

Southwinds



SPRING 2023





PermaRed. (Andreas Ellinas)

About *Southwinds*

Southwinds is published annually in the spring semester and distributed free to the Missouri S&T community. The club *Southwinds*, which produces the magazine, is a recognized student organization and open to all students. Each fall, *Southwinds* invites submissions from S&T students, faculty, staff, and alumni. Poetry, stories, photographs, and original artwork should be submitted to southwinds.mst.edu or swinds@umsystem.edu.

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The Department of English and Technical Communication at Missouri S&T offers undergraduate and graduate degree programs in English, English education, and technical communication. These programs are based on a wide range of courses taught by experienced, accomplished faculty in the following areas: American, British, and world literatures, creative writing, rhetoric and composition, technical writing, and linguistics. Check out our website english.mst.edu or our Facebook page [facebook.com/EnglishTechComDepartmentMST](https://www.facebook.com/EnglishTechComDepartmentMST)

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Summer



Changing of the Seasons (Emma Likert)

Dandelion Crown

Brooke Tiedt

My favorite thing to do is pick the dandelions that grow under the bleachers behind my school. No one questions me as I walk the wrong direction leaving class, the bell ringing sharply behind me. That would require someone to notice me. Since my car never comes through the pick-up lane, no one has a reason to know my name.

The only people who visit these overgrown fields are the soccer team and sometimes a gym class. Last year, though, someone broke their ankle by stepping in a hole in the dirt. Both those activities quickly died after that. Both the soccer team, assuming they had enough members to play, and the gym classes were subject to the musty indoors. The holes still remained, and so did I.

I've always felt like a wild thing there. The bleachers are rusting, covered in dirt and other mysterious things. Weeds grow rampant, and I always have to check for ticks after I finally go home. But always, without question, the dandelions are here.

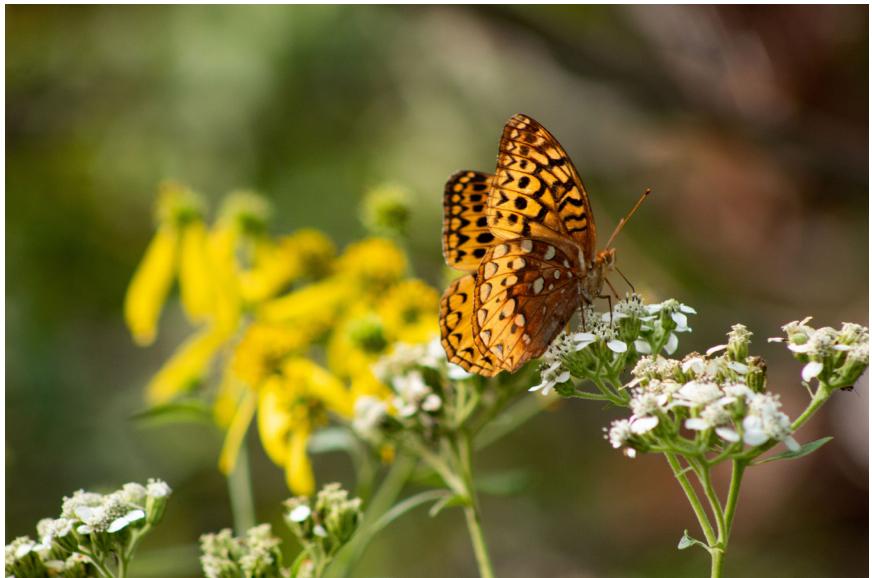
I learned the hard way that people prefer bouquets of pretty flowers. Real flowers. Flowers that aren't wilted or wild, but grown solely for the purpose of being cut and soaked in water. No one wants weeds. They weren't not pretty enough or good enough. Weeds don't belong, and they're certainly not something one should go flaunting around as treasure.

Sitting underneath the bleachers, I pinch the stems as close to the ground as I can with my nails. I line them up next to each other in the grass until I have enough to make myself a crown.

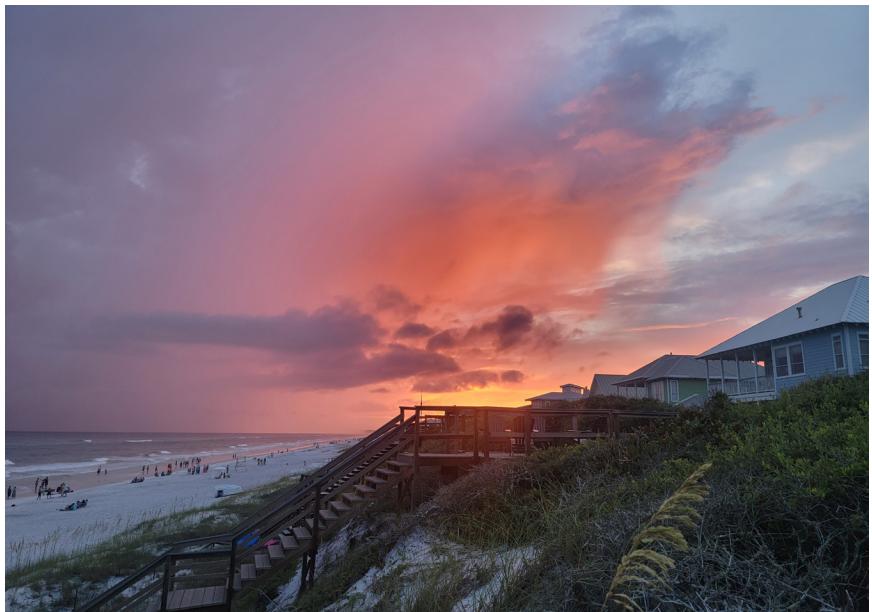
These flowers are for me. I exist for them the same way they exist for me. I have my own miniature jungle. I am its queen, and they are my treasure. In this little world, no one can take that away from me.

Every time before I put on my crown, I make sure to notice every little thing about my surroundings. I measure the height of the grass to the lowest step of the bleachers. The tips of green almost reached the metal. I try to pick out every color of flower in my field. There is yellow, of course, but also bits of purple and pink and red. I shade my eyes to catch the position of the sun. Usually it's sneaking toward the horizon, the shadows stretching like they were lying down for a nap. And always, I look up at the sky. Blue, brilliantly blue. There's not a single cloud in sight. These are the days I can clearly imagine that this place is the only place on Earth, and I am the only one in it.

Only after looking for every little detail do I put on my dandelion crown. That's the moment I become queen of my small refuge. No one looks for me, no one watches me, no one sees the little things I know about myself, and no one points out little flaws I wasn't aware of. But that's okay, because here, when the world is mine, I am determined to cherish every last inch of it. I know that in some way, it also sees every part of me. On the days when I sit underneath these bleachers, dirt underneath my nails, grass digging into my skin, and dandelions around my head like a halo, that is all I need.



Butterfly (Kassandra Hayes)



Sunset (Xavier Ross)

Orange is the Color of Joy

Agnes Vojta

The lilies in the field
do not toil nor spin –
they work the alchemy
 of blooming, distill
 sunlight, water, and air
 into an orange miracle.
In ditches and fencerows
they flower with abandon,
throats open wide. As summer
 fades, the lilies tire.
Willpower cannot halt
the wilting of leaves.
 The lilies retreat
 to their roots, feed
 on sugar stores, dream
 of blossoms, emerge
 in fierce independence
next year. So it is decreed.

Donut Days

Libby Ring

I remember what it was like, all those years ago. The barn was a shiny dull red with white window outlines. The smell of sweet oats lingered in the air along with the scent of fresh hay. I missed this feeling of the country. I could feel the sunshine on my skin and I could breathe in the woodsy smell around me, but the most important thing I missed were the horses. I remember my horse Krispy Kreme, who was named after those sweet savory donuts that people would pick up any time and day. He was a tall tan quarter horse with big brown eyes and sturdy legs. I trusted him with my life when riding and I still miss him to this day. That was 20 years ago, but it seems as if I was just here, riding with my sis and mucking out stalls all day, just to get into a water fight with the hose after. Looking back now I should have spent more time with Krispy, seeing that his eyes were getting foggy and his back was drooping more every day, but I told myself that he would be okay. I'll just stay away one more day to do school work or hangout with friends. I knew school was important because I wouldn't have been able to move to the city and work my dream job, but I never meant to neglect my first beloved animal. Life just had other plans for me.

Now driving back to the barn; to the countryside, makes me feel as if I could spread my wings and fly off to some distant land and never return. Although now I have a husband who loves me and twin daughters to put through highschool so I'm certain they would miss me. Looking at this barn the memories of youth just come flooding back into my mind like a dangerous rapid. The barn was handed down to the owner's daughter who is only a few years older than me, but she and her husband were prepared to take on the responsibility. My one regret would be not giving my daughters their very own horses, because once that bond between a girl and their horse forms, all you want to do is breath, eat, and sleep in the presence of these gorgeous mammals. There is something about being back here that puts my mind at ease. I no longer feel the stress of my job or the worries about the future, because all I see right now are rolling fields and different colored horses grazing on the bright green grass. I know now that this is my happy place away from the stressful bustling city.



In the Trees (Kassandra Hayes)



Orchids 1 (Cindy Wilson)



Orchids 2 (Cindy Wilson)

Passersby

Nathan Hart

The place was nothing like how Alex remembered it. The old town was now a shell of its former self, silent and devoid of life. Memories of the past, of his childhood, floated to the surface of his mind as he stepped out of the car onto the gravel streets. Following the images in his mind, the scenery around him changed. Feet crunching with every step, he looked around.

Vibrant green grass blanketed the ground, disturbed only by the dirt paths that had worn it down from the steps of countless feet. Over there by the broken-down wall that had never been fixed, he and his friends had played kickball, laughing together when one of them tripped, cheering together when the ball rocketed into the distance. The bar on the corner had been his father's favorite place to hang out. He wasn't a mean alcoholic like some others Alex had known. In fact, he was a kind and gentle man, he just enjoyed the atmosphere of the place. Stopping in the middle of the street, Alex paused and listened. He could almost hear the music drifting through the streets from that bar. It was always a constant in the town. No matter what time it was, someone would be performing. That house, the one with the black roof and gaudy green walls, that had been his own house, his safe place, his haven during his childhood. His mother would call from the front porch when dinner was ready, and he would always come running.

But then the memories faded. Old storefronts returned to what they'd become. Green grass withered and dried up again. Sturdy wood rotted, and smoke filled the fresh air. Rows of armored trucks stood like gargoyles, watching the town with piercing eyes. The buildings became dilapidated, left in disrepair for so long that many roofs had collapsed in on themselves. Artillery shell craters dotted the landscape, like sores in this once-peaceful village. The music was replaced with the humming of engines, the shouting of soldiers in training. That old wall was no more, long since run down by tanks in their haste to get to the next strategic point. Not even his refuge was spared from the passage of time. Not much of it was left, and what was still standing was almost unrecognizable to him, save for that faded green paint.

"Hey!" barked a harsh voice from behind Alex, "What are you doing there?"

"Nothing," he replied, his voice catching in his throat, "I was just leaving."

The Ceremony

Noah Hayes

The ceremony seemed like much to me at first, but as I prepared for it, my stomach began to get excited with anticipation. You could hear the drums playing outside as the people were also getting excited to dance. Silas' young lady helpers put tribal paint on my chest and ruffed up my bushy hair, one of them blushed once she looked at me. They put a white paw on my chest, and put the hair of the hyena on my back to resemble true qualities of myself: Humorous, Witty, Protecting, Cunning, Coordinating, and Brutal when in battle. Silas knew me almost too well. Sera probably told him my love of hyenas and my dislike for lions since they just look pretty and do nothing but mate and fight other lions.

With the rolling of tongues and the loud cries of joy, I exit the hut to walk out before all the tribes people to see them already dancing and enjoying themselves. Young couples danced with one another in harmony, as did the little kids running around being friendly. But once they saw me, they began to quiet down and move to one side of the area to make a path between me and where I believed Sera would come out. After a couple of seconds, she finally came out of her hut and blew every single thought of beauty I knew before out of the water.

Her hair was loose and bushy like mine. She had a tan, furred tunic on that exposed her indented stomach and toned shoulders and arms. She had tribal paint on her cheeks, her beautiful nose, and forehead. She carried the hide of a lioness on her waist and walked barefoot on the dirt road, just like me. She had earrings that had claws on them and she wore her feathered headdress. She had a paw right above her chest that matched mine, but her animal was a lioness rather than a hyena, for she was truly the queen of Africa tonight.

After they cheered her on, silence soon followed as Aisha brought out the wiseman and his staff. He gave a cough before looking at me and Sera. Soon, our makeup people walked us down the aisle and towards the wiseman, never have I ever wanted to kiss Sera more than when I saw her eyes up close, the shear happiness that burned in her eyes that day absolutely seared my soul in the best way possible.

“Since this is not a wedding, I will not make the speech long” he said with a friendly smile, “but since our beloved princess has found herself a suitor out of a warrior we all know and love, this ceremony had to happen”

The wiseman coughed once more before closing his eyes and breathing in deeply. “The spirits of you two are strong, and whether our neighbors gods, our distant-white boned gods, or Yeshua’s father, the true God, has brought you two together, this was a pairing that was meant to happen” he said confidently. “May you both be happy in the inevitable future, and enjoy life together, in hopes of being one one day” I looked at her and fought some tears of excitement, as she let hers fall.

“Now let the dancing continue!” He shouted before hugging us both and leaving the area.

Everyone around us screamed with happiness as they began to dance and jump for joy, soon though, they began to pair up and dance with their own lovers. Sera began to vibe with the music and began to sway her hips in a methodical way, letting her waist beads sound off against her body. No longer controlling myself, I soon grabbed her and kissed her again. She kissed me back and smiled and she touched her nose with mine.

“I love you” she said happily.

“I love you too” I said, now letting my tears fall as we began to smile and dance the night away.

I felt at home, dancing under the eyes of love to the sound of music that resonated with my heart and soul. The love of my life was before me, feeling the same way and just as strongly. No complicated mess, no doubts or fears, I finally felt ok knowing my future wife -my true wife - was right in front of me, dancing the night away, under the bright stars of Africa.



Yosemite (Kassandra Hayes)

Day of the (Red) Dead

Libby Ring

When you think of a holiday you may think of Easter, Thanksgiving, or Christmas, but what if I told you that there was going to be a new national holiday? I don't think you would be prepared for this holiday which is specifically for the gaming community. Get ready for the National Red Dead Redemption Day. On this special day gamers across America make it a point to sit down and dust off their cowboy hats for the big day. Imagine a whole day of playing Red Dead Redemption with friends. It would be total chaos in the town of Valentine. Bullets would be flying everywhere, horses would be running rampant, and due to so many players online, Rockstar Games would have to make a new online update. That would be a miracle. Gamers across America would hop on their chairs, couches, or beanbags and simply play Red Dead again, for a whole day. It is nostalgic and puts you in the feels when riding into Saint Denis with a full posse. Don't get me started on how many posse feuds there would be that day, but it would be a day to remember. Imagine randomly getting shot by a player called "JackedMonkey420" and then calling up your friend to come to your aid. That is when your friends show up to teach the random player a lesson. National Red Dead day would bring back what it felt like to play with friends in 2016 where you would spend hours on the game shooting each other with friendly fire. This would be the day to let go of all troubles in life and reflect on what it was like when the game first came out. It would be legendary.



Surrounded (Kassandra Hayes)

Fall



A Peaceful Home (Landon Royster)

Creation Through Subtraction

Agnes Vojta

In the Economist,
I read about the cells in the leaves,
the mesophylls that capture
sunlight and air, wisely arranged
veins run through the tree,
the xylem draws water
up from the roots;
the phloem sends sugars
to the tips of the furthest branches.
Come, marvel at the patterns,
the miraculous order:
how following the rules of physics
creates a living being.

I sit by the river
watch the leaves
quiver in the wind,
murmur as if in prayer.
The spirit understands
the archaic language.
Between greening and letting go,
the trees put on a show
as chlorophyll breaks down, leaves
the other colors visible.
Creation through subtraction.



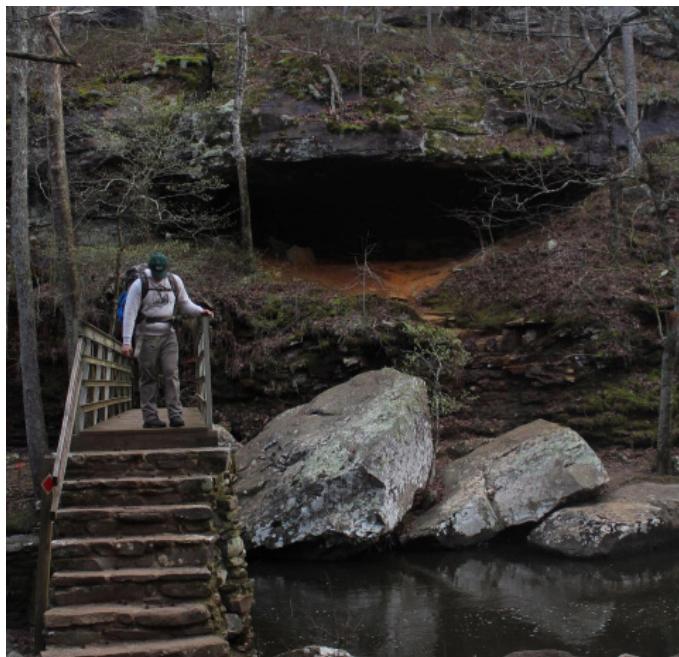
Walking Trail
(Sam George)



Home with Nature (Landon Royster)



Fall Stroll (Kassandra Hayes)



Bridge to Nowhere (Landon Royster)

Home Sweet Home

Connor Zinnicker

Susan walked up the old, worn out stairs to the first floor of her grandparents house. The sounds brought her back to a younger version of herself, anxious to see her grandmother and grandfather. She remembers sneaking up and hugging her grandmother in the kitchen, an old radio playing news, sports, or whatever was on the station at the time. She would then walk down the hallway towards the TV room where her grandfather sat in his usual recliner at the far end of the TV room. As Susan would walk, she would notice the living room to her left, the stairwell to her right, then the closet and bathroom the further she traveled. Instantly her grandfather got up to hug and greet her. The overwhelming feelings remembering all of this was too much.

Now it was only her grandfather. She still loved him and was always anxious to see him, of course. But there was this obvious elephant in the room, a gaping hole in the household, that made the visit not as exciting. A year prior, her grandmother had succumbed to lung cancer and passed away in the TV room, right on her favorite chair. Susan nonetheless loved visiting her grandfather, even if he didn't do much. She loved spending time with him; she loved every moment she spent in the house. The creaking of the stairs, gazing into the rooms her mother and her siblings slept in, the constant sound of the television in her grandparent's room, it filled her with nostalgia.

Now as an adult, she had bought the house from the previous owners. It was mostly a second house to hold onto for nostalgic reasons, something to show her kids when the time was right; where she took her first steps, where she first spoke, where she had many significant moments in her life. She and her husband would toil to make the house look at least somewhat like it did when she was a child.

The Rock

Reece Schmelz

Today's the day everyone prays to the Rock. Not like the Rock as in Dwayne "The Rock" Johnson, but an actual, literal, rock. We're not sure exactly why or when we started praying to the rock, but every year on the second weekend of September we gather around and pray to it. Supposedly this is to give power to the Rock, and with this power, it will bring us fortune. I don't necessarily buy it, but the holiday itself is fun. We have rock-themed eats and candy throughout the weekend, such as Pop Rocks or rocky road ice cream, and even listen to rock music. It's definitely not my favorite holiday, it would never top Christmas for me, but it's enjoyable enough and some places even give off work for the weekend. There are some special prayers that people have written that are said to be official, but there isn't really any religious order for the Rock that can confirm or deny it, so most people just improvise. The Rock itself is behind some pretty tight security in London, but there are plenty of mock-Rocks throughout the world that people gather around to pray to. My favorite part of the holiday is probably when my friends and I come together to watch some Rock movies. None of them are actually any good, but some are so bad that they are good. One day it's said that the Rock will gain sentience and be able to telepathically speak with all humans at once, but I don't buy into that theory. As cool as it would be for an all-powerful stone to speak to all of us at once, it doesn't seem that realistic.

Mystery Falls
(Landon Royster)



A Hero's Climb (Sam George)



Hobby Writing (Parker Buckson)



Road to Somewhere (Landon Royster)

Writing a Sonnet

Madison Jolly

Waiting for hours for some inspiration,
I cannot make any ideas stick.

All that I feel right now is frustration,
my heart is like a time bomb; tick, tick,
tick.

To put pen to paper is far too hard,
my strive for perfection bars my progress,
everything I think of I must discard.
Nothing in the world can help my distress.

Perhaps it would be better to not start,
my amateur mind will never succeed.
But without failure there can be no art.
I look at the paper where the ink bleeds.

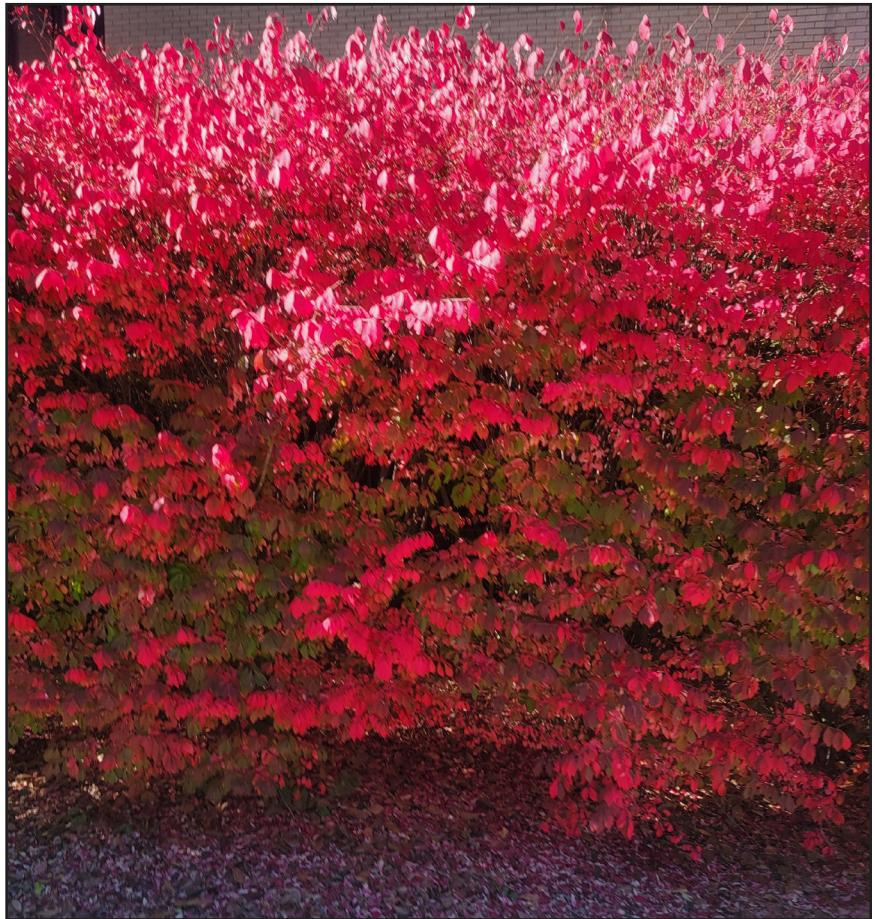
At my desk, staring at the moonless night,
I restart my mind and begin to write.

Paint Me Away

Brooke Tiedt

I've tried on every label, but I can't settle for a single, defining shade. Seattle is a beautiful emerald hue; Chicago is painted by the wind. I've made my home in Houston, Space City. The night reveals an ever-expanding universe, no shortage of wonder. It's always changing, shifting, growing. I haven't felt like I've been growing in years.

I plunge the paintbrush into the shimmering liquid. With every stroke, my skin takes on an ethereal glow. The fumes make my head spin, but I don't stop. I've never been able to reach the stars, but maybe I can become one.



New Reds (Xavier Ross)

Trashion Show

2023

Placements

This year's Trashion show proved to be a tremendous success! Six teams went head-to-head, showcasing an exceptional level of ingenuity and inventiveness. The competition, as its name suggests, challenges participants to create awe-inspiring designs using 90% reused and recycled materials. An esteemed panel of judges carefully evaluated the entries, while a People's Choice Award provided an opportunity for everyone to vote for their favorite. Overall, this event was an exceptional celebration of sustainability and creativity.



Let's Go Girls! (Tori Busse)

First place and People's Choice: Let's Go Girls!

Hanna Condrey

Autumn Watson

Haley Garrison (model)

Second place: The Gaffers Guild: Movin' On, Things

Left Behind

Elliot Sutalski (model)

Conner McFarlan

Edward Fleishman

Austin Koch

Trevor (Thomas) Stefanski

John Heuer

Third place: Bee Not Afraid

Rosalee Brown (model)

Elaine Pohlsander

Also participating...

Rocket Design Team: Married to the Team

Holly Jarvis (model)

Jay Kamdar

Nicholas Graham

Writing Center Team:

Phillip Bode (model)

Teague McElroy

Sammy Kraus

Keillyn Johnson

Cindy Wilson

Brooke Tiedt

Miles Diekemper

Pyro Maniacs

Gunnar Wurst

Kate Johnson

Alexander Baylor



Gaffer's Guild: Movin' On, Things Left Behind (Tori Busse)



Bee Not Afraid (Tori Busse)



Writing Center: Luchador (Tori Busse)



Rocket Design Team: Married to the Team (Tori Busse)



Pyromaniacs (Tori Busse)

Winter





NYC Night (Naseem Nasser Alansari)

Light in the Dark

Zachary Lovelady

For a long, long time, stars throughout the universe have just been slowly, one by one, blinking out, as suddenly as a flip of a switch.

We knew the sun that supported our planet would go dark, one day, as had happened to so many other solar systems already, but we couldn't have possibly been prepared for it to happen so soon; no one ever was. There weren't evacuation plans in place, there weren't emergency systems ready to support whoever got left behind. Billions were left to fend for themselves on a dark planet, while those who had starships of their own got out of there. Things descended into chaos.

A few months later, for the first time anyone had ever seen, a star returned. Our sun came back, as though through a miracle, or an act of some god. It brought hope with it, and not just here, but to people everywhere, on a cosmic scale. It certainly wasn't an instantaneous return to normalcy; a lot of damage was caused that took years of work and effort to mend. Nothing will ever be quite the same, here, but it's certainly a better fate than the alternative.

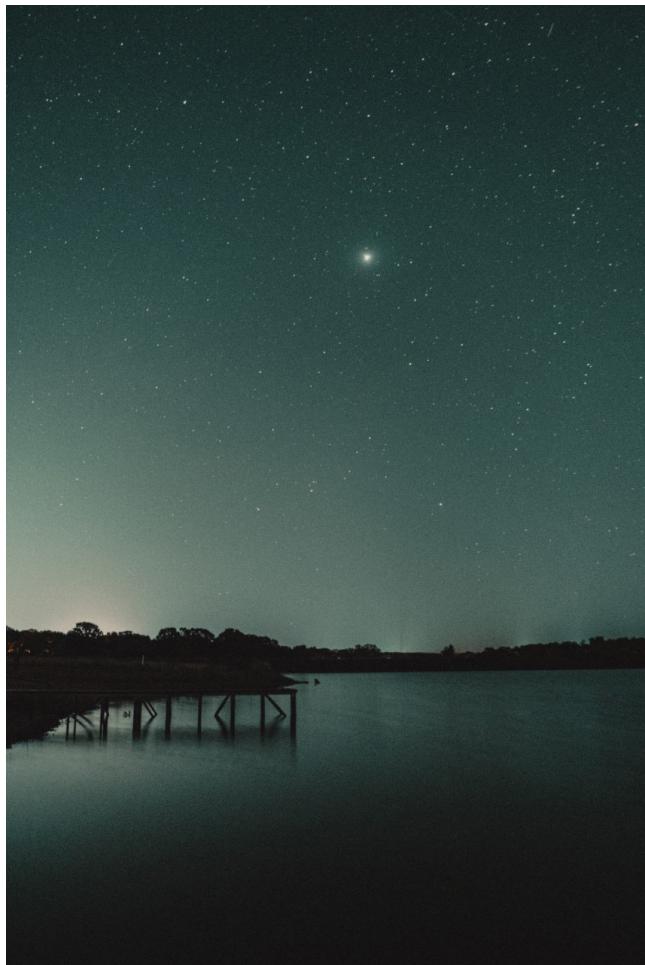
So now, every year, we celebrate. In the months leading up to the anniversary of the sun's return, many have started a tradition of keeping their own lights turned off, in honor of those who were lost in that time of darkness, both figurative and literal. Others have less popular methods of observing this practice - simply drawing their curtains to avoid letting sunlight into their home, shifting their schedules so they might operate solely at night, and other things of that nature, which haven't really caught on at a large scale.

On the anniversary itself, grand celebrations are held. Lights are turned on, curtains are opened, and brightly colored decorations line the streets. Families gather and simply do whatever sounds like the most fun way to spend the day; after all, the sun supports almost any activity I can think of, either directly or indirectly. Simply being is enough to celebrate what the sun does for us, but who wouldn't take an opportunity like this to go out and do whatever makes them happy?

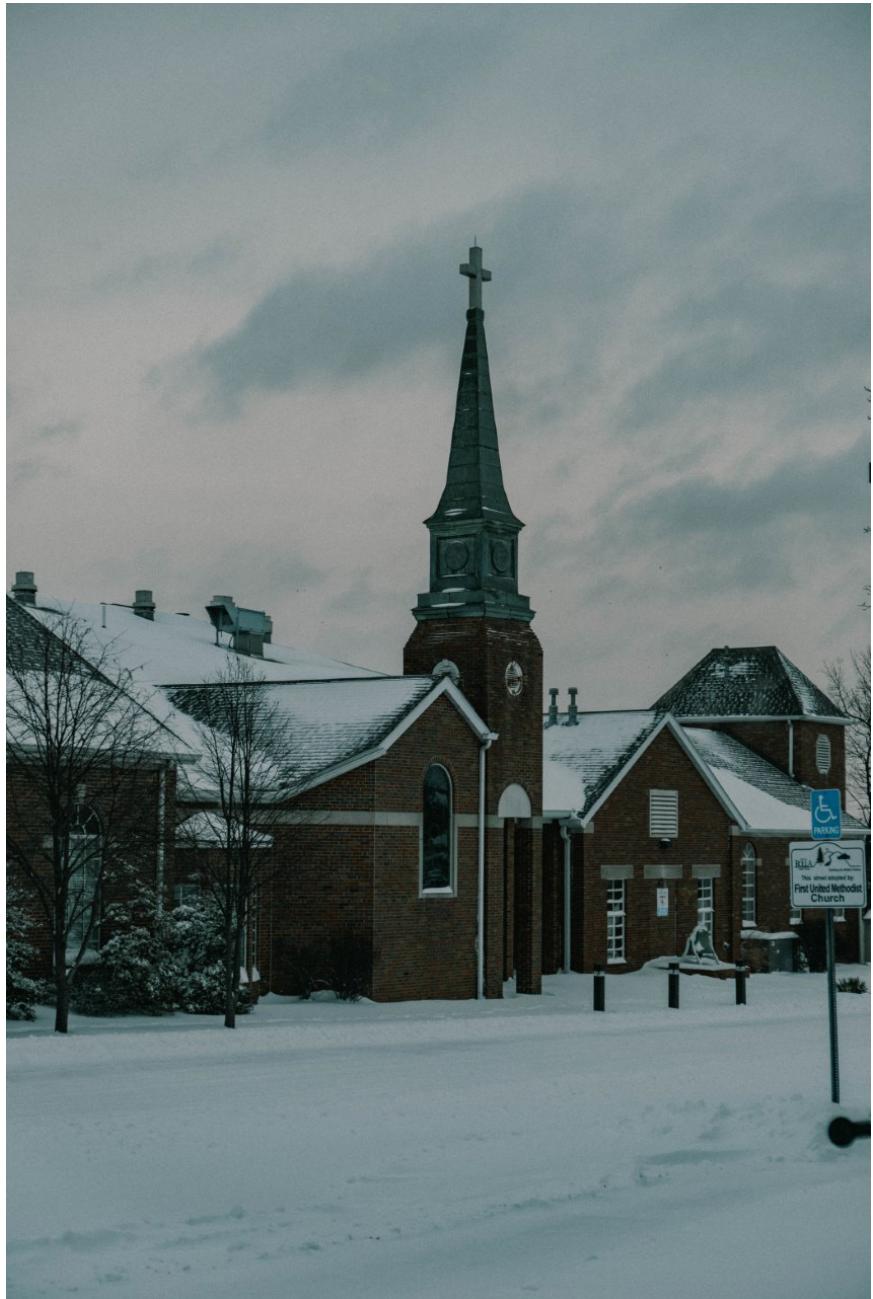
There's still a lingering worry that this could happen again, but for now, people are much more focused on that hope. Hope that things are changing for the better, that stars have stopped vanishing, that the universe is a safer place than it was. Here's hoping that, eventually, the idea of stars disappearing and planets falling into disarray sounds like nothing more than a myth, a legend. Is that the case, yet, reader?

Someday, I hope, someone will be able to answer that with a confident

“Yes!”



A Cold Night (Andreas Ellinas)



First United Methodist Church (Andreas Ellinas)

I Do Not Tire of the Miracle of Snow

Agnes Vojta

The streets are empty, the town
a photograph in black and white.
The world slows down
on snow days.

All sounds are muffled,
except for the squeaking
under my feet as I walk
home from work.

Streets, lawns, and roofs
are covered indiscriminately.
The bushes bow low
under their load.

This will not last. The squeaking
will turn to slushing,
and black patches will appear
on the pavement.

Missouri winters teach
about impermanence,
and miracles
don't last.

Ekphrastic

An ekphrastic poem is a vivid description of a scene or, more commonly, a work of art. Through the imaginative act of narrating and reflecting on the “action” of a painting or sculpture, the poet may amplify and expand its meaning.

Kira Courtois, Alexandria Pinkston, and Toni Martellaro alternate between written and visual works.

Changing of the Seasons

Kira Courtois

distant honking cries,
black wings on the horizon—
colder winds follow.



Flying away (Alexandria Pinkston)

Solace in Waterlogged Woods

Toni Martellaro

Reeds and trees stand tall
On land above murky depths
Safety for the birds

Entropy

Colby Marbury

Walking through the roads of the small Louisiana town where my grandparents lived, I am reminded of the concept of entropy. As a child, the trips we made coming over here to visit them evoked somewhat of a sense of wonder in me. Seeing the different lifestyles of this isolated community prompted me to learn to appreciate new experiences and people. And of course, the houses, the flea market my grandfather ran, and the various other town buildings radiated a rustic charm that drew my interest.

Now, however, I see this place in a different light. A used tire, broken down truck, empty dirt lot, or any other piece of random trash or waste is not scarce on the roads. The houses that were once, albeit small, visions of a different way of living now seem like no more than decrepit hovels with rotten fences and dirty walls. Those that are still occupied have arbitrary furniture thrown all over the porch and front yard. The abandoned ones seem like they were never much in the first place, already reclaimed by the weeds. Wise people, or people pretending to be wise, say that when we die our bodies will return to nature. That they will return to the grass and the trees. This town reminds me of the sentiment's falsehood. When we die, we will return that which we are like. Reclaimed by the weeds, absorbed by the mushrooms, and feasted upon by the bottom feeders, the creatures that roll around in the mud.

What Once Was

Zachary Lovelady

James wandered the remains of something that was, at some point, a home. It was almost impossible to believe, seeing the state of it, and harder still to believe it once belonged to his family. Here, a hallway at some point, though the rotting floorboards and collapsed door frames might try to convince you otherwise. Here, a bedroom that belong to his sibling, the cracked walls and shattered windows rendering it uninhabitable. The old living room was mostly in-tact, despite the peeling wallpaper, cracked chimney, and old furniture that simply hadn't endured the test of time. He knew these.

He was surprised to find the stairs up to the second floor still standing, further surprised that they could still support his climb. Taking cautious steps across the decaying floor, he made his way to his own old bedroom. As he opened the door, the only thing to slow its sudden fall was James's reflexes. Of course the hinges weren't enough to support it anymore.

James's old bed sat exactly as he had last left it, waiting for his return, though he didn't want to find out whether it could still hold his weight. Toys that hadn't seen use in years even before he left. Shelves holding some of his younger self's favorite books and small collections. A large opening in the ceiling let a gentle ray of sunlight in. This might have been a good spot for a skylight, once.

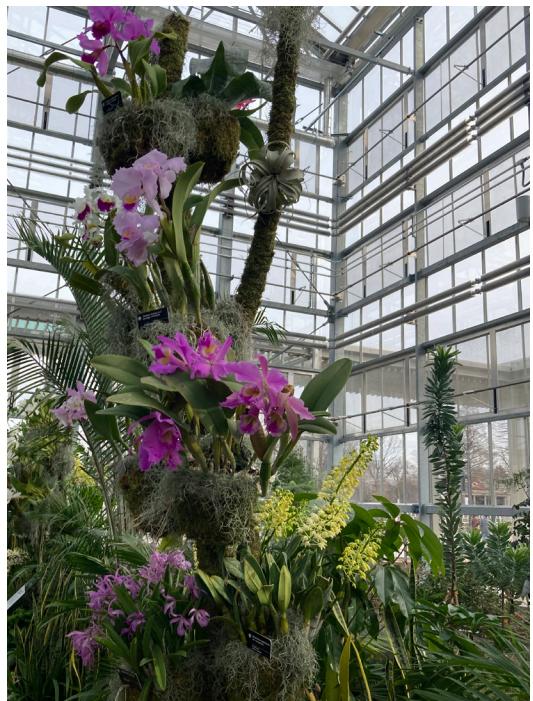
He made his way back outside. As he passed, he noticed some small patches of moss and various plants seemed to have crept their way into this shell, thriving in places where windows and openings in the walls let the sun shine through. James stopped at the front porch, and sat down to rest a while. After all, he didn't have anywhere else to be in a hurry.

This was home.

Spring



Orchids 3
(Cindy Wilson)



Orchids 4
(Cindy Wilson)

A Water's Crown

Brooke Tiedt

The void along the edge of the beach was formed by tears. Halfway down the coast, between the greedy river mouths and the diverging deltas, there's a circle as perfect as any hand-held instrument can measure. Its diameter is marked, at high and low tide, by the surf; one half is always dry sand, the other a mouth for the ocean to constantly fall into.

All this place used to be a desert. The water lay beneath the surface, brought up by dusty tools, only to be contaminated by the bloody hands and lips that sought it. Each small pool only provided an oasis for days at a time before creatures larger threatened more death if they could not lay claim to that quickly fleeting water. Their hands could not dig; their tongues could only take.

It was the winged creatures of the air. Not all of them cast long shadows along the ground, the length of a whispered prayer, but the ones that did grew inches longer at the trembling and stench of rising fear. It was their breath that withered, their voice that shook, and their teeth that tore, before a deep crimson tongue broke the water's clouding surface. And yet, despite their reigns of terror, some of those prayers were not to another for deliverance, but to those dragons themselves, as the blood of their brothers clung deeply to those scales. Each dragon laid its claim, divided its territory, until they created their own crowns of bones and sinew.

It was those that resisted the call of the beasts that were able to bring the first one down. Their victory was not without sacrifice, one more lost to those stained jaws. But it was their tears that fell upon the ground and caused the ground to shake.

The surface split, a line to the east and west creating a deep shift, the north jutting up to create a cliff, the other sinking far enough that a source of water was revealed. The water bubbled to the surface, flooding across the desert sand as far as one could see. The torches of those far off, not yet arrived who would fight on the dragon's behalf, were blinked out. Those standing on the clifftop stared down in awe. Ground opened up as they watched on, swallowing the dragon's bones and the bearer of tears.

Now, just at sunrise, watching carefully and still as one can be, light twinkles in the depths of the void. Even more rare, a motion from within casts a shadow over those lights, before the sun moves to bring its light to the rest of the world.

Only one dragon's bones have ever been devoured. The green of the ground whispers its stories in the wind, echoed in the leaves of the trees. Waves of the water, crashing against the sand and pouring into the void, have their own shout. Even the rocks, covered in moss, their harsh plain broken up now by flowers, have a silent voice in a realm that we can't hear.

Some people whisper that the dragon never died; it knows who its betrayers were and all their generations, and will burst once more from the dark places that birthed it to seek its revenge. The quieter whispers, but that which hold more hope, is that the bearer of tears does not remain fallen, but that the waters that flow down into that depth provide a place for him, his crown of water and of life, until he fights his way back out to watch the other dragons fall and gather those generations who hold their breath in anxious waiting.



Early Blooms (Kassandra Hayes)

Celebrating the Thaw

Agnes Vojta

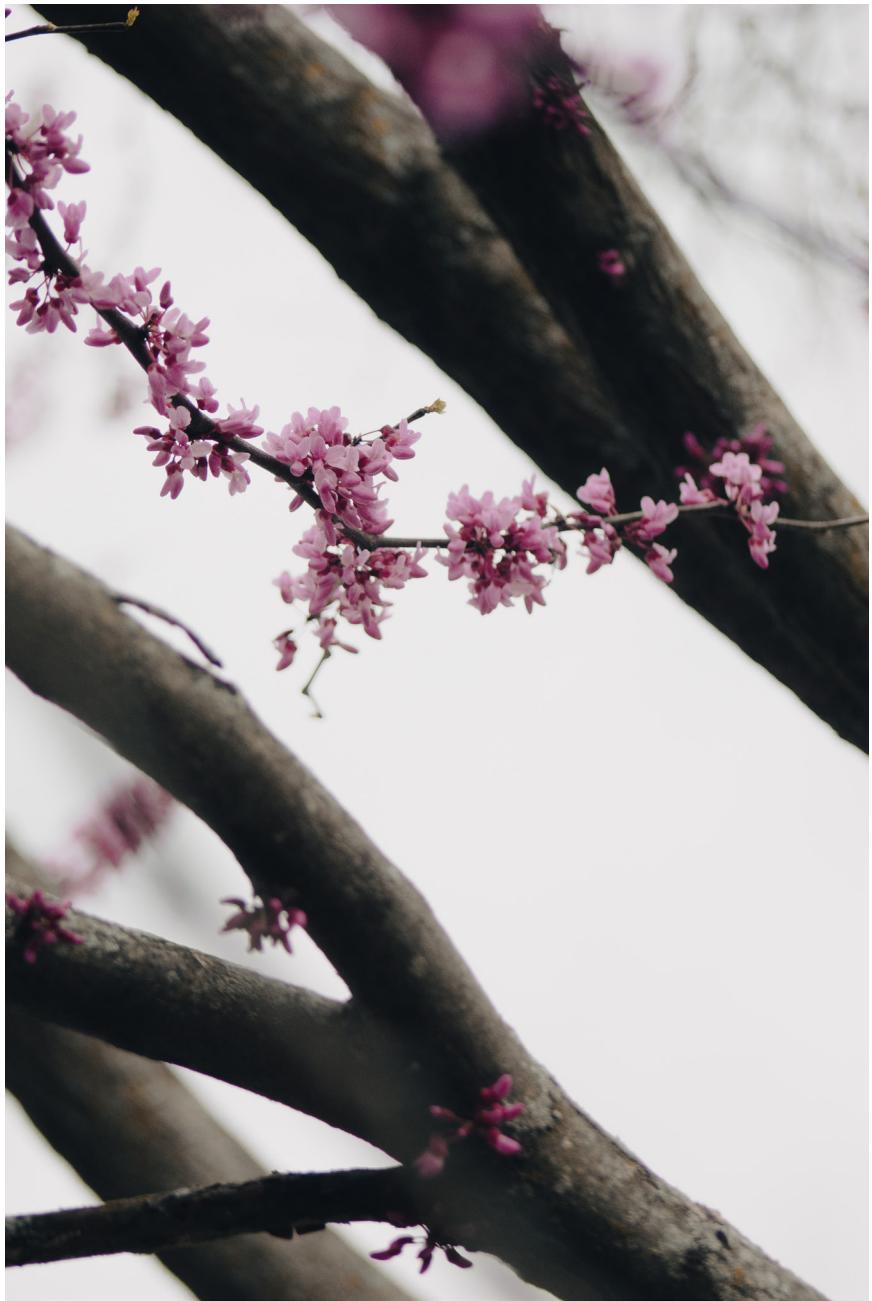
Pale pink, the moon
sinks toward the horizon.
Mists are rising.
Fields dream of spring.

In shallow pools,
the peepers shrill the air.
Steps crunch the grass.
The frogs fall silent – all

but one: defiant, he keeps singing
a series of melodious notes,
audacious soloist who won't contain
his joie de vivre.



Dunes (Nate Opperman)



Blossoms (Kassandra Hayes)



Stationary, For Now (Nate Opperman)

Tell Me When

Celeste Blakely

Today I asked nobody in particular
If when I die I will become a star
Nobody answered me

I walk along the trees, pick up acorn husks;
Look at a tree stump and imagine the moss I know will grow there.
I see the empty spaces on the ground where the flowers live and die

I find the spot in my heart where I like to hide
And wonder where have I gone?

As I keep walking, I see the ravens
So many of them, swirling and flying back and forth;
A whirlwind black paint spattering
Against hues of pink and gold and violet

I ask them
Can anyone please tell me
When will it be spring?

Nobody knows, it seems

But then they answer me:
Always,
Always,
Always,

How beautiful

They sing.



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