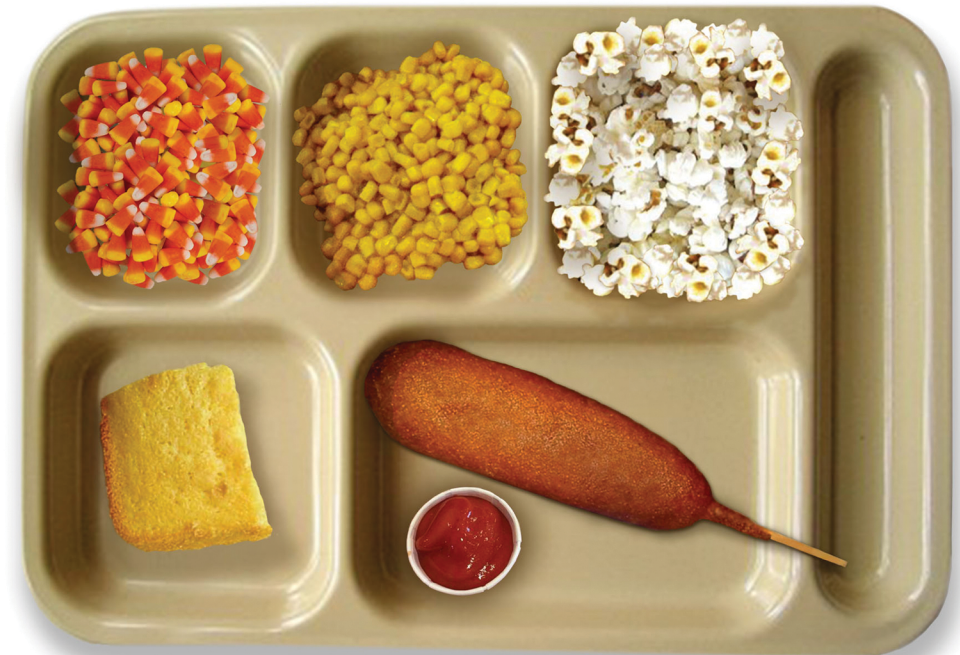


CORNFIELD REVIEW



Nutrition Facts

Serving Size 1 page (1 oz.)

Serving per container 96 pages (1 book)

Amount Per Serving

Calories 550 Calories from Fat 0

% Daily Value*

Poetry 20mg **12%**

Saturated Love 1g **5%**

Emotivity 5g

Prose 5mg **0%**

Art 160mg **7%**

Photography 37g **12%**

Focus 6g **16%**

Balance 3g

Special Sections 2mg

Literary Excellence 100%

Imagination 100%

Artistry 100%

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* Percent of daily values are based on a 1 book diet.
Your daily value may be higher or lower depending
on your reading needs.

Ingredients: Words, spelling, grammar, emotion, love, pas-
sion, paint, canvas, lead, film, also contains one or more of
the following, enriched corn meal, high fructose corn syrup,
corn, corn oil, corn flour, corn gluten, dextrose, crystalline
fructose, zein, corn starch, xanthan gum, malt extract, veg-
etable protein, cornflakes, maize, other corn byproducts.



COVER CONCEPT: CORNFIELD REVIEW EDITORIAL BOARD
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2017



CORNFIELD REVIEW

Date 2017	Table	Guests Vol. 34	Server 97201
APPT - SOUP/SAL - ENTREE - VEG/POT - DESSERT - BEV			

poetry

prose

art

photos

special

Total

Thank You - Please Come Again

A Literary Publication of The Ohio State University at Marion



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Preface

Another year has passed, and another *Cornfield Review* has made its way into the world. Welcome to the 2017 issue!

As you make your way through the following pages, from appetizer to entree to dessert (did you pick up on the food motif?), we're sure you'll leave your table more than satisfied. Throughout, you're sure to delight in the evocative poetic language, the beautifully haunting imagery, the intimate explorations of character, and more. This issue also features a special section that demonstrates the power of the written word to bring together groups of people who occupy very different spaces in our society: students of OSU-Marion and inmates at Marion Correctional Institution. Their poetry-writing collaboration, which consists of several group-authored poems, constitute a collection of verse that transcends the institutional walls behind which they were originally crafted; much thanks goes to Pablo Tanguay and Stuart Lishan for helping to bring these poems to our journal.

Among the parties we owe a great deal of thanks: the administration of OSU-Marion, led by Dean Greg Rose; the tireless English faculty; the writers, photographers, and artists who submitted to us (some students, faculty, and staff at OSUM and MTC, others citizens at large), and whose beautiful work graces these pages.

The 2017 Editorial Board was a pleasure to work with. This group worked diligently to serve up this year's issue, collaborating effectively as they made their way through the soliciting, selection, copyediting, and design stages of the process. This year's board consists of: Jan Coffey, Ash Cook, Christyne Horton, Bethany Kibler, Samantha Lodge, Dani Miller, Mickey Pfarr, Maddy Roth, and Raman Sidhu.

Cornfield Review is published annually. The Editorial Board is interested in quality poetry, prose, artwork, and photography. Submissions are primarily solicited from students at OSU-Marion and Marion Technical College, although we accept submissions from off-campus writers and artists as well. For more information, please email me at mccorkle.12@osu.edu, or visit us online at: <http://cornfieldreview.osu.edu>.

—Ben McCorkle, Faculty Adviser

The Cornfield Review Mission Statement:

We strive to represent the literary and artistic voice of Central Ohio by giving area college students (as well as others) an opportunity to see their work published in a professional literary journal. Additionally, we are passionate about achieving a cultural impact that goes beyond local campuses and reaches into the greater community.

POETRY

\$32.50

SOUL FOOD SERVED ON A PLATE OF
ANGST AND DISCONTENT. FULL OF
SMOKEY FLAVOR AND A HINT OF
PASSION, THIS ENTRÉE IS TOPPED
WITH A HELPING OF TRUTH AND
RAW EMOTION. COMES WITH YOUR
CHOICE OF SIDE.

The Monster In My Head

I have a monster in my head
No one knows about her
To tell people would give her power
The power to control me more than she does

This monster has a name, but I won't tell it
We have been battling secretly my whole life
She softly whispers to me that I can't do it
I can't make it; I'm not worth it

Every time I succeed, I hear her howl in pain and
I know that I won that round
She's not down for long though;
Within seconds, she's back in my ear,
Telling me that my success is luck,
I don't deserve it; I'm not worth it.

And I believe her.

Jan Coffey

APL Vacation

Survival is...

Bright red needle basins
chunky, clunky, enclosed in
biohazard symbols.

A bed with railings and buttons in abundance
in a cold room with white ceilings, ivory counters
chalky cabinets and pale floors.

The green luminosity of the intravenous infusion pump
beeping its agitations repeatedly
throughout the long night.

Pressurized air hissing, pushing, parching
making the door whoosh constantly
with each entrance and exodus.

The acerbic scent of alcohol swabs
nauseatingly acidic and biting
turning an empty stomach.

Long, skinny tubes dangling from the pectoralis major
implanted, straight, catheterized,
through a vein to the heart.

Countless saline-filled plungers,
with ominous air bubbles that could kill
if not held up just right.

Crisp, bleached sheets tangled over limbs
sterile-smelling, thin, never concealing
fallen crimson hemoglobin.

Bone marrow sucked through a syringe
purplish, brownish, red
filched from the ilium.

The hiss through teeth of agony
gasping, rasping, hyperventilating
overused pulmonary lobes.

Survival is...

Enduring it all
and considerably more
to hear the term “cured”
to get to go home.

Ash Cook

Arbitrary Nouns and Pronouns

Nine months of heart-racing anxiety
Of wondrous joy, worry, and panic
While cells multiplied and exploded
And grew from bean-like embryo, to fetus
To blurry black-and-grey sonogram images
And hasty gender exclamations.
Labeling a body too immature
To have a sense of self or identity.

Gendered wallpaper, gendered toys,
Gendered clothes and gendered names
Baby girl
Born with a penetrable hole, not a penis
Raised to be a girl because of my vagina.
Adoring daughter
Long hair, dresses, hair ribbons
Taught to be emotional, nurturing, feminine
Protective sister
And to hate myself for feeling so very not.
Life as a woman, the world's perception
Dutiful wife
Like living every day in a thick, tight costume
Weighed down with bags of cement
Loving mother
Which had the consistency of congealed blood.
Like the conquerable, thin lining of the womb
Strong woman
Which flushed from my betrayal of a body
And made the abject my sense of self.
Wise and caring grandmother
Playing roles I knew society wanted
Until the weight of the world left me broken.
Baby girl
Adoring daughter
Protective sister
Dutiful wife
Loving mother

Strong woman
Wise and caring grandmother
All strong, beautiful, wonderful words
But not words I want inscribed on my epithet.
Baby boy
Adoring son
Protective brother
Dutiful husband
Loving father
Strong man
Wise and caring grandfather
An issue of arbitrary nouns and pronouns
Words that are more than skin deep.

Ash Cook

Endless Ice Waltz

Come ye child with eyes aglow
where crystal ice fairies whirl and play
dance your patterns in the snow

The old trees are bare, leaves ne'er grow
'neath their skeleton limbs we sway
come ye child with eyes aglow

Shadow figures the evening sun doth throw
to mark the frigid fading of the day
dance your patterns in the snow

And once the hallowed moon rises low
grasp the glacial hand of the leering fay
come ye child with eyes aglow

Ne'er mind the shrieks resounding to and fro
of vast despair and dreams long led astray
dance your patterns in the snow

To the winter sidhe your heart will you bestow
for now and e'er your soul shall stay
come ye child with eyes aglow
dance your patterns in the snow

Ash Cook

The Malignant Lottery

The element that stood out the most
when they gave us the diagnosis
were the bright red splotches
that seemed to rapidly spread and
darken against the skin along the
back of his neck. The rest of that terrible night
and the next long day were nothing
but a series of events and emotions,
burned into my mind; ups and downs -
a veritable roller coaster that I'll never forget.

The cold walk outside in the empty
emergency parking lot, nervously waiting
for the ambulance to take him away.
The way the exhaust from our
lungs hung on the air like a fog
in the night. The lonely, hour long
drive down winding 315, narrowly avoiding
a herd of deer barely visible through
headlights and blurred vision as I
fought to hold back yet another round
of salty tears. Aimlessly losing myself
in the empty, modern building of cancer research
with its glass walls and red and grey couches,
vacant of any Buckeyes at four a.m.

Finding myself again on the fifteenth floor.
The AML clinical trials sign, my first indication
of how real the situation was.
The shock that was ever present on his
face – gaze distant and slow, cheeks pale –
even when a nurse would crack
a joke and have him laughing. The first bag
of cryoprecipitate with its color and
consistency of cooking lard. And then toxin.
crystal-clear bags of arsenic-trioxide
brightly labeled in golden yellow,
“We’re going to poison you like a rat!”

Being told repeatedly how lucky he was.
That word – lucky, like he’d won the lottery
only it was cancer, so it was more like
he had won his life, but at a cost – lucky.
APL, acute promyelocytic leukemia.
The jackpot of cancers that all oncologists
would wish for, if they had to have cancer.

Journal #3

Author's Note: *Something that has always creeped me out is Honda. I'm from Marysville, and from a young age I have always thought it was creepy that everyone at Honda wears the same white jumpsuit to work everyday. Honestly, it really reminded me of prison. I've always wanted to write something about the comparison between Honda and prison.*

No time like the present,
to bring up jumpsuits,
orange and white.

Orange and white jumpsuits,
with identical folds,
and interchangeable designs.

Interchangeable designs,
that follow schedule,
and conform to plans.

Conform to plans,
with the same guidelines
and a consistent protocol.

A consistent protocol,
in a building made of brick,
wearing orange and white jumpsuits.

The only difference is
you're wearing the white
by choice

Morgan DeWitt

To the girl who made my coffee this morning:

It's not the smell that I long for,
It's not the wave of fresh beans seeping from the pot
or the overwhelming scent invading the insides of my nose with the aroma
of overslept souls and eyes that haven't yet shut

It's not the sight that I long for,
It's not the tips of the grass kissed by morning mist,
or the empty field in front of
me
with deer searching for a silent breakfast among the serenity

It's not the touch that I long for,
It's not the caress of a passerby moving too fast
t
or the warmth of a white towel fresh on cold skin
with fibers waving hello

It's not the sound that I long for,
It's not the pitch of the angry baristas
or the soft chatter of girls in the corner
with too much on their mind

It's the red straws that I long for,
so carefully picked and placed inside
a jar of AriZona Tea™

Morgan DeWitt

Dreamscape

Experiencing life far beyond
anything one could in this,
our day and age, in a landscape shaped by
but not controlled by, an era without wonder.
Colors vivid like gemstones
which sparkle and glow as if
each had its own private sun within or
dark, gritty, and sullen like
a star which has lost its luster.
Friends, enemies, strangers, and beasts,
-some dim and some bright-
who all fill some pivotal role,
like some fantastic legend of old
as if told by a great storyteller of once-upon-a-time.
Like Tolkien describing a world
filled with great heroes and fierce monsters
putting claw against blade and light
against the darkest shadow.
Like Lovecraft, painting a picture with words
one of terrible horrors,
writhing, malignant, and eldritch fiends,
breaking minds with an ease
quite like the act of shattering
a glass under foot.
Like Baum, a man before starry eyed children
telling stories of witches, good and wicked,
of material men, lacking hearts and minds,
of monstrous men, lacking the guts that make them
who they ought to be, and finally
of girls who want to go home, like nothing else before
with only a pair of silver slippers to guide them
and saving a wondrous land along the way.
All of these and more than that
attained within the landscape, the seascape, the mindscape,
many times the inspiration of something else,
but at others only found within that changing place,
that place of twisting thoughts, words without meaning

and images without true vision,
all as understandable at the moment of conception
to the dreamer as the written word is
to the writer of tales.

And yet

This scape of all scapes
so deep and poignant with connection
to our own desires and fears,
whether as a leader, a voyeur,
a follower, or even a foe,
It comes crashing down like a cascade
the world becoming solid, pale, dry,
and worst of all, real.

Only one moment remains
to make a choice that determines
the fate of the land which
held your very being within it.
Do you sleep again, a false sleep,
a feverish experience which will end
all too soon and with false sincerity or
do you wake, live the life you were dealt
and live to dream again, a true dreamscape
and maybe
just maybe
bring a little bit of it back with you
when the time is right
and the dream is ripe enough
to share?

Austin Holloway

Roots

Beneath the leaves and grassy soil
The tree does hide its earthen coils

Its heart akin to its burnt umber bark
Folded within its earthly bulwark

Upon this cage its head sits atop
Fueled by the light and further rain-drops

For why it chose to hide its soul
I cannot say for there it will stay

Beyond the toil and endless duress
Its roots shall stay and forever recess

Austin Holloway

A Love Poem to Berenice's Teeth, from Edgar Allan Poe

Author's Note: Inspired by Edgar Allan Poe's short story, "Berenice"

Berenice I confess that I love you
I can't get you off my mind
It's your pearly whites and all they do
They shine, oh my how they shine
It's the same love story
Boy and girl meet
The boy falls in love
Captivated by her teeth
And oh their color
So brilliantly white
At the sight of your smile
My heart sails like a kite
I'm enamored by your enamel
Your dentine is so pristine
From your molars to incisors
You keep them all so clean
Framed between your lips
All as perfect as can be
They make me want to go and get
A dentistry degree
I now declare my undying love
I make you my eternal mate
I promise to be true to you,
And buy you endless Colgate
I pray that you will love me too
And with the same endurance
And that you may always have
Good dental insurance
White drops sent from heaven
But here on this planet
They couldn't be more perfect
God must have planned it
But since you had so many
I took a bunch from you
I left this note, to let you know
Why you are missing a few

Christy Horton

A Poem for Heroes

Author's Note: *A poem of thanks to 911 dispatchers & men in blue*

The phone keeps ringing all day and all the night
Calls from the faceless, wounded voices in a fright
Whether sick, injured, or a home ablaze,
They'll dial three numbers right away
The voice that answers knows just what to do
They call on the blue, bravest and few
They come without haste any time or place
No matter the creed, age or race
They come to all, the old or the young,
No matter what you've done, or where you're from
They will risk their lives to save another
Sons and daughters, fathers and mothers
They do this without even knowing your name
Nor seek any riches, glory, or fame
These men and women we all know
Share one name...hero.
And for those heroes that didn't make it home
Fear not for they are not alone
A pair of wings they now do own
Together, protecting those heroes and voices on the phone

Christy Horton

Time

Be weary of the faceless stranger who among us dwells
He who came with us into the world, the one we know so well
Forever stealing the treasured precious gifts of man
Beauty, youth, and vigor, are only lent by his hand
Forever chasing with no hope of catching, yet besides us he awaits
His labored presence is seen in man's shadow, where hunched and decrepit, was
 once narrow and straight
Gone are the fleeting memories of man, they now rest with him
Keeper of lost memories, of lovers and dreams, families and friends
Knowledge and wisdom he fades away
Leaving only remembrance of a better day
He knows no bounds; he heals all wounds
We part with him as friends only at the hour of our doom

Christy Horton

The World Coupling

I see all things pairing, pairing in love
From animals to mammals, I see them in love
I hear their sonnets, and love sympathies
I see the men, drop to one knee
Sick of spring weddings, releasing their doves
As the world couples, pairing in love

They coalesce as their love they confess
As I further and further regress
They conjugate and copulate
I'm alone, abandoned by fate
Bears and hares walk by me in pairs
Without a care, it's so unfair
Life's not much fun when you're dancing alone
The waltz wasn't made to dance on your own

I ponder the puzzle, trying to see
Why I exist, in singularity
As I look up, what do I see
A lone red robin, perched on a tree
Is he a single, a single like me
Does he ponder, wonder like me?

He's perched there staring, watching the parings
From doves to red herrings, but is he caring?
Birds of a feather, they flock together
He's wearing weather without a better
Without another the shape of his feather
His tiny heart is so untethered

Birds constantly singing, singing love songs
But my red robin, isn't singing along
This lone red robin, perched on a tree
Must be lonely, lonely like me
Nesting in his singularity

Christy Horton

5:55am

What I would give
To see these gray skies yield themselves
To that golden, glowing splendor I took for granted
In the summers, when I was young
And the glory of the sun first claiming the hills in the morning
Seemed a due
Rather than a privilege

Ruksana Kabealo

A Prayer for the Sleepless Mind

Everything is wearing thin:
my shoes, my patience, my sanity.
Grant me the wisdom to determine
how to make miles from millimeters,
peace from apathy,
and love from chaos.

Ruksana Kabealo

Across the Country

From across the country, I stood by his side,
A love that stretched beyond enemy lines.
Every morning I said a prayer.
Every night he called me from over there.

From across
The country I stood.
By his side never did I fear,
He'd run and hide.

From across the country,
I stood
By his side- people doubted,
Our love that stretched beyond enemy lines.

From across the country,
I stood by.
His side changed
While I was blamed.

A love stretched too thin,
Across those enemy lines.

Bethany Kibler

You and Me and the Road

It's just you, me, and the road tonight.
No one else needs to matter.
Let's you and me make a memory.
We can go someplace far.

No one else needs to matter.
This town is too entrapping.
We can go someplace far.
People are always watching here.

This town is too entrapping.
Pack the stuff you need.
People are always watching here.
Meet me down the road.

Pack the stuff you need.
I can't wait to run with you.
Meet me down the road.
Drop our cares and go.

I can't wait to run with you.
Take me away from my history.
Drop our cares and go.
Forget about everyone else tonight.

Take me away from my history.
Let's you and me make a memory.
Forget about everyone else tonight.
It's just you, me, and the road tonight.

Bethany Kibler

He Had Some Students

He had students with long, wild manes of hair.
He had students who had lost their ships and were floating
alone in outer space.
He had students who had never floated alone in outer
space.
He had some students.

He had students who longed to live in cabins of clay and
wattles made,
and students who loved horses that had
skins of ocean waters.
He had students who couldn't bear to leave their houses.
He had some students.

He had students who had lost their hands.
He had students who gave themselves up to the light.
He had students who were bound and tied and couldn't free
themselves when their rapists came.
He had some students

He had students with OCD who couldn't bear to touch
anybody.
He had students who had been cast out of love.
He had students who recovered love again, and some who
didn't.
He had some students.

He had students who hurt so bad their characters scalded
themselves in hot showers to lessen the pain.
He had students who couldn't bear to read their poems they
were so painful.
He had students who could only hear a ringing in their ears.
He had some students

He had students whose grandmothers had good wiggles.
He had students who loved metal core.
He had students who played music with the devil.
He had some students.

He had wonderful students, some with ink-stained fingers,
and some whose wrists that hurt from typing.
He had students who laughed, that would be most of them,
but one who never smiled, not once.
He had students.

He had some students.

Stuart Lishan

Journey without Maps

Carefully dated letters,
stamp of approval.

Symbols of all that was free,
no sign that our rebellion will end.

The desperately poor, chaotic country,
I'm not sure what I'm expecting to see.

It still keeps me up at night
How some of us live our lives.

We're seeking world order,
The Peace Heroes.

People lay the blame,
they join the vengeful army.

The guardians of morality
must develop its own strength.

Their commitment knows no bounds,
Neither should ours.

Samantha Lodge

Candy Cottage

Keep up, little girl, hold my hand,
I dropped them here and there,
we'll be home soon,
I promise they'll get us there.

The bread was plucked by hungry birds,
Now which way? I can't be sure.
We'll find comfort in the candy cottage of the glade
but the evil witch put him in a cage.

Scream as he did, nothing would matter
the blind old lady was mad as a hatter
ordering the girl to do her bidding
as she waited hungry, impatiently waiting.

I'm sorry young girl, failed you, I did
I dropped them here and there, led you here instead.
Home is but a distant past,
do as the old hag says.

"Light the oven, get in and see
is it hot enough for him and me?"
Playing dumb, she asked,
"Please show me how,"
pushed the witch in and made her howl.

Springing from the cage like a bird,
We are saved, I'm sure!
Grab the witch's riches,
"We'll find our way back," he said.
Papa will let us in, now that dear stepmother is dead.

Dani Miller

College Degree

I've thought about be-
coming a stripper to pay
that college degree...
Yet when I think that
way I remember there's my
fear of performing.

Dani Miller

Spaceships & Satellites

Hit by an asteroid long ago,
the gears rust, the lights flicker,
time takes its toll.

The low oxygen light blinks, then screams.
The air thrusting from the pumps,
the computer shouting, "EVACUATE",
there are lights, sounds of frights,
then it goes dim, the lights shut first,
red emergency lights flicker on,
the computer stops screaming,
though the sirens still ring clear,
and as the final lights dim,
giving more power to the oxygen,
all becomes bland and dark.

After an hour, I'm finally cooling off.

Dani Miller

Authors' Note [Sara Crosby]: This poem was created by the Spring 2017 class of ENGL 2291 ("America the Freakish"). It was intended as an homage to Emily Dickinson, who is known for her love of birds, hatred of cats, use of dashes, and refusal to title her poems (which had to be numbered by later editors instead). We constructed this poem like a game of telephone crossed with mad libs. While Prof. Crosby typed, each student added a line and then handed it off to the next student who added a line and so on, until we had "2291."

I see it there—a Bird
 Flying—oh so gracefully
 But—why?
 Is there a Little Murderer?

Lurking on the ground
 Why can't you let it be—
 Up then down
 Little Murderer—leave

Do you hear that—
 O! so beautiful tweet
 Little Murderer—why do You climb
 Bird—fly on bird

And—
 I have no idea
 End this Game now—
 The wandering Eyes
 My life has become

Nothing but the Bird
 Be chased
 By the Little Murderer

Hunter Burnett, Sarah Capelle, Janet Coffey, Jeremiah Davis, Taylor Edwards, Owen Fransen, Rhonda Kay Hero-Wilson, Bethany Kibler, Paxton Lindsey, John Long, Dani Miller, Kara Moore, Lauren Nichols, Mickey Pfarr, Madison Randolph, Chandler Sandusky, Justine Savage, Daniel Schirtzinger, Kevin Stapanian, David Strominger, Drew Stulgis, Jessica Vela, Cameron Ward, Destiny Williamson, Phillip Wolf

To You

To you, the creature of my dreams.
The bringer of bliss and delightful
sleep. You, the one that makes my insides
churn with expectation and my head
float far above the steady-minded
like I'm in a cartoon,
and bubble hearts are popping up
from Cupid's spell and
dancing around my head.
To you, my love and my passion -
the one thing that keeps me on my toes
because the lord only knows when
we'll next collide,
like fire and water,
and extinguish one another in our own
stubborn ways and create something altogether
unique and beautiful. It's cliché to call you my other half,
but how else do you explain the empty part of me
that longs to reach out when you're gone
and try to put myself in your shoes? I can't, because I'm
too afraid it won't be like you at all. With you, I can simply
be.

Mickey Pfarr

She was happy

She was happy.

She was mid morning, strawberry covered oatmeal.

She was barefoot, raindrop dancing.

She was crisp, white bed sheets.

She was crystal, glossy wide-eyed smiles.

She was happy.

She was follow your dreams to nowhere.

She was jolly mistletoe in the summertime.

She was sizzling vegetables on an iron pan.

She was pure laughter in the dead of night.

Paige Riebel

My Little Gentleman

The day you took me home, you never knew how attached to me you'd become.
Your day revolved around me, your happiness to my health.
You lost weight, but didn't know it.
I was a stressful being, but oh was I loved.

You talked of me as if I was your child, your own flesh and blood.
The fondness you had for me, no one would have known I was a simple lizard.
To them, the outsiders, that's all I was.
To you, I became your world for those few months.

Medicine, water, vitamins, food, you gave it all to me.
You never told anyone else that if you could, you'd have breathed for me as well.
Your love grew into hopes and dreams of a future I knew would never come.
I was dying, you were living.
You just learned how to play pretend.

I grew to expect you, I made faces at you, both smiles and glares.
You loved me so much, too much.
I didn't want to let go.
I think you knew, the day I was going to go.
You scheduled an appointment for me, for the rainbow bridge, knowing I
wouldn't make it to it.

The morning you knew, you were still trying anyways.
I was tired, oh so bloody tired, but you had one last thing to try.
I sagged in your hand as I opened my mouth, but I could not take your medicine.
You knew then, the realization dawning in your eyes like a war unfolding.

I hated seeing you cry.
You cried so much for me, yet you still called me your little gentleman, your little
Scholar.
You let me rest and left. You told me you went to a craft show.
A mother of a past lover gave you a baby blanket, it was soft.
You always knew I loved soft things, even if I didn't get to enjoy it long.

My limbs were no longer responding to my command, I was cold.
You held me that evening, on your tummy as you typed away on your keys.
I was slipping away then, I think you knew that.
You set the computer aside and just held me, told me it was okay.

So I let go.

I wish you could see me now, full of food and with a plump tail.
I am not sick anymore, I am warm and healthy.
Instead, you remember me dying.
Wrapping me in a cloth and putting me in the ground.

You coped, but not well.
Skipped meals, stress and tears galore.
You still feel empty, you find it hard to care.
To everyone else, they didn't get it.

They still don't.
I was a child to you, not a pet.
To me, you were my caretaker.
My mother, my lifeline.
Before you, I had never even had a name.

My name was Murdoch, and I know you will never forget me.
Thank you, for being my human.
Thank you for trying, because no one else would.

Maddy Roth



He remembered the wind's howl

He remembered the wind's howl.
He remembered gaining planets and nearly lost an ocean.
He remembered, like an endless clock recording time
He remembered the wind's howl.
He remembered the trees telling tall tales of old.
He remembered the sun, like a child, following him.
He remembered the wind's howl.
He remembered not being old, a raisin.
He remembered being no saint, causing ruckus wherever he went.
He remembered the moon, laughing at his figure.
He remembered the

Daniel Schirtzinger



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OUR SIGNATURE DISH. PURE COM-
FORT FOOD SIMMERED IN ITS OWN
NATURAL JUICES WITH A MELODY OF
SECRET INGREDIENTS. SERVED WITH
A SIDE OF COLOR AND GARNISHED
WITH A DASH OF PIZAZZ. A HEARTY
SELECTION THAT WILL DELIGHT THE
SENSES AND EXPAND THE MIND.

The Prison Poems

A Group Poetry Collaboration by OSU Marion and Members of the Poetry Community at Marion Correctional Institution

Pablo Tanguay: For the past several months, I met once a week, for two hours, with a group of poets from Marion Correctional. We studied Shakespeare and Juan Felipe Herrera, Natasha Tretheway and Dylan Thomas. And everyone in between, at least everyone we had time for. Grandmaster Flash and Elizabeth Bishop. Marge Piercy. Maya Angelou had a pretty profound effect on at least a few of us. We studied the major forms, and then we wrote poems in them: sonnets, villanelles, sestinas, ballads, haikus, ghazals. And on and on. I was surprised most not by their talent as writers—I sort of expected that, to be honest—but by their talent as readers. I was blown away by their perceptions of the poems we studied. I myself am one who reads poems over and over, who *needs* to read poems over and over, in order to get a grip on them. And when I teach poetry classes with traditional college students, and ask them to read aloud, and ask them to comment on the spot, I can feel in the room the nervous tension. But the Marion poets read smartly and empathetically, on the spot. They were lively and engaged. They were most definitely opinionated. In those regards, they were a pleasure to work with. And let me say also that while they sometimes complained good naturedly about having to write in traditional forms—many of the poets come from a slam or spoken word background—they turned out to be, once they sat down and began to work, remarkably proficient at writing in them. I could go on and on about these guys, for real. But let just finish by saying they were all, to a one, remarkably kind to me. They allowed me into their world, into their home, really, and made me feel welcome. I look forward to continuing the journey.

Stuart Lishan: At OSU-Marion we had gotten a small grant to bring in bring in some theater people from New York (playwright Stephen Cedars, and Julia Hansen, the Artistic Director of Theater Masters, an important support, outreach, development, and engagement organization in the dramatic arts). They were coming to my spring semester English 2267 class (Intro to Creative Writing) to conduct a residency in the writing of ten-minute one-act plays with my students, plays that would be centered on the social-justice theme of prison reform. In preparation for the class, last fall I had a phone conversation with Stephen and Julia, in which Julia suggested that I try to find a way to take my students to the Marion Correctional Institution (MCI), so that they might have a taste of what they might be writing about. Around that time, I ran into Pablo Tanquay, a good friend and great-hearted fellow who is the Undergraduate Studies Program Manager in the Department of English. He told me he was teaching a poetry class at MCI every Wednesday morning.

It didn't take long for an idea to be hatched between us: That we try to arrange a meeting between my students and Pablo's in the spring.

And so we started working on that, enlisting the help of Kendra Hovey, a wonderfully generous woman who works for Healing Broken Circles, an organization dedicated to working with people touched by the prison system, and who coordinates classes like Pablo's at MCI. Eventually, in March, we got together, my OSU students and Pablo's MCI students, for a poetry-writing session in the prison. First, to break the ice, we did some introductions – a short “alien writing” exercise, to tune up our ears, where we tried to convey an emotion in an “alien” language that each of made up on the spot. And then we started to write. Our assignment was called “A Reason for Everything”: Each of us wrote a line, and then we passed our piece of paper to the left, and the next person would write the next line, and then we'd do it again, and so on, round-robin fashion, each of us following a short prompt for each of our lines. The result was nineteen poems, written by all of us, OSU and MCI students alike, our lines indistinguishable as to who wrote what, for we were truly writing together that morning, as one class, as one poet. Here is some of what we wrote.

OSU Marion Contributors: Armani Borden, Laneysa Johnson, Dathan Lyon, Alli Morrow, Scotty Power, Paige Riebel, Ethan Rose, Daniel Schirtzinger, and Rea Swain

Members of the poetry community at Marion Correctional Institution

Because your love had faded like summer does fall
When the Winds command the hairs on my skin to crawl
When the image in the Puddle blurs
Because the rippled move more than the world
There was that freshness in the air that broke me.

And when you looked into my eyes stars exploded.
Because you saw what no one else could
Because you chose to see the good, the non-existent good in me
When my beard grew thick and burly
There was an image that was visibly — invisible.

And Because you stand with me always
When Oceans vied, like titans, waging war on us
Because only you can soothe the monster in my soul
When the night shadows surround my weakened being
There was a light that guided me out of the shadows.

And that is why I will follow that beacon, out of the shadow
and mist and veil.

Because the day began before day break
When we met in the no man's land of our bed
When the sheets were pulled up to our chins
Because the chill from the window called my name
There was a sound so soothing it calmed my soul.

And when our toes stuck out from under those sheets
Because my socks fell off and my feet got cold
We made love in the winters fold
When The night was deep and The stars so bright
There was the moon, glistening like a pearl in the vast shadow.

And Because there was nothing but your warmth
When the chill of the day before that covered us
Because of the love between us like a blanket that wrapped us
When we sat alone together cozy,
There was a strong pull that I didn't want to leave.

And that is why I will Always be with you,
to soothe your nightmares and place halos
around the kernels of your dreams.

Because You had light
When the rain caressed your already tear-dampened cheeks
When my throat closed up and it was hard to speak
Because in Essence, You're Right
There was no sound, my ears were dull.

And when the ring screams louder, like a murder
Because nothing stings worse than your own regret
Because it is brought about by The seed you sow
When you noticed what you have done
There was not much you could do, not much to be done.

And Because you ran out of options now
When your algebra homework was eaten by A dog
Because his hunger surpassed your own,
When morning becomes afternoon and it changes to evening
There was a silent show playing on the back of your lids.

And that is why the fire rings conquering your stage will
never seem to fade.

Because You had light
When the rain caressed your already tear-dampened cheeks
When my throat closed up and it was hard to speak
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And that is why the fire rings conquering your stage will
never seem to fade.

Because the floor was softer than I imagined
When I step upon it I dreamed and
When I Put my foot down
Because I was finished with the way you treated me
There was blood on the carpet and all over the walls.

And when the stain matched the stain in my heart
Because it was wounded, my soul seeping out
Because my heart whimpered for something better, anything
When you smashed my heart like glass on the floor
There was a sound of shattering at an innocent heart.

And Because you hurt me in ways I couldn't imagine
When we split, we broke apart
Because I couldn't handle this type of pain
When I filed away my tears with faraway memories of kisses lost
There was the distant sounds of doors closing

And that is why I'm feed up with your past. I can't
take your baggage and we are through.

Because the green bud breaks through the blanket of snow
When the early sun rose from the earthen field
When I peaked through the foggy window
Because the television is broke and we had nothing to do
There was a child sitting on a log.

And when The Seasons Called out to You that They All Had passed,
Because what is emotion without a muse
Because sound vibrates and makes me feel cool
When love is the maestro
There was a congregation of puppies.

And Because the snow snuffs out the green bud
When the cold wind turns your head around
Because you, too, had seen those things
When all of a sudden spring is knocking at the door
There were flowers in bloom beyond your wildest dreams.

And that is why you must take time for the
simple, and see the extravagance within.



PROSE

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THIS CLASSIC AMERICAN ENTRÉE IS LOADED WITH A MULTITUDE OF FLAVORS THAT PACK A PUNCH. BREADED IN CREATIVITY AND FRIED IN SUSPENSE TILL GOLDEN BROWN, THIS MEAL IS SURE TO ENTICE THE SPIRIT, WARM THE HEART, AND EXCITE YOUR TASTE BUDS.

Milo

Lauren Chivington

HE TROTS CONTENTEDLY THROUGH THE CHOPPY, post-winter grass that looks like a bad haircut, pointing his nose toward the cloud-spotted sky with closed eyes, peacefully allowing the spring wind to push his satellite dish ears back toward his neck. His eight pound body bristles and growls at the fifty pound boxer across the street in an understanding of mutual protection as old as our species. Time has seemed to accelerate since the first time I saw him in the gray, metal shelter cage. While all the other dogs barked shrilly and pawed at the bars, he was silent, observing my fiancé and me as we observed him. We attempted to take him outside to play, but he just sat there by the door, whether stunned or stubborn I didn't know because I had not yet learned how to read him. Looking back I see that he was afraid of the outdoors, perhaps rightly so as he had been left there before being rescued.

As they handed the puppy called Limoncello into our arms, my fiancé and I immediately decided a new name was in order, and I mused about our authority to call him whatever we liked and how the now-unnamed puppy would have to abide by it. As I awkwardly carried him out of the building and into the car, I was amazed that the shelter would just hand us a tiny piece of life to care for with no prior experience and frankly no real clue. We had so much to learn. When we took him home it was below freezing outside, and he was so small that we had to carry him down the stairs and set him onto the perfectly-cut square stones jigsawing the backyard. The cold hurt him, and he did not understand it. That kind of thing was and is heartbreaking to see in a being without malice. We tried to buy him a coat but none of the stores had any in stock. The best we could do was a dog-sized lamb costume. It wasn't much, but we fastened it securely to give him the feeling of being hugged in protection when out in the cold. He was so

timid, bopping tentatively in the likeness of another animal.

There is a huge black dog living in the home next door. One night when Milo—then only nine weeks old—was outside with me, the dog charged at him. I have never seen a living thing more terrified in all my life. His fear was just as visceral as mine, but his only way of coping was by running to his only protector, a muscleless girl under five feet tall with back problems and a heart condition. We would be utterly doomed in the wild, but here in the suburbs we could play at safety. I scooped his wriggling body and wildly clawing paws into my arms, held him close, and promised him with everything I had that I would keep him safe. For the first few weeks I didn't sleep more than a few hours at night, and even then only within reach of his bed, because an ancient instinct I never knew I had was telling me to protect this fragile bit of growing life.

For the past month I have witnessed the incredibly quickening growth that comes with puppyhood: in size, in intelligence, in rebellion, in confidence, in security. I have watched Milo's face mature and his muscles begin to show under his fur. I've made eye contact with this little, sentient thing and watched him see, recognize, interpret, determine a course of action, and in a blink's time pounce with full trust in his prize. I can predict with

perfect accuracy the moment Milo will strike, because I too am learning to see, to recognize, and to react to his every movement. I have seen the moment when timidity gives over to bravery, as well as the falls, scrapes, leaps, and recoveries as knowledge is acquired for next time. We cannot truly know what is happening within our dogs' minds, but lack of language is a pitiful excuse for the justification of mistreatment or neglect of these creatures. There is definitely something behind those eyes. Δ

*The Call
Center*
Jan Coffey

JARED LOOKED AROUND THE FLOOR OF HIS office, his face twisting into a sneer. The office was one room and held 220 employees in little cages. Jared stood in his personal jail, shackled to a headset for another six hours and forty-three minutes. He let his gaze wander around the room while he waited on that old bitch to find her bill. He was tall enough to see above the tops of the tiny cubicles.

The office was awash in shades of beige; everything the same. One entire wall of the office was ceiling to floor plate glass windows that showed an uninspiring view of the freeway and parking lot. Covering the walls were cheaply framed motivational posters meant to inspire, rows and rows of puny cages just big enough to hold a computer and a phone. The office was spacious, yet suffocating.

Jared looked at the supervisors' corner, disgust deforming his handsome face. Through the wall of glass that served as his office, Mr. Fritzburg was working on his computer. Everything about the man made Jared angry. Mr. Fritzburg favored the '80's power look'. He had slicked back hair that always looked wet even after eight hours on the job. Jared had never seen him without a double-breasted suit that seemed to be custom fitted to his body. He even wore them on weekend overtime when casual clothes were accepted. He continuously polished his frameless glasses as though he might be able to polish away problem employees.

"Hello? Are you there? Hello?" *Ah, the old bitch, finally back on the phone.*

"Yes Mrs. George, I'm still here!" Jared forced the cheeriness from his throat. *I almost want to kill myself.*

"Are you ready for my account number?"

"Yes I am, ma'am. Go ahead when you're ready."

"Wait. I think I have the wrong bill. Are you with J and R Collections?"

Jared clenched his jaw against the violent things he

wanted to say to her.

“Are you there?”

Taking a deep breath, Jared stated in a flat voice, “Yes ma’am, I’m here. No ma’am we’re the cable company.”

“Oh I’m sorry! Hang on, let me go find that bill.” The old bitch let the phone drop to the counter with a loud clunk making him wince as the feedback drilled through his head. Jared closed his eyes against the headache that was trying to sink its sharp teeth into his brain.

“Bro!” Ty popped up from the little cell next to Jared. Ty exuded douchiness from every single one of his toner-tightened pores. He was tan, worked out three times a week, and had a BMW. He spent a lot of time in the bathroom working on his hair, which was a carefully styled disarray of sharp, inky spikes. His teeth were so white that Jared had to fight the urge to squint when Ty smiled. Ty had a palate of Easter colored shirts in his wardrobe and wore a bright pastel shirt almost every day. Today, it was a cotton-candy pink that was so vivid, it made Jared’s teeth hurt just looking at it.

“Bro!” Ty said again. *If I could just punch him in the face, just once, it would make my whole week*, Jared thought with amusement.

“What’s up Ty?” Jared said. Jared felt that he was supposed to be friends with this asshole because it was the “right” thing to do. He felt that most people were friends with other people that they seemed to have a lot

in common with. Because Jared was a perfectionist, he felt that Ty would have been a good “friend”. Like Ty, Jared also worked out three times a week, made sure that he was properly groomed and had a sense of style.

But Ty doesn’t have this damn demon on his shoulder. This little bastard is always trying to convince me that it’s okay to not care about people. They are all just living their stupid fucking lives, pretending to be perfect on the outside, but hiding their cruelty like rats hiding their food. Work, go home, go to bed, wake up, and repeat. How many of my fellow employees, who smiled and acted like they had perfect lives, would leave work each day and go home to beat their wives, kids, pets? How many went home and sought the company of a child through the Internet, tricking the poor kid into thinking that they had found a new ‘friend’? But I can see through their ‘public appearance’ bullshit. I can help them. I can free them from the hell that is their lives. The demon agreed.

“Bro! Do you wanna go out after work and get some fuckin Jager Bombs?” Ty asked excitedly. *I would rather poke my eyes out with my own thumbs. We are always getting drunk. Everything was a reason to celebrate and drink. His sister had a baby, we get drunk. Ty got a raise, we get drunk. It was Wednesday; we are going to get drunk. I hate alcohol.*

He felt that it was too easy to talk when the warm caress of the alcohol spread through his system. The

thought of someone really knowing how he felt about his plans made Jared go ice cold with fear.

It had happened once. Jared had stayed at the bar after Ty had talked some girl into going back to his place. Jared was sitting at the bar alone, nursing his fifth or sixth rum and coke when a girl sat down next to him. They began to talk and somehow Jared spilled his entire story while staring into his drink. He told her all about wanting to blow up the call center, his dark thoughts and the demon on his shoulder. It came pouring out. He tried to stop it, but his traitorous mouth would not be checked. Feeling aghast, he finally looked at her and was astounded to see a smirk mar her pretty face. "At what point did you find anything funny about what I just said?" Jared was incredulous.

"You can't be serious." She replied taking a large sip of her wine. "You sound like some kind of psychotic vigilante. Killing people to prove that their existence doesn't matter? A demon on your shoulder? Really?"

With glass in hand, she leaned back, crooked her arm over the top rung of the bar stool, crossed her legs and smiled at him. Jared could see the disbelief written on her features. For just a brief moment, Jared felt on fire with rage. *How can she not believe me?* He thought incredulously. His words had rung true while he vomited his story onto her unsuspecting ears. He wanted to wrap his hands around her throat until she took back her

words. As cold as a bucket of ice water being dumped over his head, Jared's next thought was like a life preserver. *She doesn't believe me.* He wouldn't drown in the sea of his admission after all. Relief was instantaneous.

"Alright, you caught me." He said with a flirtatious smile. "I was trying to get an unbiased reaction from you, but you already have it figured out. You're right I made it all up. I'm a writer and I was trying to get some feedback for my next book. I guess my idea wasn't so believable after all." He arranged his features into a look of disappointment. "Well, it's back to the drawing board then." He tossed back the last of his drink while signaling to the bartender for the next round.

"No! It's a great story; I really like the idea that someone could be so cold and calculating. It's completely different from the way I think about people. I think that everyone's existence matters a great deal, even if the live mundane lives. So your psycho thinks about all the bad people that work in his office, but what about all the good people? What about the people who work to support their family or help their parents with the bills? What about the guy fresh out of high school trying to pay for college? What about the single mom who just wants something better for her kids? Are you going to blow those people up too?"

Jared immediately thought of Annemarie, a co-worker of his who fit the description of a 'good person'. She was trying to get through a messy di-

voice and take care of her daughter all alone. Though, through all the stress in her life, Annemarie still found it in her heart to treat people like they mattered. Annemarie did things like remember people's birthdays, order Girl Scout cookies and support the school band by buying wrapping paper from their parents. She even seemed to like Mr. Fritzburg. Anytime Jared said something against him, Annemarie would defend Mr. Fritzburg by saying that he worked hard and Jared should cut him some slack. Jared wondered how he could keep Annemarie away from the call center when the time came.

"Well, I see you have given me a lot to think about. Thanks – I don't think you told me your name?" Jared assaulted her with his I'm-a-charming-guy smile again. Laughing, she replied, "It's Gwen and your charisma is starting to show, so it's time for me to go. My fiancée just walked in anyway. It was good talking to you too. You didn't tell me your name either."

"It's David. Too bad about the fiancée though." Jared said with a laugh. Gwen slid from the bar stool, wished him luck on his book, and threaded her way through the crowd. As Jared watched her leave, she turned back and glanced at him. In that moment, Jared could see the fear on her face and he knew that his lie about writing a book hadn't been bought at all. He watched her weaver her way to the exit, realizing that there was no fiancée. Feeling ill, he paid his tab and

left. He hadn't been able to concentrate on anything for days after that. He was so worried that someone would figure out who he was and that would be the end of his plans. No one had questioned him or found his apartment and eventually, Jared began to relax. He swore to never drink again. It wasn't worth it.

"Jared. Jared!" Ty said snapping his fingers in front of Jared's face. "Are you there? You kinda spaced out there for a minute."

"Sorry. I was just thinking about whether I can waste the money tonight. What's the occasion?"

Ty laughed. "Do we really need one, bro? I just wanna try to get some tail. If you're broke dude, I got you covered. It's not a problem."

Jared feigned a hearty laugh. "Sounds like a great plan."

Ty looked past Jared and said, "Here comes Annemarie. Man, she has a killer body. I wish I could talk her into spending the night with me. She always laughs whenever I suggest it, like she thinks I'm kidding. I've even asked her on a date a half a dozen times and you know I *never* date. I always get the same answer, 'Ty, I could never date you. Hearts would break all over the city if I did and I can't be responsible for the mass hysteria.'" Ty sighed. "But I always try."

"Hey guys." Annemarie said with a smile. After casting a quick glance toward Mr. Fritzburg's office to make sure he was still working, she leaned against Jared's desk. "What's

up?”

“Hello, you sexy thing.” Ty said raking his eyes over her body. “We were just talking about going to the bar after work. Do you want to go or can I just take you back to my place tonight?”

“Ty, you are never going to get me into bed, but I do like your enthusiasm.” She said with a laugh. “So, I will say no to the offer, but yes to the bar. Are you planning on going tonight?” She asked looking at Jared.

“Yeah. Ty is going to drive me.” Jared said smiling into her upturned face.

“Good.” She replied, beaming at him. Suddenly, she seemed to realize that she grinning widely and hastily looked away, but not before Jared noticed a faint rose bloom on her cheeks. “So Ty, which hell hole are we going to tonight?”

“Well, I was thinking about going to-”

“Hello people. What are we doing here? Shouldn’t we be taking calls?” Mr. Fritzburg said, appearing like a ghost directly behind Annemarie’s shoulder making her jump. Jared sighed and closed his eyes. *Here we go.* Mr. Fritzburg took his glasses off and began polishing them with a white linen handkerchief that he produced from the bowels of his suit. “Annemarie,” He said polishing furiously, “I’m disappointed in you. You know better than to be away from your desk without being on break. And to socialize with these...boys.” He seethed, staring

directly at Jared, his almost black eyes snapping with contempt. Jared felt the anger creep up his neck. The demon was dancing with glee at the prospect of Jared losing his control. With supreme effort, Jared managed to give Mr. Fritzburg and pleading look and said,

“She was just here asking me for my copy of the newsletter. She wasn’t here for long.” *I know he picks on her just to piss me off.* Every time she had ever been in there was because she had been caught talking to Jared and every single time, she left Mr. Fritzburg’s office in tears. She never would tell Jared what Mr. Fritzburg had said to her.

“I’ve been watching you three for the last few minutes and I didn’t see you hand her the newsletter. In fact, I don’t even see one on your desk.” He said and seeming to notice Ty for the first time, “Ty sit down and turn your phone on. If I see you with your phone off again, I’ll write you up.” Whirling on Jared, he said “Sit down and I don’t want to hear another word from you. I’m sure I’ll see you in my office again before the end of the week. Annemarie, if you will lead the way to my office, there are a few things we need to...discuss. Namely, your conduct and how who you socialize with can damage your career.”

“See you later guys.” Annemarie said glumly as she started toward Mr. Fritzburg’s office.

“God I hate that asshole.” Ty said angrily. “He Always picks on her.

I wish I could get him fired.”

“I wish I could run him over with my car.” Jared said flatly.

“I wouldn’t ruin my car for him.” Ty said with a laugh. Abruptly turning back to his computer, Ty said brightly, “Thank you for calling Baxter Digital, where we specialize in all your digital needs. This is Tyler, how may I assist you today?” Ty turned back to his computer and Jared tuned him out, staring blankly at his screen.

I could kill everyone in this office gleefully. Just blow them all away. I could die a happy man just to see this building reduced to a pile of burning rubble and bodies. I wonder what Ty would think if I just let my true self out and started blowing people away. Would he run? Would he cower? Would he piss his pants? The last thought made Jared smile. I bet he would, the little bitch.

Realizing that his call had been disconnected, Jared quickly turned his phone off and stood again, looking over to Mr. Fritzburg’s office. Inside, he could see Annemarie looking at the floor, slowly nodding at whatever bullshit Mr. Fritzburg was currently spewing. Fritzburg’s hands were gesturing wildly and his face was red from the force of his words. Jared looked away and again felt the rage come over him. He glanced back to Annemarie and was surprised to see her looking at him. Mr. Fritzburg whipped his head around and made eye contact with Jared.

“Sit down, Jared.” Mr. Fritz-

burg mouthed. Jared imagined pulling out an Uzi and wondered how many bullets it would take to saw him in half. He smiled a huge phony smile and held up both his hands in a gesture of surrender and sat down. He turned his phone on. Immediately the beep sounded in his ear, promising a new caller.

“Thank you for calling Baxter Digital, where we specialize in all your digital needs. This is Jared, how may I assist you today?”

“Finally! Do you know how long I have been on hold? *Do you?* I’ve been on hold for over ten fucking minutes! This is totally unacceptable, I want to speak to your goddamn supervisor right now!” A man screamed into the phone, making Jared’s headset whine again.

Jared sighed, wishing for what felt like the hundredth time that day the he could be done with the pain that plagued his mind. “Alright. Can you hold please?”

“No I can’t fucking hold! What do you think I’ve been doing for the last ten damn minutes? Sitting here with my thumb up my ass? Get him-”

Jared disconnected the call. *I don’t have the patience for this shit.* Looking at the clock, he realized that only seventeen minutes had pass since he last checked the time. *This is going to be a long ass day.* He thought bleakly as the incoming call beep sounded in his ear again like a death knell. Six hours and twenty-six minutes to go. Δ

Imagination Walls

Ash Cook

WHEN AUTUMN WAS LITTLE, SHE OFTEN imagined that the dark, wooden-paneled walls throughout her grandmother's house had faces in them. Whorls of lighter brown were mouths or noses, the darker, more solidified knots – often in pairs close together – were the eyes. Some were right-side up, some upside down, and some were even sideways; all of them came in a vast variety of emotions. Most of them frightened her.

Summers spent at her grandmother's house were almost always an endless struggle to alleviate boredom. Her grandmother was far more protective (or as Autumn called it, paranoid) of her than her mother ever was, and so she was not allowed to ride her bike all over the neighborhood, fish (or swim) in the nearby creek, or lose herself in the woods for hours on a search for the perfect tree to build a tree-house in. All adventurous activities that were common at home, but strictly forbidden at Grandma's. There were only two ways to pass the time at that old house; she could pick blackberries from the canes that grew in the alley, or sit around the house reading and watching the faces in the walls.

She considered it watching because there would be times that she swore if she stared long enough – without blinking – and held real still, the faces would move. It was never drastic movements, or anything with which she could be certain, but the imagination of an eight year old bookworm is vast and she was fond of using it. There were days when she would sprawl out on her back on the floor and watch the walls for hours while her imagination roamed. Faces became friends (or adversaries), monsters and fairies. She'd even make up names and entire realms for them to live in, with stories of their lives and how they came to be imprisoned in the walls.

As the years passed, Autumn grew into an excruciatingly shy teen and an even shier, awkward young adult, yet she returned to that house often. During those years her imagination calmed and

the faces faded into memory, nearly forgotten. If it weren't for the events that transpired one tempestuous night in early June while visiting Grandma to celebrate her graduation from high school, Autumn would certainly have forgotten them entirely.

She knew it was supposed to storm that day, but she wasn't concerned. She'd made the hour long drive often enough over the previous couple of years to know it by heart, but of course her grandmother's paranoia kicked into overdrive after watching the weather forecast. Pregnant, grey clouds were already rolling in to make the late afternoon skies appear almost night-like when Grandma begged her to stay the night. "Look, it'll be a down-pour!" She pleaded, giving Autumn that stern-yet-worried look that she knew she couldn't win against.

"I've driven in worse."

"It would make me feel a lot better if you stayed." Grandma's hand was on her arm, the soft skin of her fingers and palm as cold as Autumn ever remembered them. She sighed and begrudgingly obliged her grandmother, mentally groaning all the while. While Grandma went about getting dinner started, Autumn found herself in her old childhood bedroom preparing the bed for her first stay in nearly five years. The storm started as she was stuffing a pillow into its pillowcase, and by the time dinner was finished and eaten, and she'd said her goodnight to Grandma, it was a raging squall. She climbed in under the

covers – still cursing herself for letting Grandma convince her of staying – and worked on trying to sleep. Bright flashes of lightning lit the room in snap shots through the curtains over the large window beside the bed, causing shadows to dance along the walls, animating those nearly-forgotten twisted faces.

She was practically asleep when the first one pried itself out of the wall. She just happened to notice its tiny brown body scamper across the floor, the overly large head bouncing like some kind of bobble-head. Like any normal person, she blinked her eyes, giving them a quick rub to clear her vision. Then she pinched herself, thinking this was assuredly a dream. The pinch hurt, so she knew she was wide awake. No longer able to see the tiny being, she shrugged and closed her eyes, determined to forget it and sleep. She almost succeeded in doing just that when she heard a distinctive creaking noise like the sound branches make when being tossed by a hard wind. There weren't any trees near enough to the house for such noises to be so easily heard, so she lifted her head from the pillow to let her eyes scan the room.

Nothing seemed out of place at first, but just as she was about to relax back into her pillow, she caught it out of the corner of her eye. The little bobble-headed figure with its unmoving, twisted face was leaning into the opposite wall, its stubby arms reaching *into* the wood paneling halfway

through the process of extracting another face. Already the chubby head of the second creature was clear of the paneling, the rest of its petite body gradually following while the freed one tugged. Autumn had recently seen a Japanese Anime called *Princess Mononoke*, and after taking in the shapes of these strange creatures, she realized they reminded her of the tree spirits in the movie. The only difference was that these things were brown instead of white and looked almost as if they were made of wood.

She wasn't sure if they were cognizant of her watching, but once the second one was clear of its prison, the pair moved along the wall to a third face and set about releasing it. They made much faster work of this one, and within minutes the two became three, then four, then five, until nearly a dozen of them were scuttling about the room, their stubby peg-legs tapping on the hardwood like wooden dowels on a board. Autumn sat watching all of this in stunned silence, shaking her head several times as if she could clear the scene from her mind. After having no success, she resigned herself to the reality of the situation and rigidly kept still while the walls emptied around her.

When at last they could no longer conceivably wrench any more from the walls, the crowd of miniscule bodies gathered around the first one as if regarding their leader. This one's face was one of those that frightened Autumn as a child, with large eyes that

were set in haunted ovals, and a mouth that seemed frozen in a slanted frown. It made a sweeping gesture with one of its diminutive arms, and quickly turned to face her while all of the other creatures jumbled into an upside down pyramid formation behind it, reminding her of a flock of geese. With every movement their unwieldy heads bobbed on their pintsize bodies; no two exactly the same in face or appearance, but all of them analogous in movement. Without a word they marched to the foot of the bed.

At this point, screaming seemed a very natural reaction. And yet Autumn couldn't even will herself to open her mouth. She'd say she was frozen by fear, by that didn't seem to be it. If frozen by curiosity is a thing, then perhaps that was it, as she sat there wrapped in an old hand-sewn quilt – perspiring – with her heart hammering in her throat. Okay, maybe there was some panic there too, but more than anything she felt drawn to observe these peculiar creatures as they climbed up over the edge of the bed and settled – still in formation – just a few inches from her feet. Other than the occasional twist or bob of a head from one or another of them, they all simply stood there staring at her silently while she gaped back.

Several minutes went by with Autumn frozen in silence, while they stayed at the foot of the bed, their inert bodies smaller than her palm, with heads nearly proportionate in size. Each time one of those heads would

kink or dip she'd feel a nervous shudder in her neck and would have to force herself to not look away. And then she felt it, a strange tingle in her head as if a tiny bug had found a way in and was crawling along her meninges. Just as she started to worry about it, the first wave of their thoughts filled her head. *You have no need to fear us.* She blinked and gasped out loud, nearly giving in to the urge to pull the quilt over her head like a terrified child hiding from a monster under the bed.

We mean you no harm. You are safe. Their voice in her head was profound yet quiet, reminiscent of people reciting verses together in a church congregation. It had a sort of calming effect, and Autumn found herself relaxing after a minute or two as the group of creatures serenely stared her down, unmoving.

"Wh-what are you?" It came out as a whisper. Her lips were parched from anxiety and licking them did little good with as dry as her mouth was. The leader cocked its head, those large eyes stoic and vacant, yet she could tell it was mulling her question over.

We are your creations. Born from your imagination years ago.

"Why?" She could feel her curiosity taking over, recognizing that these inexplicable creatures were in fact her childhood dreams given life. The leader's head creaked as it twisted to the opposite side, still considering.

To help you, and ourselves. We are fading. Your memories of us were nearly extinct. Your imagina-

tion is not what it was, and without it we cannot exist. Several of the other creatures began bobbing their heads, the gesture both grotesque and somehow endearing. She gave their words a minute to sink in, willing herself to remember her childhood dreams of them. Slowly she nodded along with them.

"Okay, how will you help?"

We shall return to you, so that we are with you everywhere you go. We will inspire your imagination and ignite it when we feel that it has grown dim.

"Return to me?" She blinked, confused. The entire group of them bobbed their heads vigorously, as if in answer to her question. The leader took several steps toward her, its head still tilted at an odd angle, indifferent eyes impossible to read. She suddenly felt the cold chill of fear slither up her spine, but had no time to react as the entire mass of wooden figures surged forward. Just as she opened her mouth to scream, the leader leapt at her, slamming into her mouth.

Its body was softer than she'd imagined it might be – not much tougher than bread – and as she worked to scream around it, it wedged its way down her throat. Before she could close her mouth, the next creature flew at her, and then the next, each of them filing into her body one after the other while she fell back onto the bed, grasping at her invaded throat and chest. There was no pain, just the discomfort of something soft being

forced down her esophagus for several long minutes without reprieve. Finally the last of them took its turn, squeezing down her throat and putting an end to the nightmarish foray. She collapsed into the bed with exhaustion, rubbing her throat and staring at the ceiling in shock.

Although unsure of how long the incident took from start to finish, Autumn did know that it took her mind and body twice as long to calm down; for her heart to stop racing and her chest to quit heaving in desperate attempts at catching her breath. She let her hands search herself over, feeling for any changes to her body. As far as she could tell, there were none, but she got up and went to the mirrored dresser anyway. Flipping on the light, she examined herself in the mirror, once again searching for any physical evidence of her ordeal. Still nothing. She sighed softly and was about to flip the lights back off when she noticed something strange in the mirror. The walls were empty. Smooth, grainless wood stretched around the room, unmarred by any dark knots or whorls. Quickly she flipped the light switch off and climbed back into bed, shuddering.

Unable to simply shrug everything off and find sleep, she allowed her mind to replay all of what had happened. Over and over the scene repeated, until she slowly started to relax and even managed to convince herself it had all been a really bad dream that she would wake up from in the morning. Just as she started to drift into

sleep, she felt that peculiar tingle in her head again, followed instantly by their voice. *It was not a dream. We are still here. We will always be here.* Δ

Sunsets & Sand

Ash Cook

I KNEW WHAT SHE WAS GOING TO SAY LONG before she said it. The declaration of my father's death hung heavy in the air for the silent, twenty minute drive to the beach with the late evening sun chasing us in the side mirrors of my mom's Honda Civic. It was mid-summer and the lake was still crowded with people as we arrived. She took me to a nearby bench where we sat and watched the waves, the hushed rhythm to their lapping nearly as peaceful as the ocean's. My numbness had already set in long before we'd found the bench, so her struggle for words seemed almost awkward to me. When she turned to me with red eyes brimming with tears and took my hand, my head was already hanging, eyes focused so intently on the warm, rocky sand squishing between my toes that it probably seemed like I had never seen sand before.

A couple of weeks before he made the decision to turn the key in the ignition of his car with his garage door closed – a pile of pictures of me in the seat beside him, something my mom had mentioned later on – my father had called me to say goodbye. “I love you, Ashley. I always have. I’m so sorry I haven’t been there for you.” I was ten years old and listening to him from the other side of the country as he pleaded with me to forgive him, and to understand that he loved me. I could hear the grief in his voice, so acutely poignant that even though I couldn’t understand what was going on, I knew that he was crying and it instantly terrified me and brought tears to my eyes. My father never cried. When my mother saw those fearful wet streaks staining my cheeks, she hurriedly took the phone from me and nudged me into the next room. I pressed my ear against the door to hear, the salty-warm tears leaving a smudge against the wood.

“Patrick, don’t do this to her.” She was scolding him. Any other time, I would have found this normal; he was always making her angry, whether from forgetting child support, or canceling my summer visit with one lame excuse or another. This was

different, and I knew it without understanding how I knew. It might have been the tone in her voice, or in his while he had been pleading with me, but something was wrong and I instinctively felt it. I strained harder against the door, wishing I could stretch my hearing like I could my vision when I squinted just right. It was no use, though; I couldn't hear the other side of the conversation no matter how hard I tried.

"Please, Pat. You can't. She needs you, you're her father." Her voice was quieter now, more desperate. I could tell she was crying too, and suddenly I was through the door, having turned the handle and stumbled in without consciously making the decision to do so. The phone was already away from her ear, the silent room reverberating with the flat dial-tone that signaled a hang-up from the person on the other line. For a long moment she sat there staring at it, tear drops standing out as darker splotches in the light grey cotton of her t-shirt. Then she was a flurry of motion, dialing numbers and talking rapidly with police, giving out names, numbers, and addresses that I couldn't have remembered the next day if I were asked.

A knot of worry had been building inside of me during all of it; so much tension that I felt like I might implode as I turned to run from the kitchen, sprinting out the back door and through the cool evening grass. The summer sun was still at least an hour from setting, and it burned my eyes through the haze of tears as I jogged through one back yard

after another on my way to the fence that gated off the military housing. Near the corner was a post with its chain-link fence pulled away from waist-high down; a secret hole for getting on the other side. I squeezed through and made my way to the creek, bare feet navigating the cool stream in just a couple of quick steps to the other side, where I stopped in front of my favorite place in the entire world, a tree with my very own treehouse. Every bit of it was built by my hands, and even though I kept it secret I was proud of it.

Along the trunk I had created a ladder of boards, nailed in but still wobbly. Only because of months of practice was I able to scale it quickly, the boards dipping and creaking under my weight, but caution wasn't one of my concerns at that moment, so I scurried up. It wasn't until I'd reached the main platform, crawled into the cramped cabin, and tucked myself back into the corner that I let the flood of tears come. Every salty orb was laced with fear, knowing that something terrible was happening, but completely in the dark about what it could be. It wasn't until the sun had long set and even the lightning bugs stopped flashing that I climbed down and headed home.

There was no news the next day, or the day after. By the end of the first week, I started to relax. The everyday activities of being a kid on summer break consumed me, until I nearly forgot about that distressing

night and its ominous phone call. But it did hover in the back of my mind, barely there until the day my mother called for a sitter for my baby brother and asked me if I'd like to go to the lake with her for a walk on its beach. There was something disquieting about her voice, a sort of heavy sadness that hinted at the exhaustion of hours spent crying. That knot in my gut returned with a vengeance, and I knew what the trip to the beach was for, just like I knew my life would never be the same again.

The sand felt a little itchy between my toes, and I kept wiggling them in an attempt to get it all out. "I know," I told her, a little too fast; she barely had time to get the words out when I spoke up. My voice cracked a little, the result of over half an hour without speaking at all. I kicked the sand and stood up, walking toward the waves. My mom followed quietly behind, leaving me to my thoughts while I stood knee-deep in the cool water and tried desperately to cry, to feel anything at all. There was just a hollow pit inside of me that had absorbed all of my emotions. I don't know how long I stood there, staring out at the lake and all of the people swimming or boating in it, but eventually my mother took my hand and led me back to the car.

Weeks passed, and I felt like a hollow shell during all of them. I spent most of my time in the treehouse reading; ignoring friends and family completely in favor of solitude and escape into the fantasies of books. I tried

to tell myself it was okay to be sad, or upset, or hurt, but no matter what I did, I couldn't get rid of that empty feeling. It wasn't until his ashes arrived in a package in the mail three weeks after the day at the beach that my emotions were finally restored to me, overwhelming me until I was a heap of sobs on the floor, clutching the death announcement in my hand with my body curled around the triangularly-folded American flag that signified his service in the Navy. Δ

*Must Only
Zibarro See
The Beauty in
a Sunset?*

Dana Dreher

IT IS ELEVEN AND A HALF YEARS AGO. My classmates don't listen to me anymore. They tire of hearing facts about cats. I have a book that's the size of my thumb in my pocket. Inside, pictures of cats accompany quotes that attempt to capture the essential feline nature. In my backpack is a book bigger than my head. It is titled *The Big Book of Cats*. While I sit at my desk and sketch a picture of a cat onto my notepaper, my teacher calls on me to answer why we have seasons. I tell her that most big cats can't purr because their voice boxes are different than domestic cats. Those voice boxes are meant for powerful roars. The teacher takes my arm and pulls me into the back of the room, to the corner, between two bulletin boards with motivational messages such as "imagine your success" pinned to them. I hate the feeling of her loose, papery skin. I snatch my arm free. She goes to the discipline board and switches my green card to an orange card. I am in time out.

When I get home, Joker crawls into my lap while I sit on the couch and read the *Big Book*. His purr is weak, but I hear it, anyway. I can hear most everything.

It is eleven years ago. My mom can't afford a cat-sized coffin, so Joker is in a trash bag. It is a bright summer day when I take the shovel from the garage and try to dig dirt out from under the maple tree. Mom sits on a bench under the tree, and her cane rests in her lap. She says Joker will flow into the tree's roots and make it big and strong. When I pause from shoveling to squint up into its branches, it looks big enough on its own to me. When I look down at my feet, as I often do, I look too small and weak on my own, without him.

It is ten years and nine months ago. My teacher walks behind me and yanks the book I had been hiding inside our textbook out from my hands. A page rips as I refuse to let go. My mother said that book was out-of-print, and I hate knowing that my teacher's dry, lifeless skin will brush across its fragile surfaces. She throws the maimed hardcover into the wastebin. I watch her in silent confusion until I see her intent and goal, whereupon I know no better course of action except to open my mouth and scream.

It is ten and a half years ago. I tumble from the neighbor's pastel pink plastic playhouse. My arm hits the ground first. The small smack of collision

seems disproportionate to the violent pain that explodes up and down its length. The neighbor kid asks if I'm okay, but I don't meet his eyes when I say yes. The swelling makes my arm look inhuman. Soon, we are back to crawling around in the grass, as we pretend to be cats.

It is ten years ago. I set the Manual of Canine and Feline Cardiology book down on the side table in disgust. My mother looks up from her own book, in her chair across the living room. When I whine that authors are so unoriginal, and that they just say the same things over and over again, my mother stares down her glasses and suggests that it's possible that they didn't expect their readers to already know everything they were going to write about. I laugh, though she frowns. What I don't say is that I don't know what I'll do with myself if she's right.

It is nine and a half years ago. My mother pulls a dusty storage bin out of a musty coat closet. As she hands me a set of gloves and a pair of tongs, she explains that this is the full comic run of Power Pack, starting all the way back in 1984. She cautions me that these plastic-covered issues are collectable, and that she'll be very sad if one of them is damaged. When I pull the lid off of the storage bin, I feel as though I am a pirate uncovering hidden treasure. I tug the gloves over my hands and take the tongs in hand, so I can turn each page of each comic without damaging them. Katie Power, the youngest sister of the four kid team, is blonde haired and chubby faced; she faces life with an awkward enthusiasm her brothers and sister love. We're almost identical. At night, I dream of flinging yellow balls of energy like she does.

It is four years ago. I have met the love of my life. My eyes are glued to the computer screen as this beautiful boy gestures wildly to his camera in an attempt to explain why Hal Jordan is the best Green Lantern. He's wrong, but then, maybe it's okay that he's wrong.

It is three and a half years ago. I stand in the doorway to the kitchen as my father berates me for not telling him we ran out of food. He suggests that I wouldn't ask for help if I fell and broke my arm.

It is three years ago, and it's three in the morning. I don't sleep; I can't often sleep. Then rain slams through my open window, onto my bed. Thunder rolls. I relax. The patter on the roof shingles blots out all other noises that conspire to keep me awake. A cry jolts me awake. I dismiss it as a bird until I realize no birds call so early in the morning. I run out into the rain, and when I return, I hold a shaking black ball of fur. She is small and weak. I can understand that.

It is two years ago. My boyfriend cries on the couch next to me. He is returning to Texas tonight. He says he will miss me. I don't understand. We will have our phones and computers. He wraps his arms around me, asks me to hold him, and I wrap my arms around him, too. He is noisy when he cries. He shakes and whimpers and sniffles. For once, I don't mind.

It is last year. My boyfriend arrives, with the intention to stay in Ohio for good this time. He kisses his mother goodbye and kisses me hello. Later that night, he cries because he misses his mother. I know this time to hold him close.

It is eleven months ago. I stumble into my first university class with my eyes wide and my tablet clutched to my chest. My professor reads his syllabus, and he assures us that each sweet word we write will be

treated with the proper respect. My tablet is heavy with years' worth of my sweet words.

It is ten months ago. A classmate sits beside me at our conference table. She moves her hands, and the size of her smile makes it hard for her to speak as she talks about the piece of writing I submitted for the workshop. She claims that she's in love with one of my characters. A few other students nod in what I have to assume is agreement. Our professor leans back in his chair, folds his hands in his lap, and grins. I look from face to face of each student in the room, and my face tingles. For the first time, I understand how they feel.

It is three weeks ago. A representative of the National Security Agency strides into the classroom with his prepared lecture papers in hand. He cracks a smile and tells the class to take off their shoes and empty their bags. I take my purse, pop it open, and overturn it. Its contents spill all over the desk. A few students around me chuckle at first, then a few more, and then the whole classroom bursts into laughter. The NSA representative grimaces and elaborates: it was a joke. The rest of the class period I spend staring at the mess on my desk.

It is three nights ago. I sit at my desk in my Special Topics in Superheroes course. We are supposed to be talking about Frank Miller's *The Dark Knight Returns*, but I bring up Superman again. The student sitting next to me slaps his hand on his leg and rolls his eyes as I discuss Grant Morrison's *All Star Superman*, when Lex Luthor gave himself Superman's powers, and he had fallen to his knees. I stop speaking. I tell the class to forget about what I was saying. The professor squints and tilts his head, but I don't know whether that means he's interested or confused. I stare at the ground. The student next to me looks up and smiles. A few other students chuckle. In that issue,

the strength of Lex's five basic senses – smell, taste, touch, sound, and sight – became as strong as Superman's for just a few seconds. It changed Luthor in a way rehabilitative justice never could. There's nothing funny about that. I wasn't cracking a joke.

Two nights ago, the page on the bright screen of my tablet is blank. I stare at it. I've wanted to put words on it all day. I've wrestled with the muse, and he teases me, but he usually grants me what is rightfully mine. Or so I thought. He has not. My fingers do not move across the keyboard.

Yesterday morning, the page is full. The next fifteen pages after it are full, too. I am still unsatisfied, but my boyfriend tells me that if I don't give my imagination a break, I'll only write things I don't like. He claims that the imagination gets tired just like my muscles, and that I'll damage it if I press it too hard. I'm not clear whether that's literal or metaphorical, but after great effort, I can turn off my tablet and get dressed for class. If Daily Planet reporter Clark Kent can wait to write his story, I can, too.

Yesterday night, I search for autism on Google. Quizzes and tests pop up in millions of results on the screen of my computer. There's no going back. I am the most basic of humans; when I hunt prey, I chase it to exhaustion.

Yesterday night, I take a fifth quiz. I know the results will be the same, but I take it anyway.

It is this morning at four am. I jerk awake when Kyora attempts to curl up on my face. Her short black fur fills my nose.

Today, I pick up my phone, and I dial my psychologist's phone number. Δ

No Title, I
Guess Not
Yet

Hannah Fuller

IN 2004, UNDER THE PSEUDONYM PENNY MULLER, I wrote my first piece of fiction titled: *A Cat Who Could Read!*: the story of a dog who is constantly upstaged by an intelligent cat. This was most likely my version of *Animal Farm* in which I'm the loyal dog and my little sister is the cat, who's very rude and who we should have returned to the stork, or so I wanted to do at the time. Though only roughly 300 words and largely exposition, it was well-received by the critics (AKA: Mom and Dad) and was my first stepping stone to becoming a "real" writer, something I still haven't, apparently, achieved. Unfortunately, *A Cat Who Could Read!* didn't have a sequel or even an ending – a theme that continued throughout my writing career and continues to this day.

I have all the beginnings and yet no endings:
117.

And that was just within the first two shoe-boxes I could get ahold of.

It's an experience, recovering writing that you've forgotten, trying to revive a part of you that has been dormant for years. You find parts of yourself in whatever you used to create. Even in the smallest of ways. Even in the ways that didn't seem to matter then.

The titles weren't much help either, not every one of 117 story ideas had a title, but the ones that did didn't disappoint:

Kangaroo Katie – a girl moves to the city of Down Under, Australia. With the setting alone, I was clearly out of my depth.

The Other Red Wine – Twilight fan fiction, essentially

Marcus, Tempted – it only talks about teenagers who are also cats?? None of them are named Marcus?

The Known and the Memoir – I honestly have no clue, but to my credit sounds deep

Danielle and the Bog (Gee This Could Be Fun) – Spoiler: she does not have fun

The Nickle Krickle Koo – a parody of *Ickle Me, Pickle Me, Tickle Me Too* by Shel Silverstein

Besides obscure and nearly meaningless titles, apparently I had a penchant for unique names when I was a young. With the name Hannah, the #7 ranked girl name of 1996, who could blame me? Renata, Layla, Marissa, Rita Ritz, Jamie Lame-y, Juneau, Wanda Jenkins, Mr. Mopps, Rodney, and other such fantasti-

cal names. Sheets and sheets of cast lists, scribbled on notebook paper, are left for me to decipher what story I was writing about. One of these character outlines might be hands down the worst character outlines I've ever read.

• [Redacted] Her name, I'm not kidding, is actually the name of someone I now know in real life thanks to the predictable name combination I chose. Please let me share a snippet of what seems like an embellished police description:

- o Drop dead lovely/Sexy
- o Shoe size: 6 ½
- o Job: bar tender/hooker
- o Dreams: to stop being sexual
§ I have so many more questions than what I did before. When did I think that a legitimate career choice was illegal prostitution? And why was it her dream to stop being sexual? What fun is that when you're a legally licensed bartending prostitute?

My naiveté is a recurring theme in a lot of these writings. I was writing about scenarios and emotions I absolutely did not grasp at the age of eleven, besides my lack of knowledge about the law system surrounding solicitation. My lack of legal expertise aside, looking back it's nice to see how easy I made the world seem, how I thought the world worked when I was still a kid. Some of the ideas I'd had at eleven or twelve still sound great to me now. Though I may have had a couple of whacky ideas I still respect my younger self for the dedication she showed; every single one of these pages is either hand written, the product of a typewriter, or are printed from computers I didn't have Internet access to from my home. Oh yeah, I knew how to operate a floppy disc in my day. Asking my parents about this now, they still insist I was the perfect pre-teen to raise: I went up to my room and wrote after school, never ending, until I had to eat dinner and go to sleep. How on

Earth did I do that? What took hold of me so tight and refused to let go? And why has it let me go now?

There was a reason why the protagonists in my stories were different, or special, just like so many of the books I had read. I was holding on to a truth that I had coveted from the first time I had opened a book: I was the main character of my own story and just because I was different from the rest of my classmates, my friends, or my family didn't mean I was defective. In a way, many of these story ideas stemmed from the same resounding arc: the main character is special, is told not too subtly by those around them that they're normal or should be just like them, and then the main character makes that decision.

Even though I may have added some fancy misspelled words to those stories or was purposefully "mysterious" and brooding, I think this is still something we all look for in our stories. The cygnet mistaken for a duckling, the hard working girl whose hard work pays off in the form of glass footwear, or the nerdy Brit who lives in a cupboard under some stairs only to save a world he never knew he was a part of. While I am absolutely not Harry Potter, Cinderella, or the Ugly Duckling, I wrote myself into these roles in my stories every time. One hundred and seventeen times, it was me against the world, every time I put my pencil to paper or my fingers on a keyboard.

I did share this writing with a few trusted teachers and friends, and it's their kind advice and words I'd like to leave you with as you read through this collection of art, poetry, photographs, prose, and pieces of themselves. The following was inscribed within a writing self-help book:

*Though people may tear you down
– remember that you are strong and
have a strong voice. Δ*

The end of night watch. Intermittent drops of rain pelted the lagoon's surface. At the black-sand beach, fishing skiffs rocked in the predawn wind beneath a dark blanket of overcast. Ragged fragments of cloud skittered inland on the breeze. The dank, sweet smell of gutted lampreys drifted in the air; crabs tussled for the dismembered innards floating in the water's froth.

Prologue to

*Anomaly at the
Vishnu
Horizon:
A Grand
Canyon
Adventure*

James Roger
Johnson

Above the sounds of the surf on the lava-stone breakwater and the breeze through the palm foliage, a bell tolled faintly in the distance. It came from inland, beyond the beach road that fronted thatch-roofed cottages, beyond the sprawl of other villages that ran up the low tropical valley toward the arid highlands to the west. And in that distant western sky, at the Ballo-nay frontier, a smudgy-red fire raged.

Inside one of the beach cottages, an oil flame restlessly flickered within a conch shell set on a shelf. On the wall above, uneasy shadows accentuated the symbol of an eye carved into an alabaster plaque. Among a clutter of items on the floor, a pair of sandals lay; into each insole three toes had worn their impression. In a corner leaned a kite of woven palm leaves with a ball of coconut twine attached; on the kite, a painted eye, as on the wall-plaque, watched over a figure prone on a sleeping pallet.

A second bell pealed; this one closer. Irg stirred in his bed. With the approaching dawn, he would soon rise and join Colo and other his friends. The high holiday of Tertan's Gift gave them a welcomed sabbatical from the lyceum. Unencumbered by school clothes, they might fly their kites from the beach or play hide-and-seek in the caves along the glistening-green sea cliffs or sail out for a rollicking game of tag amidst the scalding bubbles rising from the underwater volcanic vents. Or, they might just sit under the palms and practice Rhamgot stratagems, using Irg's basket of game pieces.

The bell in the square near Irg's dwelling sounded. He heard running footsteps; one set, then two, followed by many. Rubbing sleep from his eyes, he raised up on one elbow. The road-side door upstairs banged as it was thrown open, and he heard a commotion among his two temporary caretakers. Then footsteps hurried down the stairs and approached Irg's corner room.

Old Oscou burst in. He called breathlessly, "Master Irg! Rise immediately. We must leave . . . now!" From a cut across his gill-flap, green ooze bled onto his collar. Red blotches marred the sleeves and front of his rumpled dress tunic.

"Oscou, what has happened to you?"

Editors' Note: This is an excerpt of a science fiction novel. Portions of the work were also published in Volume 29 (2012).

Oscou set down a blue velvet bag he was holding and scanned the room. He scowled at the disarray. Limping, he picked his way across the floor to the cubical below the oil lamp, and nodded to the eye plaque on the wall. He hastily collected a folded tunic and a coiled belt, and handed them over to Irg. "Great Seer preserve us, Master Irg. I will explain after we've boarded the skiff and are underway to Ferecon City. We must hurry to the dock. Ah, you will need your identity papers."

Fastening his belt and stepping into his sandals, Irg retrieved a pack of papyrus documents, neatly bound into a brown, hand-sized booklet. As Oscou ushered him toward the door, Irg snatched his starfish talisman lying next to the oil lamp and his prized crystal of sulfur from the Rhamgot game basket on the floor.

"No time to collect," said Oscou. "Bring only your courage." Picking up the velvet bag, Oscou escorted Irg down the hall to the beach-side door. Behind him, Irg could hear the clatter of his caretakers and their panicky voices. Exiting the cottage, Oscou grabbed an oilcloth slicker from a wall-peg, and guided Irg down to the beach, hurrying him onto the dock. Bells rang from all directions.

"What of my surrogate, Oscou? Is he returning from the Parley? Does he know we're leaving?"

Oscou did not reply, but steadfastly directed Irg into the family's small boat. He loosened the lines from the dock and boarded, placing the bag and slicker under the tiller seat. As they pushed off and readied sails, Irg glanced to the village. People hurried left and right on the beach road, and others rushed toward boats, all carrying hastily gathered belongings. Tan-uniformed militia formed in the village square with coconut-husk helmets donned and lances shouldered; a contingent double-timed toward the spawning pools and tadpole nursery. Beyond, to the western horizon, a smear of dense, black smoke billowed inland on the wind, with occasional tongues of yellow flame licking up

above the green foliage.

As Irg turned back to help prepare the sails, Colo emerged from the cottage next door, nudged along by his surrogate, Tuso. Irg worried how his surrogate would find him. Kioc was his dearest mentor. Irg was so proud when Kioc had selected him from the tadpole nursery. And now, Kioc wouldn't find Irg at home. Angrily Irg hoisted and secured the amber headsail as Oscou manned the tiller, maneuvering the skiff toward the opening in the lagoon's seawall.

Looking to the beach, Irg froze. Two men in green and gold uniforms restrained Tuso on her knees and a third had his arms around Colo. Another man, in colorfully patterned dress, approached, said something to Tuso, and then struck her with such force that she slumped to sand. Colo pointed toward Irg's boat.

The men turned and looked. The three in uniform then sprinted down the beach toward a two-masted galley that dwarfed the village fishing boats. The finely dressed one just stood there and stared. A chill went down Irg's spine; he pointed the men out to Oscou.

Looking back, Oscou spat and said, "Mercantile constables . . . and Lolok . . . that conniving traitor. Great Seer curse him!" As the skiff passed through the breakwater, he said, "They're going to want you in their custody, but they'll have to wait till the tide's higher to get that lumbering beast into the sea."

Irg watched Colo kneeling to help Tuso. Looking up he met Irg's eyes and halfheartedly waved; Irg gestured back. He wanted to know why constables would be seeking him, why they were off to Ferecon City, and what in Tertan's name was happening, but Oscou preoccupied himself with raising the triangular mainsail. Once secured, he tacked starboard and the southeast wind propelled them into the choppy, gray sea. Δ

Princess
Story
Bethany Kibler

I REMEMBER THE FIRST TIME I SAW MARKS ON MY BODY.

There were three scratches in a line, going from my collar to my waist. My mother, said I must have done it to myself in my sleep. She is a very wise woman. Everything must have a solid reason behind it. I think that's what makes her such a beloved queen. While I envy her logic and wisdom, I do pity her in some aspects. I say with all the respect I can muster, that my beautiful mother, often lacks the ability to think outside of the box. For instance, I knew I did not scratch myself that September night. There was something much darker happening.

Mother was right that the marks happened in my sleep. A cat-like creature, with horns for ears, and a pointed devil tail, leapt from my dream that night. He landed his claws in my skin, tearing down my body until I awoke from the pain. I sat every morning with a damp cloth to my bloodied arm, not knowing how much worse these dreams would get. The nightmares went on for months. Each night the creatures tortured me in worse ways, leaving all kinds of scars behind. They were careful where they scratched, burned, and cut though. The marks would always be hidden by my daytime clothing. Under my elegant ball-gowns, and beneath my cloak, I was battered. It was a secret between me and my demons.

I didn't speak to mother again of the bruises until about a month after the first incident. By this time, I was waking up on the edge of death. I dared not tell her that much though, in fear of being labeled a dramatic. Her logic was, the afflictions were happening during the day. She hired two knights to escort me at all times. They went by Sir Danes and Sir Walter, but I know their real names to be Jackie and Miles. I can see why they would want to use their Surnames. I suppose I could have worse escorts. They were not controlling or cruel. I was able to do whatever I pleased, they would simply follow behind. I felt badly for them though. It went back to me knowing the attacks didn't happen in the day. Poor Jackie and Miles were simply wasting their time. When the danger didn't stop, mother insisted something change. Mother called the high priest, as well as Duke Hampton, the overseer of all the knights, to meet with me since the afflictions are were worsening. With a deep sigh, I stepped into the room where the three were seated.

After greetings, the priest was the first to ask a question. In a voice that sounded like a swine's squeal, he spoke "Princess Grace these marks you say, you believe them to be from a dream?"

"Yes holy Father, they appear in the morning." I feared answering his questions. My mother's face was full of worry as well. I knew I sounded like a mad-lady to them all. If I were anyone else, the witch hunts would have begun for my demented soul.

"Perhaps," the Father squealed, he paused a moment to cough. "Perhaps there is an attacker in the castle. Your dreams may be warning you."

It sounded fairly logical, but something inside me still said it was wrong. "Perhaps," I agreed, following the guidance of my mother's raised brow.

"Then it is settled. Someone shall be tasked to guard the princess in her sleep. I'll even give my blessing for him to be in her bed chamber."

"Your majesty will all due respect!" Duke Hampton interjected from his seat beside the good Father. Before the Father could let out another squeak, mother turned to the Duke with a deep glare as if he'd rode a horse through her clean parlor. The Duke relaxed his face with the realization of her anger. "Please, I beg your pardon. It's just, I personally know every knight in this castle, and none would wish harm on your daughter. Furthermore, none of my knights would wish to waste their time watching a young girl sleep, when there are other matters to tend to."

Mother's face grew even redder. "Are you implying my only daughter Grace, your princess, is a waste of time? The only heir to any sort of throne must lie in a direct decedent of my husband, you know this to be true. Yet, you call such person a waste of time?"

"No your majesty of course not," The Duke stammered with his words. It was amusing to watch.

Mother rose to her feet. "Without her, there is no kingdom. I want your best knight prepared to be with

her as the priest suggested, and I wish to hand pick him."

That night, I'll admit I was hesitant. I walked into my sleeping chamber expecting to see someone I recognized, Mitch or Jackie maybe. This man standing in my bedroom was someone entirely new to me. He was blonde, with striking blue eyes. He had broad shoulders, and scruff around his chin. He looked to be about five years older than me. What I remember most though, was the solemn look on his face. I cleared my throat before approaching him, it had to be just as bad for him as it was me. With a curtsy, I began my introduction. The man cut me off before I could even finish a word. "Your majesty with all due respect," he said in a flat, bored tone. "The more we get to know each other, the more awkward it will be for me to watch you sleep. Perhaps you should just lie down."

I was left speechless. Never before had a knight spoke to me so rudely. If I wasn't so tired, I'd have put him in his place as mother had with the duke. However, the nightmares had exhausted me. I was holding onto the small thread of hope that having a night guard would somehow make them go away. I needed sleep.

I climbed into my bed, pulling the pink covers to my chest, taking the extra time to tuck the sheets in around my body. It was odd falling asleep with a man in the same room. It was odd having a man in my sleeping chamber at all. This was not what we were taught to do. Sleeping came slower to me than usual. I tried not to look or think about the knight. I'd never been seen in my bed clothes before. I couldn't help wonder what he thought of me.

I woke up while the moon was still high. My body, jerked into an upright position. The terror of my nightmare was too much to speak of. It had left me wide eyed, but I wasn't the only one paralyzed with fear. Just a few feet away from my face, sat the name-

less knight. His eyes seemed unable to blink and his complexion was pale.

"What is it?" I asked. No answer. "Knight, was someone here?" Still nothing. "I demand a response!"

He moved with great stiffness over to a desk in the corner. "Listen here," I spoke with an attempt of authority, "I will not play your games any longer."

Still with no words, he threw a piece of paper onto my bed. He had drawn something. It was the tiny, troll like creature with fire for eyes. It had wrinkles on its face and a scar under its left eye. There was also a boil on its shoulder, but he had missed that detail. "So they're real." I said, looking into the flaming eyes of the creature.

"There were three of them to start, then dozens. Each of them had something in their hands. I don't know how they got on your bed. They didn't come through the door, more just appeared. It was frightening, and painful to watch. They left as soon as you awoke." The knight was quivering. "I was too stunned to move your highness."

I ripped his drawing in half, then tore it many more times until the paper was nearly dust. "Listen to me, no one must hear of this. Do you know what they would do to me if they found out?" My breath quickened, thinking about my dear worried mother and father. I was their last hope for an heir, their only chance for a child. The princess Grace. God's gift to a barren woman. Now I'm haunted by demented spirits. I lamented for my mother, how she would cry if the people declared me a lost cause. "We have to make this stop." I told the knight.

The knight cleared his throat and knelt on one knee before my bed. "The brave knight David Wallow is at your service, you have my word I will not tell a soul. May God strike me down if my lips do part." His voice had calmed from its frightened state.

"Not even to the queen."

He hesitated. "As you command."

"I am going back to sleep then. When the demons come again will you be prepared?"

The knight grinned, "Do not be afraid your majesty." His hand laid on top of mine. "I will protect you." His sparkling blue eyes were the last thing I saw before closing my eyes.

Somehow it was easier to fall back asleep. The moment of terror was replaced with a new trust. The knight's sword fought off any fear as I drifted off.

I woke up gasping for breath. My neck felt strained. I choked back a few clumps of air. To my right, stood the knight David with his sword drawn. "What's happened?" I asked him. I could still feel the lingering of the demon's hands wrapped around my throat. "Why didn't you stop them?"

The knight returned his sword to its place. He fell to his knees before my bed. "Your majesty, there was nothing I could do. My sword went right through them." I remembered running through halls from in my dream. I was corned by nearly a hundred demons. If the knight had taken just one I wouldn't have noticed. It was the bigger one who frightened me the most though. The demon with the red skin, and pointed chin. He is the one who grabbed me by the throat. I must have woken up just before...

I noticed the sun rising through the window to my left. "I nearly died." The statement was something I had never admitted anyone before. "Did you hear me? I nearly died!" Anger overtook me. My hands trembled. "You promised to protect me." "And I will your highness. I just need to figure out how. Please give me another night."

I was in the library that same day when he came to me. Everything

became an attempt to distract myself from the dreams. I don't remember what I was reading, the words had all blurred together just as mother's words had when she spoke to me earlier. I had told her I still had a terrible dream. I did not recount it to her, just like I will not now. It's a far too traumatic thing to remember. Mother didn't care about he dreams anyway. She was content with the fact there were no new marks showing through my clothes. I didn't bother worrying her with the handprint left on my throat. The mark was hidden by my satin and lace collar, something I had done intentionally. While I was reading, or more blankly staring, David came up to me. His tired, crystal eyes were nearly as red as the binding in my book, the bags beneath his eyes as black as the text. "Your majesty," he exclaimed, "I have found it, I have found the key to your cure." His voice was loud, cracked with exhaustion and excitement.

I looked around the empty library. Thankfully, mother had just left to tend to father. "Why don't you announce it to the entire countryside?" I snapped in a whisper, still furious with him.

He slowed down his pace, but it only lasted a moment. "It's your grandfather, he is the answer."

"First you allow me to nearly die, now you are bringing up the shame of my family. I ought to have you imprisoned." I turned away from him disgusted.

"But you won't because you know your troubles won't end there." We both knew it was true. "Look princess, I have found his journal." He offered to me an old black book with rough leather binding. It was held together by a course string and the thick pages were entirely covered with scribbled handwriting in whatever direction.

I touched the book ever so gently. My father wanted to throw it

out last year, but mother argued it gave us a sense of how far we had come.

It was sense tucked away with other family journals towards the back of the library. I never thought I would turn to the book for answers. "What does it say?" I asked the knight, still unbelieving.

"It talks about his plans for the kingdom at first." The knight flipped through the pages, "He had great plans. There are so many ideas in here that would still be useful to this country. He talks about his nightmares though. There is everything from demented cats, to description of Lucifer as a red mad with a pointed tail. It seems with every new idea he had, he lost an hour of sleep due to them. Look here see," The knight pointed to a specific passage.

I read aloud from the script, "The demons. Them must be attacking thee in fear. It's the only answer that pursues logic, for no demon would attack a Christian man while his spirit was awake to fight. They wait for me to rest, when I cannot call upon the Lord for refuge."

The knight read scripture transcribed on the other page "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places."

"My grandfather had these dreams too." My voice cracked with a rush of emotions overtaking me.

"We can do whatever he did to make the demons go away."

I couldn't hold the tears back anymore. First one drop, then a flow. It became hard to breathe. My shoulders heaved, and my chest hurt with every sob.

"Your highness what is it?"

"My grandfather died in his sleep." Δ

WINTER IN 1940'S GERMANY WAS ALWAYS COLD,
but somehow this year the snow came down stronger
than ever before. Papa said the weather reflects what
we do on Earth.

I used to have friends at school but now all the girls
look at me with weird faces. My best friend, Lucy, told
me that her parents didn't want us playing together
anymore. She said it would get her in trouble. I ran
home and told Mama and she drew me in for a hug.
I know she didn't want me to see, but Mama never
hides her tears very well.

One day, I was playing with my brother, Abraham,
at school when two Nazis ran by after Mr. Ephron,
the local candy store owner. I saw him on the walk to
school every day and he always was so nice to me.
"Shalom, dear Esther. Be good at school," he would
say with a smile. He always gave me and Abraham a
piece of candy for our walk.

They began to beat him with a stick until his eyes were
swollen and his screams echoed across the play-
ground. I knew I shouldn't, but I couldn't bear it any
longer.

"You bullies get away from him! What did he
ever do to you," I yelled.

"He's a Jew, little girl. That's all the evidence
we need," the officer with the blonde moustache
barked.

I began to tell him I was Jewish as well, but
Abraham quickly dragged me away. At dinner that
night, he told our parents what had happened at the
park.

"You stupid girl! Do you realize how lucky you
are that they didn't beat you too," Mama screeched.

"They were so cruel," I said, "I couldn't just
stand there and let them hurt that man!"

"Esther, you must promise me that you do not
speak to those men ever again," Papa warned.

"Ja, Papa." I kept my promise for I didn't
want to make Papa angry, and I began to fear what the
Nazi's would do to me if I tried anything. My family
said I was lucky, but I didn't feel it.

I was eventually kicked out of school because
they were scared of me and my people. They didn't

Duck
Duck
Goose
Samantha Lodge

want to be associated with the Jewish girl. I wasn't allowed to see my friends and no one on the street would look me in the eye. I stopped going outside. All because of this stupid patch on my coat. I prayed that life would get better, but I think G-d had too much on His plate to hear me.

My days were slow and I had little to do. It was too dangerous to go outside most days, so I would play jacks with Abraham and help Mama prepare dinner. I was so bored, I even offered to wash the dishes. Papa pretended to have a heart attack when I volunteered. We thought it wouldn't get worse, that this would all blow over in time. We were dead wrong.

It started with the Zingel's. Then with the Schartzwz's. One by one the Jewish families around us began to disappear. Some escaped at midnight, others were dragged out of their homes at noon. I had never seen my parents so scared. They wouldn't tell us what would happen to us if Nazi's came to our house. I imagine it was to not scare us. I think not knowing was the worst part. I asked why we couldn't just leave but Papa said he couldn't leave the small grocery shop that he ran.

"We would have no money, and then what would we do, Esther?"

So we stayed and waited. We waited for the day they would knock on our door and tell us we had to leave. We were in the middle of a giant game of Duck Duck Goose, silently waiting to be selected. I couldn't sleep at night, terrified that I would be woken by some strange man with a red band on his sleeve. Mama cried all the time.

A few days after the Zimmerman's left,

we heard a bunch of shouting in the street. I ran to the window and pushed aside the curtain. The men from my nightmares were there, rounding up our neighbors. One came up to our house and pounded on the door.

"Everyone out! No use in hiding."

Mama wailed as Abraham opened the door. This was what we had all been dreading but we still weren't prepared.

"Men in the first, women in the second!"

They were separating the men from the women onto different trucks. I burst into tears, not wanting to leave my family. My stomach dropped and I began to feel sick.

"Papa, tell them you can't go! They'll understand," I cried, clutching onto his jacket sleeve. I was desperate to hold onto the people I loved.

"Be strong for you mother. Be strong, my Esther."

"Papa, don't leave me! Don't leave!"

"*L'Hitraot*," he whispered as he kissed the top of my head.

Goodbye. Δ

The Prisoner

Mickey Pfarr

ANOTHER DAY HAD PASSED BEFORE THE PRISONER EVEN SAW SUNLIGHT again. Blinded by the rays, he cowered into the corner of his dank cell and let out a small whimper. Carefully, the prison guard backed away from the small opening he had made — that sliver of light that was freedom and a warm bath. Dread filled the prisoner when he thought about the heavy door closing again, encasing him in a darkness that was more than a lack of light, but a lack of sound, smell, and it suffocated him entirely. Everything he knew — hope, love, life — was entrapped in that small bit of light that cast a yellow glow along the floor. Fear gnawed at his organs from the stomach up; he could feel its jowls clenching on his heart. Guilt knocked on the back part of his brain, where he had thrown it after so many eyes had lost their gleam at his hand. Had he been a different man—a creature more sly than brutal—would he even be rotting in a hole in the ground somewhere over the enemy line? If he hadn't been so careless, so caught up in his work, would he be home receiving praise for his good deeds?

Jackass, he thought, *getting caught was your only mistake*. Killing was never just an order for him; it was the one thing in his life that he enjoyed. Loyalty was won through his brutality and his cold, black stares. Murder was what earned him medals and titles, and never once did he blink an eye when his kill count grew or when his pale skin was stained red. Never did he wonder if the man he gutted had a wife, or if the woman whose throat he slit was a mother.

Obscenities flowed through the gap as the complaining guardsman set down a plate of bread for the pathetic man inside. People were murdered like livestock by this prisoner, and all the dirty, sweaty man cared for was whether or not he was going to see the sunlight again. Questionable acts were committed under no other authority but his own and in the name of a god he wasn't even sure existed, but fought for nonetheless; as long as he could justify his bloodlust.

"Release me," the prisoner demanded, "and I will be sure to pardon you."

"Sorry," came a voice from beyond the cracked door, "but no." Tears of frustration welled up in the prisoner's eyes as he focused his attention on the light, ready to plead for a moment of the enemy's time. Undoubtedly, this was the worst kind of trouble he had ever gotten himself into. Victims of his own madness haunted the darkness of his cave, but he didn't care for them; all that mattered was the sunlight he so desperately needed.

"Will you please," begged the prisoner of war, "leave me some light?" Xenophobia is what he believed the Government had called the enemy's hatred for the Americans, for the war; it was a hatred of all things foreign that was plainly plastered on the faces of his keepers.

"You t'ink you deserve ta light," the guard spat, "after all of my people you have slaughtered so mercilessly in the name of your nation and your god? Zaqar plague you with nightmares and madness." The guard slammed the door closed, sliding the lock home, plunging the prisoner into nothingness once more. Δ

Author's Note:

"This is an ABC story, in which (almost) every sentence begins with a new letter of the alphabet."

*The
Wedding
March*
Mickey Pfarr

"DEAR, SWEET JESUS — I LOOK LIKE THE MICHELIN MAN."
I pressed my fingers into my sleeves, indenting their storybook "poof." If you took away the snowballs of sparkling, scratchy fabric on my shoulders, and one of the three heavy skirts, maybe I could stand to look at myself in my mother's wedding dress. The sweetheart neckline and corset-styled bodice did nothing to hide my belly, which was beginning to swell.

Outside, the "Wedding March" began to slither out of the speakers. My feet moved automatically, as if they belonged to someone else, and I dragged myself to the shining wooden doors with the Virgin Mary carved so deeply into them, it almost felt invasive. She stared at me with heavily shadowed eyes, looking sorrowfully at the pregnant woman blanketed in white.

I straightened my bodice one last time, the same one my mother wore twenty-three years ago. She had always told me as a child to look for something "true" when it came to relationships, although I never really knew what she meant by that. "Men are horrible, ugly beasts," Mother used to tell me. It was her mantra, and oftentimes, I just ignored her. Boys were gross, but I didn't think they were animals. Still, I used to sit in the back room with her, running my fingers over the rhinestones and longing for the day that the dress could be mine and I could do whatever I wanted with it. She had a chair by the door — a simple foldable chair that she brought out whenever her husbands wanted to play poker — and she would sit there and watch me caress the dress, telling me again and again how she and my father met, although it changed a little each time. She told me I just had to look for the right one... The man I could "zing" with, and who treated me like I was the sun and the moon and the stars.

For a brief moment, the carvings of Mary seemed to smirk, and with a violent swoosh, the judgmental doors swung open, revealing somber faces. I couldn't see beyond their harsh gazes; it was like God was staring directly at me through these people that I didn't even know. I took a step, and the sound of my too-small shoes over the thinly covered aisle sent shards of glass prickling through my toes and up my spine, where they banged away at my ears.

My mother used to throw her fits and shatter glass in her rage — from shot glasses to fancy pitchers — they all committed suicide, slipping from her shaking fingers and crashing into the linoleum. She would clench her floral shift, try to peel it off her as if it was her skin, and curse the day God gave her the life she lived. She yelled at God a lot, especially when she was drunk. I was always busy watching the glass shards dart under the table — trying to get away from her and their life with her. I would dart after them, begging them to take me along on their journey far from her, and spend the rest of that evening picking glass out of my arms, wincing

against the sucking sound of blood and glass.

Halfway down the aisle, I realized that there were people at the end of my somber march: my nearly-husband, Damien, in a suit that was too big for him — his shoulder pads jutted out like he had glued triangles to his jacket. He had a small smile on his face, which caused his rosy cheeks to bunch up like strawberries. Beside him, the minister was staring at me — or rather, my pregnant midsection — down with a fire-and-brimstone glare that had his forehead wrinkling an excessive amount and his cheeks redder than Satan's ass, like he was trying to hold in a prayer of purification.

At the end of my walk, in the front row, sat my mother. She wore a white dress that outshone mine, and was leaning towards inappropriate even for my senior prom; you could see so much of her that it made me blush. She sat with her thigh pressed up against her newest husband, and her hand snaked up his leg every couple of seconds. I scowled, and focused my attention on the cross hovering above the minister's head at the altar — because she made me sick.

She had always made me sick. I was only five when my father died — when my mother burst into my room wearing a sheer kimono and clutching at her heart as if it could explode from her chest at any given moment. She looked pretty, even then; a picture of Old Hollywood coated in the colors of modernity. Her hair was perfect — even in her distress, her raven curls were smooth and pinned perfectly. She had knelt down and, in the calmest voice her smooth throat could muster, she told me that Indigo, my father, wasn't the right man, that he wasn't the Prince Charming to her princess. When she wrapped me in a plush blanket and pressed me against her chest, I knew he was gone, but when the police showed up — a herd of black cloth and muscle — and my mother's make up stained my blue blanket as she blubbered about the accident, I knew it was her who made him go.

The priest was speaking. First, to Damien, who was clutching my hands, in the smiling, grandfatherly way that ministers do when they're marrying a couple. When he turned to me, his smile disappeared, and he droned on. He mentioned love and sacrifice, dedication and determination, and I stood with my feet aching in small shoes, waiting for him to give me my line.

No more than two weeks ago, I met a woman with letters from the alphabet tacked onto the beginning of her name — so many letters, in fact, that I was suspicious of their authenticity. It was a one-time thing; she listened to me and I paid her enough to fuel the collection of cat figurines sitting proudly on her paper-cluttered desk. She sat me down on a dark blue sofa, the kind that swallows you up and doesn't let you out until she's done with you. She sat herself in front of me, directly underneath a painting of a pink-nosed Persian with a lazy eye. The therapist had an ever-present squint — but that was her face, her superpower: she could see everything inside of me that I couldn't. So I told her about my mother, and about the sheer kimono and the make up. I told her about the husbands to come after Indigo, and how they became richer with each pair of vows. I told her about Damien, a man I had known since I was little — the friend of my mother's third husband. I told her about the baby, and my mother's drug addiction. I spilled my entire life out to her like vomit, covering everything in my problems. And when I was done, she leaned forward, balancing her elbow on her skinny knee, and asked me how I left about all of this. At first, I didn't have an answer, but what it all came down to was this: I didn't want to live a life like my mother's.

“Do you, Violet Ivy Day, take Damien Sergei Petrov to be your lawfully wedded husband?”
There are some things that just can't be helped.
“I do.” Δ

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Kristie Gamble, "Freedom"



Emily Hooper, "Corn Review"



Emily Hooper, "Flowers"



Emily Hooper, "Time"



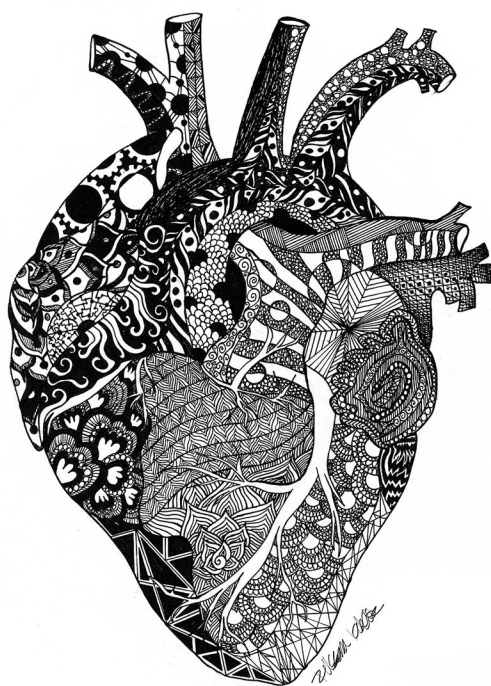
Christy Horton, "Antlers"



Christy Horton, "Natalye"



Christy Horton, "Stargazer"



Ruksana Kabealo, "Ninakupenda"



Mickey Pfarr, "Life and Death"



Mickey Pfarr, "Overlooking O'Brien Tower"



Maddy Roth, “Milkshake the Cowgecker/Muffin’s Sunhat”

Contributors

Lauren Chivington: I'm a senior majoring in English with a minor in Early Modern European History. I enjoy writing because I'm able to focus better when doing so. I'm also a senior majoring in English. What was I saying again?

A little about **Jan Coffey...**

She is a senior, majoring in English with the small hope of publishing a novel some day. She has an unhealthy addiction to Dobermans and a super healthy addiction to books :) She loves to read anything from classics, to horror, to graphic novels and plans to waste her summer away playing World of Warcraft. For the Horde!

Ash Cook is an English major at OSUM with a passion for all things artsy and fartsy. Parent of two literature-loving heathens with a zoo of animals at home, he spends whatever free time he can find reading, writing, painting, and roleplaying on a text-based MUD called DragonRealms, where he slays goblins and orcs as a cat-like humanoid. Although Ash is an out and proud member of the transgender community, he chooses not to let his trans-ness define him. Instead, he wishes that his acceptance and love for everyone be the definition of his true self, and he hopes to leave his mark on the world through these values. To know more, Ash can be reached at cook.1558@buckeyemail.osu.edu. Listening to: Sir Sly, "Nowhere" | Reading: *The Handmaid's Tale* – Margaret Atwood | Watching: *Legion* (for the third time) | Playing: DragonRealms, always | Eating: Fruit and yogurt parfait | Drinking: COFFEE... All. Damn. Day.

Morgan DeWitt is currently a student at OSUM.

Dana Dreher is an overly literal Criminal Justice undergrad, which would be impolite of you to mention, as autism is a serious and crippling condition.

Hannah Fuller is still not a best selling novelist yet but asks that you don't hold your breath. This is not Hannah's first time

in the foray with her younger self, after being published twice before in *The Cornfield*. She's a busy and tired honors junior, awake at least 27 hours a day but is thrilled you could spare a moment to read some of the fantastic works by other OSU Marion students and staff. You can find her working two part time jobs, on the Dean's List, serving as a Homecoming Court member, and watching *Jurassic Park* (only the first one!) instead of writing.

Kristie Gamble: *"There is nothing more truly artistic than to love people."* - Vincent Van Gogh

The name is **Austin Holloway**, and I am a student of English at OSU Marion. I could say more, but I don't want to detract from the poetry, what little there is of it. Hopefully you'll find it to be a good read, short stories in verse and romantic musings alike. If you don't... well, there isn't much I can do about that, is there? Except pout. You wouldn't want to see a grown man pout, would you?

Emily Hooper: I'm a Social Work student at Ohio State Marion in my sophomore year. I'm a self taught photographer.

Christy Horton is a cut-paper illustrator, miniature food sculptor, and writer. She loves to make comedic films, which you can find on her YouTube channel, ghost hunting, and watching classic, black and white movies, especially old westerns, film noir, and everything Hitchcock. She is a total nerd, and loves anything that lets her be creative, especially writing funny poems and sketches. Even though she plans to become a high school English teacher, her lifelong dream has secretly been to write for the film and television industry.

James Roger Johnson is currently a student at OSUM.

Ruksana Kabaelo is a maniac with a dream.

Bethany Kibler is currently a student at

Contributors

OSUM.

Samantha Lodge is unfortunately a non-graduating senior at OSUM. She is an English major on the writing and rhetoric track, which she strongly encourages everyone to avoid because no campuses offer rhetoric classes. She isn't bitter though. She also isn't afraid of a little shameless self-promotion. Subscribe to her hilarious YouTube channel (Samantha Lodge...easy enough) so she can have viewers other than her mother.

Dani Miller is an English Major at the Ohio State University at Marion. When she's not spending her time planning on taking over the world, she likes to kick it with her cat and husband. Dani is a starving artist that loves her Kia Soul, but her true passion lies in publication. She's an avid video gamer and loves reading weird and strange books. If you would like to know more about her, you can reach her at miller.8706@osu.edu. Listening to: Meine Gang (Bang Bang) [feat. Dajuan], Cro | Reading: *The Vampire Lestat*, Anne Rice <3<3<3 | Watching: *The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring* whoo Elves!! | Playing: Pokemon Sun!!! | Eating: nothing o__O | Drinking: Mt. Dew XP

Mickey Pfarr is a graduating senior at OSUM, majoring in English and Creative Writing. Despite her desperate attempts to fend off the questions, her only answer to the generic, "What will you do now?"

Colophon

This issue of the *Cornfield Review* is printed using **Georgia**, **LEMON/MILK**, **BALBOA Plus**, *Antro Vectra*, and *Swapping Script Diner* fonts. The layout was handled in Adobe InDesign. The interior artwork and photographs, as well as the cover design, were all edited using a combination of Adobe Photoshop and GIMP. The cover concept and interior section graphics were designed by Christy Horton, with creative input from the Editorial Board.

is simply to shrug and say, "I don't know what the hell I'm doing." Mickey loves dogs, jellybeans, rescuing worms from sidewalks, scary movies, fantasy novels, and excessively fluffy animals (bonus points if they're dogs).

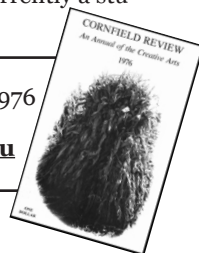
Paige Riebel is currently a student at OSUM.

Maddy Roth is a gecko fanatic that is getting her degree in Professional Writing. She spends much of her time working to rehabilitate animals, cuddling her cat and listening to her favorite Kpop groups. There is hardly a day that goes by that she hasn't read fanfic and there are constantly stories flowing through her head that may never reach paper. Her current favorite phrase is 'That's quitter talk', because she tends to try her best to see the best in situations.

Daniel Schirtzinger is currently a student at OSUM.

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In Memoriam

Editors' Note: The author of this poem, Lauren Vinson, passed away with her boyfriend Jimmy Gatchell on February 5 of 2013. This poem was found and shared by her mother Melanie. Lauren was a student at OSUM. Although Lauren has passed on we still remember her spirit through her words.

"We meet but briefly in life, if we touch each other with stardust—that is everything."—Unknown

The Story of Us

Once upon a time, we met in school.
On this fateful day, we were both acting cool.
Flirting while others did prom set-up,
we were both trying not to mess up.
We did not speak to each other for the rest of the year,
I think because we both were fighting off the butterfly fear.
Then your high school career came to an end,
and like Kevin Costner, you were gone with the wind.
Then one day, there was a call
on that day, boy, you made me fall.
As you were standing there,
I was trying not to stare.
I only said two words to you that day,
It was "Hey Jimmy", because I had no idea what to say.
The next day, you told me a secret,
and you no longer had to keep it.
You told me that you had liked me in school
But, I was trying to keep my cool.
You however did not give up,
you were always smiling, and you kept your head up.
Then On September 5th, you asked "will you be mine?",
I shook my head yes and smiled, while my heart pounded on my spine.
Since that day, My love for you has Grown,
And Every day, I Will make sure My love for you will be shown.

—Lauren Vinson