



BACK FOR ANOTHER ADVENTURE

2023
CORNFIELD REVIEW

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2023

NO. 40

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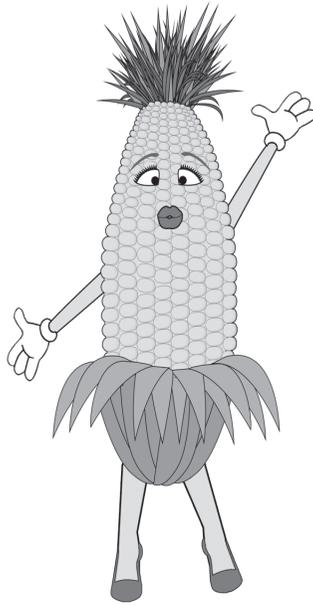
(THIS LOOKS LIKE A
CORNY SITUATION...)

CAN OUR HERO STOP THE
WRATH OF CORN-THULU?!

**CORNFIELD
REVIEW**



VOL. 40



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Preface

BEHOLD, THE LATEST ISSUE OF *CORNFELD REVIEW*. We're excited to share this edition with you, as it contains a great collection of poetry, prose, and photography, all of it lovingly curated by the indefatigable efforts of this year's editorial board. From general promotion to soliciting submissions to ultimately determining the final form of the journal you are now holding in your hands (or, fair enough, maybe you're perusing it in PDF form on our online site, cornfeldreview.osu.edu), this year's board members really put their backs into it. Once again, alumna Christy Horton has provided graphic design assistance, designing this year's cover as well as the various graphics on the interior. I thank all of you for your careful attention and enthusiasm throughout the process.

We're particularly excited this year to have collaborated with Marion Technical College in conjunction with their annual Take Back the Night event. This effort was coordinated by MTC's Wendy Weichenthal and Kimberly Bryant and featured a number of community partners working together to raise awareness and share resources to help those dealing with the ramifications of sexual assault and domestic violence. More details on the event, as well as the curated literary collection that served as a backdrop for it, can be found at the beginning of the special section of this issue.

Much thanks to everyone who continues supporting the efforts of our humble journal. 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.

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

2023 Editorial Board:

Aleece Filiater	Elishia Gaffney
Jack Hardin	Sarah Holbrook
Natalie Klenzman	Karlie Marlatt
Casey Schetter	Megan Shawver
Haily Simeral	Collin Thacker

Cornfeld 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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CONTENT WARNING: Some pieces within this collection deal with subject matter that may be disturbing to some readers, such as self-harm, sexual abuse, domestic violence, etc. If you see this symbol:



that means a piece will be tagged as containing potentially triggering content to alert readers who are potentially sensitive to such topics.

FRONTMATTER & BACKMATTER

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poetry

I Am a Walking Disaster

I am a walking disaster

Like quicksand, I latch onto people and don't let go
Smother until they drown in the love and insanity

Like an avalanche, I am rough and crash through my life
Tear through everything and everyone in my path

Like an earthquake, I am dramatic and unstable
Shockwaves follow me and force those around me to adapt to the shake ups

Like a volcanic eruption, I let my emotions explode
Holding in the anger, the sadness, the defeat until it blows up around me

Like a flood, I let my emotions overpower me
Wash over me, pull me under, drown me in the sorrows and pain

Like a blizzard, I can be cold and calculating
A strong wind to blow down anyone who stands to hurt me

Like a thunderstorm, I am loud and unpredictable
Emotions come and go in flashes yet roar like a rolling thunder

I am a walking disaster

But is that disaster more a danger to others...
...or to myself?

—*Kimberly Bryant*

Fading and Falling

The lights are fading
My sight goes dim
Everything around me
Seems so far out of sight

The closer I am to you
Everything is clear
Bright as the sun
Covered in a rainbow of colors
New and exciting
A life worth living

When you are away
Everything goes cold
Dark, isolated, uninviting
I feel so alone

In your embrace I'd much rather be

The lights are fading
My sight goes dim
Everything around me
Seems so out of sight

Yes, I've fallen
Yes, it's true
But true is it also
That I am fading

Fallen
Yet
Fading

Fading away

—*Kimberly Bryant*

As Much as You

They don't ever put me first.
They like to leave instead.

Stringing me along
With all their lies in my head.

I let it happen,
So I don't have to be alone.

Any company is better
Than being on my own.

They think they have power,
If only they knew...

None of them have disappointed me
As much as you.

Yeah, their words hurt
Like a kick to the gut.

Their actions are just as loud
Packing a hard punch.

My tears like to fall frequently,
And their hugs tend to follow.

Then I'll sit in their embrace
All cold and hollow.

In my head,
If only they had a clue...

None of them have hurt me,
As much as you.

And when they go down
To worship me.

It's your face I picture.
That you're here and you didn't leave.

The flick of a wrist.
The swipe of a tongue.

They all take me back to you.
I thought what we had was love.

I wish they could tell
The direction my thoughts have gone to...

Sure, they feel good but not
As much as you.

They say three words
When they walk out the door.

It's been so long
I don't think I mean them anymore.

And all the sparks that fly
With a thousand butterflies.

The love I know now
Never intensifies.

So when I say those words back to them
I wish that you knew.

I will never love any of them
As much as I loved you.

—*Kendra Farlee*

Chokehold

Shatter my glass with your commentary.
Our love is dead, and buried in the cemetery.

I tear myself apart if only you knew.
I've turned into Shakespeare, writing poems about you.

I hate you.
Translation: I wish I didn't care.

You're all I think about.
I see you everywhere.

It's been long enough.
It should be okay to talk about.

So why does it hurt so much
Every time I open my mouth?

I guess saying it out loud
Cements that it's true.

I hold onto the hurt
Because it helps me remember you.

If I can't have you,
I'll stay with your ghost.

Because He keeps me company
When I miss you the most.

—*Kendra Farlee*

My Memoir

I get pangs of this terrible longing,
And right in that moment
they don't feel pointless.

Then I'm back in reality.
Listening to a sad playlist.

I just get overwhelmed with this impossible yearning.
It overtakes me, refusing to let go.
Why can't your memory just leave me alone?

Taking time to heal isn't all they said it'd be
Because I'm stuck her missing you
While you're forgetting me.

Breaking myself over and over
Trying to remember you.
I'm such a fool, but only for you.

Who am I without you?
I've been trying to find her,
But it's like your ghost likes to hide her.

Come back to me one more time.
You love, it- it turns me blind
To all your aggressions, all your oppressions.

I cannot believe my eyes.
But I do believe your lies.

So, do people really change?
I don't think so, no.

They're throwing flowers on the grass
While I'm buried below.

—Kendra Farlee

What Scares You Most?

What scares me most?
Easy. Losing him.

I wish I could tell my fifteen year old self
that our worst fear came true.

But when I sit and think about it,
Maybe our wish can now, too.

No, it's okay.
Don't say you're sorry.

I wouldn't give up any time I spent with him.
Not even the suffering.

It might not have been all happy,
But it definitely wasn't all sad.

I gave him more than once chance,
Which is more than I ever had.

But who's counting?
Not him anymore.

Me?
Well, I keep a tally mark count hidden behind my door.

It's well over a thousand days
We've been apart now.

And all I hear from others,
Is that I shouldn't care anymore.

Did you know, that in Egypt,
That it's as common as their every breath...

For individuals to mourn their loved ones,
Long after death.

There's no time limit, not set date
For them to be done grieving.

But how are you supposed to grieve
Someone who's still breathing?

Our customs are wrong.
People's thoughts are, too.

If you're missing someone,
Take as long as you need to.

And if they're still breathing,
And you find a way to grieve...

Please let me know how
Because I'm missing a lot of sleep.

—*Kendra Farlee*

Excerpts from an Epic

***AUTHOR'S NOTE:** These are excerpts from a semi-autobiographical poem written in dactylic hexameter called The Nepheliad; Song of Nephele. It is an epic about the wonder of childhood, the loss of wonder, and the triumphant return of wonder during the beginning of my adult life through nature with the assistance of Nephele. Though this is incomplete, hopefully you will enjoy this like the fragmentary poems of Saphho! "Singer of measure, make me a dactylic hexameter poem!"*

Hear me, O Muse, and take heed of my plights, for I lost my one childhood.
Great is this loss as I try to rejoice in my past by nostalgia.
Though no success has been found in this search, there is hope in poetics.
Cry on, Melpomene, gather your buskins and travel beside me;
We go to sorely record all the joys from my boyhood through song.
Dry is the voice, however, as thirst for creative ideas,
Visions and sights, has been left so unquenched when I came across life;
Not from the burnout of cognitive action, but from an estrangement:
I-- am detached from my child-self; no more am I filled with wonder.
I-- am no longer familiar with things that are remi-
niscent to my past; things that are joyful; unique to my younger
Days, when simplicity had not stricken the mind with its presence
Till the awareness of man's great tragedy took toll: age. Age.
Like the four seasons among us -- from nothing begins life, blooming
Colors and tones in the spring from the snow -- this is life in its brightest!
Where in the blossoms of newborn plants in the spring teems infant
Energies -- plants of the summer lament for their colors. Their beaten
Leaves, turned green by the heat of the sun, have replaced their amazing
Colors for adequate livings demanded by life. Though plants do
Not see themselves old when green, they do know that their fall comes
Soon and their winter comes due when their limbs turn cold. Oh, how terri-
fying is man's great tragedy: gradually losing their colors,
Never again to partake in their youths; now memorial memoirs.
Only in grief with ourselves do we keep in our company these wounds,
Sickening us with the aches of lament from a sea-storm that co-
erces our stomachs to hurl for the lives we had harbored.
Sadden by alienation, I look with lament and a wistful
Sentiment, longing for bliss and the promise of wondrous and adventures;
Things that are missing in present adulthood; remedies much dire.

And so, Melpomene -- singer of chorus and tragedy -- now you
Know of my plights, so enlist you, I pray. Please, hear me and sing me
Aid for my sake; give me water so I can relay pangs soundly;
Droughtless of blunder and babble; acute with detail and dejection.

Sail and begin my return home through evocation; my nostos:

I do remember the moments in daydreams -- whom we belong to -- Where I would drink from the waters of youth and become so intoxicated with fantasy. These dreams, filled with the roles for explorers, Heroes, and daredevils, went in between the material world and Sandman's realm. With the masculine nature and wildness of free young Boys, they were brimmed with the fancy of great plays... just some imagination was all I required. As a kid, when I played the computer Games for my learning, my love for adventure began to mature; a Prelude for wondrous escapades took form. These games were not seen as Sources for learning, but windows to open and peer through; windows Serving as thresholds into exotic discoveries. Through these Windows, I entered new worlds and began new adventures. My most loved Games have allowed me to wander the Amazon jungle, exploring Rivers and cataracts, Olmec colossals, and temples of overgrowth, with the mission to rescue the creatures from poachers; to walking Through the Egyptian locales that are dotted with remnants of statues from ancient beginnings, with lost tombs hidden in plain sight, Treasures and mummies with curses and blessings, and armors bestowed to Rescue the day. As pertaining to customs of soaring adventures, Puzzles and mysteries riddled the plots of these video games, designed to strengthen the crown of the child and allow them to rule their Kingdoms with wisdom upon their inheritance. Though their intentions -- Tiny in impact yet wise in their efforts -- have failed with the likes of Me, they have left a desire to be sated and filled, like a hollow Feeling right after a dream; to recapture the moments of flight and Innocence all in adulthood; aimed for the younger me. For embracing the marvels of breathtaking sights and harmonious sounds from Different worlds with remarkable natures will cause the release of Coveted imbuements.

Children's books that contained illustrated Histories, cultures, and people have captured my time to invest in Wonderful places: from Africa, vast with safaris and filled with Mammals and birds. The unique sights -- places inspiring danger -- Frightened away the adventure in me as I flipped to the next page, Jumping to Asia. Thus China, with lanterns that hung from below the hip roofs of buildings; where throngs of pedestrians joined in the busy Streets made of asphalt as skyscrapers loom in the pure blue sky, combining tradition with retro aesthetics in harmony, with the Mention of New Years found in the next page (year of two-thousand -- Year of the dragon -- was my year. And, as expected, was my pride --

Which I had boasted about as it's far more awesome than Sagittarius); Egypt again, but with ancient desires to explore King Tut's life -- short in his reign -- and observe the procedural rites of Burial. Filled was the room with incense where the king was prepared; with Salt they preserved his retired corpse; gone from the world was his soul, awaiting the rites to be done and his heart to be weighed in the Duat. Young was the king to have passed from this life to the next. Like the trees of Bloom that had promised good tidings, he colored the future with change and Hope and away from the drought of his father before, Akhenaten. King Tutankhamen transitioned the cycle to spring, but like parasites that invaded our trees without warning, his flower decolorated. Great was the number of people who watched the cortège as a band of Women lamenting the death of the young king wailed for the lost age. Figures of death with Anubis's head sang songs for the easy Travel of King Tutankhamen. His coffin was laid on a barge of Opulence, gilded with colors of vibrance, reflecting the barge of Ra with its holiness. Glory, however, can't sweeten the taste of Death for the relatives.

...

Life is a path, and our lives are the candles we hold from Our hearts. Fragile is life, like the flickers of flame. If we fall, the Flame will go out, and will not reignite; and the gloom... will consume us. Yet, from the wick of the tallow, a smoke-string -- pulled from the candle's Last glow -- rise in the air for a moment, then cease as the gates close.

...

I do recall time in elementary school when I found a Sea turtle, swimming in reefs of the blue from a Nat Geo Kids Mag -- Vivid with yellow and green hues -- getting the camera's photo. Pupil of black! not one ocean has been so portrayed with such a Bottomless pitch in a sea creature's eye so before! If the sharks be the prideful Lions of salt, then allow the gazelles to be matched with the turtles By their sublime grace. Out from the cover, the turtle emerged with Beauty and elegance, swimming beyond the reality's conscience, Seizing my awe as it swam in the air of my mind and around the Classroom. Seared in the eyes of my past and my memories, this occurrence became an important event for the arc of my later

Life, of the moment where wonder emerged from my dreams and imaginations; no longer a fiction divided from realism, but a Wish to achieve the adventures from personal fantasies in the Real world.

...

Children observe sights, wonders and truths that adults overlook and See them as brand new splendors, allured by the mysteries of our World and the secrets contained. Kids look at the smaller details as If they had microscopes built in their eyes,

...

Oh, what a fascination this is! What a great and remarkable feature of childhood! Kids are the heroes of parents, fulfilling their purpose in life; their Duties as fathers and mothers -- despite their dark natures as little Monsters, those devilish children! Though I'm no parent, at least give Humor to what I am going to say: where the parents are disconnected from childhood, they will retrieve them from rearing their kids and Watching them play in the fields; by observing their growth through the parallels they encounter from similar lives they inhabited years ago. And with that, they'll discover a new revelation: the greatest Treasure to kids are their parent's attention, their time for adventures. Roles that were played by the parents from years past now are engaged by Offspring made from their loins. And the roles that they play now are of Mentorship, guarding the access to joyous excitements and sparing Personal time to attend the exuberant escapades of their Bairns. So lament not, genitors! Daydreaming times may be neutralized in the present, but all is not lost, for your spirit is reincarnated into your offspring. So go and create new adventures! Live your fulfillments and tend to the fires in the hearts of your children! Furnish their love for exploring the wonders of earth; share priceless Knowledge that no one can sell to your children but you and participate in their questioning;

...

Make it an honored memorial favored by fondness and great love!

Let zest serve as their bedrock character; strength for when all else
Fails;

...

I do so cherish my memories; relish in them, and indulge with
Fondness. Nostalgia is dopamine; true, but not medicine -- poison.
Dangerous symptoms may rise from attempts like these efforts. To claim back
Those good feelings again and assimilate past lives into
Present sidereal days may be man's worst course of all actions:
Friendly can memories dress their appearances, only to mock you --
Laugh and insult you for being a shell of your previous self; for
Lacking the happiness you once had as they stab at your mentis.
Dante, of course, understood this; another man great with the Muses.
Nevertheless, there resides in my heart an intense fire, flaming
Upward; combusting my tongue to unleash like a dragon, for there's a
Paradox -- pointless in nature and useless, as one may say in
Cynical terms for an aspect of human existence: remembrance.
What good comes from memories? Whether they're poisons for present
Times, or the killers of sane minds-- there is no benefit with the
Act to achieve more happy addictions assumed in the past where
Pain is the only experience. What good comes from these in-
fections? If memories cause us all pain, then amnesia is better.

...

Memories pass from the present, decay in the past, and depart in
Death.

...

Now, my esteemed, you have served me with faith, but my need is your sisters;
Great is Kalliope and Euterpe in arts I desire to explore. In-
voke them, I shall, and begin my endeavor for possible raptures:

Sing, O Kalliope, share me afflatuses through your epic
Eloquence. Ditto, Euterpe; direct me so I may compose songs.
Sing, great daughters of Zeus, as you sung through Homer and Virgil.
Night is now nigh; I await the new day and the prospect of singing.

...

Now, I would look at these sights -- these encounters -- in new ways, where my

Walks would take place not here, but in flairs of my faeries; within my
Mind's eye; inwards by means of apocalypse.

...

Eos, awake, and extinguish the night! Make sound for your brother, Helios!
Rise forth, siblings of day! Bring morning the glow you inspire and
Light up my heart! From the River encircling the world, Oceanus,
Breaking the surface with beauty and grace, you have answered my call, dear
Dawn and have stayed chaste. Duly on time you arrived to meet me,

...

Rise, o you crocuses! Shiver no more! Rise! Bring the amazing
Colors of spring and rejoice! Sing, birds! Fly high in the sky and
Bring us the news of the coming arrival of Kore! Demeter,
Cease your lament and be well, for your daughter is coming! Rejoin! So
Long have you suffered from Kore's embrace, now Persephone. Kidnapped!
Stolen away from your love to be Hades' own wife; to be queen of
Shades and the lord's house.

...

Fashioning after my trances at tropo-
sphere's edge -- base of the heavens -- the mists of the aether, the blue veil
Of the hemera, was thin. Past mists disappearing, beyond this
World, a primordial origin, never before seen, para-
lyzed me with terrible beauty divine.

—*Jack Hardin*

The Hunter

City lights and safe delights; pollutions
Stark in toxic progress; starless wishes,
Numbing senses; modern institutions
Cause the mind to die by sad submission.
Nature disappeared and we have smothered
It. The incandescent lights, their sallow
Blaze, displaced the stars from Earth, our mother.
Clouds of black have made the skies go hollow;
We replaced our northern star for hauteur;
Woe! the world forgot their primal senses!
Driving by, I see the moon -- a hunter --
Guised by human lights... a shadowed censer.
Seizing me, it left a lively substance:
Terror gives the soul a needed guidance.

—*Jack Hardin*

Kilimanjaro on Route 23

As I drove through fields of golden wheat,
Through mists of sun-rain and shadows colossal,
I was an insect in the grass among giant animals
That traversed the sky above the highway.
Their voices bellowed in the day
And their dark underbellies shook in the shade.
As these beasts quaked the troposphere,
Whose builds were too large for one glance,
Smaller critters navigated their way
Between bodies and through sun rays,
Whose figures you could see more clearer
Than the giants who took up the sky.
Their coats and wings shimmered white in the sun,
Pronouncing their patterns and feathers
Like some tapestries that gave depth and shape.
The rays and mists of the sky, kicked up by the herds,
Gave atmosphere and space between the birds,
Between the beasts and the behemoths,
Like dust in the sun that shines.

I observed all of this through my windshield,
Looking up like a child through their tent
At stars and auroras in the night --
Or a field trip student at the aquarium
To fish and whale sharks through the glass --
Or a prodigy astronaut through their cockpit
At the eye of Jupiter and the rings of Saturn.
I then looked to my left and saw another wonder;
A wonder that complimented the sky with its biome:

A plain of savannah grass was laid across the entire view
Like a blanket made over earth's bed
That reached and fell over the frame's ends.
The grass danced in the sun with their golden garments

And bowed to the west, the east, the north, and the south;
Wherever the wind called them to bow to as a plain.
In the middle ground of this plain --
To the left of my periphery --
Was a collection of common trees
Alluding the shape of Acacia canopies
And the amazing shrubs of safari.
They absorbed the heat of the sun for the shade below,
Like the tarps of pavilions for party gatherings;
For their shade invited all walks of nature
To enjoy life and converse as friends,
As members of this fantastic place.

While these scenes of nature repeated all around,
As far as the eye could see as one would say --
Across this sublime Eden in my serene eye --
A primordial god of stone and rock loomed over,
From beyond the horizon, over the edge of the world;
A mountain deity called Kilimanjaro.
Its frame was broad and its reach was wide.
It embraced the entire northern side of the hemisphere
With its long arms as to suspend the earth in the cosmos.
Its presence was felt by all, reverberating through all senses:
The trunks of trees, the backs of animals, and the spines of man.
It shook all of these creatures with its paternal command,
Without shaking the earth or striking the sky.
With snow as its crown and stone as its cloak,
Its eminence was veiled by the atmosphere's haze
While its head touched the arching blue of the sky
And its arms reached around the earth.
Distant by miles yet magnified by size,
What appeared to be far away and large, felt closer.
What seemed to be in Tanzania, was now here
On Route 23.

Brrrr! went the rumble strips, tickling my car.
Cold attacked my body and grabbed my spine.

I snapped my arms straight against the wheel
And jerked my car back on the highway within the lanes,
Pushing my back against the seat as if I was lifting off.
After a while, I relaxed into a liquid substance
And melted into my seat like hot clothing onto a leather chair.
With the cold gone, I looked back through the window
And saw Ohio:
Nice groves of trees in late summer; wheat near ready;
A grey cloud made straight, with no wrinkles of white
And a silhouette glow from the sun as it eclipsed the sky;
And a highway idiot with his head in the clouds.

—*Jack Hardin*

A Sonnet for Lost Israel

I give no poems for our Israel,
For we young know only of Babylon,
And our priests know only the serial
Songs we made when we were ravaged upon.
I cannot write what I have never seen;
I can only pray for our forgiveness.
When I was at the Euphrates to clean,
The heavens revealed what I can express:
As the smog lifted away like a shroud,
I saw our temple against marble walls.
It had its foundations on a stone-cloud,
Built by our Lord to resound holy calls.
I was then inside, dim lamps and incense.
Then, through the two-leaved veil, I saw a prince.

—*Jack Hardin*

A Forgotten City

The raptures of old have long faded
Memories of steel have decayed to ruin and gone to rust
Once busy streets have been repaved by paths of rambling cracks
Traversed by mere dandelions and the rattling wind
Broken fingers of concrete reach faltering grasps toward the sky;
Their empty offices monuments to forgotten days
Every aching moment of the past rings silent
Without a soul for whom to toll
The promises of the land are broken
Or perhaps older ones are finally being fulfilled

—*Alex Harris*

Numb

I had no hands to hold you
But without them I'd be fine
I cared not now what I'd do
For your hands could not hold mine

My promises would not be heard
I had no voice for tears to choke
And yet, I needed not the words
For without you, what could be spoke?

The cloudless blue won't bare my pain
I had no tears to blur my eyes
I wished the world would fill with rain
Yet still my face was dry

Your loss should be agony, but I cannot feel an ache
You had no hands to hold me, and I had no heart to break

—*Alex Harris*

Your Moment of Eternity

I rail at stars in darkened skies
A mayfly to a mountain
With tears in my eyes
'I cannot bear my hollow heart
For a world from which I stand apart
What is my purpose in this uncaring galaxy?'
Those distant suns respond in whispers;
comforts uttered kindly

*"Take heart, my little one
For your bones are stardust
You exist as a memory of constellations
Unwitnessed by our nights
But their stories still remain
In you*

*So be most brave
And dry those sweet tears
Hold on to your moment of eternity
And be kind to your borrowed soul"*

—Alex Harris

For the Rest of My Eternity

The life inside my cage beats vigorously
with a passion to dispose of my whole being.

The fire it excretes threatens to burn my mind
and torch my soul, but it has yet to kill me.

Scorched and bloody
polaroid pictures engulf my brain
and solemnly wrap around my existence.
My sobs and cries are to no avail as I singe.
My hands tremble in ash as my cage thumps.
Jealous fragments of lonely disposition
become its sworn anthem
and my reflection
collapses

.
For the rest of my eternity I shall sit
and wallow in my deepest sorrows.

For if the life escapes or hunts another
it will be ever hungry and murderous
and no sincere mercy will be borrowed.

—*Alexis Hayden*

our ghost

I inhaled our ghost through wide nostrils and begged the air to share your breath. It felt like pure bliss in a split second that fades to memory behind your temples. Sometimes I wonder if you think about the memories as often as I do. My left hand brushed against yours, but my right was cuffed behind me. My heart leapt into the cloud of your ghost, and...

I wonder if it's my fault. I wonder how far I should've let it go before I realized it was lost somewhere it shouldn't be; before it got wrapped up in your vines of green and tripped over blunts and thorns that weren't meant for me. I wonder what would've happened if we touched fingertips; maybe set the world on fire; looked up at the stars as the raging passion within us bubbled over and fractured every shackle in existence.

But it can't be. My right is connected to a bucket of water and my conscious tells me the memories will fade. And so, I'll sit with the key in my pocket; too afraid. I'll continue to inhale our ghost through wide nostrils, and I'll beg the air to share your breath. I'll tuck my heart back in the pocket where it belongs, and I'll accept the fact that hearts are meant to be broken. I'll hold the key that condemns me to this cuff, and I'll confine my endorphins to that split second when the world goes numb.

—*Alexis Hayden*

A Sentimental Lock

They put a lock on their fence and left their souls with it.
I was the link in “chain link” and yet there was still a division.
There were two breaks in the chain, I pray never a third.
I blamed myself for the breaks, yet it was never to work.

They put a lock on their fence and left their hearts with it.
I was the heart in “heart break” and yet I never could mend it.
There were five rubber bands that created a bond.
I perceived I had snapped and yet I was wrong.

They put a lock on their fence and left their tears with it.
I was the bird in “blackbird” and yet with my wings I still fidget.
There was salt in my eyes and a lump in my throat.
I saw the bird hit the window and through my eyes it spoke.

They put a lock on their fence and left my life with it.
I am the glass in “hourglass” and if I break, who will fix it?
The time I have spent with the chain so far apart
has been a lesson learned and a sentiment to never follow a dull spark.

—*Alexis Hayden*

△ solace's soliloquy

a habit of vandalizing
myself, I tear at
flesh and try to
find something different
underneath
the dermis,
underneath
the bones,
between the calcium
that bounds my cold
skeleton together.

I never found any
thing but it never stopped me
from trying to cut
deeper.

I pasted myself together,
using blood clots in
the absence of glue

pasting myself back
together after two hours
of sleep and a deep refusal
to get properly diagnosed.

there was no medical term to put
my suffering into proper words
and why treat something
that could never be cured?

it was a long summer -
I would go between periods

of wading in the deep end,
hoping I would drown
because I never learned how
to swim,
and sweat.

my perspiration almost made me
feel more alive
than seeing my blood
spill into the sink
at 2 in the morning,

it tasted better, at least.

licking it off the tip of the razor with precision,
met with the taste of iron,
citrus,
and flirting with tetanus –

I was old enough to
know what I was
doing and too young to be
feeling so desperately

[alone]

—*e. holloway*

Injustices of the heart

It feels wrong,
To act with love.
To give you everything you made me feel incapable of being;
Loved,
Understood,
Considered.

It doesn't make me feel better.
What's the point of being the bigger person when it makes you feel so small?
When it makes your heart ache,
When it makes you envious;
I am envious.

I am envious,
That you get to receive the love I deserve.
I understand,
That it's the right thing to do.
But why am I always the one who has to do it?

I understand that people ask for love in harsh ways.
That they ask for forgiveness in the form of abuse.
But what about me?

I understand that people ask for love in harsh ways.
But why do they deserve it;
When I ask for love in soft ways?
When I ask quietly,
Politely,
Repeatedly.

Why do they get what I ask for?
And why do I have to give it to them,
Without ever receiving it myself?

—*Natalie Klenzman*

Love doesn't take the shape of its container

I wonder if I hugged when I was younger.
Maybe that's why I'm always trying to be little;
So I can fit in the arms of the people I care so much about,
Without being too much for them to love.

—*Natalie Klenzman*

Today I Forgive

Today I learn how to feel;
How to let myself feel.
How to let go
Of the overwhelming fight for control over things that don't need it.
I let go of the false concept that I need to go to the gym to be strong.
That I need to workout to be beautiful.
That I need to look different,
Than my rightful body.
Because I deserve the right to look in the mirror and say it's okay;
Not to stare at every imperfection so hard my eyes tear up.
Not to pick out and pinch every part of myself that I don't think deserves to be
treated kindly.

Why do I believe these things about myself?
Why do I lift my neck when I remember that I'm looking down and I might have a
double chin?
Why do I fix my posture when I remind myself that I'm slouching and might look
unattractive?
Why do I care?
Why am I not allowed to breathe,
Without wondering if I'm being too loud?

Today I forgive.
I forgive myself for whispering into my own two ears that they are not worthy of
love.
For believing the lies that society feeds me with a baby spoon, because
That's enough food for today.

I forgive myself for letting others define me and my self worth.
For feeling bad that I wanted more;
That I want too much.

Today I forgive.
Today I forgive myself that I woke up late,
And I didn't make that healthy smoothie like I said I would.
And I didn't go to the gym.
And I forgot to take time to meditate.
I forgive myself.
But I do not apologize.
I don't need to apologize;
Today I forgive.

—Natalie Klenzman

Today, if I'm being honest

Today, if I'm being honest, I am sad.
I think about you and it makes me sad.
I've thought about starting therapy.
I've typed "forgiveness" into the search bar on my podcast app,
And I listened to every second of the 25 minute long episode.
Twice.
And then a third time.
And a month later, a fourth.
But my heart still feels sad.
I went on a walk;
By myself and once with my dog.
And tears sat on the edge of my bottom lashes,
Until I got back home.
I took a nap.
And the tears spooned my closed eyelids.
They whisper to me, "why are you so sad?
I thought you were doing better"
And then they sighed
and my tears fell down my cheeks
And didn't stop this melancholy dance until the morning.
And when I got out of bed I sighed and replied,
"Me too."

—*Natalie Klenzman*

Umbrellas

Can you be grateful for the rain, even when you're holding an umbrella above your head? I think so. I think you can watch the drops fall from the sky, and smile as they hit the ground all around you, watering the grass and flowers. I think you can love the way that rain groups together in small puddles, and you can admire how they look when the city lights are reflected in them. I think you can breathe in, close your eyes, and listen to the rain tap on windows and roofs while you slowly breathe back out. I think rain is a wonderful thing. I think you can listen closely as the drips from rain in gutters times up with your heart beat. I think you can dance in it. I think you can jump in puddles and laugh and smile as your socks get soaked inside your shoes. I think it's easy to forget, when the rain is washing off all of the cars around you, and making your soul feel a little refreshed too. I think it's okay if you bring an umbrella. I think you can be grateful for the rain, and still want your hair to stay dry. I think you can love the puddles and still jump over them in your white sneakers. I think the rain will love you either way.

—*Natalie Klenzman*

In My Final Hours

My friend took his last breath today
lying side by side while I watched
eyes open, wings limp, and the heaviness of death
compressed my chest on the warm sidewalk.
my life flashed before my eyes
while I was frozen in the moment
before we hit the false image called glass

A loud “thwack” and his life was over.

A giant with worried eyes came to me
embracing my fragile body in her warm hands
an angel with purple feathers and green eyes
cooed at me reminding me of my mother
her gentle hands like wings covered me with safety
“It’s ok baby, you’re alright”
with the grace of God and this sweet woman
my weary heart continues to beat

—*Brittany Violet Long*

Memories

We pass dark skies and white houses,
while rain silently pounds on our windshield.
Flowers hold rain drops like tiny tea cups,
And amber light glows in the distance.

There is a tiny blue House
Up on that lonely hill
Where I like to keep my memories
Locked up and put away safely.

If you travel the halls
you might hear growling voices
trapped in constant dispute.

If you trace your fingertips
across the chipping paint
you might hear soft cries,
That make your tummy feel hollow.

If you peer out the big kitchen window,
you might see cardinals,
or robins rolling in the dirt.

You might hear laughter
Or you might catch a familiar scent.

These forgotten walls hold the secrets of my childhood.

—*Brittany Violet Long*

Mother, Mother Ocean

I believe the ocean is a mother.
A mistress and alluring lover.
Saltwater bleeds in her veins
like tears that sting
as they spill from her eyes.
Dripping with love like the wild sea,
Her movements are strong and steady.
The depths of her grace
are as deep as untraveled waters.
Her belly holds treasures as precious
as rubies and diamonds.
Her undulating currents
stir like mixed emotions.
Her waves like arms
that rock and embrace,
Cradling sunken ships
and souls lost at sea.
She forgives and washes
away all imperfections.
Just as forgotten memories
settle in her Oceanic Abyss.

—*Brittany Violet Long*

The Termination

I got fired today.

Well, not fired...

“I’m not going to ask you to come back next year,”

is what she said, with cold, glass tears glossing over her eyes.

After months of promising job security

A simple, “I changed my mind,” is what she left me with.

Of course I cried.

Not only cried

but bawled my fucking eyes out

while I had to sit and listen

to the laughter outside the door

while I tried to pull my shit together.

So now I sit in the dark

With my feet up

Listening to the drippy, pond water

Staring at plastic, pink flamingos

Guzzling down a Miller Lite

Smashing mosquitos trying to suck the life out of me...

And I plot revenge.

—*Brittany Violet Long*

We Drive in Silence

When every word hangs in the air
after dripping from his tongue like a dagger
And there is nothing left to say
we drive in silence

When my cheeks are embarrassed embers
And my blood claws at my eardrums
My pride promises to stay quiet
So we drive in silence

When Lee Brice sings Our song
But our silence is louder
it reminds me how much
I hate the golden hour

When the sun shines its amber light
It stings my eyes, Just like his words
sting my confidence.
And we drive in silence.

—*Brittany Violet Long*

Fantasy

Out of all these books
You were my first
You, yes you, you started my obsession
The Drama...
The Characters...
The world you create...
It spoke to me
You will forever have me in your hold

Every morning
It's there to greet me
Warm me up with that cozy feeling
Whether there's milk, cream, or sugar
Hot is the way I take it
And please oh please let me drink it

—*Karlie Marlatt*

Through The Everglade Trees

Through the everglade trees
And around the cabin
While listening to the breeze
Everything goes silent

...

Find a place to hide in
For if you are seen
You'll start to scream

...

Lengthy legs
Gnarly dangling arms
Leisurely walking past the cabin
Don't make a peep
Don't move a muscle
For if you are seen
You'll start to scream

—*Karlie Marlatt*

Billy the Kid

The kids are in the backyard,
mulling about, in the overgrown grass.
Their staccato cries creep in through the window.
Billy skips toward the fence,
while Jesse jumps on a hickory stump,
And struts around like king of the hill.
Wyatt walks to the back door,
and begins chewing momma's rug.
She fusses at him to quit, muttering
Damn goats.

—*Amy Plough*

To Yearn

Worn out, stepped on, stretched thin.
The hand-out machine, empty.

Inside this body, deep and dark.
Smells of dust and greasy must.

Longing for a break, a breath, outside.
For empathy, without meaningless relation.

Relief from insomnia, stress, and melancholy.
Free from doom and gloom, fed by TV.

Unmuzzled, unchained,
From the maw of tyrannical narcissism.

Needing, wanting, comfort.
Relief from pain, mental and physical.

Feeling, without burden.
Trust, without betrayal.
Friendship without expectation.

Time and money enough to live without breaking
Life to enjoy, and live, while time permits.

Yearning without guilt.

—*Amy Plough*

Rerouting...

I can't travel a second longer on this wicked walkway of life.
My feet grow numb with each step, my heart sinking due to this great strife.
A whirlwind of sensations spin in my mind, roaring and rattling in my ears.
Howling down the highway, I drive on, one mile at a time, too afraid to face my fears.

Rerouting...

Surprise, surprise...I'm again misguided.
My ultimate destination is still undecided.
...Will I ever find my calling in the land of the united?

... Dead. End.

There is nowhere left for me to go on this pavement planted with potholes.
My aspirations are disoriented, I've forgotten my goals.
It's too late for me and all the lost souls.

Rerouting...

Rerouting...

Dead End.

—*Nicole Pohlman*

I Must Say Goodbye

I never wanted this to happen
I loved you with all the power I had in my veins
I saw in you what you and others didn't
The sparkle in those honey colored eyes
I thought you were my missing piece
The single piece that connected my puzzle
But the behavior is crushing me
I'm suffocating, to the point where I see
No outcome but deep darkness;
That's what loves does... blurs the lines
I never told you that I loved you
A real form of love I've never felt
But I must love you from afar now,
Now, I must say goodbye.

—*Haily Simeral*

Hospital Bed

The lights

Oh how they hurt my eyes

And the noise

The sole cause of my headache

Flashes of white

Of what exactly?

I am not sure

I felt as though I were being suffocated

But at least I was warm

Blurry vision subsiding

And now realizing I was not alone

In this small room

As I come to the conclusion

That I'm in heaven

So why am I handcuffed

To this hospital bed?

—*Collin Thacker*

Monster in my closet

Not everyone has a hero;
But this is an account of mine.
My monster in the closet.
Sometimes all you need is someone
To save the day.
Or a life.
To find you in your hardest days,
And your darkest hour.
That lets you know; you are going to make it.
But it may not always be who you think.
My guardian angel
Has also been my monster in the closet.
Now I know the reason he kept me in there
For so long;
Was to shield me from the hate of this world.
In the dead of night,
We talk back and forth,
So we always had strong ties.
His name was Bryccen.
He soon became my ride or die,
And I carried him around as you would a shadow;
Discreet and invisible.
He helped me study, and he always kept good time.
We play board games at precisely 12:03 am.
He became that still small voice in the back of my mind
That tried to play God.
We laughed at new fashion trends, and gagged at the price of iPhone's.
He was a constant reminder of where I came from.
And he refused to let me forget where I was going.
And what I was going to do in this world.
How I was going to make a change;

An impact and a difference.
We didn't grow up together,
But he knew me.
Faithful staying by my side, partners in crime.
Together and inseparable.
Not a soul knew about my Bryccen;
He was my dirty little secret.
My black dossier, and forever friend.
Then one day we came out.
Out of the safe haven,
We call the closet.
And that is when we said goodbye.
That's when he left me;
To a world that would never understand.
I didn't know how to feel, other than hurt.
You stole my happiness and ran with it;
Heartstrings still attached.
Do I not matter?
Does my worth not mean anything to you?
Have I not filtered over, and permeated through
Enough of your bullshit?
Enough to make you want to leave this world behind?

—*Collin Thacker*



prose

LIGHT

ELLISHIA GAFFNEY

She was so full of life that the entire world seemed to gravitate towards her, pulled in by her shine like a moth to a flame. Her smile was so bright that the darkness ran from her and hid in corners where they could not reach her. When someone came to her hoping that her light would burn away their darkness, it seemed to work. Their demons ran from her brilliant light and ran to those corners, out of sight.

The rumors spread quickly that the girl was so untouched by the darkness that it ran from her, so she became an attraction for visitors. People plagued by darkness and worry came from around the world to use her light to rid themselves of their pain. These visitors did not realize that they were not just ridding themselves of their darkness, they were taking pieces of her light with them. Their problems started to become her own. With every word of their darkness, it started to slowly eat away at her light. Slowly, all the girl could do was smile and listen, taking on the burden for them to be free. She takes their woes and gifts them a small amount of her light. She secretly placed the handful of light onto their backs as they left, wanting them to be protected from the dark lurking in the corners.

Soon, she only had a handful of her light left for herself. The girl started to regret helping the travelers with their sorrows, fearing that all the dark she took upon herself would consume her. The darkness leered and cackled as they saw the sorry state the once bright light was in. The small light flickers as her hope for the future disappears. Just when all hope was starting to leave, a knock came on her small grey door. The sound has become a common occurrence with the steady flow of visitors.

She quickly throws on her mask with a bright smile etched on her face before answering the door. As she had done with the rest, she listens to their concerns and pushes their darkness into the corner. Once they feel better from getting everything off their chest, the girl gives them a parting hug and places the last of her light onto their back as they leave her home. The door closes, and the girl was alone once again, getting not even a thank you and only receiving a hug when she gives one. The girl falls to her knees as all the dark that has been waiting in the corners comes upon her in an instant.

The darkness consumed her.

Once word got out that she had no light left to give, the girl with the brightest flame became nothing more than a legend; in the end, she was forgotten. *

ENCOUNTERS
FROM AFAR

ALEX HARRIS

I DON'T UNDERSTAND IT. I don't believe in it. I don't believe that it happened. I saw it happen, but it isn't true. It can't be.

The first time I saw it, I thought I had imagined it. It was just a little moment, a blur in the corner of my eye. By the time I looked back towards him, it was gone. He looked at me, gave me one of those signature smiles of his, a little too wide, and a little too blank in the eyes, and walked away.

The third time around, I was watching him. He had just come out of his building. His jacket was strangely ill-fitting, bulging and concave in all the wrong places, and his face was ever so slightly out of proportion. But then, I blinked, and he was normal again. He nodded at me with that awful smile and wiped his chin. I told myself he had spilled some wine or sauce on himself.

But I knew it was blood.

The tenth time, I saw he was getting suspicious of me. That I had started to put the pieces together about what he was. About what he was doing. The tenth time, when he looked at me as I looked at him, he didn't smile. If his smile was awful, the way he looked at me that day was worse. When he walked away, it was slower than usual, his gliding strides replaced by shuddering steps. When he looked back at me, I knew that if I was going to survive, I would need to run, far and fast, and never look back. Never again think about the man with limbs that didn't bend like they should, and teeth that were never quite the same twice.

I didn't run.

The eleventh time I saw him, I knew he had come for me. *

WHAT DREAMS ARE MADE OF

ALEX HARRIS

I'VE BEEN ASKED BEFORE WHY I LOVE WRITING. However, if I want to be fully honest, I have to admit that I don't. My first and truest love has always been reading. Immersing myself in worlds anywhere from just next door to ours, to those so wildly different, it's amazing to know someone thought it up at all. From sorcery to sci-fi, detectives to dragons, reading allows you to escape your own existence for a while, and visit with the impossible.

The best thing about books to me is how deliberate their existence is. Every element, every twist is purposeful. Every fact the reader knows, we know because the author wanted us to. Characters aren't people; they always react in ways that have a logic to them. Even ambiguities are intentional. This is more than convention to me, this is built into the bones of the universe, immutable as the laws of physics. To break this, is to break the story.

Don't get me wrong, writing can be a lot of fun. Finding the spark of an idea in the most mundane of places, be it an offhand comment or a quirk of happenstance. Taking it and working it over in the forge of your mind, adding and cutting, reworking, and hammering and twisting and tempering, putting it to paper and letting it cool, scrapping what you have and starting again, over and over, until it glows like a star. To build an entire universe and hold it in your head and hands... there's no feeling that compares.

But it can be miserable sometimes. It can be miserable a lot of the time. You can spend hours, days, weeks, even months beating your head against a roadblock, with progress better measured in paragraphs than pages. Not to mention how frustrating it is to be unable to encapsulate what drew you to the project in the first place. You take the idea from your mind, where it exists in perfect form, ephemeral and unburdened by gravity, and force it into mortal words, only to find that it has lost something; it may be more fully formed, but it's somehow... diminished. You show it to people who can't see it shine the way you can, and it

kills you. You didn't disappoint yourself; you ruined a star.

And it can be isolating. So much of the stuff that makes up your soul goes into writing, that what remains in you isn't enough for other people. You can spend time with them, knowing that your head will always be somewhere else, its whirling gears clicking away trying to put the pieces of your world together. Or you can kill it in your heart; stuff it in a box in some dark corner of yourself. You can't have both.

So you have to choose.

Still, I do what I can with what I have. Although the bad moments seem like they outweigh the good ones tenfold, I cling to those good days tightly, desperately. You have to, otherwise what's the point? It's hard. Hard enough to take the joy out of it sometimes.

But not all the time.

So, although I might not be able to say that I always love writing, I do love dreaming. Writing is just my way of taking hold of my own dreams, binding them to ink and capturing them in a form that other people can touch, as best they can.

And I can live with that. ✱

DOOM APPROACHING

JACK HARDIN

THE RAIN WAS FREQUENT AS THE SHELLING. We hid in our trenches as the mud glistened in the dusk. Our feet were deformed in the pools of mud and blood. They were freezing and hurting. I did not wish to see their conditions. We lived with brothers living and brothers dead, sharing the same air along with the “trench rabbits.” This was our home; and our garden, which belonged to none, was No Man’s Land. Unlike that land, which we had ravaged, God’s land had been untouched. Its cloudy canopy was flat and smooth. It was... appealing. It was so smooth, perfect. But it gave no color as God had abandoned that land, and we cannot find Him in that grey. At the end to the West, however, an evil lit up the edges of the canopy with orange, like fire encroaching the end of a piece of paper. I looked ahead and saw our doom approaching, crossing over No Man’s Land. Their uniforms were brown as if they were born out of the mud, unlike us as we were thrown into it. Their arms were crooked and their frames were thin like the scarce branches. Their bodies were twisted and bear, like the dead trees that were destroyed, only they were very much alive and were marching here; at least they were alive. They wore their gas masks as rubber mockeries of our faces, and their eyeholes were windows into hell. They were producing that glow in the sky. It was approaching along with them as they carried weapons of fire, blast, and shot, like devil’s pitchforks and instruments. Preparing for battle seemed futile. How can you even face such demons? We got ready, anyway. We placed our rifles over the top and aimed. We waited. I waited. As time seemed to drag, something caught my eye. The rain began to slow; not in frequency, but in speed. As the rain slowed, breaking time, I saw something beyond the land, beyond the canopy, just below. It seemed like a crack; a lift of the lid of our coffin; a mistake in this apocalypse. But it was real. I knew it was. It was the end of the world, yet this end had no fires awaiting, nor torment preparing. The end had a very light blue, like a tropical ocean with warm sands underneath for my feet and exotic fish to accompany -- with clear air and living trees, I imagine. It had a blue sky with a golden tint with strips of clouds. It was the color of another day, an epilogue of our sad story. God was there.

My God, it’s beautiful. *

STUBBORN EXISTENCE

WILLIAM HURT

I HAD *VERY* BIG SHOES TO FILL. At least that's what I imagine I told myself at that age. It didn't matter though; I was ignorant to how much effort it would require to fill the preordained footwear I imagined for myself. I continued to lay brick while the rays assaulted any uncovered skin, unbothered by the mixture my sweat and substrate created. Standing back to revel in my accomplishment I had an important reality to face; I was out of bricks after roughing out the foundation, and less importantly I was not a bricklayer. Adults lacking optimism might have conceded to the pragmatism of limitations, but I cite other reasons for my withdrawal. I carefully exited the framed sandbox I practiced masonry in assuming it would work itself out. Besides, I had more pressing commitments to finish that day concerning the bees colonizing our tired lilac tree, who selflessly diagnosed my allergy to their sting.

Instead of control, I was allowed to foster my early-onset independence. I was captivated by the hold of pure untouched opportunity that can only grasp a world experienced before the cynicism of maturity could hamper it. This world is fragmented in my mind, puzzled together with mismatched pieces. Some pieces have edges that meld perfectly with others, some were fitted by force and pressure. In the beginning all you can ask for is a strong start, though my world of unhindered discovery began aging faster than planned. Naiveté was traded in and replaced by a hereditary bout of character development.

If I had access to the blueprints, I wouldn't be shocked if many of my relatives held an interest in amateur survivalism. I admit, following their path was more a matter of coercion than personal choice. Paternally, our *extensive* family history sprawls all the way back and ends with my father. As the youngest of three I never dug too deep into this archival tree, I knew enough at the time. His penchant for proliferation was not discreet, I had five other half-known half-siblings residing in states too distant for family bonding. The ancestral absence of a more detailed lineage (or a traceable record at all) can be blamed on his picture-book childhood. Unlike standard picture-books, this one more closely resembled a dark and melancholic scrapbook thrown together with little care, reflective of the macabre imagery within its binding.

My dad had had the torch passed to him early,

assuming the position of “man of the house” after his father had passed away while in his early teens. Fortunately, he had another parent to lean on and share the burden brought by loss. With motherly love and compassion, she promptly offered him to an orphanage in exchange for a presumably nonexistent sense of responsibility. His tenure there was shortened as he was rescued by the Marine Corps (I hardly consider that a fair trade.) Lying about his age got him into service during The Vietnam War, snapping a photo for my own familial scrapbook.

I remember the corroding parts of the rusty screen door that elegantly provided the gateway to our worn-out rented duplex. Groaning floorboards begged for a long-awaited break from their service and the sheetrock was heavy from bearing decades worth of cheap paint. Alternating lights painted the neighborhood in patriotic colors that night while sirens pervaded the air. It was a newfound proclivity for hammers and their ability to reinforce both lumber and threats that earned a free ride this time, provided by a three-digit phone call. A permanent memory that remains mostly buried and more dissected with age; yet, life moves forward.

Passed down from my father’s side I received an uncommon trait that resembled his own upbringing. My mother embraced homeschooling for a night to teach me the meaning of “terminal” and the poignant effect it has when paired with an illness. I found myself living in a single-parent household just as my dad had lived, only I was spared the maternal abandonment. At least

I was now privy to the truth that avoids many children; understanding the reality that immortality is a truth reserved for more fictitious storybooks.

Consequently, suspicion of a “family curse” invaded my mind as I grew. My scrapbook was incomplete though, it required more tragedy to remain competitive. My mom’s side of course, felt obligated to assist. Adding material by redacting two aunts and a mother from my file. The loss of my first aunt was dampened by being too young to remember it clearly and the second was lessened by distance and family disagreement. By this point, I had rejected the “family curse” mentality and accepted the unbiased nature of the human condition.

Truthfully, I had thought I’d weathered the tumultuous and categorically disastrous storm I was born into. In search of fairer weather, I took a page from my relative’s book and enlisted with the United States Navy. I assure you it was not a longing to resume generational service within my family. Instead, it was a lack of options generously extended through poverty. This better recollected portion of my life resulted in the most authentic and candid snapshots in my personal photo album.

It would’ve taken a lot to curb my excitement that day. An innate desire to own a motorcycle as my grandma used to was finally fulfilled. Immense satisfaction inundated my body when I flung the kickstand and gave my bike a rest. I stepped back and gazed at the machine that carefully straddled two freshly painted lines on the weathered blacktop. To get a better view of my pride, I took off my helmet to begin my day. The shipyard was busy with yardbirds working on segments of fatigued ships needing attention before they could push them

from the industrial nest. It was warm with the beginnings of sunlight in the air, salt pervaded the air when inhaled. Habitually, I checked my phone and read the message that would abruptly end a promising day.

To put it bluntly, I learned the pain of losing a friend. Although the distance helped it feel less real, I still carry it with me. Buffered by the retirement of outdated calendars replaced by hanging books with more current dates, more bad news would be delivered. The following bereavement gave the courtesy of skeptic refusal since it was supposed to be a “routine surgery.” The familiar grief I’d hoped had left me returned as a lifelong partner.

I often question how my family still exists after inheriting an apparent cosmic curse. The answer I found was my grandma. An old stalwart pillar of stoicism who refuses to succumb to deterioration and weather as many pillars have. I am not the sole recipient of our loss; my grandmother is a collective shareholder as well. Traits of resilience and practicality prove our relation. Our place is earned in a tattered family tree that won’t allow the earth to release its roots. These are the genes my own children will carry, continuing to refuse concession or circumstance. Ambition and persistence will run through their bones as it has in generations past and find itself in generations to come. When looking at our rough and hacked at tree I notice the stubborn branches still swaying, rather than the number of limbs and leaves. ✱

DOING THE WORK

ANTONIO JOHNSON

MY NAME IS ANTONIO JOHNSON. The breakthroughs made in my life took hard work and honest evaluation. I was sick and tired of being sick and tired. I was given seven and a half more years at the parole board. Then I was removed from college because I was now over the required five years or less. That truly hurt because I love education. Then a few months later my fiancé at the time and I went our separate ways. I decided I was not going backwards. I had to be realistic, and the first thing I had to admit was for the first seven years of my incarceration I was a young 17 - year - old child that didn't follow any rules. It took a few months for me to fully take responsibility for my short comings. This period of my life was like a storm that seemed to never end.

The first time I ever recall hearing the term “Life Coach” was in November of 2017. I was assisting Mrs. Edmonds with her Skills for Success class, and she was sharing that she is a certified life coach. So, I requested if it would be possible for her to coach me. On January 30, 2018, we had our first session. Each week I had to really evaluate myself and do the work. The first thing I had to do was find three things I was grateful for that week, which was much more difficult for me as time went on. Also, each week I had a homework assignment that challenged me to dig deep. From the start it became clear that I had a lot of problems about my past, but for me the pain of staying the same was much worse than the pain of changing. The first breakthrough in these sessions was in regards to me and my mother's relationship; because just talking about how I grew up opened up what I found out was a “mother wound”. I still blamed her for not putting me first while I was growing up amongst other things. Add to that I had yet to fully take responsibility for my part in how I was raised and the poor decisions I made. Even while I was discussing it I felt silly; especially since my mother and I have such a close and loving relationship now. There were feelings of anger, and I started to sweat.

My homework for that session was to write down everything I was still holding against my mother, every negative emotion, memory, and judgment. After doing that I prayed to God to release her from it. The process of truly forgiving her was so impactful for both of us that it motivated me to want to release my dad as

well.

This was another breakthrough because up to that point I had yet to process the fact that 33 years of my life I loved my dad based on my mothers' lies. I wanted to be loved by him and that void created a "father wound". For over three years I hid the truth from everyone that at my birth my dad didn't want me. In fact, he beat and tried to make my mother have a miscarriage. I was embarrassed and ashamed about what he did.

I just couldn't imagine how someone could do such an extreme act to his wife. I had to write down the things I had to release my dad from and pray for him that in his last moments he gave his life to Christ. Just two months after I was born, my dad was tortured and murdered. I had a "father wound" that for years I refused to acknowledge. The main thing I had to address was shame and embarrassment. This was very difficult for me because of the questions I still had about what happen and why.

Without these life coaching sessions I would have just continued on the path of denial. Those sessions provided a safe place for me to discuss and process everything. These were my root issues that affected everything I was doing in my life, from unhealthy relationships to low self-esteem to my bad habit of projecting my past experiences with others onto people. A major example of my projecting was me rebelling against male authority in my life. I was not even open to receiving good advice or counsel. In order to get breakthroughs; the first step was being honest, secondly by being transparent, and the third step was releasing my mom and dad so I could move into the greatness God had planned for me. I

had to respect the process of seed, time and harvest. Time is the one thing I had to really learn to respect. For most of my life I wanted instant gratification. For me I had to get a spiritual father and mother as well or accountability partners in my faith. Through it all I had to do the work in my life each day to be the best version of me that I could be. The difference now is I have the tools to make it through anything.

Truly growth never stops either; I am still working on me. Throughout it all I had to do the work, but respect the process, growth and change is a lifelong process. Regardless of where you are at in the process of getting whole, please take the time to at least evaluate yourself by doing a self-assessment, and ask yourself if that is where you want to stay. *

SILVER FOX

CASEY SCHETTER

"It's really not as hard as you're making it sound," my father says as he picks up his glass, taking a hard swig as I'm staring down at the bar table, trying to absorb what he's trying to convey, "Just talk to her and let her know how what you're thinking, it can't end up that bad." The glass clinks back onto the bar.

"You obviously don't know her very well then. I've seen the things she's capable of and it's really terrifying, like really, really terrifying." I slowly swirl my drink around, staring into the glass like it's a way to get answers, "Honestly I'm more scared of her than I am of you, which says a lot." I lazily side-eyed my father.

"The worst she can say is no." he slides that statement in like it holds any value,

"I'm pretty sure it can get worse than that." I say sounding defeated,

"How?" he snaps, shifting his weight, forcing the stool he's sitting on to creak as he turns towards me.

"How?" I stop swirling the drink and look back down as the whirlpool subsides, "well to be honest I don't really know how... But I do know it will be worse!" I say while waving a finger somewhere in his general direction.

"Dude seriously I thought I raised you better than this." He says slumping back into his chair, waiting for my counterattack, "I mean c'mon, are you just going to sit back and hope everything in life just comes right to you? Like seriously, take a risk or two sometime!"

Now it's my turn to slump back in the chair, although mine is a sign of falling for his trap, "Alright, fine. What should I say to her then?"

Absolutely thrilled and with one hundred percent confidence, he looks me dead in the eye and says, "Just walk up, say," lowering his voice, mocking me, "Hey my name is Casey Schetter and I think you're hot'." Bringing the voice back to normal, "Works every time for me. Honestly."

Silence for a few seconds as we both turn back towards our drinks, picking them up, finishing them, then sliding them towards the back of the bar for another.

"Fine." He says as he gives a deep sigh, look-

ing like he's about to get up out of his stool, "I'll just go talk to her for you."

"Do. Not." I hiss as I whip my head towards him, giving a glare that even the dead would shiver at, "I'll just... I'll go say something if you'll just get off my back."

With the victory he had been waiting for, grinning ear to ear, he says, "That's my boy. You got it kiddo."

With a huff, I get up out of my bar stool, take a deep breath and walk over to the lady sitting towards the other end of the bar.

I approach the girl, preparing for whatever I can say to save myself from this execution of social status. I know she can smell the fear in me, all women have that ability. And I give the best possible opening line I can, "I am so sorry my dad made me come over and talk to you." This is received better than I thought as she chuckles at that statement, but responds in a horrific way, "Oh I know him! He's the hot guy that comes in all the time that's like, super good friends with the owner, right?" I didn't know what to say. How do you respond to someone calling your father hot? I was dumbfounded, I couldn't answer the question. "He's just got this whole 'silver fox' thing going for him, it's super sexy."

A few moments pass, my father can't see either of our faces. But what he does see is me itch the back of my head, starting to talk with my hands, and then pulling out my phone. Then me walking back with my head hung low.

"She said no?"

"She said no."

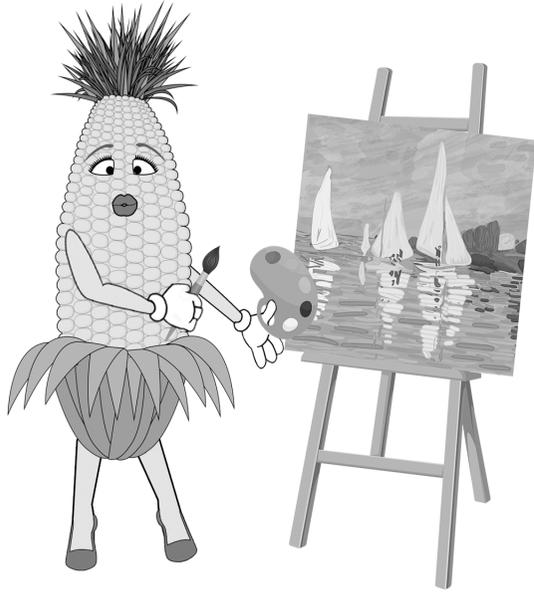
"You'll get em' next time kid, don't worry. You are my son, after all." *

TRUTH IS A LEAF

CASEY SCHETTER

TRUTH IS A LEAF. It comes and goes. Sometimes it's ugly, we just want to push it away and act like it's not there, bag it up and throw it away, anywhere but close to us. But sometimes it's beautiful and colorful, bright reds that fade into burning oranges, which is the truth we all want to keep, keeping a close eye on the details and trying to preserve it. We all want beautiful truths to surround us and to never leave, but they don't stay for long. They all rot, even the bad ones. But we don't notice those. We only see the wonderful ones decaying and dying. Even on many those beautiful leaves we can notice little dots of corruption, making the overall details of the leaf a little less great, but those can be passed by to just enjoy the natural beauty of it as a whole. But at what point is there too much that isn't good about that leaf that makes a good, beautiful leaf, ugly and worth throwing to the side? But I think that's the point, everyone will have their idea when a leaf is bad enough to be forgotten, or when the beautiful leaf is no longer good enough and is traded in for one that just has a little less abnormality, a little less bad hidden in it, a little less age than the previous one. Everyone wants a new, better leaf than the last, no one is ever content.

But what do I know? I'm not a leaf expert. Nor am I good at telling the truth. But here I am. Standing outside, looking at all the leaves. Why is it that the one that has the blackest little dots drawing my attention? Now that I'm looking at your leaf again, those colors don't seem to glow like they used to. Grabbing onto it revealed what it was all along; a fragile leaf, one that even the most delicate of hands could not keep preserved. All leaves decay. Even the beautiful ones. ✱



art & photography



Haily Simeral
“The Busy Life”



Haily Simeral
“Peeking Through”



Haily Simeral
“A Walk in Sunshine”



Katie Vela
Untitled



Katie Vela
Untitled



Katie Vela
Untitled

Special Section

Taking Back the Night At MTC



⚠ Sensitive content warning: This section includes content about sexual assault and domestic violence.

TAKING BACK THE NIGHT AT MTC

Special Section Editor:
Natalie Klenzman

On the evening of April 20, 2023, Marion Technical College hosted Take Back the Night, an annual event to spread awareness for and give support to survivors of sexual assault and domestic violence. It is supported by the Take Back the Night Foundation, an international volunteer organization that grew out of grassroots efforts to protest mistreatment of women stretching back to the 1970s. The event in Marion takes place every April at the Health and Technologies Center, located on the Ohio State Marion / Marion Technical College campus.

This year, *Cornfield Review* has partnered with MTC to showcase a collection of literary works dedicated to exclusive content regarding themes of sexual assault and domestic violence. These pieces were on display during the event. We have also published this special section to highlight the work shown there.

This event was coordinated by Wendy Weichenthal, MTC Public Relations Specialist, and Kimberly Bryant, a student at MTC and student worker in Marketing (and also one of the featured speakers). It featured a number of community organizations, including the Crawford-Marion ADAMH Board, the Marion Victim Assistance Program, and the campus OUTloud student organization, among others. When asked about the significance of hosting an event like this, Bryant replied, “This event means a lot to us and we appreciate everyone who takes the time to be there. We hope we can keep the momentum going throughout our community to really reach people and help those in these struggles and erase the stigma on these hard topics.”

If you or someone you know has been affected by any of the issues raised, we encourage you to speak up and reach out to the following resources:

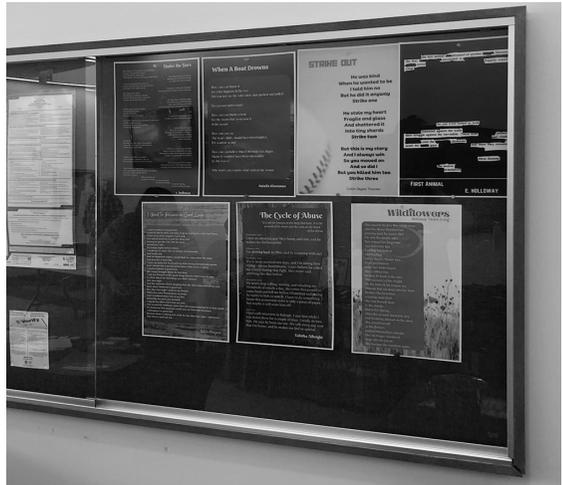
- **National Sexual Assault Hotline:** 1-800-656-4673
- **National Domestic Violence Hotline:** 1-800-799-7233
- **Take Back the Night website:** <https://takebackthenight.org/>

Special Section Editor: Natalie Klenzman



Poster promoting the Marion Technical College Take Back the Night Event, held April 20, 2023.

The literary works featured in this section were on display in the tabling area during the MTC Take Back the Night Event.



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 - Collin Thacker**
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 - Strike Out
 - Tabitha Albright**
 - The Cycle of Abuse
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first animal

the first animal dreamed of another Monstrous
the first succeeded in
terror happily crawling
close

no one even turned to look

slammed against the walls
their struggle against the inevitable. These men pulled
and climbed
onto the skeletons beneath the gaze
and there they remained,

these demons

the motive
scandalous

—e. holloway

Under The Stars

the coldness of his hand on my thighs,
trying to spread them apart
in the backseat after prom.
“Like butter,” he said, tilting his head down.

Our friends were in the front,
making out as I held my breath
in a dress one size too small.

I was watching the sky above us
my gaze glittering in the rear window
waiting for the night to end.

I wished on a star that I wouldn't
become another number on the way home.

He cupped my cheek
frenching me without consent;
my last drink of punch rushed up
to burn my throat with acid,

the only reflex I had that night.
I was alone in a car full of people
and a tear fell down my cheek
as his hand fell down to squeeze my waist.

I had to give up the comfort
of viewing the stars
to close my eyes,
the only sense of stability

I could find. His hand moved
to slap my ass as I adjusted myself

not unlike another day standing at my locker.
It didn't make it easier
knowing that my body had felt
an unwelcome touch.

I opened my eyes again
when he was whining about
finding a way to make our future's
work together; going to college
and not waiting for him
made me a bitch.

His grasp
become hot with rage as he pushed
me to the other door in the backseat
of the 20 year old sedan.

I still have a scar on my shoulder
when he dug his fingernails into me,
shoving his tongue down my throat again
trying to convince me I loved him.

I didn't, I couldn't, I wouldn't
even be able to get out of the car
fast enough and never text him back.

My hand grasped the headrest
of the driver's seat with white knuckles,
stirring our friends from their intimacy.

The car shifted into drive,
only in glimpses from working streetlights
we drove under would I know
if he was trying to

hike my dress up
to grab my waist,

to cusp my cheek
or touch my breast,

to spread my legs,
or try to touch me again.

—*e. holloway*

I used to believe in good luck

I used to believe in good luck.

I used to search miles and miles of grass looking for a four leaf clover.

I tied every straw wrapper I've used,

And asked someone to pull the other end,

Hoping to get the side with the knot;

Sometimes I did.

On snowy nights before school,

I would go to sleep with my clothes on backwards,

And inside out.

And on desperate nights I would flush ice cubes down the toilet,

And pray for a snow day.

I wore my lucky hair tie around my wrist during championship games. And I always had a special pencil when I took a test in school.

I used to believe in good luck;

But I never thought about the bad kind.

I was too focused on the good things you didn't have to earn,

To think about the bad things you didn't deserve.

Like that night.

And the wishbone charm dangling from the silver chain around my neck. Back when I believed in good luck.

But after that night I stood in the shower,

While the water flowed down my body.

And I scrubbed every inch of my skin;

Especially the parts you touched.

I ripped the silver chain from my neck,

And cursed the wishbone charm that still clasped attached to it, And myself,

For believing that good luck could save me from bad intentions.

I still believe in good luck,

Because there's nothing luck could do. But after that night, I now know;

That there's bad luck too.

—*Natalie Klenzman*

When a boat drowns

How can you blame it
for what happens in the sea?
Did you not see the wild winds that pushed and pulled?

Do you not understand?

How can you blame a boat
for the storm that overcame it
in the ocean?

How can you say
The boat's lights should have been brighter,
If it wanted saving?

How can you believe that if the boat was bigger,
Maybe it wouldn't have been taken under
by the waves?

Why don't you wonder what started the storm?

—*Natalie Klenzman*

Virginity

Virginity is like a unicorn creature
Rare and beautiful
I held on to mine like a prized treasure
A chest of emeralds, sapphires and rubies
Only fit for a demonstrated suitor.

—*Brittany Violet Long*

Wildflowers

She used to be free like a wildflower
wild like those blackberries
growing past the fence. But
He was the purple juice
that stained her fingertips
and tinted her lips.
Leaving her hollow
and haunted
with a dreary Winter kiss.
Dark depression
made her limbs heavy
like a willow tree
turning its back to the sun.
The memory of his weight
Or the taste of his tongue are
wounds that cut deep into her bark.
Broken like branches
cracking underfoot.
She lost herself deep
in the woods.
But in the Spring,
when the ground started to dry,
and birdsong danced on the wind,
She found herself
as the flowers
painted themselves colorful.
She no longer wandered
deep into the forest.
She became the sunshine again.

—*Brittany Violet Long*

The flat sheets on my bed

Cornered between walls of
Discomfort and confusion
He stuck me there
Without remorse
Between the flat sheets of my bed

Fake is he who
Claims passionate actions
And performs acts of addictions
And hatred
Between the flat sheets of my bed

Cut by ice
Healed by fire
Are those composed by repetition
Of his disease
Between the flat sheets of my bed

Love is a cohesion
Of different giving and taking
But it really hit hard
When he left nothing
But the flat sheets on my bed

—*Collin Thacker*

Strike Out

He was kind
When he wanted to be
I told him no
But he did it anyway
Strike one

He stole my heart
Fragile and glass
And shattered it
Into tiny shards
Strike two

But this is my story
And I always win
So you moved on
And so did I
But you killed him too
Strike three

—*Collin Thacker*

“It is not the bruises on the body that hurt. It is the wounds of the heart and the scars on the mind.”

— Aisha Mirza

2012

September 2012 – I met an amazing guy! He’s funny and cute, and he makes me feel beautiful.

THE CYCLE OF ABUSE

TABITHA ALBRIGHT

October 2012 – He’s living on a cot in his dad’s laundry room. And his dad gets angry when he comes down to Jacksonville and stays for any length of time. It’s hard driving 2.5 hours to see him, and he always wants to be here anyway. He’s already met the kids, and they get along great. I think we’ll just let him move in. It will be easier, and we’ll get to spend more time together.

November 2012 – Can you believe it?! He asked me to marry him. We went to the pier at Topsail Island. Of course, he didn’t know that I’m terrified of the ocean and heights, so we weren’t there long. Then, we went to go eat at this place called “Bats,” which was pretty tasty. Then, in the parking lot of a surf shop, he dropped to one knee and asked me to marry him. Of course I said yes!

December 2012 – He walked out tonight because we had a fight about weed. He said when we got together that he wanted to quit smoking weed because he wanted to be a better role model for the kids. But now, he says he wants to start again. He knows I’m against it, but he says I’m overreacting.

2013

January 2013 – He doesn’t like it when I call him on my way home, or when I call him while I’m working. He said he doesn’t understand why I don’t just talk to him when I get home. Maybe I’m calling too much. I

don't want to be too clingy.

February 2013 – I'm moving back to Ohio, and he's coming with me!

February 2013 – We got stuck in a snowstorm on the drive to Ohio. I'd never driven a U-Haul before, and he wasn't able to drive it because his license is expired. We had to stop at a rest area in Virginia and we slept in the back of the truck in 23F weather!

March 2013 – I got a job at an industrial robotics company. What do I know about robots? Not a damn thing. But I'm writing content for their website, so this should be fun.

April 2013 – Now, we both have jobs! Everything is going to be great!

August 2013 – He lost his job because they found out he had a possession felony from four years ago, even though he's clean now. Oh well. We're getting married in a month. There will be other jobs.

September 2013 – We've been married two days, and I'm sitting here crying – on our honeymoon. I can't believe he called me a bitch during that fight. He's never said anything like that before.

2014

March 2014 – He screamed at me, which didn't bother me. That happens a lot. But he punched a hole in the wall

and started throwing things at me. I'm leaving for a few days.

May 2014 – I woke up to a thunderstorm. My daughter was spending the night with my parents and her bedroom window was open. I'd twisted my knee the day before, so I woke him up to go close it. When he came back, he proceeded to keep me awake for two hours, threatened to kill me if I ever woke him up again, and put a pillow over my face.

May 2014 – My sister is in ICU, and I've been going back and forth to the hospital every day to see her. He is mad because he doesn't have the car to go see his friends because I am gone. He pushed me and then held me down on the bed and screamed in my face because I lost my balance, and he thought I pushed him. As he was on top of me and screaming, the phone rang. We had to rush to the hospital. My sister might only have a few days left.

May 2014 - My sister died today. She had a stroke last night, and whether she needed to have a DNR signed by her husband was no longer an issue. They unplugged the machines. My sisters and I weren't allowed in, but my parents, my brother-in-law, her kids and my BIL's parents were in there. My sisters and I cried. I went down to the chapel and said a prayer. Then, she was gone. I read to her before I left her that day, the last one in the room with my little sister. He wasn't even there.

June 2014 – We buried my sister today. He got up this morning and ripped a huge hole in the wall because I woke him up to get a shower. He stood up with me for appearances as I gave her eulogy, and then passed out and drooled during the service. He drove home, despite being on two Xanax and told my children on the way home that I screwed another man (not true). Then, he dropped us off at my parent's house and left. He told me he has Hep C, which he doesn't. Then he drove home drunk and got followed by a cop. He's passed out on the couch in the house now.

September 2014 – After several months of back and forth, it all ended today. He kept me up all night, threatening to hurt me or break my things. I begged him to leave. He said he would leave if I gave him \$140. On the way to the ATM, I got a flat tire. My mom dropped me off at the house, and I gave him the \$140, and he left. He knew it was the last money I had. While I was gone, he had trashed all the food in the house, taken apart the lawnmower, made holes all over the living room walls, and peed on our bare mattress and remade the bed. He then told my mother that he was happy her daughter was dead, and left town.

November 2014 – He won't stop calling, texting, and emailing me. Hundreds of emails a day. He's even threatening to come back and kill me

before Christmas and saying he wants the kids to watch. I have to do something. I know this protection order is only a piece of paper, but maybe it will scare him off.

2015

April 2015 – Some time has passed. I see where I was wrong in all of this, and we are talking again. He's in NC, but I think we might be able to make this work, if we can somehow smooth things over with my family and get the protection order dropped.

April 2015 – I had a job interview in Raleigh. I saw him while I was down there for a couple of days. I really do love him. He says he loves me too. We talk every day now that I'm home, and he makes me feel so special.

August 2015 – He is dating someone else. He says he loves her, and he doesn't want to talk to me anymore. What did I do wrong this time?

October 2015 – I'm in the hospital for a heart issue, and they needed to know my next of kin, in case something happened. Since he and I are still married, it's legally him. So, I called him to let him know I was in the hospital in case they called him. He was with his new girlfriend. He started talking about how I wouldn't be in the hospital if I wasn't such a fat tub of lard. She laughed in the background. I hung up.

November 2015 – I'm back to my

maiden name! The divorce is final! I am free!

2016

February 2016 – He called me again today. He says he wants to come back to Ohio. We started to plan for him to get a bus ticket, but the end of the day, he decided to stay with her in NC.

April 2016 – He's coming home! I drove all night to pick him up, and when we got home, my daughter had made cookies. We're so glad that he's home. I can't wait to fix this and be a family again.

April 2016 – 26 days. He was here for 26 days. When I got home from work, we watched TV, cuddled, and went to bed. When I woke up, it was thunder storming. He wasn't in bed. I looked for him, and he wasn't in the house. Maybe he went to the store? No. He called. He was with her. She drove all night to pick him up, and he snuck out without even saying goodbye. I am done dealing with this.

September 2016 – I think we might be able to work everything out. We love each other, so we should, right? The kids and I left to get him in the evening and drove over 24 hours round trip to pick him up in NC and bring him home. Now, we just have to hide him until the protection order is dropped.

December 2016 – Merry Christmas! No more protection order. Now, I just have

to figure out a way to tell my parents that we are back together. I will figure it out soon enough. But until then, I just want to enjoy the time we have.

2017

May 2017 – We had to move to a new apartment. It's our first apartment together! This is so exciting. His friend helped us move. My parents still don't know he's here. But everything will be fine.

June 2017 – The shit has hit the fan. The family knows he is back. They are not happy. My sister wants to disown me. I told them that he is different, and I am going to be with him because I love him.

August 2017 – He got angry at me today because I wouldn't get up and do something he wanted me to do. He brought a glass of water into the bedroom and poured it on me while I was lying in bed.

September 2017 – I threw him out today. This morning was the last straw. He's been picking at me for weeks, but this morning he started making fun of my rolls and talked about how disgusting and diseased I was because I was so fat. I told him that it was over, and I wanted him out by the end of the day.

November 2017 – He stayed with me for three weeks, and then left on a bus bound for NC. Today, a week later,

I find out through social media that the entire three weeks he was staying with me and saying he wanted to work things out, he was also having an on-line relationship with another woman – telling her he loved her and wanted to be with her.

December 2017 – He and his new girlfriend messaged me on Facebook Messenger and started to berate me. They made fun of me. She told me how fat and ugly I was, and he either agreed or just laughed. It was mortifying.

December 2017 – He called me today, and he says that he wants to be with me. I am home to him, not that other woman. He said he needs me and wants to come back. I drove overnight to pick him up in NC and bring him back to Ohio. He says it is different this time. He says he understands how much he has to lose. I think we can really make this work. ✱

CONTRIBUTORS

TABITHA ALBRIGHT | OSUM graduate. Writing UX content makes her money, while writing poetry, memoir, and social commentary makes her happy. She loves long battles through Diablo 3 and World of Warcraft, as well as spending time playing fetch with her orange Tabby cat named Jack.

KIMBERLY BRYANT | I'm a student at Marion Tech studying Business Marketing Media. I'm also the owner/operator of Kitty Kat Candles, a small Marion-based candle shop that sells candles, wax melts, and more. These writings are part of my coping skills to get through my struggles and push towards my goals, dreams, and success!

KENDRA FARLEE | For Colton.

ELLISHIA GAFFNEY | I am an English major focusing on creative writing. Writing has always helped me work out my feelings since I'm not that great at talking to others about what I am going through. That means each piece I write has a part of my story imbued in the works I create. I hope to one day show my works to a large audience and it looks like my dream starts right here with the Cornfield Review!

JACK HARDIN | I am majoring for a degree in history. I love the films of times past, stories of the fantastical, and nature's abundance.

ALEX HARRIS | A recently graduated English major who's getting to work on that novel, so give him a break already!

ALEXIS HAYDEN | An English Major with a focus in creative writing, Alexis aspires to one day publish a line of poetry books and open a Japanese cuisine inspired bakery.

E. HOLLOWAY | e. holloway is a writer currently based in ohio. their work explores self-identity and doubt, missed connections, and fumbling through life. they were recently a writer in residence through Sundress Academy for the Arts

in Knoxville, TN to focus on poetry as well as queer and theatre studies.

WILLIAM HURT | William Hurt is an Ohio native. After serving in the United States Navy, he began attending OSUM last fall and plans to earn a biology degree. Although his major may not suggest it, he has always had an affinity and appreciation for English and literature. William currently resides in Tiffin with his girlfriend, Sophie. The two are expecting parents and look forward to their first child together this November.

ANTONIO JOHNSON | Antonio is a writer from the Central Ohio area.

NATALIE KLENZMAN | Marion-made sophomore at OSUM! Studying creative writing, with a minor in English as well. 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 (TikTok), and joy. My aspirations include trying to be the best version of myself that I can, and writing about what that means to me. Often described as super awesome and funny and probably something else really great.

BRITTANY VIOLET LONG | Brittany Violet Long is an Ohio State University alumni. She is currently a second grade teacher at Genoa Christian Academy and a married mother of two. By day she is a chaos coordinator and by night she dreams of becoming a poet.

KARLIE MARLATT | My name is Karlie Marlatt, I am a blood sucking vampire who feasts on high schoolers. This is why I work in the Admissions office so I can easily spot my next prey while giving tours of campus.

AMY PLOUGH | Amy is a poetry hobbyist, crazy cat and amphibian lady, and hospice nurse. Ambitious and always ready to just keep pushing, she is back and ready for more college, going for her RN-BSN at WGU.

CONTRIBUTORS

NICOLE POHLMAN | I am an aspiring English major with a minor in Professional Writing from OSU Lima. My whole life I've always wanted to be an author, and this past year, I've achieved that goal. In 2023, I published a children's book on Amazon titled *The Little Fly Who Couldn't Fly*, but I dream to one day publish a novel. I will graduate in 2026.

CASEY SCHETTER | Hey everyone! I am Casey Schetter and I am a Creative Writing major here at OSU Marion. I'm a pretty big nerd and very interested in all things video games and Dungeons and Dragons related, but most of my writing focuses on stuff that has happened within my lifetime, outside of the fantasy world. I'm hoping to eventually work within the video game industry for whatever studio that will take me, but right now the hope is for either Riot Games or Bethesda Softworks!

HAILY SIMERAL | Hi! I am currently a junior at OSUM, working towards my English degree in creative writing. I'm originally from Cleveland, Ohio, which isn't that far away but it's part of who I am! If I'm not in school or working, I am working on my first novel in hopes to have it published! You can usually spot me at my local Barnes and Noble or a Five Guys Burger Restaurant! Here's to the Cornfield Review!

COLLIN THACKER | Hey! My name is Collin Thacker and I am attending The Ohio State University at Marion. Soon to be a poetry author as I finish

my Bachelors in English with a minor in creative writing. I was born and raised in the Marion/Caledonia area and I love poetry with every fiber of my being! I'm a total social butterfly yet extremely introverted and I love to make new friends. My friends, family, and Professors are what have kept me going. My favorite color is emerald green, I love crab legs, and I have an interest in adventure!

KATIE VELA | Currently a graduate student at The Ohio State University and an amateur photographer based in Columbus, Ohio.

COLOPHON

This issue of the *Cornfield Review* is printed using a combination of **Georgia**, **IMPACT LABEL**, **Raleway Extra Bold**, **IBS**, **BEBAS NEUE**, and **SHANA POW** 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, PhotoPea, and GIMP. The cover concept was developed collaboratively by the Editorial Board and designed by Christyne Horton.



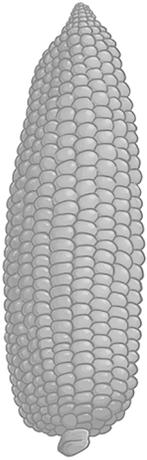
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KAPOW!

Come and join **Kapow!**, the Ohio State Marion campus creative writing club. Organized by Stuart Lishan, all versions of creative writing are encouraged to be shared! Feel free to come participate and hang out. Contact Stuart Lishan (lishan.1@osu.edu) for more details.

