Dear Reader,

Welcome to Zephyr Volume 15. Putting together this magazine has been filled with hard work and passion. We never dreamed of being such a large part of the Hutchins community, and it has been an incredible experience being members of the production committee for the Hutchins Zephyr magazine.

This class was comprised of a variety of Hutchins students, some graduating, some just starting out, and some right in the middle of their studies. No matter where we were on our journey, we were able to create a successful publication.

We would like to thank the following people for their collective hard work and support: Our donors for their generous donations and dedication to the Hutchins School of Liberal Studies, Sonoma State University; Heidi Lamoreaux for her facilitation of this project; Kathryn Atwood for her contributions; and to the writers and photographers who provided the beautiful content of this magazine.

Now open your mind and experience what can happen when you let your creativity flow!

Warm regards,

Zephyr Publication Committee 2015

Photograph by Alexandria Kenyon

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FOR LOVE & MONSTERS

Andrea Austin

“Tell it again, daddy!” His boyish smile would prevail in spite of any grown-up problems formerly on his mind, and the story I had grown to cherish would begin once more.

They met in a café where my mother was waitressing, the best she could do in California without a degree. She had just moved from her hometown deep in the heart of Tennessee, and her charming southern drawl had followed. My father was born and raised in Hong Kong: China's liberal, Americanized little sister. John Wayne was his hero and the source of my father’s obsession with the iconic sensuous-yet-elegant ‘Southern Belle.’ As the story goes, she was serving him coffee on an uncharacteristically unremarkable afternoon. He loved her from the moment he heard her sweet voice and saw her curly auburn-red hair. The only thing left to do was light up that freckled face with a laugh.

My eyes would widen with anticipation as the inevitable punchline was delivered, verbatim, in his broken English: “So daddy say to mommy, ‘Can I have some of your sugar with my coffee?’ And daddy point at his cheek, and mommy give him a BIG kiss!”

Of course falling in love was this simple. But staying in love? A different monster entirely.

A gigantic, black, slimy, soulless creature from the abyss began to feed on the deteriorating marriage my parents were desperately trying to salvage. With every fight, their frustration grew more tangible. At twelve, I recall my father punching the plaster wall of our family room, making holes in the place reserved for perfect couples with perfect children. He would huff and puff and blow off his steam in his office-sanctuary, while my mother and I traded the fractured pieces of our hearts over Jay Leno and potato chips. Things only got worse with time; my father had been laid off and unemployed for over two years while my mother took every teacher’s assistant job she could manage.

As the eldest of three, I felt responsible for the demise of the Austin family, as if somehow I had upset my parents with my watered-down attempt at teenage rebellion.

My entire life was centered on the belief that one God, in His mighty omnipotence, was guiding my family slowly to heaven, keeping a watchful eye on us as we tackled trials and tribulations in the meantime. But as I stood over her stale, motionless body, I was robbed of the breath that would have cried out to heaven in my former innocence. In a moment, I had lost everything. I imagined for that eternal moment that if I shook her hard enough, breathed back the life she had given me, then maybe God would give us a second chance to be the perfect family once again. But as they say, “He gives and takes away.” Somehow, God’s robbery is excusable.

Time stopped. Sound was warped and foreign. I became a shell, frozen in mind and body. My father began shrieking, “It was the drugs! It was the drugs!” I knew of no antidepressant strong enough to create a killer from the most humble and harmless of men. Still, my eyes bore the truth: My father had murdered my mother.

I can try with all my might to believe in pure, illumined love. I can hold the clammy hand of a suitor and half-smile back at him, feigning first-love nerves. I can lie. But I know too much to believe in fairy tales anymore. Someday I will look into the bright, eager eyes of my own child, forced to conjure up a bedtime story suitable for tiny ears and a hopeful heart. The choice between raw honesty and delicate half-truth will present itself. Those beautiful eyes will re-shatter my bandaged heart, and I will tell the story of how my mommy met my daddy.
FOR THE LOVE OF EARTH

Lisa Clarke

I believe in nature and the benevolent power of the earth. Nature does not judge the imperfections of humans, but offers soothing solace to aching hearts and wayward souls. The earth sustains and nurtures and forgives our transgressions. No matter how much we take, the earth continues to give.

I enter a timeless, continuous space when I walk in the forest not far from where I live, connected to all of creation. The sacredness of the silence pierces the innermost part of my being and any doubt, fear, or insecurity I feel dissolves into the calm of the Earth. Away from the torrent of cars and the looming deadness of the concrete world is where I feel the safest.

Nature is always changing, constantly in flux, and yet its nurturing, sacred nobility is unyielding. The mutability of nature adds to the glorious wonderment and mystery that I experience in walking along the ocean shore or deep in the redwoods. The unpredictable ways of nature keep me feeling alive, all my cells awake and recharging, sparking to attention at the sight of a rainbow or a bobcat.

Once, as I walked the perimeter of Bon Tempe Lake, a Bald Eagle startled from its perch, and seemed to fall lake-ward from far above me in the trees. As it reached the lake's surface it grabbed a fish with such precision and ease, then lifted off back into the high branches before I could fully fathom that I had just seen one of the biggest birds in North America. I felt I had witnessed a true miracle and a sacred peace washed over me.

Another day, beside another local lake, my friend and I walked around a curve in the trail and came face to face with a beautiful coyote. It stared with its big, wild eyes and my friend and I stared back. I felt nothing but gratitude and excitement to be in the presence of such a creature, but my friend picked up a stick, waved it, and the coyote forged a different trail into the woods.

Nature is extraordinary. Never have I walked by the ocean or in the woods in a foul mood and emerged in the same state of mind. The earth has a way of absorbing negativity, healing broken hearts, embracing the places where humans can't touch. The earth is a compassionate witness to our tears, as well as our joy; the best, most ancient friend there is. This is why I will always stand in defense of the earth and eternally believe there is nothing that is more worth saving.
It has been noted that when one thing dies another begins.

Everyday lives a life and dies at the rise of night. Today is the day of the turmoil heart.

Once a year this day appears and once a year it lives through another cycle for each soul present on its day, for all karma left in its reign, it has a purpose not to be blamed.

Today, this day of 'love and pain' cannot seem to comprehend its array.

It wants to be loving, it wants to be cute, and yet all it knows is it just does not want to be mute.

Today is ending.

St. Valentine's death once again draws near. So in a way, I very much hope you will not also sneer at the words you are soon to hear.

In all the pearls a soul can hold, one always gleams the brightest. On the ending of this day it wishes to be called the highest. So being a day of supposed carrying, though every day before and after should be as equal in its stead, I felt the urge to tell you Sir, that my love for you is still not dead.

All and all, I work to mend, all the wounds my hand has bled. In saying this I hope I have not maimed further the heart that I have brushed in my rush with the burning kryptonite in red.

Red glowing jellyfish,
Carrots,
Angels,
Broccoli,
Or mandrake roots with blue dangly tendrils.

Thunder and lightning,
An electric field in the atmosphere,
Breaks down to form a huge spark.

Blue jets shoot miles out of cloud tops.
Gigantic jets of lightning morph
Into blue flames
Before turning red
As they reach the edge of space.

A momentary flash of light to us
That cannot be seen with the naked eye.
A Sprite to science
Seen by cameras and telescopes
Where it's dry and clear and high above us.

Wyoming, Kansas, Nebraska,
Oklahoma, Arizona, Utah,
Northern Mexico, New Mexico, and Colorado.

Down below the city lights
We never see a Sprite.
Can barely see a star in the sky
Let alone a Sprite.

*Inspired by On the Hunt for a Sprite on a Midsummer's Night by Sandra Blakeslee
I BELIEVE IN LISTENING

Karin Slezak

I believe in listening, for the world will be a better place when we do. True listening involves patience, time, and open-mindedness; it’s an art form not difficult to learn. A person who truly listens allows someone to talk while shutting off one’s own inner voice, the voice that formulates responses during a conversation. This inner voice, the ego, creates comebacks or responses often to either rebuttal, defend, judge or suggest ideas or concerns back to the person sharing their story. This voice is the reason why communication loses its power and its value; nobody really hears what is being said. Also, truly listening involves reading between the lines, such as realizing a speaker’s body language, which gives clues to the speaker’s emotional state. The non-verbal part of a speaker is often much more loudly speaking and most important, and only when truly listening can one recognize it.

It is in a listening environment that a person opens up his or her heart and a powerful outlet of healing is created. It is then that someone feels important, valued, and as part of society which in return makes up for a more balanced, happier, and much more high-functioning human being, eager to positively give back to the people around him or her.

When I came to America at the age of twenty-one, my English was poor. I did not speak much for the first six months and remember feeling extremely lonely because of it. Culture shock was significantly increased by not being able to express myself in my own language, and there was much confusion about who I was, not only to the people around me, but also to myself. People would not take the time to truly listen to me. My broken English was viewed as if I was uneducated, not interested, not engaged, or as if I had nothing to say. However, inside I was screaming for help. The emotional toll was great and if it wasn’t for the people who actually took the time to listen to me, I would not have made it through living in a new country. The feeling of being listened to changed my life at that time, and I will never forget the people who did so. Being listened to has nurtured a human-to-human relationship with a select few that created much deeper, more meaningful, and extremely rewarding friendships than with any other people in my life.

Truly listening heals. All of us have a story we so desperately want to tell, but most won’t because we don’t feel listened to. Therefore, we stuff our emotions inside our bodies and become sick, lonely, depressed, or sad. It is not difficult to listen; all it requires is to step back and pay attention. There are summer camps for people designed specifically to be allowed to have a voice, and weeklong stays gathering around morning circles and evening camp fires are dedicated to let individual people speak whatever comes to mind without being criticized. These camps are often lifesavers for many struggling young adults who do not feel heard amongst their immediate families, teachers, or society.

We spend so much time in groups such as when in the schoolhouse, at work, or in public; yet, we don’t pay much attention to each other or take the time to get to know someone else’s story, or to listen. However, doing so would make for a much more harmonious space when realizing most of us have the same struggles.

Listening is one of the most powerful ways we can heal each other as neighbors, as communities, and as fellow human beings.
hUman

Chris Strong

There are beautiful things that transcend human ability to process life.
The way lips purse
And cheeks blush.
The way that one blushes behind bright keys in dark rooms.
The effortless way the heart speaks in perfect conjunction with the mind without
knowing what has just occurred.
How we love blindly,
Know blindly, and put faith in something invisible.
All beauty.
All human.
All you.

STICHES

Chris Strong

Sometimes I get stuck.
Sometimes the long hairs on my head get hooked on the thoughts of the past when
All I'm trying to do is focus on the right now.
Sometimes all I do is search for something, or someone
To fill the parts of me that always hollow out again.
I don't want a tourniquet stopping the flow of raw emotion.
I want something to dam up destructive parts of me, but let buildings collapse
Without needing to blow the explosives tied to my torso.

Sometimes I float away.
Sometimes the waves of emotion inside my body of water
Ebb and flow too close to points of impure intoxication.
Sometimes I float in a sea of toxins and
Surround myself with poison that death is someone I could always recognize
if they swam to me asking for relief from being overjoyed.
I don't need a buoy to pull me to shore;
Signaling my distress to a close by harbor.
I want a fire
To burn away to oil I float in,
But somehow to stay alive surrounded by flame.

I need stitches to close the wounds of my past life;
Healing the proverbial womb of my broken mothers,
But allow me to escape into the world unscathed.
Myself; painless.
BUMMERLAND
Elizabeth Warner

Bummerland
Where life is pain
And they don't make 'em like they used to
And it'll never work, we'll all be killed
And shit always happens.

You live at the corner
Of Submission & Resignation
Where all the traffic lights are red
And your car's out of gas
And the bus never comes
And your cup is always half-empty
Of cold coffee.

It's time to move on.
You can come with me
If
You leave your baggage behind.

ON FINISHING MY THESIS
Elizabeth Warner

423 footnotes in Chicago style,
Broken up by commas and periods,
Sparse colons and their semi-spouses,
Some italics, no bold or underline,
Anchor my pages with crabbed 9-point type.

They said it was for illumination;
They said it was to keep us honest.
But truly, it was just a picayune pain in the pudendum.
THE NECKLACE

Laura Warner

Two years ago I liked you well,
Though I was never free to say,
And though you stole my heart away,
I stayed within my boyfriend's cell.

But now, my feelings stir anew
As time slows down when we're apart
And quickens with my fickle heart
Whenever I am close to you.

You act as if you too are free,
Though you are bound as well as I;
It's useless, but I wonder why
You find joy in tormenting me.

You flirt with me through prison bars
As though you're standing in the sun,
And while you seem to think it's fun,
I sigh about this bond of ours.

Your words affect more than you think;
Your girlfriend's fragile heart may break
And, if only for your own sake,
I'll bring us both back from this brink.

_In Memory of My Dignity_

WHY HER?

Laura Warner

They say staring at the sun blinds you if you look at it too long. They say light
is truth, and darkness lies. (Yet white and black alike are colors of mourning.)
Sitting in the dust, searching the sun's setting gaze, he finds no answers to his
unspoken question and closes his eyes.

Photograph by Taylor Zavala
HAIKU
Zach Bailey

I laugh at myself.
I fell in love with the wind,
Then it blew away.