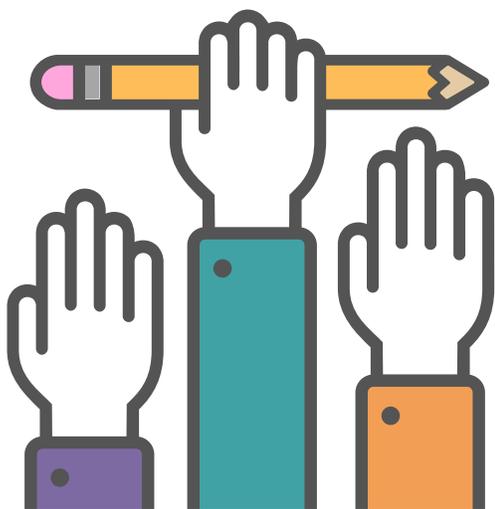




## A SHOWCASING OF

Flash Fiction - Poetry - Short Form



Nampa Public Library's 2021

# WRITING CONTEST

[nampalibrary.org](http://nampalibrary.org)

215 12th Ave S

(208) 468-5800



Nampa Public Library would like to thank our community for the time, effort, and creativity put into the pieces that were submitted for the second annual writing contest. There is a wealth of talent in our community and we are proud to be able to share these selected pieces.

We hope to continue to support the talent and interests of writers in our city.

Please enjoy this year's selected pieces. You will find flash fiction, poetry, and short form produced by youth, teens, and adults.

Original text from entries has been formatted to fit Nampa Public Library's printing limitations.





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## Observing

By Anthony McFeters

The two of them tried to get in as close as possible, squinting as if that would help see more clearly.

"They're so small!"

"I know."

They seemed to hesitate to even breathe, fearing to disturb the environment of the little specks moving in the enclosure.

"Did they build all of that?"

"Well some of it came with the kit, but they did build a lot of it. I just had to add some water to get started, and I have to leave the light on; but since then I've just been watching it grow and grow."

"I wonder if they even know we exist."

"I don't think so."

Silently they sat – intrigued, still, and observant.

"I'd like to start my own planet too."

## A Closer Look at Those Unseen

by Emma Edgemon

The laughter is piercing, like a shrill siren announcing death.

"No- please-" She sobs, shaking so hard she falls to her knees. The townspeople pay her pleads no mind leering at her.

Better you than me, their eyes tell her.

Her screams grow in desperation as they grip her arms and yank her to the post; the volume makes many cover their ears for fear of being bewitched.

"No, no- please!" She chokes out through tears. "I'm innocent, please! I have children!"

The ropes cinch tighter, tighter than the invisible hands closing around her neck, bolting her to the stake. They light the match.

The flames burn brighter.

The screams grow louder.

Both, eventually, die out, leaving nothing but ashes and haunted echoes.

## Thin Flat Line

By Michelle Smart

I saw you dancing on the beach today,  
Unbridled joy and love conveyed.  
As I watched you there, I realized:  
At last your smile has reached your eyes.  
Gone is the torture of earthly years,  
with guilt-laden sting of regret-filled tears.

I felt your hand in mine today.  
With hope, I asked if you would stay.  
You said you wouldn't if you could  
And suddenly I understood  
that yesterday is all I have,  
until we meet again, my love.

I tasted your sweet lips today.  
"A kiss for love" I heard you say.  
You whispered "I am with you still,  
just hold me in your heart until  
we walk in lock-step side by side  
to dream by day and fly by night".

I heard your laughter in the wind today.  
The sound? It took my breath away.  
Then I heard you say "don't cry for me...  
I walk in strength;  
I rest in peace...  
And it's not a chasm but a thin flat-line  
That separates your heart and mine".

**Care to Look**

by Emma Edgemon

In the moments before the sun rises,  
You watch with anticipation.  
You do not know what colors it will create,  
Only that it will be different from the last.

In the moments after the sun sets,  
You watch in peace.  
It leaves the sky fighting off night with fire.  
Neither win, it is a balanced cycle.

In the moments of peace,  
The silence is broken by the scritch of a pen and a quiet humming.  
The melody is little off and she mouths the words wrong,  
But that's okay.

In the moments of quiet,  
The wind blows harshly.  
She laughs freely as she dances in the streets; the stars sing.  
It's easy to forget you're alive when you're living.

Of peace and love,  
Silence and sound,  
Sunrises and sunsets;  
Between day and night,  
Blank pages and dry ink,  
Music and notes.  
It is quite easy to find myself between the words.

## Truth or Consequences

By Sabrina Howard

The Cashier could tell they'd arrived somewhere new when the Strawberry Fanta restocked itself. He'd just taken the last one, but now the little row of sodas was back. A customer, then.

The Cashier popped the tab. A pressurized hiss cut above the hum of the fluorescent lights, and sweet strawberry infused the air. He took a drink, relishing the sharp fizz as he strolled between the snack aisles to the checkout counter. As he sat down in the lopsided swivel chair, the door burst open and the three-note electronic doorbell buzzed resignedly.

"Welcome to the Truth or Consequences 7-Eleven," the Cashier intoned. "We come and go by no choice of our own. How can I help you today?" He unfolded himself from his chair. The customer staggered forward, flushed and gasping, his heavy winter coat and scarf tangled.

"Help me, please! You gotta help—there's been an accident." The whites of his eyes were visible around enlarged hazel irises as they rolled absently over the entire store. His words stumbled over themselves on the way out of his mouth. "This lady—she ran into the road, don't know where she came from—couldn't stop. Oh, God, I couldn't stop." He reached out with a blood-smear hand as if to snag the Cashier's arm, but the Cashier stepped back.

"I'm sorry, sir," he said tonelessly, "but employees of the Truth or Consequences 7-Eleven cannot leave the premises."

The customer shook his head, uncomprehending. "No, but you have to help me, you have to help her." He flung a hand toward the front of the shop. The night smothered the glass, showing nothing but the reflection of the snacks and ice cream and postcards and candy, the piercing fluorescent bar lights that loomed above them all.

"Look." The customer advanced on the counter again, producing a black leather clutch purse. "I got her wallet," he said, "in case the paramedics need to see her ID when they get here, but my phone's dead and hers is—it's broken, and I think we're pretty far from town. I don't know how long it'll take the EMTs to get here, but it might be—it might be too long." He licked his lips, tasting the truth of his situation. "I—I think she's already—" He cut off into a moan. His trembling fingers dug into the leather. "I just need the paramedics to get here. I just need them to make her better."

But by the look on his face and the dread in his voice, the paramedics could no more save her than the Cashier could quit his job.

The customer had a choice to make.

The Cashier nodded at the metal stand beside the counter, hooks hung with plastic-encased Nokias. "Would you like to buy a cellular phone with prepaid minutes?"

The customer's dark eyebrows squished together.

"To call the authorities."

"The auth..." The customer trailed off, blinking. He took two wavering steps back from the counter. The confession came in a whisper. "I only had a couple drinks."

His options were clear. The phone, or... The Cashier gestured to the back wall, at the

procession of hardware and tools. "Perhaps a garbage bag and a shovel?"

The customer recoiled into the postcard stand. Three desert landscapes emblazoned with Truth or Consequences, NM slid to the tiled floor.

The Cashier said nothing. It was best to say nothing.

The air conditioning kicked off and the background hum sputtered out into empty silence.

The customer dropped his gaze to his boots and did not denounce the garbage bags.

"Shouldn't you call the authorities?" the customer asked, lifting his eyes. The Cashier knew the real question: Are you going to tell them, if I don't?

The Cashier shook his head. The rules of the store rolled off his tongue, familiar as the Strawberry Fanta. "Employees of the Truth or Consequences 7-Eleven cannot contact the outside world."

The customer frowned and motioned at the old Windows desktop beside the Cashier.

"What's that for, then?"

"Minesweeper. Chess. Solitaire."

"Oh." The customer's confusion was obviously mounting, but he negated it, turning away. He had bigger problems to deal with. Customers always did. The man began to pace, footsteps squeaking with grimy meltwater.

The Cashier leaned forward with his elbows on the counter. "Hey."

The customer looked up.

"You want a Slurpee?" He gestured to the machine gurgling against the adjacent wall.

Sometimes Slurpees were a good way to pass the infinite time, and maybe it would help the customer think. The Cashier wanted one himself. Blue raspberry. Maybe cherry.

The customer's jaw dropped and the Slurpee machine went through three churns before he shut it. He cleared his throat. "No, thanks," he said, shooting a pained look at the colorful slush. And then, softly: "Allie loves Slurpees. The Blue Shock Mountain Dew ones."

"Your daughter?" The Cashier wondered what Blue Shock Mountain Dew tasted like.

They didn't carry it, so he would never know.

The customer nodded. "Five years old. Her mom died last year." An odd noise escaped his throat—a dry, muted sob. "I'm all she's got now." His fingers crumpled the woman's purse.

"Do you—do you think they'll arrest me? Take me away from her?"

The Cashier didn't answer.

"Because I can't let her down." His lip quivered. "I can't leave her alone."

"You're choosing the shovel, then?"

The customer shuddered and pressed the crook of his elbow to his mouth, and the Cashier thought about calling the Janitor. But the man straightened up again and eyed the front door. "I can't leave her... her..." The word 'body' thrummed in the air with the same dark energy as the neon Marlboro sign in the window. "...to freeze out in the mountains," he finished.

"Is that where we are?" The Cashier studied the storefront windows, but the night was blinding, all indications of their surroundings obscured in its weighted folds.

A small click. The customer had unclasped the woman's purse. He thumbed a card out of its slot. "Her name was Zoey," he said. The knowledge of her name broke him, and the suppressed sobs came freely. He doubled over, a man crushed between his mistakes and the two horrible paths that lay ahead. Forfeit Allie, or erase Zoey.

Truth, or consequences.

The Cashier drank his Fanta. People attached a lot of weight to a name. As for himself, the plastic tag pinned to his green polo said 'David,' but the word meant nothing now. (The Janitor's name tag said 'Roberto,' but he'd stopped going by that long ago.) The Cashier had tried to throw his name tag away, in fact, but when the store had moved, the name reappeared on his chest—a two-syllable string of sounds that had once come with a full personal history. The only thing the Cashier remembered now was that he liked "Flashlight" by Parliament and the taste of Strawberry Fanta.

The customer heaved a breath and stepped toward the counter, pulling the Cashier from his musings. He sniffed, wiped a sleeve across his eyes. His jaw was set now, his shoulders pushed back.

"Made a decision?" the Cashier asked.

"Yes."

"What'll it be? Truth?" The Cashier gestured at the Nokias. "Or consequences?" He indicated the back wall.

"Allie sees me as a hero," the customer said. "I'm not. But I can do the decent thing." He pulled a Nokia off the hook.

A wise choice. Sometimes customers made them.

"How much?"

"On the house," the Cashier said. "Everything is. Sure you don't want that Slurpee?"

The customer broke the packaging and powered on the Nokia. "No, thanks." He fumbled with the buttons. Three beeps in sequence. A fourth.

A grating drone—no signal.

"You have to use the phone outside the premises."

"Oh." The customer nodded. "Thanks..." His eyes dropped to the Cashier's shirt.

"David."

The Cashier smiled wryly and swirled the last dregs of his Fanta. "I'm just the Cashier," he said.

The customer looked mystified—customers always did—and drifted toward the exit.

"Okay. Thanks." He turned and faced the front door and the elongated night behind it. He clenched his hands around the phone and the purse.

Would he change his mind? Customers did that sometimes, too.

But then he squared his shoulders and marched past the threshold, and the doorbell sang of his departure.

The Cashier went to the Slurpee machine. As he filled his cup, the back door opened.

The Janitor wandered in, eyes downcast as he moved his mop in rhythmic circles.

"What'd he pick?"

"Truth."

The Janitor grunted. "Good for him."

Cherry slush met the rim of the Cashier's cup and a vague idea emerged. "Hey," he said, "do you wanna be the cashier next time?"

The mop stilled. The Janitor looked up, frowning at the impossible notion. "I'm just the Janitor."

The Cashier nodded. "I know." Perhaps these were the consequences of truths they'd once avoided themselves. He turned back to the Slurpee machine.

It had refilled itself.

## Strings of Perseverance

by Johann Cumagan

The sound of my plow and the mooing of my cow is all I hear on that hot summer afternoon. It was late March and the field was ready to be ploughed. Sweat trickled down my face as I worked. The cow mooed in agony as she went through the field and worked for almost a day already since dawn. I felt pity for her because she was already too old and had served the farm for a long time and my family could not afford to buy new cows.

Oh, wait a minute, where are my manners? Before I tell you my story, I should introduce myself. My name is Luke Walsh. I was born in a poor family and we have an old farm here in Dublin, Ireland. I have two older brothers named Daniel and James, and a younger brother named Thomas who is just three years old. As for school, I only graduated from kindergarten; my parents couldn't afford for me to go to elementary and high school. Since my dad can't do all the work alone; he makes me and my two older brothers work with him; and if he has enough money; he pays us for a day's work so that we could save for a good future. I'm just 15 years old but ever since I was six years old, I've always dreamed of becoming a guitar player and travel the world and do my own concerts. Sometimes, my dad, Finn Walsh, would watch a guitar concert with me on our old box TV and my face would light up. Tommy, my childhood friend and neighbor thinks that I have an impossible dream but I think I could reach it myself. Tommy and I have been friends since we were kids; we go to the same school in the past and they also own a farm next to ours that's a little bit bigger. He would even invite me every week so we could spend time together and play video games on his nice *Nintendo Switch* that I wish I also had if only I could afford it.

"Luke, time for supper!"

"Okay, I'm coming!"

That was my mom. Her name is Shannon Walsh and she taught me reading, writing, arithmetic, proper manners and everything that a normal kid learns in school. The smell of roast potato and chicken filled my nose as I entered the house. Everyone gathered and sat around the table to eat.

"Bless us O God as we sit together. Bless the food we eat today. Bless the hands that made the food, bless us O God," my father said as he prayed.

We each had one potato and chicken. I was wondering where we got the chicken since it has been a month already that we've been to the grocery.

"Mom, where did we get the chicken?", I asked.

"Your dad had to sacrifice one of our chickens since we don't have enough money to buy food."

"Then we're only left with three chickens?", Daniel complained as he ate his potato.

Mother nodded in agreement but I was so surprised to hear that one of our chickens were slaughtered just so we could eat. So, I decided to ask my parents the question that has been bothering me for days.

"Mom, Dad, how do I get my first guitar?"

My parents looked worriedly at each other as they thought of what to say.

"Do you really think you could be a guitar player in the future?" James teased.

"Yeah, right." Daniel said while laughing.

"James, Daniel, quit it! Son, all you have to do is work hard in the field, save the money that I give you until it's enough to buy a guitar."

The next day, me and my brothers started early to work in the field again. Every time I think about my dream, I always think about what my parents said yesterday. We were about to fetch the cow but as we approached the barn, we smelled something malodorous coming from inside the barn. James and Daniel opened the barn door and we found that our cow died due to old age which unfortunately would slow down our day's work and delay our crops that we grow for us and for the market.

So, my father decided that we plough the fields ourselves without the cow. We started by pulling the plough which my father did and controlling the direction which James and I did. While we ploughed the field, Daniel stood in the distance and made sure we were plowing the field in a straight line. We were able to finish plowing the whole field at about eight o'clock at night when my father taught us a lesson that I would never forget.

"Sons, let this be a lesson to you, that whatever happens no matter how bad it is, you have to be ready for it and use all the resources you've got to avoid wasting time."

The following day, I sat down for breakfast when my mother told me to run an errand at the market which lies behind the dark Ballyboley forest.

"I want you to buy some ingredients for our lunch today, here's the list, okay?"

"Okay mom, I'll be back!"

I kissed her forehead and went on my way. While walking, I watched as I saw our house including Tommy's house become smaller and smaller in the distance and then everything around me went dark like midnight. The trees in the Ballyboley forest grow very tall that they do not allow sunlight to shine between them. As I walked through the dark forest, twigs snapped under my feet, branches get caught in my head, and tendrils of mist swirled around my ankles. In the distance, I see an old merchant leaning on a tree with a big evil grin on his face.

"Where are you off to young lad? You know you shouldn't be in the middle of the forest at your age." he said as he kept on smiling.

"I'm off to the market to buy some ingredients for my mother."

"Oh, what a good kid. I heard you want to become a guitar player when you grow up."

"How do you know that?" I said surprisingly.

"I am a really good fortune teller and I see the marks on your hand."

"Woah, that's cool" I said as I looked at my palm.

"I have something for you." he said.

He pulled out an empty white jar from his pouch and handed it to me. He told me that anything I say inside the jar will come true including my dreams of becoming a famous guitar player.

"But that will cost you the money you have, young lad."

So, I gave him the money my mother gave me and we both went our separate ways.

Little did I know, I have made the worst mistake I've ever done in my life. I came home and

showed my mother my jar of wishes but she was not pleased with what I had done.

"Luke, where are the groceries for our supper?", my mom asked.

"Mom, I can fulfill my dreams right now!"

"I wish to become a famous guitar player now."

I was so disappointed at myself when nothing happened. My mom then grabbed the jar and dumped it in the garbage.

"Luke, life doesn't work that way!", she said as she shook her head.

"In life, you have to work hard to achieve your dreams; you can't just go the easy way like wishing through a useless jar which doesn't even work."

"If you do this, you will not achieve your goals in life and people will trick you."

That night, we weren't able to eat my favorite food because of me, so we just ate the leftover chicken and potatoes.

Years past and I have earned enough money and the cool thing is I was able to buy my guitar. I even named it Perseverance after everything I've done to get it. My parents helped me learn the guitar and I've traveled almost around the world and I just told you my story from the backstage of my concert here in Paris, France. Do you hear the crowd? Let's go have fun!

## Spirit Quest

By Audrey Bird

*"Here's to the ones that we got, cheers to the wish that you're here but you're not, 'cause the drinks bring back all the memories, of everything we've been through..."* Rowan sang with the radio. Her dad joined in (in his LOUD voice):

*"Toast to the ones here today..."*

*"Toast to the ones that we lost on the way..."* Rowan laughed. And then an advertisement came on. Rowan's dad turned off the radio. The loud buzz of the 1972 Chevy C10 Cheyenne filled Rowan's ears. Pop drove that car everywhere. Literally. They turned onto Highway 65, heading towards the cornfield that their family owned. Suddenly the engine started rumbling and making unusual steaming noises. Pop swerved and turned, inches away from other cars.

"Uh, Pop, it's fun when you do it on main streets, but on the highway? You're almost crashing into other cars!" Rowan asked as she lurched forward.

"Rowan...I don't know what's happening! See?" he let go of the steering wheel. It continued to turn wildly.

"No, Pop! Hold onto it!" Rowan screamed. Pop tried grabbing onto it, but it was moving around too much. They swerved into the lane beside them, and then the next one, way too close to the edge of the hill. And then the wheel turned even more, right before Rowan's eyes.

"Hold on, Rowan!" Pop shouted. They rolled down the hill, crashing at the bottom. Rowan struggled to get out of the car, but she squeezed out.

"POP!" Rowan cried. The truck was completely crushed. She was amazed she survived. She looked around. A dark shape with four legs ran up to her. It was a dog! It licked her face.

"Go find help. Go, go!" Rowan commanded. The golden retriever barked. And barked, and barked and barked. Then she ran off.

A few minutes later, Rowan heard sirens, and the dog returned with some people. At this point, Rowan's head ached. As the ER doctors lifted her into an ambulance, everything went black.

--

It had been a month since the accident. Pop had passed, and everyone in Rowan's family ached to miss him. Nobody, not even Rowan, knew what happened to the truck that day. Rowan sighed. She was riding her bike in the crisp morning air. She loved morning bike rides. Especially with Pop. But Pop was gone now. Forever. She heard another bike behind her. Rowan knew she was slow on her bike, so she pulled to the side of the road. She thought the other biker would pass, but instead they pulled up behind her. Rowan whipped around. The biker was a boy, in jeans and a hoodie.

"Hello, Rowan. My name is Finn McCarthy. We have to go."

"Whoa, whoa, whoa. Go where?"

"The day of the accident? Something bad got into the truck and wrecked it," Finn explained.

"Oh...kay?"

"And now we have to go search."

"Wait-search for what?"

"Don't you know?"

"Umm, no."

"We have to search...for Spirits."

To Be Continued...

## Behind the Stone Wall: Liesel's Adventure

by Sayuri Cumagun

Young 12 year old Liesel with golden hair was a villager in the land known as Aaravar. She was always a curious one whose poor mother would scold her for it. "Liesel don't even try to touch fire," her mother would say, but Liesel never listened and the results were rather disastrous.

On Liesel's morning walks, there was this tall, strong, long and thick stone wall that she passed covered with ivy, roses, and thorns. Liesel asked once what had been behind it but her mother only said, "Nothing worth seeing. Haven't we talked about this, Liesel?" her mother had only scolded her. So she kept quiet.

But now standing in front of it, Liesel could hear strange noises. Curious now, she scanned the wall. Liesel spotted a ladder and ran toward it. She took the first step. When she reached the top, she gasped at the height. The ladder fell down. Liesel wanted to scream but it all happened too quick. Grunting and holding on to the wall she kept going till she was sitting on top. Her heart pounded. From up here it looked like about 97 feet high. Finally, she looked at the other side. Her jaw dropped. Those noises Liesel had heard were animals. Smart animals working, talking. But she never even knew they existed! She had thought they were only myths. Well! Liesel realized that these animals-forest animals- were building a village- for themselves.

Now it was time to get down. The side she came from had nothing she could land on but on the other side there was hay and soft grass. Liesel closed her eyes and jumped. Now she screamed. When Liesel landed on the hay, conversation slammed to a halt. Oof. Now all her muscles ached. Spots danced in her vision and Liesel blacked out.

Liesel woke up to something saying, "Hello? Hello-o? Wake up!" Liesel blinked slowly. Then, suddenly she snapped awake and stood up so fast she bumped into the furry head that was leaning over her. It was a badger.

"Hi," the badger said. "Name's Truffle. Yours?" Truffle said kindly.

"L-Liesel," she said weakly. "I-I have to go home."

"Hmmm," Truffle muttered thoughtfully. Right at that moment, Liesel spotted a big she-eagle that was injured. She had a crooked wing and several gashes. Liesel took pity on the eagle and went to help her. One thing Liesel was good at was helping wounds heal. So she cleaned the wounds and bandaged them. And of course the eagle asked how she could repay her. Liesel hesitated.

"Can you-can you carry me on your back over the wall?" she finally asked.

"Think I can manage," the eagle said, smiling. So Liesel walked to the stone wall. The eagle started flying beside her and Liesel jumped on the eagle's back. "Thank you," Liesel calls to Truffle.

"By the way, my name's Pyrite," the eagle said.

"Mine's Liesel," she answers politely. "Thank you. I owe you a lot," Liesel adds.

"No problem," Pyrite said cheerfully. "You saved my life." Pyrite landed near Liesel's house. "Good luck!"

## Astronaut and Kangaroo

By Clara Monroe

Once there was an astronaut. She lived on the space station. Her name was Shannon Walker. She met a kangaroo on the space station. She took him down to the ground to live with her and her family. And then the kangaroo went back to his home and Shannon Walker went to the space station again. But before she could go, she had a problem with her rocket. They didn't have enough fuel for it! They couldn't fit enough fuel in her tank. Then they decided to put two jugs in, that way it would have enough. Then the countdown started. But before she blasted off, the kangaroo came and blasted off with her! Then, they started blasting off. And they snuggled together. And they got to the space station and they started doing experiments. The kangaroo did his kangaroo experiments. Then they went back to the ground and she adopted the kangaroo and her and the kangaroo lived happily together. The end.

