talk to himself about his emotional turmoil. He would stage unofficial, self administered therapy sessions. He would fold out an old, plastic, green and white striped pool chair in his bedroom. He'd lay down and lament over not having his quintessential "perfect life", a fantasy he lived out in his imagination and acted out in his bedroom. His perfect parents, his perfect sibling, his perfect friends, everything that he thought was wrong had an elaborate alternative to its reality. He created safe zones, warded off from the harshness of real life, that he could escape to and imagine he was somewhere else, anywhere else. Ray never removed the blanket and pillow he kept under his bed.

Vermadalen

by Katelyn McSorely



Revelry

by Vedran Ulemek

Mama! Mama! I have met God

and we walked through the streets of Bethlehem.

A child sits, suckling exposed breast.

“Life’s first tragedy!”

Starving wanderers naked in these paths;

They walk and they walk and they walk

in a futile repetition of sacred cycles.

“Tis’ the road more traveled!”

Their skin clings to brittle bone

And they hide behind hollow smiles.

A snake in a bodhi tree, coiled in its golden scales.

“A whore bathed in moonlight!”

Mama! Mama! Do not mourn for me, this is only
destiny.

Papa! Papa! I have seen the wars.

He joined me in Troy’s carnage,

Armies clashed in lustful embrace.

And again at the Hot Gates,

Writhing walls of gluttonous corpses.

The sack of Athens!

Pride purged to flames!

O’ the plight of Carthage,

Salted in absent glory.

“Are you afraid of me?”

Immortalized in blood and in stone,

And in tears and in memory.

Papa! Papa! Do not mourn for them, it is only destiny.

And the world came in nibbanic revelation!

Mass unto mass, twisted fabrications

Sickly and contorted in forseen abdication.

Mass unto mass every man a beggar

This city’s shaking we can feel the tremors.

The world seems like it just stopped turning

Someone help me I can feel it all burning.

Mama, Mama, I know you hear me crying

Our blood self-cannibalized we’re dying.

Papa, Papa, I’ve seen our blood sports

Mass unto mass we’re all but death’s cohorts.

Mass unto mass in cataclysmic eruptions

Mass unto mass in whispering corruptions.

Cardinal Beauty

by Nela Jovanovic



Adolescents on Horseback

by David Pink



We rode the days we knew would always last--
Never spoke of the past. It meant nothing
To us lost in youth's eternal summer.
The high hill of sex? We climbed it, laughing.
In easy dark, felt our way by instinct.
The desert representing loss? We took
Tumbleweed tombstones for granted.
Crossed the river of no return? No problem.
We neither noticed nor knew its portent
As we galloped full out through its current.
Motion was enough and we moved faster
To prove that we were living. What matter
If we never stopped, or deeply thought
About anything? The future could wait
For us to dismount. Then it could spring,
Like parents' traps, inevitably, questions:
"Where had we been? What, by God, had we done?"
To which we'd reply, innocent monks and nuns
Back from night-long vigil, "Nowhere. Nothing."



Gallery Space for Lease

by Emily Hankins

It seems to me I'm looking through
A plastic beige-tinged curtain.
Where there beyond the dull air, trapped
There grows a red rose garden.
And sometimes thoughts like petals push
Against that taut communion,
But I see them through that nauseous film
Which warps their true intention.

Oh, will I ever truly sit
And think my thoughts to reckoning?
Or will they only push and heave
Against the part that's bending?
And will that bending cease to move
Someday when tides are ebbing?
Will fingernail find oil and groove,
And open up the rendering?

One day, I know, I'll peel it back,
That cautious old pretender
Who dared to try and stop my thoughts
And return them to sender.
And all at once I'll understand
That old saying that goes
"A rose is a rose is a rose is a rose."

Nature's Xanax

by Janet Striedl



The Flight of the Moor Children

by Tricia D. Wagner

"You mustn't!" Lox shook his head, covering his mouth with a collection of boney fingers. His voice was infantile in the common way of Moor Folk children who have not yet had their twelfth-year soiree. He crouched low behind a boulder on the flat palm of the Bolivian mesa.

Behind him, the sun joined in on crouching low, hiding itself behind mountain peaks. The sky floating around it, sapphire blue, was growing hazy with night mist.

"Come come, you need not fear." Kosa stood tall before the crouching Lox and the disappearing solar disk, making his voice low and even in the way of Moor Folk children who have had their twelfth-year soiree only last week. "See how she looks towards us, but cannot see the light in your wings?"

"She does!" Lox's blue wings quivered. "Oh help, I think she does!" He cowered deeper behind his stone.

"No," said Kosa, lower still. "She is blind. They all are. See, I will prove it to you."

"No don't, oh, please don't!"

Kosa's face rippled into its most mischievous grin, and he spun towards the shanty and fixed on stocky woman hanging out of its window. The woman was staring absently over the mesa and into the heavy vacancy of southern darkness. She was waving a ragged cloth over a piping loaf of mountain berry bread, making it cool and sending tendrils of steam into the twilight and beneath Kosa's button nose. Kosa closed his eyes and sniffed the savory tenderness of ground grains and risen yeast, breathing the cool deli-

cacy of mountain berries, tempered sweet by the embers glowing inside the woman's stone oven. He opened his shining eyes and winked at Lox.

He leaped forward and flared his wings full, shocking the air around him with charges of electric blue light, flooding the mesa with faerie fire, chasing startled night insects out of clumps of shining desert grasses and chasing frightened hunting mice into them. The insects crouched lower to the ground than even the huddled Lox, and they silenced their singing legs and readied themselves for flight, while rabbits and kangaroo rats trembled in the achingly beautiful peals of starshine flowing out of the Moor child.

Lox, terrified, glanced up at Kosa, and then raised his astonished eyes over his barricade and looked at the woman. She stood at her window unchanged, and he could read nothing on her face but boredom. Kosa breathed deeply, recoiling the blue fire back into his body and mingling it with the shadows spilling from the mountains. He let out a guttural cry and bellowed the yodelly notes selected from the night song of his Genii tribe that, when combined with the strength of many voices, could pull the sleeping moon from beneath the gray havens and into the misty atmosphere, east of Bolivia.

The singing of a tribal cry is not an art that Moor children are born knowing. They must learn it, and they must perform it at their twelfth-year soiree, as each faerie camp boasts its own particular recipe for song. For their cry, Kosa's Genii Cucullati tribe had stolen pieces of coyote howls. These they had strung together with the notes that night hawks sing. And they had finished their piece by raiding the camps of Amazonian

Indians, where they had drawn no less than three pure strains of music from the pipe of the chief, as he sat bare-bellied and merry by his fire, singing beautifully.

Lox's laughter made Kosa cut his cry short, so that only one poor star popped into the heavens, and this a small one. Lox pointed at the star, fizzing, barely alive, and he laughed even harder, reddening, decomposing beneath the dim glow of its pitiable impotency. Kosa giggled at it with him and dropped his hands to his sides. He knelt on the dusty earth and folded his wings and gestured for Lox to follow.

"Why must we creep so, like the creaking crickets?" Lox asked, from the pose of a frog. "If she can't see us, why don't we walk upright like bears?"

Kosa spun around and grinned at him, nose to nose. "Because it's more fun if we creep. Secrecy always makes the bread taste better."

"Oh," said Lox, sitting up and rubbing his belly. "Okay."

They scaled the gentle rise of the sandy mesa, until they reached the tin eaves of the shanty. The steam rising from the bread was hanging in a cloud of dewy air around the window, making the pupils in the golden eyes of the Moor children swell. Kosa nodded to Lox, and they set their fingers on the window sill and pulled their small bodies, here now in their basest form, the same size as human children, up to standing. Their two faces, brown as the bread, peeped over the threshold and looked up at the woman whipping her bounty with a kitchen rag.

There she slumped, resting one fatigued hand on the back of her hip, her face glistening with oily sweat drawn by the humidity of the night and the intensity of her day's labor. She stepped away from the window and bent double to stoke the fire in her hearth.

"Now what do we do?" whispered Lox.

"We steal it, of course," said Kosa, smiling hungrily at the loaf. He isolated one knobby finger and set it on the hunched back of the bread.

The woman turned around and found the plate empty. "Mercy!"

"What is it, Rosa?" asked a gruff woman's voice from inside the shanty.

"Cursed faeries!" Rosa cried, turning round and slapping the wood slab kitchen table with her rag. "They've swiped the bread I baked."

"You are imagining things, dear Rosa. There are no such things as faeries."

Kosa snickered and lifted his finger from the loaf. The woman turned back and cried out in surprise.

"What now?" asked the gruff woman.

"Well the bread is back! The bread is back!"

"You are a crazy woman, Rosa, I hope you know."

Rosa put her knuckles on her hips and leaned out the window. Her eyes narrowed to slits, and she scanned the horizon from east to west. Lox ducked away from her, bending low his hood

and ears, while Kosa, still grinning knavishly, slid his hand between the woman's bosom and the bread. Giggling, he poked his finger into it.

She looked down, started, and screamed about the missing bread. Her flailing arms set loose her braids and sent the empty plate crashing to the ground.

Kosa gripped the bread and ran, tripping in his laughter. He sprinted down the mesa's slope with Lox stumbling close behind, both of them heaving peals of merriment. When they neared the lip of the ravine, they kicked their heels at the Earth and together spread their wings and jumped into the abyss, picking up blue wind and soaring into the indigo vacancy of newborn night, circling the round mesa, over its tiny shanties and firelights, then scaling up the sharp line of the high green hill upon which they had both been born.

"Calm yourself, Rosa, now, calm down," said the low voice, the voice of the mother of the family who called the tiny shanty home. She felt sorry now for making fun of the poor cook, who was all but wild with fright.

"Cursed rascal faeries!" Rosa stabbed her bread board into her oven and fished out her second and last loaf. "Damned immortal race!"

"No doubt you have been the victim of a crime tonight, dear Rosa, but the true criminals were more like to be a troop of capuchins than faerie folk."

Rosa leaned out the window and shook her fist at the blooming stars. "It was those meddling faeries, Marianna. I would swear it to the holy grave."

"Come now. There are not faeries. Come away from the window and sit with me, and we will have our bread hot."

Seraphina lay in her dark room upon her straw bed, listening to the argument. Her tiny heart, not ten years wise, was beating very hard, the way it always did, when faerie folk were nigh. She rose up on her bony knees and scooted to her window and peered out from behind the drabbet curtains into the deepening sky. Before her eyes, two darkish shapes streaked vaguely against the glittery backdrop of stars. Any other mortal would have perceived the flight of the Moor children as a passing whisper of cloud or a glistening of a shooting star, especially beautiful. But this mortal saw with open eyes, and she grinned, exultant.

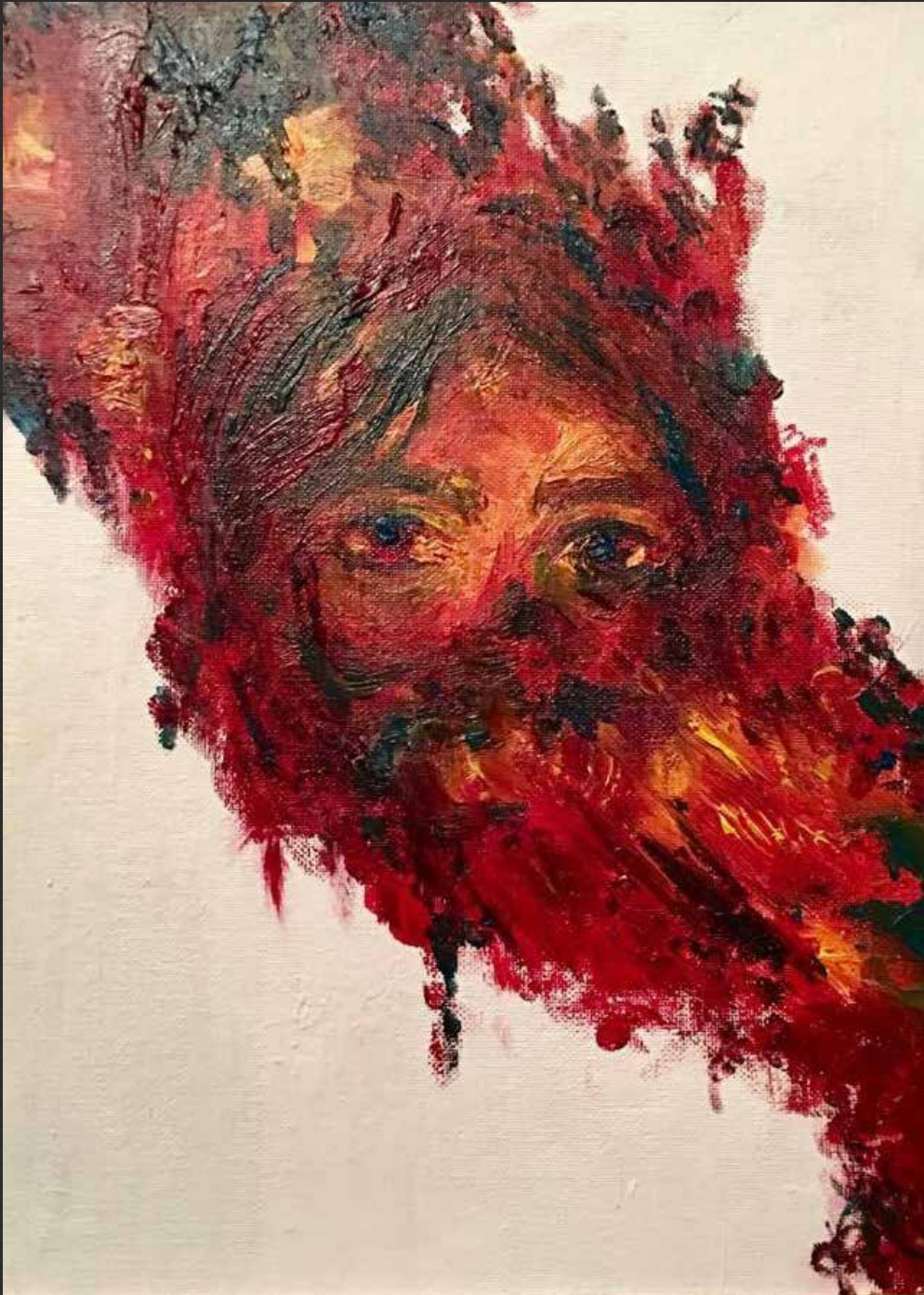
She looked at her baby brother, who was watching her from his bramble crib, blinking large black eyes at her. She smiled at him, and he smiled back around the wood cork his mother had given him to suck.

Her lips curled into a clever smile, and happiness wrinkled her eyes. "There are faeries," she told him.

This work has been previously published

Eye of the Storm

by Erin Hays



Vibrancy


by Alec Reicher



The Timekeepers

by John Tuttle



The background of the entire page is a dark, moody photograph of a forest floor. It features a dense layer of brown, fallen leaves and twigs. On the right side, a green plant stem with a white, bulbous base is visible. The lighting is low, creating a somber and naturalistic atmosphere.

Presented by
Rock Valley College
Journalism 139 students

Voices

Spring 2017