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1st prize freshman essay

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Into the Light
by Jamin Becker

Darkness rushes all around me.
Vague outlines of strange shapes flash by,
I alone am sheltered from the fear,
Safe in my island of light.

Suddenly an unseen force pulls me--
Pulls me from my safety,
Drags me into the rushing black,
And I see my light flicker and vanish.

Terror rises as I fight back,
But like a river the darkness pulls me down.
It fills my lungs--drowns my screams.
My heart grips with ice as I fight death.

Forever I am held suspended,
And then I breathe.
In that moment I see--I see the truth.
the darkness has become light,
Death has become life,
and I do not need my island.
Predetermined Jeffrey Dahmer
by Tim Winterstein

Psychopath in my next-door neighbor
head and shoulders in the bathtub
Snacking on a finger, or a toe for lunch
Cannibalism is such a bore.

Pornography is a free-speech issue
It’s a healthy form of self-expression
Wait until Ted Bundy gets there
raped by all that you approve.

We’re all predetermined Jeffrey Dahmers
nothing between us and that hell-bent path
We’re chewing our own hands off at the wrists
becoming what you hate and curse.

You don’t understand how they could do it
It’s beyond your comprehension
Take your Prozac and calm your mind
But there’s something deeper than you will admit.

Yeah, predetermined Jeffrey Dahmers
It’s deep inside of you as well
You have it hidden so no one can tell
but it won’t be long ‘til you devour your own mother.

You don’t believe me, call me insane
but I sat next to you in a death-row straightjacket
When that day comes you’ll be no different
All masks will be removed revealing only pain.
crashing
by katie jane

i wanted to be a doctor
to help
to run off to some little country
where little children are dying
of some unknown outbreak
of some unknown diseases
i wanted to hold their hands
and watch them while they died
and see the pain in their eyes
and help to stop it

(look around little girl
you’ve built your world on lies)

then i wanted to grow old
and go back home
to big old America
i wanted to set up a nice little office
where the poor could come
and i could help them
and be the one to save them
i wanted to make an impact
on someone’s life

(look around little girl
idealisim is a world of illusions)

then i grew up
somewhat
and i found that i hated
the math and the science
and i didn’t want to be a doctor anymore
and i became a pessimist
and i hid in my little hole
and i wasn’t happy

(look around little girl
you’re still so small
there isn’t time to hide)

day after graduation
i rubbed my eyes
cleared them of the star dust
and of the cobwebs of bitterness
i walked on my own two feet
decided i wanted to be a teacher
a mother
and a wife
and i was happiness

(look around little girl
happiness is only temporary)

and i came to college
with my bag in my hand
and my head held high
sure of my beliefs
i didn’t shed a tear
and i was happy
for longer than usual
i was amazed at myself

(look around little girl
the hardest is yet to come)

i found myself one day
curled up on my bed
telling a little boy
to get rid of his idealism
"you’re living in a romantic ideal"
i said with a laugh

as if i weren’t
i did to him
what they did to me

(little girl, little girl
you still haven’t changed)

and now i sit crying
now i sit
almost dying
pessimism
bitterness
reality
and i close my eyes
and i begin to think

(look around little girl
what do you want to do with yourself?)

so i open my eyes once again
and see my faith renewed
see the world drift away
idealistic fancies pour out of my mind
curl down my throat to my lips
to my fingertips
romanticism is my home
and i can change the world
and i will have faith
and i will have hope

(look around little girl
you’re going down the same road again)

SHUT UP
i don’t care
i am a little girl
the path you walk
has never been my way
will never be my way
i have been looking around this whole time
seeing things through these eyes
i know ...

(look around little girl
you’re so stupid)

... if only you knew ....
... if only i still cared what you thought ....
crashing
by katie jane

i wanted to be a doctor
to help
where little children are dying
of some unknown outbreak
or disease
i wanted to hold their hands
and watch them while they died
and see the pain in their eyes
and help to stop it

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(look around little girl
you're going down the same road again)

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i am a little girl
the path you walk
has never been my way
will never be my way
i have been looking around this whole time
seeing things through these eyes
i know...

(look around little girl
you're so stupid)

... if only you knew...
... if only i still cared what you thought...
The Road of Life
by Alissa Harris

The homeless girl is a disease wrapped in a coverlet of isolation.
She strides down the street faster than most, eager to reach her hole in the city bulwark.
The itinerant walks on, eye and heart downcast,
gripping the folds of her many tattered shirts between grimy hands.
her rugged calluses covering angst and despair,
emotions kept in check for as long as she can remember.
She passes by an old shark, clad in a drab overcoat
who taps his cane onto the dead sidewalk.
He knows with each small, uncertain step he makes
that he walks further and further from this world.
He has seen much, known much
but the only thing that his latter years seem to have taught
is to move out of the path of the next generation
who trample those of burden underfoot.
He skateboards on by, dubious of those who could be caught in his wake.
those who are mere blurs of flesh, like the old man.
His stereo gnaws at his ears but he has become numb to the sensation.
Immoral lyrics and degradation lull him.
How many times has he been told he's a problem
no nail and hammer can fix? lost cause.
So he drinks his problems away by night.
nursed on schnapps and put to comfort by a heroin-adorned teddy bear, his first playmate.
and swears to that old cliché, that excuse.
his parents are responsible for the character he is today.
She notices him as he whizzes past.
but quickly diminishes further rumination on the matter.
far too busy with her cell phone.
which has rung nonstop throughout her hectic day.
On her strawberry suit a spot of ketchup
will be the only thing her thoughts account for.
when she sees the third client of the day.
who will survey her like a bird of prey.
for deceitful actions and curt manner.
Radiantly she will smile and chat, all the while.

A moment of confusion startles the babe; he lets out a loud bawl.
Inexperienced hands struggle to bring him comfort.
Her eyes are raccoon like and puffy from the previous night's feeding.
She wonders for the briefest of moments, what does the community think of her now.
Her young hands caress her baby's curls as she holds him like a doll in her arms.
The curls, so much like his father's--or are they?--she can't hardly remember anymore.
She rushes home to meet her mother's clock
which has been set by fretful and anxious hands.
She stalks by a park bench where an army recruiter sits.
watching people walk by; like a vulture he eyes the masses.
Yet he's more concerned with the next possible soldier than with the carnage they may create.
Yet a vulture is the only thing his gaunt face resembles.
He asks, "Which one is a potential soldier, which one is the next big promotion?"
A jackal-like grin stretches across his plastic thin face.
The itinerant will become a phoenix raised from the ashes.
She will be the next linguistic operator, and the credit
for making something out of a nobody will be all his,
and on the road of life the beginning meets the end, for all lives are intertwined.
The Road of Life  
by Alissa Harris

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She strides down the street faster than most, eager to reach her hole in the city bulwark
The itinerant walks on, eye and heart downcast,
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her rugged calluses covering angst and despair,
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She passes by an old shark, clad in a drab overcoat
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which has rung nonstop throughout her hectic day
On her strawberry suit a spot of ketchup
will be the only thing her thoughts account for
when she sees the third client of the day
who will survey her like a bird of prey
for deceitful actions and curt manner
Radiantly she will smile and chat, all the while

wishing she were at home with her children, her adorable offspring
who as cute as they are cannot match the beauty of the blond curly top
leisurely in a hand-me-down stroller
A moment of confusion startles the babe; he lets out a loud bawl
Inexperienced hands struggle to bring him comfort
Her eyes are raccoon like and puffy from the previous night’s feeding
She wonders for the briefest of moments, what does the community think of her now
Her young hands caress her baby’s curls as she holds him like a doll in her arms
The curls, so much like his father’s--or are they?--she can’t hardly remember anymore
She rushes home to meet her mother’s clock
which has been set by fretful and anxious hands
She strolls by a park bench where an army recruiter sits
watching people walk by; like a vulture he eyes the masses
Yet he’s more concerned with the next possible soldier than with the carnage they may create
Yet a vulture is the only thing his gaunt face resembles
He asks, “Which one is a potential soldier, which one is the next big promotion?”
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The itinerant will become a phoenix raised from the ashes
She will be the next linguistic operator, and the credit
for making something out of a nobody will be all his,
and on the road of life the beginning meets the end, for all lives are intertwined.
Private Place
by Philip Kennedy

Take me away to my own private place
to my very own playground
filled with toys and things of my fancy
Take me away to a place far and away
from the cares of today
where I can live in the way of a king
Take me away to the kingdom of fantasy
where I can learn of magic and lore
and where I can meet faerie folk
Take me away to the age of chivalry

where every knight had his damsel
and where all love won the day
Take me away to the days of old
where things were simple
where things were pure
Take me away to the land of magic
where I can drink tea with a dwarf
and sing songs with a satyr
Take me away to time of my own
where I can sleep all day long
and feast and celebrate all night
Take me away to someplace
where I have no cares and worries
and where I can do no wrong
Take me away to my dreams
My Father Told Me How My Grandma Died: A Sonnet
by P.J. Bentley

Your mom and I—you see that?—carved our names right there. Now if you turn to this side here, the sun reflects the amber sap that ran into the cuts we made for letters . . . This. See this? (A giant wound) This happened when your grandma died, my mother. I was six.

July and fullmoon dark, past twilight. He’d had fourteen shots that night, the Friday prior to Easter. Mom had put her boy to bed and walked out to the tree to lay among its suckling feet and hum her hymns. He sped up Hill Road, cursing the tree and all strong life. She’d gone asleep and he roared near. He saw her glow like angels in the headlights’ wash.
1st Communion with Beethoven's Pastoral
by Randy Bush

I stretch and rest
my head on the wind.
The shadow of my body is
storm, it is
stormcloudblack.

Redwoods are my feet
and mountains my knees and
Time's Roar is sucked
to a Whisper.

I fill the valley.
I am the valley.

My dreams, antlered and hoofed,
scream earthward
down steep trails without
bending
one green twig, without
tearing
one glistening web.

I become, for a breath,
the Voice of Pan's flute.
Solitaire in the Corner  
by Corinna Bolon

When he is an old man  
his memoirs will fill pages and pages  
like an old Bible  
soiled by stories of blood and dirt.

Even so, I want to touch his world, and him in it  
because he reclines in the corner alone, rejected repeatedly by friends and even lovers,  
if the rumors are legit.  
(They rarely ever are, I'm told.)  
Now he must shuffle his cards repeatedly to reach desired disarray  
since the only thing he can play over there is solitaire.

"I know crazy eights," I offer, shoving my eight fingers into my pockets,  
which are too narrow to fit my thumbs, as well.  
And when he looks at me, I finally know how gorgeous his victims feel.  
His eager eyes regard me as if I am an archangel, present now in order to love him.  
It's all I really wanted to do, anyway.

When he is an old man  
maybe me and my game of crazy eights  
will brighten a page in his gritty memoirs,  
otherwise ruled by blood and dirt.
Pencil
written and illustrated by "Vienna Sausage"

The tiny tip of a pencil
writes entirely too many
words that we don't give it
credit for. I'd hug it if it wasn't
so small and
lifeless.

Poor little thing, I watch in
amazement as it gets smaller
and weaker as I write. And I know
that when the lead has worn
to the eraser, I will
throw the once
was pencil into my
overflowing
garbage can. Or maybe I'll lose
it long before. And there's nothing
much I'll care to do about it. But I
think it will cry. Do you?
Anxious Faith
by Michael Schultz

By being prepared
to walk the coals of consequence
I trapped one lucid moment
in my heavy hands
The trick was not to search
through records full of
moth’s dinners and rusty memories
but simply to accept surrender
to the gossamer wrapped present
The clarity of bells ringing
a morning call to worship
chased out the inner demons
Loitering among the angels
the infinite within me
stripped bare,
my life before
a question mark
Soul-searching for the cause
but now encompassing the creation
I remember arms stretched out
a molecular rippling as the universe
poured its secrets in my soul
I remember the spirits of life
sparkling, as if infected with stars
whispering the barriers to union
with the divine
But it was not enlightenment, no . . .
but only a glimpse of the infinite
The consciousness that contains all else
also known as God, and His consequence
to my hyper-state of consciousness
was to watch and feel it
slowly drift away from me
I Want . . .
by Maria Mejia

someone to see me smile and think it's beautiful
someone to feel my anger and hold me,
someone to hear my laugh and feel the waves
         crash against his heart,
someone to lie beside me and think of nothing else
except that moment.

I want nothing more than to see the man of my dreams . . .
smile and make my heart jump
to hold him when he is upset
to hear his laugh and for it to bring a smile to my face
to lie beside him and be content with all that is
going around us
That is all I want
That Four-Letter Word
by Kiersten Brady

My relationship with Roger had always been a bit hard to define. It was one of those crazy more-than-friends, less-than-dating, always holding hands, never kissing . . . that type of thing. It didn’t really take shape and pick up at all until our sophomore year. As freshmen we were both too busy to notice each other; I was dating every guy in sight and he was trying desperately to keep his 4.0 in spite of his 19-credit load and having to work night/weekends/lunch hour. Somehow I wound down and he loosened up and we started hanging out.

Roger was the kind of guy who always said what he meant, but let you take it whichever way you wanted to. I can’t remember when it started, or why, but our big inside joke was his proposal. I must have been feeling blue one day or have just been dumped (a frequent occurrence), because to cheer me up he got in the habit of saying, “Would it help if you married me?” I never take things seriously and have no intention of getting married. I perked up a bit and saucily replied, “Maybe next weekend. I’ll see what else turns up.” Roger smiled and squeezed my shoulder. He knew I hadn’t taken him seriously, but it didn’t concern him.

This continued for three terms. I kept frittering cash away on clothes and movie tickets, and then writing home for more money. Roger worked as hard as ever, still keeping his GPA high enough to qualify for scholarships. We spent more time together, the good kind. We studied together, rented movies, gave each other rides to the airport for vacation weekends. One time the electricity went out in the dorms and he showed up on my doorstep with a Bic lighter and a Hershey’s chocolate bar. He knew I was terrified of the dark. About once a week he would offer me his heart forever and I would smile and laughingly turn him down.

The second term of my junior year I hit the wall. My parents got a divorce, which both jeopardized my cash flow and rocked my world. I wasn’t sure which way was up. Emotional security was compromised and I needed to know that the four-letter word I thought I was building relationships on was real. Roger came and held me while I cried and cried. Life was so hard, and I was so tired, and I couldn’t face it alone anymore. He gave me his standard line of comfort and this time, I bit. I needed him. We packed up the car and headed to get married over the weekend. We had been driving for about 45 minutes when he pulled over. He said, “This isn’t what you want.” I looked at him and tried to compose some sort of reassurance that would make him keep driving. Nothing came. Roger continued, “You don’t really want to get married, or admit you need
someone. You won’t be happy.” How could he know me so well and why in the world couldn’t I love him? I just didn’t have it in me, and it broke my heart. I knew this was my one and only chance and it was going to pass me by. He brushed my hair out of my eyes, switched the radio to some 80’s music, and turned the car around. After about ten minutes, when I had my composure, he turned to me and smiled. “Is next weekend good for you?” And I knew we would always be friends.

I miss Roger. They say only the good die young. I don’t think that’s fair, but apparently I’m not in control. Two weeks before graduation a group of seniors went out drinking. He went along as the designated driver. At about 2:30 in the morning, after taking everyone home safe and sound, he was killed in a head-on collision with a drunk driver. They said he died instantly, like that should make it okay; I say dead is dead. The four-letter word worth building relationships on had been demonstrated clearly in a love that asked (and unfortunately received) nothing in return. I’ll never forget that and will continue to show that to others in the hope that he will not have loved in vain.

People won’t know you love them unless you show them or tell them. Roger told me. Don’t be afraid to tell someone close to you. Is that person’s response really what matters?
Freshman Essay Contest Results

1st Place: Ruth Truitt
2nd Place: P.J. Bentley
3rd Place: Molly Merz

1st Place Winning Essay

Asian American Assimilation and the American Dream
by Ruth Truitt

Have you ever seen something so beautiful that you were afraid to look again? You bowed down to the possibility that somehow, in the instant you turned away, your ideal would be shattered and that beauty would be lost. America reigns in that beauty, and for this reason, more than one group of people chooses to live in fear of losing their place in it. Traditionally, “white” Americans ignore the positive distinction of colors that accent and give vibrancy to the picture. While minorities often choose to dull and disregard natural attributes to become more harmonious, in fact, these transformations only cause the picture to endure the mediocrity of a dreary, cloudy ocean view. Asian Americans Jeanne Wakatsuki Houston, Sui Sin Far, and John Wu confront these transformations and attempt to explain their roles, experiences, and struggles in American society through their writing. Being an Asian immigrant encompasses more than just learning and following a new set of rules; it also includes conquering a self-imposed and societal image that in time can be either destructive or empowering.

Jeanne Wakatsuki Houston chooses to convey the ability to empower through acceptance. In her speech, she discusses the struggles of immigrants and challenges the reader to recognize the obvious: America has always been diverse. Houston suggests that common bonds such as freedom, equality, generosity, and love should be the focus of how we as Americans run our society, instead of focusing on the differences that are the root of many problems. She has experienced the effects of prejudice, and she chooses to see the growth and recognition of individuality as the outcome. Though she does not discuss the lasting personal and emotional effects on the younger generation, she optimistically alludes to the idea that they, too, will survive through strength, knowledge, and pride in their ethnicity. With this optimism, she also points out the responsibility of America and its generations to be an example for other less democratic and multicultural aware countries. She reports an exchange with a Japanese leader, in the urbanizing movement, as he describes America’s role as the example of democracy and multiculturalism in the following: “The world is watching America deal with its diversity... we need your country to lead us in human rights and values” (Houston 139). The price of assimilation, in her view, is the willingness to overcome obstacles, the strength to have satisfaction and pride in differences, and the heart and selflessness to act as an example to others.

Though many contemporary immigrants are able to find optimism and empowerment through their struggles, many early Asian Americans, just as quickly, discovered the strict laws that make America’s freedom and liberty possible. In “In the Land of the Free,” Sui Sin Far recounts the fictional tale of a Chinese family torn apart by immigration regulations and a government that overlooked them. As the main character, Lae Choo, waits for the boat to dock signaling the end of the journey to America, she relates her joy to her young son,
Little One, promising, “It is very beautiful and thou wilt be very happy there” (Far 172). Lae has surrounded herself with a blissful dream of returning to her husband, Hom Hing, and raising her son in the land where they will become successful and prosperous. This hope is quickly splintered when, upon arrival, immigration officers take her child away due to incomplete paperwork. Yet, during this trial, Lae Choo still holds onto the possibility that her dream will be realized. She waits and hangs onto the words of Hom Hing, believing that “there cannot be any law that would keep a child from its mother!” (Far 175). Ten months later, after enduring the grief of expectancy and longing for her son, she finally is granted guardianship. However, the cruel fact arises that, though no law on paper can take away her son, the absence of her presence has done just that. Although through time the wounds may heal, the impression of abandonment has left its mark. Little One now clings with loyalty and trust to an American. He may one day attain the American Dream that his mother had wished for, but through this struggle, Lae Choo loses her reason for the dream.

One may wonder what path Little One’s life took after returning to his mother. In John Wu’s “Making and Unmaking the ‘Model Minority,’” readers are introduced to the lives and conflicts surrounding second-generation Asian Americans. Wu attempts to dissect the “Model Minority” label in light of both its positive and negative connotations; he does so predominantly to draw attention to the double burden it places on Asian American youth. This label generates encouraging images of Asian Americans, whose hard work has kept the American dream alive. It is also seen as a constrictive prison that binds them to certain academic and career fields, while using their prosperity as a scapegoat for America’s lack of minority accomplishments and awareness. Throughout this confusion is the underlying voice of Asian youth, whose lives are tailored by this model and by the dreams of their parents. Wu explains that “knowing the sacrifices of the immigrant parents, second-generation Asian Americans feel obligated to work hard to meet the expectations and, in a way, repay the first generation. These are the same expectations as those of the society on Asian Americans in general as a model minority” (290). Through loss of individuality or extreme rebellion, Asian youth are crushed by this heavy weight of expectation. This is the cost of their assimilation.

Though Houston’s account stirs the need to invoke change and create a more positive self-image, and Far’s tale pulls at the heart, Wu’s summary of the burden of constant expectation is the most helpful in understanding the position of Asian Americans as they assimilate into American culture. He explains how the liability to country and family shapes the people themselves, as they are caught up in an external game that affects them on the most internal level. As players in this game, they strategize to hide their true colors for a winning outcome. By doing this, they blend in and slip through unnoticed. As more of the younger generation begins a bold new plan to be noticed and to take risks, their revitalizing perspectives and ideas put them in a position to be knocked down. However, to take Houston’s more positive outlook, it more likely puts them in a position to shine and to add to the tapestry of colors that still makes America a land of hopes and dreams.

Works Cited


Catharsis
by P.J. Bentley

gasoline
spills
(that's ok put a match
to it later)
jerk
  jerk
  buzz
rattling ready
to cut to the mother
board bone
scream blood murder
bring it down
on the tower
  jerking
  sparking
jerking hard
enough to break
the wrists
split the shell
split the chips
split the invisible
bug or gremlin
until the chain
snaps
and the gears grind inside
to a crunch
now the book comes out
tear one
red head
and strike it
and drop it
a little glow
down to the excess
spilled in fervency
and watch burning
blooms blossom
and spread
till the room is a furnace
    now walk away
away
to a place
where
no one knows electricity
and everyone knows
gasoline.
Contributors

P.J. Bentley is from Nampa, Idaho. He likes reading and writing in his spare time, but he doesn’t have much of that.

Corinna Bolon is an interdisciplinary studies major who likes to play solitaire. She is a Taurus with Pisces rising and is an INTJ.

Kiersten Brady likes long walks on the beach. “Proverbs 3:5-6—that’s what it’s all about.”

Randy Bush (“Randwulf” to those who really want to make points) has run the CU library circulation desk for twelve years. His dream is to sell children’s stories and operate a combination bindery/brewery/bakery. He lives with cats and his wife.

Alissa Harris has written for The Herald, a widely distributed newspaper of the Klamath Basin, reporting on community, local schools, and public events. She served as her school FFA reporter.

katie jane wants to be a waitress when she grows up.

Philip A. Kennedy is a theater/psychology major who enjoys all arts. He has been in 70 theatrical productions in six years and has loads of fun at Concordia.

Maria Beatrice Mejia says, “Hi, Mom and Dad!”

Michael Schultz was raised by wolves in the upper reaches of the Transylvanian Alps. He came to Concordia to learn morals and dogma to temper the more animalistic sides of his nature. He has nearly succeeded.

Leigh-Anne Stohl gave us this really cool drawing to put on the cover.

Ruth Truitt is currently a freshman hoping for a double major in psychology and biology.

“Vienna Sausage” says, “When I was six I wanted to rule the world. Now I’m content to rule my fishbowl life with the help of my flowering plants.”

Tim Winterstein is a junior in the pre-seminary program. “Nothing can be said so carefully that it can avoid misrepresentation.” --Apology of the Augsburg Confession, Article VII.