The Heron is an annual literary journal that focuses on the writing community at Great Bay Community College. Poetry, fiction, non-fiction and artwork produced by students, faculty and staff are collected on a rolling basis.
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Sometimes the stars blink, confused.  
They can't understand why one runs.

They don't understand why one cries, because they never cry.  
What do they have to cry about?

Do they understand violence? Do they understand death?

I don't think so or else, why would they watch,  
Shining and laughing,  
While crimes, and sickness, steal away lives, and hearts, and mothers, and fathers, and children?

No. I don't think they understand.  
I do not think they want to.

But we understand.  

I understand.  

The stars watch from a distance, and while they do, I watch from right here.  

I understand why one runs, I understand why one cries,  
I understand death,  
I understand crime and sickness,  
I understand from right here.
Pixie Dust without the Trust

By Gabrielle Rogers

You had my hopes up so high
My dreams came true and I learned how to fly
You gave me everything I could ask for at the bat of an eye
Then pulled the rug out from under me and told me goodbye
You promised never to leave
You said I only need to believe
Anything I wanted, I could achieve
Never had I felt so relieved
But you lied and flew away without me
A child like you could never keep your word
The thought of flying off with you was so absurd
Yet so real that I could have been a bird
Screw You Peter Pan
Knots
By Nicole Lavoie

I knew the day in Boston, Massachusetts was supposed to be fun. I spent the day at the aquarium with my parents, but every time they would try to keep me busy, that feeling of butterflies and knots filled my stomach. I held back tears as best I could, but the feeling would not go away. I knew what they were doing, and I knew what was coming next.

The aquarium smelled like salt, and had the soothing sound of running water. I walked over to the sea turtle tank with shaking legs, but somehow that calmed my stomach enough to actually enjoy the day. I stayed there, looking at the tank for what felt like a long time. The sea turtle looked calm, swimming among the rainbow colored fish. I stood on the light blue ledge that was near the tank so I could get a better look. The cylinder shaped tank was amazing — not only did I see the sea turtle and the fish, but I also saw a hammerhead shark, its charcoal body looked striking against the blue water. The whole tank felt like my escape from something I knew I would never be able to escape.

“Hey Nikki, why don’t we look at other tanks?” my mother said.

I did not say anything, a feeling of guilt rushed over me so I complied. As soon as I walked away from my escape the butterflies and knots returned, my shaky legs returned. We walked up a ramp and passed a blue ceiling with a whale skeleton hanging from it. People walked by me, talking and laughing like they hadn’t a care in the world, and here I was just trying to keep it together and stop myself from crying. We reached the second floor and turned right, heading toward the penguin exhibit. The smell of fish was strong, it almost made me gag. When we reached the exhibit, the knots got worse. I could not stop thinking about what was going to happen the next day. Even though the knots in my stomach would not subside, I put on a smile for my parents so they would think I was having fun, when really, I was screaming inside. As the day went on the knots and butterflies came and went. The next stop, a “nice” dinner downtown Boston.

We walked into the restaurant and waited to be seated. I felt sick to my stomach. Even though I hadn’t eaten anything since that morning I felt like throwing up. I told
myself to calm down, and that everything would be alright. But I couldn’t calm down. My mind kept coming up with worst-case scenarios: What if I don’t wake up? What if something went wrong while I was under? My parents had only known Dr. Snider for a couple of months before they agreed to have him do the surgery, and me being only thirteen at the time, I had no say in it. They said they thought it over hundreds and hundreds of times before making the decision, but I did not believe them. How could they make a decision that could impact the future of their daughter so quickly? I felt like they had not even put into consideration how I felt about it. I did not want it to happen. I felt fine. I mean sure my bones were a bit crooked, and yes I was getting tired more quickly, but I would have a way to cope with it instead of just jumping straight for surgery. It felt like a big slap in the face. They say they were only trying to do what they thought was best for me at the time, but I feel like they were also giving up on me; like they were done letting me try to figure it out for myself. How to run without using so much energy; how to figure out a way to stand for more than five minutes without it feeling like I had just run a marathon. I felt like if my parents had only believed in me and given me the chance, I wouldn’t be have felt as nervous as I was now. When the waitress came to seat us and take our drink order, it was the first time I had spoken that night. I ordered a Shirley Temple, mom ordered a sprite and dad had a Budweiser. When the waitress left, everything was silent again for twenty minutes until finally my dad started to speak up and tried to make small talk.

“Did you have fun today?” He asked.

“I guess.” I said. I felt tears start to trickle down my face, I tried to keep the flow of tears to a minimum.

“What do you mean you guess? You love the aquarium.” He said.

“I don’t know—I guess it was not as much fun as the other times I went.” I snapped.

“Look, I know you’re upset and scared but you did not have to snap at me like that,” He said sternly.

“Why not? You two are the reason why I’m like this” I snapped, not caring if we received strange looks from other diners.

“Nikki.” My mother said. “Stop.”
I tried to be polite and keep up but I was too wrapped up in my head. What if something went wrong? What if I died? I could not say a word to them. I was too angry with them, and did not want anything to do with them. I did speak the occasional “Yes” or “No” but I did not take much of an effort to engage in small talk. When the waitress came back with our drinks, she placed them in front of us and asked us if we were ready to order. I ordered chicken fingers with fries, dad ordered a hamburger, and mom ordered a chicken fried steak. Then there was another long moment of silence.

I was in my head, too concerned about what might happen while I was under. I did not know what was going to happen or how well or terribly the operation was going to go. When the waitress arrived with our orders, mom and dad seemed to have no trouble eating their food, whereas for me every bite felt like a rock in my stomach. I really did not want to eat, but I knew that if I did not, I would not be able to the next morning. So I ate the chicken fingers and fries without a word, even if they felt like rocks. Again there was silence. Nothing to be said, nothing to be heard, no apologizes, nothing. Just a quiet family eating their dinner with nothing to say to one another. We finished up our dinner and waited for the waitress to come and bring us our bill.

“Forty-two dollars” dad said and took out his debit card and placed it inside the bill holder with the tip on top. Then we got up and left. Again, the shaky legs returned as we headed out the door. When we got back to the hotel, I spent the rest of the day watching Disney movies. I tried to keep the knots inside my stomach from getting tighter. I tried to enjoy the movies, but the sick to my stomach nervousness feeling would not go away. So I went to bed to try to sleep it off. That night I went to bed with tears in my eyes.

Before I knew it the day had come, the day I had been dreading. It started with my mom waking me up and getting me dressed. We had to be at the hospital by six A.M. Even though I had tried to sleep off the knots and butterflies, they returned full force the next morning. I bit my bottom lip to try and hide the waterfall of tears behind my eyes as we got into the truck and drove to the hospital.

Boston Children’s Hospital is a round building with brightly colored poles. We drove up to the drop off lane where I got out to the sound of busy Boston traffic. Honking, swearing, pollution. I walked in to the hospital with my parents, checked in, and went into a glass elevator.
We made it up to the waiting room. It had a gray carpet with yellow painted walls and a table off to right with coloring pages on it. I was too preoccupied with fear to try and do anything get my mind off of it. So I went to the middle of the room, where there was a giant fish tank that reminded me of the sea turtle tank I saw at the aquarium. I felt calm again for a little while until the nurse called me in to do the final stages of preparation before the surgery. I went into a room with my mom, dad, and the nurse to get one of those hospital bracelets. She asked me questions like “Are you allergic to anything?” All I could do was shake my head no. I looked around the room while the nurse asked my parents questions about me. There was nothing really on the walls that took my mind off of what was happening and before I knew it, I was in a room, in a hospital bed being prepped for surgery. I was choking on tears; I knew something was going to go wrong later on in the recovery of the surgery. The doctor came in and drew where he was going to make incisions. A nurse came in to tell me and my parents about what was going to go on during the surgery and that they would keep them updated during the operation. With that, two nurses came to wheel me away to the operating room.

We arrived at the operating room. The nurses and doctors gave me a smile and I was able to manage a weak smile back. They wheeled me to the so that I was facing the door on the right. I talked to the nurse in a last-ditch effort to try and get my mind off of what was about to happen. Surprisingly, my voice was steady despite me swallowing and fighting back tears. The last thing I remember is looking off to the left, up at the ceiling as I drifted off into unconsciousness. I remember dreaming about walking for the last time. I walked through forests and beaches laughing and smiling. Running at top speed through piles of brightly colored leaves that crunched beneath my feet, I was happy. I felt like nothing could go wrong. I ran through the moss covered ground and felt its soft, supple texture up against my toes. I was enjoying being able to run and not having anyone telling me not to go anywhere or not do something. I could do anything I wanted. I could swim, eat anything I wanted, go anywhere I wanted. I remember laughing. I felt like that was the most I’d ever laughed in my life. I ran through oceans, kicked up sand and rocks and seaweed. Little rocks got stuck in between my toes, and I smiled. I was so happy to be walking. I stood on the beach and looked out at the ocean. I smiled and sat down and watched the sunset. Little did I know I wouldn’t be able to walk ever again after the operation.
The life that I did not know was ahead of me was going to be a long and hard life to live. I would have to rely on a power wheelchair to be my primary mode of transportation. I could not stand for more than five minutes after the surgery without feeling like I was breaking my legs in the process. I would not get out bed for long periods of time. The only time I would get out of bed was to go to the bathroom. I would not eat, would not go outside, would not socialize. I was too upset to do anything. The next three years were going to be the hardest three years of my life.
Icelandic Landscape by Elias Roussos
Before The Bell Rings
By Gabrielle Rogers

Blood dripping noses and threats being written
Scores being settled and fights being finished
Savage, inhuman, unthinkable things
All things that happen before the bell rings

Kids being bullied in ways that are brutal
Attempts to stop it that prove to be futile
Trying to hold back tears that sting
All things that happen before the bell rings

Kids doing drugs and hiding their stashes
Getting so drunk that they get into crashes
Partying all night feeling like kings
All things that happen before the bell rings

When the kids fight, when the tears sting
When it's getting bad
I remember these terrible things
And then I just feel so sad
Motherhood

By Heather Lurvey

When I think of myself the first thing that comes to mind is mother. Everything else that I am or might be precedes that. With that being said, at the center of every choice I make are my children; whether it is what we’re having for dinner or what I choose for my career. I always think of what’s in the best interest of my children first and foremost. The fundamentals of my own happiness depend on their wellbeing and happiness. I knew the second I saw those big brown sparkling eyes staring back at me, five and a half years ago, that my world was going to drastically change. No choice that I’ve made since has been hasty or without well thought out consequences. Though sometimes I’ve been made to think and feel differently. I’m sure other mothers have also felt this same worry and guilt that our peers, media and society subject us to. For a culture that promotes individualism, there are many unspoken expectations that are thrust upon mothers.

Parenthood is essentially a different life than that of a single person. Some of the friendships you have with adults who don’t have children will vanish like fog lifting off the ground in the morning. Others will grow into stronger bonds than you could have imagined. Friends who don’t have children may ask you to go out drinking, go on a road trip, or do something spontaneous since they lack the mentality of a mother. They may even get upset or angry when you say no. Only when they have children of their own will they be able to fully understand.

From best friends in high school to distant friends in adulthood, the toll of motherhood negatively impacted a once vibrant friendship of mine. Friends and family will overbearingly tell you what way to feed, change, hold, burp, swaddle, dress, and parent your child with the idea that they are being helpful. Inevitably you’re the one who gets to make the decision despite all the advice you get. Sometimes you’ll offend or upset someone by not taking their advice, but they should respect you and your choices. Back to my high school friend; we were inseparable until our parenting choices divided us. We thought that our children would be best friends for years to come! Then the choices I made seemed to be all the wrong ones in my friend’s eyes. I, soon after, decided not to subject myself to such scrutiny. She thought that being in a relationship in which she had been impregnated meant that she had no other choice than to get
married so that’s what she did. I strongly believe that having a child should not be the sole reason that two people get married. She pushed her beliefs on me and my tired ears could no longer take the constant judgment.

I tried my hardest to breast feed and ended up not being able to due to the lack of production. Critics acclaim, “Breastfeeding is easy because it’s natural” (Myths of Motherhood). I read this, thinking the complete opposite based on my experience. It was the longest two weeks of my life, constantly trying and being unable to keep my sweet newborn baby satisfied. I finally decided to choose an alternate form of nourishment and the ridicule began. In my girlfriend’s eyes, it was this day that marked the reason for every ailment that my baby would endure for the rest of his life. From ear infections to seasonal allergies, the cause must have been that he was “bottle fed.” A once meaningful friendship was now left in ruins. It’s from past experiences that I beg of you not to judge one another based on your beliefs. There truly is no right or wrong way to parent. I can reassure you no mother ever said “I decided not to breast feed because I don’t care about my child’s health.” Or, “I want to use disposable diapers to ruin the environment.” Just because someone doesn’t agree with you, doesn’t mean they’re disagreeing to spite you. Each person is entitled to their own belief, choices and the right to exercise those choices.

Becoming a mother can also strengthen previous bonds. My children consider my best friend since the sixth grade their “Auntie”. Despite having no relation, she’s been there for them since before they were even conscious of it. She’s never missed a birthday, graduation or significant event of theirs. They squeal and glimmer with happiness when they know auntie is coming over to see them. It’s these intimate relationships that you thank your lucky stars to be graced with.

Becoming a mother opens many doors to meeting a wide variety of mothers. Moms are involved in so many clubs, organizations, and activities that I’m sure you didn’t even know existed prior to becoming a mother. In being involved in these extracurricular activities, our children’s horizons are broadened and they’re given the opportunity to learn various life skills, where they can build relationships and interact with other children that are on the same level as them. Letting a child become part of your local library may seem so insignificant to you, but to a five year old, it’s the single most awesome thing in the world! To be able to go check out books that pertain to whatever
he/she may be interested in at the time is fascinating and very beneficial to helping them become literate. There are also many groups for moms to connect with other mothers in similar situations, and places you can reach out to for advice. Some mothers’ groups meet weekly just to catch up and socialize, which I find very beneficial for mothers in our society. I use to meet once a week at the local mall where our children could run around and play on the indoor gym and the mothers could socialize as well.

Media often pushes unrealistic expectations on moms. On the front cover of the magazines, you'll see celebrity mothers in their bliss describing their newborns as perfect and having no complaints whatsoever. These mothers claim, "When I hear his cry at 6:30 in the morning, I have a smile on my face, and I'm not an early riser" (Douglas and Michaels). Making mothers everywhere feel inferior to the celebrity mother who adores waking up, not only at all hours of the night, but early every morning for the following months after birth too. What the media doesn’t portray is the average mother whom has to put out twice the amount of work and doesn’t have half as much help. She is tired at 6:30 in the morning and may not wake with a smile on her face, but she loves her baby just as much as any other mother! Despite what we may assume,

Celebrity-mom profiles haven't been just harmless dreck that helps sell magazines. They have encouraged self-loathing, rather than reassurance, in those of us financially comfortable enough not to have to worry about where our kids' next meals are coming from. And they play a subtle but important role in encouraging so many of us to think about motherhood as an individual achievement and a test of individual will and self-discipline. (Douglas and Michaels)

There are always subtle and blatant messages that the media is pushing us to believe. Just because mothers aren’t always feeling happy and ready to conquer the world, doesn’t make them inferior.

Society makes mothers believe that their child is a direct reflection of themselves. Even though mothers have little control, “Everyone acts as if a mother is responsible for everything her child does. People glare at you in the supermarket if your child acts up – as if you don't know how to manage them. They make comments on the bus if your child is unruly. If your daughter protests loudly when you leave to go out in the evening the babysitter or your mother might think, ‘she never does that with me’” (Heffner). There is so much weight put on mothers’ shoulders when it comes to
parenting. Three types of parenting are: authoritarian, permissive, and authoritative (Myers 138). Authoritarian is to make specific rules and expect them to be followed without question. This parenting type is looked down upon for being too hard on children. Permissive is to have few demands and use little punishment. This style is looked down upon for being too lenient because children thrive with schedules and boundaries. Authoritative is a mixture of rules and expectations while encouraging open discussion and allowing expectations in some instances. This is thought to be the most effective and positive parenting type (Myers 138). I believe that this is the style that I use with my children. We have set rules that they know they have to abide by, but sometimes I make exceptions. It’s such a gray area because who’s to say what is too strict versus what is too lenient? It’s all in the perception of the individual. Stay-at-home mothers are criticized and perceived to sit around drinking coffee relaxing with other stay at home mothers all day. On the other hand outsiders often speculate that working mothers don’t spend enough time with their children. So many misconceptions cause a barrier that makes us incapable of seeing the common interests that we all have.

Motherhood is a blessing. Unlike the media tries to portray, you’ll have bad days. Days that you will be tired, on edge, or feel like you just can’t be all that you need to be. As with anything else in life, these things will pass. You have to learn to take the bad days along with the good because everything can’t always be smooth sailing. The community of mothers is here for you on your good days and bad and you should really utilize this great asset.

My favorite part of being a mother is my family’s bedtime routine. After brushing our teeth and using the toilet, we read two books together. My son picks two books of his choosing. Then I read with him using all different voices and pitches with different emotions and my son giggles and is enthralled by this. No matter what kind of day we each have had, this time pulls us all together, forcing me to realize what’s really important. I’d like to leave you with a quote from a video that I watched a few months back. The video was very powerful in showing that no matter what our religion, preference, or choices, we all have the same common interest. I found the quote “No matter what our beliefs, we are parents first” (Similac advertisement) spoke many words to me. If you have the chance, watch the Similac advertisement. I hope it will do the same for you.
Works Cited


Behind the Lens

By Mary Vogt

Everyone is hiding from the world

With photos that cover

And conceal the truth

Everyone is busy comparing themselves

To the pretty girls

And reckless boys

Everyone is blind

To what is really happening

Behind the lens
Deer in Autumn by Stephanie Bowden
I hate it so much, I hate staring at the ground, I hate being quiet, 
I hate being me sometimes, I want to talk, I want everyone to know what I have to say 
I want to say certain things to certain people at certain places at certain times 
but I can’t, I just keep my mouth shut because no one wants to hear me 
and if they do they’ll regret it after I say something, 
something will come out wrong, someone will get offended, someone will be angry, 
someone will feel something and when someone feels something they do something 
and if it’s something bad then it comes back to me because I’m the one who opened my mouth; 
I’m the one who doesn’t speak but I do speak, I know I can 
but sometimes I swear my lips are sewn shut my heart sinks for a moment 
my lungs collapse blood no longer flows I can’t breathe 
so I just sit down as they talk and talk and talk and it’s a luxury, 
it’s a luxury and they don’t even know it, it’s normal, it’s human, but what does that make me? 
Am I broken or just a little messed up? Or maybe they’re messed up or maybe we all are 
or maybe I should just sit back down.
Excerpt
By Casey Marfongelli

I flip on the light to find a new, brighter perspective on the once dark room. I pick up my toothbrush and toothpaste and begin to brush my teeth. I’ve always found it interesting, how the only bones sticking out of our body are seen as a beautiful structure. Good teeth means beauty. Like, what if my leg snapped and my bone was sticking out? Would I just polish it until it was glowing white? A nice, sparkly leg bone would surely bring the girls to me. I’d be the guy with the best leg bone in school; they’d even put a section in the yearbook just for me: Best Leg Bone.

I spit into the sink - the mint being a much better taste than yesterday’s post-stomach occupants. Or whatever I threw up, considering I didn’t eat anything. After rinsing my mouth out, I stand up to find my reflection staring back at me, copying my every move. I use him to tie the black neck tie hanging down my torso. Cross the big over the little one, tuck it back under, wrap the little one around and tuck it in, now pull.

I only wear ties to school on occasion; I don’t know the occasion, though. Maybe it’s just in case I die somehow; I’ll look nice in the process. People give me more attention for some reason, too. People always ask why I’m wearing a tie: same reason a girl wears makeup. I just want to look nice. I’m not a fan of my physical appearance so I may as well try to look presentable every now and then. Black jeans, black tie, and a white button down; I look like a hipster pilgrim. Without the buckle hat, of course, there’s a beanie instead.

I make my way down the stairs, heading towards the kitchen. I push around inside the fridge for a bit, looking for a drink. I find one, obviously, pulling it out and feeling its cold aluminum texture in my hands. I close the fridge and put it on the counter while sitting on the floor and tying my shoes I had left here. Well, I don’t tie them - I slip them on with the laces stuffed in the shoe.

I grip the table and pull myself up, standing in the kitchen and wiping my butt in case I was sitting in anything. I look around at what my vision can see with the lights off, the room dimly illuminated by a blinking light on the landline telephone. It’s a red
glow that pleases my eyes, occasionally giving them a tainted view of the room. I stand still for a bit, staring at the wall for some reason. I don’t want to go to school anymore, but I have to. I pick my bag up from the chair I left it on, swing it over my shoulder, and then head back to the fridge. I pull open the door while reaching over the counter with my other hand, grab the can of booze, and slide it to the back where it had been sleeping. I don’t know why; this isn’t some “new day, new me” shit. I just felt maybe I could save it for another day.

With that, I make my way out the door and outside towards the bus stop at the entrance of my neighborhood. There’s two kids there already - who’s names I’ve never bothered to learn. I meet people throughout my life, why should I bother learning their names? They won’t matter to me in the end and I won’t matter to them so why waste brain cells?

I stand at least ten feet from them, waiting for the bus as I always do. They continue a conversation they were having prior to my arrival, except noticeably quieter, as if afraid I would hear. I’ve never understood why people do that, who cares if I hear? I don’t. I catch a few words about an upcoming test and that’s about it. Nothing important.

“I’m gonna fail, no doubt,” one of them says. Kids focus on the wrong things; how about appreciating the fact that you’re sane enough to put effort into school. That drive, for me, left long ago. School is mostly an activity to pass the time at this point. I go there because I have nothing better to do; also it’s free. If there’s one thing I’ve learned, if something’s free, use it, whatever it is. Maybe I won’t learn how to do science or math because I lack ambition, but maybe someone will do something stupid and give me a reason to laugh.

That’s another thing I’ve learned; look for something to laugh at. Things could always get worse, may as well laugh when possible. There’s some science stuff behind it, but I know laughing can make a person feel better at any given moment. I learned to laugh at almost anything and it’s quite possibly the only thing keeping me going at this point. I know that’s not very healthy, but oh well.

The bus is here.
I don’t think there’s too much wrong with me; I don’t need a therapist or anything. I can just keep going how I’m going then die eventually. Besides, what good would a therapist do for me? They would just tell me things I already know. Yes, I know I’m not healthy, I understand that something I’m doing is wrong, I see that I can change, but I don’t know how. So if I can’t change myself, how can someone else?

“I like your tie,” the bus driver says as I get on.

Caught off guard, I barely manage to mutter a “Thanks” before proceeding down the aisle. I need a preparation before a compliment, otherwise I’ll just look like a jackass who ignored something nice that was said to me. Maybe just slap me on the face to get my attention first followed by said compliment, that’ll assure I hear every word of it. That way, I can respond without embarrassing myself. Because I do that a lot.

I sit down around the middle of the bus in a once vacant seat. Staring out the window, I find a thick mist fogging my vision of anything greater than fifty feet. The bus trudges through the stuff, possibly unaware of what lies ahead of it. Good job, bus. You’re very brave.
Gray Matter
By Jared Michael

She is sticking by my side through and through
Riding out this storm of epic proportion
I shot her down harder than can be imagined
Dealt a blow that would cripple any other
Temporarily knocked flat only to find a footing
She is trying to figure me out as I do the same
I’m standing on a cliff yelling at the top of my lungs
Start with my forehead as I begin to part my skin
Tearing like a button down shirt, top to bottom
It is in agony of pure frustration
Frustration of having no peace, no happiness
Destined for the path of self destruction
Destruction down to nothing
Build up again without the adversary of toxic gray matter
The Birth of Fire by Stephanie Bowden
To Immunize or Not: Shining a Light on the Uncertainty

By Heather Lurvey

Parenting comes with so many responsibilities. They lurk around every corner, threatening your perceived ability to rear well-rounded children. One of the most talked about responsibilities of a parent is the choice to vaccinate or not. Although it’s every mother and father’s choice, there is a great amount of ridicule that comes with choosing not to vaccinate your children. Isn’t the right choice a given? It’s natural to question whether or not so many injections prior to the age of five are really needed. It may not be pleasant to hear your innocent four month old wailing in pain but that’s a very small price to pay for not contracting a disease such as polio or whooping cough. Especially since they’ll hardly remember the experience, if at all. I will tell you right now, with certainty, that vaccines are undoubtedly necessary because they could save your child’s life down the road.

Though you may not hear that these diseases are rampant in our society that does not mean they aren’t out there. The internet can often be a very deceiving and misleading source to depend on. If you’re on the fence about vaccines I’d recommend looking to your pediatrician or a credible source for more accurate advice. As claimed by the CDC, “Today, parents may not have seen a case of a vaccine-preventable disease firsthand. Therefore, they may wonder if vaccines are really necessary, and they may believe that the risks of vaccinating infants outweigh the benefits of protecting them from infection with vaccine-preventable disease” (CDC, Talking to Parents). In this article the CDC explains a common phenomenon that is just because you can’t see it doesn’t mean it’s not there. Parents don’t often see the outbreak of the diseases that we vaccinate against. Some parents may even question whether or not to have their children immunized due to this, but the diseases are most certainly still out there. It’s vaccinating against them that’s made them so scarce in our society. This is why we need to keep vaccinating in order to keep them at bay. All it takes is one child not being vaccinated to possibly expose an entire elementary to a fatal, and preventable, disease.

The Center for Disease Control and Prevention recommends immunizing children because of the tremendous decline in diseases that have happened due to vaccinating our children (CDC, Why Immunize). To paint a clearer picture I’ve come across the CDC’s charismatic analogy:
It’s much like bailing out a boat with a slow leak. When we started bailing, the boat was filled with water. But we have been bailing fast and hard, and now it is almost dry. We could say, “Good. The boat is dry now, so we can throw away the bucket and to relax.” But the leak hasn’t stopped. Before long we’d notice a little water seeping in, and soon it might be back up to the same level as when we started. (CDC, Why Immunize)

The analogy confirms the idea that the reason we don’t see many vaccine preventable life-threatening diseases, such as polio and diphtheria, now-a-days is due to the significant amount of people immunized in past years (CDC, Why Immunize). Thus our boat is almost free from water. Now, since some parents are becoming leery of the contraindications of immunizations and choosing to decline immunizations, it’s as if they are throwing away our bucket to bail water with. If we have a massive decline in vaccinations this will counteract the positive results we’ve seen and lead to outbreaks of vaccine preventable diseases.

Paul Offit is an American pediatrician specializing in infectious disease and an expert on vaccines, immunology, and virology (Boghani). He states that “A choice not to get a vaccine is not a risk-free choice. It’s just a choice to take a different risk” (Boghani, 33). This is dead on. Just because you chose not to have your children immunized doesn’t mean you can now put the choice behind you. Now you have a much higher risk of contracting the actual disease and have the opportunity to spread the disease if exposed to it. Children are exposed to so many different situations. What happens if they travel or their high school has a foreign exchange student that they befriend and contract one of these diseases? Have you ever Googled Polio? Let me tell you it isn’t pretty. Some carriers of these diseases have no symptoms at all and can spread the disease unknowingly (Lantos). Paul Offit, MD asks

And what is that other risk? For example, even though we hadn’t seen measles in this country for 10 years, we finally got to the point where enough children weren’t vaccinated that children started to get measles in 2008, as many as 140, and some of those children were hospitalized, and one of those children almost died. And you don’t want that to be you. And the only way that you can accept, I think, a vaccine for disease that frankly are virtually gone from the United States, like measles or diphtheria or polio, is if those vaccines are incredibly safe,
have a wonderful safety profile. And these vaccines do have that. Doing nothing is doing something. It is, in this case, taking a risk that’s unnecessary. (A Choice)

By writing this, Offit disagrees with parents making the choice to not immunize their children. He tries to expand your mind by telling you that if you don’t choose one risk you will reap another. Vaccinating or not vaccinating is putting your child at risk for something; it’s just a matter of weighing what risk you’d rather take. In other words, if you choose not to vaccinate your children, you’re putting them at risk of not having any immunity if and when exposed to a vaccine preventable disease. Offit insists that having a vaccination is far less risky than contracting a disease (A Choice). Either way, naturally, I accept that there are risks in immunizing, but I firmly believe there is much less risks in vaccines versus the risks of acquiring a life-threatening disease. The CDC reminds us that even though vaccine preventable diseases aren’t heard about a lot they’re still able to come back with vengeance through unimmunized adults and children if travelers bring the disease to the U.S. (CDC, Talking with Parents). The CDC also attempts to convince skeptics that vaccinations are ever evolving and being made safer each year to ensure that they are the less risky and more beneficial choice vs. not immunizing (CDC, Talking with Parents).

Jeffrey Baker concedes that pediatric immunizations are “One of the great success stories of American public health in the 20th century” (Baker 199) explaining in depth the evolution of various immunizations and how they’ve strengthened America. He also reveals the significant decrease in disease infections after the use of immunizations in stating “pertussis cases fell from 334 in 1923-1933 to 131 cases in 1937” (Baker). Baker argues that immunizations are America’s greatest mode of decreasing mortality and increasing population “than any other public health intervention besides clean water” (Baker). What I took from Baker’s argument was that despite all of the negative stigma that immunizations are enduring, they have been greatly beneficial overall in the past and we cannot forget that.

Thimerosal is one of the components of vaccinations that parents are frightened of often due to hearsay and misconceptions. The American Academy of Pediatrics emphasizes their support of the World Health Organization in not banning thimerosal from vaccinations (American Academy of Pediatrics). For those of you who don’t know, the American Academy of Pediatrics describes thimerosal as a preservative that con-
tains ethyl mercury and it’s used as an antibacterial and antifungal agent in some vaccines (American Academy of Pediatrics). The bad reputation that thimerosal has acquired is due to the fact that when “thimerosal is broken down in the body to thiosalicylate and ethylmercury... ethylmercury and the highly toxic methylmercury...were perceived to have similar toxicity profiles... which has been disproved” (Barrett 2). Researcher Julia Barrett findings are extremely useful because it sheds insight on the fact that thimerosal is not toxic and therefore is safe to use in vaccines. Although I agree that parents should be very cautious and make sure that we have all the correct information, I disagree that thimerosal has any negative effects on children because of research that has been conducted. The Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices has done a wealth of research on the effects of thimerosal on rodents and came to the conclusion that they saw few, if any, neurological effects, and when they did the thimerosal levels were 250 times greater than that found in vaccines that we use today (Curtis et al). In their more recent research, the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices conducted an experiment exposing rhesus macaques, monkeys, to a vaccine schedule like the one in place in the US currently, as well as multiple other vaccine schedules that contained the thimerosal. They observed that there is no evidence of any adverse impacts of vaccinations in early neurodevelopment (Curtis et al). Julia Barrett, whom was involved, wrote an article concluding there are no negative impacts of thimerosal on neurodevelopment (Barret 1). She went on to describe that vaccinations have tremendously impacted the drop of disease in the country and now that the diseases weren’t there people began to develop perceptions that vaccines themselves may cause more risks than the ones they prevent (Barrett 1).

Another skeptic point of view is that immunizations, specifically Mumps, Measles, and Rubella, cause autism in children. Alison Singer worked for Autism Speaks in New York. An organization that supports vaccine-related research. They contributed a great amount of time and money into the debate on whether or not there was a link between vaccinations and autism and were never able to find any link between the two. Thus when she knew she’d be required to vote in favor of endorsing more research into the multi-million dollar vaccine autism vortex, she resigned and set out to start her own foundation. Prior to resigning,
Singer had followed the growing number of studies that debunked any link between autism and the once-suspect measles, mumps and rubella vaccine...for the past several years, she says, the data have been very clear. “There were no studies indicating a link between autism and vaccines.” As time went on, Singer became increasingly uncomfortable with her organization’s continued funding of vaccine-related research. She was even more disturbed by its failure to state, publicly and unequivocally, that all the data show that vaccines do not cause autism. (Wadman, 30)

In another words, Singer implies that despite no evidence of links between autism and vaccines, large companies will still contribute huge sums of money into research to appeal to its consumers. Though it was hard to wrap my head around this at first when the chief science officer for Autism Speaks stated:

The evidence strongly suggests that there is not a link between autism and vaccines. What we are trying to understand through our research funding is the role of the immune system in autism, which certainly could be relevant to the question of vaccines...we are willing to leave the door open for the possibility of rare cases in which an immunization may have triggered the onset of autism symptoms due to an underlying medical or genetic condition. (Wadman 31)

It became clear that he was making this statement to appeal to all audiences. Singer founded the Autism Science Foundation (ASF). The ASF was, “a tiny New York based charity with a relentless focus on rigorous science, a niche supporting the youngest researchers and a guiding principal that “vaccines save lives; they do not cause autism” (Wadman, 28). A number of researchers have studied the links between vaccinations and autism and all of these studies have shown that this link does not exist. Singer’s foundation is not focused on studies pertaining to links between autism and vaccinations but rather the science of autism itself. Singer believes that autism is “being hijacked by the vaccine hypothesis” (Wadman, 30-31). In conclusion, Singer decided to start the ASF in hopes of finding treatment for autism and ways that we can help people who have autism live happily (Wadman, 31).

As I mentioned before it’s only natural to question whether or not your child needs to be injected with so many different vaccinations prior to the age of five. Furthermore, if you have been misled by social media, friends or other sources, it’s easily
understandable that you’d think vaccinations are a risk not worth taking. Just remem-
ber – sometimes the sources that you’re basing your choices on are biased or untrust-
worthy. If you’re on the fence, educate yourself with credible research or talk with your 
pediatrician. Remember that if you choose not to vaccinate you’re children you’re not
free from risks you just have different risks to consider (Boghani). After absorbing all of
the information that I’ve provided, such as the facts that vaccinations don’t cause au-
tism, thimerosal isn’t toxic, and being immunized is key in keeping disease to a mini-
mum, I hope that you’re better suited to make the choice to have your child vaccinated.
Don’t take the option for granted because others in different places in the world would
give up so much to have the opportunity that we have in our great country. With the
help of immunizations we were able to be wipe out so many life threatening diseases
that are still plaguing some areas of the world. It’s only with the continuation of im-
munizations that we can keep up our great defense against these diseases. It only takes
one unimmunized person, child or adult, to expose hundreds and even thousands to a
disease which could result in death. I’m certain you don’t want to be that one.
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The Dancer by Emily Burr
Mindless
By Jessica Spoto

Hands like an earthquake tremble to the beat of her heart
Her mind racing with positive and negative, yes and no
Pulled this way; torn that way
Her eyes drown in the fear that one day rejection will consume her

Cold air fills her unwanting lungs; inhale exhale
Love, hope, apple trees pounded into her brain
Sadness, hurt, hate release into her mind as she sits frozen and numb
Forever unloved in her unconscious mind
The Twenties and the Sixties

By Anthony Cusano

History paints pictures with stories and eyewitness accounts. Those pictures remain in the minds of those who have learned about that point in time. One thing that education has difficulty getting across however is that many events worth taking a look at, the good and the bad, sometimes take place within the same time period, or even in the same year for that matter. This has been the case for two influential time periods in American history: The roaring twenties and the sixties. Both decades have striking similarities — technological innovation, drastic political change, and cultural evolution all took place during the twenties and the sixties. The twenties saw Charles Lindbergh’s flight across the Atlantic in 1927, and the sixties saw Neil Armstrong landing on the moon in 1969. The twenties saw the Stock Market Crash of 1929, and the sixties saw the atrocities of The Vietnam War. The twenties saw the introduction of Jazz, and the sixties saw the birth of a new generation at the 1969 Woodstock music and arts festival. It’s astonishing to see how the people of the United States react and behave when confronted with so much change and so many new events that constantly challenge social norms and what's humanly possible. Throughout American history, the American people have been seen to do amazing things. Out of all the events that occurred in the twenties and the sixties the most crucial part of both of those decades was how much music affected the opinions and perceptions the public had about what was going on around the world and in the United States as well. Music bridges the gap between experience and knowledge, and it’s only through the music of a time period that we can see how the American people lived their lives amidst all the change they saw in their lifetimes. Artists like Louis Armstrong, Duke Ellington, Creedence Clearwater Revival, Janis Joplin, Jimi Hendrix, and many more changed the way people lived their lives and consequently how they came to view and understand the world around them.

The roaring twenties was a strange time in American history. It was the first time that middle class Americans had access to many household commodities that assisted them in many aspects of life like the radio, the dishwasher, the toaster, the Band-Aid, the Model T, the refrigerator, and the vacuum. One of the most notable technolog-
ical feats of the twenties was Charles Lindbergh’s flight across the Atlantic Ocean on May 21, 1927. Such a feat was thought to be impossible, even from Orville Wright himself who proclaimed “No flying machine will ever fly from New York to Paris ... [because] no known motor can run at the requisite speed for four days without stopping” (Wright). This makes the amount of change in the twenties even more astounding. Just the simple inventions that came about changed the lives of millions of people.

The remarkability of the twenties didn’t stop there. In the year 1920, women finally gained the right to vote. This allowed for women to be taken more seriously in everyday life and allowed them to influence the world of politics. Eventually some women would come to take the world by storm by defying cultural norms and identifying themselves as flappers. “...Flappers kept their hair and skirt short, smoked and drank illegally in public and availed themselves of birth control, and marketers encouraged them to buy products like cigarettes christened torches of freedom by Edward Bernays” (Green). Going from not being able to vote and viewed as inferior to men, to being able to live their lives socially in any way they deemed fit was an extraordinary development for the twenties. Finally another great event that took place for women in the twenties was Margret Sanger’s American Birth Control Conference. This event took place over November 11th – 13th, 1921, and was meant to bring together the intellectual minds of the time to discuss the implications and potential repercussions of birth control. Margret Sanger had this to say about the event:

The idea in calling this Conference was to bring together not our old friends, the advocates of Birth Control, whose worth we know and whose courage has stood the test of opposition; but rather to bring together new people, with other ideas, the people who have been working in social agencies and in other groups for the same results as we, namely a better nation and the banishment of disease, misery, poverty, delinquency and crime. (Sanger)

The amount of progress made for women in the twenties is worthy of admiration. Their perceptions of the United States at the time, and what they wanted to changed showed the earnest in which they wanted progress to occur in every aspect of life. Eventually it would come to be that women were not the only ones to garner advances on the cultural stage.
Another great cultural advancement that took place in the twenties was the Harlem Renaissance. This was a surge in racial pride and the embrace of black culture in New York City. Just like how women had begun breaking down social norms, so too were African Americans by embracing their culture and promoting new ways of self-expression through music, leading to the creation of Jazz music. Jazz allowed for the birth of new attitudes, playing at speakeasies where people gathered in comradery to listen to the latest form of entertainment defy the alcohol prohibition. Jamaican-American writer-poet Claude McKay found success during the Harlem Renaissance in 1919 with his famous poem “If We Must Die,”

If we must die, let it not be like hogs, Hunted and penned in an inglorious spot, While round us bark the mad and hungry dogs, Making their mock at our accursed lot. If we must die, O let us nobly die so that our precious blood may not be shed In vain; then even the monsters we defy shall be constrained to honor us though dead! O kinsmen! We must meet the common foe! Though far outnumbered let us show us brave, and for their thousand blows deal one death blow! What though before us lies the open grave? Like men we'll face the murderous, cowardly pack, Pressed to the wall, dying, but fighting back! (McKay)

This poem expresses the level of fervor that ignited the Harlem Renaissance, feeding the flame that was the social and cultural progress of African Americans in the twenties. No longer willing to lie down and take the oppression that they had so long dealt with, they instead stood up against it and fought for what they believed in. Alas, African Americans wouldn’t gain all the civil liberties they undeniably deserved until the sixties.

Like the twenties, the sixties experienced its own level of political, social/cultural, and technological advances. The twenties saw the creation of Jazz music and the extension of rights towards women, while the sixties saw the explosion of counter culture and the extension of rights toward African Americans.

The main technological catalyst of the sixties was the space race. This competition between the United States and the Soviet Union (USSR) was responsible for the advancement of satellites and modern engineering, as well as furthering knowledge of
science in regards to the cosmos. In 1961 President JFK announced that within the decade, The United States would put a man on the moon. JFK delivered on his ambition on July 21, 1969. The entire world watched as man took its first steps on the moon, only forty-two years after Charles Lindbergh’s flight across the Atlantic Ocean. It was well within a person’s lifetime to have witnessed both events take place.

On the side of social progress, men like Martin Luther King Jr., Malcolm X, and even JFK pushed the boundaries and demanded the undeniable human rights that all African Americans deserved and had long fought to gain. During his “I Have a Dream” speech Martin Luther King Jr. uses similar imagery as Claude McKay to make his point.

They have come to realize that their freedom is inextricably bound to our freedom. We cannot walk alone. And as we walk we must make the pledge that we shall always march ahead. We cannot turn back. There are those who are asking the devotees of civil rights, “When will you be satisfied?” We can never be satisfied as long as the Negro is the victim of the unspeakable horrors of police brutality... (King Jr.)

Just like Claude McKay, Martin Luther King Jr. showed how the black community wasn’t willing to take anything less than what they knew was rightfully theirs. Even though the two decades are separated by forty years, the same attitudes that began in the twenties persisted in the sixties.

Then on the front for counter culture there was the event known to many as the Woodstock Music and Arts Festival of 1969. This event was only supposed to have 50,000 attendees, but due to a lack of man power and a lack of concert regulation, 400,000 people arrived to partake in the world’s largest concert ever. The cultural attitude that was prevalent at Woodstock was one that promoted peace, the youth’s breakdown of the previous generation’s values by experimenting with drugs and sex, and just simply that of being together with one another. One of the most noteworthy quotes from the event was said by John Fogerty, the lead singer and guitarist for the band Creedence Clearwater Revival:

We were ready to rock out and we waited and waited and finally it was our turn... ...there were a half million people asleep. These people were
out. It was sort of like a painting of a Dante scene, just bodies from hell, all intertwined and asleep, covered with mud. And this is the moment I will never forget as long as I live: a quarter mile away in the darkness, on the other edge of this bowl, there was some guy flicking his Bic, and in the night I hear, 'Don't worry about it John. We're with you.' I played the rest of the show for that guy. (qtd. In Bordowitz)

This quote illustrates a lot of the attitudes that persisted during the sixties in regards to the counter culture. It embodies the willingness to engage in the progression of social and cultural boundaries. Woodstock helped America and the world look at things in a different light, just like the jazz and Harlem Renaissance helped America view culture differently in the twenties.

As I mentioned in the beginning of this essay, history paints pictures. History education also sometimes fails to show how events in history take place often right around the same time as one another. One point I have yet to make is the negative events that took place in both decades of progress. Anti-government sentiments grew in the early twenties with the Teapot Dome scandal. The details of this scandal are extensive, but that’s not what’s important. What is important is that secretary Albert Fall did underhanded deals with private oil companies, and sold government U.S. naval petroleum reserve at Wyoming’s Teapot Dome without allowing bidding to take place (“Senate Historical Office”). This weakened the public’s faith in the integrity of elected officials and the government as a whole.

Prohibition in the twenties also caused an influx of underground mafia gang crime with the bootlegging of alcohol. Relating to gang violence was the Sacco-Vanzetti Trial. Two Italian immigrants who were affiliated with anarchists and communists were questionably convicted of the murder of a shoe company paymaster in South Braintree, Massachusetts, however the evidence against them didn’t hold sway against their alibis. Even after multiple appeals, delays, and international protest against their death sentence, both Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti were put to death for a crime they may not have even committed in the first place (Burton). This only furthered the public’s unrest and distrust with the American government.

With the integration of new technologies and an improved standard of living many Americans fell into debt because of consumer credit. This led to the Stock Market
crash of 1929, the worst economic depression that the United States has ever seen. The improved lifestyle many Americans had enjoyed throughout the decade was ripped out from underneath them.

The sixties didn’t fare much better. Many of the same problems that existed in the twenties persisted in the sixties. Many Americans questioned the LBJ administration’s involvement and acceleration of violence in the Vietnam War. Many Americans, although empathizing with the South Vietnamese and approving of the fight against communism, didn’t agree with the military tactics or the actions of the men in service.

Also while Martin Luther King Jr., Malcolm X, and JFK all promoted peace and the advancement toward a better society, they were assassinated for their progressive beliefs and ideas. Leaders of the free world and honest men were taken from the world unjustly and with cruelty.

So, all of these events beg the question: “How was it that the American people were able to face such adversity, not only with other nations but with inner turmoil amongst its own people, and still be able to continue the goal of all the men and women who sought to further peace, love, and happiness?” The answer to that question lies within the music of the people. The creation of Jazz, the Woodstock mentality of the American youth, and its effect on the breakdown of long held conservative values helped forward the agenda of the good men and women of this country. Both the 1920’s and the 1960’s saw tragedy and social progress. The influence of music on the American public is an undeniable factor in how the people behave and perceive political and social issues. Without the music to help shape the minds of the American people, the events that led to the culture and world we see today could be a very different place, and where we are today is a direct result of the music of the past.
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Vanishing Point

By Jared Michael

We sat on the edge of that ocean
Watched the sun set and kissed the rest of the world away
Drank the rays until we felt the shine
Made love on the beach with the sun past its vanishing point
Her skin on mine, my lips on her neck
My arms wrapped around her, wrapped up in blankets, wrapped up in each other
The Origins of Golf (At Least for Me)

By Nathaniel David Melvin

Many people often have a special or unique activity that they will go to in order to relieve stress. Some people enjoy going to an art studio, creating beautiful pieces of art, or making magnificent sculptures. Others enjoy going to the gym, either to work out their stress or to just stay healthy and provide the opportunity for the mind to wander. Although I support any activity, I prefer to golf. Often times though, many people question this activity, stating “How can it be a joyful sport if all you do is chase after a ball?” or, “Why would you play a game where there’s such a great chance of failure?” I typically brush these questions aside, often replying with, “Because I just really love the challenge.”

I began this wonderfully competitive sport in the summer of 2008, when my father discovered how much fun it is to hit a tiny, dimple-covered, ball, chasing after it (either on foot or in an electric cart) and then hitting it again. My father and I frowned on golfers, despite my grandfather swearing by it and having family history revolve around it (coming from a wholly Scottish family, my relatives have very staunch view of what is “fun”). We’d often state things like “It just didn’t truly feel like a real sport,” “It’s a general waste of time,” and “It’s a game for the privileged.” My mother would always respond with “You’ve never tried it, so how can you truly pass judgement?”

As time passed, my father informed us that he had to attend a business trip in upstate New Hampshire. One of the events the trip just so happened to entail was golf. My father was extremely hesitant at first, remembering his words spoken from the past, and almost called off the trip entirely, but at the behest of my mother, then decided that this was the chance for him to, in his words, “Try out something new.”

After a week, my father returned with an incredibly different attitude towards the game. While eating dinner, my father spoke of rolling hills and beautiful greens, of tough terrain, and of breath-taking views. My mother was extremely pleased of this and mentioned that I should join my father on the field.

“No way,” I responded, dumbfounded at the idea of my mother even suggesting such a thing.

“Yeah, you should, bud,” my father said. “It’d be good for you to get out and for us
to spend some time together.”

As my parents came to their mutual decision, I moaned and groaned, thinking about how I would just exactly word this to my friends, trying to keep them from laughing at me. “I honestly just don’t think—,” but it was too late. My parents, who were done discussing it, decided that that following weekend, my father and I would venture out to a local golf course that was located in Newmarket, NH, and to pay the $50 to play a game that we had previously just scoffed at.

That Saturday, my father and I traveled to a local sports store, my father searching for new balls and a glove, and me, trying to find everything from clubs and balls, to a shirt and a hat. My father approached an older gentleman who was the resident golf clerk at the store, and asked if he could help us find some equipment. The man was in his late 70’s and was obviously working there solely on the love of the sport. He smiled at me and asked my father,

“Is this your first time?”

“My second, my son’s first” my father responded.

“I just figured I’d take him out and hopefully find another sport he can enjoy.”

The man smiled and nodded. “It’s great to see younger folks getting into the sport.”

He then proceeded to show my father and me a basic set of clubs that he promised I would enjoy using. My father thought they were perfect, and I was clueless as to which clubs did exactly what. Before I could ask, the clerk and my father were gone, looking for shoes, balls, and clothing for both him and myself. For the next 30 minutes, I was in a flurry of golf-related activities, from hearing stories from the older man about his time playing the game, to the different golfing brands (I found out Titleist was from Massachusetts), and the specific reasons as to why I couldn’t just wear a t-shirt and jeans while playing on the course (“Unless of course you want to get kicked out, then by all means, go right ahead”). Once we finally found everything we needed, the older gentleman smiled and wished us the best of luck on the course.

The following day, my father and I gathered our golf-related items, piled them into our car, grabbed waters, heard a final “Good luck!” from my mother, and made our way to the golf course. All the while I kept envisioning the golf course to being some-
thing out of the movie “Caddyshack” where the course was immaculate and everything there was very old, pristine, and elite. I thought to myself, “I don’t think this would be the best place for a twelve year old boy.”

As we continued on our drive, my father was going on about what his experience was when he first played. He also offered different tips on how to address the ball correctly, which way to hold the club, and how to read greens. All of it went through one ear and out the other, my mind still wrapped up with the thought of failure.

Thirty-five minutes later, we finally arrived at the course. Pulling in, everyone we could see seemed to be enjoying themselves (the term “Weekend Warriors” always comes to my mind). My father and I got out of the car, him acting like he’d been there before, me worrying that I didn’t look like a complete fool (although I’m sure me gawking at everything and everyone didn’t help). My father slipped on his golf shoes and tied them, as I watched closely.

“Are you sure about this Dad?” I asked, still nervous about trying it.

“Sure I’m sure.” he replied. “Now gather up your clubs out and follow me.”

We approached the clubhouse, which, with its bright red wood paneling and steely-grey roof, looked like something that was a relic of the late 1970s. Inside was more of the same, with worn-out Kelly green carpet and more peeling wood paneling. My father walked up to the counter, rang a small bell, and waited for the owner. A stout man with a thick, black mustache, came out of a small office in the back of the clubhouse. He was in his upper 60’s and looked like he had seen his fair share of northern New England winters.

“Can I help you?” The man asked, somewhat gruffly.

“My son and I would like to play a round,” my father replied.

The man looked down at me, and then back to my father and responded “$30.”

“That’s all?” my father questioned.

“Why, do you want to pay more?” the man grunted.

“No, I think I’m all set,” my father responded, finally taking a look around the place and somewhat grimacing. “Thanks though.”
The man gave my father the key to one of the many old carts lined up in a row, and waved at us, quickly back-pedaled, and returned to his quaint, little office. Once we were both outside, we were finally able to take a proper look around us, seeing old fairways that had seen better days, older golfers chopping madly at the ground, silently speaking words of frustration, and colorful flag pins dotting each hole as far as the eye could see.

Looking at each other, my father and I then gathered our clubs, put them into the first worn-down cart, and proceeded to the first hole. As we continued, I suddenly felt an odd sensation of anxiety and excitement. I was once again worried that I may botch the tee-off and look like a complete clown, but I was excited to make that mistake. I finally approached the tee box after my father said I could go first. I reluctantly approached the tee box. All the while, it felt like thousands of eyes were trained upon me, although further inspection proved that it was just myself and my father. A cool breeze swept across the course, chilling me in its wake.

I finally made it to the box, took a tee out of my bag (a bright blue tee that my grandfather had given me prior), and sunk it into the deep, yielding earth. Grabbing my still-new driver, I lined up my shot and promptly missed the tee completely. Embarrassment rushed across me, but my father, noticing this, kept me there telling me to “just relax.” I stood back and processed his words of confidence. I then re-approached the tee and took a deep breath. With my eyes closed, I took a mighty swing, praying that I not miss twice. The movement and the sound of the golf club hitting the ball clean off the tee is something so unique, I still, to this day, don’t believe can ever be recreated. It wasn’t a massive hit, by any means, but it felt as though my whole body had thrown all of itself into the swing and plowing it into the ball. I remember my father saying, “Great shot buddy!” and giving me a pat on the back. I felt as though I had succeeded at something that I never thought I would be able to do before in my life, let alone, try.

We continued on to the next holes, repeating the same actions as we had on the first hole. Eventually, the sun started to dip in the sky and pass the tall pine trees that outlined the course. Shortly after the 9th hole, my father congratulated me with a hug and suggested that we go and get a cold beverage from the worn clubhouse. Once inside, the gruff man came back out from his office and asked us how we did. We both
responded simply with “Good.” The man nodded, almost as if he knew the answer, prior to asking. He handed us a couple of iced teas and my father asked me just how I actually liked the game.

“Surprisingly Dad,” I said, “I enjoyed myself.”

My father, somewhat taken aback, announced that he was happy that I had decidedly changed my mind. Later that night, my mother asked us how it went.

“Great!” my father began, “The little guy did well, and really seemed to enjoy himself.”

My mother looked at me, almost as if to certify the claim. “I loved it!” I exclaimed, having had the necessary time to think about it. The rest of that summer would be spent on the course with my father, trying to better ourselves at the game that we once made fun of so frequently.
Fluid Poppies by Stephanie Bowden
Withdrawals
By Jared Michael

Hooked on your flesh, binge on satisfaction, slave to your bed
Know how to work your body all too well
An image of heaven while it’s getting hot as hell
Curl your toes, feel you quiver, grab the sheets, hold them tight
Putting all our energy into the night
Bite your lip, scream my name, pressed against the wall
Nothing outside of this cave matters at all
I pull your hair, you grab my back, rolling your eyes
Steady rhythm reaching a climax between your thighs
Passionate ecstasy, the ultimate release
Addicts getting their fix, a high heroin envies
Fiends fending off the withdrawals for now
Chapter 1

Jack spilled his coffee and swore. He mumbled an apology and flashed a sheepish smile to the young woman across the table.

“The men came on November 6th, 1999,” he said.

She handed him a pile of napkins, and returned to the reason she was there.

“Do you remember who they were?” She scooted forward, dangerously close to the edge of the metal seat.

Jack returned the saturated pile of napkins to the tabletop with a wet thump.

“No. I was six. I remember a group of men, all dressed in suits. My mother was angry. But, she let them in.” He frowned. “Does this really matter?”

She removed her hat with frenzied hands. “Yes, yes. Absolutely.” She smiled for the first time, and settled back with a steaming cup.

“Tell me everything.”

Jack fingered the item strung around his neck, let it fall, and sighed.

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Jack ran down the dark hallway, and threw himself into his father’s arms. The man crouched, dropped his suitcase, and enveloped the boy in a wide embrace. He patted Jack’s back affectionately, and smiled over his shoulder to where his mother stood.

“It’s good to be home, I’ve missed you both.”

Jack, with his face wet, pulled back and grinned at his father.

“Did you get a new one, Daddy?”
His father chuckled and said, “I was waiting for you to ask me that.”

He pulled the collar of his shirt open, to reveal illustrated white skin. “I got this one just for you, Jack.”

The boy’s eyes became gaping discs. Carefully, he reached out and felt the pink, inflamed flesh.

“Can I get one too?” asked Jack, “Please!”

He smiled and shook his head, “Not until you're older.” He moved to stand, “Now give your mother and me a minute alone.”

Jack’s smile fell. He then left.

The couple kissed and hugged. Jack’s mother smiled, tight lipped. “It’s good to have you home, John.”

He held her hands, “It’s good to be home.” His eyes brightened, “I almost forgot! I got you something too.”

She ran her fingers lightly over the intricate ‘J’ below his collar. “You know I don’t need anything.”

He smiled, weakly, and pulled a box from his pocket. “I know, I know. I saw it and couldn’t help myself.”

He held the box between them and popped the lid. She gasped, and lifted the gift with trembling fingers.

“Oh, John! It’s beautiful!”

He smiled a wide grin, “Here let me put it on you.”

She spun, and he clasped the necklace in place.

“Mommy looks like a princess!” Jack giggled, from the doorway he’d snuck back to.

The couple smiled and laughed. The wire wrapped emerald sparkled with a green hue around his mother’s neck.
Chapter 2

Jack woke up to sniffling and tears. He climbed out of bed and cautiously ebbed out his door.

“Mummi?” he called, in a small voice.

The sounds continued as he followed the noise. The sun was just rising, casting sparkling rays of light through the windows. Jack moved toward the kitchen. The cabinets were brown wood, and had a warm glow in the morning light.

His mother was perched on a stool, with her head in her arms. She had her back to Jack, as he entered. Her body shook.

“Mummi?” Jack said again, fear finding its way into his voice.

She lifted her head, and wiped her puffy eyes. “Oh, Honey. Good morning!” She stood, and tried to shake off the emotion. “How about some pancakes?” She smiled, looking heartbreakingly sad.

Jack’s mouth quivered, and a tear streaked down his cheek. “What’s wrong, Mummi?”

She fell back to the stool with a groan. Jack ran over and hugged at her center. Between sniffles and tears she choked out words.

“Daddy’s gone, Jack.”

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The table was riddled with semi-transparent orange bottles since John left. Jack couldn’t pronounce most of the labels. But Mummi said it was her medicine. He didn’t ask about it again.

His mother stayed in bed most days now. So, it was Jack who answered the door when someone knocked.

“Hey little buddy. Could you run and get your mom for me?”
The man was dark, and surrounded by others in suits. He smiled at Jack, and peered over him. He started to step inside.

Jack stumbled backward. “Mummi!”

She appeared at the end of the hall. Her eyes were wild, and her hair matted in thick strings. She had a phone clutched in one hand, ready to dial.

“Who the hell are you?” She demanded, bitterly annoyed.

The man held up a placating hand, and reached into his pocket. “We’re from _____, ma’am. We’re just here to take a look around. This will only take a moment.”

She gestured, wildly, “You have been all through here, time after time! Jesus! What else do you need to do?”

The man’s mouth was a thin line, “I assure you this will be brief.” He paused, “If you are willing to cooperate, that is.”

She opened her mouth, and closed it. Then she pressed her back to the wall. “Come here, Jack. Let the men do their job.”

Chapter 3

A guard pounded on the door, “Ten more minutes.”

The young woman set her cup down, and scrawled in her notebook. She looked up, “So? Did they find anything?”

Jack shook his head, “No. Of course not.”

She grinned, and scribbled another note.

Jack frowned, “This really doesn’t seem relevant. Why do you care about any of my story?”

She looked up again, and met his eyes. “Just humor me some more, Alright?”

He held her gaze, trying to determine what her stake in this could possibly be.

He nodded, slowly. “This is usually the time when people start calling me a liar.”
Jacks mother died on November 4th, 2000. The funeral was held on November 6th. It was a small gathering.

Joanne, Jack’s aunt, held his shoulder reassuringly from behind. The casket was open. Inside, a pale corpse pressed against white padding.

Tears fell down Jack’s face, but he kept some composure. He reached out and gently lifted the emerald necklace from his mother's greying flesh.

Without a word, he let it fall and turned away.

Chapter 4

The house was enormous. Its shutters were a dark shade of purple. The siding was a chestnut brown.

The car engine cut off, and the two stepped out.

“This is your new home, Honey.” Joanne smiled through melancholy. “I hope you like it.”

Jack moved up the steps without saying a single word.

“Jo! Adam’s here!” Jack cried, as he and Adam entered the huge house. From somewhere in its depths Joanne called back a hello.

The boys ran up the two flights to the top floor without pause or prelude. They entered the room and immediately turned on the gaming system.

The screen flashed a date, and time as it loaded the game.
November 6th, 2008; Server down for maintenance.

The boys grumbled, and threw the controllers back to the ground.

“Well, shit. What now?” Jack thought, aloud.

Adam jumped up and grabbed a football. He threw it to Jack, and Jack threw it back before getting up off the couch.

“Throw me a diver!” Jack yelled, as he bounded forward.

Adam tossed the ball in an arch across the room. Jack grinned and lunged for it, but tripped over some unseen object. The ball slammed into the angled ceiling with a dead thump. Jack cried out as he fell to the floor.

Adam ran to his side, “Are you okay?!”

Jack groaned in response.

“Woah,” Adam breathed in awe, “That’s awesome! Look at this!”

He held the item by its string, above Jack’s face. Jack bolted upright, and grabbed at the necklace.

“Where did you get this?” He practically screamed the question.

Adam struggled for words, but pointed. A slot of wood had slid out of place to reveal a notch in the structure. Jack stared.

“Get out!” He yelled, manically, at his friend. “Get out!”

Adam ran from the room.

Jack stood, and investigated the spot. He ran his fingers over words engraved there. He read them in a whisper, “Some gifts can’t be discarded.”

Chapter 5

The door opened with a mechanical click, “Times up.”

Jack spoke in quick succession, “I gave the necklace to Joanne that night. I thought she should have it. She died a week later.” He paused, “I didn’t kill her.”
The woman wrote down a quick note and stood.

Jack pulled the emerald from around his neck. “This was with my stuff when they brought me in.”

She scoffed, “And how did it get there if you gave it to Joanne, but you didn’t kill her?”

He blinked at her, and ignored the question. Instead, he held the necklace out to her.

“Take it.”

Her expression slipped, “No. I don’t think so. But, I thank you, Jack.”

She moved toward the door where the guard stood with it held open. She turned back for one last glance as she crossed the threshold.

Jack was smiling, and slipped the emerald back over his head. “Some gifts can’t be discarded.”

/////\n
She felt a chill go up her spine when she left Jack. But, she refused to give it any attention. "He’s a felon, a murderer, and a liar", she told herself. There is no reason to believe anything he said.

But, still.

She knew some parts were true.

**Chapter 6**

There was a chill in the air when the young woman left the penitentiary. She shuffled quickly through the lot and spotted her car. She clutched at her jacket, and pinched the collar closed against the steady breeze.

It was a short drive back to her home.
She pulled into the gravel driveway and cut the engine. She paused in front of the steps leading to the front door, and let out a longing sigh. A man opened the door, and she called to him. “We’ve really got to do something about the color of the shutters, Dad.”

He smiled, “Why? I’ve come to like the purple.”

She sighed again, and climbed the steps. They hugged briefly before moving inside.

“How was work today, Hon?” her father asked, casually.

She moved to take her coat off. She started to reply, but before she could, a glass shattered.

“Where did you get that?” He demanded.

She blanched, and felt anger bubble by the sudden change in his tone.

She replied, confused, “What? Get what?”

She followed his eyes, and looked down to her chest. A single green stone shimmered from a length of wire.

She gasped and grappled at the necklace. “I don’t... I didn’t... I didn’t take it! It’s not possible!”

She pulled it over her head with trembling fingers. “What kind of sick joke are you playing? How’d you do that?” She said. Her breathing became ragged and panicked.

He didn’t respond.

Her voice raised an octave, “Dad? Dad! What’s going on?!”

Her father seemed to snap back to reality, with a shake of his head. He reached out and took the necklace from her with a gentle hand.

He spoke softly, “It’s alright. Relax. Tell me what happened. Let’s just figure this out.”

She ran a frantic hand through her hair and stammered, “I went and talked to Jack today.” Her father didn’t move, and she continued. “He told me a wild story, and when I had to leave he offered me the necklace. I turned it down.” Then louder, “Did
you hear me?! I didn’t take it!”

He blinked, “What else?”

She moved toward him and tugged at his collar. “He also said this,” She rubbed a thumb over the ‘J’ there, “Was for him. For Jack.”

He grasped her hand and slowly lowered it from his neckline. He looked at her, with pain clear in his eyes.

“Janice, we’ve been over this. Jack’s not well. Please, it’s not healthy for you to keep talking with him.”

She pulled back, and turned away, eyes gleaming.

Chapter 7

Janice woke the next day to an eerie, silent house. She crawled out of bed and called for her father.

There was no response.

She obsessed over her notes from the prison for the weeks and months following John’s disappearance. As days passed without a word or sign, she became increasingly depressed. The kitchen counter grew covered with orange bottles.

She lost track of time, and of reality.

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Janice answered the door on a breezy fall day, almost a year after John’s disappearance.

A dark man stood in the doorway and nodded a greeting to her. She moved to close the door in his face, but he stuck a foot out to block it.

He pulled something from a pocket for her to read. “This will only take a moment, ma’am. Your cooperation would be greatly appreciated.”
She threw her hands up in surrender, “People already been all through here! But, be my guest. Waste your time.” She stepped aside, and let him in.

After several minutes, he returned from the depths of the house, empty-handed. He thanked her, and left.

She moved back to her spot at the kitchen table and popped a few different capsules. Her finger glided across a page of her notebook and she mumbled along. She stopped at a point, and tapped her index finger over the phrase in thought.

“Some gifts can’t be discarded.” She read aloud, with bitter resentment.

Suddenly, something clicked in her mind, and she gasped. Pills tumbled across the floor. She didn’t seem to notice. She stood, in a dead haze, and walked to the stairs.

She found herself two floors up, and reaching toward the slanted ceiling. A click sounded, and a heavy wire fell with a clatter to the floor.

Janice stared in disbelief.

The emerald glowed ominously against the dark wood.

She looked up and ran her fingers across grooved wood. She sniffed. She choked a whisper, and through a spring of tears said, “Some gifts can’t be discarded.”

She bent, and reached for the necklace.
Spooky Bed by Elias Roussos
Healthcare and its Greed in John Q

By Heather Lurvey

Healthcare is an expanding field in today’s society. It’s something that will always be in demand as population increases along with ailments. Knowing this, big corporations often show poor ethics and put finances above all else, even a patient’s well-being. In the movie that I chose, a small family is abruptly faced with their son, Mike’s, extremely dangerous health problem. After having an episode of what seemed to be a seizure and very low blood pressure, health professionals at their local emergency department realized that his heart is three times the size it should be and he needs a heart transplant or he won’t survive past the following months. John and Denise Archibald, Mike’s parents, question how this information wasn’t discovered before now since Mike’s always gone to his annual check-ups. The head administrator of the hospital, Rebecca Payne, and Cardiac Surgeon Dr. Raymond Turner explain that in some cases physicians are rewarded with bonuses from insurers for not reporting health conditions. This way the insurance company will save the money they would have to spend had the medical condition been reported. The kicker is that even though Mike’s father had been at his job for over 10 years and had always been full time and insured, the insurance doesn’t cover the magnitude of his son’s health conditions. John finds his policy was changed by his employer. Since John had recently only been working 20 hours a week, he was decreased to part-time coverage which only covers $10,000 worth of medical expenses. The Archibalds had to come up with $75,000 dollars just to get Mike’s name on the transplant list. I feel like a vast majority of people in my generation, and even outside my generation, can relate with this. Working in the medical field, I have definitely seen people forego having medical care because they didn’t have the money for it. Whether it be from a gash that could have used stitches, a dental cleaning that was skipped numerous times, or a procedure that their doctor recommended that was just too expensive.

In the second scene of “John Q,” his vehicle is being repossessed. This sets the sympathetic mood from the get-go. The movie proceeds to show you how much of a hard working family the Archibalds are. They work, go to church, Mikey plays baseball, and they’re trying their best to make ends meet. This is essentially what we’re all trying to do in life: make enough money to live happily. This is sometimes a struggle, as I’m
sure we’ve all experienced. The lack of compassion and great amount of grief that John and his family endured is disheartening. It seems to only get worse the further in you get. The cost of the care that they need is far above the price they can afford to pay. This is a huge problem for many people in today’s world. Statistics say “we spend twice as much as other wealthy countries on health care, but still leave 15 percent of our people completely without healthcare coverage and many more vulnerable to illness-related financial hardship” (Caper). Therefore we are one of the most advanced countries when it comes to medicine yet we don’t give all people the same quality of care.

“John Q. is an all-stops-out rabble-rouser that hurls a broadside at America’s medical insurance crisis. It takes aim at the HMO hell that so many Americans have experienced firsthand and drives home its message with the subtlety of a sledge hammer” (Thomas). I think that this is absolutely correct. John represents every middle class or poor person that couldn’t afford to get the healthcare that they deserve or got treated unfairly by the insurance company when it came time to needing the coverage they had been paying for. Is it fair to make someone who isn’t rich forego health care due to a lack of what a corporation thinks is adequate income? I think not. I full heartedly believe that our entire culture is losing sight of what’s important. In the eyes of a doctor or corporation, a patient is just merely a number. A physician explained that, “In our system, patients have now become seen as consumers. While getting them to be advocates for themselves is a great thing, their humanity is getting lost in the process. Having a hip replacement is not the same as shopping for a set of kitchen knives at Walmart. They need to be respected as more than just consumers” (Girgis). I strongly agree with Linda Girgis’ view on the problems in the healthcare system. Health issues aren’t something that we choose to have. For some people healthcare is something that they need to stay alive. A person doesn’t get a choice in having a life threatening disease that needs treatment, so why are they punished with high medical bills for something that they have no control over?

The hospital administrator and physicians in the movie don’t personally know the little boy in the movie who is charismatic, funny, and has a large heart; figuratively and literally. If Mike were your son, wouldn’t you want the best care for him? Does it matter whose son, daughter, wife, husband, mother or father it is? Isn’t everyone equal? Doesn’t everyone deserve what could potentially be life-saving health care? After being told that their son needs a heart or he will die, the Archibald’s have to come
up with $75 thousand dollars just to get his name on the transplant list, never mind the other $175 thousand that they’ll have to pay off. John and his wife are crippled with fear. John asked the doctor himself, if it was his son what he would choose. To medicate him, as Rebecca had highly recommended, or have the surgery? The doctor answers without hesitation that he would have the surgery performed to save his life rather than medicating the child because that would result in his death. This goes to show that in the healthcare field, patients are not seen as equal. If it had been the surgeon’s son that needed the transplant, he would have been immediately put on the transplant list without hesitation. Yet, because of John and Denise’s financial situation, they aren’t given the same quality of care.

The movie displays dramatic lighting differences to make you feel the family’s emotional ups and downs throughout the movie. There is a dark and cold lighting in the beginning of the movie when John’s car is being repossessed. When Mikey drops to the ground while playing baseball and during his donor’s car accident scene, time seems to slow down. This makes the scenes seem more dramatic and also helps build suspense as to what is to come. During the Archibald’s discussion with the administrator of the hospital and the cardiac surgeon, the lighting is dim and cold. Rebecca Payne’s eyes are shown up close as she tells the family that they don’t have enough money to get Mike’s name on the donor list. They are blue and ice cold and really add to the scene. When building your relationship with the family in the beginning of the film, there is well lighted bright warm colors to help you connect and develop a sincere liking for the Archibalds.

There are many subtle auditory impressions that are made during the movie as well. While building your relationship with John, Denise, and Mikey, you see and hear lots of laughter. You can see just by the way they look at, speak to, and touch each other that they are a very close and loving family. You also hear the distress that they are in during and after the diagnosis of their son. Denise is often short and frantic sounding in many scenes after Mikey is diagnosed. This is displayed in the tense situation when she calls John and tells him that their son is being discharged, even though his health is deteriorating. She is a complete mess and she easily gets upset with John and begins yelling at him in frustration. John is built up to be a magnificent father, husband, and friend. He is constantly under pressure and doesn’t ever take it out on his family. He is loving, supportive, and sincere. His personality is exuberant. He begins to feel a great
amount of pressure when he feels helpless in the case of his son’s health. The nurse at the hospital is very sympathetic and tells him that he can go to financial aid, the state and a few other places to try and come up with a way to pay for the surgery. She tells him, “Do not take no for an answer!” He calls his wife who is extremely stressed about the entire situation and she tells him, “You always take care of it but it’s never enough, now you do something DO SOMETHING!” It’s after this that he knows what needs to be done. This defining moment is his breaking point. He knows that if he doesn’t do something drastic, his son will die and he firmly believes that his son should bury him, not the other way around. He decides to go into the ER, lock it down so that no one can get in or out, hold hostages and make a deal that he will let the hostages survive if his son gets the lifesaving transplant that he so desperately needs. It takes going to these extreme measures for John to get his point across which is that he won’t be taking no for an answer. John never had a mean bone in his body but he was willing to go to any measure to help his son.

John’s best friend says to a news broadcaster,

The whole thing sucks. It could have been so easily avoided if John was just a millionaire or his last name was Rockefeller but sometimes John just doesn’t get it that what we hold sacred in this country isn’t values and it’s value that’s important. We’ve got white collar, we’ve got blue collar and then we’ve got no collar. In the hospital we’ve got surgery, we’ve got outpatient surgery and we’ve got out of luck surgery. There’s a lot of people out there, a lot of people here that don’t have $250 grand in their bill folder. To shame a man like that and back him into a corner seems to me something is out of whack not someone.

This statement is a very powerful one. John’s friend can completely see where he is coming from and doesn’t think his choices are wrong. He thinks that the hospital is in the wrong here, not John. It’s easy to see John as the bad guy, but he wasn’t left with any other way to save his son.

John never had any intention of hurting any of the hostages. He just needed to have the upper hand in order to help his son survive. At one point before they find out that there was a donor match for Mike, his father was going to shoot himself so that his son could have his own heart. John Q is a movie that most certainly will make you
think about healthcare in a different light. The amount of greed behind the industry is substantial. I think that Linda Girgis sums up what’s wrong with our culture best by saying,

Corporate greed, especially of health insurance companies, is destroying our healthcare system and the medical well-being of patients everywhere. We need to put the person back in the patient and get corporate decisions out of the exam room. Medical decisions need to be decided on the best interests of each individual patient, whether or not they fit onto the insurance companies clinical pathways. We need to consider cost but not at the expense of the patient. Doctors’ decisions serve the best interests of our patients, and we need to be able to practice medicine, not comply with regulations. Do we really want bargain basement medicine or is it time to restore the US healthcare system back to the best?” (Girgis)

With that being said I believe that healthcare is a wonderful thing if supplied appropriately, but in today’s world it may be going down the wrong path. Healthcare should be easily attainable to everyone; it should not be based on your value.
Works Cited


Money River by Stephanie Bowden
Lost In Time
By Cameron McColough

I wish I could return
Change the way it was
I know you’d ask I continue in my path
Because no one can change
The past
But then again,
Maybe I’d Refuse
Because to see you again
May set off my fuse
One I can’t contain
Lost to the pain
As I awaken crying
Your name
Sometimes I wish
I could forget it all
But I know this would
Make me crumble and fall
Because to forget your face
Would erase your place
And all you had done
The love laid plain
Would die alongside
With you in vain
Brother

By Casey Marfongelli

My brother made me cry a lot. I was the little brother, so the daily teasing and beatings were normal. However, it didn’t stop me from crying. There were times he’d bully me to the point of no return; only my mother could help solve it by simply telling him to stop. As if it were that simple, he would cease. My brother was my brother. He was different than me in some ways, but similar in others. We both loved hockey, we shared the same circle of friends, and we had a variety of similar interests and hobbies.

I remember being as young as six years old and crying myself to sleep at the thought of my brother leaving home; whether it be for college, to live in his own place, or even him dying. The thought always scared me, my young mind somehow aware that he would have to leave eventually.

It’s November of 2014, and we’re in Portland saying goodbye to him before he left for boot camp. We walked around the city a bit; getting lunch and giving a bag of food to a homeless person, witnessing the woman’s face light up as she dug into the bag. As much as that will stick with me, so will the next moment. Hugging in a room full of tears, I wiped my eyes one more time before hugging him tight just before he said something I thought he never would. The words escaped his lips and ran to my ears, “I love you, kid.” His voice loud and proud, a slight smile on his face. “I love you, kid.” It echoes around my mind. It seemed too surreal, but he said it. My mom was as surprised as I was, but we were beyond happy, somehow, crying on and on. I’ve always known that we loved each other; we were family, it was in our blood, but the words out loud sound so much smoother. That was the last time my brother made me cry.
Math Doesn't Have to be a Four-Letter Word!

by Denise Whitehouse

Math phobia is a real phenomenon, but it doesn't have to stop you from taking math courses. Here are some things that you can do to overcome your fear of all things math.

First, be aware of your "self-talk." Try to notice what you say to yourself because those thoughts can be self-fulfilling. For example, do you often say: "I'm no good at Math," "I can't do this," or "I'm going to flunk - I always do." If so, replace those words with: "I have worked hard so I will be able to do this," "I am not the same person I was, so I will succeed this time," or "I can do this."

Secondly, when taking a test, use techniques to keep you calm, as many math-phobic students do who also have test anxiety. Stop and take a deep breath whenever you start to feel overwhelmed. Hide part of the test with a blank piece of paper so that you focus on only one question at a time. Remind yourself that you have prepared for this test so you will do well. Skip any questions that are overwhelming to you at the moment and come back to them later when you're calmer. Since many students panic at the first question, always come back to #1 after you have finished the last question because you might have received more hints from other questions.

Mostly, believe in yourself. There are many people in this world who would be glad to criticize you - don't become one of them! Be kind to yourself. Math may be a "four letter word" but it doesn't have to be an evil "four-letter-word!"
Black Irises
By Jared Michael

She is competing for my love
When I am the only competitor
Her opponent is the memories of a past lover
Still battling the demons that reside
I know she can feel it no matter how much I try to bury it inside
The black irises won’t die with her love
The lingering effects of how they once consumed me
Dampened, darkened, less effective than they once were
Yet their presence is enough to snuff out the flame
Stranglehold on my lover as she is struggling for air
Of Course

By Breanna Glazebrook

I watched them from the opposite side of the room. They leaned across the small square table towards one another, talking between bites and sips. A second didn’t go by where she wasn’t smiling. He kept reaching over to touch her hand. My stomach twisted the tiniest bit. I looked across my own table to find Jeremy’s expectant face, hyper aware of the distance between us.

“I’m sorry?” I asked.

“I said: are you enjoying the coffee?” He replied, pointing to the plastic cup between my hands.

“Of course. It’s coffee. I like coffee,” I said.

“I know that,” he said. “How’s yours? Is it sweet enough?” He always added way too much sugar.

“Yeah, it’s okay,” I replied.

My eyes went to the girl again, laughing at her table. She looked young... and so very happy. I could only see the back of the man’s head, but I could tell by the way he leaned in close and touched her that he was happy, too. I wondered how long they had been together. Her eyes met mine quickly and I looked away, embarrassed.

“Are you okay?” Jeremy spun the straw in his cup as he spoke.

“Do you remember our first date?” I paused, allowing only a slight nod in response before I continued. “We went to that Italian restaurant that used to be downtown. You called me beautiful. And you kept making stupid puns.” I giggled at the thought.

He smiled and asked, “What do you call a fake noodle?”

“An impasta.” I replied. “You thought you were so funny.”

“I am funny!”

“You’re something alright. But can you remember the last time we laughed that much?” I asked.
He thought for a second. “No, I guess it’s been a while.” He shrugged and took a sip from his coffee.

“But we definitely have since then. That was like ten years ago.”

“It was twelve years ago.”

“Why are you thinking about this?”

“Don’t you miss it? Don’t you miss laughing and having fun? You can’t honestly say you’re happy, can you?” My eyes darted to the remaining people in the shop, including the young couple, but nobody seemed to be paying attention to us.

“Does it matter?” He leaned in towards me.

“Of course it does! We’re together; we should be happy together.”

“Happy together?” He asked, and I started to respond but he turned away from me. I followed his gaze to a lone coffee drinker sitting in front of the large window at the front of the shop. The man had a mug on his table and a newspaper in front of his face. “We’re together, yes, but happiness is a luxury. Anything real between us stopped mattering a long time ago. You know that, so don’t be so naïve.” His voice was low.

“We’re married. That’s real.”

He reached out and gently took my hand in his; the intimacy made my breath catch. It was a feeling I’d long forgotten. When he spoke again, his words were even quieter than before. “This,” he said, rubbing the band on my finger with his thumb, “is barely more than a prop. It’s a necessity for our survival. Of course we must care a little bit, or else the other’s survival wouldn’t matter. Happiness, and love, and fun; those all take a back seat to living.” He placed my hand back on the table, and pressed his against my cheek. I wasn’t fooled by the gesture this time; my breathing remained steady.

I wondered what somebody might have thought to see us from afar. Would they think that we were anything like the young couple? Would they mistake the proximity and physical contact for a sign of adoration? Or could they see the ice in the air between us?

He glanced around the shop and started again. “It probably would have been easier for us, safer even, to split the check and go our separate ways, but we didn’t
choose that. We chose each other and we can’t choose again. Now we need each other.” He pulled away from me, straightening in his seat.

“We can always choose again. We could say goodbye right now, split what we have left and leave separately. If you want to be on your own, you go right ahead and do that. Don’t let me stop you.”

“Lower your voice,” he said. His eyes flicked to the man with the newspaper again. “I don’t want to be alone. We’re all we have now; it’s just you and me.”

I knew that he was right; unless we wanted to live and die alone, we had to stick together. I didn’t want to go from town to town, sleeping in cheap motels and eating in diners and coffee shops much like this one. On top of that the driving, so much driving, all alone. And we couldn’t risk trying to create a life for ourselves separate from each other; there wasn’t enough trust in the world to make it safe for either of us. As long as we were both alive we’d have only each other.

He changed the conversation after that. We sat a little longer, discussing our next destination, the unseasonably warm weather, and the upcoming election. We kept the rest of the conversation light, but the heaviness of our previous words remained in my head. We started to run out of topics to discuss. Our silences were exaggerated by the whirs of machines behind the counter.

“What about you?” I asked.

“Of course I do.” He insisted a bit too loudly, and then continued, “Do you love me?”

“Yeah, of course.” I met his eyes. “‘Til death.”

“Good. Then come along, sweetheart, we have a long journey ahead of us.”

We walked away from the table, the receipt signed with a name that will soon be forgotten and replaced with another. His empty coffee cup and my nearly full cup flanked either side of the masquerade, the only evidence that we’d ever been there.
Molten Gold by Gabrielle Rogers
My Once Upon A Time

By Gabrielle Rogers

Do we understand the importance of Once Upon A Time?
It’s not Twice Upon A Time or Thrice Upon A Time,
It was just once. The beginning of your story happens just once.
It won’t happen again, you’ve already begun.
But that’s not the important part You only start once.
Once Upon A Time, you were born. It won’t happen again.
The beginning of your story already started, it won’t start again.
Your story may be rough and have villains,
But it will also have heroes and sunsets.
You may feel you’ve been captured and locked in a tower,
But if you flip the page to a new chapter you’ll see
That Happily Ever After does come. It just comes after
All the other chapters.
Your story already started, this is only a chapter.
Joseph smiles. He glances up with his great melon-ball eyes and grins widely.

“What are you so happy about?” John was suspicious.

Without much in the way of a response, Joseph simply pointed upward and leaned back with arms outstretched. As if he were enjoying the rain that wasn’t there, embracing the sky. Joseph gazed at something far above John’s perspective with a face that could only be described as worshipful.

John craned his neck upward, struggling to see what held Joseph’s eyes, but all John saw was his bedroom ceiling. As John continued with eyes straining, the ceiling began rushing towards him, faster, faster. As off-white began to fill John’s field of vision he started to make out mountains, valleys, glaciers.

In the blink of an eye John’s perspective shifted. He was falling, not rising. His hair whipped against his eyes, the cold air stung his cheeks, and his teeth chattered. As John fell toward his inevitable conclusion he was surprised at how calm he was about the general situation. The earth rushed toward him — white.

John awoke with a start. He shivered. Watching his breath fog the air, John was made painfully aware of the fact that the heat was still broken in his apartment. Making a mental note to yell at his super, John dragged himself out of bed. He shrugged off his sleepwear, rubbed coffee into his eyes, dragged his toothbrush through his teeth and sped on the highway until the office loomed in front of him.

The Office: a stark and monolithic building if ever there was one, its very existence seemed to be for the destruction of dreams and aspirations. A comically sinister crow coughed from the building’s upper levels, as if to ensure there was no doubt that this was a place without hope.

The fake painted on windows somehow managed to be more depressing than if there were none at all, and the sole entrance was an elevator in the center. John pushed the button, and with that his work day began — his work day that consisted of emailing people, answering calls, and a lunch break if John had an appetite (a rare occasion that was to be celebrated whenever it came to pass).
What a life.

At 8:54AM John glanced up from his desk. Something has caught his attention—a flash of red! In this office of grey rectangles, manned by grey rectangular people who were doing rectangular things grey-ly John was stunned by this red plumage. It was a tropical bird, a tree frog, a poisonous mushroom, a fire hydrant, an explosion of visual activity in a wasteland. And then the red was gone, past John’s cubicle, (presumably) never to be seen again.

John stood in a sudden fit of terror. Fifty cups of coffee were knocked over; reams of paperwork went flying. With violent motions desks were flipped, space was warped and pockets of time slipped in and out of sync under the sheer force of John’s conviction. Conviction to follow the red flash, determine its source, its purpose, and perhaps his own.

Jeremy looked at a curious sight from across the office. John the Unsteady (as he was lovingly called) stared blankly into space, slowly clicking a pen. Suddenly and with seeming urgency, John rose. Jeremy watched with quiet fascination as John methodically poured his coffee over his desk, pushed the papers populating said desk onto the floor, and slowly and ever so carefully flipped the desk over entirely. After a glance in either direction, John stole down the cubicle-lined hallway.

Jeremy considered following the unusually active John down the hallway but thought better of it. It wouldn’t do if the reports weren’t completed by noon.

John’s breath ran ragged as he pursued the red scarf through the maze of cubicles. He had long lost sight of the red scarf, but still pursued with a blind faith that it would appear once again. It appeared altogether sooner than he had expected, as he turned a corner and came upon a young woman waiting for the elevator. She wore a slim red scarf, long boots and skinny jeans. Hanging by her side was a slim black briefcase, and her rainbow hair was cut short. Bleak eyes stared blackly at John and she asked without much interest “Can I help you with something?”

John snapped out of his stupor, reddening in embarrassment. “Well, uh, “ He stammered, “you dropped this!”

Holding out the missing item before him like it was the holy grail, John awaited her response breathlessly.
Slowly the young woman parted her lips. John could hear the intake of breath that precedes speech, and she let forth her judgement, her tongue bringing blessing and good fortune, this modern day prophet adorned in denim and silk. Her words washed over the planet’s miserable existence made bitter in its loneliness. In the distance woodland animals’ ears perked up, birds fell silent, trees fell without making a sound.

“Thanks, but you can keep it. I have a spare.”

She held up an identical plastic pen and flashed a smile as she spun around and entered the waiting elevator. With a low hum the elevator descended into the depths beyond, and she was gone.

John stood in shock, still clutching the treasure given him by the rainbow goddess no older than twenty. Her image lingered in John’s mind as he walked back to his cubicle.

Sitting down once again, John calmly cleaned up the coffee and re-sorted the documents on his desk. He recalled the dream he’d dreamt the night before and couldn’t help but chuckle. He’d thought that the dream would portend something monumental in the following day, but in the end all he’d gained from it was a pen and a smile.

Well, a pen and a smile were more than his coworkers got in a day’s work. He looked across the aisle and waved cheerily, hoping to send Jeremy some good will, even if it was just a little.

Jeremy waved back with a faint smile, wondering what John could be thinking about, the poor sap, and more than a little interested in what had transpired during John’s trip away from the cubicle. No matter, Jeremy thought to himself, it doesn’t concern me.
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If you are interested in working with the publication of *The Heron*, please contact Cynthia Walton, Faculty Advisor (cwalton@ccsnh.edu).