



2024 CORNFIELD REVIEW

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Cover art by Christy Horton titled "Holy Cow- The County Agent by Norman Rockwell"

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CORNFIELD REVIEW

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Preface

Presented for your approval: the 2024 issue of *Cornfield Review*. This year's issue might look the same as years' past, but the way it came about is quite different. This year, we weren't able to offer the regular Introduction to Literary Publishing course, the class that typically serves as the editorial board for the journal (in addition to learning about the history and practices of the small-scale publishing industry). So instead of letting the 'field lie dormant this year, we reached out to Kapow!, the campus creative writing group, to help curate this issue. What you'll find on the following pages represents their tireless efforts to assemble a top-notch issue for you, dear readers.

Under the faculty guidance of Professors Stuart Lishan and Nathan Wallace, this year's Kapow! group both submitted their own work and solicited additional submissions from folks in the wider creative writing community. This year, Kapow! consisted of Skylar Thacker, Eliza Rodriguez, John Albaugh, Brittany Larson, Sarah Detrick, Jules Rains, and John Neville. This issue's copy editors are Casey Schetter and Karlie Marlatt. Additionally, Christy Horton has once provided her expert graphic design skills to bring you the issue's cover as well as the various graphics on the interior.

A round of thanks goes to all who helped support the production of this issue. This includes 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. We are indebted to you for all of your help, both this year and in year's past.

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

—Ben McCorkle, Faculty Adviser

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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POETRY

A sestina written after listening to *Everywhere at the End of Time*

Specter caught in the walls of his hospital room.
Some restless, needful thing.
A smudge in the paint now—six feet tall.
Thrashing and clawing and biting at time
Like dogs snap at stinging flies.
Nothing but a burning memory.

Before, there had been no raging battle with memories.
In his mind's eye, he was in a beautiful room
And nothing hurt. His words came easy, taking off from his lips and flying.
His companions agree. He is trying to say something.
“A fleeting resource, time.”
An auger to mine it from the earth—sixty stories tall.

By stage three, he didn't seem so tall.
Displaced in memory,
Adrift in time.
A lost sea of life, buried in a hospital room.
Or a hospice. Or a care home. Or a table in the morgue. Same thing.
An angel with stunted wings, too cold to fly.

Stage four, and the man we knew has flown.
Destination unknown. No one followed. No one at all.
He's left us with post-awareness confusion. A grasping thing
Before a temporary state of bliss. A final memory.
It's gone now. The only thing left in the world is this room.
There was no before, there will be no after. I am unaware of time.

Advanced plaque entanglements—the evidence of time.
Tempus fugit, they say (those blessed with time).
It is stage five now, and there is no room.
How could something so pitiful have ever been so tall?
Liquid flowing through tubes—a family's last memories.
A necessary burden. A necessary evil. A man becomes a thing.

An incomprehensible thing.
An inevitable theft of time.
A brutal sort of bliss, beyond an empty memory
A confusion as sticky and cold as the paws of a reptile.
And a reputation just as tall.
A journey begun in a place like this, a journey to end in a hospice room.

The story of a man ends with a dead thing in a cold room.
Everything else has been done. Now it is time to be a memory.

How could something like this have happened to a man so tall?

—*John Albaugh*

Untitled

Wanda was captured in Newport Harbor.
She was the first whale to be taken.
Two days later, Wanda was gone—
She was the first whale to live in captivity,
and she was the first to escape.

Moby Doll was captured near Saturna Island.
They thought he was a little girl—only 5 years old.
He taught us that if you speak to a killer,
the killer will speak back.
Moby Doll and his family only ate fish—that was their culture.
For three months
he was only given mammals to eat.
It was early autumn when Moby Doll drowned;
too weak to swim any longer.

Namu belonged to C1 Pod.
His mother's name was Kwatna.
He was her first baby.
Namu was the first whale to be captured by accident.
Until a buyer was found,
Namu lived in a net.
One year later,
Namu was free.

NoA0002516 was captured from Henderson Bay
with her mother.
She was given the name Shamu.
Her mother died of her wounds before she could be given a name.
She had fought to stay free. It was what she wanted for her daughter.
Shamu joined her mother after six years of performance.
And
like a hand-me-down, like an heirloom, like ashes,
Her name was given to someone else.

The Coast Salish people named her Sk'aliCh'elh-tenaut,
and she was captured in Penn Cove.
They took her name away from her,
and called her "Lolita".
Female killers are long-lived,
and thus was Lolita.
For 53 years
the whale whose name meant "sunny day"

lived in the dark.

L25—the whale called Ocean Sun,
the whale Lolita called “mother”,
still swims the seas off the coast of British Columbia,
with nothing else to do but remember.

A16 was captured in Pender Harbor.

They renamed her Corky.

None of her calves lived past the age of seven weeks,
but she has acted as a mother to many.

Her relatives still swim the waters of British Columbia.

Perhaps Stripe still tells stories

about the daughter that the boats took away from her.

His name was Keiko,

but you know him as Willy.

He lived a world away from his family in Icelandic waters,

at Reino Aventura,

a theme park in Mexico.

A thousand schoolchildren wrote letters,
asking for Free Willy to be returned home.

Keiko was released in July of 2002

and was dead by December.

Today

there are 56 whales in captivity.

Only 23 remember where they came from.

Only 23 remember their mother.

Only 23 remember their brothers and sisters.

Only 23 have tasted the ocean, dark and free.

Do they tell stories?

Do they remember their mother’s voice?

Do they think about the boats,

the nets,

the harpoons?

Do they know why?

Someday,

the business of exhibiting captive orcas will disappear.

But until then,

Twenty-three whales have nothing else to do

but remember.

—John Albaugh

What My Dog Knows

It would perhaps be easier
to tell you what he doesn't know.

he doesn't know how to sit for more than three seconds
he doesn't know "stay"
or "lay down"
or "roll over"

he doesn't know which apartment he lives in
he doesn't know what time dinner is
he doesn't know how to drink water without making himself sick
(he just gets so excited)

he doesn't lay motionless at my side like a spaniel,
waiting for the report of my rifle.
he doesn't run out in front of my mount,
baying on the trail of a fox.
he doesn't follow my carriage,
barking so that all may know:
My Master Is Coming.
Everyone Make Way.

but those dogs—
they don't know what my dog knows.

he knows the sound of my tread on the stairs.
he knows the sound of me waking up in the morning.
he knows to drag a blanket to my desk,
so that he may sleep at my feet while I work.
he knows "hey, bud."
he knows "that's a good boy."
he knows "I'm going for a walk. do you want to come with me?"

No one taught him to walk at my heel,
staring up at me instead of looking where he's going,
with eyes that say:
"What now, boss?"

No one taught him to wait at the door for me.
No one taught him what it means to cry
or what it means to make someone laugh instead.
Saying:
"Why are you sitting here feeling sorry for yourself?
When I'm right here?"

No one taught him.
But he knows.

—*John Albaugh*

Emotions of the moon

My mother sheds tears as often as a lunar eclipse,
I always wondered why mine came with each sun-set;
Or in the absent reflection of I'm sorry from my father's lips.

Each moment in the mirror, like a weatherman predicts,
Whether it's truly the Sun or the Moon that forgets,
My mother sheds tears as often as a lunar eclipse.

Unlike myself, who seems to share only her hair and hips,
As we dance in the same burden, like a flame from a cigarette,
In the reflection of I'm sorry, from my father's absent lips.

Our conversations feel forced, like reading broken scripts,
Avoiding the question, does the Earth remember to regret?
But my mother does not often shed tears for a lunar eclipse.

Only in the shadow of soft reminiscing, does the world slip,
Between the gravity of her crescent, and the Sun's borrowed debt.
Hidden in I'm sorry, from the absent reflection of my father's lips.

Sunlight shattered on my floor from His burning ellipse,
The Moon does not wonder how the Sun and Earth met,
Only why her mother only sheds tears when there's a lunar eclipse,
From her absent father's reflection, with I'm sorry on her lips.

—*Natalie Klenzman*

Hometown

I wonder what it would be like to move away from my hometown.
I wonder what I would miss if I did not stay in my hometown.

I often think of how it feels to be in a new city, a new state,
And it leads me to question, am I afraid to leave my hometown?

Or of the judgment released from my family, predisposed guilt,
Knowing they would feel betrayed along with my hometown.

But I know my heart is somewhere else, stretched and thin,
Wondering, yearning, and living astray from my hometown.

If I'm honest, sometimes I don't feel like I belong here anymore,
My creativity chewed and swallowed, merely prey for my hometown.

I know sometime soon I will find another place to exist,
I grieve the goodbyes and conscious last day in my hometown.

Childhood stories and old friends coming with me wherever I go,
Holding memories forever, like a bouquet of my hometown.

I may live somewhere else, but never as someone else,
Always remembering young Natalie from my hometown

—*Natalie Klenzman*

Safe Space

If the big bang began the creation
Of the world, if it began time,
And we were technically made
From the same star dust, same soul,
It makes sense that our hearts feel connected;
That mine feels that it knows yours.

It's as if my heart belongs with yours,
A string that ties us back to creation.
Where we first became connected.
And since, there is not a moment in time
That my soul was not a part of your soul.
A love that could only be heaven-made.

The recipe of our relationship, home-made.
The ingredients of love, my hand in yours,
While we join both fingers and soul.
Our laughs mixing into a wonderful creation.
Memories that will transcend time,
Minutes nor miles could change our connection.

Nothing temporary effects a permanent connection,
One that could never be unmade.
Because it began as early as time,
With my hand always meant to be in yours,
With starts in our eyes, as if creation
Left a soft part for each other in our souls.

A spot on my heart, which you are the sole.
Keeping it soft with our connection,
Forever grateful for the creation
Of you, every inch intentionally made
To be mine, as I am yours.
Never to know another, until the end of time.

Once you leave this earth, my time
Will too, the light of life will leave my soul,
And it will search again for yours.
Knowing its purpose is our connection,
Aware of the reason it was ever made,
To replicate the great creation.

The creation of the world, at the beginning of time
When you and I were made, from the same star soul,
Our connection, an eternal thread, from my heart to yours.

—*Natalie Klenzman*

Untitled

It does not feel like conversation
Between a sister and the brother,
Rather that of a sister and a shell,
Hollowed out and empty, filled with false appetite
Of all the influences of those surrounding you,
Compromised acceptance, held down by craving approval.
I see the empty efforts, full with sounds of imitations.
I hear your voice, but the words are not your own.
I feel your intention, but your actions are not
Your reflection, rather your shadow, and
The song in the car makes me just sad enough
To listen to it twice. My eyes read over the title,
My heart screams skip, but I stare straight and drive.
The tears roll on my cheek. It's one of the only songs I do not sing.
It makes me wish I could forget how, that I could go back
To the time before I got trapped in this space we are suffocating in now.
Our conversation, a mix of performance and an empty palm reaching.
Cold as it remembers the warm of our shared memories;
Of broken promises like cracks in the ceiling of our living room.
Yet, laughter let in the sun through the splintered space.
Only these recollections connecting a sister and her brother.

—*Natalie Klenzman*

Remember

Remember

Remember when everything was good, and we were all innocent?
Remember when bee stings were our biggest fears?
Remember the time you said you loved me? No? I didn't think so...

Remember?

“Remember to unload the dishwasher, kiddo.”
Remember how you hated that Sheryl Crow song about Santa Monica Blvd.?
“Remember to pack your epi-pen, bud.”

Remember.

Remember how the water felt on our toes as we dripped into each other's souls?
Remember that time you cared? Still no? Not surprising.
Remember when your mother made brisket that autumn before she died?
Remember the last time?

Remember me?

—*Collin Thacker, Kendra Farlee, Natalie Klenzman, Haily Simeral, John Albaugh, and S.D. Lishan*

You Said

You said “everything” and I heard “home.”
You said you’d be home at eleven. It’s been three years .
You said, “if you don’t brush your teeth, skeletons will come
out from the ocean and steal your bones.”
You said this because you were young and alone, and parenting is difficult.
You said.

You said, “just try”; alas I cannot.
You said it in winter, when the cold froze our words
to our tongues.
You said forever, but that seemed too good to be true.
You said the name of someone else when we made love.

You said.
You said it twice, as if ice could melt from an empty puddle.
You said you would quiet my soul but all I heard was rock n roll.
You said you’d never hurt me, but weren’t you holding the knife?
You said you would draw stars around my scars.

You said.

—*Collin Thacker, Kendra Farlee, Natalie Klenzman, Haily Simeral, John Al-
baugh, and S.D. Lishan*

Reason for Everything

NOTE: “Reason for Everything” poetry collection by the students and professor in Spring 2024’s Advanced Poetry Writing Class (English 4566): Collin Thacker, John Albaugh, Haily Simeral, Natalie Klenzman, Kendra Farlee, and S.D. Lishan

Poem #1 (started by Collin):

Because a bee landed on my skin,
When the red flower bloomed so bright,
When the golden sun grew awake,
Because everything was just right,
There was a dandelion growing from my kneecap.

And when I went to see the doctor,
Because, however irregular, it felt like euphoria
Because of the beautiful patter of my slowing heart
When they told me to let it grow,
There was no one, no one to call home.

And because the red Dahlia of tomorrow blooms beside my Coach bag,
When you dug up her roots and set her in glass,
Because her shards never cut (well not that deep),
When the smile of her life forever faded,
There was no life left, no insect, no thorn.

And then this is why the bee landed upon the flower, upon my kneecap,
upon my skin.

—*Collin Thacker, Kendra Farlee, Natalie Klenzman, Haily Simeral, John Albaugh, and S.D. Lishan*

Poem #2 (started by Haily):

Because The giant Earth spins so fast,
When time passes and clocks tick,
When Moments all blur together,
Because your mama whacked your bottom
like she whacks your clothes on the clothesline,
There were tears in your eyes, and a song in your heart.

And when my tears could no longer escape my eyes,
Because the longing of you was holding too tight,
Because the tension forced my eyes closed,
When night comes and sleep evades,
There was a nonstop flight to crazy-town in my heart.

And because you told me I could never go home,
When I pleaded with my reflection,
Because you couldn't see what my soul protruded,
When the Earth whispered, "It's best for you,"
There was no argument.

*—Collin Thacker, Kendra Farlee, Natalie Klenzman, Haily Simeral, John
Albaugh, and S.D. Lishan*

Poem #3 (started by John):

Because you took your coat and left without me,
When I told you that I actually cared,
When my depression caved in like death,
Because there grew space where my heart shared,
There was no warning, "I'm next."

And when the blue carnation of your spirit spit into so many seeds,
Because flowers can only bloom for a season,
Because some things were meant to be temporary
But my love for you was forever eternal,
There was a broken stem of a beautiful rose.

And because once it's broken it can't be fixed,
When your Mitsubishi of insults sputters to a halt,
Because, to be fair, it was running on fumes anyway,
When third cylinder began to ...,
There was now no turning back to the wreck.

And that is why I don't make a habit of dating mechanics.

—Collin Thacker, Kendra Farlee, Natalie Klenzman, Haily Simeral, John Albaugh, and S.D. Lishan

Poem #4 (started by Natalie):

Because ink drips from broken pens,
When hands get too rough,
When hearts get too rough and ready-to-wear
Because you haven't aged a day,
There is a callused and cracked scar around my heart.

And when the shards of my heart scattered about,
Because the river of ink drowned our love,
Because your gentle hands now shove,
When your pockets fill with curses like bags of gumdrops,
There was me, still waiting for the sweetness to return.

And because we were given no sweeter option,
When the ticking time bomb was set to blow,
Because ink stains the hands of those that hold it
When other evidence appears gone,
There was nothing to forgive between us anymore.

And that is why broken pens can't write on even the whitest paper.

*—Collin Thacker, Kendra Farlee, Natalie Klenzman, Haily Simeral, John
Albaugh, and S.D. Lishan*

Poem #5 (started by Kendra):

Because even after everything,
When even the pages of before performed their pantomimes of longing,
When your side of the bed was colder than the grave,
Because it was sad, and lonely, and empty,
There was nothing but a soft image of you.

And when the book that held our story ended,
Because you decided to start anew,
Because even galaxies have to Big Bang sometime or other,
When I was set adrift in an ocean of stars,
There was a constellation that led the way.

And because that journey of ours blew out,
When the Big Bang reversed into nothing
Because the answer was never ours to have,
When mist lay on the water uncovering the shadows of skylarks,
There was a greasy black feather, adrift in the wind.

And that is why, even after everything, I'll never forget him.

*—Collin Thacker, Kendra Farlee, Natalie Klenzman, Haily Simeral, John
Albaugh, and S.D. Lishan*

Poem #6 (started by Stuart):

Because the house you swore to love me in wore a blouse of shame,
When December waned and January came sweet and new,
When winter coats were an option,
Because the time is fast but days are slow,
There was space between weather and a warm home.

And when the lights turn off
Because we love to undress each other in the shadows,
Because looking at you is like looking into the sun,
When ultraviolet never stood a chance,
There was looking at you burning like a thousand suns.

And Because a house could never hold me like you can,
When my thoughts get too loud,
when my dreams sag and sizzle like bacon gristle,
when affection flies from us like so many migrating geese,
There was you, only you, remaining among the nothingness,

And that is why I'm never trying online dating again.

*—Collin Thacker, Kendra Farlee, Natalie Klenzman, Haily Simeral, John
Albaugh, and S.D. Lishan*

In Another Universe

Maybe in another universe,
We'd be sitting on a beach eating ice cream.
Thinking about how lucky we are to be sitting beside each other
As the sun sets and our minds wander.
Maybe in another universe,
We'd be kissing at the top of a ferris wheel,
While the lights of the carnival illuminate our show.
Maybe in another universe,
We wake up next to each other.
Roll over and smile
Since there is nowhere else we would rather be.
Maybe in another universe,

But not here.

—*Casey Schetter*

Praying

I may not be very religious,
But choking on tears
Thinking of you
Makes me want to pray to God.
Just to have you back
For one more night.

—*Casey Schetter*

A Poem for Her to Read

I know we haven't talked in awhile, but I have some things to tell you.

First off, I forgive you.

Life's been different without you,

Not a good different.

Ever since we've broken up, I've thought about you everyday.

I want to reach out to you but I don't know how.

So for now,

You can stay in my phone as "them" without a picture

Like the rest that I try to ignore.

I didn't mean to do that to you.

The pain I caused wasn't what I wanted,

I just didn't want to be an issue.

I don't know what to do,

So for now, I'll leave it at "I forgive you."

Now what do you want me to do?

—*Casey Schetter*

Stars

If all the stars in the sky
Aligned to make something new
They still would not hold a spark
To the feeling I get
When you walk into the room

—*Casey Schetter*

Inside the Shattered Mirror

I look inside the golden-edge floor mirror,
hoping to find you saving me from death.
Like the last standing dandelion, all I see
Is my soul drifting away with the cold wind.

You said you would save me from my destruction,
You wouldn't let my thoughts get this far.
My lifeline that is killing me slowly...
The oxygen I didn't know was suffocating me.

The mirror is trembling, it's scared for what is next.
I spray painted it black so I couldn't see the damage.
As if I can gouge my eyes out to stop seeing light.
"Will you save me?" ... "But who will save me from myself?"

The inside of the shattered mirror...
And all I see is a broken version of me, incapable of repairs.

—*Haily Simeral*

Stolen from Maya Angelou

The way her skirt flairs

When the wind jet streams by
Caressing her curves
In the many ways
A man cannot.

(Does my sexiness offend you?
Stolen from Maya Angelou)

The fragrance, the brand, the power...
Has it ever occurred to you,
How females poise themselves
For more than just pleasure
A secret unknown to man
Never to be discovered.

(Does my sassiness upset you?
Stolen from Maya Angelou)

How women drink their soda
Through a straw to avoid
Brown teeth.
Stay skinny but not barf up their burger,
Tan but not orange,
And stay sexy but not a slut.

(Does my haughtiness offend you?
Stolen from Maya Angelou)

—*Collin Thacker*

The sun has set and left me in the dark

The sun has set and left me in the dark

I cannot see the colors of the day

I only feel the coldness in my heart

I try to find a way to make a spark

To light a fire that will not fade away

The sun has set and left me in the dark

I wonder if there is a hidden mark

A sign that you are still with me somehow

I only feel the coldness in my heart

I walk along the streets and through the park

I see the places where we used to play

The sun has set and left me in the dark

I hear your voice and laughter in the lark

I smell your scent and touch your hair of gray

I only feel the coldness in my heart

I know that you are gone and we're apart

But I will always love you anyway

The sun has set and left me in the dark

I only feel the coldness in my heart

—*Collin Thacker*



PROSE

DEAR CUPID,

DEAR CUPID

ELLISHIA GAFFNEY

Next time hit us both. I do not know what kind of sick mind games you play while working but this is not one that should be allowed by the higher-ups. Why is it that I need to suffer through this pain when you are the one that made the mistake? They do not even know I exist and yet they are all I think about when I wake up, while I eat, while I work, and they are the last thing I think about before bed. Their smile is what keeps me moving, and yet that smile is never directed at me. That stupid, adorable gap in their teeth never leaves my mind. The way their eyes sparkle while eating their favorite snack. The way their hair flies behind them as they run to the finish line. The way they sway their hips as they walk. Every little feature and quirk that they have makes me fall deeper in love, and it is all your fault. If you had shot them too, I would not have to admire them from the sidelines.

If you had just done your job, they would be in my arms instead of hers. Those arms that only know how to take that tooth-gapped smile away instead of cherishing it. That woman who only knows how to take and cheat. Those arms that shield my love from their eyes. She knows about your trick; she knows that every little thing they do sets my heart ablaze. That is why she is holding them close. You shot her for someone else, and yet she is keeping them in those snake-like arms. She loves someone else, but because of your failure, she is stealing them from my view.

That is not even the worst of it. They know nothing about me, not even my name. We have not officially met, and they are so far out of my reach that we may never even exchange casual greetings with one another. That is what hurts the most. Their gaze never falls on me. Their smiles never shine in my direction. My arms were never the ones wrapped around them. I will always be sitting in the audience, always the background character in their life. I will never become the second lead in their story.

Writing to you might seem a bit extreme, but I want you to understand that these are real people you are shooting. People suffer because of your games. I can never have the one I was shot for because you didn't even bother shooting them too. You messed with my

heart and my head. I refuse to fall into your trap. I will wait until these feelings vanish since it is obvious you have no intention of fixing your mistake. If this is how love works, I never want you to shoot me again. Keep your arrows far away from me and stay out of my life. I do not want to experience this thing called "love" ever again.

Sincerely,
A very pissed-off recipient of your
arrow *

THE BATTLE HAS LASTED YEARS. The typical stereotype of a hero and a villain. I am fighting for a cause, to stop that despicable being from destroying the world that has been carefully crafted around us. Our peace is hanging in the balance. If I do not win, what will happen to the world that I have been fighting for? I must win. I will win.

THE HERO & THE VILLAIN

ELLISHIA GAFFNEY

“Stop right there,” a familiar voice booms through my halls. I huff, letting my shoulders slump in irritation.

“Do you not realize it yet? You will never win,” I cackle. This routine has become mundane over our constant back and forth. “I want you out of this city. Actually, I want you off this planet completely. I’ll let you choose if you want to leave alive, or if I need to erase you from existence.”

“It is you that needs to find somewhere else to go. Can’t you see what you are doing,” he growls back, lifting his sword into the air as he gets ready to strike.

“All I see is your constant meddling. I am saving this world from the disaster you are gearing it towards,” my hands flare with power as my anger at this villain grows. “Let’s finish this once and for all,” I state, before charging at my opponent. The battle goes back and forth as it always does, but soon the tides shift, and all the favor of this fight falls into his hands. He cut my wrists during our tussle, leaving me powerless. Powerless means I am as good as dead. I am knocked into the wall, taking what little strength I had left with the impact. He makes his way over to me, never breaking eye contact as he glares down at me. His blade is pointed at the center of my throat as he stands proudly in triumph.

Looking up at the man about to kill me I realized something. I wasn’t the hero in this story. I was the villain the whole time, and no one would mourn when I was gone. They would dance on my grave and

hold parades. I can already picture
that parade, it's the one I thought
would be held to celebrate my victory,
but now it is celebrating my demise.
My eyes widen as the reality of my life
goal settles in just as the blade sinks
into my throat. *

2022

CONNOR GARTIN

THE NEED TO CONTINUE ON KEEPS YOU GOING; THAT'S WHAT WE HAVE TO DO. We have to keep being our most authentic selves because without that we lose a part of who we are. Day in, day out. The repeated way of life keeps a motion of balance; a way to push oneself without getting in the way. Until that someone, until that identity swallows you whole and you lose focus. Lose clarity. Lose yourself.

You find this someone that makes the head and the heart clash; their own identities lost in the way of the world. The head, which houses the part of continuing, echoes a vibrancy of red alarms that need to be stopped. The heart, which welcomes the brightness, feels at peace and with warmth. The two swords slam within you; unable to process what is happening. In the fight of the head and the heart, there can only be one winner. One crowned victor to tell the story back home. But only this time, there is no hero. No shot at redemption as both the hero and villain end up lost in the midst of the battle. Your identity is clouded as that someone special moves further and further away from you.

You don't know what to do, as the clouds thunder above and your stomach fills the unfillable. This repeats, over and over and over again. The never ending void hurts you. You just want to be free from the middle; the middle free from judgment and fear and sadness. You just want to be you; your most authentic self with the head and heart at peace. ✱

LOVE / HATE
LETTER OF MY
OWN (THANKS
POSTY)...

CONNOR GARTIN

WHEN THE TIME IS RIGHT, WE FIND OURSELVES AT THE ROOT OF EACH OTHER. Truly enjoying the company; never really wanting to leave as time winds down. We connect again and again; smiling as if the sunshine was the spotlight on us. Talking about the hardships that battle us daily and weekly and monthly; the continuation of us through the simple words that mean more behind the scenes. Aspiring to do more; achieving through the spoken language of celebrating who we are. The interconnection of academic validation sweeps into the picture, as we both are on different paths but want a similar opportunity to succeed. Through the personas that enter and exit, we continue to be us. Pondering and wondering, to ask the question of “is that really true?” Doubt has its power, control, and hold. Casting an ever-powerful spell on the ability to make a move. To make a decision about how to keep moving forward without ruining the amazing path set up by the both of you. Two words pop-up when the thoughts start to materialize: Value and Truth. The ease and clarity in communication of telling the appreciation; the battle of realizing it might not hold the same weight. The growing void within sits, awaiting a new message and firm sign to keep at the momentum that’s possibly there. Only time will tell, as the *Love / Hate Letter* is only two sides of one perspective... *

DON'T GET ME WRONG, I LOVE WHO I AM AND WHO I'VE BECOME. But I'd never choose this. I'm not sure anybody would. I'd never want anyone to have to go through the thoughts and exhausting feeling of being trans in a society like ours.

EXHAUSTED

JAY E.S.

You're telling me, my options are slathering my arm with stinky gel every day for the rest of my life, or the even worse feeling of dysphoria? For being trapped in a body I never asked for?? Cruel. I have to rub this stinky gel on my shoulders for the rest of my life, that's possibly another 60+ years at max. That is, if everything goes well, every day. For what??

A deep voice? Facial hair? No. Because my other option has a much higher chance of killing me.

On the other hand, I *LOVE* being trans. The sense of community is like no other. (you know who you are) Some of the people I've felt most comfortably around have been often queer and trans people. Because most of them get it.

It's fun! It's euphoric! But it's also dysphoric and painful. Then it's freeing being able to look in a mirror and not wonder why something feels weird, you get comfortable. Then it hits you again.

"Oh my god, I have to do this for my *entire* life. That's like probably a really long time. Do I have the guts, the energy to do that?"

I love being trans I really do. I'd rather be that than the girl I never was. But it's exhausting.

I don't get to just exist like everyone else. (***) I had to pry my masculinity from a god that I don't believe in. A god who apparently, made me like this, for what? Shits??

This isn't funny. It's a sick, sick joke. Make us like this just to damn us to eternal suffering?

But you won't catch me detransitioning. I will

leave bloody claw marks on my masculinity before I let it go. I'll be dead before that happens. I worked hard to get where I am. I am not gonna let this go that easily.

(***) His hands clasped tightly behind his back.

"What are you holding?" A little girl asks the being in front of her.

The figure looks distraught, "Uhm... nothing," hands white with pressure. The girl shrugs and moves on.

Eventually, years later, the girl gets curious again. "Hey... can I see what's in your hands yet?"

"No." the figure states, hand now in front of them, "You aren't ready."

The girl, 12 years old, gets impatient and tries to pry the fingers apart. The figure clasps tighter.

About 2 years later the girl tries again. "Sir, I've waited for such a long time," in her defense she has. "I must see what you're holding so tightly."

The figure shakes his head, "No. You aren't ready." Hands clasp tightly close to his chest.

The girl gets tired of being told the same thing. So, she lunges after him, attempting to peak at what the man in front of her was holding.

They tussle, but it ends like

last time. And the time before that. His hands clasp tighter, and in a rage the girl storms off.

With no hope, no goals, and no hobbies in her life, the girl grew depressed. For what she felt was forever she sulked.

Another year passes. The girl grew angrier each day.

She storms up to the figure. Still clasping just as tight, if not more to whatever he was holding.

"Sir, you will show me what you've got. I know it is something you're scared of. I will see it."

The figure gulps, terror filling his eyes. "NO. You aren't ready yet." He insists.

The girl launches into him. After a while the girl has him pinned. "Can't go anywhere now," she mutters. She starts prying fingers away from one another. He cannot fight it anymore. He's far too tired. So, he stops.

"Please, I'm begging you, you aren't ready yet!"

After all this time she finally understands she wasn't ready. She wouldn't ever be. As she stares at his open palms, she gets that far too late. She watches the memories play like a YouTube video in his palms. The heartbreak, the hurt, the good, the bad. When the memories stop playing, she looks up and sees the mirror in her

bathroom. In it is the man. ~~She~~ looks back at ~~her~~ hands. They are his hands.

“Jay! Dinner’s almost ready! Come eat before we leave!”

You are rocketed back to reality. “I’ll be out in a second!” a deep voice responds... **your** deep voice responds.

You blink at the mirror. “Wash your hands idiot. We’re hungry!” your thoughts say.

Blinking at your reflection again, you look down, and feel the gel on your hands. “Oh, right. My T...”

As you wash your hands, you feel a pulling at your chest. You dry your hands off and pull your shirt up. You see the tape you put on just two days ago. You’d had these same feelings then also. The derealization.

“Jay! Dude are you...” another person stands in the doorway. You put your shirt down and turn towards them.

“Oh buddy. Come ‘ere.” Your short friend pulls you into a hug. “Again?” they ask quietly.

You hug them back with more force than necessary. You also don’t realize you’ve started crying until you feel the tears land on their shirt. After a while, they direct you out of the bathroom. You take one last look at the mirror.

“You coming?” Your roommate

asks.

“Yeah.”

For those reading, you are loved, you are valid, and you are amazing. You are stronger than you think.

Keep it up, you’ve got this! -Jay <3

*

LESSONS OF THE AFTERLIFE

CASEY SCHETTER

THERE'S SO MUCH DIRT UNDERNEATH MY FINGERNAILS THIS TIME. That was my thought after resurrecting this time around. Not, *where is the piece of shit that killed me or who is trying to control me now?* but it was how strange it was that I had dirt under my fingernails after someone tried to bury me, what they had apparently thought was a dead body. Well, I was, dead that is, but death doesn't stick for someone like me. I try to sit up and see what's going on, but instead, I ram one of my horns into the top of the casket that I'm buried in. Anyway, that's enough rest, it's time to get back to work. Into the darkness, I speak out a simple word and think back to my lair, "**Locus.**" and with a slight popping sound I teleport back home.

It's almost the exact same as I left it: my ship still in harbor hidden behind the magically enchanted wall, people running around the docks doing my bidding, the cattle begging for their lives, another ship on the opposite side of the dock on fire, and- wait there's not supposed to be fire here. An arrow suddenly slams into the stone wall beside me. Great. Another raid. Absolutely no rest for the wicked I see.

"Rico, where the fuck are you," I call out unmused.

Rico steps out of one of the shadows close to where I'm standing like a dog that knows he pissed right where he wasn't supposed to, "Right here sir! I didn't think they would be a problem so I didn't want to bother--"

"Obviously not Rico. They are very much so a problem since my ships are on fire... God you are so inept at your job, I don't know why I've kept you alive this long." I say after surveying the dock in front of me on fire.

He audibly gulps, thinks for a second, then says "You were ordered by the King to create me and keep me around, sir."

I stare at him in silence for a second before four more arrows get shot in our direction which forces me to throw a magic barrier to stop them from hitting me. One does hit Rico, but it glances off of his skin like he was wearing full plate mail armor, except he's just standing there in slacks and a baggy white shirt.

"I didn't need the reminder, it was rhetorical." I glance down to where he should have been hit by the arrows, not seeing his skin penetrated at all and nod at him, "Well at least you're figuring out how to work those powers. Hey, quick field test, go slaughter those archers."

"Yes sir. I'll go now" and with that, Rico blurs over to the group of archers like something straight out of an old fable, tearing limbs and guts from the soldiers like they weren't wearing any armor at all, sending screams and hail mary prayers to whatever Gods they believe in before they're mercilessly killed by the five foot nothing mongrel standing before them, stopping at the last one before he bares his fangs and sinks them deep into the man's jugular, sucking his blood out until the wet gurgles just subside into a corpse looking to the sky for an answer to a prayer that was never heard in this godless cavern. Gods that made me feel so proud of my little snaggletooth.

We're vampires, me and Rico. I'm what they call his "sire", the one who gave him the vampiric "curse" as people call it, but to me it was nothing but a blessing in disguise. There are some extremely powerful abilities that come from being a vampire, like how Rico can move in and out of the shadows completely invisible, but some people's abilities are even stronger and unknown. Especially the King, the strongest of us all. The King acts as the head of our kind, making decisions on what we can and can't do, commanding us to sire more of us. Rico was my punishment for killing a fellow vampire. He insulted me for being strange compared to the others, so I showed him just how strange my powers really are. Many of the things that enamored vampires did not bother me. Sunlight? Not a problem at all. Vampires aren't supposed to have magic, but as I demonstrated earlier I most definitely do have, and for some reason, things like stakes and garlic don't affect me either. I haven't been able to find a reason for these things, but neither has anyone else, so to my knowledge, they have no way to keep me dead, and if anyone could figure out how to keep me dead, it would be the King.

Some see me as some sort of demon reincarnated to this world to wreak havoc and cause mass destruction, a Calamity in many religions, but I don't remember who I am for sure.

What I do remember is the first memory I had when coming back from being turned into a vampire myself is what I wanted to bring to this world, the same thing I felt when I first awoke; Agony.

“Y’know, seeing you do things like that almost makes me proud of you, Rico.” I say as a small smirk perks up from the corner of my abyssal skin.

“Thank you, sir.” Rico says, mirroring the smile back at me, slitting the throat of another soldier as we move our way deeper into our base.

Most of the time when stuff like this happens I’m not worried, but something felt weird about the situation this time. Not as many soldiers as they usually send, trying to cause general chaos within the base, and a severe lack of my men defending the docks. After checking out one of the corpses, these aren’t the mercenaries that usually get sent either, they’re much better equipped than the ones I’ve seen the last couple of months. Everything about this situation is telling me that this was not a small raid like they’ve been sending, this feels much more like a formal attempt on my life, not that they will be able to do anything different from anyone else. Scanning the docks doesn’t seem to provide the answer I’m looking for though. They didn’t target my flagship,

which is strange. Usually when something like this happens they go straight for that since it’s the biggest most expensive looking thing in here. Along with that, they are setting certain buildings on fire but the more I think about it the more it seems planned. The smoke from the buildings that are set on fire is covering key points in the defensive structure of the Cairn, making me think that these guys are more than mercenaries sent by some angry baron that got his shipments hit by me; they’re acting with efficiency and inside knowledge.

“Rico, scout ahead but you’re forbidden to go into my domain. Report back your findings and if you aren’t back in 10 minutes I’m going to assume you’re dead and won’t look for your decimated corpse.”

He nods and steps into the shadows, disappearing from sight once again.

I still remember dying for the first time. It was supposed to be a routine raid on a small-time village that was unclaimed by any of the surrounding kingdoms but was claimed by a local vampire that was growing a little too big for his britches.

It wasn’t even a fight.

I was freshly created and a little too trigger-happy with my new-

found abilities, blasting every single vampiric discipline that I could and quickly figuring out what happens when your body runs out of the blood needed to use them. Turns out you become basically a bloodless corpse. He put me outside to burn in the sun when it rose, which much to his surprise I did not, and instead he opted to decapitate me.

Here's the messed up thing about a vampiric blood-paralysis; you are fully aware of everything that is going on. So you can imagine what thoughts were going through my head when he was sharpening his silver ax in front of my frozen body, giving his stupid villain monologue about how he was not to be trifled with and how *your body will send a message to any others that come to try and stop me!* Here's the good thing about being immortal; you can exact your revenge on whatever shitbag thinks he can play you for a fool.

Needless to say, Beskemer of Poratio isn't here anymore and I now own one of the largest islands on this side of the continent. Who's to be trifled with now?

After waiting around for ten minutes and getting no sign of Rico, I was starting to think that these guys might actually be a problem. As useless

as he seems, Rico was trained by me, so therefore he is at least somewhat worth his weight in gold. It doesn't matter though, whoever these people are just proved to me that I need to act like they could be a threat so I need to get moving.

Moving my way down the dark stone corridor, I'm noticing a severe lack of dead bodies or any sort of signs of fighting at all. It's spotless, like no one has been here, but if they are half as intelligent as I think they are then they know this is where I would retreat to... and it's the best possible place for an ambush.

I try to make a little light in my hand with magic, "**Ignis.**" It doesn't go off, must be some kind of anti-magic field, "You just make this so much more painful for yourselves. Get out here."

Three men step out from behind some hidden walkways on the sides, giving me the widest grins like they've just captured a bison that they've been hunting for weeks and it's almost time for the big feast. Each of them holding a different weapon; one with a crossbow, one a longsword and shield that seems to be made out of some strange wood, and the last guy with a long wooden spike which is presumably a stake if I had to take a guess, maybe they didn't do their research all that well after all.

The first person to make a

move is the guy with the longsword and shield who takes a couple steps to my left, trying to take a better flanking position and play to my offhand, the guy with the stake stalks to my other side as well, and finally the bowman begins to take aim at me. "Are you three religious?" I ask without moving.

For a second, they all exchange quick glances, at least one of them keeping eyes on me at a time, before the bowman responds "Agony Blackbarrow; by Riann we shall destroy you and this heretical place!"

I start to drop into a stance, ready to pounce on the hunters that thought they trapped me into a corner. A chuckle escapes my grinding teeth, "Oh I am so glad I get to kill you and prove to you that God doesn't exist."

Time to dance.

Something about this reminds me of the past. Not a normal memory of the past. It's a memory of before I was a vampire, before I was mortal. It was my first kill. He was a young man, probably not much older than 18, it felt wrong to take a life that young so I hesitated, he was guarding a temple in a city somewhere so it didn't feel right killing someone that just was trying to serve his God. I still needed him dead. After some contemplation, I went and sunk my dagger between his ribs. He

was surprised at first, but then the pain set in and I could see in his eyes that he knew he was about to die. I remember feeling something. Something that I haven't felt in a long time... Sympathy? No that can't be it. Anything has to be better than living in this hell, and I killed him outside his goddesses temple so his soul was probably saved or something, but looking into his eyes made me realize that there was no going back from what I had just done. It made me realize that whatever I was, I was no longer.

Before I can even make my first move, there's a sharp sting and pain from my chest. I look down and see dark black blood dripping out of my chest and onto a hand with claws coming out of it... a hand that seems oddly familiar.

"...Rico?"

"You should treat your workers with a bit more respect, Agony." He whispers into my ear before pulling my beating heart out of my chest. I guess I forgot to check the shadows.

He stands over my body holding my heart in his hands, "The running theory I have is cutting off all of his limbs and separate them out far enough he shouldn't be able to come back, get to cutting boys." My heart stops beating in his hands and

he crushes it, the black blood spilling out all over the floor around me, his words slowly fading from existence as my vision goes dark. Maybe he's right, but then again maybe not. I've come back from worse stuff. One thing is for certain; if I come back, Rico's head is going to be the new ornament on my next flagship. *

PREMONITIONS
OF
CALAMITY

CASEY SCHETTER

AT FIRST, THE ONLY THING I AM ABLE TO CONCENTRATE ON IS MYSELF FROM ANOTHER PERSPECTIVE. There is no spectral ghost in front of me, but rather my consciousness being able to transcend my body to view more around me. But I must focus and attune to the land around to learn more about what is going on. First things first, try and find the blackout zone. Breathe and meditate, and it will come to me. I'm able to feel the rain pattering onto the outside of my cabin, and through that I think I can bring my mind to be pulled farther out into the world, until the continent itself looks like a small blot on a map, the darkest spot immediately drawing my attention.

Darkness consumes all of Western Karta. It has not been reachable for days upon days and no mages have been able to breach the impregnable wall. After nearly three decades of peace, this seemed like a call to arms from one nation to another, with the main culprit being Adri.

Focus, Besk, we need to see more.

The veil is finally pushed through. Everything seems normal inside and there are no obvious changes, but I can feel something. Something's wrong. Something is corrupted.

Clear your thoughts, don't let the darkness overtake your mind. Work through it like you've been training to do. We need to know if this is the first sign.

I don't know how, but my mind moves to a building far off in the distance. It swoops through the land, a hawk honing in on the unknowing prey, right to the source of my worry this whole time. Domin-esca lies dead in a small cottage merely six miles out of Zephyryn. Her buzzed bone white hair untainted by anything other than a splotch of mud seemingly splashed up from her fall, pale gray skin and blue lips

at rest like she had just fallen asleep standing up, and her suit wrinkle free and looking like it was just put on. The Prophecy has begun.

The rain pounds away at my windows, the feeling of wardrums trying to prepare an army to march to its death, but only for the greater good. A message meant for both sides, one to prepare for death, and for the other to fear whatever is willing to face it. My workplace is barely illuminated by a flickering candle, the wax dripping off of the sides, staining the satin cloth of the placement meant to keep ink from dripping onto the table itself.

Archmagi Adolphus Gare,

The thing that you must understand is that this is more than merely a theory, what we have researched here at the College of Conjuratation is more than some simple idea that popped into the head of two brain-touched children, but rather a working idea!

Something pushes through the wards outside of the estate and begins working its way in. “Whatever it is, it’s

presence isn’t very large, so it is either insignificant to the point of being no worry, or it’s trying to hide itself.” I whisper out.

We have seen glimpses of other worlds that are similar to ours, but different in ways that significantly change the outcome of their world.

Pushing past the second set of wards makes me think this might be another assassin or ravenous creature from the depths of the Hells, either way it can wait until I’m finished explaining why Adolphus doesn’t know what he is talking about.

I purpose the name for this “new world” to be called “Earth” as it seems so similar to the ground that we walk upon but so different in exciting new ways!

“Noctis.”

I dip the quill back into the ink and blink, “Besk. To what do I owe the pleasure?”

The possibilities for research are endl—

“She’s dead”

I still the quill immediately. I

dare not move a muscle, “Who, exactly, is dead?”

“Dominesca. In Zephyryn.” he says. I can feel the defeated look as those words leave his mouth.

“I see. Have you informed Chaucer of this yet?”

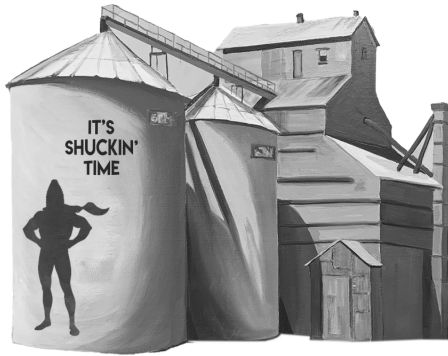
“No. You are the first person I thought of when I found out. Figured you might be able to wave those magic fingers of yours and find a way to bring her back from whatever happened.”

The quill clicks the edges of the inkwell when it gets put back as I push the chair back and slowly stand up. Finally meeting the gaze of an old friend, “Not this time, unfortunately. Let me grab my cloak and we can be off.”

Seeing him again brings back fond thoughts, thoughts of a time when things might not have been so complicated. When men fought men and vampires were but myths. His fangs are a dead giveaway that my dreams of a better time have finally ended and we are back to being one with the shadows. Beskemer timidly holds up a large leather cloak towards me, “You never moved it from her grave, but I figured now would be a good time to bring it back to you.” His brow furrows into something like a frown when he looks back at the cloak before finally handing

it off to me, “I’d like to prevent more stories like hers from coming out of this next adventure, if we could.”

“Me too.” ✱



SPECIAL SECTION

(He's a) BARGAIN BASEMENT TRUMP

28

172 $\text{♩} = 120$ Music and Lyrics by Neil, after R&H, C,G&B. //

Vx

Pno.

Dr.

He's oft - en seen with -

176

Vx

Pno.

Dr.

out a jack - et, Em - bracing the im-age of a "shirt sleeves" kind-o' guy. His

(He's a) Bargain Basement Trump
Neil Saggerson

Vx

MA-GA mob; Re - Trump-lic-an - i - sm is the key. You're a queer one, Jim-my

Pno.

Dr.

Vx

Jor - dan. You're ir - ras - cib - le and wild - er than a bull in a

Pno.

Dr.

Vx

MA-GA mob; Re - Trump-lic-an - i - sm is the key. You're a queer one, Jim-my

Pno.

Dr.

Vx

Jor - dan. You're ir - ras - cib-le and wild - er than a bull in a

Pno.

Dr.

Vx

clo - set full of chi - na, But you can - not be acc - used of be - ing

Pno.

Dr.

Vx

dull. You've been act - ing ver - y cag - ey when you're

Pno.

Dr.

201

32

Vx

asked ab-out your part in Don-ald's coup. Feel-ing guil - ty? What-cha

Pno.

Dr.

204

Vx

hid - ing? Do you sense the walls are clos-ing in on you?

Pno.

Dr.

Vx

1. Why, oh why, oh why-o - - - don't you go home
 2. Why, oh why, oh why-o - - - must you inst - ig -

Pno.

Dr.

Vx

to O hi - o - ? - - Catch up with your old
 ate a floor-show - ? - - Act - ing out with your

Pno.

Dr.

Vx

col - lege buds, and wrest - le with the past
 grand - stand - ing and fir - ing up the fringe

Pno.

Dr.

Vx

Go toy - with your tro - phies - - - pract - ice your "seig
 Grown - ing - at your Buck - eyes, - - - Fu - el - ing the

Pno.

Dr.

Vx

heils" - - - - Bask in the fra - ter - ni - te you
lies. - - - - Pois - on - ing with rhet - or - ic, de -

Pno.

Dr.

235

Vx

hope can for - "Ev - er - last" - - - -
fault sy-cho - phant - ic winge. - - - -

Pno.

Dr.

1.

241

2.

C

36

Vx

" . . . Now we - know that Don-ald's - a bar-gain-base-ment

Pno.

rit.

Dr.

246

Vx

dump, and Jim's a barg - ain - - - base - ment

Pno.

accel. A Tempo

Dr.

Musical score for Vx, Pno., and Dr. The score is written in 4/4 time and consists of five measures. The Vx part is in the treble clef with a key signature of one flat. The Pno. part is in the grand staff (treble and bass clefs) with a key signature of one flat. The Dr. part is in the drum set notation. The Trumpet part is indicated by a bracket above the Pno. staff in the second measure.

Vx

Trump

Pno.

Dr.

— Virgin dressed Guadalupe blue — Breed my ^{sinned,} chapel heart ^{cheats.}
The sun slept with the moon

My mother ponders
out
loud

To satisfy our street ears.

Untitled Shape Poem #1
Eliza Rodriguez

MOON had shot
iuns

FIRE!—

The
Angels
dotted
my
lines

Chirped—
Perched Angels
Lay

The
Angels
dotted
my
lines

Rest to—
the
trumpets CRY—

FIRE!—

The
Angels
dotted
my
lines

The
moon
held
its breath—

Untitled Shape Poem #2
Eliza Rodriguez



Baby Doll (OpenArt AI-augmented photograph)
iLLiac



Choir Boys (OpenArt AI-augmented photograph)
iLLiaC



Madear

by Kathleen Clemons-Keller

Illustrated by Grant Sykes
Peace & Freedom Publications

DESCRIPTION: Doryan and his father find themselves in Marion, Ohio, after a move from Columbus due to the harsh realities of racism. Little did they know that their lives would take a turn when they encounter Madear, a woman whose historical roots, nurturing spirit, and love know no bounds. Join Doryan as he navigates the challenges of being in a new town and the unexpected bond he forms with his wise grandmotherly neighbor, Madear.



Available for purchase:

<https://go.osu.edu/madear>

CONTRIBUTORS

JOHN ALBAUGH | John is a writer of prose and poetry, as well as an English major at Ohio State Marion. Additionally, his piece “Made of Starlight” won the Stuart L. Lishan Creative Writing Award in the Narrative category.

ELLISHIA GAFNEY | Writing is the best way to put my feelings into words without them being about me. I can create whole worlds with my experiences, but I put a fantasy spin to it to balance a comedic overtone with the real feelings as an undertone to not fully overpower the story. I want to give a special thanks to my amazing group of friends, who have become part-time proof-readers, for always encouraging me to reach for the stars.

CONNOR GARTIN | Connor is a first year, first generation college student at OSUM. Studying Political Science on a pre-law track, he wants to become an author and create short emotional pieces describing his own life experiences.

ILLIAC is a experimental digital artist from the Cntral Ohio oarea.

JAY E.S. | Hi, I’m Jay and as a trans-masc person living in a place like Ohio, it can feel lonely and isolating. To any lovely people reading, thank you for taking the time out of your day to see things from my POV. <3

NATALIE KLENZMAN | Marion-made junior, currently studying creative writing full-time at OSUM and OSU. I’m very passionate about writing and reading poetry, and am a strong advocate for empathy and compassion. I thrive off of matcha tea, poetry, therapy (aka TikTok & thrifting). My goal in life is to be the best version of myself that I can, and write about what that means to me, hopefully helping others do the same along the way!

ELIZA RODRIGUEZ | Salutations, I am an English major at OSUM who breathes poetry and owns a pet rock name Bibble. I also enjoy other artistic endeavors such as crocheting, coding, and contemplating cartoons in her free time.

NEIL SAGGERSON | Neil Saggererson is a political song parodist hailing from Florida.

CASEY SCHETTER | Casey Schetter is an undergraduate student in the English program here at the Ohio State University with a focus in Creative Writing. In the future he wants to become a lead writer for Bethesda Game Studios, a video game developer that he has grown to love through his passion for gaming. His mind rarely leaves the fantasy world, as he regularly plays Dungeons and Dragons with his friends and

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roommates, hoping to be able to make a career out of it in the near future.

Hi! I'm COLLIN THACKER and I like to think of myself as a 21st century narrative and free-form poet and a deep lover of all the things that encapsulates the art of words, especially in poetry. I am very proud of the works contained within these pages. I am equally ecstatic that this is my 5th publishing in the *Cornfield Review* and unfortunately may be my last, realizing that I am due to graduate with my Bachelors' of Arts and Sciences majoring in English and a minor in creative writing. I can truly say I've had a good run. Special thanks to Professor Ben McCorkle (hey, Ben!) and a farewell to a great friend and Professor Stuart Lishan. Welp, that's all for me folks! Collin: Over and Out.

COLOPHON

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KAPOW!

Come and join **Kapow!**, the Ohio State Marion campus creative writing club, where we encourage participants to share and workshop all versions of creative writing! Feel free to come participate and hang out. Contact Professor Nathan Wallace at w Wallace.419@osu.edu for more details.

