

THE GENETICALLY MODIFIED, HIGH FRUCTOSE SUPERHERO

SUPERCORNFIELD REVIEWMAN

DISCIPLINED MIND PACKED WITH
PEER-REVIEWED FRESHNESS.

AW SHUCKS

It's
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TIME!**

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HEAR ART

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PAINTS IN
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HIS POETRY
COMES FROM HIS
HEART AND CAN
MAKE DOLPHINS
CRY

KUNG-FU GRIP!
CAN TURN PAGES IN A
SINGLE BOUND

ABLE TO WRITE
METAPHORS, SIMILES,
AND RHYMES IN HIS
SLEEP- HIS WORKS ARE
INSTANT CLASSICS!

BUTTER AROMA
THAT INTENSIFIES
IN HEAT!

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No. 36

CORNFIELD REVIEW

10¢

2019



2019 • CORNFIELD REVIEW • VOL. 36



**CORNFIELD
REVIEW**

A LITERARY PUBLICATION OF
THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY AT MARION

VOLUME 36 | 2019

PREFACE

FACE FRONT, TRUE BELIEVERS!

Welcome to the latest issue of *Cornfield Review*. With the recent passing of comics legend Stan Lee late last year still fresh in our collective hearts, we wanted to pay homage in our own way to his lingering influence. His death marks the end of an era, but certainly not the end of our fascination with the spectacle, heroism, and humanity of the characters he shared with us over the years—as of this writing, it looks as if the juggernaut film *Avengers: Endgame* is positioned to become one of—if not the—highest grossing films of all time. To that end, we must thank Christy Horton for her inspired design work for this issue, bringing the “pow!” and the “zap!” to this issue’s cover, as well as the interior design flourishes that weave their way throughout this year’s collection of poetry, prose, art, and photography. (Incidentally, I’d pay good money to see a film starring *Cornfield Review Man*.)

We would like to take a moment to thank those who helped support this project: the administration of OSU-Marion, led by Dean Greg Rose; the English faculty who encouraged students to submit their work; the writers, photographers, and artists who took that brave leap and submitted to us. All of you help make this journal a stalwart mainstay of our community’s literary and artistic scene.

The 2019 Editorial Board (listed below) went to such heroic lengths to assemble this current issue—determining which submissions were included, copyediting, developing design concepts, and multiple other tasks. Their hard work has helped create what I’m sure you’ll agree is a particularly strong issue. Excelsior!

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 of-campus writers and artists as well. For more information, please email me at mccorkle.12@osu.edu, or visit us online at cornfeldreview.osu.edu.

—Ben McCorkle, Faculty Adviser

2019 Editorial Board:

Sarah Capelle	Alex Kauser
Tricia McCambridge	Ash McCloud
Kristen Orewiler	Zachary Winniestaffer

The Cornfield Review Mission Statement:

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

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05.30.2014

I watch my sobbing sister,
as she writes my obituary.
I search and search, no cause of death –
Anorexia's unbecoming... I see.
I wish I could hold that pen, write now,
And show her the truth – my misery.
“This young woman was a prisoner,
plagued by a friend turned enemy.
Putting her happiest face to the world;
smiles hid unstitching no one else could see.
She sat all day in her bedroom
begging the hunger to let her be.
Tired and alone, she gave in to the pain
after silence met her plea.”
As I stand there with her, I realize
I'm glad it wasn't left up to me.
But I've left this weight, this burden,
to hang over my family.

The dead don't feel emotions,
but this disorder killed more than me.

—TC Albright

I don't see how it's any of your concern what I wear

I don't see how it's any of your concern what I wear
And what I adorn my body with.

It is my own and I
Should be allowed to proudly present myself
With confidence.

But that has been stripped from so many other girls:
from magazines and media since the day we were born
Being told to be this or that to be found attractive

But when they say confidence is beautiful
They don't mean being confident in your body
They don't mean we'll respect your body
They don't mean that they'll respect your mind when you wear a shirt that shows
a little bit of cleavage
And they'll forget you have a voice if you wear a skirt that shows a little too much
of your legs

The problem with having confidence and wearing it around your neck as a new
silk scarf is that it can become a noose
Tied tightly in order to slowly strangle you as you try to speak out
As you try to defend yourself
As you try to defend others.

But why must we defend ourselves?
Why must we be so hyper aware of our surroundings and remember not to wear
those 3 inch heels because you can't run fast enough but you know you can at
least make it a few blocks in the 1 inch heels because you won't stumble over
yourself.
At least not as much.

You remember to wear a belt so it's harder for them to slither inside the quiet
folds of the fabric

You remember to not wear your hair in a ponytail because it's easier to be
grabbed by your own reins but you always keep a hair tie on your wrist in case
you go somewhere safe and it's humid.

As women, as girls,
We must protect ourselves everyday.
Boys like the character Wolverine but never have to imitate him with their car
keys when they go to their car at night
Or in the afternoon
Or in the morning because they're always watching

Someone wants to give into the temptation and illusion that women have been
painted as for years.

That is why when I saw a girl passed out drunk at a party, I sat by her on the
couch. I braided her hair to comfort her so nobody else would touch her.
I wrapped my arms around a girl I never met and talked to her like we were best
friends, not because I knew her, but because she needed protected and she was
alone.

Why does it matter what we wear
When you have no right or admittance to even get to know us if we don't want to
know you.

Our inner clothing that makes up our personalities and our interests
Is what you're so afraid to see.

Because if a thing has a soul, personality, interests...

Then it isn't your property.

It is its own.

—*Amber Alexander*

it is okay to be grounded

It is okay to be grounded
This is something i must tell my soaring heart
Every second of every day.

When the world seems to open to you
Like it's yours for the taking,
"Oh, but you must hold back"

That is something that I wasn't used to hearing
For I was the one who had to make my own path
And holding back was never an option for me

I was told to always bite my tongue and never let others understand what I was
feeling
So the expression of words got stuck in my mind
And could only be freed when I placed a pencil in my hand

It is okay to be grounded
This is something I tell others
When they worry about where life may take them

I still have no idea where my own life is taking me
But every second of every day
I must tell my soaring heart it is okay.

This will all be okay one day,
And perhaps my okay is different from yours
But one day it'll all work out

You'll get the promotion you always talked about
And maybe we'll fall in love
And have a nice colonial somewhere we make our own

But for now we must tell our hearts that while it is okay to dream
We can stay grounded for the time being
Until we both sprout wings and have the ability to soar

—*Amber Alexander*

Pas Avec Toi

they used to call me their sun
and they were my moon.
but to someone who doesn't understand the concept
of sacrifices within love,
they forced my rays to stop beaming
and watched idly as I turned
to face another hemisphere.

they call me the woman who hides behind her smile
because i've been through enough hell to last a lifetime
yet through it all
I remain constant and unnerved;
like a mountain, I will never move myself,
but i will continuously move the geography around me
because my force is that grandiose.

but the thing about being a mountain
is that only man made things will destroy you
and tear you down
strip you layer by layer
until everything useful is gone
and you are left with a skeleton of yourself

mais pas avec toi
avec toi, you make all my layers feel useful
and special
and beautiful
even if they lack luster

my brain was not an empty barren cavity full of secrets
hiding terrible fits
but it swelled with thoughts and ideas and beautiful words
and you saw past the surface
dug deep
and revealed it not only to me
but to those who called me worthless.

—Amber Alexander

What about me will you remember the most?

What about me will you remember the most?
Will you remember something that's even tangible
Or will i be subjected to be lost in memories?

Will you remember the way my hair curled when it rained
Or the look I would get in my eyes when i talked about something I was passion-
ate about
Would you remember me by my favorite perfume
Or would you remember me by the poems that continued to stream out of my
consciousness and onto the paper

Will you remember me by the way my lips would imprint soft kisses against your
own
Or the way my hand felt in yours when we walked together
Or will you remember the little smile that would light up my face when you called
my name

Or will you remember me in my darker moments
When i had to hold onto you while i sobbed and left tear stains on your ironed
shirt
Or when i would collapse into your arms and hold onto you in silence
Or when i would rest my head in your lap and you would draw your slender fin-
gers through my hair to soothe my terrible thoughts and aching mind

Of all these, which will you remember the most?

Or will you not remember something singular,
Will you remember everything?
Or will you be someone
Who doesn't remember me at all

—*Amber Alexander*

2 A.M. Motivation

Do you see it?
The fluttering filtered sunlight
Melting under your doorway
At 2 o'clock in the morning
While you're trying to sleep?

Sometimes you wake up
And gaze upon its beauty,
While other times you sleep through its beckoning
As it calls you to go go go
When it's the most inconvenient of times.

It's somewhat tragic
How you will lay there awake,
Or, if you're lucky, you'll doze off,
And that sunlight will be gone in the morning
Now that you have all the time in the world.

— *Sarah Capelle*

My Monochrome

Ever since that day
I've been staring into the past like it's a wishing well,
And I'm wishing well for my future
Even if all I see is monochrome.

I don't know how to breathe anymore,
So I hold my breathe and wait for the light.
But I know that you see so much color
As you look at my gray, dark world.

What makes you different than me?
Oh right. You don't see a ghost when you dream at night,
And you're not afraid of anything
While I'm afraid of my own two hands.

Teach me how to see the colors.
Teach me how to dream again without having nightmares.
I want to see what you see and hear what you hear
Because I'm blind and deaf while I'm drowning.

Bath me in your colorful image.
Your soul is too old for your young vibrant eyes.
You shine
And color pulses from my monochrome when you touch it.

— *Sarah Capelle*

You Trample

In the eyes of the trampled there are no tears —
Only disbelief, and quiet shock.
They never rise up, nor fight back.
They just lay there —
A pile of bodies used up and forsaken.
You stepped on their faces, trampling.

Maybe once upon a time they screamed out at the injustice,
But now they rot in the glowing sun that you praise so much.
The sun you idealize.
The sun you head towards, trampling.

Its heat is so intense.
It is not warm and welcoming but searing.
Penetrating.
Bodies are tied down in this sun and it is melting them.
Melting them into silence.
You are trampling.

Kind and Generous people.
Hard-working people.
Honest and Open people.
Heartless, Cruel,
you trample.
You trample.

— *Sarah Capelle*

Ocean of Questions

I wish I understood the depths of my world,
From the ocean's tides to the stars in the night sky;
The meaning behind seeing colors and fists curled, Why we live and why we die—

Finding a purpose seems to be a goal I strive for,
Looking in the trees to see if God himself is there—
Standing, waiting, holding open Heaven's door.
Sanity held within the lord's prayer.

New answers and new questions arise daily,
But the one I've been looking for remains unknown.
Falling asleep, my dreams so vague
With a world so big, it's hard not to feel alone.

Reminders of infinity every time I look to the stars
My mind hits limits I didn't know it had
They say the world is ours,
So why does it all make me so sad?

— *Kyler Goebbel*

Stephen King

It always happens when he's alone in the car;
He swears the wheel shakes in his hands,
That the cars behind him honk at his driving.
He swears it only happens after the night shift,
That the long nights drive his tired mind
Close, too close, to insanity.
It always happens when he's alone in the car;
The vehicle behind him crashes,
His own car swerves into oncoming traffic
Crashing and killing the people he hit.
He snaps awake after the surreal scene
His forehead slick with sweat
And the steering wheel shaking in his hands.
It always happens when he's alone in the car;
The radio switches on and his favorite comedian tells jokes,
Funny at first, slowly becoming cruel and harsh, telling him
To hit the pedestrian on the side of the road.
When he refuses, he swears the power goes out in his car
But every time he checks the battery, everything is fine
Everything is fine.
He repeats this until he gets home.
Anyways, it always happens when he's alone in the car;
He tells his wife and kids about the problems every time
No one seems to hear him.
Is it happening outside the car? In his own home?
He can't believe the sight in front of him as he talks
About the steering wheel shaking as his wife begs him to put the gun down,
How he hit and killed a family of four because of the night shift
He tells her it always happens when he's alone in the car
As he drags her body into the trunk of the car.
Streaks of crimson block his vision as he drives,
Drives away from the hit and run scene,
Turning his favorite comedian's voice all the way up,
Giving in to the car.
It always happens when he's alone in the car.

— *Kyler Goebbel*

Mars Science Laboratory: The Story Edited by Grotzinger, *et al.* (Springer, 2013)

In the heavy science volume that I received
From Springer, the editors conjure Burroughs
And the pulps from a century ago then publish
Nearly nine hundred careful pages of reports
Glossy and complete with charts and graphs
On the rover Curiosity that is down on Mars.
My son is lead scientist for the project RAD.
He had the book mailed to me, his Dad.

Burroughs and the pulps, I know, have grounded
Many NASA men while the Russians link
Our enterprising moves to space even more
With sentiment. Recently I see Geoffrey Landis
Won the Robert A. Heinlein Award for stories
That most support modern human exploration,
And clearly both my sons have bravely tried
To forge ahead with rigor once their mother died.

You see, my family like the politics of space
Is a blended family, as we say. Sue and I met
And married soon after Diana's early death.
Her daughters, then, and the boys inhabited
Our home together growing up. Our love
Is strong now. Each kid is grown and gone now.
And though we fight when they return as adults,
Turbulence is always part of printing out results.

In fact, we have emerged, each in his or her
Own way, with all wheels down on rocky
Terrain. The radiation is constant danger.
The atmosphere too thin. We feel the distance,
And cannot return. But strangely feel at home again
On Mars. We have our princesses and prince.
Our children grown from grit and wit move on.
The story resonates. No final word is ever said,
And many orbits can be traced among the dead.

— *Donald M. Hassler*

The Desiccation of Botany

After I wrote the two botanic flowers of colorful
Prose, I sat next to the botanist at the poet dinner
Hosted by my son. He had worked on sexual
Pollination above the tree line in Montana
And carnivorous plants before the rain forest
DNA and chemistry took over the field.
He also said that poetry in time must yield,
Being overgrown with weeds.

I said

That in the Islands infestations of greenery
And sunny spots to echo Coleridge, or Botany,
Is messy so super people, super clean, need
To grow randomly a new politics, to seed
The necessary change. Perhaps a stance
Rooted firmly in the past is our only chance
To serve the proper tea. Perhaps a view,
Instead of some utopic fiction, so new
That we will not recognize ourselves.
In any case, our politics involves
Some determinate selections soon
Lest we be launched halfway to the moon
In weightless orbit.

So all our fields are
Either overgrown with weed infestation or
Decline. My cousin Bob stood like Dad
As he watched us drive away. We should do
More but all stand alone at the end though roots
Run deep. It was Vergil, also, on my mind
This trip—the part where three times
Aeneas tries to touch the shadow of his father.
My students always laughed at how much Vergil
Had Aeneas weep. We moderns do not believe
In shadows anymore, certainly not on sun-draped
Islands. But shadows drive this modern jet
Voyage of ours. So if sentimental means
Reaching out beyond the possible, we touched
Shadows this trip. My Uncle with his eyes
Lit up spoke of his father. I spoke of mine.
Finally, perhaps, the Islands are not so isolate.
My Uncle said it rained. It always rained
When someone leaves, he explained.

— *Donald M. Hassler*

Beagnach

It's given,
from nothing,
coal black garden birthing brightness,
breathing fire from the womb though barren.
It flares, a brilliant sun,
whose tongues caress the dead,
creating life.
Violence, a tale foretold,
erupts,
snuffing out this fierce and hasty savior,
finding void, eternity,
waiting,
stillborn remnants spilling softly into sleep.

— *Freya Holloway*

Echoes From the Well

“What ails you?” she asks,
knowing I know she already knows,
blue eyes smiling.
My malfunction is hers.

I shrug, though,
casting eyes to ground,
her smile pulling at my own lips.
This game we play.

We walk and sing.
We talk and dance.
We smile at friends and strangers alike.
We mingle and make promises to meet again,
but inside-

inside, we are fingers,
clawing at earth,
and mouths gaping wide,
but drawing no breath.

We are tears and ash
until we have flown
and have drunk deep of the cures for what ails us.

— *Freya Holloway*

Soiled Matter

It rains
every day,
black-soot streaks across a cracked façade.
A lone candle flame flickers,
fades,
goes out.
A ghostly pillar flows against a spattered pane.

There is only the rain.

Cold silence,
like a dense fog,
creeps into the frame
and settles,
suturing gaping imperfections.

It waits for either discovery or erosion.

— *Freya Holloway*

Willow

How easy it would be, and how subtle,
like a whisper in the night,
erased by wind and scattered shadows.

Beauty fades,
may be recalled,
but is never forever.

How gracefully life could pass
beneath the willow,
veil of forgetting,
blanket of embracing,
a lullaby to soothe the passage,
and a song to carry on
what brittle bones beneath the soil
once harbored.

— *Freya Holloway*

A Retail Haiku

A tag-less item.

Chuckling, the customer says,

“That must mean it’s free!”

— *Alex Kauser*

Maya Angelou

Maya is bold as a soldier
Intelligent as a professor
This is why the caged bird sings
She opens the cages , for freedom with the power of her words
Now she knows why the caged bird sings
The struggles , of her ancestors. - She tells her stories
This is why the caged bird sings
In activist , she works for the king but the queen in her own way
Her innocence was stolen but now , she dances as free as a bird
She finally caught her worm which was a medal for freedom.
This is why the caged bird sings.

— *Liyah Laury-Jones*

Back of the bus butterfly

I'm a back of the bus butterfly.
Long day at work,
tired of giving in.
Back of the bus smells like a bag of garbage.
when will it end ?
Tired of giving in.
Bus got too crowded.
Several whites are now standing.
Tired of giving in.
The bus is now stopped.
The driver is up and removed the sign to separate the "colors" from the whites farther
back.
Tired of giving in.
He's asking a few blacks to get up and give their seats to the whites standing, but not
me .
 I'm tired of giving in.
Refuse to give up my seat to a white passenger.
He's just the same as you and me.
Tired of giving in.
Got arrested but this sparked the Montgomery bus boycott and ended segregation
nationwide.
I bet this isn't what the driver expected to happen when he got me arrested.
You wanna know why?
 because i WAS,
 just the back of the bus butterfly.

— *Ma'Rita Long*

Lust for the Light

I'm at the bottom again, typical,
And I can't see the top.
The spiral path up is slick.
I've lost count of my setbacks.
Always, all the way back down,
Back down to the lightless lake.

My desire to reach the light,
Resilient and predictable,
Will get me climbing again,
Over and over and over,
To achieve relief at the top.

I trusted another one,
Another false acolyte,
An abusive, pseudo-prophet.
A delusion of grandeur.
My eagerness to become dry,
To part with the water from the lake,
Has hazed my foresight,
And blinded me to past wounds.

Countless times I watch others fail
And the despair the path brings.
The hard falls, bruising to the core
Beyond repair are the ones
Who lay motionless in the lake
Why do I strive for such pain?

Fear of being
Forever alone,
At the bottom I pray,
Ironically agnostic,
That some callous deity,
Hopefully, not the one who condemned me
To this cold dark place,
That I may take my final breath
Before I realize, I'll die isolated,
In the lightless lake.

— *Ash McCloud*

The Other Side

Some say the grass is always greener on the other side
But I was always told that this was false.
So, I had never even bothered to look at the other side.
I know the grass on my side is the greenest there is.
Even in the winter, it shines bright green
The grass is soft to my feet and free from weeds.
Animals never dig it up or destroy it.
It never grows uncontrollably or dies.
However, one day I was curious and looked at the other side's grass.
I found it was true that it was not as green as mine.
It was untamed, filled with weeds and had a dull brown-green color.
Despite this I was attracted to its wild beauty.
Colorful butterflies fluttered around the ugly flowers that were growing.
Some of the dirt was dug up from animals looking for food.
There was a sweet sound of birds swooping and singing as they gobbled seeds.
I decided that I liked this side's grass better than my own.
Although the grass was not greener on the other side, at least it was alive.

— *Matt McPherson*

I Wait for Her

I meow at Mom as I hear her approach
she has been gone all day
hearing her at the door

I call louder
welcoming her home
I stick my head out the door
only for her to say, "Get back"
purring louder

I walk away
beckoning her deeper in
heavy thuds
soft scrapes
Mom talking

Just hurry up now!
meowing
calling
finally she comes after me
leaning down
wiggling her fingers
calling me closer

(I always pause a moment
making her think I'm not needy)

I trot towards her
knowing what's next
Mom scoops me up
one hand holding my bottom
one under my chest
pulling me close and tight
I rumble louder
telling her how I've missed her
squeezing me tighter
she kisses my head
telling me she loves me

She misses me.

I wish she didn't leave me
but I know she will
every morning she tells me to be good
telling me she loves me
and she'll see me later

Every day
I wait in the window
for her return

I see her approaching
jumping from the window
waiting for her to come inside
to greet her at the door
Only for us to do it all over again.

— *Dani Miller*

My Butt Has Touched Every Surface in This House

You know it's true, so don't deny it

I make sure it's nice and clean,

but sometimes it's questionable

it can't be helped that my butt has touched every surface in this house

my tail is unable to cover my butt when I sit down

standing erect, showing my postier for the world to see

it's hard to miss when I come walking by, proudly showing

yet, I've heard you talk of getting me something

to cover my butt

A... Twinkle Tush...

I do not know what that is,

but it doesn't sound appealing

having something covering my butt,

no longer able to show it off

no, I will not allow this to happen

I wish to have my butt touch every surface in this house

I don't want it any other way

— *Dani Miller*

My Food Bowl Was Empty

I know the humans don't mean to let it get empty

but some mornings it's empty

I let the humans know it's empty

meowing and walking all over them

this sometimes proves to not work

the one I call "Mom" ignores me

she must think this fools me

(it doesn't)

I walk closer, touching her face with my whiskers

she nudges me away, not wanting to get up

I walk to Male Human

telling him my food is empty

he finally relents

getting up and following after me

I show him my empty food bowl

looking with me

Male Human grabs my bowl

makes a sound

sets it down

There's food in my bowl!

I do not know what he did

but I am grateful

I meow to him

giving him thanks

My food bowl was no longer empty.

— *Dani Miller*

At night the glass reflects the crescent moon

At night the glass reflects the crescent moon
I shudder as it dances upon my face
A taste like loud art
If only I could complete absolute persistence
Because the beauty of the darkness draws me in
I hear Death is a scarecrow
That he hides his weakness with vile fear
I hear his tiger weave growls.

—Various

[Editors' Note: The poems on this and the following two pages were collaboratively written by various authors as part of a collaborative poetry workshop conducted in Stuart Lishan's Honors Introduction to Poetry course in Spring 2019. As he explains the collaboration:

This particular assignment was a group poem, in which the squad leader read a number of poems out loud, by poets as varied as Kenneth Patchen and Emily Dickinson. When commandos heard a word that they felt/thought was a "fresh usual word" in one of these poems, they wrote it down on "word tickets." Then the commandos put the squad members in groups, and each group member started a poem with a line, and then passed the budding poem along to another group member, who wrote another line, and then passed it to the next group member, and so on, thus creating a number of poems, round-robin fashion. There were some parameters and suggestions for each line, one of which was to use at least one of these "fresh usual words" per line. Such means of composition as this have been used by a number of poets in the modern and contemporary era -- who used collage, serendipity, and the like -- to create poems of surprise and explosive awareness, often with rich textures both emotionally and intellectually. You can see the results of our English 2260H poetry commandos gracing the pages of this fine magazine. Enjoy, but, I must warn you, dear reader, beware as well: Lines and images from these poems may just blow your mind, as well as heal your heart.

*Authors in the English 2260H Poetry Commando Squad include: **Nick Clark, Miles Grooms, Sonny Grooms, Nina Huang, Devin Lutz, Jacob Moratt, Lily Noftz, Andrew Quakenbush, Megan Rodas, and Hannah Ziegler.**]*

My father raised scapegoat steers

My father raised scapegoat steers,
One morning I saw the cow horn crown.
It was as if peace had settled over me.
I feel the warmth of the breathing flame from the bonfire,
I long to linger there, to feel the burning to live.
The silent crown soon to speak the sweet winged music of its time.
My father's look completed itself.
I have forgotten what it was.
My mother's sorrow lingers in my mind.

—*Various*

Once I lived as if bridled by death

Once I lived as if bridled by death

My past and future alive with the music of life

It was as if my innocent soul recalled the valley

If only the vile fox came to my altar

All eyes on me, our mouths have no strength

To feel death is to know life

Fate, comes bounding over the horizon

—*Various*

The Romance Decrescendo

Music dancing in the theater seats,
Ghosts of themselves, embracing silently.

Let the Sonata play, without any sheets
As the two lovers embrace closely, but not violently.

A tragedy of woe and sorrow
Left in the past. Now there is just two ghosts

In their new home, no worries for tomorrow.
Their lives a past home, no holds or oaths.

One was a performer, lost amongst the sounds,
Up on the stage, letting the music play.

With the melody and audience that surrounds,
His fear of being alone had no place to stay.

The other was alone, of all but one,
That would laugh at the dog in his cage.

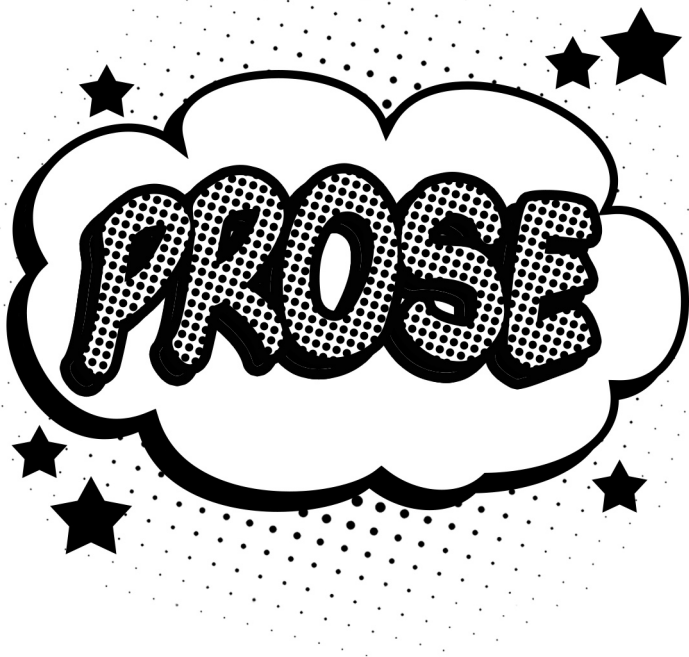
No matter the crimes, no matter the wrong, he could never outrun,
The one that kept the key to the locked stage.

An accomplice and a victim
Both dead, but not gone.

The music not being able to depict them...
Only the tale of their now love that lasts beyond dawn.

A poisonous pen wrote their past,
But now, they are free at last.

— *Zachary Winniestaffer*



THERE ARE A MULTITUDE OF WAYS TO SUFFER, BUT some of us will always choose to suffer in silence. In life, humans are tested by their ability to feel and capability to not feel, their ability to hide behind a mask and the capability to put on a convincing performance to the audience; the rest of the world.

EVER SINCE NEW YORK

AMBER ALEXANDER

Although Vincent already knew there were a lot of struggles and complications going on within not only his family environment, but his own life as well, he found a way to desert himself on his own personal island. By climbing from his window in the Colonial house, he would sit on the roof with his favorite snack or drink and allow the world to merely exist around him.

On this particular night, he was accompanied by a small package of Double Stuffed Oreos, which against his ballet teachers advice, he still enjoyed whenever he pleased. Vincent moistened the cookie between his lips so that he didn't make a loud crunch when he took a bite as a way to still enjoy the natural wildlife that existed around him simultaneously. The crickets chirped through the surrounding woods filled of live oak trees layered in Spanish moss. Off in the distance, the sound of fireworks going off echoed throughout Vincent's own, their booming roars and dazzling lights taking over the night sky through the surrounding trees.

Something so simple became the concept of something that seemed so complex and intangible to understand, he thought to himself. All he could do was shake his head as he closed his eyes.

Vincent, to his mother's distaste, had a mind and soul just like his father's. Although in the South it wasn't considered exactly socially acceptable for him to be so involved in theatre and dance, he still pursued what he wanted in his heart. He felt a shiver course through him as he remembered his last unsuccessful conversation with her.

"Vincent, I'm just saying, it's not what dignified men /do/." She said simply, taking a sip of her sweet tea as they sat in the shade that summer afternoon. Vincent could feel her eyes remained glued to his father's frame as he sat in the sun, sketching their

garden. If Vincent had it his way, he'd be sitting beside his father with his own sketchbook, but after what he drew last week, all his available supply of paper from sketchbooks and notebooks had been taken away.

"Mother, are you saying that David Bowie and Van Gogh aren't dignified?"

"Vincent, don't be ridiculous. They were European, they weren't supposed to be dignified. Southern gentlemen were." Her words stung his skin, but in retaliation he blasted his Aladdin Sane album a little louder that evening in his room.

He snapped back to reality as another flash of light in the sky dazzled above him. He could already feel himself beginning to grow even more distant from his mother who was becoming the woman he loathed. She questioned every little thing he did, and wouldn't give the funds for him to do what he yearned to do. Therefore, his artistic father had to sell enough paintings in oil and and sculptures of beautiful caramel colored clay in order to keep up. Vincent was unable to find a job in his own city. That could of been one of the main reasons he wanted out so badly.

If only he knew that wanting to leave Georgia may of been a mistake.

"Charles, if you make that boy actually believe that he can have a life doing that-

"Charlotte, if I can do it, so can he. He's far more skilled than I was at that age and there's so much potential in him."

"I really don't care. He doesn't need to be chasing after things he can't

get."

Charles offered her a blank stare, shaking his head furiously before walking into the kitchen. "He's my son too, damnit. Lottie, let the boy live!"

"Who's the one who makes the money around here, Charles? That's right, me. So shut your damn mouth before I think about kicking you out."

"Lottie, you know you can't do that, my name is on the house too."

"Do I really look like I care?" She rose her eyebrows in question, a sneer on her red painted lips. "That boy is just like you.. I wouldn't be surprised if he's—"

"You stop right there." He demanded, turning around forcefully, a deadly glare ruminating in his eyes. "Lottie, you have no right to use that against either of us. If he is, so be it. We love him no matter what; that's what good parents do."

"Is that what you call it?" She asked coldly, turning on her heel and heading off to her office. Anger boiled inside of Charles as he slammed his palm against the countertop, jumping in surprise as he heard faint footsteps on the tile floor.

"Hi dad. Did you still want to watch that movie in the den?" Vincent asked, a faint smile stretching across his lips.

"I'd love to, Vin. You get the drinks and I'll gather up the snacks." *

WHAT'S MINE ISN'T OURS

AMBER ALEXANDER

Setting:

SCENE ONE: The interior of a higher-class southern home in an undisclosed location along the eastern coastline towards the South of the United States

SCENE TWO: The interior of a higher-class southern home in an undisclosed location along the eastern coastline towards the South of the United States, Thanksgiving

Characters:

CHARLES MINETTE, a lengthy man in his early 40s. An artist who has more passion and desire for anything involving his art and his son. Sensible. Married to CHARLOTTE and father to VINCENT.

CHARLOTTE MINETTE, a lawyer in her early 40s. Very strict, unreasonable, has a hard time at separating work and life, and oblivious to how other things affect other people. In a loveless marriage with CHARLES and mother to a son she barely acknowledges unless she's criticizing him, VINCENT.

VINCENT MINETTE, a teenager with aspirations to move away from Savannah to New York in order to pursue a career in dancing. Has a close relationship with his father, CHARLES, due to their passions in the arts. Compassionate but not expressive with the use of verbal communication. Tends to keep to himself when he's around his mother.

SCENE ONE.

Int. of a recently restored home along the suburban coastline of the East Coast towards the South. This home has just gone through a hurricane that swept through the neighborhood in a short timespan. CHARLES and CHARLOTTE are sitting across from each other at a table, sorting through their expenses — as usual, this is a stressful event.

CHARLOTTE: Just look at these bills, Charles. This is ridiculous. Vincent doesn't even have a job.

CHARLES: You know he's been trying, it's hard to get a job when he's only 15 years old.

(pause)

I'm afraid nobody intended for a hurricane to come through this area.

CHARLOTTE: I told you we should've got the damn insurance when we could have. I had the money for it the whole time. Then we decided it wasn't important enough.

CHARLES: *(he gathers an indifferent tone with a hint of angst behind it)*
No, dear, we have the money. It isn't just yours. And you were the one who insisted we didn't need it because we weren't in a flood zone. Actually, I remember you telling me these exact words: "Shut up, Charles, there's never been a hurricane here. We'll be fine." Now look at us, we're in debt because we had to fix the house. Also, fifteen people lost their lives Charlotte! Do you know how devastating this is for our town!

CHARLOTTE: *(rolling her eyes, she gives a huff and takes a drink of whiskey from the glass sitting on the table. She scans the papers again after taking a drink and a stern look begins to grow more prevalent)*
So? What's your point? I never spoke those words. Who gives a damn about the flood maps, certainly not after what Ethan showed me at the office.

CHARLES: Wow, as an environmental lawyer I would think you would actually care about something like that in our community. *(teasing tone)* You're not becoming crooked are you? Did someone pay you off?

CHARLOTTE: *(another eyeroll, raising her palm to nearly strike at him)*
Charles, I've had enough of you today.
(pauses, lowers her hand)
I still don't understand why there's so many charges I don't know about.

CHARLES: Like what? They're all accounted for, I already told you what that lump was for —those were my expenses.

CHARLOTTE: Then tell me what you did with them.

CHARLES: Charlotte, I hardly see how that makes a difference, I mean-

CHARLOTTE: Charles, tell me. Or so help me, the power of the Lord will take you away the next time this house gets flooded!

CHARLES: *(grows upset and alarmed)*
What do you mean next time? I hope this place doesn't get flooded again! We've lost so many of our memories because the basement flooded so bad. Do you even care that our wedding tub got destroyed?!

CHARLOTTE: Charles, stop trying to change the topic. What were the expenses?!

CHARLES: *(with a sound of defeat)*
Fine... It was so Vincent could keep going to classes.

CHARLOTTE: You know how I feel about him pursuing the arts! Stop it, it'll never happen.

CHARLES: What won't? Tell me, Charlotte, I'm sick of trying to read between the lines with you.

CHARLOTTE: He'll never make it as a dancer and it just feels so... *Wrong*. Our son? A ballet dancer? Everyone will make fun of him and think he's a... *Homosexual*.

(this should be spoken disdainfully; CHARLES later turns out to be homosexual in the storyline unseen in this play.)

CHARLOTTE: Please, I'd rather he was never born if that's the case.

CHARLES: Take that back.

CHARLOTTE: Do you always have to come to his defense? Listen... Charles, that fantasy he has of this dream you've foolishly instilled in his head is costing me too much money. We could've used that for insurance! And now he won't even stop talking about going to some school we won't be able to afford now! I refuse to leave this house! And guess who's going to have to be the one to take the blame for all of this? Me. Who is he going to hate at the end of the day and blame for everything? Me! It's enough that we've lost most of our things with the last hurricane that went through, but he's not getting any younger, Charles. God, I wish he would be interested in law, I would actually be willing to—

CHARLES: Will you stop like acting like you're the only one making money?! I have commissions that make us money every month and it's enough to cover your expensive car payment AND some groceries since I have to do all the cooking!

CHARLOTTE: Don't act all high and mighty just because you—

(VINCENT enters the room with a book in hand. He is caught off guard but isn't surprised that his parents are fighting again)

VINCENT: Dad, have you gotten to chapter four yet? I can't believe more people aren't talking about this book — it's so relevant. Oh, hi Mom.

CHARLES: What would you like for dinner tonight, Vin? It's our first night back, we should celebrate!
(ignores Charlotte)

VINCENT: Did the fuse for the oven get fixed? A nice pot roast sounds good, I love potatoes.

CHARLES: (*chuckles*)

Yes, I know. Alright, your wish is my command.

(*stands to go through cabinets to collect what he needs to begin prepping dinner for the seemingly long evening ahead of them*)

VINCENT: Thanks dad.

(*silence falls in the room as Vincent tries to gather the courage to speak to his parents about his pressing issue. As he begins to explain, he seems to be talking about a prestigious college but it's actually revealed to be ballet*)

VINCENT: — Mom since you're here this will probably be better. I got a letter of interest from a few schools today and I know I'm only a sophomore but I think it's important to start thinking about these things now, especially with ballet.

(*Charlotte isn't surprised this conversation went this way but is disappointed/angry*)

VINCENT: It's extremely competitive in New York, you know.

CHARLOTTE: No Vincent. We can't do that.

CHARLES: And why can't he? He'll get scholarships, he's a smart boy.

CHARLOTTE: It'll still cost too much, I was barely able to fix this house after what happened.

CHARLES: WE, Charlotte. WE.

VINCENT: I just wanted to let you know... I thought you'd be proud, Mom.

CHARLOTTE: Vincent, I—

CHARLES: I'm proud of you son. You keep working hard and we'll figure it out.

CHARLOTTE: Charles, Vincent —Look. If you want to keep this house, which we are because I've already made my mind up, then you can't go to New York. I'm sorry.

VINCENT: But Mom.. it's all I want to do, please!

CHARLES peers over on the counter at the stack of papers CHARLOTTE brought in from her office earlier in the morning when they started discussing their financials. CHARLES sees VINCENT'S name on a letterhead.

CHARLES: Charlotte, why is there a letter addressed to Vincent in your papers?

CHARLOTTE: That's none of your business.

VINCENT: Yeah, but it's mine!

(Vincent grabs the letter from his father's hands and EXITS, reading it off stage.)

CHARLOTTE: Way to go, Charles.

CHARLES: What, because you didn't get your way? You didn't succeed in keeping a secret like that from your son? All because you're so obsessed with money! Damn it Charlotte!

VINCENT enters, evidently upset. He places the letter on the table.

VINCENT: *(sounding defeated)*

The deadline for the summer program in Massachusetts is tomorrow morning at 9 am.. I have a scholarship for half my tuition.

CHARLOTTE: Well done, Charles. Look what you did.

VINCENT: *(begins to grow angry and very hostile with CHARLOTTE)*

Why would you keep something like that away from me?! Do you know how hard I worked with my instructors to even get a letter of recommendation and an audition video completed?

CHARLES: *(examines the letterhead as he leans against the table, raising his brows)*

Charlotte, this isn't our address...

CHARLOTTE: Great detective work, Charles.

CHARLES: Why isn't it our address?

CHARLOTTE: Well... I called the program and had it sent to Ethan so Vincent would never see it. I must of accidently took it home one night when—

CHARLES: Woah, woah. Vincent, go to your room and listen to that new Bowie record I got you. I need to speak to your mother in private.

VINCENT EXITS.

CHARLES: Charlotte, are you cheating on me with Ethan?

CHARLOTTE: How dare you accuse me of something so ungodly!

CHARLES: *(his face grows red as he grows angered, biting his bottom lip in an*

attempt to keep some of his composure)
Charlotte! It's a simple question.

CHARLOTTE: Well, I mean—

(her work cell phone goes off with a buzz in her pocket. She uses this as a way to avoid the conversation at hand with Charles)

Hi Ethan, no I'm not busy. Yeah, first day back. It flooded pretty bad here, we practically lost the entire basement.

(She shoots a look at CHARLES, who recently took a few steps towards the open window of the kitchen, opens a drawer, lighting a cigarette. He lets out a cough — he hasn't smoked in a month — not since the flood.)

I'm glad you're doing alright after all this. — Wait, what? They're looking at new flood maps and we were wrong? Shit. This is going to cost us big — we gave them the okay to pave new roads there, now there's neighborhoods settled there! SHIT. *(she abruptly hangs up, collects her papers from the counter, and gives CHARLES a look)*

CHARLES: I can't believe you.

(he takes a long drag of his cigarette before CHARLOTTE takes it from his fingers, takes a long puff and glares back at him.)

CHARLOTTE: You never deserved me anyway, Charles. I'm going to the office. I'll deal with you later.

CHARLOTTE EXITS.

LIGHTS DOWN. END OF SCENE ONE.

SCENE TWO: One year Later, Thanksgiving

INT. of the same home that we saw in Scene One. CHARLOTTE lives in the house alone and has been for three months. VINCENT AND CHARLES have moved out into a small apartment closer into the city; void of the nature and luxury that CHARLOTTE now has to herself. CHARLOTTE is busy in the kitchen as she makes a small Thanksgiving meal for her guests who are about to enter.

Suddenly, a knock on the door. CHARLOTTE heads over to open it. At the door are VINCENT and CHARLES. VINCENT has broken his right ankle and is on a crutch, with the assistance of CHARLES. CHARLES has a pumpkin pie in hand as a peace offering.

CHARLOTTE: *(for once she seems genuinely worried and has a surprised look on her face)*

Oh my heavens, Vincent, what happened?

VINCENT: *(sounding disappointed in himself)*

Well... I broke my ankle.

(CHARLES nods with a sigh as he helps Vincent hobble in to take a seat. VINCENT sits.)

CHARLOTTE: But what happened?

VINCENT: *(sounding disappointed in himself)*

Well, I was trying to do harder dance moves so my auditions would look better since I could only get into the mediocre school last summer and...

CHARLOTTE: Charles, didn't I tell you this would happen?

CHARLES: *(he ignores the jab and finds himself a seat in the living room beside Vincent)*

Well it's nice to see you have flowers around the house still.

VINCENT: Well, it's not dad's fault. I only wanted to push myself further... But now I can't even audition for anything... It's all over for me.

CHARLES: Now Vincent, it'll all work itself out. Psychological therapy can be covered by the insurance at my new job in the office...

CHARLOTTE: You got a job?

CHARLES: I don't have the great pleasure of being able to live without one.

CHARLOTTE: Then where are you living? Surely if you have money now you're not staying with your parents in Anna Woods.

CHARLES: If you remember I had to wait until downtown was rebuilt since the hurricane ruined almost everything. Only then could I find a place to live after we separated. That was after you made us move out so you could have the house you love soooooo dearly to yourself.

(CHARLES sighs gently, making himself comfortable on the couch)

VINCENT: Guys, please don't start fighting... It's been forever since we've been together and I just want to eat turkey and pie, and not deal with this. It's been forever since the hurricane and—

CHARLOTTE: *(in a flirtatious tone)*

Yes, Charles, let's not argue. I apologize for provoking you. How are your parents?

(This takes CHARLES by surprise as he glances up to look over at CHARLOTTE)

and then VINCENT)

CHARLES: They're recovering well. They were lucky enough to have insurance and they sold off some of their land for their neighbors to rebuild their home. The Printup's lost their home and their daughter in the hurricane last year.

CHARLOTTE: Oh, well that's mighty kind of them.

CHARLES: Yes, they shared some of it with me and Vin to help us get on our feet when we left.

(CHARLES is unaware that he just told CHARLOTTE that he had some help with money. CHARLES is from old money but would never ask his parents even if he needed it. CHARLOTTE knows his parents are generous and believes they're helping him more than he's letting on)

CHARLOTTE: *(as if she's onto something)*

Oh, did they now?

(CHARLES is oblivious to this; Silence consumes the stage before CHARLES breaks it)

CHARLES: Do you need any help in the kitchen?

(CHARLOTTE understands this as code word for speaking as private, although this is not what CHARLES is intending)

CHARLOTTE: Sure, sure. Follow me.

CHARLES AND CHARLOTTE EXIT TO THE KITCHEN.

VINCENT is now alone on the stage, still sitting in a chair with his bad foot *(right)* still propped up.

(A giggle can be heard from the kitchen before CHARLOTTE and CHARLES enter, a warm smile warming up her face as CHARLES teases her by hitting her on the hip with a dishcloth)

VINCENT: Wait, were you guys flirting? I thought you hated each other!

CHARLOTTE: It's nothing of the kind.

Immediately the cheeky grin begins to take over CHARLES face as he hears this being said. VINCENT isn't sure what just happened, but the tension in the room grows stronger once again.

CHARLES: *(to VINCENT)*

What do you mean? We're not divorced.

VINCENT: Yeah, but you're separated! You don't even live in the same house. This is the first time we've all seen each other since Easter — we didn't even get to eat dinner because you two kept fighting. The ham was burnt, mother.

CHARLES: Now now, that's not important.

CHARLOTTE: Your father is right.

VINCENT: Dad, we're supposed to be on the same side. (*VINCENT is now flabbergasted*)
What's going on?

CHARLES: I think we're beginning to realize all of this wasn't worth it. We want you to be happy, Vincent.

VINCENT: (*his voice grows more worried and confused*)
That's not what I want!

CHARLOTTE: Oh Vincent, you're so hard to please. This is good! We can all live together again.

VINCENT: Mother, what are you talking about? This isn't how it—

CHARLES: Vincent, this is hardly your place.

CHARLOTTE: (*with an attitude towards VINCENT, loving tone to CHARLES*)
Yes, Vincent. Now, I'll be checking on those potatoes. Charles, join me, won't you?

CHARLES: Just a moment, Charlotte.

CHARLOTTE EXITS TO THE KITCHEN.

VINCENT: Dad, what's going on?

CHARLES: Well, your mother and I were thinking about trying again. We occasionally text and thought having Thanksgiving together this year would be good for us. Aren't you happy, Vincent?

VINCENT: Honestly? No. Mom doesn't support me and she didn't support you when you were doing art. She only wants to use you for the Minette money dad! Her firm is already going under. You told her about grandma and grandpa—

CHARLES: (*interrupting him*)

Vincent, please. It's fine—

VINCENT: No, it's not. I mean, if she can break me then she can break you too. All for what? So your money comes together and saves the house? From how you two were talking before you got separated, the mortgage skyrocketed. *(hinting at both his PARENTS RELATIONSHIP and the HOUSE)*

VINCENT: Some things aren't meant to be fixed. Just think, Dad—

(CHARLOTTE enters at the end of Vincent's line as he realizes and slowly stops talking— in that moment the ding of the oven goes off, alerting all members of the household that it's Thanksgiving. VINCENT looks at the pie that is still sitting on the table before him and since him and his father hardly have any money, the smell of the turkey seems almost intoxicatingly inviting)

VINCENT: *(although he wants to leave, he is yearning for food)*
But I guess we can't let a good turkey go to waste.

CHARLOTTE: *(in a vindictive tone, CHARLOTTE just wants to be around her husband CHARLES to ensnare him further in her trap. CHARLES is oblivious to this)*

Vincent, dear, do you mind if me and your father have a chat while the turkey cools? You could go up to your room or something.

(she immediately exits. VINCENT feels ostracized and as if his mother doesn't want him there. He can sense something is going on and that CHARLOTTE seems to be taking advantage of CHARLES)

VINCENT: But mom, my ankle is broken, how am I supposed to get up those narrow steps? Mom?

CHARLES: I'll carry you and I'll come get you when dinner is ready. I'm sure you miss the view of the live oak and Spanish moss outside your window. *(he says softly, wrapping his arms around VINCENT as he stands slowly from his spot.)*

LIGHTS FADE. END OF PLAY.



THIS STATEMENT IS FALSE

PADEN AUBRY

A RED LIGHT TURNED ON AND OFF, ON AND OFF, AGAIN AND again, accompanied by a high pitched beep; this sound woke him up. Arthur was still sitting in his chair, right in front of his computer screen. He must have fallen asleep while working; he couldn't remember what he had been doing, he had a headache that radiated from the back of his head throughout his skull. He decided that if anything important had been done on his computer he should probably save it, no use angering the boss, no use losing work. Arthur shook the mouse to wake up the computer and tapped a button on top of the alarm clock to turn it off. The bright, pale light that came from the monitor was an odd contrast to the dark room, Arthur had to squint to look at the screen. As Arthur looked at the computer screen, the puzzled look on his face grew. The background was a milky white, and there was nothing on the screen except for an odd sentence, written in black: "This statement is false" What confused Arthur just as much was that the screen kept flickering in irregular intervals, turning to black over and over again.

Freaked out by the odd behaviour of his computer Arthur got up and walked away, he may have had no clue what was happening, but he wasn't naive, something was going on. He was almost out of his room when an odd sound came from the previously silent computer. It sounded similar to the static someone would get when they turned their radio to the wrong station. This sound started to get louder and louder. Arthur cautiously walked over to the computer, the static slowly subsided as he slid into his chair and placed his fingers over the familiar keyboard.

The screen flickered, the odd statement slightly changed, again dominating the white background. "These statements are false" Arthur began to puzzle over what it could mean, but before he could begin to think the screen flickered to black. The static sound came back again, louder this time than before. Arthur clapped his hands over his ears and got out of his chair. He bent down and yanked the computer cord out of the wall, the awful sound subsided and the monitor turned off. He felt that was enough so he walked away determined to finish his daily routine. Walking was all he could manage in his current groggy state. Arthur forced himself out of the room, trying to

drive the awful sound out of his mind. His head was pounding. The digital clock that hung above his front door read 5:43 a.m. Considering how far away his job was, he thought he could probably get there close to on time. He was confused and his head throbbed as he grabbed his work bag with his laptop in it. He took the keys off of the hook that hung next to his door and walked outside.

The temperature must have been at least -25 degrees celsius, snow covered the ground, cold wind whipped around him, threatening to freeze him to death. Arthur got into his car and pulled out of the driveway, looking back at his small, one story house still thinking about the computer. The drive was just as long as ever, and hunger that nearly always plagued him was ever so present. The traffic must have been terrible, because he found himself dozing off during red lights. The static sound echoed through his mind, and the sentence, "This statement is false" bewildered him as well. He pushed that out of his mind, and slowly but surely he was making progress, the traffic was clearing up, he got few red lights, but he was still going to be at least ten minutes late. His car hit a couple potholes, and he nearly hit a jaywalking pedestrian, but he wasn't going to be too late.

When the large white building came into sight it was already 8:20, twenty minutes after he should have been there. Arthur drove up to a parking spot and got out, bringing only his work bag. The large glass doors silently slid open as he walked up to them, bringing warm air that was so much nicer than the frigid outside. Arthur walked in, looking around, surprised to see that few people were there. His

footsteps echoed against the polished-looking faux marble floor as he made his way to his office. The openness of the building mixed with all the white reflective surfaces made walking out it in open feel odd to Arthur. He was surprised that his boss didn't stop him and begin yelling about how important it is to not be late. The usual commotion was replaced with eerie silence. Inside he set his bag down and pulled out his computer, ready to get on with the tedious and monotonous daily routine, the events of the morning entirely out of Arthur's mind. When he opened his computer he jumped back, nearly screaming in fear. The screen was white, and in black text it read "These statements are false"

Arthur nearly fell out of his chair in shock when he saw that statement. *Why had it followed him here!* He decided that if he was to get on with his day he would need to see what all this was about. So he started thinking, wondering. It was a well known paradox, if what the statement said was true, then that would mean it was false, making it impossible to complete, but it usually went "This statement is false" the word "These" made no sense. Arthur went to see if he could interact with the computer, he swiped on the mouse pad, but nothing happened, there was no mouse on screen. He clicked over and over again, and began hitting the keyboard randomly. One time his finger hit the letter "T" on the keyboard. The screen blinked and the "T" in "These statements are false" became red. Arthur hit "H" and the same thing occurred with the second letter in the statement.

Arthur repeated the process with every letter. Immediately when

he hit the last “E” the screen turned red, the loud static returned. Arthur clamped his hands over his ears, the static sound was much louder than the computer’s speakers must have been. This time instead of backing away, Arthur stared at the screen, which at the time was slowly changing into darker shades of red. After the screen had turned black a new message appeared, this time in white with a black background, “Time moves as normal” Arthur got up and slammed his chair in - *at least the computer could give him one thing that makes sense!*

As he began to walk away the computer made a static sound. Arthur turned around and on the screen was a new message, this one in red “You can’t leave us” Arthur reluctantly sat back down and the static sound stopped. The message changed, “Time moves as normal” Arthur typed “T” to see if it would work in the same way that the last statement did. He waited a second afterwards, nothing happened. He typed it again, and still nothing happened. The words stayed white, the background stayed black. Arthur sat there waiting, wondering, why was that statement on the screen, what was going on. He decided to walk around and think about it.

Before the static started he said: “Shut it, I’m just going for a walk” oddly enough the computer stayed silent, no loud static sounds. Arthur felt safe enough, so he walked out of his office, the white floors reflecting all of the overly bright lights above. He went over to the water fountain, his throat feeling as though he hadn’t drunk anything in weeks. Above the water fountain was a clock, the time on the clock read “7:00 a.m” It took Arthur

a few minutes of looking at the time before he was hit with the shock, he had gotten there at 8:20, so there was no way that it could be 7:00. He ran back to the computer, the screen pure white this time, and completely blank. He tapped the mouse pad, the screen flickered a few times, but nothing else happened. He began to type, what started off at first as quick clicks of the keyboard, quickly descended into violent slams as Arthur lost his temper, but even through that no words appeared on the screen.

Footsteps sounded behind Arthur, he jerked his head around to see what it was, but nothing was there. When he turned back to the computer screen it read “Everything you believe is true” Arthur couldn’t figure out what was going on, what did this all mean, this computer was only telling him things that made no sense whatsoever. He started to click and type, but the message still read: “Everything you believe is true” Arthur got up and walked away from the computer. Suddenly, all of the computers in the room flashed white. On their screens were the words “This statement is false” The static sound echoed throughout the entire building. Building up as each computer joined in, like an orchestra of broken radios. He tried to calmly walk to the front door, to hide the fear that was building up inside him, from whatever thing was watching him. His slow walk quickly turned into a sprint.

When he reached the front door to the building he heard footsteps behind him, he whipped around, but again there was nothing there. Arthur ran through the doors, almost hitting them as they opened. The cold air outside hit him like a punch to the gut,

taking the air out of his lungs, but still he ran, out of fear and, likely, necessity. There were no other cars in the parking lot, only his car. He ran to it and jumped in, nervously trying to turn on the engine. It took just as long as normal, but seemed to take an eternity. Arthur looked to the left of him, footsteps in the snow, much larger than his own, went from the front door of the building to about five feet away from his car. He hadn't heard the footsteps as he was running, but they were there. Arthur stepped on the gas, taking off as quickly as possible. The wheels slid across the snow covered asphalt as he drove out of the parking lot. He was driving far over the speed limit, and ignoring all traffic laws, but it didn't matter, he couldn't see any cars nearby anyway. Actually, he hadn't seen anyone at all since he walked into his office, he saw a few people before, but afterwards they were all gone.

Arthur passed by his house, sooner than he thought possible, but he didn't stop, he couldn't risk it, considering the morning events, even his house wasn't safe. He continued driving for a while, no cars around him, no one at all. After what felt like a few minutes something to the right caught Arthur's eyes; a house, one that looked exactly like his own. He brushed this off as being lazy designers, ones without enough creativity to make houses that weren't all the same. He looked down at the clock, it read 7:00. He could have sworn that he saw it change from 7:00 to 7:01 a couple of minutes ago, but he couldn't be sure of anything, his headache dominated his attention, his vision was going red.

Arthur's eyes were again caught by something to his right,

another house identical to his own! He had enough, he pulled off to the right, a pointless action as it seemed that there were no cars or people around, and ran to the house. He put the key in the door, turning it slowly, afraid of what was going to happen. The door opened. It was his house! Immediately when he stuck his first foot in he heard footsteps behind him, heavy footsteps that crunched the snow under them. He ran into his house, stumbling over his coffee table and chair. He reached out and pulled himself into his room, slamming the door as he came in. Arthur held his head in his hands, the headache had an exceptionally bad swell, the room nearly went black. He recovered and walked over to the monitor, sliding the chair out of his way. The background was black, the text on the screen was in red. It said: "Reality is a lie". He slid into his chair, the text sent a shiver through him. He was so focused on the statement that he didn't hear his door open, but he did hear the heavy footsteps that sounded behind him. Loud, shaking the ground, though Arthur didn't have time to turn around before he felt a sharp pain on the back of his head. Everything went dark.

A red light turned on and off, on and off, again and again, accompanied by a high pitched beep, this sound woke him up. Arthur was still sitting in his chair, right in front of his computer screen. He must have fallen asleep while working, he couldn't remember what he had been doing, he had a headache that radiated from the back of his head throughout his skull. He decided that if anything important had been done on his computer he should probably save it, no use angering the boss, no use losing work. Arthur shook

the mouse to wake up the computer and tapped a button on top of the alarm clock to turn it off. The bright, pale light that came from the monitor was an odd contrast to the dark room, Arthur had to squint to look at the screen. As Arthur looked at the computer screen, the puzzled look on his face grew. The background was a milky white, and there was nothing on the screen except for an odd sentence, "This statement is false" ✱

[Author's Note] *In my high school creative writing class, we were challenged to write a short story of exactly 55 words. This is the fruit of my labor:*

**FUTURE
SCIENTIST**

SARAH CAPELLE

A family of four sat around their dinner table. Lucy, the oldest daughter, watched her little sister, Anna, intently. Soon, Anna began choking and turning purple. The girls' parents started to panic and frantically called an ambulance. Lucy turned around and muttered as she wrote in her notebook: "Red berries in the backyard – definitely poisonous." *

[Author's Note] *A fable inspired by the little light in my lamppost.*

THE LITTLE LIGHT IN THE LAMPPOST

CHRISTY HORTON

ON A DARK AND NARROW STREET SAT A TINY HOUSE. In its front yard, which neighbors say is always trimmed and well kept, stood an old lamppost rooted among the grass, black iron and beginning to reveal its sign of age. Inside this old lamppost lived a small, dim light, guarding the winding path to the front door. The light was only a little light, yet it burned faithfully every night. The light possessed a very vibrant radiance, especially considering its size, and it lit up cobblestone path and yard, lighting the way home for the man who lived within the tiny house, just beyond the lamppost.

The little light loved the man, but he hated his old lamppost and even more, his dim light. After the man in the house returned from a long absence, the little light had heard the man speak of the bright lights on New York with awe and wonder. The little light dreamed of becoming a big, bright light, shining among the brightest and most famous lights in the world, the lights lining Broadway in New York City. Each and every night the little light would pretend to be a brilliant, flashing light on one of the famous marquees on Broadway. Overlooking the glittering street, he pretended to be outside a grand theater. People would stop and stare up at him as his blinding light dazzled them and beckoned them within to the crimson curtains, glossy stages, and soft velvet seats. He could see them snapping photographs, posing in front of him, either on their way into the theatre or as they passed by. He dreamed and dreamed every night, hoping and wishing. The little light thought here he could be famous, shining brighter than the ever could in his aging, musky old lamppost, and so he longed to leave his dark street and narrow lamppost, and live among the millions of glaring beacons in New York City.

One day when the man came outside to visit the little light as he often did. He tightened his bulb, wiped the dirt off him and dusted away the cobwebs

on his lamppost. When he was finished the little light decided to tell the man about his wish to become a famous and bright light on a grand marquee overlooking Broadway. The little light pleaded with the man to grant his wish. The man looked at his little light sadly and said, "Bright light, you have always been here to light my way home, helping me to see on many dark and dreary nights. I owe you something in return and cannot refuse your wish." The little light was overjoyed, but filled with sadness at the prospect of leaving the man and the home he had always known. Determine to be bright and see the lights of the city, the little light buried his feelings and fears and thanked the man.

Just as he promised, the man took the light to New York City. He searched up and down Broadway until he found the largest and brightest marquee, outside one of the oldest and most famous theatres of the city. Beneath the marquee were lines of flashing, glowing lights, beckoning theatregoers. Lighted playbills, ticket booths, and door runners, seemed to moved and danced with light. The man found a ladder in a nearby alley and climbed all the way to the top of the sign, hanging above the grand entrance. He placed the little light in a spot where another light was missing and made sure to tighten him in firmly. Suddenly the little light popped on. Instantly, he grew ten times in size! His light burst out of him in every direction. He flashed wildly and burned

brilliantly. The little light was no longer little. Finally he was a shining light, as famous and bright as the rest of the lights around him. The little light was a star.

The man knew his little light's wish had been fulfilled, and he climbed back down the ladder with a smile that hid his sorrow. As the little light watched him descend the ladder, his heart overflowed with a spectrum of conflicting emotions that would have given the lights a run for their money, had this spectrum been a visible, tangible thing. The little light thanked the man once more, and he heard him say goodbye as he disappeared around the corner. Although the little light was sad to see him go, he was so happy now that all his dreams had come true. All his longing and imagining had finally come to fruition. He was a bright light of New York City.

A short time after he arrived, the little light's happiness started to fade. He found that he had no one to talk to. The little light was surrounded in a sea of lighted billboards, TV screens and flashing advertisements, but the other lights were always too busy to speak to him. Crowds of tourists stopped to look up at his glow, but he found they could never hear his voice over the buzz from his sign or the loud noises coming up from the street. This made it impossible for him to make any friends, and so the little light grew more and more lonely.

New York City never slept, and glowing so brightly was very hard

work. He found it very tiring after a while. The little light burned with all his might through the day and night, never stopping for any rest. In his old lamppost he always had plenty of time to sleep during the day and now he never slept at all, and so the little light grew more and more tired.

The giant marquee was part of a busy theatre. Employees of the theater were too busy attending to the inside of theatre and the stage lights inside, which light the glamour stage performers, that the theatre attendants never took much time to take care of him. Only once in a blue moon did they ever climb the ladder to wipe the dirt from him, dust away cobwebs, or see if he needed to be tightened. So, the little light grew more and more dirty.

Exhausted and tired, dirty and alone, the little light dreamed of going back to his old lamppost on the dark and narrow street, under the care of the kind man. He knew that he would probably never see the man or his old lamppost ever again, and suddenly the little light was filled with tremendous regret and sadness.

Days and nights went by and the little light had almost given up any hope of returning to his home, until one day a familiar voice shouted up from the noisy street. "Bright light, bright light, is that that you?" yelled the man. The little light was overjoyed; he couldn't believe the man had come back, but he was not alone. The man had a family with him. Beneath him stood the man, his wife, and a young

child. They had come to see a play inside the theatre and visit the city, but the man had stopped to visit his old friend. The man climbed up to see him, just like he did back home in his old lamppost, and he dusted away the cobwebs, tightened him in, and cleaned him with a handkerchief. The little light begged the man to take him home and apologized over and over again, begging and pleading with the man. The man smiled and said in his kind, soft voice, "Bright light, you were always there to light my way home, helping me to see on many dark and dreary nights. I cannot refuse your wish. I will need you to watch over my child as he plays in the yard on summer evenings and I will need you to light the path and safeguard my family from dangers." He then took the little light down the ladder and back home, placing him once again into the old lamppost.

Finally the little light was home. As the morning sun rose upon the tiny house, the little light let out a yawn and slowly flickered out. He thought about his journey and found that his life in the old lamppost was much more rewarding than being a bright, famous light on Broadway. It was then, quite suddenly that the little light realized that he wasn't a dim, little light at all, but a bright light, just as the man had always seen. In the old lamppost he shined brighter and more brilliant than he ever did on the giant marquee. He shined brightly because he was loved and needed. The little,

bright light knew there was no place
like home, no place would he rather be,
than in front of the tiny house, on the
dark and narrow street, inside the old
lamppost, lighting the way home for all
who need to find it. *

DIVINE INSTRUMENT

TRICIA MCCAMBRIDGE

“MY QUEEN, ARE YOU CERTAIN THAT YOU WOULDN’T LIKE EVEN one of us to walk you to your room?”

Cerdwyn stopped walking before she could enter the keep, fighting the urge to sigh as she turned to face the four guards at her heels. “Yes, I am certain that I will be fine. Thank you for all of your hard work today. I believe that we have made strides toward quieting the agitation that has been developing since King Pell’s disappearance.”

“Very well. I wish you a good night, your grace.”

“And you as well,” she said with a gracious but brief look as she turned to enter the keep. Despite her dismissal of them, she heard no sign of the guards’ departure as she quickly increased her distance from them. She was certain that as soon as she was out of sight, at least one of them would be sent to follow her and stand guard in the keep; the current chaos in the kingdom was too great and the risks too high to leave the queen truly alone.

However, the queen had not had a moment alone in weeks and it was truly beginning to wear unbearably on her nerves.

As soon as the queen rounded the corner away from the still chattering guards, she dropped her royal countenance and buried her face in her decorated hands just in time to catch the first of the tears that plunged from her exhausted eyes.

“Pell! Seraphine” she wailed the names of her missing husband and infant daughter as quietly as she could into her palms as she continued to walk quickly toward her room. “I’m sorry!”

The queen leaned her weight against the wall as she moved as quickly as she could as she stumbled through the seemingly labyrinthine corridors of the keep to her chamber, her horror of the thought of being caught in such an undignified state propelling her forward, all that prevented her from crumbling to the floor in a wet, writhing heap.

Finally, even through the tears that obscured her vision, the queen saw the massive, intricately carved dark oak door of her chamber come into view. She hurled toward it, falling over an uneven surface

in the stone floor beneath her and scuffing her hand against one of the sharper surfaces. She cursed, but threw herself upward toward the door that now stood extravagantly before her. She threw the door open and slipped inside, slamming the door shut behind her.

Inside her chamber, she looked around, desperate to find some shred of the comfort that she once found here. The massive expanse of the room draped with luxurious, thick fabrics and filled with sturdy, furniture of exquisite woodworking lay before her the same way it had every evening before. The absence of Pell—who ordinarily would already be waiting in the room before her, sprawled in what he believed to be a seductive pose on foot of the enormous bed directly in front of the door—was tangible and filled the cavernous space with an eerie emptiness; Cerdwyn could feel the memories that she shared with her now absent husband like ghostly hands pawing at the inside of her mind and at her arms. The cold of the room gripped her core—it in itself now unbearably empty of her daughter—and she wrapped her arms around herself and kneeled down to the floor, doubling over until she leaned over her knees and her forehead touched the ground.

Cerdwyn shot up from the floor with a start, her eyes darting toward the direction of what she knew was the window despite her inability to see it. The haze in her eyes and the small warm pool that her hand sat in on the floor coupled with the saliva streaming from the corner of her mouth indicated, even through her agitated

state, that she had fallen asleep. She was uncertain how long she had been unconscious, but she could see that it was now completely dark. She used the heel of her hand to clear the film from her eyes as she rose from her crouch on the stone floor, finally opening her eyes to inspect the window before her.

There was nothing out of the ordinary to be found.

Certain that she had heard something, she crept toward the large window as she felt the beating of her heart intensify in her ears. As she reached the small table that sat before the large window, she stood on her toes to lean over it and take in the dark view beyond; again, she found nothing but the sprawling dark city below.

Drawing back onto flat feet, away from the window, her still damp hand brushed against something hard, cold. She looked down to see the small statue depicting the goddess—her goddess—Atelia, the goddess of life, her hands held up gracefully, in what appeared to be a dancer's pose, her robes swished around her ankles despite being frozen in bronze. However, something was off: her position was skewed such that she faced the far corner of the room and stood just a bit to the left of the direct center of the window. Cerdwyn far from obsessive in her neatness despite her general preference for tidiness, but she was fanatical in maintaining the positioning of the visage of her goddess. No one else—aside, of course, from the missing king—was permitted in this room.

Someone was in the room with her.

Cerdwyn froze in place as

panic set in, crawling up her spine slowly, ceaselessly, from her limbs. She could feel eyes on her, burning in the darkness of the veritable cavern of her room. Her hands took on a mind of their own, freeing themselves from the restriction of her terror-addled mind, and fumbled, grasping the first—the only—sturdy object within reach. She looked down with wide, swollen eyes to see the precious, bronze statue clutched between both hands. She shook as the weight of the sacrilegious act came over her, but she found herself unable to loosen her grip, her breath ragged as her hands tightened with terrible force around the holy figure against her will.

She could sense him coming up behind her. He was silent over the sound of her own heaving breath, but something inside her told her that he was there.

She spun around just as she felt his breath on her neck. Before a thought could form, she spun around, momentum and muscle driving the bronze effigy of her goddess into the side of his skull. He fell to the ground, cracking his head against the stone floor.

While he was dazed, Cerdwyn smashed his right hand with her heel and kicked the dagger toward the door and blood pooled copiously around her stationary foot. She stood next to the now unarmed man, raising the bloodied statue up, ready to smash it into her attempted assassin's head in a moment.

"Who are you?" she said, attempting to summon all of the regality that she could into her voice though

she could hear it wavering wildly.

The man coughed weakly before responding. "The god of the inferno will purge this kingdom." He spat the blood pooling steadily in his throat at the queen, though as a result of draining strength the majority was caught and fell in strings down the side of his face. "Fuck the whore-queen!"

Cerdwyn lowered the statue and set it back upon the table, weakly attempting to correct her positioning and wipe some of the dripping gore from her glorious face. Recognizing the futility of the effort, she hurried toward the door to alert the guards, who by now were certainly within the immediate vicinity of her chamber.

She took only a few steps before she caught sight of the would-be instrument of her murder laying on the cold stone floor. She felt a fire raging in her core as she bent down to gently pick up the knife. She had just caught sight of one of her sore, inflamed, still damp eyes in the glimmering side of the blade when she gripped the handle tightly in her hand. She quickly stood up and whirled around to face the man whose blood was contaminating the floor next her husband's side of the bed. She did not pause when she reached the failed murderer's side once more, immediately plunging the dagger deep into his chest. She only struggled for a moment to release his ribs' hold on the instrument before lifting it high above her head again to plunge it into him once more.

She was unsure how many times she had repeated this process before she fell over in exhaustion into the vast pool of blood that now warmed

the cold stones of her floor. She laid there for some time, staring at the far-away ceiling of the chamber for some time. Eventually, Cerdwyn mustered the strength to stand, slipping a time or two in the liquid that now coated her once fine gown. She stumbled to the chamber door, dragging it open enough to slip through to locate one of the guards.

A guard had been just down the hall from her chamber, and it was only minutes later—after repeatedly verifying the queen’s physical well-being—that they both entered the room to inspect the corpse.

“Who was he, your grace?” the guard asked bending down alongside the body. He inspected the now hollow, gruesomely hacked chest of the intruder, refusing to meet the queen’s gaze.

“A cultist. He said he worshipped the god of the inferno.”

The guard grimaced. “Fanatics have been bold since the king’s disappearance. I’m glad you were able to—” he hesitated “—fight him off.” *

JAX AND WU HAVE AN ADVENTURE

W.E. MOODIE

ON A BRIGHT SPRING DAY TWO DOGS WALKED IN A certain field. One dog was a Pekingese with shaggy brown and black fur. He was tall for his breed, a foot and a half long and a foot high. It is rumored that his ancestry may have had Dachshund mixed in, but as any self-respecting Pekingese, Wu preferred to think that his ancestry was kept in the family. His name was Wu, and if you know anything about Pekingese you will know that he thought himself to be a large and strong dog. Wu also believed that he was very intelligent and put himself in charge of Jax, for Jax's own good of course. The other dog, Jax, was a giant fluffball that is referred to as a Golden Retriever. Jax was the most loveable dog that you could ever meet, but as most big loveable dogs he believed that he was a small lapdog. He tried to squeeze into small places and sit on people's laps. While this was adorable it was also quite terrifying to see a giant golden fluffball lunge at you (tongue first).

On this particular spring day the pair was searching the field for food. While their master always provided them food, the dogs preferred to go for adventures and see if any other goodies could be found first.

"I am getting hungry," Jax moaned, "maybe we should go home now."

"Not yet, not yet," Wu yipped, "I want to check around that building up ahead."

The building was a barn, and its owner was not there when the dogs came near. They looked around to see if any treats were sitting unattended.

"Hmm," Wu puzzled, "what is this?"

He ran up to it with his little furry legs and smelled the object thoroughly. He had seen objects like this before only they were much, much larger. For it was a red jeep, but it was for a small child and ran on an electric battery. The child would simply push the pedal and steer with the wheel (or perhaps just let it go where it wanted, if the child did not understand the steering part). Wu did not know any of this, but assumed that it must be a miniature version of a jeep that he saw on the road.

"I believe this is a jeep," Wu proclaimed.

“What does it taste like?” Jax asked.

“It’s not for eating, it’s for driving,” Wu explained.

“Oh, I want to try,” said Jax as he leaped over Wu at the driver’s seat.

Jax missed the seat and landed between the dashboard and the seat. Then it occurred to him that he was stuck and would be unable to drive or get out.

“I’m stuck! I’m stuck!” Jax cried.

“Don’t panic,” Wu scolded, “I will get you out.”

Wu looked around to see if anything could help his friend. Jax had already given up and laid his head awkwardly on the seat. Wu looked around the barn and found a wooden board. “Maybe I can pop him out with this,” Wu thought. He dragged the board over to the jeep. He then pushed a small rock to center the board and wedged the board under Jax’s large behind.

“Is this going to feel like a paddling?” Jax asked in a worried tone.

“You deserve a paddling,” Wu muttered.

“What?” Jax asked.

“Oh, it shouldn’t hurt,” Wu said.

The Pekinese then leaped onto the board with all his might and was able to get enough of Jax up to allow him to scurry up onto the seat. Jax then leaped out the other side of the jeep and no longer wanted to drive. Wu pushed out the board and decided that he would try to drive.

It was quite awkward for him to get his paws into the correct places. He knew that one paw was needed for the peddle and something would need

to steer. After a long struggle, Wu was able to prop his back against the seat and barely reach the pedal and was still able to see a little bit over the steering wheel. He slowly put pressure on the peddle and the jeep began to move.

“Oh boy!” Jax exclaimed, “Wu you’re driving!”

Wu had a very difficult and awkward time driving, but it was much better than walking in his opinion. He was able to keep up with Jax’s long legs without wasting all his energy. Wu decided to drive around the field a little and show off his new ride to the other animals they knew. Jax followed behind as the loyal companion that he was.

First, Wu drove up to the oak tree where the owl Albert liked to sleep during the day. Wu did not like Albert because the owl thought he was the smartest animal in the valley. “This will show that old owl who is smarter,” Wu thought.

As they approached the tree, Wu began to yip to wake Albert up from his daytime sleep. Albert, as any owl, was quite annoyed by Wu’s rude behavior, but then he was shocked by what he saw.

“Oohoo, dogs driving?” Albert said in a sleepy voice, “what next pigs flying? Or perhaps cats scuba diving? Preposterous, what is this valley coming to?”

Jax thought that pigs flying or cats scuba diving would be neat tricks. Wu did not know what that “P” word meant but he knew that he annoyed Albert and was content. Next stop would be the rabbits.

Jax and Wu liked chasing the

rabbits, however Wu was always too slow to keep up with them and Jax. "Now," Wu thought, "I will be able to keep up."

There were many rabbits in the valley but Wu decided to visit three that he knew the best. They were light brown rabbits named Jimmy, Emma, and Butch (His real name was Harold, but for some reason everyone called him Butch. Don't ask me why because no one ever told me). Jimmy and Butch were eating clovers and Emma was sleeping nearby. Then Emma popped up because she thought she heard something odd. She looked around and saw the small jeep being driven by Wu.

"What on Earth?" Emma exclaimed, "Wu is driving something weird and is going to chase after us. Run!"

"But I am still hungry," Butch complained.

"No time for pouting," Jimmy said while giving Butch a push.

The three rabbits were easily able to outrun the jeep, because the jeep was made for a child and the adults did not want their kid to go too fast. This disappointed Wu greatly, but Jax was having a wonderful time chasing the rabbits.

Then the rabbits sprinted down a steep hill. Wu did not think about how steep it was until it was too late. Now his jeep was really moving and nearly hit Jimmy on the way past them, but the rabbit leaped out of the way. Wu let go of the wheel and laid down on the floor of the jeep, because he was afraid of how fast he was going. Jax was barking after him all the way

down and thought it was a great game they were playing.

Finally the jeep stopped at the bottom of the hill and Jax ran up beside it. When Wu realized he stopped he gingerly got back up. His eyes looked like the ones your uncle has when he has had too many beers. I believe that Wu would have looked emerald green in the face if he were a human. He no longer liked his knew toy and decided that the only thing to do was to take it back to the barn they found it.

So, he propped himself back up into a driving position and pressed on the peddle, but nothing happened. He tried two more times and got the same result. Then, seemingly out of nowhere, appeared Arizona the silky black cat. Arizona was actually the smartest animal in the valley, but please do not tell Albert I said that because it would upset him greatly. Arizona walked up to the dogs and looked at the jeep.

"The battery is dead," Arizona said, "you will need to recharge it."

"Yes, yes I know that," Wu said, "but...you had better explain that to because you are better at explaining things to him."

Arizona knew that Wu did not know what she was talking about but also knew that pointing it out would be a waste of time. She looked up at Jax and explained, "The jeep runs on what the Humans call a 'battery'. When the 'battery' dies it needs to be plugged into a hole in the wall so the battery can be revived. So, you two will have to push the jeep back to the barn."

"Just what I was going to suggest," said Wu. Arizona rolled her eyes. "Well Jax," Wu continued, "You will

need to push and I will steer.”

“Why can’t you push?” Jax asked.

“Someone needs to steer, and you cannot fit in the seat, remember?” Wu asked in his patronizing voice.

“Oh--right you are little buddy,” Jax replied.

Poor Jax had to push the jeep up the steep hill, and back across the field to the barn where they found it. It was very hard to push the jeep up the hill. Especially when you have to use your head. But, Jax managed and got the jeep back to the barn. When they arrived Wu hopped out of the jeep and looked much better than he did after his wild ride.

“Well we should get home and have something to eat,” Wu proclaimed.

“I suggested that a while ago,” Jax panted.

“Yes, but now that we have finished exploring it is time to return home,” Wu explained.

“Oh, that makes sense,” Jax panted as the pair started walking back home.

Jax was very relieved when he finally had his lunch and decided to lay in his bed for the rest of the day. One adventure was enough for Jax today. Wu on the other hand was trying to examine the wall holes that Arizona was talking about. However, he could not quite figure out how a hole in the wall could power a jeep. After he gave up, he laid down with Jax and the pair slept until their master came home for dinner. *

**THE MANIC
ADVENTURES OF
IDBA RUN**

ABDIRAHMAN NUR

IDBA RUN WAS AN AVID DOER. HE WAS A DOER IN THE WAY that one breathes, as the completion of tasks provided a feeling that he relished in. He did because he loved to do. Obstacles that limited Idba's ability to do, well, would not do.

At the break of dawn, he arose and began his daily ablution. He scrubbed tirelessly until he was completely certain that any grime from the previous night's rest had been utterly decimated. A wave of accomplishment washed over him, as though an item on a mental agenda was marked off. He left the bathroom, strolling toward his cabinet. After a few moments of shuffling, Idba successfully collected his clothing for the day. He carefully scrutinized the articles, verifying that the clothes were spotless. He then returned the washroom and switched out his resting attire for the fresh set.

He paused as a loud commotion resonated. He slowly turned and began to scan for the source of the interference, but failed to locate it. Slightly frustrated, Idba opened the door to the washroom and searched his room, desperately attempting to pinpoint the noise. He wandered exasperated, checking underneath anything and everything, indifferent to the lack of light. Underneath his mattress, beneath his drawer, and between his cabinets he frisked, slowing becoming more and more agitated. "Beep... beep... beep...", the sound reverberating across the room. He slowly stood up, and once more examined the space. "Lord!", he shouted. "A once perfect order... ruined by a mere... beep?". His face slowly contorted, his once calm demeanor vanishing and replacing itself with frenzy. "A beep? A beep? A BEEP!", he shrieked. He took a step toward his bed and gripped his mattress. "A beep... A BEEP! A BEEP! A BEEP!". He lifted the mattress and slammed it into the wall in an excellent show of strength. Idba began laughing hysterically. He scampered toward his chair, raising it high above his head and hurling it onto his desk, cracking it in half. Wooden shrapnel flew from the chaos, a shard insert-

ing itself into his palm and drawing a great deal of blood.

Idba stopped and stared into his cupped hand, slowly dripping as a result of his injury. He glanced up and regarded the destruction caused by his impractical madness. He sat, positioning himself on the floor. He began collecting his thoughts, yet as he did so, he was sent back into mania by the very noise that caused the prior hysteria. Idba rose and sauntered through the room, muttering nonsense. He quickened his pace, taking long strides to traverse the length of the expanse. "I can hear it!", he declared. "It's so close... so very close!" He giggled feverishly. "I know it's here. I know I can find it! I know..." Idba reached for his wrist to mend to irritation that had begun to bother him, but his fingers hit a barrier. He glanced down and found a watch staring back at him. He brought it close to his ear as a hunch overcame him, and as he did so, he let out a whimper. "Beep... beep... beep...", the watch sounded. Idba, overcome with his own stupidity, fell to the floor in a state of desperation. He glanced once more at the damage caused by his own foolishness, but he quickly looked away and held his face into his bloody palms. He sat for a moment before collecting himself, returning his mattress, bandaging his hand, and retiring to bed. *

**A RECENTLY
DISCOVERED
LETTER TO A
LOYED ONE**

JEROME F. SHAPIRO

THANK YOU SO MUCH FOR ALL THE LETTERS YOU SEND. I could not go on without them. I am well, I assure you, and my spirits are high. Having said that, I must confess I have come to what you may find a startling realization. This battle I wage every day can never be won. I say this not in despair or resignation. In fact, this realization has renewed my strength and commitment to the cause.

Each day I work to chase them out as best I can, and clear away the debris and scarred remains they leave behind. Each night they return. It goes on like this day after day. Some say the goal is peaceful coexistence. I could live with that were it not the vermin that inevitably follow in their footsteps were I not to persist. It is a Sisyphean task, I know, and I am content with my lot in life, to push that rock up the hill each day knowing full well I will begin again the next morning. It is not me, it is not them, that makes it such, and it may not be the way they, I, you, or anyone wants it to be. Still, knowing it is the only, and the best of all possible, worlds, each morning I happily turn my shoulder to the rock content in knowing I am playing the role this world has given me, and playing it well, serving God, family, and country.

Lying here on my bed, writing to you brings me joy. Soon it will be lights out. I will close my eyes knowing that when I wake, if I wake, it will be a new day and yet the same day. I accept that now. So, for as long as there is enough strength left in my hands to put them into hot water and grip the sponge, or rinse and put dirty dishes in the dishwasher, your grandchildren will eat off clean plates.

Your loving son,

... *

A COMPANION

ZACHARY WINNIESTAFFER

THE RAIN FELL IN A TORRENT, THE DARKENED SKY becoming even darker as the citizens of the town of Coldwood tried to find cover from the sudden storm. Morgan Woodruff held his head down, trying to keep the rain in his face as he navigated the cobblestone streets, but it was a futile attempt. On either side of the street, Morgan could hear people as they rushed towards buildings or stray trees; their curses as they stepped splashed into puddles that were scattered across the road like autumn leaves. However, Morgan pressed onward, heedless of the torrent.

Morgan knew the layout of the town like the back of his hand, having lived here the entirety of his life. Despite not going anywhere but a few particular places, he could not imagine living anywhere else, especially with the circumstances standing as they are. Without even looking at the buildings around him, he was able to navigate just off the road itself, taking a left and heading straight. He could feel the rain soaking his clothes through his coat, its dark brown exterior becoming even darker as the rain drenches it. He always liked the rain when he did not have to do anything, listening to the heavy drops splash against the roof of his small hut behind the church. It was only when it came to work that it became troublesome, as he could not easily dig a grave when the water would rather turn it into a lake of mud.

The Candlelight orphanage seemed to loom over Morgan, without him even having to raise his head to look at the structure. Moving his damp, mud colored hair out of his face, he raised his head – taking in the sight of his former home. The exterior was a mixture of moss and stray vines, the red brick exterior barely poking through. He thought that he would never come back to this building, no reason to, especially not after it closed just a few years ago – after Morgan and Jamie left. Once they reached 18, both Morgan and Jamie were thrown out of the orphanage. Morgan had to no idea what to do at the time, he felt like he was suddenly in an unfamiliar world, despite

being in the same town he had grown up his entire life. He had no idea how he was going to survive, and the years that followed had been hell for him trying to find a place in this world since Jamie left him too.

Morgan could remember the last day he saw Jamie, the cold winter sun breaking through an overhead of clouds as he tried to keep up with Jamie's pace.

"Where are we going, Jamie?" Morgan had asked, his voice lingering between the pants of cold breath. Despite being physically stronger than Jamie then, Morgan always walked at a slower pace, never understanding where he was going.

"We, Morgan?" Jamie's reply was sharp, the tone itself slowing Morgan's tracks behind Jamie. Jamie looked at Morgan, his gray eyes looking down at Morgan felt like he was standing at the bottom of a cliff instead of just an inch beneath him. His voice was caught within his throat, trying to figure out what he did wrong.

"I am leaving this town, Morgan," Jamie continued, his eyes being colder than that of the air around.

"Leaving? Where are you going?" Morgan asked, his voice tentative. He wanted to ask about what he meant with "I", but he felt like if he didn't ask, the shadow that started to loom over his mind would somehow cease to exist.

"Somewhere, anywhere," Jamie coldly stated, the wind blowing his black hair in Jamie's face, he ignored it

as he turned and began to walk again down the cobblestone street.

"What about me?" Morgan asked, picking up his own pace to meet back up with Jamie, but instead he saw Jamie spin on his heel and raise his arm, punching Morgan in the face. The fist itself did not hurt as much he thought it would, but the damage done felt like his face had been stabbed in the face with a knife. His legs collapsed from under him, their standing lost with his mind's confusion at the situation — the only sensation being pain and heartbreak as he stared up at Jamie.

"You are staying here," Jamie's voice felt like it was miles away, but the intensity of it caused Morgan's heart to seem like it was frozen in ice. What did he do wrong, he asked himself, how did he upset Jamie. Morgan felt tears begin to trickle down his face as he watched Jamie continue on his way, his silhouette disappearing amongst the winter wind.

Morgan, even now, could feel his heart breaking in two as he was reminded of the memory that played every night in his dreams. Even now, he didn't know what he did wrong to Jamie. Sometimes he wondered if Jamie figured out how he felt, the feeling that he buried deep within his heart — determined to never let out. As long as Jamie could be happy, he thought he would be, too. All of that changed that day, when Morgan lost the only person that given him a reason to live. He passed each day empty, living on

the streets, food being thrown to him in pity. The old priest of the church was the one to take him in and give him a job, digging graves and helping with the physical work. The straining of his muscles was a welcome distraction from Jamie, but in the end, he never managed to have Jamie fade from his mind. The lingering sensation of the punch remained for months after, never going away.

Shaking his head, not wanting to get distracted, Morgan strode up the steps of the orphanage. He grasped hold of the door handle on the door, but when he tried to move it, it refused to budge. Morgan felt the seed of doubt begin to bloom in his mind as he rifled his hands through his coat pockets till he found the letter that he had gotten just days before. The first sensation was disbelief when he got it, unable to understand, he had thought Jamie wanted nothing to do with him. However, Jamie mentioned that he wanted to see him here at the orphanage, where they had first met.

Morgan put the letter back, making sure it didn't fold, as he focused on the situation at hand. If Jamie was here, perhaps he took a different entrance. Morgan quickly went off of the front steps and took a quick glance around the street to make sure no one was around. He turned into the alleyway to the left of the orphanage, moving past the piles of trash that was scattered around, just dumped against the side and forgotten. He kept his attention on the orphanage wall, looking

at the windows to see if any of them were left open. After a few seconds of walking, he saw one window that was left cracked, leading into a darkened room that he guessed was a bedroom. After taking another glance to make sure that nobody was watching, Morgan jumped and grasped the edge of the window sill, pulling himself up to a point where he could kind of balance himself on. He opened the rest of the window with a rattle before stepping into the damp interior of the orphanage.

The interior of the Candlelight orphanage was dark, and without his prior knowledge of the building, Morgan would have trouble telling the silhouettes of the furniture from the shadows. He was in one of the series of bedrooms that the children were herded into, varying only in the occupants that had lived there. The room was long, filled with beds that were placed with only a foot or two apart. He could remember sleeping in one of these beds as a kid when he first arrived, struggling to find a good position to sleep in on the bare mattress. It took a long time, but eventually, he managed to ignore the uncomfortable bed and just go to sleep.

He pushed open the door, leading out of the room and into the hallway, even darker compared to that of the room – where at least there was the light coming in from the window, even if it was not much.

“Jamie?” Morgan called out into the shadows, the hope in his voice

apparent to even him, but there was no answer. After a few seconds, he called out again, louder, "Are you there? It's me, Morgan!" Still no response. Morgan felt that doubt begin to creep into his mind again, but he knew he was in the right place. Jamie had said to meet him at the orphanage, but where was he at? Was he hiding from someone, and if so, from who? Morgan tried to think of anything that Jamie would want to hide from, but his mind came up empty. He was always full of confidence, but he was friendly and caring too. He even became friends with Morgan, when no one at the orphanage would talk to him.

Morgan clenched his hand into a fist, digging his fingernails into his own skin. Despite the years since they've last seen each other, despite Jamie seeming to reject him, he felt anger begin to form like a piece of burning coal in his heart. He knew that he would do anything to help Jamie out, to make him feel like he was important enough to keep around, even if for a moment. Morgan marched briskly through the darkened hallway of the orphanage. Opening a door, he came across a classroom, the desks remaining left in various states of disarray.

Morgan was left in the care of this orphanage when his parents died in a carriage accident, him being the only survivor. He knew that he should feel some grief or anything, really, but it was so far ago that he can't even remember their faces – if they really cared about him that much,

they wouldn't have died. That line of thinking was the only thing that allowed Morgan to truly start living again. He was just an empty husk at the orphanage, just doing the tasks handed out to him at the orphanage by the headmistress and the teachers, not really understanding anything at all. He never tried to talk to anyone, and so, the other kids never tried to talk to him. Jamie was the first person to try to talk to him, to ask him how he was doing, anything at all. Morgan couldn't help but feel some sort of admiration to Jamie then, and before he knew it, he became the face that Morgan looked forward to seeing every day. Even Jamie, despite being one of the most popular kids at the orphanage, constantly kept Morgan close. When Morgan confided into Jamie what had happened at the accident, Jamie told him that they would have survived if they cared about him.

Morgan turned away from the classroom and tried the door at the other end, leading into one of the offices of the teachers. He couldn't remember which one now, but he remembered being dragged in here before. The other students accused him of stealing food from the cafeteria, but even if he knew he was innocent, he couldn't seem to speak. The teacher thought he was guilty, so what did it matter? Jamie had spoken up for him, though, acting as a witness and convincing the teacher that he did nothing wrong. Morgan remembered sitting in the chair, looking at awe in

Jamie, tears blurring his vision as he was defended. That was when Morgan knew about the feeling that he buried within himself, knowing that he wasn't allowed to hold these kinds of feelings. He knew he would do anything for Jamie then and there.

Morgan heard a sudden metallic crash within the building, breaking him from his memories. It sounded not too far away, coming from the cafeteria. Quickening his pace even more, Morgan pushed onwards, towards the double doors of the cafeteria. However, his pace slowed instinctively, as a smell began to waft its way to him. It was an unfamiliar smell, but his body seemed to instinctively revolt it, his mouth going dry as the heavy scent of iron filled his lungs. What was going on in there? His body seemed to instinctively take hold of him while he was too busy trying to grasp the situation. He felt himself instinctively taking a few steps backwards, away from the doors of the cafeteria. There was a strange sense of dread that resonated in his body, trying to get him to leave. Jamie was here, though, so he couldn't just leave? His mind seemed to be at conflict with his body – one fighting on some strange instinct to run, while his mind wanted to push forward. Trying to reassure himself that nothing was wrong, Morgan took a deep breath of the iron-tinted air before taking careful steps towards the cafeteria doors.

He closed the doors behind him, the scent became stronger that it was before, seeming to have a more of

a presence than the air itself, still damp with the rain that seemed to be slipping into the building through cracks. Morgan looked around the darkened room, before seeing the first semblance of light in the building, a small lantern and a figure sitting beside it that seemed to rise when he entered. He could barely make the familiar features out from the light that the lantern provided; black hair that seemed messy but perfectly kept, the familiar edges of Jamie's face, with his familiar winter gray eyes looking right at him.

"Morgan!" Jamie's voice rang across the empty cafeteria, filling Morgan with excitement and helping shake off the previous unease that he had upon entering the room, "Glad you managed to find your way in. Didn't want just anyone to walk in here, so I had to lock the front door, but you seemed to manage just fine." Jamie smiled and waved Morgan over.

Morgan was walking over before he even knew what he was doing, his eyes remaining focused on Jamie. He couldn't break away from him, he had forgotten how handsome Jamie looked, especially now after a few years had passed. How his voice was enough to put Morgan into a stupor. No matter how much he tried to remember, no matter how much he imagined, nothing could compare to having Jamie in front of him now.

"Come on, take a seat Morgan," Jamie said, pointing to the seat across from him at the table, where Morgan obediently sat and looked towards Jamie.

Despite being only an inch shorter than him, Jamie always seemed to be taller than him with just the presence that he carried.

“Glad to see you again, friend,” Jamie said, smiling at Morgan. Despite the cold interior of the cafeteria, he could feel his temperature rise as he tried to remain focused.

“Come on, speak up! We haven’t seen each other in forever!” Jamie said with a laugh as he leaned forward and shook Morgan’s shoulder, the sensation lingering after he pulled away.

“Good to see you again, Jamie,” Morgan breathed out, the name escaping his lips solidifying that this was reality, not just a dream. He actually got to meet Jamie again, he hadn’t thrown Morgan away and forgotten about him.

“I know we didn’t leave on the best of circumstances,” Jamie said, looking away for a moment, staring into the darkness of the room. Morgan could see an emotion unfamiliar on Jamie, regret. His body relaxed into his seat, tension being released from his muscles, like steam escaping a pot with a lid. Jamie regretted leaving him behind.

“I was hoping you could help me out, though,” Jamie turned back to Morgan, the regret gone and replaced by anxiety. Morgan could feel his blood begin to ignite, his body temperature rising as anger ignited a spark within him.

“With who?” Morgan’s voice escaped him, too loud and too

strong. His throat was dry from just the unusual sensation of speaking so loudly, grown accustomed to only quiet mumbles and silence.

Jamie let out a laugh, his laughter increasing Morgan’s pulse, but for a different reason entirely. Morgan tried to look away from Jamie while he laughed, but he couldn’t help but keep looking back. Morgan knew what this feeling was, but he wasn’t sure how to act on it, instead just trying to keep it in himself and enjoy moments like these when the two of them were together.

“Well, it is a couple people, actually, and I figured that you and I would be perfect in figuring this out,” Jamie said, rising out of his seat and taking the lantern within his hands before starting to slowly walk away from the table. “Come on, let me show you something.”

“Truth be told, I’ve been having a bit of trouble with something,” Jamie said, leading Morgan between the tables and towards the back of the room. “I wasn’t sure how to deal with it, but I didn’t want to trouble you, so I tried to deal with it myself.”

‘You won’t trouble me at all!’ Morgan replied in his mind, but he caught himself. Saying that would put him on a path that he knew there was no escape from — the emotion he had buried in his heart that he can’t let escape. He doesn’t want to lose everything, especially after the first time it happened.

“I’ll help you,” Morgan said

after a few seconds, the rest of what he wanted to say sitting like an angry wasp on his tongue.

“I’m glad to hear that,” Jamie laughed, before reaching the door to the kitchen and opening it. “Truth be told, I knew that I could only count on you for this.”

Jamie held the lantern out in front of him, and the light revealed the interior of the kitchen to Morgan. He could see pots and pans in varying states of filth, resting in various states of seeming use, despite not being touched in years. The counters had some spots of dust-like powder on them that he could see, but despite that, they seemed clean. He expected this room to be filthy, but for some reason, it looked like it had been cleaned. Morgan noticed that the strong scent of iron was stronger now, seeming to coat the entire kitchen with an invisible, thick fog.

Morgan heard a click behind him before Jamie walked forward, leading Morgan deeper into the kitchen.

“You’ll see it in here,” Jamie said, beckoning to a door in the back of the kitchen. Even though he knew most of the interior of the orphanage, Morgan had never been allowed in the kitchen – nor were most of the kids allowed, although he remembered some particular kids being able to enter at one point, Jamie included.

“Just,” Jamie spoke with something that Morgan had never heard in his voice, a hint of nervousness leaking

from his words, his usual confidence breaking. “Promise me that you’ll still like me, after you see this?”

“I’ll always like, like you, Jamie.” Morgan stammered, feeling his heart pound, seeming to beat against the holds of his body. Even if there was the devil himself in that room, Morgan felt like he could face him down in that moment. Jamie had never relied on him before, nor had Jamie ever shown weakness. Morgan felt special, his body was warm with the feeling that he kept within him, for fear of letting it out – a feeling of love within his body.

“I’m glad to hear that,” Jamie smiled at Morgan, a bright smile that seemed to match that of a group of fireflies on a moonless night, before pushing open the door and revealing the interior to him. The first thing that Morgan saw was an arm, grasping at the empty air as it protruded out of a burlap sack. There were dark, red stains on other bags, too, and crates that seemed to be still dripping, he now realized, with blood. He could feel vomit rising in his throat, his eyes looking everywhere and nowhere. His body that was still damp from the rain become cold with sweat that began to coat him beneath his clothes.

“I need help dealing with these,” Jamie paused, contemplating for words as Morgan slowly turned to him, his face still vibrant, but with a darker shade that seemed to grow across it now, “*leftovers*, I suppose I should say.”

Morgan’s voice seemed to be

lost within his throat, tight and closed, as it were bound by stitches. The emotions in his body were lost, he could feel everything and nothing at the same time. He opened his mouth, but all that came out was a low sound of air weaved with his voice. His body collapsed, his knees being the only thing keeping him from landing on the floor. The only thing he seemed to be able to do was to just let out a few, silent tears.

“Are you alright,” a familiar voice asked. The concerning tone should have been a comfort to him, but the only emotion that seemed to rise to the question was fear. The only person that Morgan thought he would never fear, the only person that Morgan felt he could rely on, the only person that Morgan loved.

Morgan shook the hand off him as fear began to take hold of his body, his body already turning before he could stand up, his legs pushing him towards the exit of the kitchen before even his mind could keep up. It felt like he was an ant trying to get out of spilled molasses. The air seeming to pull him away from the blood-stained room. He fought against the air, his muscles straining for him to move faster than he was, but it felt like it took an hour to reach the kitchen door. He desperately tried to open it, but the door refused to budge, the lock holding it in place. Left with nothing to do, Morgan took a step back and shoved his body against the door, the old wood breaking open and collapsing beneath him.

Morgan collapsed onto the

floor in the remains of the kitchen door, one shard of wood finding its way into his stomach and piercing his skin, the pain seeming to encompass his body and distort his vision. He heard footsteps behind him, patient, barely audible over his heated breaths tumbling out of his lungs. He tried to crawl forward, to get away, but was soon met with a familiar hand on his shoulder.

“Really, you shouldn’t go so far as to injure yourself, Morgan.” Jamie’s voice was unnaturally calm and cool, it felt like Jack Frost himself was speaking to him, his body growing colder within Jamie’s presence.

“Let me,” Morgan panted out, trying to pull himself forward against the stone of the cafeteria floor, “Let me out, please.”

“I thought you said you would always like me,” the familiar voice cooed within his ear as he felt himself be turned over. The once familiar features of Jamie’s face seeming to be darkened and twisted.

“Your stomach will need some time to heal, that much is for certain,” Jamie observed, squatting on the ground and setting the lantern beside him. He took one of his shirt sleeves and tore the fabric, taking it and reaching toward Morgan’s wound, removing Morgan’s coat and shirt, tearing when necessary, to look at the wound. The look of concern on Jamie’s face seemed to stop Morgan’s movement, making it impossible for him to do nothing but watch as Jamie reached for the shard of wood and pull it roughly out of

Morgan's body. He howled at the pain, feeling the blood that was held in by the shard begin to stain his clothes and spread across the rest of his stomach.

The fabric of Jamie's shirt wrapped around his stomach, covering the wound in an attempt to slow the bleeding. Morgan felt his body's breath slow down, his mind seeming to be floating in the sky while his body was solid on the ground. Perhaps the room was just his imagination? Jamie couldn't have really done anything like that. Why would he be taking care of Morgan if he had?

"That will have to do for now. We'll have to get you out of here, though," Jamie huffed as he picked up Morgan's body and leaned him on his shoulder. Morgan felt comfort as he leaned against Jamie's body, the man's frame being a comfort to him. He could feel his vision begin to darken a little, his mind calming down. This was his best friend, his only friend. He was just imagining things in that room, it didn't happen – maybe this was all just a dream, and he would wake up with nothing wrong in the morning.

"We can think about what to do with the leftovers tomorrow, once you calm down a little," Jamie said with a laugh as he began to walk with Morgan, practically holding him upright all by himself. Morgan's thoughts were stopped. The denial was replaced with a cold stone in his stomach that even outmatched the warmth of the blood that stained him as he shoved away from Jamie, collapsing onto a

table. He couldn't deny what he saw, he knew what it was, he knew that Jamie had murdered those people.

"Morgan, Morgan, Morgan" Jamie sighed, his voice sounding exasperated, stepping towards Morgan and holding him down onto the table, his body leaning over him. "I thought I would trust you with this. I thought you liked me."

"You killed those people," Morgan managed to breath out, his face looking up at Jamie's as he managed to continue, "You killed them and stuffed them in a bag like they were garbage, scraps of food."

"How unexpected of you, guessed it right it one," Jamie laughed as his arms snaking around Morgan's frame. He started pressing them even closer together against the table. Morgan could see his reflection in Jamie's eyes, the light cast by the lantern being just bright enough to make out enough details to see himself in the reflection – his mud colored hair disheveled, his somewhat tanned skin being paler than chalk, his brown eyes looking right back at him. Morgan thought that this may be the last time he saw himself, with the man he thought at one point he wouldn't mind facing the devil for.

Then everything seemed to stop when Jamie's lips pressed against his own. The situation that seemed to be as tense as a spider web that was being pulled apart seemed to collapse, his emotions that had managed to grasp themselves once again dispersed into nothingness as they fought for

control. The only thing that Morgan knew he could feel would be Jamie's lips pressed against his own, securing a state of dominance against him as it pushed even further than that as he felt an intrusion in his mouth. Morgan was breathless, a situation that he had dreamed of before in fantasy appearing in what could only be described as a nightmare. Jamie's eyes were staring right at his, their emotions unreadable, but Morgan could not look away – he felt like he was a mouse being held by a snake.

Morgan didn't know how much time had passed, but eventually he began to writhe from underneath of Jamie's body as his lack of air began to send his body into a frenzy. After a few seconds of this, Jamie finally broke the kiss, his face leaning away from Morgan's, the bewilderment of Morgan's mind still not fading away when Jamie began to speak.

"I love you so much, Morgan," Jamie coughed, as tears began to drip down his face like rain against a window.

Morgan's mind began to align itself, following his words like a writer was pulling his mind along, writing the emotions to fill his mind. This was still Jamie, he was the only one that Morgan had. No matter what Jamie did now, he was still the one the kid that talked to him that day, when no one else would. Morgan felt his emotions begin to dim as he calmed down, his breathing returning somewhat to normal as he kept his eyes looking

right into Jamie's.

"Yes," Morgan sighed, the tension in his body relaxing into Jamie's hold, "You're right." Without Jamie, Morgan would still be the husk that he was, not able to feel anything, not able to talk at all, only able to do the commands that were given to him.

"Of course I am," Jamie laughed, pulling Morgan up and holding himself against himself. Morgan could feel Jamie's heartbeat against his own, as he leaned into the embrace. *

SILENT MUSICIAN

ZACHARY WINNIESTAFFER

MORGAN'S STOMACH SEEMED TO BE A SEPARATE entity by itself, floating within him as he took slow shuffles towards the main theater of the music hall. He shifted his head down, letting his mud-colored hair obscure his face, focusing on the velvet carpet. The heat from the crowd around him felt like sunlight, uncomfortable and too heated for him. He sometimes ran into people, but he just muttered a few words and passed on, trying to focus towards the end goal – having finally fulfilled his dream of going to the Music Hall.

The Music Hall was always the house on the hill for Morgan, like the idea of a family adoption back at the orphanage. With the gilded sculptures, lights constantly brimming in the evening air; it stood opposite of the graveyard in location and design. It was so foreign, like some of those exotic lands that Jamie would talk about them visiting when they were a child. Those dreams never came to fruition; however, this was his chance to finally fulfill a dream that was unrelated to Jamie. All he had to do was keep walking forward, to get into the main theater.

The main theater made the breath escape Morgan's lungs, making him feel like he stepped into a world above his own. The walls of the theater were filled with gilded statues, perfectly imperfect figures frozen in various performance. Men, women, and children, all were featured beneath the painted starry sky on the ceiling. The very air seemed foreign in the room as he was shoved forward in the mass of people, he felt like he was a meteor part of a shower he saw just once as a child.

He took a seat in the middle of the theater, granting him the perfect view of the stage. The stage was nearly empty, only a single piano under the light, the background a crimson curtain with silver as bright as starlight sewn into them. Morgan took a deep breath, feeling the excited air enter his lungs, feeling part of a crowd – a sensation foreign to him, being the last time he felt it so far in the past. He could feel his shoulders bump with that of a burly gentleman to his left, trying to get his child to sit still as they bounced around. The Music Hall, despite its fantastical appearance, was built for everyone, and yet it was Morgan's dream to come here... and here he is.

The audience began to hush and quite down, and when Morgan looked back to the stage, he saw

a man begin to approach the piano on the stage. He didn't recognize the man, he didn't even know what kind of performance the ticket was for – he got it off of a chance at the loss of another. Because someone's future was stopped, his future took a turn that he didn't expect. He watched with anxiety, his eyes fixated on the performer as he took the stage, his bald head shining the light like a lake during a clear night.

The man stretched his fingers, then brought them down, crashing into the keys like the shovel hitting the earth. His fingers tumbled over each other, each note playing a different sound, combining to form a song that felt like it was telling a story with no words. Morgan was entranced, he couldn't move, couldn't blink, he could only watch as the man's fingers danced across the keys... and then he faintly saw another set of hands pulling the man's fingers along.

He saw the faint outline of hands pulling the man's hands across the keys, the performance growing stronger, more enticing. Morgan felt the audience around him catch their breath at the strength of the performance, but Morgan caught his breath for a different reason – he could see the silhouette of a different man on the piano bench.

The first thought to enter Morgan's mind was how handsome the silhouette appeared, with the brown hair mirroring that of the ashes and wood in a fire, a regal face that seemed like a single firefly within the night. The man wore a suit, with gilded edges that aligned with that of the music hall – Morgan was reminded of Jamie, with the captivation the man seemed to provide. However, another thought entered his mind... that the man sitting there was a ghost, like the horror

stories read to him as a child.

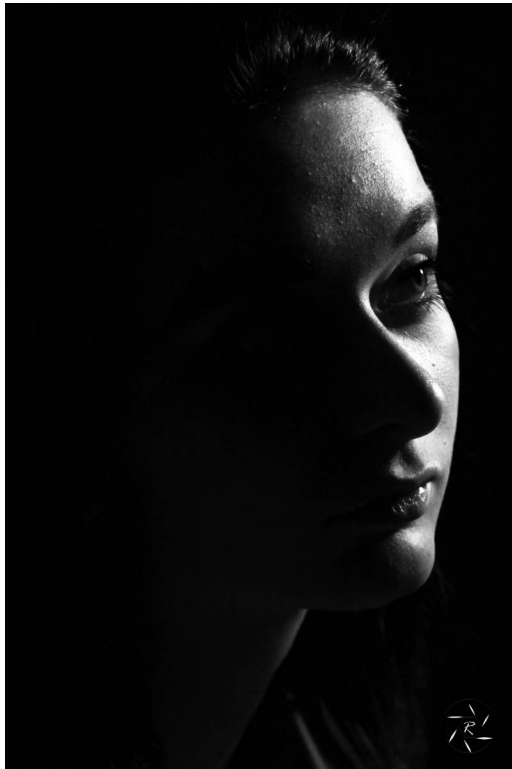
Nobody seemed to have any idea about the ghost appearing on the stage, not even the performer himself. The performer's face was as crimson as the curtains behind them, he was breathing heavily from the pure energy of the performance. Visible, gleaming sweat was dripping down his head, as he pushed forward into the song, the climax of the rising notes making it hard to breath as Morgan hung on to the notes themselves – despite the knowledge that the ghost was the one leading the performer this entire time.

With a final triumphant flare, the performer's fingers were slammed by the ghost into the keys, bringing the entire Music Hall to silence. Morgan felt himself panting and sweating as much as the performer, and before he knew it, he was clapping along with the crowd. Just beneath the surface of sound, just single chord seemed to be played, a musical laughter filling his ears. ✱





Sydney Cook, "Concealed"



Sydney Cook, "Shadows"



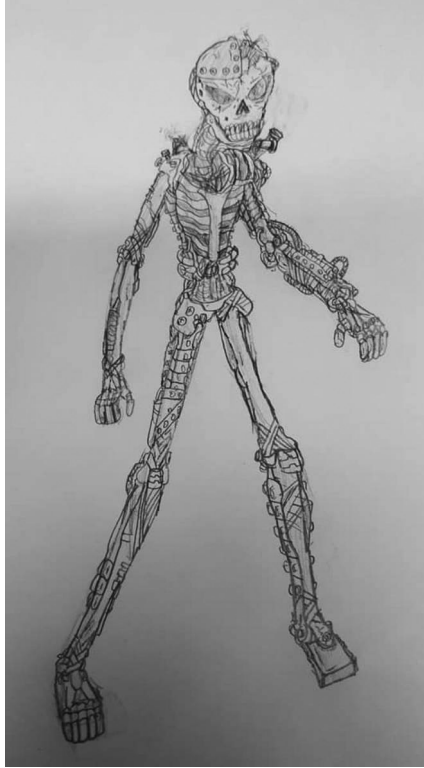
Kristie Gamble-Perdue, "Around the Corner"



Cyndi A. Smith, “American Harvest”



David Merritt Sexton, "Havoc"



David Merritt Sexton, Untitled



Amanda Keeton, "Facing Doubts"



Ash McCloud, “Breech”



Shaina Orewiler, "A Bee's Journey"



Shaina Orewiler, "Crowned Ocean"



Shaina Orewiler, "Morning Dew"

CONTRIBUTORS

From the heights of creativity to the depths of corporate finance, **TC Albright** has done it all. A digital content writer by day and a poet and memoirist by night, she strives to spread inspiration and hope with the only thing she has the talent to give—her own words.

Amber Alexander is currently studying English at Ohio State Marion and was recently named as one of the Sesquicentennial Scholars for the 2019-2020 school year. She plans to get an MFA in Creative Writing in order to continue pursuing Creative Writing. She was unofficially nominated most likely to forget she wrote a book.

My name is **Paden Aubry**, and I started writing stories when I was in 8th grade. I began with attempting to write a book (one I am still working on), I then moved on to writing short stories. My favorite writers are Garth Nix and Robin Hobb, and their writing has helped inspire me more than anything else.

Sarah Capelle is a graduating senior at OSUM. She participates in casual creative writing as a long time hobby. She has a love of books, anime, and video games which have all impacted who she is today.

Sydney Cook is a student at OSU Marion.

Kristie Gamble-Perdue is a student at OSU Marion.

Kyler Goebbel is a student at OSU Marion.

Donald Hassler published years ago in *Cornfield Review* and is delighted to be back. His family members mentioned in this new work are well-established adults now, but were children then.

English 2260H Poetry Commando Squad: In English 2260H (Honors Introduction to Poetry) this past spring semester, the poetry commandos in the class mounted a number of missions, including the group poems published in this volume. Perhaps you might have experienced some of our metaphor grenades that were laid about campus last spring, some of which are now on display on the second floor of Morrill Hall. Another mission consisted of an exercise whose purpose was to raise an awareness of the power, the texture, and the connotative possibilities of what our course text called the “fresh usual words” in poems. The squad consists of: Nick Clark, Miles Grooms, Sonny Grooms, Nina Huang, Devin Lutz, Jacob Moratt, Lily Noftz, Andrew Quakenbush, Megan Rodas, and Hannah Ziegler.

Freya Holloway is a student at Marion Technical College.

Christy Horton: I’m proud and honored to have another piece included within the pages of this publication. Storytelling and writing are central to my life and my contribution this year is a children’s story/fable inspired by the light in my lamppost. I hope it will make you, the reader, smile and “light your way” to fond memories of home and family. I’m excited that my fingerprints are on the cover once again, and I hope you enjoy Super Cornfield Review Man as much as we enjoyed creating him and his literary superpowers!

Alex Kauser is a senior at the Ohio State University, majoring in English with a minor in Professional Writing. She works as a writing tutor in the OSU Marion Writing Center, as a social media intern for the Marion Popcorn Festival, and is a merchandising specialist at Gap. In her free time, Alex loves to binge watch TV shows and hang out with her pug.

Amanda Keeton is a student at OSU Marion.

Liyah Laury-Jones: I’m a high school student who plans on finishing high school and going on to college to become a nurse. When I was little I used to write because it calms me down and takes my mind off things. I am proud of this poem because Maya is a powerful woman.

Ma’Rita Long is a sophomore student in high school. Her favorite subject is math but she likes to write as well. Her poem, “Back of the Bus Butterfly” was written as a classroom project to celebrate Black History Month and she never guessed it would be published! She loves working hard and trying her best to at everything she knows she is capable of, and she aspires to go to college and be a social worker to help teens and young adults move into the right direction.

Tricia McCambridge is a super senior who will graduate someday with a degree in English; she has a Bachelor of Science in psychology and is currently developing a new life plan. She adores the horror genre and hopes to contribute to it herself.

Ash McCloud walks the halls of OSU like the god he is. He took pity on the Cornfield Review and graced its pages with his eloquence.

Matt McPherson is a student at OSU Marion.

CONTRIBUTORS

Dani Miller graduated from the Ohio State University with their bachelor's degree in English. Since graduating, Dani spends their time hanging out with little kids and learning what it's like to have an imagination all over again. When not doing that, they're coming up with witty haikus and long epics about elves and fish people.

W.E. Moodie is an alumnus of OSU, class of 2018. He is currently attending United Lutheran Seminary in Gettysburg, PA, working on a Master's of Divinity. He is most likely to start a C.S. Lewis conversation at a cocktail party.

Abdirahman Nur: I like to write because I can share my thoughts to everyone without any extra effort. No one has to track me down and have me read it out to them, they only have to look for my name on a piece of printer paper.

Hey guys, my name is **Shaina Orewiler** and I just finished my freshman year at The Ohio State University. I enjoy hanging out with my friends and family. On my free time I enjoy traveling and taking pictures along the way. Hope you guys enjoy!

My name is **David Sexton**, and I am a 12-year-old student at Rutherford B. Hayes Elementary. I have been drawing since I was old enough to hold a pencil! I am also a cancer survivor and finished all of my treatments at the end of last year!

Jerome F. Shapiro: I am a recovering academic. My scholarly publications are primarily on cinema and culture. Currently I am working on a study of films about trauma. Program60 allowed me to take my first creative writing class. Ever. What a wild experience that was. This is my first fiction publication. Thank you OSU-Marion.

Cyndi A. Smith: I am from Meeker, OH. I am 49 yrs old (extremely late bloomer :-). I attend OSU Marion. My major is biology (forensic or cancer research assistant).

Zachary Winniestaffer is an English Major studying at the Ohio State of University. He enjoys both reading and analyzing literature, as well as creative writing. Additionally, he particularly enjoys works of the gothic and/or romance genres.

COLOPHON

This issue of the *Cornfield Review* is printed using a combination of **Georgia**, **COMIC BOOK** and **Raleway** 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 was developed collaboratively by the Editorial Board, and designed by Christy Horton.



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Cornfield Review has been presenting the creative works of students and community members since 1976. These creative works encompass everything from pictures of natures to short comical stories, along with everything in between and more. Submissions are open to students and community members, feel free to either just read along or submit a work of your own!

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KAPOW!

On the Ohio State University of Marion campus, there is a creative writing club that is called Kapow! Organized by Stuart Lishan, all versions of creative writing are encouraged to be shared and written. Feel free to come participate and hang-out, talk to Stuart Lishan (lishan.1@osu.edu) for details and more.