





# AWARD WINNERS

Fall 2008

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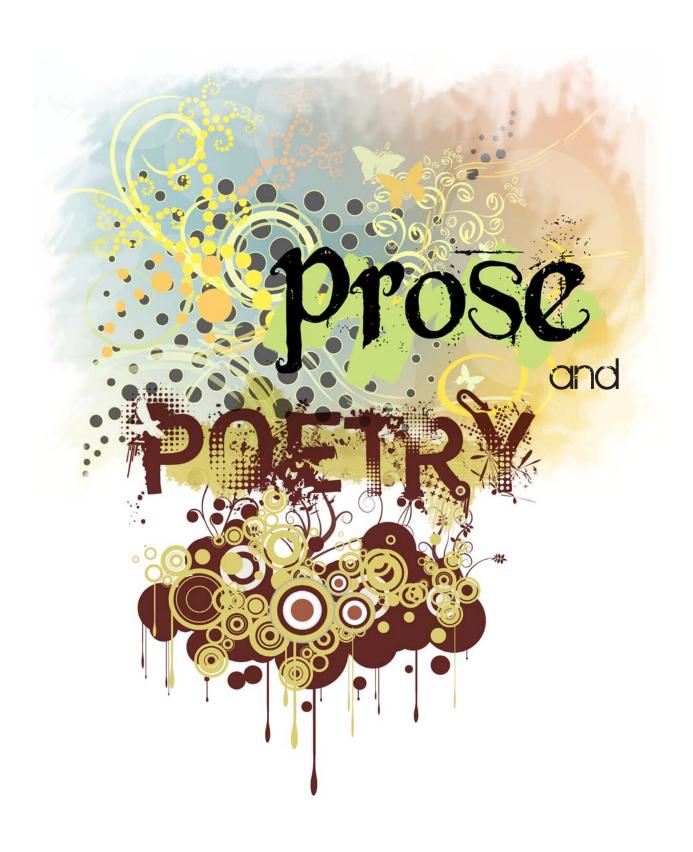
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Submissions are accepted from students, faculty, staff, and members of the community. All submissions are considered by the Voices staff each semester and rated through a blind voting process. All submitted work in each genre is given equal

consideration, and winners are chosen based on numerical rank. Acceptance and publication of work is based on artistic quality as percieved by the student editorial staff. The views or opinions expressed in this magazine are those held by the authors and artists.





## While My Bouquet Loudly Weeps: A Time for Zeal By Emily Brewer

Kennedy was my grandmother's favorite President. She had lovely pictures of him placed delicately in the hallways mapping the way towards the bathroom. Every anniversary of his death, she would place his favorite flowers on the dinner table and cry. She was in love. My grandfather called him her boyfriend and accused my father of having the Kennedy face and the nice tan. My father would smirk like a geek and nod in agreement at his children. And on my mother's side of the family, we had a dear man I called Papa, my grandfather. An honest and hardworking American who had two pictures in his possession when he passed: my grandmother and of Lincoln. So, I say, in jest, my blood runs like everyone else's, blue. I never thought of voting for anyone other than my sturdy Democratic bloodline. My poor grandmother, for God's Sake, would be crushed! I was raised in a lovely Midwestern town and brought up with morals and dirty, blue collars. This is my given history.

Thankfully, my wonderful grandparents never saw the effects of the tragedies from 9-11, or the sadness of Columbine, or now the bloodshed on the floor of my grandfather's college, NIU. We needed to be moved, we need to love, we want to hope, and to believe so deeply that we weep over flowers and invest that strength in our spirits. And there he was; front page of the *Chicago Sun Times* screaming for my generation to look up and see that through the gray newspaper of our new history, there is a way: "Change will not come if we wait for some other person or some other time. We are the ones we've been waiting for. We are the change that we seek" (Obama 2007).

It's hard for me to separate myself from this truth. He, Obama, speaks to a generation that is my own. Change comes from the ones who will accept it. This choice of change is something we are familiar with. Kennedy proved to us in the sixties that we need to make a choice for change. He proved that we are a nation that will not accept oppression. He fought with tenderness and honesty. We, as a nation, have shown that we are not going to be silenced, that we can reach and hope and prove that the American dream is not in our hands but our hearts.

After all, we can't stay at those dinner tables and watch the flowers wilt. They instilled spirit in us so that when this day came, today, we would have the endurance to prune off the ends of injustice and face the change that my grandmother held so deeply in her heart. This sense of empowerment stems from a seed I now see as the roots of our ideal American dream.



# **How I Bet My Heart and Lost** By Caitlin Chance

You asked me to write you a love note, once.

It was a joke request, I think. I've never really been too sure about that.

I tried. Really, I did. One read:

Dear X,

What is love? Where can I find if? In your heart, maybe? In your soul?

But then again, maybe not.

It was a complete failure. So, I tried again.

Dear X,

Tell me you love me and I'll tell you the same sweet lies. Let's run away together.

I really couldn't get this stupid love note right. It joined the last one in the trash. Another paper, wasted. Anther tree, dead.

This time, I'll try for real.

A-flat

Yes. That, that is a love note.

Another note joined it.

A-flat, C, D, B-flat

Notes found their way on to manuscript paper I didn't know I had. These discordant love notes twined together to create, dare I say it? A love song. Surely, that was what you had asked for? But it wasn't.



### Stay Beautiful By Carissa Kampmeier

Eve could feel them as she walked down the hallways at school. She could feel them as she sat in the classrooms, rustling papers anxiously and avoiding gazes. At the mall, at the gas station, at the library. Everywhere she went, there were eyes.

Strangers stopped her on the street. People looked at her in awe or reverence, or pretended not to look, but she could always catch them sneaking glances out of the corners of their eyes. Once, in class, she'd whirled quickly in her seat to see if it was all in her imagination. It wasn't. They didn't even look away, embarrassed at being caught staring. As though it were a good thing.

Nobody cared if she'd done her English homework (she hadn't), or if she'd passed her math quiz (she had), or what she thought about the presidential campaign (she didn't like any of them). It was worse than being hideous. She was beautiful.

Her friends were quietly envious. They frequently complained about their appearances—their hair was too short, their forms, too flat, and their noses, just too crooked. But the moment Eve tried to join in, either with friendly reassurances about the adequate shape of their noses or minor complaints of her own, they grew suddenly deaf. She wasn't allowed to complain. She wasn't allowed to speak. She wasn't allowed to breathe.

Her boyfriend, when he kissed her goodbye each night, would wink and say, "Stay beautiful."

Then he'd chuckle at some private joke; as if the thought of Eve ever being anything but beautiful was so unlikely that it was laughable.

It wasn't that she didn't like her appearance.

Eve supposed she must have been lucky that she didn't have to obsess over the mirror each morning like most girls her age, but in truth, even had her appearance been blessedly average, she probably wouldn't have. Because it wasn't as though beauty counted for anything. It didn't make her smart, or talented, or indeed, useful in any way. It wasn't even as though it would last forever.

Eve contemplated all of this as she stood in front of her bathroom mirror with the scissors. There wasn't any excitement, only a flat sort of determination that this had to be done. People had to see that beauty wasn't everything. That it didn't last. That there was more to her than just another pretty face.

One by one, her long, mahogany locks fell into the sink. She cut at random, at different lengths, some a few inches long, and others so close to her scalp, she feared she'd slip and cut herself.

But it was worth it. She was breathing heavily by the time she finished, as though she'd been running. But a slight frown formed between her eyebrows as she contemplated her reflection.

It wasn't enough.

A strange sort of exhilaration filled her as Eve got into her car afterward. She had to go





somewhere; she had to test this new look. She'd only planned on cutting her hair, but when that proved a failure, she'd taken it all. Her head felt smooth and empty, free of its long, heavy curls, and pale as the inside of a shell. She wanted to watch peoples' reactions. Certainly, they would stare, because people always did, but these stares would be different. They would be because she was different, and not because she was beautiful.

It was hard not to smile as Eve strolled through the mall, feeling free for the first time in her life. She'd chosen it because there were always people there, especially on the weekend, and they would provide a nice, neutral audience before the real show on Monday morning.

Many of the shoppers looked at her strangely, but what was one bald girl in a generation of neon hair, nose rings, and fishnet? For the first time, she didn't mind that people were gawking. It was like wearing a really good costume; she could be anybody now.

A boy about her own age stared openly as she passed, his mouth dropping open a little. He was moderately good-looking, she noticed, but he didn't seem like the type who was aware of it. He didn't look away quickly enough when she tried to catch his gaze.

"What?" she asked, fighting the strange, almost gleeful feeling that filled her chest as she anticipated his answer.

He ducked his head, and a surge of joy shot through her. He was embarrassed.

"Nothing," he said finally, a sheepish smile pulling at his lips. "It's just... you're really beautiful."



# When I knew I Didn't Love You By Kyle Pratt

I got up at four every morning that summer. The nights you slept over, the nights we slept alone, the nights we didn't sleep at all; I got up at four. Most of the time I hated it. I would pull myself up and stumble towards the bathroom door. The stale yellow light always hurt that early, and I would end up getting ready with one eye closed and the other squinting. But when we didn't sleep, when the ringing alarm was merely an unwelcome addition to our already established rhythm, four was a beautiful time. The sun wasn't up, but outside the window you could see everything in shades of dark blue. Everything seemed illuminated with a muted freshness. Those days, when you grabbed my wrist and tried to pull me back into bed and away from the hours of work ahead, getting up at four was always nice. Those days, I never felt more awake.

That morning, when I got to work, there was a boy standing at the top of a hill staring down at the marker of a girl who was buried a couple days before. I watched him there: at the girl's grave. He stood in wrinkled clothing, hands clenching and unclenching, and began to speak to her, and as he spoke he dropped to his knees and lay down his head to the soil. Rain started to pour down just then. It came down so quickly and heavily it soaked through my clothes almost instantly, and he began to look slightly faded, but I could still see him as he lay there with his ear pressed to the soil on the spot where, thinking back on it now, he must have thought her

heart was. I watched him as the rain fell, and he clutched the grass on either side of the upturned earth, my clothes growing heavier and heavier in the downpour.

I wish I could say when I got back that day, and I walked into the house and peeled off my shirt, the heavy cotton clinging to my body, that I told you what had happened: that I had seen a boy, who loved a girl so much he had tried to raise her from the dead with his tears. I wish that when you had slipped your hands around my damp skin and kissed me, I hadn't kissed you back as if I meant it. I want to say I told you everything, and that even though it hurt, you were better off for my honesty—but you know the truth. When you looked up at me and told me you loved me, I looked you in the eyes and told you I loved you too, even though I already knew.

And when you seemed satisfied, I leaned down to set the alarm.



### "Foolish Bones" (Lyrics) By Carrie Allen

Let's go for a midnight run
I gift wrapped my clarity and it
Fills my lungs
Hopefully I have been as your frog
As you held the scalpel thinking
Nothing could go wrong
But something did go wrong...
All wrong

These bones won't let me slither, slither away.

Rich in spots here and there You pick through me like in the past And I was foolish I couldn't help it It was hopeless I am hopeless...

These bones wont let me slither, slither away

As your scalpel moved across my skin I couldn't help but feel like the Frog in this experiment
The frog
In this experiment

These bones wont let me slither, slither away These foolish bones



#### Waterfall David Finch

Endless flowing glass, Masquerading as mirrors, Showing self and soul.

#### **Hunting In The Grass** Coleen Martin Williams

The robin stares down Doesn't need her wings to fly Hunting in the grass

# The Pond's Reflection Coleen Martin Williams

The pond's reflection Shows green flora above it Contrasted with blue



## **Mechanic Needed See Page 2 David Mortenson**

Busted lights
Shine on our broken dreams
Busted dreams
Cracking painfully in the seams
Broken nights
Where knights no longer roam
Broken streets
Where everyone stays at home

## **Love's Persuasion Coleen Martin Williams**

Love convinces
Every nerve
Every bodily sensor
To climb to their highest peaks
In full view
Of the lowest valleys
That wait
Like a nest of hungry mouths
Knowing
They will be fed



#### if only He knew... Matt Lask

"Those who call the shots are never in the line of fire." the blood and sweat runs thick with one desire: to go on home, to call it a day, it's six p.m. now, we've been working since eight.

it's the middle of august and here's what we say:
the moon never wakes while the sun's on cocaine.
the work is rough and the days don't end,
our arms don't stop and our backs stay bent.
the shingles and nails tear through our skin.
we're paid dirt cheap, but somebody will win.
we feel no pain, for that stage passes by,
at least there's one benefit of getting high.
there's holes in our boots, there's tar in our hair,
our hands are weak, our minds are bare.
the bodies toll has been taken but the work will end soon,
for roofers in rockford, the winter is doom.

And here He comes, the Big Bad Boss With His air-conditioned truck, to collect the cost. He sits down low as He sits and He stares With that grin on His face and His slicked back hair.

He's never worked hard, His collar's always been white. His daddy's the owner, so He holds all the might. He dropped out of college so His dad told Him "Son, don't worry about college, do not jump that gun. For You'll come work for me and You'll make lots of money. It never will rain, it will always be sunny! The roofs are too steep and with that there's a risk. I think You'd be better off in the office. We'll skip all the hard work, for that there's no need. All of Your knowledge comes directly from me. And if the roofers don't like it and they talk all that talk, Then I will make sure that they take a long walk." So that's how it happened, how it all went down.



He says He once was lost, but now has been found. He'll make lots of money, determined and bound! And all of our paychecks are signed by this clown. And He'll scream at us, while we don't make a sound. because we are lost roofers who will never be found.

we avoid His eyes hoping He doesn't get out, we're ready for sleep and know what He's about. He'll kick and He'll scream and He'll cry and He'll whine: "This shit's all wrong, quit wasting My time!" The truck turns off and our blood runs cold. as sad as it is, He's only twenty years old. He comes up the ladder and He walks on the roof, He's close to me now, all it would take is a push. "Quit looking at Me, go clean up the ground! Nobody talk, not even a sound! Now listen to Me, this doesn't look good. I wanna get paid, is that understood? Now start it all over and make sure its right. I really don't care if you sleep here tonight! My word is final and you'll do as I say, Try to speak up, and I'll cut all of your pay!" He crawls down the ladder and back to the grass, while we pick up our hammers to throw at His..skull. He gets in His truck and He drives down the road, Headed on back to His two-story home With His wife and two kids and His dog and His fish. while we work til dusk, His one simple wish.

we're told what to do so we do what were told. though we're high up on roofs, we're low on the pole.



### Pinwheel Kyle Pratt

She moved with fragile revolution. One cheap pinwheel—drugstore hypnotist—leaving her gudgeon baited with false ambition.

We met, we two, amidst measured heaving.

Her lustrous lips, alley-lit in a way that illuminated the flesh without betraying her deliberateness. "Stay," she whispered. And I consented, no doubt crossing my mind, as we moved in the breeze sweeping down the lane. I was quickly charmed. She kept me for a while, spinning with ease the words requisite. But in the end, harmed, I realized her circular nature: just a toy with a shiny veneer.



### **Epic Ashley Ray-Harris**

A girl once asked me if I enjoyed being a woman. Because, she said, "if I had a choice I'd give away my ovaries as Carnival prizes and I'd sell my breasts on late night tv Because that's all they're worth to me.

And... I froze
Stunned by such blatant disregard
Of maybe the best gift anyone could ever be given
You see, womanhood doesn't just come with
One curse, it comes with a mountain of them.
And your walk becomes weary with the
Boulders you carry because women never forget,
We simply pack it all on, continually stuck in
The cotton fields of this country's plantations

It shows in my stride because each step I take
Is heavy, every footprint I leave in the sand tells a story
Or two or three or
However many it took for me to prove that
Even though my stride is smaller than yours,
My feet are tinier than yours,
They are still just as strong, and maybe even stronger

And she said, "this womanhood ain't worth much to me, It's consumed and used and invaded."

And I said, honey if I could carry each woman's sorrows I would Because that's what makes us humble, but I can't Because every woman needs a sense of burden of Ever-looming defeat.

It's the only thing that'll make you valid anymore.



But, this wasn't enough because she still looked at me And she goes, "I'll take that, but I still don't fit into this Definition of 'woman' I just can't relate." And I couldn't help but wonder what dictionary she was using Because I learned a long time ago that one is not born a woman, One becomes a woman.

So, I am forever defining myself as a woman.

I am lavish and I am nefarious and I am a complexity Because, I am a woman And I am rough and I don't clean my nails and I don't wear skirts Because I am a woman and I believe I have too much work And too little time to worry about how the magazines say I should look. And I have holes in my jeans and dirt on my shirts Because I am a woman and I believe that holes are a badge of honor They show you that I am not afraid to get on my knees and work, Or beg, or pray and I will wear these jeans on any given day of the week Because I don't think hardwork should be reserved for weekends Now, I don't have a problem with the girls who decide To buy in to the textbook, tv guide definition of "woman", The "maybe she's born with it, maybe it's Maybelline" woman, The Covergirl, Clinique, don't eat woman. But, when I tried on that definition I found I didn't quite fit, Because they said I was a little too big. And the word "woman" is always shifting and changing And it's too complex to fit into that size 0 Gucci dress So I recommend that you make your own definition too.







DREAM, ELEANOR, DREAM CARISSA KAMPMEIER





UNTITLED THERESE ROWINSKI





TORTURED REFLECTION RYANN WARD





HEALING NIKITA SOLIS





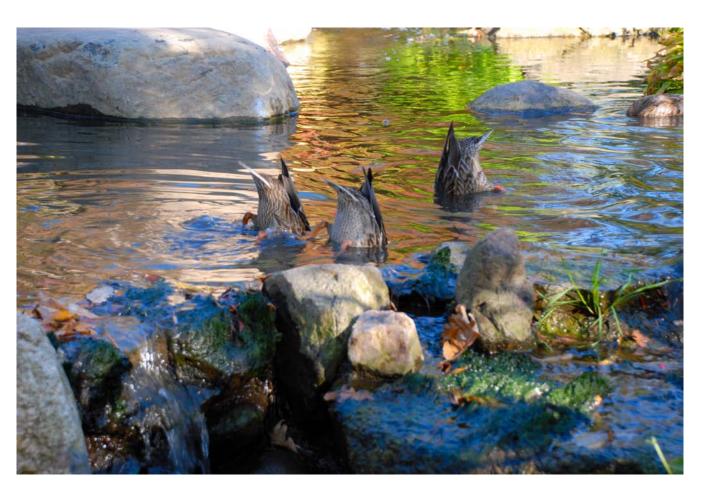
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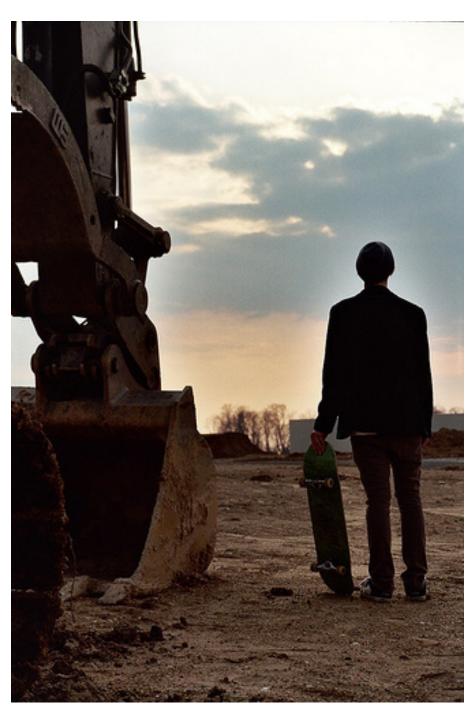
DUCKS UNDERWATER MITCH KOEPP





A STORY ON THE INSIDE AUDREY PETERSON





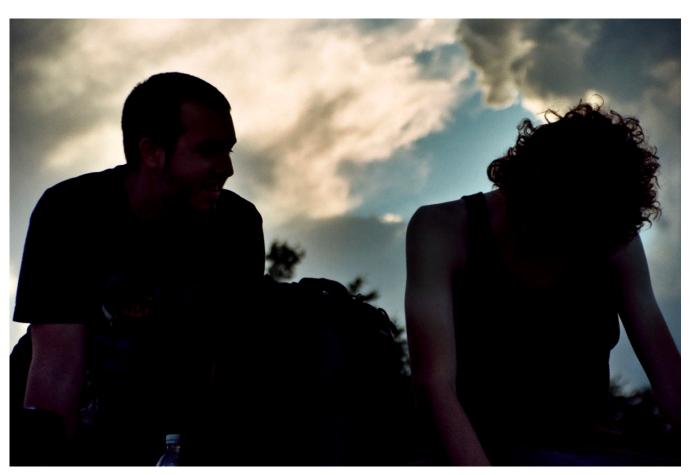
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GHOSTLY PLAIN CARRIE ALLEN





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