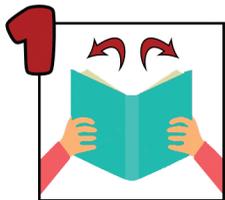


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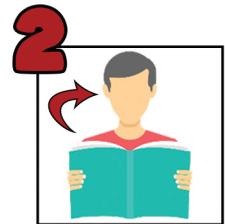


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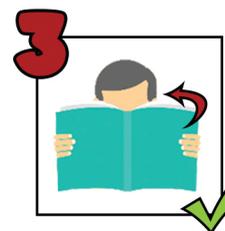
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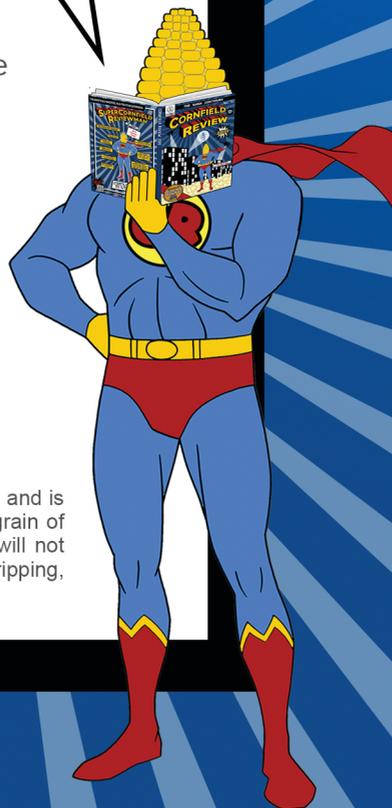
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**KEEPING YOU
SAFE...
COVER TO COVER!**



2020 ★ CORNFIELD REVIEW ★ VOL. 37



2020

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BACK TO SAVE THE DAY

No. 37



STILL BUTTERY FRESH

**CORNFIELD
REVIEW**

**RESCUING
THE WORLD
FROM
COVID-19
ONE ISSUE
AT A TIME!**



**CORNFIELD
REVIEW**

A LITERARY PUBLICATION OF
THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY AT MARION

VOLUME 37 | 2020

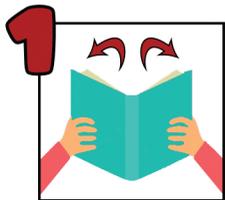
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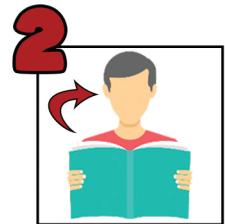


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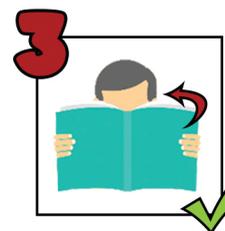
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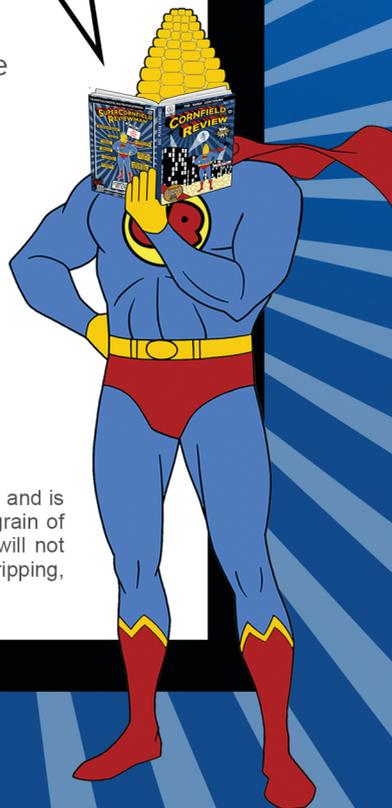
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PREFACE

WOW. WHAT A DIFFERENCE A YEAR MAKES.

Things have certainly taken a turn with the global Covid-19 pandemic and subsequent quarantines rolling out in states and countries all over the planet. Suffice it to say, we hope that you're well and keeping yourself healthy. We also hope that this latest issue of *Cornfield Review* will help brighten your day as you make your way through its contents. I certainly tip my hat to this year's editorial board (listed below), who adapted to their new circumstances and rose to meet that challenge, reading submissions in isolation and meeting remotely to discuss the make-up of this year's issue—heroic efforts indeed. As we start to emerge from this period of lockdown, we proudly present to you the socially distanced edition of *Cornfield Review*.

As usual, we thank the many people who have helped support this publication: Ohio State Marion's Dean and Director, Greg Rose; the Ohio State Marion English faculty; the Ohio State Marion Office of Communication and Marketing; the fine folks at Marion Technical College; the campus artistic creative writing community; our alumni and friends in the community. Without your support, we would not be able to bring this little magazine to press, and so all of you have our gratitude.

As with the last several years, Christy Horton has once again volunteered her graphic design expertise to the cause, and we're gifted with a wonderful cover that offers readers a message about the uplifting power of the creative arts.

Cornfeld Review is published annually. The Editorial Board is interested in quality poetry, prose, artwork, and photography. Submissions are primarily solicited from students at OSU-Marion and Marion Technical College, although we accept submissions from off-campus writers and artists as well.

For more information, please email me at mccorkle.12@osu.edu, or visit us online at cornfeldreview.osu.edu.

—Ben McCorkle, Faculty Adviser

2020 Editorial Board:

Darby Anderson
Adam Coutts
Anderson Grooms
Jeremy Johnson

Victoria Bell
Lindsay Euans
Miles Grooms

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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FRONTMATTER & BACKMATTER

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She had dances

She had dances who stalked her in the middle of the night
She had dances who took flight in an instant
She had dances who refused to budge at request

She had dances

She had dances who screamed for her attention
She had dances that lay lone and forgotten
She had dances that cried louder than she did

She had dances

She had dances that froze over like hell
She had dances that nibbled on her ankles
She had dances that bloomed to great height

She had dances

She had dances that laughed her to tired
She had dances that died before they were born
She had dances that yelled at the people

She had dances

She had dances that sang with the angels
She had dances that stank up the pages
She had dances that lived long and gave life

She had dances

She had dances before she had a birth
She had dances that groaned and moaned in pain
She had dances that rained gently on the plain

She had dances

She had dances yet undreamed
She had dances unmanned unplanned
She had dances that took her to lands

She had dances

She had dances never been seen
She had dances that never saw light
She had dances rolled on their head

She had dances

She had dances that tapped on her tomb
She had dances that knocked on her door
She had dances that were foolish

She had dances

She had dances that sang in ears
She had dances blinded by tears
She had dances that stayed through years

She had dances

She had dances that ran romped and played
She had dances that gave gray hairs
She had dances that woke her in morn

She had dances

She had dances growing stretching yearning
She had dances working earning
She had dances hanging on for bare life

She had dances

She had dances that drove hard
She had dances whipped and driven
She had dances in shreds

She had dances

She had dances she loved
She had dances she hated
She had dances that just dissipated

She had dances

— *Victoria Bell*

The Weeds

The Weeds, my Teacher
I want to be like them
When I grow
Up

I wander a country lane
The Tiger Lilly jumps out at my eyes
Blue Bells twinkle in my ears
The Queen Ann's Lace my sister loves

The weeds were not bidden to the table
Last chosen
Least loved
They thrive

Mowed down
They fight back
I love them.
They catch the glisten

Of a thousand rays
Proud, stout
Humble in sway
Standing in clumps

Make their boast
Or one pops up
Alone like gold
Hushed

Speak quietly their colors
Make their way to the table
Welcome at mine
My eyes feast on them

Some slowly
Some devoured in haste
The weeds, my Teacher

I want to be like them
When I grow
Up.

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.

— *Victoria Bell*

I Knew the Sea Once, Too

I knew the Sea once, too
Caressing the Sun on my face
To taste life in a Breeze
I have not forgotten

I visit in my dreams,
Grinding stone in my rapids
I am a roaring river,
Living without apology

I awake to earth beneath my feet.
Too dry for a river
Or for a winding sea,
But I can dream again.
And curl my toes in the sand

— *Nicholas Clark*

Always Here

Here and there are common phrases, describing our location.
To truly think about them, though, would cause much complication.

Here is such a solid concept, as concrete as they come
But going there's like caching shadows, simply can't be done

Here is always just right here, the spot where you are at
And there depicts a someplace else, now we can all see that

But issue lies in traveling from here to there, you see
For going to what you call there, just will never be

As here and there do never name, the same spot that's in space
For here is always where you're at and there's a different place

So if you were to travel there, there would disappear
For once you were to travel there, there would become here

— *Anderson Grooms*

At the Bureau of Monster Unemployment

Welcome to the department of monster relocation
Where our goal is to help you find, good accommodations
You're here because your last kid is no longer scared, you say?
Well I'm certain that we'll have you back to scaring in a day
We simply can't just give you, though, a brand new kid to chase
We'll have to pick through all our jobs, to find you the right place
It seems we have an open spot, under a young boys bed
Three years old, so room to grow, but has a dog that sheds
We also have some space inside, a closet if you choose
Plenty of warm clothes to wear, and full of smelly shoes
Under the stairs, I'm sure you know, is quite a rare position
But moving to a small cramped space, can be a hard transition
Basement fright is quite the gig, if you're feeling bold
Lots of space, as you will find, but winter's freezing cold
Now sir I know you'll have to think before you make your pick
What's that? You want the closet job? Now that was pretty quick
Just take this form to registration, there's papers you must sign
I'm glad that I could help today, I'll take who's next in line

— *Anderson Grooms*

Controlled Chaos

The universe is contrast
The greatest emptiness within it
Yet overflowing with everything
Novas breath white fire
Bright stars shoot flares like flickering tongues
And still the deepest dark of oblivion
Fills the ever shifting areas between
Geriatric beyond time
But filled with the life of a newborn
The empty infinity can give the worst kind of isolation
Yet just the same it encloses you in a cocoon of peace
Polar opposites in harmony, the recipe for the universe

— *Anderson Grooms*

Infinite Loop

In class, time runs like honey, slow
No way out, no place to go
Minutes pass yet time stands still
Like walking up an endless hill
On the clock, your eyes will plaster
But nothing will make time go faster
Teacher lectures on and on
Spirit crushed, all hope is gone
Then it's a miracle, this you know
The clock says that it's time to go
But when you think the class has passed,
Turns out the clock's ten minutes fast

— *Anderson Grooms*

The Lunch Rush

Kids rush blindly down the hall
It's their favorite time of day
Keep on moving, do not stall
To the lunch line, don't delay

Impatient line snakes out the door
Forward moving, one by one
Shuffling across the floor
To the front, the wait is done

Now several choices you may face
But must fill all the groups of food
On your plate these foods may grace
Some look good and some look crude

Now decisions far behind
The lunch journey almost done
Two and change you will be fined
Now to tables you may run

The morning mountain you may climb
Now join friends for simple feast
You'll feel free for endless time
Or thirty minutes at the least

— *Anderson Grooms*

Nothing in the Dark

Oh life is such a fragile pretty thing.
Man comes to terms with this in life sometime,
but this weighs heavy on man's conscious mind.
So fear of death has burdened all my thoughts,
for I have met death, seen his cold still eyes.
He takes a form unnoticed, seen by none,
aside from I. I knew from then to hide.
If death was real, I could not die unless,
found. Running, skulking, hide from hidden fright.
Was surely not ideal, but was a life,
I thought. I saw one day it was not life,
for dying not is not the same as that.
When old and wrinkled, peace found me at last,
from dark I greeted death as one old friend.

— *Anderson Grooms*

The Peddler

Gadgets, trinkets, big and small
Come look folks I've got them all
Rarities from far and near
Gather round if you want to hear
Tales of all the things I've found
From traveling the world around

From the Valley of the Kings
A beaded necklace, emerald rings
A fancy rug with rainbow hues
A brand new pair of running shoes
Just a few items from my store
But wait folks there's many more

From Europe I've collected lots
Paintings, pictures, pans and pots
Bikes to ride and gum to chew
Genuine fake rubies too
And the best (so I've been told)
Is rubber from King Leopold

Africa had quite the haul
Wooden spears and voodoo dolls
Water buckets, desert sand
And a prize that's really grand
I found a tribe that can't be beat
They sold me several shrunken feet

So just a taste of what I sell
To your friends about me tell
Treasures truly one-of-a-kind
Look no more for a rare find
Gadgets, trinkets, big and small
Come look folks I've got them all

— *Anderson Grooms*

School Oasis

School is hot, my mouth is dry
Feel as though I just might die
No money for the pop machine
Heat stroke, blurred eyes, start to lean
Hydration chances do seem bleak
It is a fountain that I seek
Sitting there upon the wall
It is the savior of us all
A free drink for my lips so parched
My tongue feels like its freshly starched
Though water warm may trickle slight
The fountain is a welcome sight
Now overjoyed beyond belief
I push the button for relief.
But water pressure was too high
Now my cold drink's in my eye

— *Anderson Grooms*

Teach to the Test

Study hard and try your best
This test reflects upon me
Most important is the test
Smarts don't matter you will see

This test reflects upon me
Doesn't matter learning math
Smarts don't matter you will see
Testing well is the only path

Doesn't matter learning math
You are not here just to learn
Testing well is the only path
Smarts or test skills don't discern

You are not here just to learn
Knowledge might not be the best
Smarts or test skills don't discern
I'm just teaching to the test

— *Anderson Grooms*

My Symphony

What does a symphony make you think
And how does it make you feel?
Does it sink down deep into your heart
And leave an echoing thrill?

I'll tell you what my symphony's like:
It's warm, pulsating vibrant joy;
Sometimes slow like an elderly one
And sometimes like a jubilant boy.

Autumn leaves floating on a mountain lake
And the quietness of wood-land kin
broken by the songs of birds
and the sighing of the wind.

A glistening rain drop on a leaf
After a morning rain,
And the rainbow on the clouds above
When all is well again.

Listening to the majestic chords
From a great musician's hand;
I bow in humble gratitude
To the music..... Of the Land!

— *Mitchel Hendricks*

Alden Avenue

It's raining on Alden Avenue
The droplets stream down my windshield in rivers
It's a heavy, steady kind of rain
The gravel crunches as I pull into his driveway
We duck the rain running under the overhangs
Keys. Door. Inside.
And just like that - I have a vision
Of us in the future doing the same thing
Coming home
Being home
Having a place to call home that doesn't ache deeply

For a moment, I can see myself pulling the door closed
as he walks into the kitchen and hangs up his jacket
For a moment, I can see it
I can just see it
and in that moment
I finally find the space
to breathe

— *Ruksana Kabealo*

Dandy Lion

There once was a dandy lion
Who's life was dull and alone
He'd been on the Earth for a while
And it had worn him down to the bone

He thought that he had all the answers
He was handsome! Well-educated! Rich!
But brains, they don't work like they're supposed to
And life? Well, life is a...

Nothing he tried would cheer him
Not diamonds or champagne or new clothes
His friends - they all tried their hardest
But our lion reached the lowest of lows

He thought that this woe was forever!
Or for the rest of his life, at best
But all of that changed in a moment
When he met the loveliest dandy lioness

— *Ruksana Kabealo*

Commute

Mindless chatter fills the space
Empty shells of meaningless words
Never speaking of what we face
Deepness shackled like caged birds

The world is a blur as it passes by
Each day a repeat of the last
And still they only gossip and lie
Ignoring the cries from the past

Light phrases and bubblegum voices
Are a pleasant part of life
But lets break the bonds of easy choices
And voice our dreams and strife

So, when you next find yourself aboard the bus
Choose to break the noisy silence
Confide in someone that you trust
Defeat this universal shyness

— *Mindi Klaus*

Love Breathes

Love breathes fire
Intensity and brilliance
So bright
Even the sun covers its eyes

Flames of fervent feelings
Falling fantastically through the fields
Of irrevocable and unconditional
Heart
Heart of happiness and of joy
And of forever

Love breathes water
Safe and tranquil
A sense of security
Longed for by the masses

Waves of unwavering worthiness
Washing over the whimsical wishes,
Granting them and turning them true
Into the salty, sunshine filled breeze

Because love breathes air
Feeding the veins of the heart
That beats for only one
Forever and always

Brightly blowing into brilliant bliss
Basking in brave and blushing beauty
As the one thing in the world that means the most
Is filled up and made complete

— *Mindi Klaus*

Caramel Memories

Streaming through the sun-kissed blinds, golden yesteryear saturates the living room.
In the chair made of creaks and cracks sits an idol flush with illuminated brown.
A tribute more beautiful and more blasphemous than any calf statuette,
I await my sleeping uncle's rise from his dream bogged cave,
so he can resume his annual sermons.

The church is quiet for now,
but there has never been a better time to believe.
The chipped walls smile proudly at the seams
as they welcome aspiring apostles to their humble chambers,
spreading family photo triptychs like open arms.

As Turkey Day football crumples to the crunch of Mississippi leaves
that magnolias have placed proudly on the soil,
my 6 year old toes let the wispy fingers of the carpet wrap them in safety.
Knees tucked to chest is how I pray on these Thursday evenings.
I am the only one that attends this tryptophan mass,
reciprocated sweetness my one true reward for remaining faithful.

The pitter-patter stubble dusted in salt and pepper gleams on his chin,
smirking slyly with his lips as new tales simmer in his mind.

Once he awakes, my congregation will rejoice.
Recycling the stories wrapping my prophet,
will feed a mind even to the afterlife.

— *Travis McClerking*

A letter from the bifocals weary of my shortsightedness

I write you a tunnel.

I scratch in stalagmites that won't groan with their years of reaching for the ceiling,

I carve registers prophesying future memories in the pockmarked walls

and sprinkle in seeds that will outgrow the roots permeating in doubt.

I erase the withered floor to engrain grooves

stuffed with friends that smile with their teeth

and family that laugh with their eyes-

Stomping out worries with crow's feet.

I draw a flaming symbol.

Something that will burn away the dead skin on your fingertips

and the calluses on your eyelids.

I use it to light your way,

then stab Janus and close his mirroring doors.

Life is always the right choice.

— *Travis McClerking*

Crying in Silence

Crying in Silence is repulsive,
But if I express myself to you would you comprehend?
Would you become my friend
Or speak bad of me?
Walking the halls with a smile upon my face,
I desire to cause pleasing chaos.
I imagine breaking free from the normality of life.
But the emptiness inside me
Does not know all it yearns for.
I am crying in silence.
Fearing to speak of my aspirations
Because it is not the norm.
We have one life to live.
And I must break free.
To satisfy my desires.
Not to please yours.
Crying in silence is no more.

— *Cyndi Smith*

Overpowering Emotions

Storming with countless of emotions.
Determination is my temptation.
Tantalizing me with every motion.
Emotions are bridgeable to my destination.
Provoking my destination to the indication.
Suggestions of a near graduation.
Thinking of the lives, with every protection.
Avoidance is unacceptable.
Pleasing is gratification.
Negation is unbearable.
Freewheeling is my intention.
Attention of the lives I may spare,
During my profession.
Encouraging my essence.
Quintessence of self-possession.

— *Cyndi Smith*

Torn and Tattered

As a nation,
As a race,
As an individual,
We are torn and tattered.
Torn and tattered is what makes us one.
The cruel moments.
The pleasant moments.
The over opinionated.
The over relinquished.
Those we have loved and those we detest.
Is what makes us all torn and tattered.
Torn and tattered can bring us
hope
happiness.
grief.
heartache.
Experience.
Torn and tattered can make us experts.
Torn and tattered is what makes one unique.
We may deny or accept
But It's the thing that connects us all.

— *Cyndi Smith*

Where the Lilacs Bloom

At grandpa and grandma's, playing by the lilacs
Is where you would find me.
Watching the adults gather bouquets of lilacs for their vases.
Talking their adult conversations.
Listening was not for a child's ears.
Attempting to rush away a child would not last long.
White and purple lilac shrubberies colored the yard.
The purple lilacs are my favorite.
A strong fragrance that awaken my senses.
A slight breeze towards the right direction,
I knew they were blooming.
As if, they could call my name.
Filling my chest with excitement.
Is where the lilacs bloom.
I gather bouquets of lilacs for my vases.
Speaking of adult conversations
With my cousins next to my side.
Chasing away our children.
That is when my warm springs began.
The lilacs grew tall and resilient.
Determining to get to the top,
Is where the best lilacs were.
Now, I am a grandmother and
My grandchildren are experiencing
Where the lilacs bloom.

— *Cyndi Smith*

All Your Loving Lies

All those things you said
They meant nothing
In your own twisted lies

Now im stranded
Leaving me hurt
From your disguise

I can't believe you
Had me
Stuck in my own demise

— *Collin Thacker*

My Year

This will be my year,
To do something great,
To fill those shoes,
To conquer the unknown,
To complete those expectations,
To heal the wounded,
To prosper through the hardships,
To live on through my life,
To create my legacy,
And most of all,
To write my own story,
This will be my year.

— *Collin Thacker*

One-Liner

Love is a necessity, love is everything.

— *Collin Thacker*

Apricots in Summer

Eight years
It was eight years, I think
An eight year war where all the pieces
The pieces were me
I suppose
You burned my sharp edges away
And I was all sharp edges

I was young— we were young, once
With stars in our eyes
My stars
Faded
Your stars didn't
You became a galaxy
And this is when I'd say a metaphor about
Astronomy
Or astrology
But I just think you were very pretty
And I think you deserved to be looked at

Don't, now
Don't make this hard on me
Don't be gentle
I don't want that.
I want you to tear me apart
Or I don't want to live at all

I wanted to go to Italy with you
We were different people in Italy
Weren't we?

...
I'm
Sorry
I lied
We never went to Italy
But I often imagine we did
Like I imagine the curl of your lips
The smile as you say my name
Oh
There it is again
In Florence, this time
Let's go to Italy, I say
You laugh and say
"Why?"
I don't have the heart to answer

— Riley Timms

Sung to Be

We were happy in summer
Like lemonade
The smiles were yellow and the tears
Well
The tears were warm
And my sobs were like the ice cubes in our glasses
Clinking
Making noise
We didn't notice
Or maybe we played polite and ignored it
I don't know
We were happy in the summer
But now it's autumn
And
It's gotten colder
I miss you

— *Riley Timms*

To Home

I don't like

Poetry

(I think it's overrated)

(I think)

Well

What I think

Is that poetry is written by people

Who are lonely

And who want to be

Oh

I don't know

Loved, maybe

And it never happens, darling

Never

The unwritten letters, the

Seldom spoke words

They just sit there

Gathering dust

Like what all poetry is good for

Here's a funny joke

You will laugh

It is

Fairly funny

And I am seldom funny

The joke, of course

I could say it was me

But I think I'm

Being disingenuous

I'm the joker

Not the joke

And you're not the joke either

The joke is something

Else

Right?
This can't be it
This can't be
All
That life is
Right?

Once upon a time, I fell deeply in love
The gross kind
You know
Where
Your stomach hurts
A hundred angry butterflies
Or
Bees
And it tore me up
And I promised myself, "I will never
Ever
Love again."
But darling, those butterfly bees
They don't know when to quit

— *Riley Timms*

Recover the Wreckage

A suicidal shipwreck drowns in self insecurity
The downpour from their eyes
Compressed into their urge to say goodbye
For she, invalidates their identity

Unconditional love twisted with heartbreak
Lies and fakes a smile
Alone, but only for awhile
Recovery, at stake

Unwillingly shy
The darkness is comforting
The silence is haunting
Merely mumbling “hi”

Scars ascending from wrist to shoulder
Time, healing the self inflicted wounds
Oh how the darkness protrudes
Their vessel, a wreckage collector

Limbs trembling as they bared the weight
Hold on tighter
They will become a fighter
No more, struggling like a derailed freight

Strength started as a seed
Hidden beneath the soil
Surfacing past the weed
Igniting like flame over oil

Their existence will not be another statistic
Opportunities lie across the floor
Their body is not carved from plastic
They have found themselves; they are not lost anymore

Her voice still echoes through the walls
Faint but still whispering in their ears
An eerie lullaby they do not wish to hear
Happiness may be at fall

Has it been a year?
I am not in fear
She brings such an unsettling atmosphere
She never owned me

Wind rushing through their hair
Heart pounding faster
Vision becoming clearer
As their lungs refill with air

The ground beneath them shakes
Past nightmares fade
New dreams expand
It is time to awake

Her words shiver down their spine
With too much to say
All bottled up within a day
It's time to leave her behind

No longer plastered in labels
I am meant to be free
This is who I will be
No longer unstable
I cannot set my own expiration date
The battles will be overcome
Acceptance will be welcome
I cannot predict my own fate

One day I will create a masterpiece
I am now just setting sail
My wings will not fail
Release.

— *Kai Van Dyke*

Toxic Media

sunlight casts shadows beneath our eyes
numbed by each cup of weak caffeine
insincere laughter joins hollow smiles

starstruck in twisted mirrors
silently tears escape
from our weary eyes

scrolling to avoid conversations
preoccupied by the lies it feeds
hungry? that's unattainable for beauty.

the outward cries of being an abomination
why do you demand to be seen
by those who do not want to see you?

internalized hatred persists
disposing your confidence
lets them win

pleasing... for their eyes
we pose for golden hour
finally, blessed by the evening's glow
where did it go?

we retreat to our darkened bedrooms

— *Kai Van Dyke*

Anniversary

it took me three years to be able to talk about it without a shake in my throat /
shuffle in my feet / tissue in my hand / three years before I could find a way to
beat that memory / no cheat code in sight / find the lasso that could successfully
tie it up and deem it indifferent / make it known that my weaknesses have made
me stronger / telling my tale of triumph / finding a way to bask in the subsequent
pause / waiting for a reaction / hoping it perfect / not knowing what perfect even
is / hoping for it anyway / owning that trauma / as if it even had a fighting chance

— *Naomi Williams*

cemetery

when asked about the afterlife my indecisive mind tends to reel a bit.
sometimes i envision myself living forever
no reincarnation needed to roam these hallowed grounds
but other times the thought halts me
makes me consider why i'm just delaying the inevitable
a postponed "return to sender" that's anything but optional

i once came across a headstone labeled "specimens"
as if the gravediggers believed the bones would be thankful for being tossed into
the worst "Great American Melting Pot" like ever
trapped under the same headstone
binded together under literal tooth and nail
not knowing what came of their existence postmortem
only being sure of the secret that came after it was all said and done.

tell me why I feel like that headstone sometimes,
waiting to take my place in an earthly temple.
it's easy to blend into the grave when you already have one foot in.
it's easy to feel like you belong there when you know it's where you're going to
end up.

— *Naomi Williams*

For All the Unsaids

let me just start off by saying
i'm sorry that i never said i was in love with you
never felt brave enough to say what needed to be said
a broken music box full of all the right hums
but never feeling like it was the right time to open up
i understand that to be vulnerable is to be brave
but sometimes wearing your heart on your sleeve means ripping it out of your
chest
and i don't think i'm not ready for that kind of pain
at what point does poetry turn diary?
because the ink bleeds so often between the two when i write about you that i'm
having a hard time keeping track
trust me, i know about the expiration date on things like this
that any hope i'd find between us is probably in the back of some pantry at this
point
so before i go just know that even though you deserved to hear it long ago
i'm sorry about all the things that i said
and even more sorry for the things that i never will

— *Naomi William*

Missing

Phantom lips that seem to trace against my skin,
Curving along my back,

Touch as sweet as peppermint
With chills that are from a blissful cold.

A touch that holds my own
Intertwined with blankets and sheets,

A desperate heat that seems to follow,
Summer that seems buried in winter's gift.

Frame of frame, we dance together.
Touch of touch, we linger together.

My eyes closed as I try to match the silhouette
Curving my body, your sensation guiding my own.

When my eyes open,
Only one lingering kiss remains.

— *Zachary Winniestaffer*

Unbroken

Now the 450 International-Farmall tractor sits,
and leaches rust against the Amarillo sunset,

longing to be idled,
screams viciously to be driven,

does not sputter or ooze charcoal smoke,
but sits and awaits its owner

who does not come to grease the joints
or fix the cracked headlight. How empty

the seat looks without Wrangler marks etched into the leather.
Holding no one's flesh, bones, and aged muscle.

— *Hannah Ziegler*



AGAINST CHILDREN

DARBY ANDERSON

IT'S NOT THAT I *ABSOLUTELY LOATHE* THE LITTLE creatures, not all of them. There are a few I do not shy from.

I can only readily name one that I will hold, gladly, though she's getting too big for it now a days, growing on *three years old* (and I cannot remember when she was born, it wasn't that long ago?!). Lilly Clementine Haff. My sister's daughter. My sister took both names I was going to use for a girl if I were to have one, so I suppose I'll settle with the better plan of being a D.I.N.K. (Dual Income, No Kids).

I figure I'm the same as my mother in the fact that she didn't want kids, either, and as the story goes, "until I saw you," and all that. But why fall for the trap if you know it's already laying there? Walk around. Skip ahead to the next chapter! Actually, tear the pages and use them as confetti while you dance with your partner and your money, in your lavish wherever, with no worry of waking up some spawn of the pair of you.

Can you imagine something even 50% like me running around? I've heard on two accounts— both by biology teachers— that if humans were to asexually reproduce, they'd be worried about more of me running around.

"How could the world handle two Darby's?" Mrs. Gorilla (I can't remember her real name, but she told us not to call her Mrs. Gorilla because it rhymes with her real surname, so we'll settle with it) says with a laugh and a shake of her head, pregnant belly engorged for the third school year in a row, turgid beneath a flimsy top. I figure I'm not too awful, but if I had multiples? Yeah, yikes.

And what is a kid if not a miniature of one parent? Yes, there's a mingling of both sometimes. Maybe not in all cases. Sometimes that's for the better, but not all parents are horrid. My mother is quite alright, and she tells everybody that I'm her "Mini Me". How sweet, right? But I feel as if I didn't only inherit her good qualities in small doses, but also the ones that make her human, make her and I faulty. Perhaps that's why we fit along so well; we can commiserate. That also means I have my own faults to pass on to someone. Horrid thought.

And what if my kid is a shit-hole? Sorry to say, but not every kid is as fantastic as I am. I don't need to list the great many things that "delinquent children" do nowadays, (okay, boomer speaking), but goodnight Irene. What am I supposed to do when my kid isn't my kid anymore, they're an adult doing their own things, figuring out life with me on a walkie-talkie (turned off half the time) in the bottom of their book bag? Maybe I get lucky and they carry my wisdom in their back pocket, maybe they call me when shit gets bad and they need a ride home because they trust me to save them and aren't afraid of me. Maybe they don't and OD one day because they wanted to try something at a party instead of at home first and— and then what do I do? What do I do when the thing most precious to me in the entire universe is gone? What if my child dies. No parent wants to think of it, no parent ever can prepare to plan for such an event, but I'm a horrid worrier. What if my child dies and I could have, in some way, prevented it? I don't know, folks. I think I'd check out and join them.

That's another thing; what if my kid doesn't trust me? What if I'm not family to them? I'm something to fear and avoid. That's awful, right? Why run the risk of disappointing something you're meant to be the hero to? And is there any righting of a wrong such as the mistrust of a child after the paper has been crumpled and warped and stained after so many years of abuse? How do you even go about fixing the swath of pain if you fuck up your first go-round with parenting?

Hopefully, if you realize the first was a mistake, you don't try again, but the majority of the population breeds with as much freedom as Catholic rabbits, so I know I'm probably the only one giving this much of a shit about the future.

Sure, this could all be irrational. Five years could go by and I could realize, "You're a moron, nineteen year old Darby. Kids are great with this person in mind, blah blah, all these rationalities." Everybody scoffs when I figure I don't want children—a woman with ample eggs and no halting defects not having a child? What a terror for people to behold in this twisted day and age! "Oh, dear. Just give it some time and you'll want them," "You don't know what you want, you're too young" (not entirely false), and the always asked "Why not?" with that silly scoff and roll-eyed look. See above some reasons as to "why not."

Perhaps this is more telling of my fear of failure and the inability of making everybody happy than children at large... but small children currently at large are awful and only getting worse (with poor parenting, of course, it's the same as training a dog, which is another topic; when does the kid no longer become second-tier family member to parent, to teacher?). Some of them... ughf, folks. I cannot describe to you the amount of bullshit children cause and get away with because "they're only kids!"

And for some reason it's a sin if I tell my child "No" anymore, or employ any sort of discipline to a creature that needs the proper sanctions provided by the social family

circle to *survive, thrive, and develop* in the “real” world. Socialization, people. It has to happen in the major spheres of life, and for childhood development it is most crucial that they learn the “ways of the social world” via their parents. What if their parents suck and never teach them properly, perhaps because they don’t know “proper” as it was never taught to them, either? That’s not their fault? That’s true, it isn’t the kid’s fault, and I hope they get attuned to the social continuums of the world before the world sends the kid’s head to the pavement, watches it bounce with a hearty, happy “thunk!”, and laughs about it.

I don’t know what happens to those kids, besides their parents keep them afloat for a while, and that’s all I’ve heard. I don’t socialize with those children, because they grow up to be assholes. Sometimes functioning, but other times raw and festering.

On the flip side: what if I adore my kid so much? Too much?! I force him to sign up for a sport he obviously doesn’t enjoy so I can live out some sick vicarious fantasy through his success— in the process crushing his self esteem and creating a self-imploding timebomb; I feverishly hound on all studies so the failures of my past can be masked by her triumph— because what are kids but a second try for a selfish parent, right? They can’t be their own being, developing too far from you, because that means... something bad, right? Or isn’t it good that you nourish a new human up to be something all on it’s own? I’d like to think I’d nourish something, someone, into something they could be proud of. *

I CALLED THE DEVIL AND THE DEVIL DID COME. That was the name above the phone number on the bathroom stall, so I figured it was safe to call him the devil, or one of a sort.

I CALLED THE DEVIL.

DARBY ANDERSON

He showed up at my house, a dark leather slick covering all of his figure. He didn't take it off. He didn't look amused, occupying most of the door-frame while I beckoned him in. He merely stood there and stared over my head, looking at the inside of my apartment. His hair was frazzled by the rain, slicked to the sides of his gaunt face.

I said to the devil, "Devil do you like drums? Do you like cigarettes, dominoes, rum?" So eager I was to know everything about him, if only he'd come inside and let me talk endlessly and ask my questions without pause.

He said only; "Sundown, Sundays, Christmas," before turning away and leaving. I went to call out for him again, though he had already melted into the shadows that gathered cooly at his feet whilst he had been walking down the stairs.

****Call #74****

I called the devil and he rose up from the ground this time, the shadows in my meager dwelling converging into a figure on the wooden floor. He stood up, glowing at me sternly. His hands brushed off the suit he wore today.

With an almighty huff the devil said, "Quit! I can't be bothered! You better handle your shit!"

He paused, standing in the middle of the room, where he regarded me and my dumbfounded face. A wry smirk impishly made an attempt at his lips, though the devil kept an impassive countenance. He slicked back his hair and rolled his jaw. He looked reptilian; sharp, acute angles composing his visage, though his voice had the heft of a train. "Keep about your wits man, keep about your wits!"

His eyes flared with an ominous flame, his warning coming sternly my way. I stumbled to sit on the couch, gawking at him in awe. The lingering scent of cinnamon dulls my mind, but my hands fumble and find a journal, shitty pen ditched for a loyal pencil.

“Know yourself and who you came in with...” His chest heaves with a sigh, thumbs slipping under his pinched lapels.

I have to settle my jumping fingers. They obey; they always do in times of stress, and I thank them every time for their servitude. They write his advice with bumpy, bubbly letters that bulge out of the neat, lined borders. I look up to regard him, the sound of his Oxfords on my wooden floor makes my heart kick up. My thoughts started to drift, become rash and antsy.

Those enrapturing hues bored into my being. He could see the panic in my person as it bled into my present essence. Perhaps to save me some embarrassment, he cleared his throat, approaching as he spoke.

“Can I sit down?” He’s already pinched his pant legs up a few inches and has sat next to me, knowing my mind has already said “yes.”

“I’ve been hustling all day,” he says, head leaning back and body slowly succumbing to the captivating pull of my couch. He chuckles, a lazy hand waving around. Something glitters on his cuff.

“I can’t even count how many souls I’ve made off the same deal you’re on.” My throat tightens. *Right, the deal.*

He turns his head, eyes opening and fixating upon me. I suddenly felt unsafe, like a meal left out in the open.

“Remember,” he began, “the devil ain’t a friend to no one.”

There was a pause as he read my face, even though I turned it away from him and looked solely to my journal. “But fun, true,” he filled in the silence with what he read from me,

the thought arising straight from my internal id.

He pushed himself up and dusted himself off, the mortal debris from my squishy couch hanging on his corporeal form. The devil swept back his hair again and after taking two paces away from me, submerged into the floor. The shadows that had all vanished upon his arrival suddenly came back in suppressing waves and I was alone in my apartment again.

Call #258

I called the devil and the devil didn’t even show up at first.

He sounded groggy on the phone, voice muffled and being cut off by the sound of rustling fabric.

“Hey, why you been calling this late? It’s like 2 a.m.,” a thunderous yawn interrupts his flow of speech. I can hear him get up, the noise coming through the phone nestled against my right ear tells me he’s no longer laying down. I’ve woken him up for the night.

“...and the bars all close at 10 in hell, that’s a rule I made,” he adds in a surly mutter. The voice is suddenly by my left ear. There’s some warm figure next to me on the couch. His presence, though startling, is welcomed. I sigh and drop my phone off to the side, glad to look over and see that blasé face scanning my distraught features. The brevity of the action causes my heart to swelter; his eyes already surveying elsewhere as he begins to speak again.

“Anyway,” he pulls the blankets from my lap and lays a decent portion on top himself. I know he’s cold; he’s only wearing a set of linen pajama pants, and it’s frigid so far above ground. The cold-blooded fiend picks up our conversation, always bet-

ter than I at keeping a topic going.

“You say you’re too busy saving everybody else to save yourself, and you don’t want no help,” his eyebrows loft in my direction. He knows I see the irony of it; he’s reading it from my mind right this second. His eyes have that amber sheen to them.

“Oh well,” he says with a shrug. I stew in the silence, waiting for him to say more. He drinks in my unease and displeasure, my anxiety making the air around us sultry.

The grin of a Cheshire Cat takes hold of him as he offers more insight, leaning forward towards my small work-table. One long digit reaches out to lightly touch the corner of my journal, “That’s the story to tell.”

He bobs his head once at me in an indicative manner as my fingers pull open my notebook. The pencil is wedged in between the pages, worn down to a fraction of its former stature after so much use.

I get busy writing, so engrossed in the act that I don’t even know when he leaves. The chill that creeps over me pulls me, eventually, from my flow. I look up to spot the empty space next to me, teeth automatically preening my lower lip and mind churning with unwholesome thoughts. *Even the devil needs time alone sometimes.*

I write until I forget he’s gone, and I feel... better. I figure I might be able to fall asleep tonight without calling the devil again.

*(This piece’s dialogue comes from the song “It’s Called: Freefall” by Rainbow Kitten Surprise.) **

THE SHORT PEOPLE

VICTORIA BELL

THE INTERPRETER ASKED, “Would you like to visit the short people?” Our team had assembled from many countries to love on the Syrian refugees in Jordan. We drove through streets of Arabic folk, simple housing, but rich smiles. There were dusty, drab, dull colors, but gaily wrapped hearts. Out of the taxi we bounded. The abode of our visit was a plain block building. Family stood outside and grinned eagerly at us. Kissing was the norm. So we always got kissed twice, once on each cheek, and again by other family members. It was 90 degree day, hot and dusty, no air conditioning, small but tidy. We lowered our humbly dressed long skirted bodies onto long flat cushions which lay on the floor. We were careful not to let the bottoms of our feet point out indiscriminately at our hosts. Then it hit: the short people. They were short because their bodies did not have proper skeletal strength to hold up. Two daughters were handicapped. One of them was severely formed in so much that she could only lie on her side and never sit up. A young boy slumped into his misshapen form.

The mother brimmed with joy, but was able to relate her story of trauma. As her story unfolded she shared being tortured in Syria. A brother and uncle had been shot and killed. Her husband had abandoned the family. After being brought to Jordan, she alone was caring for invalid children. Yet she had an unshakable joy. My normal routine in the refugee homes was to play hand games and teach simple dance to the children. While the adults shared war stories, I would entertain the children. But this home was different. There were no able children to play with. I took out my cheat sheet which contained about 20 equivalent Arabic and English terms. I edged toward one young woman, “Would you like to learn English.” “Oh yes!” So I proceeded to pronounce carefully each syllable and she repeated. I moved to the next family member and did the same. As I approached the woman who was severely handicapped, I pondered and prayed. How could I work with her? She lay on her side, on the

floor cushion, a cell phone in her hand. She appeared fully alert and mentally stable. The structure of her jaw was misaligned so much that it caused her teeth not to quite fit together, but rather spurt out in directions. At once, God opened my understanding and gave me the answer to my question! In a moment I had a flashback, of how Jesus became like us to connect us to God. Jesus took on a human body so he could suffer and die for us. He paid the price of our sins to connect us back to God. I knew I must become like Ashiya to connect with her. I lay down on the floor on my side, facing her. I placed my eyes directly in line with hers and my mouth across from her mouth. She may have seldom seen this mirror view of a person. Everyone else in her life could at least sit upright. Perhaps she had only viewed the hems of passing garments. As I proceeded to mouth English to her she smiled. When I pronounced the equivalent Arabic she chuckled at my bumbling. And so she laughed at my mispronunciations and I laughed at hers. Our eyes both twinkled at the delight of connecting. We were best friends forever. I was home again. *

MY MOTHER'S BEST ADVICE

KATIE FUSEK

I GREW UP WITH A CRAZY MOTHER – not the conventionally crazy mother you know like she wasn't overbearing or mistrusting or searching my room for porn or anything like that. Actually, she showed me my first porno. It was during the big sex talk, and she was explaining to me the most important thing for a young woman is to remember to keep her vagina clean. "*Always wash your pussy, you don't want a smell coming out of there,*" she said between puffs. I nodded my little head at six years old and dutifully followed my mother's advice, even got overzealous with a can of lemon-scented pledge once. I was always an overachiever. I still associate citrus with chemical burns.

No, my mom is certifiably an immediate threat to those around her, just a thrilling force of destruction. Please, do not let this lady have kids. I'm not sure if she saw that Faye Dunaway movie, *Mommy Dearest*, growing up and just decided that's what she wanted to do? Like, the other kids wanted to be cowboys or pirates or doctors and when the teacher called on her, she said she just wanted to be old enough to blow cigarette smoke in her kid's face one day; and God-willing, that dream came true.

I met that teacher once too, and she did seem to sniff around me. She was probably relieved I smelled more like lemons than menthols.

I remember at 21, my mom calling me after my divorce and telling me how proud she was of me, and she immediately follows it with "*it's good to get the first one out of the way early.*" It really stuck with me.

She said it like it was some mundane thing like a pap smear. Like marriage, to her, is routine maintenance where you pay a few hundred bucks to spread your legs and hopefully you picked someone who lets you keep your socks on. Is that weird? I noticed socks can really divide a marriage. My ex-husband was always put off because I never took mine off. I can't help that my feet get cold! I was born with that poor-white-

trash circulation, where my blood tries to hang out near my womb because it's been ready to incubate since the seventh grade. It was always my biological destiny to get impregnated by the first guy I met named Ricky. He'd love Nascar and smell like Arizona Peace Tea, and I'd listen to Deana Carter and watch my hips explode. Thank God I married out of that.

When I think about it, my first marriage went a lot like my first pap smear. I took my bra off for both and was immediately met with this look like they were trying to maintain a serious face, but eye contact was a challenge. My doctor, fortunately, put me at ease. *"Don't worry, breasts come in all shapes and sizes,"* as he was trying to arrange his hand in a way that was professional, yet sympathetic. At least there wasn't fluorescent lighting in the double wide I shared with my ex-husband; fortunately, I was only contending with the soft glow of his Margartaville alarm clock. And I was already plotting my escape before either had finished.

I like having small breasts. My mother used to tell me to look at the silver lining, that small breasts were a blessing. I mean sure, she had her pick of men with 38DDs, but me? If a guy picked me out of the crowd it was because he really loved me, she explained, and real love is rare.

We put our feet up on the coffee table at the same time and she gave me a side-eye glance because I'd stolen a pair of her socks. Sentimental

moments are scarce for us, but this was surely one for the books.

"You know you get almost everything from me. Those smarts, that hair, now even socks apparently," she said between puffs before finishing her thought. *"It's just too bad you get your tits from your father."*

I shoot Big Edie a look before I render any comeback useless. I figure, at least she let me keep the socks on. ✱

AN EYENING WALK

FARRAH GREGG

GROWING UP IN OHIO, there are some things that you just know. No one is sure where they learned these things, maybe they heard them from an older cousin, or a kid from down the street, but nonetheless, you take them as fact, and they become ingrained into your mind. Some of these are obvious, avoid the teens standing in a circle at the park, always pay attention to the people walking by you on the street, but some are more sinister.

You know that you are not supposed to go into the woods alone, as you may hear the soft whispers of the trees that pull you farther and farther in, until you can no longer remember how to get home. It is common knowledge that if one sees a movement stirring in the cornfields, to look away and run as fast and as far as you can, from what, no one knows, but you know that it is always there watching, waiting, hungry, in the night, in the dusk. Though you are a smart, observant individual, there may come a day when you don't heed these warnings and signs that you have grown so accustomed to.

One fall afternoon, you are walking home from school as you always do, but for some reason, you are at the school a little later than usual, and dusk is beginning to set in. It's a crisp day, and you are wearing your favorite jacket to protect you from the elements, so you just barely register its bite through your clothing. After exchanging the proper pleasantries, you turn to go as the sun dips, bathing the trees in an amber light that contrasts the temperature.

A small seed of dread starts to form in the back of your mind, you *hate* walking home alone in the dark, after all, that is the first rule that you learned so long ago. Your house is not that far away, but the light is fading fast, almost as if it is racing you home. Should you take the long way, down the dark streets and past the small town cemetery, or do you walk down the familiar dirt road that will take you into your shortcut through the forest and around the edge of your neighbor's cornfield? You don't have much time to decide, so you choose the quickest route, if you're lucky, you might even get home before it's entirely dark, you reason, and you're not *scared*, are you? You're not a kid

anymore, it's not *that* bad. So, you take a deep breath and start towards your accustomed shortcut.

The dusty road beneath your feet affirms your choice as you approach the small forest. you *know* these woods, right? As the light fades, the already shady canopy begins to swallow the remain light, leaving you in a creeping, almost dark. The trees creak and the bark pops as the dipping temperature that starts to nip at your bare skin. The wind kicks up, whispering in your ears and edging you forward faster, farther onto the darkening trail. *Come in... come in... follow...* the breeze whispers and you feel as though you are being watched. Your heartbeat quickens, it's just the wind, it's just the wind, you think, but you know it's a lie. You can feel the presence watching you, and following, closer and closer. You don't dare look back. Your footsteps quicken, but not so much so that you would alert the thing following you, you know how this works, if you don't make too much noise, or run, you have a better chance.

Even knowing this, you try not to hold your breath as the clearing in the trees grows closer. You feel what you hope are branches clawing at your back and sharp, hollow hisses that cause your hands to tremble. As you take the last few strides out of the woods, you shut your eyes tightly, hoping that you've escaped what was following you. As you exit, you open them again, you're finally out of the woods, so you take a deep sighing breath in order to calm yourself and steel your nerve, as though you made it this far, the worst is yet to come.

Though you got through the forest quickly, it is almost completely black outside, and the corn sways menacingly as you enter the small breaks in between stalks. The papery husks scratch and snap loudly as you pass. You hear a heavy crack not far from you that dampens into the shushing of the corn husks as it darts towards you. You stop in your tracks as your heart races. The shushing stops, as if it is listening and looking for you, your heart is thudding in your ears and you know that there is only one way out of this, you have to run. You sprint forward, but your speed is hindered by the reaching, swaying stalks that seem to purposefully hold you back, aiding whatever is chasing you. And now you hear it, that guttural calling that reminds you of a wounded animal, the sound that would compel you towards it in any other circumstance. It gains closer and closer, until you can feel its hot breath on your neck. As you lose feeling in your limbs, you take one last bounding stride to safety, but your ankle is yanked back, and you are dragged deep into the cornfield never to be heard of again.

Many years have passed, and now *your name* is used in the stories the children tell, for now you are always watching, waiting, and raring to take the next victim just as all of the others have before you. *

**THE STORIES
HIDDEN BY
DUST**

KENDRA HILDRETH

I

WITH A SMALL SIGH, I knock on the door to Miss Marie's house.

It was a well known fact around town—a generous term for the small village I lived in—that Miss Marie was a bit on the eccentric side.

I didn't *want* to be here. She was crazy, her house was full of cats, and it smelled like cheese.

Or so I've heard.

My boyfriend had tried his best to convince me that she wasn't crazy, but I had seen what she did. Kept odd hours, offered nasty caramels to any kid she met as she walked, never left her house. Everyone knew she had lost her marbles years ago.

But, I needed the money. I had just gotten fired from my summer job for something I hadn't done and I needed the gas money. Pride stopped me from going to my parents for help.

"Melanie!" Miss Marie opened the door with a smile.

For someone who was in her nineties, she looked incredibly healthy. She had a wrinkled face, accentuated by a wide smile. And leaned on a cane made of polished wood. Carefully styled white hair and bright blue eyes gave her a friendly, grandmother-like air.

"Call me Annie," I say, coming into the old and weathered house. It didn't smell like cheese, and I didn't see cats. It actually looked rather cozy.

Miss Marie tuts and says, "My dear, you must be cold. Come into the kitchen first. I made hot chocolate."

"Really, I don't—"

"I insist."

With no room to argue, I followed Miss Marie into the depths of her kitchen.

"This is amazing!" I say, sipping the hot chocolate, which I loaded with generous amounts of whipped cream. The warm liquid helped heat my chilled fingers.

"Thank you. It's a recipe I learned when I was in Belgium for vacation one year."

"You went to Belgium?" I had a hard time

believing that Miss Marie could travel. An old lady tottering around New York Square? Please.

“Oh yes. And Paris. Germany. All over the states. Russia too; beautiful country with nice people. Although, I suppose it was the Soviet Union then.”

“*You? Went to the Soviet Union?*”

She smiled. “But, that is a story for another time. I won’t bore you with an old lady’s rambling.”

II

Boxes and dust were my first impression of the attic.

“I can do this by myself. Really,” I say. But the doubt in my voice was evident.

In truth, I didn’t want to talk to Miss Marie. She annoyed me. And she was crazy; everyone said so. It would take me forever, but I could do it by myself.

“Nonsense! I will oversee what you throw away, decide what I should keep, and do the dusting. You lift the heavy stuff,” she says. “Besides, it’s lonely up here. You don’t need to stay here by yourself.”

Wonderful. The old bat would be watching me.

I sit down on the floor and begin to sift through boxes.

The first few were mostly papers and outdated receipts. Miss Marie tossed a few in the trash, telling me—rather unnecessarily—that it was useless to her.

When I went to lift another, larger box, it was too heavy to lift. I frowned and opened it.

Inside where books, tightly packed together.

“Who’s Hemmingway?” I asked, picking up a book. *The Old Man and the Sea*.

“A writer. An excellent one at that.” Miss Marie hobbles over, throwing the rag she was dusting over her shoulder. “I met him once, you know.”

“Really?”

“Mhm.” Miss Marie got a dreamy look on her face. She seemed to be looking straight into the past. “It was 1927, when I was nineteen. His last year in Paris, and a few years before the stock market crash. Terrible time, that was. We lost nearly everything. But you don’t care about that. Where was I?”

“Paris. Hemmingway.”

“Ah, yes. Him. It was in a restaurant. I dragged my boyfriend at the time, Pierre—” my eyes widen in surprise at that “—and I talked to him and got my book signed. *The Sun Also Rises*.”

As she spoke, I dug through the box.

I pulled out the book she was referring to and opened the inside cover. Sure enough, inside, in neat handwriting, was the signature of the author.

To Marie. Thank you for your kind words. Hemmingway.

“Here, read this.” Miss Marie hands me the copy of *The Old Man and the Sea*. “If you like it, keep it.”

“Really?” I asked, honored she would let me borrow a book by an author she obviously held dear to her heart.

“Really.”

III

“What did you think of the book?” Miss Marie asked as we climbed slowly up the stairs to the attic.

“I loved it. Read it all last night; stayed up till midnight to finish.”

She smiled. “Wonderful! Why don’t you take home whatever book you find up there. They will get donated or pitched otherwise.”

“Oh Miss Marie, I can’t. They mean so much to you. Don’t you want to keep it?”

“I insist.”

I smile and nod, entering the attic with excitement. Yesterday I had made a lot of progress and couldn’t wait to see what else I could find. From downstairs, the phone rang.

“Oh, that must be Veronika. She always calms around this time of the week. Mind if I-”

“Go take the call,” I tell her. “Talk as long as you like, I’m fine up here.”

Veronika, I had learned, had been someone Miss Marie had met overseas on one of her many vacations. They quickly became penpals, and exchanged phone numbers later in life so they could talk more frequently and much longer.

As I began to lift more boxes, the bottom of one fell out. Papers and photos went flying across the attic floor.

Out of curiosity, I began to study the photos. They were black and white. I couldn’t tell what they were at first, but once I read the labels I realized it was a log of Miss Marie’s

time in the war.

“I can’t believe it!” I say. “Marie fought in the war!”

At first, I tried to steer clear of the letters. I didn’t want to invade her privacy. But I soon caved and opened one.

It was from a man named John Hurst. He was very obviously in love with Miss Marie, and I could only assume she had responded in kind.

For hours, I sat there reading letters and learning history.

“You were in World War Two!?” I ask Miss Marie when she hobbles back into the attic.

“Mhm,” she says. “I told you I went to Germany.”

“You didn’t tell me you *served*.” I brandished the letters. “You were amazing! Healing the sick, going through enemy fire to save people’s lives; you were one of the most important people in the war!”

Miss Marie smiles. “I’m honored you think so.”

I wrap my arms around her small frame and hug her tightly. “I’m so glad I met you.”

IV

“Annie?”

I turn to find my boyfriend, Christopher, standing in the stairway.

“Hey Chris.” He was one of the few kids on the block who regularly visited Miss Marie. He got her newspaper on days it was snowy or rainy, and walked with her on days it was sunny or warm. And the reason I found this job.

“Miss Marie said you were up here, cleaning.”

“Yeah. And?”

“It’s date night.”

My eyes widen as I gasp. “I completely forgot! Miss Marie had all these cool stories and I was so busy trying to finish this up and I forgot and I’m sorry.”

Christopher laughs lightly. “It’s okay. I just figured I’d bring the date to you. Miss Marie said to feel free to come up here.”

From behind his back he shows me Chinese take out. I grin.

“You’re the best.”

Miss Marie finds the two of us hunched over an ancient record player, arguing with each other.

“Stop that.”

“You’re going to break it.”

“Nu-uh.”

“Yeah huh!”

“No I’m no-”

“Here, allow me,” Miss Marie said, startling us both. She turns it on and a jazzy piece begins to play.

Christopher pulls me to the middle of the room and tries to get me to dance, as he usually did whenever a song came on. With a little persuasion, he gets me to smile and I start to slow dance with him, leaning my head against his chest.

Miss Marie shakes her head with a smile on her face. “Tut tut. You need the proper clothes to be dancing. Follow me.” She points to Christopher.

“In the trunk over there are some suits.”

She leads me down the stairs to a closet full of dresses. Instantly, my eyes land on a deep blue one.

“You want me to wear one of these?” I ask, a little shocked she would let me wear such beautiful dresses.

“Go right ahead.”

I slip off to the bathroom. When I come out, Miss Marie nods approvingly.

“Come on. Glenn Miller was a genius, and I don’t want you to miss a second of this.”

We walk back up the stairs and I find Christopher looking sharp in a blue suit to match my dress.

A new song comes on, which I later learned was called “In the Mood,” and Christopher grabs my hands, starting to dance. I’m sure we looked ridiculous, but I could care less.

Miss Marie sits on a trunk, watching us with a smile. “Ah, to be young and in love,” she says.

V

When I finished cleaning, I was a bit disappointed. The attic was spotless, and we could move freely about. But there was something about the friendship I made with Miss Marie, and the fun I had learning about history, that I was going to miss.

“I’ll visit often,” I promise, hugging her.

“I’ll make sure of it,” Miss Marie says.

I laugh. “I’m sure you will. Hobbling after me in the streets, chasing me with your cane.”

Miss Marie smiles and hands me an envelope. “Twenty dollars per day, as promised. A grand total of a hundred dollars.”

I stare at the money. The whole reason I had taken this job.

“You know what? Keep it. I hear the grocery store is hiring.”

Years later, I still reflected on

those five days as the most fun I ever had.

One day, at the dawn of 2020, my mother called me unexpectedly.

“Hi mom,” I say, carefully driving through busy New York. “I’m almost to the library. I’ll have the files then. You’re really lucky my boss was sending me here anyway, or else it would be months before I had a chance to get them to you.”

“I’m not calling about that.”

“Can it wait? New York is awful busy and-”

“It’s about Miss Marie.”

“Oh.” My heart sunk.

“I’m afraid she passed away this morning.”

I knew it was coming. She was, after all, one hundred and twelve. But that didn’t stop the tears from springing up in my eyes.

“I know you two were close.”

“Yeah,” I croaked out. “She’s who got me into history, and being a historian. Was it peaceful at least?”

“Very,” my mother assured me. “She told me to tell you that she was going to miss you, and that you were the best friend she could’ve asked for.”

“Thanks,” I say. “I gotta go.”

“Bye sweetheart.”

I hang up and throw the phone in the passenger seat.

Oh, how it seemed like yesterday I was in that attic, fifteen years old, cleaning and choking on dust. *

THE PECULIAR ADVENTURE OF BECAN

W.E. MOODIE

ON A CERTAIN ISLAND IN THE NORTHERN SEAS there was a small castle. In that castle lived an old wizard named Conant. Conant was an extremely old wizard, no one was quite sure how old he was (and I think he forgot his own age). He wore long green robes, walked with a large wooden staff, and his long white beard flowed near to the floor. He always had a cap on that covered his long white hair, and he wore glasses that rested on the tip of his nose. From time to time he would take in an apprentice or two.

Currently he had two young apprentices. One was a boy named Becan who was eleven years old. His father had trained under Conant when he was a lad and knew that the old wizard would train his son well. Becan was a bright, but impatient, lad. He had curly light brown hair and dark brown eyes. Conant gave the lad red robes to wear when he arrived at the castle one year ago for training. Conant's other apprentice was a young lass named Morna. Morna was a distant relative of Conant's, like her grandmother's second-cousin or some such thing. Morna was nine years old, and had arrived shortly after Becan. She was very smart and even Conant was impressed at how quickly she learned. She was given purple robes which in a odd way complemented her curly red hair.

Naturally, both students were given wands to perform complicated spells. Simple magic can be done without wands, that is how magic tricks are played, but real spells need to be performed with a wand. Becan was always too eager to perform the new spells and Conant had to let him learn the hard way a few times that rushing through can be dangerous.

One day when the three were in the training room Becan asked, while reading through a spell book, "Can you teach me how to apparate? The spell in the book doesn't seem too difficult."

Conant was helping Morna learn a spell to transfigure small objects (currently a spoon into a cup for a safe practice). Conant turned to Becan and smiled as he always did at Becan's questions. "My lad," the wizard began, "you are not reading carefully. The words are simple enough, but you have to see the place you want to go to. If there is any conflict in your mind

then you may end up in a different place entirely. You have to train your mind more.”

“I think I can handle that,” Becan said, “I can picture the field at my parent’s home right now.”

“Haha,” Conant chuckled, “my dear lad, you need to be patient. The field you are picturing can easily become a different memory or thought altogether. I will teach you how to focus your mind soon. Then we can see if you are ready to apparate.”

Becan folded his arms and gave a pout and replied, “Fine.”

Conant shook his head. Just then the clock struck the hour, it was five in the evening.

“Oh dear me,” Conant said with a larger smile, “I am afraid I will need to be leaving. I am expected at an old friends home for dinner, he is turning one hundred today. But I am afraid you two would be quite board by us old timers. When you are ready for dinner, Berta will have food ready for you in the kitchen.”

The old man began to walk but stopped, “Becan,” Conant ordered, “do not practice any new spells while I am gone. I do not want another incident like the horde of five foot mice that rampaged in the basement last month.”

Morna gave a little giggle, and Becan folded his arms tighter and sank into his chair.

Conant then left the room, of course he was going to apparate to his friend’s party but he did not want Becan to try to copy after he left.

A few minutes went by. Morna continued to turn the spoon into a tea cup and then back into a spoon. Becan

looked around the room. Conant’s collection of potions caught his eye. He walked over to the cabinet of potions. Most of the ones that were left in the classroom were transfiguration potions, which were safer than using a spell. They were put into different categories. Rodents, Aquatic, Semi-Aquatic, Birds.

Becan looked at the bird potions. They seemed to be placed in order of size, without really paying attention to which vile he grabbed he took two from the larger end. He put them into his robe pocket and returned to the spell book.

“Morna,” he called, “have you ever been to northern Eire?”

“No, I come from the southwest,” she replied then she looked at him with an inquisitive look and asked, “why do you ask?”

“Oh, I was going to stop by tonight and wanted to see if you wanted to join,” he said trying to look very proper.

“Haha,” Morna laughed, which made Becan look more serious, “you know it is too far to fly before it’s too late. And you are not suggesting you are going to apparate are you?”

“Well, Conant is going to be away for a while,” Becan began, “whenever he visits his old friends they drink too much wine and he does not come back till the next midday. So we should not be bothered.”

“Well um...,” Morna stuttered.

“Don’t be scared now,” Becan said walking over with a smile and offering her his hand, “I know what I am doing.”

Morna is a smart young lass,

but something about Becan's look makes her follow him when she knows better. Perhaps when they are older they will figure out the cause of this.

"Um...okay," Morna said, blushing and taking his hand.

They walked back over to the spell book.

Becan skimmed over it again and said, "The book says that multiple people can go together as long as they are physically connected. So hold on tight to my hand...not that tight."

Morna squeezed his hand, but lightened her grasp a little.

Becan took out his wand. He said, "léim amach," and drove his wand straight into the air.

All of a sudden they felt like they were moving very quickly, too quickly for Morna's liking. Then all of a sudden they landed on the ground, and Morna landed on Becan's side.

"Oof," Becan groaned as Morna climbed off of him.

"Sorry Becan," she apologized.

"It's okay," he replied, "I am fine and it was our first go at it after all."

They looked around and they were in a field with emerald grass all around. It was mid-March so it was rather cool, but the children did not mind. Becan did the spell correctly, they were in Northern Eire near his home. This was the field that he roamed before he went to Conant's for training.

"It worked!" Becan exclaimed, "I knew I could do it."

Morna was looking around the field and smiled at Becan. Becan pointed at a tree nearby and ran off

to it. Morna followed. Becan was an excellent climber, but Morna was afraid of heights. So she stayed on the first branch. Becan climbed as high as he could and looked around.

"See anything interesting?" Morna asked.

"Not really," Becan said, "but the cool air feels good up here."

He climbed back down and the pair walked around the field for about an hour. They saw all sorts of animals, rabbits, badgers, and an occasional deer. After a while Becan's stomach began to growl.

"I am getting hungry," Becan said. Morna nodded in agreement.

"We should probably get back," she said.

She took his hand and he closed his eyes to think. He thought of the castle and the ice nearby, as he was began to say the spell, he thought about snow, and said, "léim amach."

They felt the rush around them and before they knew it they landed. But they were not at the castle. Instead they were in a field of snow and ice. Becan had focused too much on the ice as he cast the spell and his mind wondered off from the castle. The result was that Becan apparated to an icy isle off the coast of Alba.

"Where are we?" Morna asked worriedly.

"I...I don't know," Becan replied then he reached into his pocket, "here I took two bird potions. Hold onto this one. I will turn into a bird and fly up and see if anything is nearby."

"Why not try the spell again?" Morna asked.

"I...I don't know what went

wrong,” Becan answered, “I might make it even worse. Here just hold this.”

He handed her one vial and opened the other and drank it. The transformation is quick but it looks very strange and Morna looked away. When she looked back she was horrified, Becan had turned into an ostrich. Becan put his head down in the snow.

“Don’t drink that one,” Becan’s voice came through the snow, “I took it from the same place.”

Morna shook her head and put it into her pocket.

“Well,” she said, “first I will make a magic fire, then we will need to build an igloo or something to get out of the wind.”

Becan got his head out of the snow and nodded in agreement.

“Tine,” Morna said moving her wand in a downward strike.

Meanwhile, Becan was attempting to put snow together to build the bricks of an igloo. As you can imagine it was not going very well. For it is not in the nature of an ostrich to build an igloo. After a few failed attempts and slipping a number of times, Becan gave up and sat down next to Morna’s magical flame.

Morna had an easier time, because she could still use her wand. She was constructing the igloo with spells to bind objects together and levitating them into place. After she made a rather large igloo she said, “you can go in now, Becan.”

Becan slowly made his way into the igloo. Morna patted him on the wing and followed him in. The igloo was warm enough and blocked the

wind.

“Do you think Conant will find us?” Morna asked.

“I am sure he will,” Becan said, “but I hope he doesn’t drink too much tonight.”

They sat quietly for the rest of the night. Morna knew that Becan was very sorry for his silly plan and did not want to make him feel any worse than he already did.

Luckily for the children Conant did not drink too much to prevent him from coming back early in the morning. When he arrived he appeared in the dining room. He found Berta in a chair with her head in her arms. He could tell that she had been crying and knew what had happened. He shook his head and then tapped her shoulder.

Berta woke with a start, and when she saw Conant she began to sob.

“I don’t know where the children went,” she cried between great gasps, “they just disappeared.”

“It is okay Berta,” Conant said with his arm around her, “It is my fault, I should have taken Becan’s wand when I left. I will get them back. Just make a large lunch because they will be hungry when I get them back.”

Berta stopped crying as hard but was still sniffing as she went into the kitchen.

Conant drove his staff into the floor in frustration. Then he apparated to his study and took out a magic ball. Conant was one of five wizards or witches that could use a magic ball to find someone that he wanted. When he located the children in the snowy northlands, he rose and apparated to the igloo.

“Morna, Becan,” Conant called out.

A few moments later a very hungry and cold Morna came out of the igloo. She smiled and ran to the wizard. She embraced him and said she was sorry.

“It’s okay child,” Conant replied patting her on the back.

Then an ostrich came out and Conant laughed at the sight. Becan had his head very low to the ground and humbly walked up to the wizard.

“I should have listened to you sir,” Becan began, “I am really sorry.”

“I hope you learned a lesson,” Conant said, “or perhaps two. You should really check the labels on my potions. I have flightless birds all the way to the right. Tell me how did the igloo building go for you?”

“I was not able to do anything,” Becan replied.

“Stands to reason,” Conant said laughing, “we cannot expect an ostrich to do something outside of its nature any more than I can expect you to do something outside of yours. Too bad listening seems to be outside of your nature.” Conant patted Becan’s back and laughed. “Okay,” he continued, “I think it is about time we went home.”

Conant lifted Morna onto Becan’s back and then held onto Becan’s long ostrich neck. Conant then performed the spell (he can cast magic without saying words) and they went straight into the dining room of the castle where Berta was finishing placing lunch on the table.

When she saw them, she ran over and grabbed Morna off of Becan’s

back and spun her around. Then she realized that an ostrich was in the dining room.

“Is that Becan?” Berta asked. Conant nodded and everyone but Becan began to laugh.

“Do not worry the potion should run out soon,” Conant said.

Conant and Morna took their places at the table. Becan was given food on his plate but had to peck at it. After a few minutes the potion wore off and Becan returned to his normal form.

“Too bad,” Conant said with a wily smile, “I was beginning to like you better as an ostrich.”

Morna laughed. Becan gave a little grin as he sat down and was able to eat normally, or at least normally for Becan.

So the lesson in the story is to always read the label on the potion. Oh, and to be patient and take the time to learn to do things correctly is a good moral too. ✱

VILLAGE VOICE
ESSAY

JEROME F. SHAPIRO

AS LUCK WOULD HAVE IT, I avoided being thrown out of college by the end of civilization as we know it. I was attending a United Students for a Universal Class (USUC) rally for zombie rights. Maggie, the Pied Piper of campus was speaking. In the front rows, zombies were sitting sedately. White Castle's Impossible Sliders, it turns out, kept them under control.

"The Impossible Burger is too important," Maggie proclaimed, "to be controlled by transnational capitalists who care only about their quarterly profit reports and not the needs of the people. The state must take control of the means of production." A PowerPoint presentation of oppressed workers turning icky goo into Impossible Burgers, began. Clearly the USUC's leadership never read the Rogers report on the Challenger Disaster, or understood the inherent hazards of PowerPoint. The zombies, however, realized they weren't getting their RDA of human flesh. One lurched onto stage and proceeded to make himself a Maggie burger from the soft, pale flesh of an arm.

I threw myself at the zombie, managing to knock down the podium with my head. When I came to, a dozen VPs of Student Affairs accused me of agitating the zombies —who were now huddled in a corner grumbling to themselves — and said they were going to have me expelled. A couple jocks dragged me out of the auditorium. That's when it started.

We ran back to the auditorium. Have you ever seen the movie *Carrie*? Remember the prom scene? It was worse. *

MY BELOVED CANCER CHILD

CYNDI SMITH

*[Editor's Note: This piece
is written in the style of
an ABC story.]*

AFTER HALLOWEEN, we were at the children's hospital's doors, with her walking by my side. Believing the doctors, they can cure her cancer. Caity is my nine-year-old daughter, who needed the cure. Dog was stuffed in her right hand and her left hand was holding mine. Every step we took, was one step closer to her remission. Following the arrows that led us to the oncology department, we laughed and giggled (deep inside I was scared for her).

Giving it no thought, she started the treatments. Health was to become good over time. Innocence and imagination, she was full of. January she was in remission and returned to school. Keeping the scarf on her head, she meets all of her classmates who were wearing hats for support. Love and laughter every step of every office visit. "Mommy", she said, "When will these visits stop?" "Now you know I made a new friend at school and these is taking my time away from her." Oh no Caity, I am sorry. Please forgive me, we got to get you back to the school grounds. Quietly, we walked into class and she and her new friend hugged as though they have been friends for a lifetime.

Remission did not last long. September was here with bad news. Tumor was obscuring in her chest lymph node instead of her neck this time around. Unfortunately, the bone marrow transplant was her next step. Victory was not in her favor this time. While I helplessly watched, she spent four weeks in an isolated room. XoXo I gave to her. You know something, Caity, mommy loves you to the moon and back. Zany attitudes were what we lived for.

"Mommy, I know you love me. Now stop saying it. I am watching Hanna Montana." It echoes in my mind. If only, she could be here, I would say it a million times more and tell her, she is the bravest girl I have ever known.

*Caitlyn Breann Jean Hamm
10-8-97 to 9-23-07*

*There is a way that seemeth right unto a man,
but the end thereof are the ways of death.*
-- Proverbs 16:25

HONOR SALUTE

WILLIAM F. STRANGE

AN OLD MAN DRESSED IN JUNGLE FATIGUES and a battered Marine field Jacket, stood peering through the heavy plate-glass window at Gate #3. He watched planes take off and land, marveling that a machine so big and heavy could fly.

His wrinkled face was covered with many days growth of scruffybeard mottled gray and black. He showed no emotion visible to the casual observer, but repeatedly wrung his hands for a few moments, then stuffed them into pockets of his jacket.

No one in the Waiting Area seemed to notice his presence. They were consumed with their own concerns wrangling children, talking on cell phones, munching junk food, or sleeping. No one noticed him but me.

The old man was so absorbed watching planes, he took no notice of the people and activity behind him. His manner, dress, and apparent attitude, put him out of place among the well dressed travelers. I watched him for more than an hour wondering if he was waiting for a relative, friend, or fellow veteran.

Every half-hour or so he would pace back and forth in front of the window, disappear into a restroom and return flush-faced to his vigil. Two more hours passed, he watching and waiting and me wondering what he was there for. The old Marine finally sat in a chair next to the window, apparently exhausted.

People came and went, boarding and deplaning, yet he paid no attention to them or their activities. He seemed to be an odd-ball, a character out-of-place; he did not belong there so the people ignored him as if did not exist. All the while, he watched, waited, and perhaps hoped.

Ahhhhh! What do I care? Why is he here? Is he homeless, or retarded; is his mind gone locked in a

time loop from the past?

It is none of my business, still, I feel an odd burden of sadness for this grizzled old veteran. I, too, am a veteran and understand being different and ignored.

He suddenly became animated as an announcement blared over the PA system, "Young Tiger Flight number 1183, Special Military, now arriving Gate #3, from Kabul, Afghanistan."

So that's it! He is waiting for someone returning from that conflagration in Central Asia. I scanned the crowd looking for some kind of reaction to the announcement, but there was nothing; no response, nothing at all from the crowd. It was as if the war there and the old Marine did not exist at all.

The old man continued to fidget, wring his hands, shove them into his pockets, and pace the floor. He stretched his neck trying to see or locate something below. When he stopped and came to attention, I was certain he had found what he was waiting for. That did it! I had to feed my curiosity so I moved up behind and to his left. As I rose to stand the old Marine slowly raised his hand in salute. When I moved closer to the window, I saw why.

Below on the ramp a young Marine dressed in Class A Greens, was standing at attention waiting for a flag draped coffin to be lowered by conveyor to a waiting funeral cart. The young Marine slowly raised his right hand in salute as the coffin began to descend.

Just then, a boy of 8 or 9, approached the old Marine and gently tugged on the jacket to get his attention. The old man lowered his salute and turned to the boy smiling, "Yes, son?"

The boy politely asked, "What are you doing, sir?" The Marine replied, "I am waiting for my son." The boy said that he was waiting for his Daddy, and could they wait together.

The old man smiled and said it would be fine and returned to attention and the salute. The boy stood at attention and did his best to copy the salute. The Marine cocked an eye toward the boy and whispered, "Good boy." I followed, coming to attention, and rendered the Honor Salute.

As the coffin was deposited on the cart, the Escort Marine lowered his salute, followed by the Marine, the boy, and me. The old man turned to me and said, "Thank you. My son has come home."

A wave of sadness rolled over me as tears filled the old man's eyes. He reached out a hand and I took it, squeezing, the feeling that cannot be described, only felt.

I caught a glimpse of something hanging around his neck. It was a five-pointed medallion hanging from a strip of wide ribbon.

I thought to myself, "Where have I seen this before?" I struggled with this for a moment, then it hit me: This is the Medal Of Honor!

I shot a glance at the coffin below and saw the Escort Marine care-

fully laying out the same Medal at the head of the coffin.

“Oh no,” I said to myself.

Father and son: one lived, the other killed. Both decorated with the Nation’s Highest Honor.

What cruel irony brought this to an aging father and Marine?

The old man turned to me and said, “Thank you; you must be a veteran.” “Yes, sir, I am,” my eyes brimming with tears. We stood there, hands clasped knowing what the other was feeling as only veterans can do.

The boy next to him sensed something was wrong and asked if he had done anything to upset the old man. The old Marine knelt before the boy and said, “You have done nothing wrong. That is my son down there in the coffin. The slow salute is called the HONOR SALUTE: we render HONOR SALUTE when our heroes return from war.”

At first, the boy appeared confused, then realized what was just told to him. He apologized, “I’m so sorry to bother you, sir. I didn’t know what was happening. I’m so sorry about your son.”

The boy began to cry covering his face in tearful embarrassment.

The old Marine embraced the boy and asked his name, “Brandon, my name is Brandon.”

“Well don’t cry Brandon, it’s alright. Thank you for joining me.”

“You honor me and my son. I am grateful for your company and I hope your Daddy comes home soon.”

Just at that moment, a young woman rushed up apologizing for the boy’s intrusion. The old Marine smiled and replied, “He’s fine; he was helping me.”

She looked up at the old man, suddenly recognizing him, “Oh, Hello Dad!”

“And He shall judge among the nations and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore.”

-- Isaiah 2:4

SAM PLAYS THE BEETLE-GAME.

Sam plays the beetle-game. They're the best at it, Johnny had said. It's easy to play, too: hide in a very dark, small space. Hold your breath. You can blink, but you can't cry. Johnny had said that Sam was the best at it, which made sense, because Johnny couldn't fit in the cupboard.

THE BUZZING IN YOUR EAR

RILEY TIMMS

Sam doesn't like the beetle-game that much.

Johnny had to leave. He said so. He said that he would be back soon, and he made Sam promise to play the beetle-game if anyone came by. Anyone at all. Even Dad, and Sam didn't understand that, but had nodded anyways. Then Johnny went away into the Fog and Sam was left alone.

Sam plays the beetle-game now. And waits. The beetle-game is very specific: no moving, no crying. If you cry, you lose. That's the rule. It's the most important one, and Sam is very good at it. The waiting too. Waiting.

A shadow passes over the window. Not even a shadow, just a shimmer, the idea of a shadow, just the sound of footsteps outside in the Fog. Breathly breeze of a whispering groan. Sam does not flinch, even though they want to, because they are the best at the beetle-game, because Johnny said so, and so they are still and silent and they do not cry at all. Not even in the way that you can cry when no one is looking- not even that.

The footsteps get closer to the window. Shuffling, stumbling, a dull thump against wooden boards. Sam doesn't move an inch, even when it sounds like the breath is in their ear now. Too close. It sounds hungry, it sounds like crunching and groaning and hurt, and it smells like a graveyard cooked in a microwave. Sam is as quiet as a beetle, and they shake but it's okay because it doesn't count.

It feels like it takes forever. The-- the thing

outside, it rasps and groans and chokes on its own breath, and Sam squeezes their eyes shut and counts to twelve, ten times over. The footsteps mumble and stumble and, finally, stumble away. Back into the Fog where all the bad things come from. Sam wonders if that was Dad. Sam hasn't seen Dad in a long time now, ever since Johnny had to board up the windows and teach Sam the beetle-game and now they eat beans from cans and don't have to go to school anymore. The footsteps go away, and Sam keeps hiding in the cupboard and waits.

Sam waits for a long time.

When Johnny comes back, he'll see that Sam was the best at the beetle-game. And then he won't ever leave again. He will be so happy that he stays, and he won't have to leave and the things that stumble around the Fog won't come near anymore and everything will be happy again. It'll be just like before, when Sam didn't have to play the beetle-game and Dad came home and Johnny didn't look so sad all the time.

Sam hopes Johnny comes back soon. *

SWEET BY & BY

RILEY TIMMS

THERE WAS THE GROANING AGAIN. It was dry and rasping, and it trailed off with a wavering gurgle. Like batteries running low in a toy. Long, drawn out, echoing in the silence of the dark home. You covered your ears; it didn't work, but you did it anyway. Sometimes it made you feel better.

Anna-Marie Johnson was a star student with the perfect boyfriend and a bright future. Or, that's what you pretended. You liked to pretend that she'd had blond hair, two younger brothers, and a love for habanero peppers. Not anymore though. The rotting flesh and her moaning, groaning shambles. The cannibalism too. Some people tried to say that they ("those things!") weren't human anymore, so what they did wasn't cannibalism. But they looked human to you, still, so you could pretend. Pretend that the thing outside your apartment had family and feelings and wasn't scratching divots in the wood to try and tear open your insides.

It worked. Sometimes.

The building whistled with wind. It sounded like the floorboards themselves were groaning, and you gave a little silent giggle- turned into a dry, muffled sob halfway. You were fine. It was fine. It was fine, sitting here in the old farmhouse, waiting and pretending. Sometimes you imagined that the sound of footsteps was a hero here to save the day, and they'd say "it's alright now!" and your family would be safe, your dog would be alive, and Dog Cops would play on tv. Back to normal. Anna-Marie Johnson would be saved, of course, and she'd be your best friend, and you'd both sit at Bruno Brother's Pizzeria and play at the arcade, just like friends, no hard feelings.

Wouldn't it be nice?

Maybe tomorrow would be the day the hero came. You hoped it was. Maybe tomorrow morning you'd wake up at dawn, to the sound of bones snap-

ping as the things dragged themselves into the shade to sleep, and you'd hear a big heavy car rumble down the road and all the heroes would come out. Bang bang. The sound of their guns firing, not of rotting fists at your door. Bang bang. The heroes would shoot the monsters, and they'd tell you how brave you'd been. That they were proud of you.

They'd come tomorrow. You knew they would. So you lowered your head to the floor, laying it on your balled jacket, and you tried to pretend that the thing breaking down the door was named Anna-Marie Johnson, that she was your best friend and tomorrow you'd get pizza and beat Tetris and everyone would clap and sing.

It was a nice dream. ✱





Rebekah Grace Hennip, "Daisies"



Rebekah Grace Hennip, “Lovebirds”



Rebekah Grace Hennip, “Sunshine”



Emily Kauble, "Bold"



Emily Kauble, "Rare"



Emily Kauble, “Yellow and Black”



Amy Plough, "Disoriented"



Amy Plough, "Drowning Death"



Amy Plough, “Floyd Was Right”



Amy Plough, "Gate to Nowhere"



Amy Plough, "Slippery Slope"



Amy Plough, "Plume"



Amy Plough, "Strong Hands"



Amy Plough, "Tunnel"



Cyndi A. Smith, "Abandoned"



Cyndi A. Smith, “K9 Bone Cancer Sucks”



Hannah Noel Ziegler, "Pine Water Horizon"

CONTRIBUTORS

Hey, I'm **Darby Anderson**, and I'm sitting here with some milk-tea and some sort of delicious pecan short-bread cookies wondering what to write for this note so I don't get the note of shame. This is pretty decent, I suppose; just like my milk-tea. You should try some milk-tea, if you've not.

Victoria Bell: I am a follower of Jesus Christ and passionate about serving as director of Bethlehem Dance and Ministry Arts. My current pursuit is an English major and Dance minor at Ohio State University.

Nicholas Clark: Upper Sandusky native and History major. Optimistic individual, sad poet.

Katie Fusek is a double major in English and History and will graduate Fall. She focuses much of her work on the complicated relationship between women and motherhood. One day, she hopes to join the leagues of David Sedaris and Phoebe Waller-Bridge, but until then is happy trying to survive undergrad.

Farrah Gregg: I am extremely proud and honored to have a piece within this publication. I have written and read stories for as long as I can remember, and the sheer joy I feel knowing that others enjoy my writing enough to publish it for readers to enjoy for years to come is immeasurable. Anything can inspire me to write a story, be it a sound, an image, or a moment in time, so I can usually be found consuming any kind of media, be it books, art, webcomics, anime, or video games.

Anderson Grooms is a senior in high school and has been a full-time college student since his sophomore year. He just received his Associate of Arts degree at the end of Autumn 2019 and will be graduating from high school in May of 2020. He plans on continuing his education next fall as an engineering/math major. He is relatively new to creative writing but he has fun with it and is glad that some people enjoy his work. When he's not writing or doing classes, he enjoys spending time with his family, hanging out with his brother and reading.

Mitchel Hendricks: English major at Ohio State Marion.

Rebekah Hennip: Psychology major at Ohio State Marion.

Kendra Hildreth: I'm a freshman in high school. This is my first time submitting to the *Cornfield Review*.

After school I plan to enter the archeology field, and continue writing on the side.

Ruksana Kabealo is a maniac with a dream.

Emily Kauble (Marion, Ohio): I have a bachelor's degree in Environmental Biology from MVNU and I am currently attending MTC for the Police Academy.

My name is **Mindi Klaus**. I am a CCP student, but I intend to be a double zoology and microbiology major. Writing has always been a passionate hobby of mine. Words can sculpt a reflection of a soul, but only if you are willing to read between the lines.

Travis McClerking is a freshman at Ohio State University, Marion. He has been published in the self funded upstart *Olio* zine and received the 2020 lyric prize for OSU Marion students. Although he is from Ann Arbor, Michigan, he currently dwells in Columbus and, being a general sports fan, understands the conflict of interest. He got introduced to poetry through competitive slams. He still exercises his enjoyment of performance poetry at Kafe Kerouac where Wednesday readings have become a sort of ritual. His high school teacher Dr. Jones and the Columbus native, Hanif Abdurraqib, are his biggest influences in writing.

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 Arts with a focus in Church History. He is a huge fan of C.S. Lewis.

Amy Plough: Photographer, writer, poet. Passionate about expression, reads from a deconstructionist point of view. Science fiction lover.

Jerome F. Shapiro has a Ph.D. in Comparative Culture from the University of California, Irvine. The only person ever to have referred to him as "Dr. Shapiro" is his mother. Jerome has taken three creative writing classes at OSU-Marion, and this is his second publication in *Cornfield Review*. Unlike Emma Stone, Starbucks employees never give him free coffee.

Cyndi Smith: I am majoring in BA for medical anthropology minor in forensic sciences. I hold many positions in my life, such as; wife, mom, nana, daughter, sister, friend, volunteer for a Hospice organization, and of course, OSU student. My most favorite position in life is being a nana. On my spare time, I enjoy photographing nature and when the mood hits me right, writing poems

CONTRIBUTORS

or short stories from my heart.

William Strange: is a resident of Marion and an avid writer.

Collin G. Thacker: Hi! I've lived in Marion all my life. I'm one of nine children and most of my inspiration comes from life itself!

Riley Timms: Psych major, horror fan. Dreams of living in the woods and disappearing under mysterious circumstances.

Kai Van Dyke: Hometown: Milford Center, Ohio. I am constantly traveling in the space between here and there. The next adventure awaits.

My name is **Naomi Williams** and I'm majoring in Business Administration. I'm also from West Liberty, Ohio, and I think Wendy's 4 for 4 deal doesn't get the hype it deserves.

Zachary Winniestaffer is an English Major studying at the Ohio State 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.

Hannah Ziegler is a student attending OSU and currently majoring in Agricultural Communication.

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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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.