

FROM THE

FALLOUT SHELTER



2019-2020

About Us

From the Fallout Shelter is the annual literary and arts publication of the Penn State Harrisburg campus, and it is also the name of the student club that produces the magazine. The magazine and club were known for many years as Tarnhelm (a magical Viking helmet). In 2008, club members updated the name to reflect a unique feature of campus, which is the fact that the basement of the Olmsted Building is designated as a fallout shelter, complete with a few metal fallout shelter signs from decades long gone. The building may have been built to withstand radioactive fallout because it used to be part of the Olmsted Air Force Base, and it is also near the nuclear reactors of Three Mile Island. The Air Force sold some land and buildings to the university in 1966. The entire base closed in 1969, (Harrisburg International Airport now operates the old runways) and Penn State Harrisburg has been expanding ever since, with annual creative achievements showcased in this magazine.

All selections, including the winning pieces, are chosen anonymously (through blind judging) by the reading boards and the editorial board, comprised entirely of students. The only exception is the Academy of American Poets Prize, which was picked via blind judging by professors. Students who submitted work and served on the editorial staff at the same time did not evaluate their own work.

The print edition of the magazine is distributed for free on campus during the spring semester. Funding is provided by the Student Activity Fund, the School of Humanities, the Commission for Women, fundraisers run by club members, and private donors. The contributors, editors, and the adviser are responsible for the content of this magazine.

We can be reached via our website, www.sites.psu.edu/falloutshelter, or join our Facebook group, called *From the Fallout Shelter - Penn State Harrisburg's Literary/Arts Magazine*. Find us on Twitter and Instagram @FTFS_PSH.

Current Penn State Harrisburg students and staff may submit their work anytime via our online submission manager, where all the guidelines are also posted:

<https://fromthefalloutshelter.submittable.com/submit>

FROM THE FALLOUT SHELTER

PENN STATE HARRISBURG'S LITERARY ARTS MAGAZINE

www.sites.psu.edu/falloutshelter

2019-2020

GENRE EDITORS

Poetry Editor: Kenneth Nolan III

Assistant Poetry Editors: Sam Bixler and Elijah Hayes-Olivera

Fiction Editor: Sam Bixler

Assistant Fiction Editors: Ashleigh Cummings, Nabin Adhikari,
and Valerie Frigerio

Nonfiction Editor: Valerie Frigerio

Assistant Nonfiction Editors: Nate Willison and Jess Mele

Comics and Graphic Narrative Editor: Elijah Hayes-Olivera

Visual Arts Editor: Jess Mele

Assistant Visual Arts Editor: Rachel Lenich

Business Manager: Nabin Adhikari

Online Editor: Ashleigh Cummings

Copy Editor: Rachel Lenich

Faculty Advisor: Ashley Cowger

All rights reserved, 2020

All rights revert to the authors, artists, and photographers upon publication.

Featured on the front cover is "A Chaos of Violets" by Molly Goehring.

Featured on the back cover is "By the Sea" by Molly Goehring.

From the Fallout Shelter

<https://sites.psu.edu/falloutshelter/>

Olmsted W356

Penn State Harrisburg

777 West Harrisburg Pike

Middletown, PA 17057-4898

Designed by Triangle Press.

Printing and binding by Triangle Press.

Table of Contents

ESSAYS

Bloom by Sam Bixler	8
The Closet Has Many Doors by Sam Bixler	11
In-Between by Brienna Carr	28
There's a Beef on My Roof by Naomi Detwiler	62

FICTION

When Cockatoos Talk by Emily Dempsey	14
Breathless Endowment by Madaline Hoy	41
One of Those Days by Alexander Owens	54
Life! The Game: A Dull Battle Between Survival and Fulfillment by Alexander Owens	55
Scout's Honor by Kelleigh Stevenson	65

POETRY

Aroma Erotica by Emily Dempsey	19
Caricature Artist in a 7-Eleven at 1 O'Clock in the Morning by Emily Dempsey	20
Chiron, the Centaur by Leisa Kilby	22
The Treachery of Images by Jules Freidly	24
Lei Upon the Ocean by Kelsey Cramer	33
Winter Memory by Long Nguyen	34
A Sunday Confessional by Kelleigh Stevenson	35
The Beginning is Everything by Brienna Carr	37
What Every Foreigner Should Know by Nabin Adhikari	38
La Liberté Guidant Le Peuple by Valerie Frigerio	40
Revenge by Kristina Stokes	49
The King and I by Emma Bankert	51
Summer Storms by Kelleigh Stevenson	52
Pediatricians Work for the Government by Emily Dempsey	58
Ghost by Sam Bixler	60
Diving Deeper by Alexander Owens	64

Table of Contents

My Words by Addison Rabbette	70
I Say by Madaline Hoy	72
Smell the Mourning Rose by Alexander Owens	73
A Tuesday Afternoon by Nabin Adhikari	78

PHOTOGRAPHY AND ARTWORK

Tea Party For . . . by Seyilayo Olagbami	18
Italian Alley by Jesse Goranson	25
A Long Night's Wait by Jesse Goranson	26
Florentine Posture by Jesse Goranson	27
Railroad Continuation by Ethan Lee	36
Neon Girl by Seyilayo Olagbami	46
Rose by Seyilayo Olagbami	47
Orange by Seyilayo Olagbami	48
Abstract #1 by Alexander Owens	53
Friday Night Lights by Sarah Paul	61
Happy by Adam Jones	71
Beneath the Leaves by Elizabeth Lynch	74
Fresh by Elizabeth Lynch	75
Sunlit Garden by Elizabeth Lynch	76
Produce by Elizabeth Lynch	77

From the Editors

Sam Bixler, Fiction Editor

Previous issues of *From the Fallout Shelter* have featured stories heavily reliant on tension and suspense, but this year's submissions were more introspective, to the point of being almost melancholy. None of our submissions focused on horror or shock value to get their message across, with some of our best pieces—such as Best in Genre winner Emily Dempsey's "When Cockatoos Talk"—acting as more of a slow burn, an act of contemplation. Grief played a role in several of the pieces featured in this issue, including Kelleigh Stevenson's "Scout's Honor" and Madaline Hoy's "Breathless Endowment," and overall the tone of this year's submissions was somber and somewhat cynical. This is a continuation of a theme seen in last year's issue of the magazine, and I think part of it can be attributed—as I said in my previous editorial statement—to the current social and political climate of our country. Every time you blink, there's a new crisis, and I think it's natural for students to feel helpless. For Penn State students, I think writing about grief and about pain is an act of processing, of filtering the events taking place around us rather than retreating into escapism. These aren't happy stories, but they're real, and I hope our readers are able to appreciate them for that alone.

Valerie Frigerio, Nonfiction Editor

The beauty of nonfiction is the truth. Truth in its purest form from a writer's mind to words on paper, baring their soul to the reader. It's difficult to write nonfiction, as many find it awkward and self-centered to write about oneself and their experiences. They often fear that they are uninteresting, or that they expose themselves to the bone. However, that vulnerability shows much more strength than they realize. This year's submissions were open and honest, pure and clean and really just uplifting to read. The best in genre was "The Closet Has Many Doors" and "Bloom," both written by Sam Bixler. In "The Closet Has Many Doors," the author gives the reader an open door to their journey of discovering sexuality and gender, and the difficulty of having to inform family and friends, over and over again as new discoveries are made. "Bloom," is a heart-achingly sad, but hopeful reflection of love lost, and love gained, eloquently described with epithets of flowers that bloom once or forever. These submissions were lovely to read, and I hope that others will be brave and have the strength to write such strong realizations about themselves as this author has.

Kenneth Nolan III, Poetry Editor

Matthew Arnold once said that “poetry is simply the most beautiful, impressive, and widely effective mode of saying things, and hence its importance.” I would argue that now, perhaps more than ever, speaking out on important issues is both radical and needed. The students at Penn State Harrisburg have taken this idea and submitted valuable pieces with clear purpose. This issue of *From The Fallout Shelter* indeed deals with intense yet contemporary themes. For example, the winning poem this year, “Aroma Erotica” by Emily Dempsey, deals with the theme of female objectification and misogyny—something that is still a top priority within the feminist movement. Madeline Hoy’s piece, “I Say,” is an ode to self-expression: wherein bending the gender-binary and loving yourself is celebrated! Although our country’s political landscape may be shaky for some, joy and self-love are radical ideas. Furthermore, with the queer community continuing to become mainstream, queerness should be celebrated. Though a lot of the pieces are intense, we do have some lighter fare within the selections. “The Beginning is Everything” by Brianna Carr is a clever piece about first love, hope, and heartbreak. Whether the pieces are political or not, I hope the poems collected within this issue can bring you comfort, love, and inspiration.

Jess Mele, Visual Arts Editor

Art may be one of the greatest forms that exists on earth. There is a certain type of magic that elicits an emotional reaction—something that can pull at your heart and make you truly feel something. Many times uniqueness provides a segue into this type of magic. The winner, “Tea Party For...” utilizes warm, bright colors, a unique art style, and is just visually stunning. That magic is seen in every aspect of this piece. Similarly, “Chaos of Violets” is eye-catching and feels just beautiful knowing how close spring truly is. Capturing the changing seasons in this piece, the art transforms the viewer into spring and you can almost feel that serenity coming off the page. Lastly, “By the Sea” provides a lovely end to this year’s magazine. Serene and lovely, this piece ties this issue together and leaves us on a high note. What all of these pieces of art have in common is their ability to elicit emotions from the viewer. Whether it be the quiet chaos of the violets or the screaming demands of serenity, one thing is certain: art has the ability to make us feel things just by gazing at a picture the same way we feel things when reading the words in a book.

Sam Bixler

WINNER
Best Essay



Bloom

Love is a flower. You got to let it grow. – John Lennon, “Mind Games”

- i. *Hapaxanth* (n. a plant species whose individuals flower only once in their lifetimes before dying)

Rose picked me at the moment of full bloom. I thought I was ready. I thought it was what I wanted, to be plucked from the earth, made beautiful because someone else said so. Her hands were soft, her words sweet and gentle. I didn't even realize she had torn me from my roots.

Thinking back, I should have known better. She was fresh out of a long-term relationship, which had ended in large part because she couldn't handle the distance. She lived in Missouri, and I lived here, in Pennsylvania. It was a nearly thirteen-hour drive going one way. But I thought it wouldn't matter, that I was worth the effort.

I had only come out a few months prior, accepting for the first time that I was not bisexual, but a lesbian. Her relationship with her then-partners had been part of that change. Seeing them together made my heart ache. I wanted a love like that, and only like that. I couldn't see myself having that with a man. Not ever.

When she flirted with me for the first time, I could have sworn I felt my heart stop. No one had ever shown interest in me before. I was easy. She didn't want a relationship, and I thought that would be just fine – that as long as she was paying attention to me, everything would work out. It was two months of discovery, of searching each other, of finding something worthwhile. We began “officially” dating in May of 2018, two weeks before I would visit her for the first time.

The trip was not what I had expected in the slightest. But the first few days were blissful. I met her parents. I had tentative plans to stay the whole summer. Simply put, I was naïve – in too deep, too quick. I thought that was what love was supposed to be.

We overwhelmed each other, I think. I wanted more than she could give, and she wanted less than I was willing to offer. There was a fight on the third day, a moment of overstimulation, of panic as we attempted to navigate the city of St. Louis with some of her friends. I sat in the passenger seat of her car, heaving sobs wracking my body, as she sat motionless outside on the curb. When I tried to touch her on the ride home, she recoiled, and from that point

on we danced around each other, trying to figure out what we wanted.

The drive home hurt. I listened to sad country music and wondered if she hated me, if I was a bad person, if I had done something wrong. When I returned home, we were still together, but things weren't the same. We didn't fall asleep on video call anymore. We didn't listen to podcasts together or spend our every waking moment enjoying each other's company. She told me she needed time and space, and I accepted it, because I wanted things to work. I wanted her to see that I would wait for her.

She broke up with me in July of that year, in the heat of summer, when my face was cherry red and burning. I texted her on the drive back from a visit to my aunt's, told her I was coming home, and she said good, because we needed to talk. I knew what was happening, but we had just watched a movie together the night before – the first time since I'd been back home. I thought things were getting better. I thought it might work. I thought, I thought, I thought.

Flowers die.

- ii. *Pollakanth* (n. a plant that produces reproduces, flowers, and sets seeds recurrently during its life)

Flowers die and leaves fall, but there is beauty in decay. Jess and I came together after we had both had our hearts broken. It was August of 2018. Neither of us were ready for a relationship. But we wanted *something*. We craved closeness.

For a while, it was just that – a friends with benefits type of deal, a distraction from the loneliness of being single. But again, I felt myself falling for someone who didn't want me in the way I wanted them. I danced around it. I cried again. I didn't want to be hurt, to let someone leave me behind again. I left her instead.

Her life fell apart, and mine stagnated. The dissociative symptoms which had popped up in the aftermath of my Missouri trip returned in full force. Jess and I were still friends. We talked often, and as the chaos in her life reigned (she had cut off contact with her parents, set out on her own with no real support system after suffering through emotional and physical abuse), I tried to be a good friend, to put my feelings aside and be there for her when it felt like no one else had bothered to.

But as the new year came, it all became too much. I wanted her still. My feelings had not subsided. We came back together, though she claimed she

didn't want to date in the new year. I got my passport, planned a trip to Canada – only six hours this time, thank goodness.

Spring came, and I had returned to my bloom. I was not as beautiful as before, my colors not as vibrant, my stem not as pure and green. But Jess picked me anyway. She removed me from the earth to plant me in my own pot, and she helped me grow. We helped each other.

I thought I knew what love was, but I was wrong. Love was not chasing after someone who didn't want you. Love was not feeling like Too Much. Love was not overwhelming each other, but finding strength in each other, finding peace, finding something like home.

She's laying on the couch next to me as my cat climbs over her, legs crossed at the ankles, glasses pushed up above her face. I don't think I could have ever had this with Rose. I don't know if, should the unspeakable happen, I will ever have it with someone again – not like this, not this first love, honey-sweet. I want to keep this in my heart.

I'm in full bloom with her.



WINNER
Best Essay

Sam Bixler

The Closet Has Many Doors

October 11th is National Coming Out Day. On that day, members of the LGBT+ community come together to share their experiences with “coming out of the closet.” Often, this is seen as a one-and-done situation. A celebrity says they came out at sixteen and now everyone knows forever. Straight and cisgender people eat it up. *Was it hard to come out? Did your parents accept you? Oh, you poor thing. That must have been so difficult for you.*

Not to say that we don’t value our straight or cisgender allies, but it is strange how so many of them seem to think of coming out as anything other than a long, arduous process. They see the struggle, but they don’t understand how deep it goes – and who can blame them? Most of them have never had to reveal anything about their sexuality or gender identity. When you’re straight or cisgender, the world automatically assumes things about you, and they’re usually – though not always – right. There’s little need for explanation or justification. You simply are who you say you are, and others tend to accept that at face value.

When I was twelve years old, my best friend (at the time) came out to me as bisexual. I remember standing on the curb with her outside of Cedar Crest Middle School, scanning the horizon for my mom’s car, when the world came to a halt. I had never heard the term before, but I was fascinated. You could like both guys and girls? It’s strange, thinking back, because I don’t know if I had even allowed myself to consider the possibility of liking girls before. Still, I was enamored with the concept. Our conversation awoke something within me, and suddenly, my entire life had come into question. It would be years before I was able to reveal the truth – or what I thought was the truth – to someone else: that I was attracted to men and women, too.

After disclosing my bisexual identity to a childhood friend, it struck me that I would need to tell other people. For a long time, I avoided the topic. It wasn’t until I was sixteen years old – roughly two years after my initial coming out moment – that I would tell my mother the same thing. Despite her having been supportive of the LGBT+ community outside of our family, there was part of me that feared her kindness would not extend to her youngest child. I wonder now whether it had just been so ingrained into me by popular culture that a parent could not accept their child’s sexuality, that there would always be strings attached, that I would always be destined to walk on eggshells. I thought having a daughter who was anything but straight would be the end of the world, and when my mother came back to me and asked if I was sure I was bisexual, I thought my fears had been confirmed.

Though my mom insisted that she loved and supported me, her questioning stuck with me for years afterward. I began cyber schooling in eighth grade, so it wasn't like I had anyone else to come out to during this time apart from my father and brother, both of whom I refused to tell. My father because we already had a complicated relationship and my brother because he was eight years older and never around anyway. So, I was out, but not out-out, which is how I spent most of my teenage years. If I trusted someone enough to tell them, it was an important thing. My sexuality was on a need-to-know basis, and for a while, that was how I was most comfortable.

My feelings began to change about two years ago, in the early months of 2018, when I met my now ex-girlfriend and realized for the first time that I wasn't attracted to men. All my childhood crushes on boys had been unattainable, after all, a way to fit in without ever having to get too close. I had to come out, again, just to myself. *Oh, wait, you're a lesbian! It all makes sense now!* I toyed with the label for a while on my own, fearing I might be seen as a stereotype, a girl flip-flopping between the bisexual and lesbian labels or perpetuating the idea that bisexuals always choose a side in the end. But once I realized the truth, I had to re-come out to everyone who already knew my sexuality.

It was at this time that my mom revealed that her question of whether I was certain of my bisexuality had been a question of whether I was a lesbian, and had no basis in the idea that I would someday realize I was straight and marry some white-bread man so I could have his babies. It was a relief to hear that she didn't mind me being gay – and, in fact, had always thought that I was “more” gay than even I had realized. But now that I was more confident in my sexuality, ready to step out into the world as an open lesbian, I knew I would have to tell even the people I had never told before. On a car ride with my father, I disclosed that I was going to a meeting at the LGBT Center in Harrisburg, a roundabout attempt to hint that I was gay. He said he knew. That it was okay. Nothing more than that.

I've never officially come out to my brother, though he knows I'm gay. We see each other so little that there was just never a right time, I guess, though I don't care that he knows, and would like to believe that he will support me no matter what. In public, I started being more open with my sexuality – knowing that there would be some who would look at me differently, but not caring to lie anymore about who I was or what I had been through to get to where I am today. If being a lesbian was relevant to the conversation – say, a class discussion on feminism or love or sex – then I was going to talk about being a lesbian, and if people had a problem, I would deal with it later.

For a long time, I thought my coming out journey was over – that I was an out lesbian, and I was okay with that, and there was nothing more to be said or done. But over the past few years, and especially the past few months, I've realized there is more to my story than even I originally believed. This past year, on National Coming Out Day, I came out to most of the people I know as nonbinary. It's something I had been toying with for a long time, probably since I was about sixteen years old, but for years, I thought that my gender was something private for me. Being openly gay was okay, but people couldn't accept a gender outside of the binary male or female, and I didn't want to deal with questions or judgments about who I was (or, rather, am).

But I did it. It took lots of tossing and turning, hemming and hawing, but I finally revealed that I am nonbinary. I use they/them pronouns. I don't fit into an either or, but somehow outside and in-between. Since coming out, no one has asked me anything. And I don't know if the people in my life have accepted it. My mom still calls me she, unless I remind her. My brother, too. Even a few months ago, when I revealed I no longer identify with my birth name, it was brushed off. My gender is "hard" for other people. My expression is difficult for them to comprehend. Some would have me believe that it is my responsibility, then, to be forgiving, lenient, to not be offended if someone calls me the wrong name or pronoun to my face.

Point being, there are still people who can't understand who or what I am – people who try their hardest, but consistently fall short. I know that I will have to keep coming out, exposing myself as a nonbinary lesbian over and over again simply because some people can't imagine a person being anything other than straight or cisgender without them explicitly saying so. I will have to keep stepping back into the closet only to reemerge once more. I will open closet doors only to find myself in bigger closets.

Emily Dempsey

WINNER
Best Short Story



When Cockatoos Talk

Amelia's grandfather, Charles, salted spicy food because he said it made it less spicy. He also salted his fruit, explaining that the iodine extracted the fruit's natural sugars and left a coating of sweetness on the surface. She believed every word and carried a small plastic salt shaker around with her in a yellow corduroy backpack. Amelia was six years old and the only person that talked to Charles like he wasn't a rambling old man with hearing aids. They never had long conversations because neither of them could keep their attention up for extended periods of time. She didn't care much that he often made no sense and that she probably wouldn't understand him anyway if he did. Their brief discourses over a shared bag of pretzels or card games without rules were Amelia's favorite part of visiting.

"I lost a tooth," she said, leaning into his left ear, knowing the device in this ear worked slightly better. Amelia pulled down her bottom lip and revealed a small dark gap in her smile, like a tiny cave opening. Her cheeks flushed as she reached inside her backpack to grab a little snack bag containing a pebble-sized bloody tooth. Charles squinted at the little baggy and with a hoarse chuckle and pulled out the top set of false teeth from his own mouth.

"Me too!" Charles erupted in throaty laughter, wide-eyed and with a string of saliva bridging between his gums and the set of teeth. Amelia jumped back and gasped sharply, gripping her plastic snack bag. After a brief fit of coughing interrupted his laughter, Charles pressed the teeth back onto his gums and offered her a close-mouthed smile. Amelia cautiously smiled back and returned the baggy to the front pocket of her backpack. As her back was turned, Charles slipped a king of hearts onto her pile of cards.

"Hey, you don't happen to have a king do ya?" Charles asked. Amelia hid her pile of cards on her lap under the table as she sifted through them.

"This one?" she held up the king of hearts.

"How 'bout that! That's the winning card, sweetie!"

"Woah!" Amelia proudly stood up on her chair and stuck the card in the bottle compartment of her backpack.

"Don't stand on the chair, Amelia. Get down, it's time to go." Amelia's mom returned from the kitchen with a mug of tea for Charles.

"I won!"

"Say bye to Pops," her mom said as she placed the mug on the table and picked Amelia up from the chair.

“Here’s tea, Dad. It’s hot.” She collected the cards and set them in a neat pile on the corner of the table. “See you Wednesday. Love you.”

Amelia and her mother had started visiting Charles three times a week, on the days that his nurse wasn’t scheduled. Her mom would clean and prepare his meals for that day and the next, while Amelia and Charles played cards or worked on coloring books. She was always tired and had been helping take care of her father for almost a year. Seeing his health slowly get worse took a toll on Amelia’s mother. She tried to stay strong and dismiss the thoughts of him passing, but this made her seem cold-hearted.

Amelia and Charles were of vastly different ages, but the two were quite similar. Neither talked much and both enjoyed listening to the opera music that Mom always put on the radio. When they did speak, it was simple sentences with very little meat to them, nothing like the verbose adult talk that Amelia’s parents engaged in. They both had trouble reading and avoided books unless they had pictures, they both liked to watch Abbott and Costello, and they both loved the old white cockatoo in the sunroom.

Charles had owned the cockatoo for almost thirty years. His name was Tiresias and lived in a beautiful cage crafted by Charles. Amelia adored the bird and would toss it little seeds every time she visited. On several occasions, Amelia and her mother would come over to the house and find Charles in the sunroom sitting in the middle of a coffee-colored loveseat with his hearing aids placed on a bookshelf beside the birdcage. He had once told Amelia that he can only hear the bird talk to him in absolute silence, sort of lip-reading Tiresias’ beak as he cawed. Amelia’s mother dismissed it and would ask him to put the hearing aids back in so that she could remind him to take vitamins and ask him if he preferred pasta or rice for dinner.

As Amelia and her mother continued to frequent his house, Charles’ health had increasingly worsened. His daughter knew that he hadn’t very much time left and that the last thing he’d want was to die in a hospital away from his bird. So, for the last few months of his life, she and Amelia visited him in his home almost every day. One day, the two walked in the house to find his quiet lifeless body seated on the sunroom sofa, his neck crooked upwards and mouth agape, with his hearing aids on the floor beside him. Her mother didn’t cry, and Amelia didn’t understand.

The house was sold, and Charles’ belongings were dispersed among his children and grandchildren. Amelia’s mother chose to keep a broken rocking

chair from the back porch, almost his entire book collection, his three favorite sweaters, and the cast iron pots and pans from the kitchen. Amelia was given Tiresias.

“Did you feed that bird today?” Amelia’s mom called out from the living room. Tiresias’ cage was kept in the guest bedroom of their house and would move to Amelia’s room if they were hosting guests. It had only been a few months since the funeral and Amelia would often ask if they could go back and visit Charles’ house and bring Tiresias to his old sunroom. Her mom would just dismiss the request and change the subject.

“I can do it now, Mommy!” Amelia ran upstairs to the cage and grabbed a handful of seeds. She squeezed her wrist in between the bars of the cage and let Tiresias pick a few seeds from her palm before she sloppily dumped the rest into his dish and salted it with her little plastic shaker. Then she hopped onto the guest bed and sat up with her head resting in her hands, watching the cockatoo eat.

Tiresias was mostly white but had bright yellow feathers under his wings and a few pink ones only visible when he ruffled the feathers on top of his head. He used to know several words and phrases and would dance around his cage for anyone that entered the room. But he was an old bird now, tired, and not familiar with the new location of his cage. He mostly cawed like any untrained cockatoo and occasionally, he’d squawk out the word “sweetie.”

Amelia sat on the bed and pulled a deck of cards out of her backpack. She shuffled through the cards and pulled out the king of hearts and slipped through the bars of his cage.

“Here, birdy,” Amelia couldn’t pronounce his name. “You won!” She danced around the room hoping Tiresias would bounce along with her like he used to.

“What’s wrong?” she asked, returning to the bed. Amelia reached for the roll of duct tape that she had hidden in the nightstand drawer by the bed. She peeled off two pieces of tape and stuck them to her ears.

“I’m listening now.” Since the bird moved in, Amelia had tried everything to make the room absolutely silent so that she could hear Tiresias talk. She had pressed her palms to her ears, stuck cotton balls in them, and even snuck her dad’s headphones into the room a few times. Duct tape was her most recent attempt at silence, but she could still hear the bird cawing, and the adhesive material was uncomfortable and would get stuck in her hair.

After a few moments, Amelia gave up, peeled the tape from her ears and placed the roll back in the drawer. She tossed another handful of seeds into his dish and watched Tiresias peck at the ground.

“You’ve lost your teeth too, birdy.” Amelia reached in the cage and brushed her fingers across the bird’s back three times before skipping out of the room.

The next morning, Amelia jumped out of bed and ran into the guest room to visit Tiresias.

“I’m going to take you outside today!” she whispered excitedly. Before falling asleep the night before, Amelia decided that Tiresias must miss the sun terribly. The guest room had only one window on the opposite side of the room and Amelia figured that if she gave the bird sunlight, he would finally speak to her. Her mother gave her permission to take Tiresias to the back yard as long as she kept him in his travel cage.

It was a beautiful Saturday and Amelia and Tiresias were toasting under the sun. Every few minutes Amelia would jump into their backyard pool and splash around, then return to her bird, shaking the water out of her ears. For a brief moment, with water still clogging both of her ears, Amelia watched Tiresias caw but didn’t hear a sound.

“Wait, do it again birdy.” She knelt beside the cage and the bird squawked, but this time she heard the noise and couldn’t make out his talking like her grandfather had been able to. She darted back to the pool and scooped water into her ears so that she could be deaf like him and hear Tiresias talk, but the water wouldn’t stay. Amelia sat beside the cage on the warm concrete and cried.

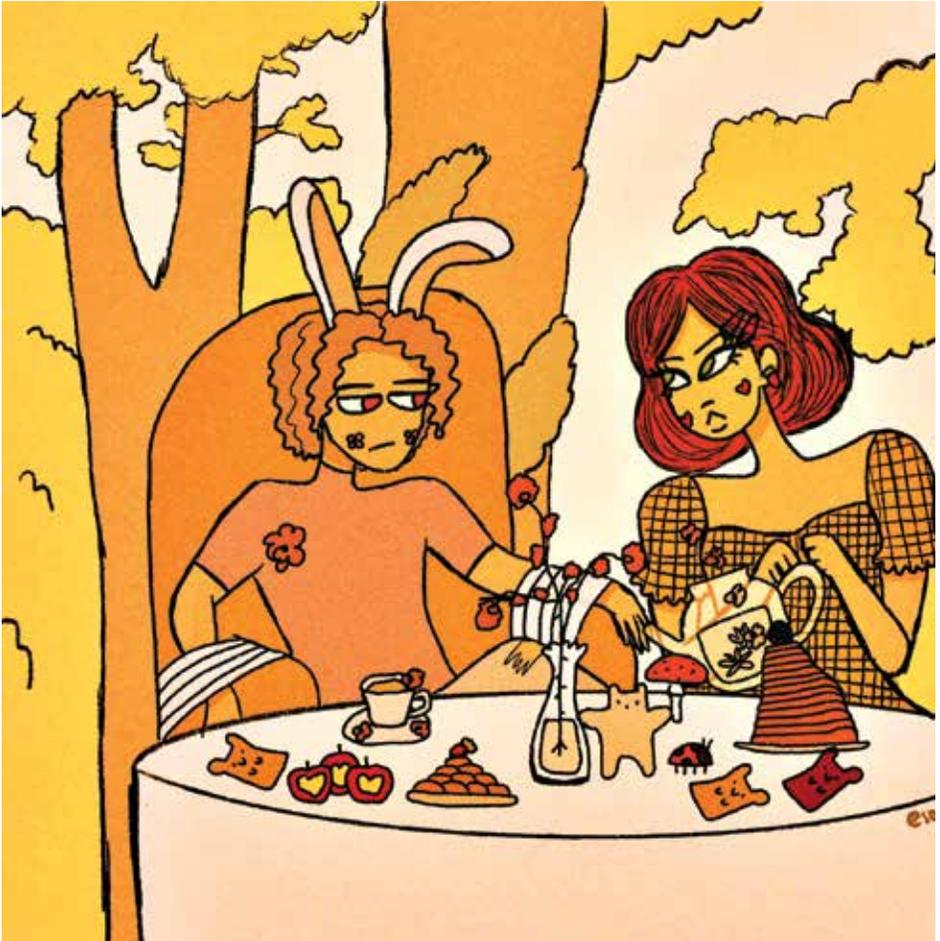
“Sweetie,” Tiresias cawed. She offered him a close-mouthed smile and her eyes widened with an idea. Amelia ran to the hedges that surrounded the pool and collected three large cobblestones from the garden border. She hurriedly carried them over to her poolside chair and dumped the belongings out of her little yellow corduroy backpack, placing the rocks inside. She pulled the straps over her shoulders, wiped the tears from her eyes, and fixed her goggles to her face.

“Come here, birdy,” she said, carefully opening the cage door and grabbing Tiresias with both of her small hands. He was old and didn’t bother to squirm. Amelia carried the bird to the edge of the deep end of the pool and gasped.

They sunk slowly together. Amelia gripped the bird tightly and felt his little chest pumping against her palms. They reached the bottom of the pool and she sat and watched Tiresias jerking his beak open and close, releasing tiny pockets of air that floated to the surface. His eyes rolled back, and their lids closed as his neck softly crooked upwards. His beak fell open catching a beam of light that flickered in the water. It was absolutely silent, and Amelia could hear a low and constant wail bursting from the cockatoo’s mouth, like the longest note in a piece of opera music.

Seyilayo Olagbami

WINNER
Best Artwork



Tea Party for...



WINNER
Best Poem

Emily Dempsey

Aroma Erotica

The television cuts to a close-up frame of a woman wearing high heels in a hot tub and a silk dress that pairs appealingly to the golden undertones of her skin. The fabric is drenched and clinging to a pair of strategically freckled breasts that don't have nipples and don't rise and fall with the woman's breath.

Maybe she's holding it in.

She looks at the camera with her eyelids half shut and her mouth half open and her right hand sliding through her velvet gelled hair and her armpit is as smooth as her face. A violin concerto crescendos with her ascension from the steam, as if it's being spontaneously composed just for this. She's eating a pear and her fingernails break through its emerald skin. Next shot. She's standing wide-legged in front of a backlit purple curtain but it's only her silhouette. Maybe she's naked. Next shot. The vein at the base of her calf is like a Cartier anklet and the beads of sweat on her face are diamonds. Next shot. Her satin lips. The concerto pauses. She whispers something in French. The concerto erupts. Marble fountains spit red wine at her and she dances in it. I'm watching her gyrate in a shower of Pinot Noir and wondering what the fuck this fragrance smells like. Cut to a close-up of me wearing aloe vera socks on the sofa and my ex's gravy-stained t-shirt, braless with a pair of uneven breasts that slowly begin to sink into my chest like I might start laughing, or crying.

Maybe I'm holding it in.

Maybe I might spontaneously combust just from this.

The television cuts to a close-up frame of a lean strip steak, freckled with pepper and grease-glistening on a pornographic barbeque.

Emily Dempsey

WINNER
Academy of American Poets Prize



Caricature Artist in a 7-Eleven at 1 O'clock in the Morning

I'm hiding behind a shelf of thumb-smashed Little Debbies
 Trying to capture the cashier's face in less than a minute,
 So I'm not suspected of stealing anything
 Other than his stale expression.
 Scratching a 0.7 ink pen in my olive-green faux leather sketchbook
 Where I collect people's faces.
 The purple sacks hanging from his eyes look like pregnant betta fish bellies.
 My dad's eye bags were silly putty.
 He used to tell me I gave them to him
 When I was in college and stopped going to church.
 His hair went gray because I'm a terrible driver
 That loves road trips.
 When he died, I started biting my fingernails.
 I'd bite each one in weekly cycles
 So that I'd always have a fresh one to chew on.

I always draw in ink so that I'm forced to make the best out of mistakes.
 The cashier's mustache is detached from his beard,
 But I accidentally drew them connected.
 So now I'm fashioning all his facial hair into a long Viking braid
 And sketching horns on his 7-Eleven visor.
 Borrowing someone's face to motivate creativity
 Feels like raiding a stranger's photo album
 And hanging their pictures in your house
 Because you can't stand to look at your own.
 I have a cardboard box under my bed
 Filled with empty frames and a gallon bag of prints.
 Every time I try to take it out, I have that feeling you get
 In the seconds before slipping into a familiar dream
 Or nightmare, so I slide it back underneath, all the way, against the wall.

I pocket the sketchbook and stare at the screaming merchandise,
Trying to decide if all these shelves were removed,
Would this place feel more intimate or just empty?
I start eeny-meeny-miny-moe-ing
An oatmeal crème pie and a bag of mini glazed donuts,
But I came here for Cool Whip.
My dad told me you can make any cereal a dessert
If you use Cool Whip instead of milk.
Nazareth is singing "Where Are You Now."
There's two of those hot dog grills by the refrigerator section.
I imagine myself as a little cozy sausage,
Greased and dizzying on a hot dog roller coaster.
As I walk home, I pull my turtleneck over my face,
So that my hair is a patch of grass on the sidewalk.
I painted my nails to stop chewing them,
But now I like the taste of polish.

Leisa Kilby

RUNNER-UP
Academy of American Poets Prize



Chiron, the Centaur

After the painting by Paul Reid.

It is a cool morning in early autumn
and Troy has not yet seen a giant, wooden horse.
Perhaps somewhere across the glittering sea,
Helen sits across the breakfast table from Menelaus,
sucking the sour-sweet flesh from a nectarine,
feeling a drop of juice trickle down her chin
as leaves tumble from the olive tree
outside her window. But here and now,
Chiron's concentration is the point of an arrow,
his arm poised halfway through the motion of knocking.
The stone wall behind him encloses his training grounds.
It is overgrown in places with vines
that creep up and begin to turn the color of sand
after a hard battle.
But here and now, future soldiers are just boys,
their bare feet slapping the sun-warmed stone floor as they run,
pretending to duel with wooden swords. The resounding
clack, clack, clack.
One is much quicker than the other with fiery blonde hair
and a fast smile,
much more skilled than the other,
but playing kindly, allowing him to glance a few blows
to his sides, his thighs,
even—with a grin—the hollow of his throat
before twisting away and swiping at the heel:
the one place he himself must never be struck.
It is a brisk, yet pleasant morning,
one that carries the scent of the mountains:
earth and wet grass,

SHELTER

sharp apples and the musty-sweet stench of ancient books,
something distantly barnyard,
and the ruckus of boys at play.
But autumn will not last forever. War
is coming and they will be soldiers soon –
Or, rather, tragedies waiting to be written.
Chiron has raised boys like these before.
For others, they are newly-carved game pieces
who have never touched the chess board.
But here and now, his concentration is the point of an arrow,
the flexing of muscle and a taut string that creaks when it's pulled.
If he allowed it to stray further than the arrow,
he would surely lose his will to train these boys
how to be heroes.

Jules Freidly

RUNNER-UP
Academy of American Poets Prize



The Treachery of Images

Ceci n'est pas une pipe.

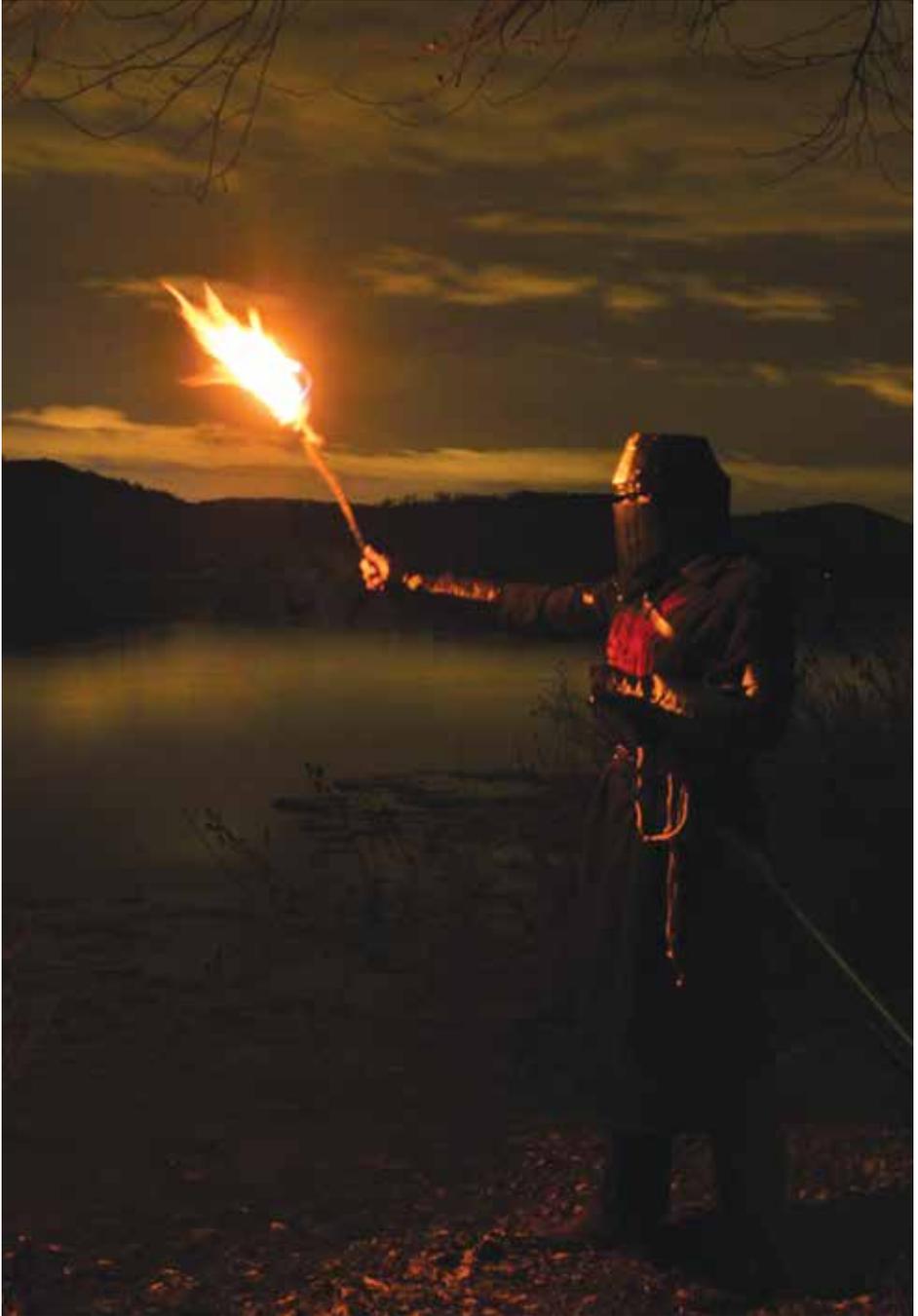
My mother scoffs.
People can just paint anything and call it art, she says.
Don't you see, I say, it's a painting of a pipe—not a pipe.
Color on canvas conjures a pipe in our minds,
depicts that which is real,
yet is itself unreal.
She doesn't see. She won't allow herself to see.

Discomfort worms into discovery
and eats its flesh from the inside out;
knowledge decays before it can return
home to our prodigal minds. We see a pipe
because we want to see a pipe.
A pipe makes more sense to our minds than
oil and pigment and threads of canvas woven taut,
stretched to fit a frame far beyond the fabric's comfort.
It is so much easier to see the pipe
than to see the elaborations that occur
to bring that pipe into existence in our minds,
the tears and sweat of the artist's
skin and bones courting tendons and muscles
to warp and shape and create.
The magic inherent in those flexing fingers,
those straining sinews, those bending brains
that the artist sacrifices to summon up the treachery of images,
the final abstraction before our minds
will comprehend something that pleases us,
something that has meaning to us.
We will accept anything but reality
until that very day that we realize
our own skin and bones and brains were nothing more
than pigments, paints, pipes, papers made of stars
manifest as dust that pretended to be human
for just a little while.



Italian Alley by Jesse Goranson

FALLOUT



A Long Night's Wait by Jesse Goranson



Florentine Posture by Jesse Goranson

Brienna Carr

In-Between

They say that you can tell if someone loves you in the small things; the little moments where you see the true heart of the other person displayed in their actions that they expect to go unnoticed. It is in these small choices and expressions (the twinkle of an eye, a word barely spoken, the brush of a touch that is meant only to *seem* unintentional) that we fall for each other, and I have fallen for the small things--and everything in between.

"I'm going to go dunk Murphy in the dunk tank!"

We were at a fourth of July party, and were recently surrounded by a group of his friends. Though I had mentioned wanting to go and do this countless times before, the statement was more pressing this time, as it was my way of avoiding a place where I felt out of place.

"I'll come with you."

That was certainly the last thing I had expected to hear from his mouth. As he started following me, the surprise was written all over my face.

"You don't have to, really I--"

"I'm coming with you." And he did.

That night he sat with me to watch fireworks. I was not one of the people he typically spent his time with, but he chose to sit next to me as the sky exploded. His eyes flickered between the fireworks and their reflection on my face, with wonder and mischief, slowly inching his way closer to me until the finale ended.

"That picture makes it look like you're in a relationship," my mother announced her conclusion, completed with a curiously accusatory gaze, about the picture of me on his back. She said it loudly enough for everyone in a three-mile radius to hear, which included all my immediate family under the canopy.

"Let me see!" my aunt took the phone from my mom and after looking for a moment, peered over at me with a knowing look in her eyes, handing the phone back to my mom. "Isn't this the same one who kissed the top of your head the other night?"

I sighed and rolled my eyes. "That's just him. He's just like that. Trust me, he would *never* be interested in me!"

"I don't know..." my mom smirked and handed my phone back to me. "He *did* just so happen to be around every time I came to visit you out at camp this summer..."

"Mom, it's just him," I said, trying to convince myself just as much as I was trying to convince them. "He is so out of my league. Have you *seen* him?"

They laughed and gave me gentle, chiding looks, and we let the conversation drop there. It was tempting to continue to wonder if they could possibly be right, that maybe he was interested in me, but I continued to reason the thoughts away. *It's just him. We're just friends.* And for a time, it worked; but only for a time.

A little over a month later, I was in hysterics as a result of a tumult of self-induced stress and worry over numerous "problems" that were either unimportant or unlikely to happen (which are two conclusions I would have *never* believed in that moment of panic).

"What would make you feel better?" My best friend had been on the receiving end of said panic for long enough to realize I needed this time to let it all out, instead of keeping it bottled inside of me.

"All I want is for him to hug me, but I don't want him to see me like this, so he can't hug me, and I have to go and--"

I hadn't even noticed her grabbing her phone or lifting it to her ear, but I knew exactly who was on the other end when she started speaking. "Meet me at my house in two minutes. It's Brie."

It took about five seconds for her actions to register, and about five more to reach her house before I parked the car.

"Larissa! He can't see me like this! I don't want him to see me like this!"

"You need it."

Which I did. I couldn't deny that I needed it. So, I furiously wiped my tears and inhaled a deep breath before exiting the vehicle and walking slowly towards where he already stood, patiently waiting for me to choose to come to him. I kept the waves of emotions at bay just long enough to step close enough to meet his concerned eyes, before his arms wrapped around me and he pulled me to his chest. He smelled like comfort, like sweatpants and a tub of ice-cream curled on the couch on a Saturday night, like home; and I melted.

As he held me, every fear came pouring from my mouth between shaky breaths and sobs. He didn't say a word until I had finished crying, just held me close to him and swayed us back and forth, before gently whispering the truth that he knew would destroy the fears I had allowed into my heart, kissed the top of my head, and said goodbye.

I surprised him for his birthday. I had thrown him off my track entirely, since I called him on my way and told him that I hoped he had a great day and that I had some errands I was running and needed to get going. Little did he know, my errand was to bring him a piece of birthday cake and an extra big smile. It worked.

Later that night, as we sat out on the bench swing, breathing in the crisp September air, he put his arm around the back of the swing, and moments later allowed his hand to fall on my shoulder. He tried not to make it noticeable, but I noticed. I *definitely* noticed.

Time passed, more plans were made, and surprises were executed on both sides. My favorite surprise came in the middle of a long day of work. The night before, it had come up in conversation that my ex refused to dance with me during my senior prom, no matter how many times I had asked. He told me that he just “couldn’t understand” how someone could spend two and a half years with me and refuse to dance with me even once.

I couldn’t understand why it even mattered to him.

“Come out to your car,” was the text that lit up my phone as I grabbed it from my locker for my ten-minute break. A smile immediately spread over my face and I walked as calmly as possible out to the employee parking lot, then to his car which was parked across from mine. My “calm” walk became a near-sprint the closer I got to him, as he got out of his car and stretched his arms out to hug me.

“What are you doing here?” was probably not the exact phrase he was hoping to hear first as a reaction to his romantic gesture, but I had to know.

“Just wait one minute.”

He reached into his car, fiddled with his phone and turned up his radio as high as it would go. He turned back to me, leaving the car door open, and smirked, before tapping his phone to start the song *Speechless*. He took my arms in his hands and pulled them up to wrap them around his neck before slowly beginning to sway back and forth, as I stared at him in wonder and could only laugh in response.

I was speechless. Wide-eyed. In awe at this certainly-not-small moment that so clearly demonstrated a love he would not yet admit, and I was too timid to address.

I began noticing everything. I noticed how he would intentionally stand next to me if we were talking with friends. I noticed the way his voice and

laughter were just a little louder when we were not in the same conversation, almost as if he wanted me to notice him and go to him. I noticed the softness that flooded his eyes when he looked at me, which was not quite so strong when he looked at anyone else. I noticed that his hands would begin to reach toward me, before he realized what he was doing and pulled them back. I noticed the joy that flooded from him. I noticed the pressing questions he would ask me, and the interest he took in “my people.”

I noticed him.

Simultaneously, I noticed that he noticed me. I noticed when his eyes darted to me as soon as I entered a room, because mine immediately sought him out. I noticed his awareness of my emotions, even down to the most miniscule shift or micro-expression. I noticed that he remembered things that had happened months ago, because he knew it was important to me. I noticed that he made an effort to be there for the small victories, and comfort me in the great disappointments. I noticed how he silenced my fears. I noticed that he did things just to gain a reaction he knew he could obtain, because of how he had studied me as something valuable, something worth cherishing, something beautiful.

I noticed how he made me feel beautiful.

We were driving back from New York City, with four of our best friends piled in the back of my '03 Tahoe. It was my first trip to NYC, which was why the day had been planned to begin with. It was incredible. There were so many moments that had stuck in my memory; snapshots that are so clear, it's like they happened yesterday. But these moments of quiet as we were driving back, with everyone else asleep and just the two of us talking, are my favorite to remember. His eyes were focused on the road ahead (thank goodness), but even then, his thumb was softly rubbing circles in the back of my hand, and we discussed the best moments of the day.

“When you saw Times Square for the first time,” he smiled, clearly picturing us stepping out of the subway station, into the brilliant light and excitement of Times Square at night, and my saucer-eyed awe at the scene that no picture or movie could accurately capture. “That was my favorite moment.”

“Why in the world was *that* your favorite?” The surprise exited my mouth in a few nervous chuckles, which would not hide anything from him, anyway, since he always picked up on my nervous laughter.

“Because you were breathtaking.”

They say that the small moments are when true love is seen. Under most circumstances, I would tend to agree, but then what does that leave to be said about the big moments: the gestures and plans and long conversations intended only to articulate the deepest appreciation of the person you love? What does that say about the moments that can't be described, the feeling of being near them, or their attitude, or even something as small as a shift in their breathing in reaction to the brush of your lips against their cheek?

It can't just be the small moments, and it can't just be the big ones. It is the culmination of doing life with a chosen person by your side. It is sharing heartache, sharing excitement, sharing even the mundane and boring parts of life because there is no one else you would choose to share it with. It is in the moments of apology, the moments of correction, the moments of placing the other person's best interest above your own desire to make them momentarily happy, or to be happy yourself. It is sacrifice. It is patience. It is love.

It's the journey from friends, to best friends, to more. It's the many steps in between each of those milestones that can't be described. It's the car rides to and from the things you do. It's dancing around the truth that you both know just because you know that once you admit your feelings to them, things will never be the same--and somehow you are in between where you were and where you want to be. It's the adventure that is made not only of the places you go and the things you do, but of knowing someone deeper than you ever imagined possible; sometimes, it seems, more acutely than you know yourself.

It's excitement. It's fear. It's laughing at your embarrassing moments and sharing each other's burdens and tears. It's knowing you have someone in your corner and choosing that same person as the one you want to fight with for the rest of your time together. It's the good times, and the bad times, in both sickness and in health.

And it's everything in between.

Kelsey Cramer

Lei upon the Ocean

As the petals begin to crumble,
I know it is time to release it.
The intoxicating smell makes it hard to let go.
The exotic orchid scent is like a spray of a new tropical perfume.
Ombé colors fade from purple to white.
Grasping onto the velvety petals,
As I lift them off from my sweaty neck.
The waves crashed as my petals floated on top.
As I gaze into the ocean,
The crystal blue water is calling for me.
But normal life is waiting for my return.
They return to the sandy surface
And so will I.

Long Nguyen

Winter Memory

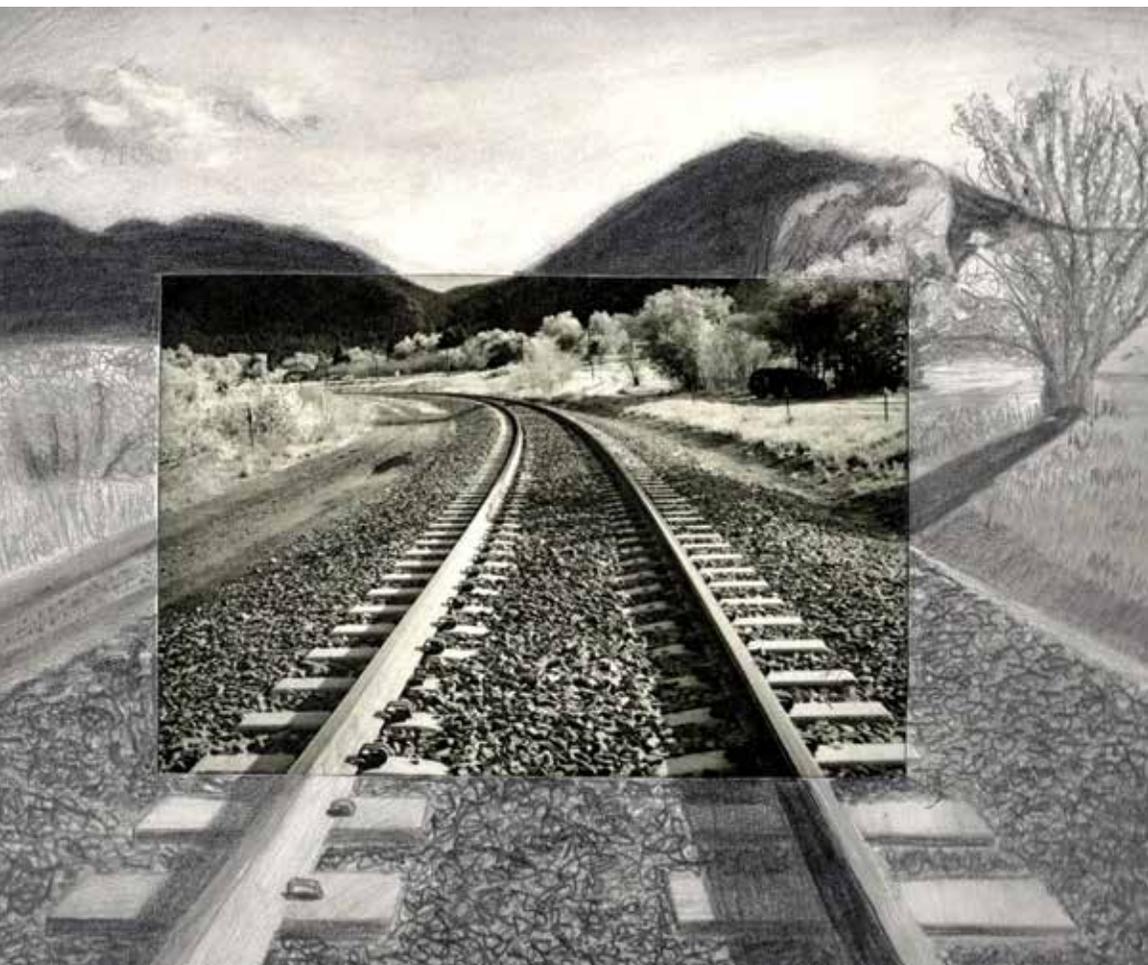
Memory, oh, where have you been?
Eclipsed for so long, why then appear now?
Round and round goes the winter night.
Round and round goes the breezing wind.
Year after year, you hide away from me.

Candles light up in the gloomy night.
Halos show their own glory as the candles shine.
Ringing bells sing with vibrant voices
Into the midst of the dead silence.
So, it does seem to be dead but is it?
To the heart, they sing-- touching to the soul.
Memory, you came in silence
And as a friend, you sit next to me--
Showing me things that I have forgotten.

Kelleigh Stevenson

A Sunday Confessional

What
better
way to spend a Sunday
than in my own cathedral,
one in which
communion
reeks of wine
on an empty
stomach, lost
in the villages
of Sodom and
Gomorrah.



Railroad Continuation by Ethan Lee

Brienna Carr

The Beginning is Everything

My first “love” came on quickly. I was a
darling little thing; timid as a field mouse,
I’ve realized, every insecure man’s dream.
Fallen ever-so-quickly for the high-school sweethearts’ love story,
Out of all the men in the world, proximity alone brought him to me.
Of course, as time went on and days slipped slowly into weeks
“Love” that was supposed to grow only proved to shrink.
With great depths of peace and waves of relief, with a simple phrase I led.
You have to read the first word of each line to know just what was said.

Nabin Adhikari

What Every Foreigner Should Know

“If you think you’re too small to have an impact,
try going to bed with a mosquito in the room.”
– Anita Koddick

If you get the death stare on a Friday evening from a kid,
It’s just a Friday evening, at the grocery store, shopping for milk.

If you get the middle finger in the parking lot of Walmart,
It might be because of the way you drove, or your skin color.

Patience is a virtue that the rich hold,
Show yours and you will defuse the fire.

Don’t leave your backpack on the subway,
You will get arrested by the police for disturbing the peace.

Being numb to the situation is not always a bad thing,
It is the reality of a better life for the kids.

You will hear your kid running off of the school bus,
But not so much the sirens chasing you.

Thieves come in many forms, but you are not one of them;
The job offer you got last night is yours and you earned it!

The Miranda Rights are important when you get arrested on the subway,
They protect you from oppressive law enforcement.

Don’t lose sight of your love for this country,
Because a common song played at Walmart is “go back to where you came
from.”

SHELTER

Prepare for every Halloween night with cleaning products,
Kids like to have fun when you are the only brown colored family.

Teach your kids the strength of resistance,
The Bill of Rights is a great place to start.

An argument on a Sunday morning is just for the weak.
Resist the temptation, a paralyzed voice does not overcome ignorance.

Being blamed for another's action is part of life now.
Stay true to yourself, you don't need to disprove anyone.

Your next-door neighbor will be your best friend,
or the dude across the street, and the family that hosts an annual barbecue.

Don't "borrow" your neighbor's tools because he offered it,
Next thing you know a police officer is outside with a search warrant.

Valerie Frigerio

La Liberté Guidant Le People

After Eugène Delacroix's 1830 painting

We cannot seem to help ourselves
But to follow this
Bare breasted
Bare footed
Woman.

She strides ahead, a
Fixed bayonet in one hand, and
The symbol of our pride in the other.

We follow her through bloody battlefields,
Smoke formed to every crevice of our
Breathing fate. Soldiers and students and worker women
Alike tread along, as the ground
Becomes more burdened with rotting flesh.

She does not falter a single step.
She forges on.

Thrice we have struggled under this wretched tyranny.
Thrice we have been trivialized, as trifles on porcelain plates.
Thrice we have been scorned, like a mistress whore.

We start to run.
She turns back to look at us, a
Determinedly triumphant gleam
In her eyes.

We will follow our dear Marianne in the Phrygian cap.
We will follow her into this final Revolution.
We raise our guns and scream
An almighty battle cry.

Oh Lord, in your gilded cathedral, can you hear your people sing?

Madaline Hoy

Breathless Endowment

The baby was born roughly half an hour after Grandfather passed away.

My godmother had ushered my older brother and me into the hospital room where my parents sat together with small lump swaddled in a white blanket. A pale blue cloth poked out from the top. Both of them were crying. Still, large grins were painted on their weary faces.

My father lifted me up onto the bed next to Mother. Grayson went around to the other side to stare at the baby. All I could see was his little pink face, scrunched up tight as he slept against my mother. She asked if I wanted to hold him, gently placing him down into my arms without waiting for a response.

“What do you think, Josie?” my father asked.

“He looks like a burrito,” I replied. They laughed, but wrapped so tightly in that blanket, he resembled food more than a human. I began to think of the meager breakfast I’d had that morning, already bored with the baby, hoping someone would take him from me.

“Call my dad,” Mom said. “He’ll want to know about his name.” She couldn’t keep the smile away, though tired grooves etched deep in her face.

“Can I hold him, too?” Grayson asked as my father pulled out his phone to make the call. The burrito-baby was shifted from me to Gray; sister to brother. As soon as he was in Gray’s arms, the baby shifted, yawning silently, pressing a rosy cheek to a new, warm body. Even back then they were close to one another.

“Agnes! Good news! The baby was born a few hours ago!” My father spoke eagerly into his phone. “Is Elliot awake yet? Sharon wants to tell him...” He trailed off, the joy slowly drained out of his face and he brought a hand over his mouth. “What? When?”

“Brian?” Mother urged, pushing herself up in bed. “What happened? Is Dad alright?”

My father didn’t answer. Rather, he walked slowly over to her. “I’m gonna put her on the phone. Okay, Agnes?” Silently, he held out the phone to my mother, who snatched it eagerly from his grasp.

“Mom?” she asked, a tremble in her voice. “Is Dad okay?” There was a beat of silence before my mother gasped. The once happy tears in her eyes were washed away by those of anguish. She tried to keep her sobs in, but they broke free and came out in large, wailing sirens. Gray and I stayed motionless, having never before seen our mother so distraught. In Grayson’s arms, the baby began to cry.

The hospital room door suddenly flew open, and my godmother barged in. “What happened? Is the baby okay? Should I get a nurse?”

My father shook his head, doing his best to console his wife. “Get the kids out of here, Jill.” My brothers and I were quickly pulled out of the room and into the hallway. The baby was swiftly taken from Gray, Jill bouncing him in her arms.

“It’s okay, baby,” she soothed. “It’s gonna be okay.”

She lied.

Father told us later that night that my grandfather, Elliot Franklin Eisenberg, had died on January 14th at 2:46 in the morning. His lungs had put up a good fight, but they finally lost their four year battle against the cancer. At 3:18 a.m. that same day, my little brother, Elliot Brian Lowery, was brought into the world kicking and screaming, lungs in perfect working condition.

It was uncanny how much Eli looked like grandfather. Both had the same tiny, pointed nose that my mother shared with them as well. Jaw and cheekbones both sharp enough to cut steel on, and a dimple that proudly formed in only the left cheek when they smiled. Through old pictures, I’ve noticed that they have the same hair color, too; a strange auburn tone that grows darker in the winter, both equally as untamable.

Maybe that’s why I was so jealous of his and Grayson’s relationship. I was closer to grandfather than Gray was. He used to take me down to the woods near their house, and would teach me about all the different trees and flowers we’d pass. (Mother said grandfather used to work with plants before he retired). Then, when the cancer stole his breath and he couldn’t walk as far, we’d play cards and dominoes on the back patio, or see who could find the strangest colored bird at the feeder that day. Maybe I just wanted to use Eli to fill that emptiness left after his death.

Grayson said I couldn’t do “boy things” with them because I was a girl; though I’d been doing those so-called “boy things” with him before Elliot came along. We used to push each other into the mud after a heavy rainstorm, lobbing wads of thick sludge at each other, grinning as our mother scolded us for getting the house dirty. I played every video game Grayson played, and even started to get better than him at most of them. Now, with Eli around, he had found someone new, someone more acceptable, to spend his time with.

I tried to tell my mother about this, but she never listened. Without taking her nose out of her work, she’d always reply without fail, “boys will be boys, Josie. Why don’t you go play with some of the girls in the neighborhood?” And

I would have, except that the rest of the kids my age in our neighborhood were boys too, and all my girl friends from school lived too far away to walk. So, I started to spend more and more time alone.

Behind our house sat a really big tree (Grandfather had called it a bur oak). Father hung a large tire from one of the thicker branches for Gray and me one year, and he used to push the two of us until he claimed we started to get too heavy. After that, Gray would always try and prove how strong he was by shoving me as hard as he could, desperate to send me flying into the sky. Now, Gray would only push Eli in that old piece of rubber. Exiled from the tire swing, I resigned myself to climbing up the tree to find a comfortable spot to read, alone, trying to block out the excited sounds of my brothers doing “boy things” from the world below.

It was during our summer vacation when things changed. Father had off during the summer months, so he and Mother often stayed together for “adult time” inside while the three of us went out to play. Afternoons were spent with the other children that lived around the block, newly freed from the prison known as “school”, eager to stretch their growing limbs and burn off restless energy where their parents couldn’t complain about noise or messes. Grayson and Archie, the oldest boys in the neighborhood, had organized the other kids into two teams so they could play soccer in the expansive patch of grass where our yard met with Archie’s. Eager to play, as I had often done in the past, I rushed out to join them.

Archie stopped me in my tracks. “You can’t play, Josie.”

“Why not?” I asked, crossing my arms.

“We’d have uneven teams,” he explained, gesturing to the small cluster of kids behind him. Four boys on each team, someone else now standing in my offensive position.

“You’re letting Eli play in my spot!” I balked.

“No girls allowed!” one of the other boys, Travis, called. The rest snickered and began to call names at me. My face felt hot.

“Yeah? Well, I don’t want to play with a bunch of stupid boys anyway!” Embarrassed, I turned on my heel and stormed back to the house. Pausing, I glanced over my shoulder and pointed at Elliot. “This is all your fault! If you weren’t here, none of this would have happened!”

I didn’t wait to see Elliot’s reaction. Instead, I sprinted back inside, sliding inside and bolting upstairs to my bedroom before my parents could say anything, if they even noticed. I pressed my palms to my eyes, forcefully

pushing the tears back into my head. I would not cry. Instead, I grabbed my book and headed into the backyard.

Huffing, I pulled myself up into the tree, settling back against the trunk, letting one leg dangle precariously over the edge of the branch. As I flipped through the pages, the excited commotion of the soccer game out front melted into a world full of knights and dragons. I could see myself becoming the beautiful yet fierce heroine. One who didn't need a knight to save her from the evil king and tell her she wasn't good enough to play with the other noblemen; that the princess could be just as strong as a knight.

Moments before I could let myself drop down from the tower, easily making a sneaky escape from the guards, a scream pulled me back to reality.

"Help!" One of the boys was shouting. "Someone help!" as fast as I could, I jumped down from the tree, hitting the ground hard. Ignoring the pain in my ankles, I ran into the front yard to see what was going on, colliding head first with Travis.

I pushed him away. "What happened?" I asked.

"It's your brother," he sputtered, eyes wide.

"Which one?"

"Eli." He then shouldered past me, barging into my house, yelling for my parents. Panicked, I raced over to the impromptu soccer field. Grayson and Archie had stayed, hovering over Elliot who was lying flat on his back. As I got closer, I could hear strange noises coming from him.

"Move!" I shoved Gray aside and dropped down onto my knees next to him. "Eli? What's wrong?"

He couldn't answer, just grasp widely at the air and make retching noises. Lips bloodless, the color slowly melted from the rest of his face. His back arched as though the pavement was burning. I tried to hold one of his hands, but he pulled away, gesticulating wildly towards his face.

"Eli? What's wrong?" I asked again, helpless tears stinging the back of my throat.

Suddenly, someone was pushing me out of the way, and my father was there, kneeling over Elliot. My mother had come as well, frantically yelling into her cellphone. Though by now I couldn't hear anything over a high pitched whine that had started as soon as I saw Elliot on the ground and had grown steadily ever since. Couldn't hear the sirens as the ambulance approached. Couldn't see the bright flashing colors or the flurry of people as my younger brother was taken away. Couldn't think of anything besides the brash words I'd sputtered at him, now knowing they may have been my last.

I could, however, feel the gentle hand of my older brother on my back as he led me back inside, where we sat in the kitchen and waited for someone to come get us. It reminded me of the time we waited outside the hospital room on my brother's birthday, waiting for my father to deliver the awful news of my grandfather's passing.

Mother and Father came home with Elliot a few hours later. It was July 23rd, 2018. 10:45 p.m. That was the day my younger brother was diagnosed with chronic asthma. A disease that would plague his lungs for the rest of his life. Force him to rely on an L-shaped piece of red plastic and chalky medication. Keep him from playing soccer with the boys and laboring his breath every time he climbed the oak tree in our backyard.

Later that night, as I was on my way to the bathroom, I overheard my mother and father talking in the kitchen. She couldn't stop sobbing over the fact that July 23rd was the same day my grandfather had been diagnosed with lung cancer, six years ago.



Neon Girl by Seyilayo Olagbami



Rose by Seyilayo Olagbami



Orange by Seyilayo Olagbami

Kristina Stokes

Revenge

It begins once upon a time in a kingdom great.
Rumor has it the royal family was happy when things were new,
So what happened? Vain queen hated watching the princess grow up
Pretty? Perhaps Princess and Mirror team up like “mean girls” after awhile
When the princess morphs-- her hair like ravens, lips like blood,
Oozing overconfidence. The queen asks— “Mirror, mirror on the wall,

Who’s the fairest of them all?”
Their nasty joke goes too far when Mirror declares her second rate.
The queen rages, snaps, overflowing with cliched boiling blood
At the horribly offensive news.
Problem solved in an overdramatic way via Huntsman. “I’ll
Need proof. Her heart upon

A platter should do. Are you up
To the task?” Huntsman nods, says nothing at all,
And frees the princess in the woods while
Carrying an animal’s heart and a task that grates.
She’s alone, nearly murdered, so why sing her song, bubbling anew,
Whispering an irritating melody across those lips of red blood?

Watching her break into a house full of men, one expects things to turn lewd.
Instead she’s invited to sup
And shares secrets no one ever knew
To a group of seven men who...aren’t particularly tall,
But love quickly, protect her well, and offer a good room rate—
A clean house and some food every night? She can stay awhile!

“Don’t open the door!” But the first knock comes— “I’ll
open the door, ignoring the queen’s lust for my blood!”
Enter stage left: creepy old woman with questionable fruit. “Eat!”
Holds it out—no hesitation. She lifts it up
Takes a bite, and falls down dead in the hall
It makes no sense. I mean, we all knew!

Men lay her to rest in a glass coffin, so new
It shines. Where did they get it? Costco sale awhile
Ago? Laid to rest in the woods surrounded by singing animals
No one knows she's still alive despite those lips, still so like blood
Until a random prince shows up
Good thing this man is here to save, how great.

Popular girl—now her man-count is at eight!
A small kiss for the erstwhile dead, and the princess sits up.
The perfect revenge? A dance for the queen until her feet bleed.

Emma Bankert

The King and I

Getting To Know You

Through the reflection
Of a funhouse mirror
Facebook friendly facade
Black Mirror altered reality
Seen only as intended
Appearance is everything
When a lie is involved

Shall We Dance

Around the definition
Of domestic abuse
A seminar in semantics
Locked on a hamster wheel
Of hubris and bravado
Round and round and round
Your arguments twist and turn
A wretched waltz with no end
A shuffle that becomes a
Sprint around the block
Cold seeping in my skin
Through the places
You have punctured
With shotgun contention

A Puzzlement

I shake and tremor
Courage disguising itself
As the need to fly away
Hope is the thing
With feathers
That perches in the cage
You have built around us
Bars of anxiety
Barbed with your sneer

Shall I Tell You What I Think of You

A small man with a small heart
Obsessed with the idea
Of importance
Imbued with the greed
Of affirmation
A narcissist in sheep's clothing
Masquerade in masculinity
And our heads
Shall never be higher than yours

Song of the King

Sounds like tears in the closet
After condescendence
Ridiculing laughter
Crescendo over logic
Forte above reason
Virtuoso of manipulation
You put Hammerstein to shame
A symphony of spite
Oscar goes to you
The bastard that makes
Yul Brynner an amateur

Kelleigh Stevenson

Summer Storms

I have a need to taste the rain
outside my window, to let it
mix, tangy and salty, with the
tears taking cover beneath my
eyelids.

I need the thunder to cover the
wailing siren song screeching
from my lungs, and for the lick
of the lightning to gently heal my
skin.

SHELTER



Abstract #1 by Alexander Owens

Alexander Owens

One of Those Days

It was one of those days, all right. One of those days where even the smallest of inconveniences can send you spiraling into a wave of mass anxiety, depression, and hopelessness. I didn't mean to spill some of my coffee as I collected it from the barista working at the coffee shop this morning, but it sure did shake me to my core. It was one of those times when you've bottled up just enough emotions that all it takes is one joke that was too funny or not funny enough, and then everything shuts down. It was only a drop. Just a drop or two of coffee hit the counter. So little coffee that it could have easily been sopped up by one of those complimentary napkins that comes in a single pack of eating utensils. Yet the moment that drop of stupid caffeinated bean water hit the damn counter, I lost it. The floodgates were pulled back with zero warning, unleashing waves of that salty liquid. Tears ran down my face ferociously like a water cooler with the nozzle left wide open. I was insane. I was sure of it. People gawked at me like I was a roadside attraction, then ignored me strategically so as to not set off the next break down.

Why am I like this? I thought as I quickly gathered my belongings and made a hasty retreat to an empty handicap stall in the bathroom. It is here that I would return to tonight's scheduled programming: This Week's Mental Breakdown. No, I haven't just gone through something traumatic. No one has died and I haven't received any bad news. This is just the endless tirade that I have become far too familiar with and have been subjected to for far too long. Nothing. That's right, my countless tears, the endless hours of rationalizing why something that shouldn't matter does matter, and the dread that fills my soul bi-weekly like an hourglass filled with sand made of lead, is credited to nothing. Simply a glitch in my brain's firmware. I could attempt to patch this faulty program with as many pills as I would like or take it to a specialist who swears they know the answer, but there is no guarantee. So, every two or three or four weeks, like clockwork, I will begin to feel the endless dread and search for answers, but I will not find any. I do know one thing though. There is one guarantee that just as my storms will always come, they will always pass as well. And this is my solace as I sit crumpled on the cold tile floor of the handicap stall. This storm will pass. This storm will pass.

Alexander Owens

Life! The Game: A Dull Battle Between Survival And Fulfillment

PLAYERS:

One player. Sometimes two if you're lucky. Three or more if you're into that kind of thing.

SETUP:

It's best to set aside a good chunk of time for this mundane adventure, as setup can take upwards of 18 years! That's right, in just 18 years you'll be ready to file your tax return, give up on your dreams, and fall into place as the cog that you are in society!

To begin, first make sure you have all the pieces to ensure a successful game:

- Mother x1
- Father x1
- Brother x1
- Sister x1
- House x1
- Dollar bills x1,000,000
- The cards you've been dealt (Sucks, am I right?) x1

Missing a few pieces in your game? That's okay! Who needs a father anyway? You'll do just fine channeling the angst from this gaping hole in your life to drive yourself to be number one!

DISCLAIMER: THIS DRIVE DOES NOT GUARANTEE A WINNING GAME. ONLY THE PROPER AMOUNT OF MONEY CAN GUARANTEE SUCCESS IN THE GAME OF LIFE.

After you've gathered all the pieces, assess the cards you've been dealt and accept them because there's no changing the fact that you can't afford to be alive. Oh, and ignore the \$1,000,000 in the contents list (We forgot to include that, sorry!) Gameplay begins when your mother and father piece accidentally get knocked up before college begins. Nine months later, play starts.

OBJECTIVE:

To collect enough money to survive, while also keeping enough of your soul to care. Yeah, sure that job might earn you enough money to get a massage by that dolphin who's a masseuse on the side and get plenty of those murals that are hand painted on grains of sand; but who said money can buy happiness? Oh. That's right. The Doctor. After you couldn't afford those hospital bills – Oops.

GAMEPLAY:

Go around the board interacting with the many different squares. The more times you go around this definitely not metaphorical board, the faster it gets— Or at least it feels that way! Eventually the stress of this endless marathon will get so intense that you will just cease to exist. Collect the most money and happiness before the inevitable claims your soul!

SCHOOL:

Once you have gone around the board four or five times (six if you need a little time to get ready) you will begin a fun little thing we like to call school. Unfortunately, you go to public school so you can't use mommy and daddy's money to pay your way through this demoralizing hellhole. Will you learn some things while you're here? Maybe, but no thanks to the curriculum. Better hope you end up with a teacher that cares. Otherwise you'll just memorize your way through those standardized tests. Get those Ticonderogas ready!

COLLEGE:

Thank god! You've now made it around the board 18 times! Time to ditch that high school hellhole. You're finally done with school! Right? No! You're going to do this shit all over again! You're doing this to appease your mom, aren't you? Okay, whatever floats your boat. Time to keep doing the school thing, only this time you realize that college is completely different than grade school, and high school didn't really prepare you for college (or anything else, now that I think about it). But hey, at least your new professor Chad is kinda hot.

TAXES:

You finally passed Go! Jeez, it took you 18 years. Here's 200 smackaroos! Oh wait. I almost forgot I need to take some of that back—for research purposes, of course. By the way, it's up to you to figure out how much you owe me. I'm sure you'll figure it out. Get it wrong and we'll just throw you in jail (at least you'll get three meals a day).

LAWS:

Okay, so after four failed classes, an extra semester, a year off (for mental health reasons), and way too much Rockstar, you've finally graduated college! You can finally do what you want! Except what you want needs to fall within specific guidelines given to you, and these oh so specific guidelines tend to be really confusing. Oh yeah, and they're different depending on what state you're in. But you'll probably be working a job you don't like until you die anyway. So, who has time to break the rules?

ENDING THE GAME:

Just fucking die. Duh.

Emily Dempsey

Pediatricians Work for the Government

I had been able to sing to my baby using pulses of energy like Morse code sent through the umbilical cord. They told me snipping it would be as painless as a haircut, but I felt it.

It was a sharp disconnect
like a phone call cut off
without a static warning.

And she was screaming because I couldn't sing to her.
And I was screaming because I couldn't sing to her.

They tossed aside her warm placenta cradle and took her away to a cold plastic table where they sent her secret messages through a stethoscope. They put a little cotton cap on her head that I am sure was sucking away any memories of my womb.

It was then I began to suspect
that our children are not for us.
And they placed her in my lap before they left the room.
And I replaced the cap with a purple knit wrap.

Babies' brains are so big because they are the wisest on humans' earth. They can read a face as if they wrote it themselves and they can see the natures of people in hazy, hovering auras halo-ing their heads. They know God and they've seen Satan. When you catch them in a wide-eyed trance facing the empty corner in a room, they are gawking at things we can't see and keeping still so the things don't stare back.

If adults could see
through baby blue eyes,
we wouldn't have to try so hard
to read each other,
and truth would be inflexible.

And the government knows this.
And the pediatricians are paid to destroy it.

I took my baby to prenatal checkups because I was told I had to. And they pumped her up with a serum that I am sure was some sort of poison. They removed the dried up remains of our umbilical cord and threw it in a hazardous waste bin to be sent away with all the other little womb time capsules. When they tried to scan her head in their baby brain stealing machine, I ran out of the office and promised I'd never take her back.

In six months her eyes turned brown,
Like mine.

And she's started growing taller so her head looks smaller.
And she doesn't remember how I sang to her.
And she's older and the world is gripping onto her.
And they'll make her grow up to be a baby doctor.

Sam Bixler

Ghost

There is a ghost
in my family home.
I catch glimpses
of his wrinkled
sheet crumpled
by the stairs,
wisps of ectoplasm
plastered
to the shower wall.
His voice echoes
in the hall, the rattle
of chains building,
reaching a crescendo.
Beneath the cacophony,
his words are sweet.
I am not afraid.
I extend
a weary hand,
desperate to cling,
to embrace,
to know
that in this space,
I am not alone.
But it's too late.
He is gone.



Friday Night Lights by Sarah Paul

Naomi Detwiler

There's a Beef on My Roof

As a college student and literary enthusiast, I find myself doing much more reading than the average person. At this point in my education, you'd think I'd seen it all, but as the English language contains over a million words of which we currently only use about 170,000, there are plenty of curveballs the language has to throw at those who attempt to master it.

One day, I was reading some chapter of some textbook for some class, and I came across the word "roofs." Now, to many people, I'm sure that seems totally normal. But for me, it was one of those curveballs I was talking about. With singular/plural forms like "hoof/hooves," "loaf/loaves," and "leaf/leaves," my mind corrected "roofs" to "rooves," and I moved on with my day. To-may-to, to-mah-to. After all, there are plenty of nouns that follow the "roof/roofs" format, like "proof/proofs." That's the closest word to "roof" I could think of, and it does the same thing. No big deal. But then it happened.

That same night, I stumbled upon a word that changed everything for me: "beeves," the archaic plural form of "beef." While telling a friend about the funny new word, I noticed something that shook me to my core. "Beeves" was accepted by my spell checking software; "rooves" was not. I immediately seethed with a type of rage I'm convinced only English majors experience. I could think of no mortal reason that "rooves" was not acceptable in the realm of written language while "beeves" was allowed without question. In fact, I checked several sources that told me "rooves" was perfectly acceptable alongside "roofs," but my very own typing software said otherwise.

You're telling me, in a lineup of "roof," "rooves," "beef," and "beeves," the odd one out isn't "beeves"? Beeves. I've got beeves with the people who did me like this. Like I said before, "beeves" is archaic, and "rooves" is not. And doesn't "rooves" just roll off the tongue in a way any word that ends in "fs" couldn't dream of? Even a quick Google search will tell you that "rooves" is the proper way, but I had to manually add it to my dictionary in Word to prevent any future aneurysms on my part.

So before you go starting any beeves with your friends over this, just know that I've had enough time to cool down and come to terms with the fact that sometimes, the world just doesn't make sense. We can either make peace with that or let it consume us. I don't want to waste any of my finite mortality or energy in rage, and neither should you. Life is so short, and there are far more important things to worry about than petty linguistic mishaps.

SHELTER

I like to think that since I suffered through this subtle blasphemy and made amends with it, things have changed. If someone were to tell me I was crazy because Word has since accepted “rooves” as a word, I’d be thrilled. But if this essay ignites even the smallest metaphoric flame of anger in someone else’s consciousness, I hope they’ll use it to roast some beeves and not to burn down any rooves.

Alexander Owens

Diving Deeper

Ignorance is like diving in the ocean without scuba gear.
Yes, you can hold your breath for some time,
But this breath will not last long.
Eventually you will need to come back to the surface,
Only able to dive as deep as that breath can take you.

You may be able to make out murky images
Through the silt and the salty water.
But this sight will not stretch far.
You will only see the shadows,
Of what you guess is your diving buddy.

Put your regulator in your mouth,
You will find the air to dive deeper.

Put your mask over your eyes,
You will see for miles, and clearly too.

Ignorance is knowing you can breathe underwater,
And choosing to hold your breath.

Kelleigh Stevenson

Scout's Honor

"Scout, come see the waves with me!" Lila squealed, her small feet imprinting the sand.

"One second, Squirt," I said, the warm sun toasting the skin on my midriff. My towel scraped against my arms as I lazily turned over, grains of sand sticking under the beds of my fingernails. Vertebrae after vertebrae of my back cracked as I arched and rolled my shoulders towards the sunlight, lounging like our family's cat on the windowsill.

"Scout, hurry up!" Lila's voice cried again, farther away this time. I turned to look over my shoulder, brushing a stray curl out of my eyes to see Lila's bright yellow swimsuit and her matching yellow swim goggles hanging around her neck. "You're missin' the good ones!"

"I'm coming," I groaned, more to myself than her. I dug my fingers into the soft ground to hoist myself up, nicking my finger on something sharp beneath the layers of the bank. Digging around, I pulled the seashell from its hiding place, its pale orange hue identical to that of the sky overhead and Lila's orange sherbet melting in the cup beside me. Her favorite. "Lila! Come here and look at what I found!"

I jumped to my feet and turned around, the beach towel tangling around my ankle and making me trip forward. I looked up after centering myself, the only thing in front of me the view of the waves rolling, rolling, rolling.

"Good morning, Squirt," I say, rubbing the sleep out of my eyes.

"Scout," she says, bouncing a rubber ball against the hardwood floor. "Why haven't you hung up any new posters? The room is boring without stuff on the walls."

"I know. I'm working on it," I reply, kicking the blanket into a ball at my feet. "Where did you get the jacks?"

"I found them in the closet down the hall," she says, her small hand clasping around three of the metal playing pieces. "Where all the other games are."

"I don't think I've seen that game in years." Pulling a pair of sweatpants and a shirt out of my dresser, I plod into the bathroom connected to the bedroom I share with Lila and begin getting ready.

"Scout, can we go swim later? You promised." Lila's voice sounds soft from the other room, and without even seeing her I can picture her grabbing her yellow swim goggles from the drawer in my desk and slipping them around her neck. She's always wearing those goggles.

"Soon, Lila."

The mintiness of my mouthwash stings the cuts on the inside of my lips, the painful aftermath of constant biting. The discomfort causes my shoulders to roll back, sharp shoulder blades pinched together in a vain attempt to move the pain to a different part of my body. I glance around the bathroom, my vision blurring in and out as the grogginess slowly leaves my body.

Coffee. I need coffee.

"Scout!"

"I'll be out soon, squirt," I yell through the door, pressing my fingers firmly to my temples as the room begins to spin around me. I splash some water on my face, sputtering as droplets go into my nose. My knuckles turn the same shade of white as the sink beneath my fingertips as my grip tightens on the edge. "Shit."

"Scout!" Lila's voice calls again, and the small thud of footsteps approaches the door. "Are you in there?"

knock

The sound on the door starts softly, erratic like the heartbeat attempting to escape my chest.

knock

knock

knockknockknockknockknock

"What--," I cry, flinging the door open and leaning on it for leverage. A fist is raised in the air, level with my collarbone, and worried eyes stare straight into my own. My mother tilts her head to the side, a sigh parting her lips as she lowers her fist. I shake my head in confusion, taking a shaky step forward. "Mom?"

"Come here, honey," she sighs, wrapping an arm around my waist and leading me back into the bedroom. "You're drenched. Have you taken your meds yet this morning?"

"Not yet," I mutter, sitting down on the edge of my bed. "Where did Lila go?"

"After you have your breakfast, I think your father and I would like to--"

"Mom, she wants to go swimming--"

"... and then I think we should all have dinner tonight. Think you'll be--"

"No, mom, I promised her, I told her we'd go--"

"And then we'll bring you back home and maybe watch a film--"

"Mom!"

"Yes, sweetie?" she says calmly, stopping her relentless picking at the invisible specks of garbage on my dresser and desktop.

"Lila wants to go swimming again soon."

"I know, sweetie," she replies, sitting down beside me on the bed. "How do you feel about dinner tonight, and then the movie?"

"Yeah, sure. That sounds fine." I shrug, picking at a string that's fraying off the leg of my sweatpants.

"I think it'll be really good for you. We've got to pick out something nice for you to wear," she says, quickly standing and striding over to my bureau, the click of her heels bouncing around the corners of the room. "I swear I haven't seen you out of those sweatpants since-- for a long time, sweetie. You have so many nice things."

"But sweatpants are comfy, Mom," I say, playfully scowling at the row of jeans and blouses hanging in the closet. "Those things are so confining-- they feel like a straight jacket."

Her shoulders pull inward, her head jerking slightly to the side as she flinches at my words. She quickly fixes herself, though, her head pulling up and her spine aligning, back to her ever-present air of sophistication.

"That's not very funny, Scarlett."

"Scout," I correct, rolling my eyes.

"What?" she snaps, turning to me with her arms crossed and her moss green eyes narrowed.

"You know I go by Scout. I always have."

"Oh, that silly name from that stupid book," she mutters, turning back towards the closet and rifling through the clothes. "It's not very becoming. It sounds more like a boy's name."

"It's easier for Lila to say than Scarlett, and I like Scout better. Dad gets it."

"Your father is--" she begins, cutting herself off and taking a ragged breath. "Your father has been in a rough place the past two years. But I think he agrees with me that it's time for you to move on from these kinds of things, Scarlett."

"Right, Mom," I sigh, swinging my legs off the edge of the bed.

"Scout! Come see what I did!" Lila's voice squeals from the direction of the bathroom.

"Mom, I have to pee. I'll be right back," I say, heading towards the bathroom.

"Be quick about it, you really need to go out for breakfast soon!"

"Yeah, yeah," I mutter, pushing into the bathroom and closing the door behind me. Lila is splashing around in the bathtub, her yellow goggles around her neck and her bright yellow swimsuit already soaked. "How did you get in here? When did you get in the bath?"

"I wanted to swim," she says simply, shrugging her small shoulders as she drags a blue sailboat over the top of the water. "The bathtub is close."

"Well, what did you want to show me?" I ask, sitting down at the edge of the tub, the warm water soaking through the leg of my pants.

"Oh!" she cries, excitement dancing across her features as her hand plunges into the water. The hand emerges with a doll clasped in her fist, its hair dripping and flinging water as she shakes it around. "Look! I made Lucy a pair of goggles like mine! So she can swim, too."

"That's so nice!" I say, taking the doll in my hands. The plastic is smooth under my fingers, the blonde Barbie hair knotted and matted to the top of her poor head. "And they're yellow just like yours!"

"Yellow is the best color!" She plays for a second more, a pout slowly pursing her lips. "You know what would be more cooler?"

"What?"

"If Lucy could make sandcastles like we can! She doesn't have cool sand toys, like a bucket," Lila muses, her big green eyes looking up at me. Her eyes are the same shade yet the complete opposite of our mother's hard stare.

"I think I have something that would work perfectly!"

"Really?" she asks, her eyes widening as a grin spreads across her face, her small teeth on proud display.

"How about a toothpaste cap? I think that would work pretty well as a sand bucket," I say, handing her back the doll and dropping to my knees to look under the sink for toothpaste caps. I can hear her splashing in the water, giggles erupting as she most likely makes a mess all over the floor. "I have a few unopened tubes that I can take the lids off for now. Maybe even the cap to some cough medicine? Then it would be a bigger castle. What do you think, Squirt?"

No response comes as I pull the caps off of tubes of toothpaste, twisting the cap off of a bottle of NyQuil and trying to balance the now open bottle in my full hand without spilling.

"Squirt? What do you think?"

Knock

"One second, mom," I say, standing from the sink to speak through the door. I turn towards the tub again to talk to Lila, shuffling the caps and the bottle in my hand. "Squirt--no! Lila!"

The caps fall to the floor, showering the tiles like a cascade of plastic pennies, an ominous symphony broken as the NyQuil falls to the ground, red running across the floor. Floating, face down, Lila's brown curls sway in the water like dancing corals. Her body is still, the room silent.

"No, no, no," I chant, slipping in the medicine on the floor as I rush to the tub, flipping over her small frame. My view is obscured by the tears falling down my face, but I can see her swollen skin, her small hands pruned and discolored, her face devoid of its usual rosy tint. Her eyes are open and staring up at me like Lucy's painted on stare, her mouth open in a silent plea. "Mom? Mom, come quick!"

"What is it, Scarlett?" she yells, running into the bathroom. "What's going on, why is there stuff all over the floor?"

A strangled sob leaves me breathless, a howl that doesn't even sound human escaping my chest as I hold Lila's body in my arms. "I think we can help her, you need to help me get her out of the tub! Don't just stand there, help me! We need to get her out of the tub! Oh my God. Oh my God, Mom. She's dead! She drowned, and now she's just laying here!"

"Scarlett," she says calmly, walking towards me.

"Mom, I didn't mean for it to happen, I was just finding stuff for her to play with! I should have taken her swimming, then she wouldn't have been in the tub! Help me--"

"Scarlett!" my mother says louder and more firmly than before, startling me as she grabs me by the shoulders, spinning me to face her. "No one is in that tub. It's empty."

"No," I gasp, shaking my head as salty tears and snot mingle in my mouth. "That's not true, she's there!"

Her grip on my shoulders tightens as I try to squirm away, her nails biting through my shirt into my skin. "Lila is dead, Scarlett. She died two years ago at the beach. She's gone."

"No!" I scream, tearing away from her and turning around. In front of me the tub is empty, no sign of the toys from before.

No Lucy.

No sailboat.

I grab the damp part of my sweatpants from when I sat on the tub. Dry.

"She's gone," I say, the words coming out at barely above a whisper. My knees give out, my body sinking down onto the floor, toothpaste caps stabbing into my thighs and NyQuil sticking to every inch. My body won't stop trembling, my teeth knocking and numb as I sob, the sound of waves crashing filling my ears.

"She's gone, she's gone, she's gone."

Addison Rabette

My Words

my words are going to hit you so hard,
you forget your first name.
the paintings etched on your skin
will now be our story
and I want your
cigarette-stained fingertips to burn holes
into my skin--
set me on fire.
my words are going to stay with you
while you're not holding your breath
on bridges, tunnels,
elevators, train tracks...
and my face would be turning blue,
with lack of oxygen.
my words are so precisely
and concisely constructed
into sentences, that are never spoken,
never whispered,
uttered, or murmured;
but are written down
for you to read.
so please--touch my face
tell me you love me
set me on fire.



Happy by Adam Jones

Madaline Hoy

I Say

I say do what you want.
Life's too short to waste
On what others say to do.
Focus on what's fun to you,
And let your heart ring true.
Girls, go ahead and play football.
Boys, put on some makeup and dance.
Don't be afraid to take that chance.
Just do what you want, because
Your interests don't matter;
The person underneath does.

I say love who you want.
There's so much more to love
Than a label given for free
By those too afraid to see
Anything beyond heterosexuality.
Though they'll shout their opinions
Much louder than the rest.
Ignore those pessimists,
And love who you want, because
Your sexuality doesn't matter;
The person underneath does.

I say be who you want.
Quit trying to fit in a mold,
Treated with no respect,
As though you're just another object
That needs to conform to be considered perfect.
They can't break you. You're too complex.
Express who you truly are,
And I promise you will go far.
Be who you want, because
Their wants for you don't matter;
The person underneath does.

Alexander Owens

Smell the Mourning Rose

Flower's smell does not mean life and beauty
to my Poppop's senses, who I suppose
must seem callous; his heart black and sooty
for his distaste to smell the mourning rose.
How could this sign of spring bring signs of bad?
Does he not smell the mild fruity perfume
of the lilies and the lilacs? Which had
brought solace to many who've seen its bloom.
Alas, I suppose he is a man who
thinks cynically about the world that
uses such allurements and beauty to
dress caskets and grant Life's blossom, Death's hat.
 When he smells flowers, he does not hate life
 But rather death and endless nature's strife.



Beneath the Leaves by Elizabeth Lynch



Fresh by Elizabeth Lynch



Sunlit Garden by Elizabeth Lynch



Produce by Elizabeth Lynch

Nabin Adhikari

A Tuesday Afternoon

Brown skin, chin held high, foreign language:
A terrorist. Colored skin, alone, quiet, a backpack:
A bomber. Giant foods, in the aisles, grocery shopping,
Police called, sirens blaring. Checkout line: closed,
Handcuffs: a thief. Colored skin, chin held
High, well spoken, foreign face: life sentence.

White skin, rowdy, unapologetic: community
Service. White skin, AR-15, grocery store,
Mass shooting: mental health service. Tattoos
On the face, hatred in the eyes: help needed.
A black backpack, on the subway, ignited:
A terrorist, no, white skin: just an accident.

Mother, grocery shopping, cart full of food,
Cops called: a thief. Ignorance, spit in the face,
Self-defense: arrested. Fingerprinted, pictures taken:
Narrative written. Arraignment, first appearance:
Guilty. Colored skin, quiet, obedient, soft
Spoken, remorseful, guilty: death penalty.

Young white teen, white dress, white cone:
First Amendment. White skin, arson shopping,
Cart full of bullets: Second Amendment. White
Skin, shooting in Walmart, death toll, ten.
Blood spilled: Muslim ban. Bullets flying,
Resisted arrest: hotel bed, well fed.

Contributors' Notes

Nabin Adhikari is a sophomore living in Harrisburg and currently studying Criminal Justice, Political Science and a minor in Creative Writing at Penn State Harrisburg. After undergrad Nabin hopes to tackle the LSAT to attend Law School. From a young age he enjoyed writing short fictional pieces inspired by personal experiences. He uses personal experience to write creative pieces that hopefully people enjoy one day.

Emma Bankert is currently a long-term substitute at Crossroads Middle School teaching 7th grade ELA. She is working on obtaining her master's in teaching and Curriculum and was previously awarded the All-American Poets Prize from Penn State Harrisburg.

Sam Bixler is a senior majoring in Creative Writing. They live in Grantville, Pennsylvania with their mom and three cats (Toby, Levi, and Tali). When not writing, attending classes, or spending obscene amounts of time on the phone with their girlfriend (or traveling to visit her), they spend much of their free time playing video games and obsessing over Dungeons and Dragons (or whatever their latest hyperfixation may be). They will be graduating in the Spring of 2020, and they were the Fiction Editor for this issue.

Brieanna Carr is currently pursuing her Bachelor's in HDFS at Penn State Harrisburg. She has enjoyed writing as a form of expression from grade school to present, and pursues many other artistic hobbies when she is not too busy with coursework and her community involvement off-campus.

Kelsey Cramer is currently a sophomore at Penn State Abington Campus pursuing a Business Degree. She recently traveled to Hawaii over the summer and legend has it that if you throw your lei into the ocean and it comes back, then you are destined to return to the island. "Lei Upon the Ocean" is a poem that reflects the emotions she felt when she had to leave the island of Kauai.

Ashleigh Cummings is a current last semester senior at Penn State Harrisburg. She is currently majoring in American Studies with a minor in Writing. In her free time, she rides horses, is writing her first novel and raises Seeing Eye Dogs. She will be returning in the Fall to begin her Master's in American Studies. She was the assistant fiction editor and online editor for this issue.

Emily Dempsey is a junior Creative Writing Major and Theatre Minor. She works as a Theatre Technician at the Kulkarni Theatre and is the Secretary of the Capital Players Theatre Club. She also enjoys drawing, journaling, and playing pretend.

Naomi Detwiler of Harrisburg, PA is an English major with a minor in technical writing. She loves all things Shakespeare and Poe. In her free time, if she is not writing, she can often be found making music or art. She will graduate from Penn State Harrisburg in Spring 2021.

Jules Freidly is a senior at Penn State Harrisburg graduating with a bachelor's in English. They have previously been published in "The Burg" and "Fission" and hope to continue writing poetry after graduation.

Valerie Frigerio is a senior at Penn State Harrisburg, with a major in Mechanical Engineering Technology, and minors in Creative Writing and Theatre. Valerie likes writing in her spare time, various types of prose and various topics. Valerie is not trying to change the world with her writing, but perhaps bring some joy.

Adam Jones is a supply chain management major who likes photography and to travel. Adam has been to Ireland, Spain, Canada, and Morocco.

Leisa Kilby is a senior studying Communications at Penn State Harrisburg. She has been writing poetry for four years and her work can be read in From the Fallout Shelter, Fission, and The Burg. Her poems "Medusa Speaks of Jealousy" and "Chiron the Centaur" have been runners-up for the Academy of American Poet's Prize at Penn State Harrisburg.

Molly Goehring is a Letters, Arts, and Sciences Major graduating in the Spring of 2020. She focuses on illustration, painting, graphic design, and other forms of two-dimensional art.

Jesse E. Goranson is a sociologist enrolled in the Community Psychology and Social Change M.A. program. He expresses his creativity through his work in the theatre and as a videographer on campus.

Elijah Hayes-Olivera is a graduating senior with a degree in General Biology. He has a wide range of interests, some of which include watching biographical films and reading science fiction novels in his free time. Of all the flowers that may bloom in a field, his favorite is the White Clover.

Madaline Hoy is from Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, and is attending Penn State's Harrisburg campus as a creative writing major.

Ethan Lee is currently a second semester freshman at Penn State Harrisburg. His plan is to double major in public relations and economics as well as minor in psychology. Pursuing this will require Ethan to transfer to the main campus in a year and a half, the start of his junior year. He is originally from Santa Clarita, CA, a small suburb in Los Angeles County. His hobbies include swimming, listening to music, and collecting coins.

Rachel Lenich is a senior English major with a concentration in Creative Writing. She has been the copy editor for *From the Fallout Shelter* for the past two years. Her writing has been featured in *From the Fallout Shelter*, *Inked*, and *The Wildwood Journal*. After graduating, she plans to work in education and to continue submitting her poetry to literary magazines.

Elizabeth Lynch is a marketing major who lives backstage in the Kulkarni Theatre. She spends her days balancing two and a half jobs as a full-time student. In addition, Elizabeth is always looking for inspiration for photography and body painting/makeup.

Jessica Mele is an English major. In her free time, she enjoys reading, writing, and spending time with her cats, Enzo and Izzy. She was the visual arts editor and assistant nonfiction editor for this issue.

Long Nguyen is a junior at Penn State Harrisburg. He majors in Computer Science but also is passionate about literature, especially in story-telling. He likes to engage in philosophical discussions as they help him understand his beliefs better.

Kenneth Nolan III is a senior English student. He likes activist poetry, queer theory, and listening to PJ Harvey as a form of catharsis. He was the Poetry Editor for this issue.

Oluwaseyilayo (Seyilayo) Olagbami is a Computer Science major from Nigeria. Seyilayo loves to draw and play video games and likes making up stories for fun and hopefully for future reference. Seyilayo wants to develop games in the future!

Alexander Owens is a sophomore with a major in communications and minor in theatre. He enjoys creating music, videos, photographs, and poetry. He is very involved in theatre and enjoys being both on stage acting and behind the scenes working as crew at Penn State Harrisburg, Music Directing Peter Panic at Harrisburg Christian Performing Arts Center and helping to run The Pharmacy Theatre as part of its team.

Sarah Paul is a freshman, planning to graduate early with a Bachelors in Psychology. Sarah is from Syracuse, New York and is particularly interested in black and white photography. She has been in many local art shows throughout her junior and senior years of high school, and has won Best Photo.

Addison Rabette is studying English and plans to graduate from Penn State Harrisburg in the Fall of 2020 (hopefully). She is from York, Pennsylvania and works at Starbucks where she enjoys making lattes, watching true crime shows, and playing with her corgi puppy, Benji.

Kelleigh Stevenson is a sophomore at Penn State Harrisburg majoring in Creative Writing and minoring in Theatre. She drinks far too many cups of coffee, but that caffeine has gotten her published in multiple literary magazines and will (hopefully) push her to graduate in 2022.

Kristina Stokes is a nontraditional honors English major in her senior year. She lives in Palmyra, PA with her husband and 4 children.

Nathan Willison is a sophomore journalism major serving as an assistant nonfiction editor for From the Fallout Shelter. Nate is planning on working for a news publication after graduation.

SHELTER



Penn State Harrisburg's Literary Arts Magazine