

Not-so-subtle

INSPIRATION

Sky's the LIMIT

The Manatee

Spring 2019 Literary Journal | Twelfth Edition

Power Up
Your Brain

"Deciding
to make
my voice
heard was
the biggest
decision of
my life."

On Fire

"I KNEW I WANTED
TO EMBRACE ALL OF
ME. THE GOOD, THE BAD,
THE COMPLICATED."

Watch
Your
Tongue!

Making
History!

The Manatee

Spring 2019 Literary Journal | Twelfth Edition

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WHAT'S THE MANATEE?

The Manatee is a literary journal run by the Students of Southern New Hampshire University. We publish the best short fiction, poetry, essays, photos, and artwork of undergraduate SNHU students, and we're able to do it with the support of the Creative Writing Club.

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Editor's Note

This is my first year as Editor-in-Chief of *The Manatee*, and I am so grateful for how rewarding this process was and is. There is an abundance of talent to be found at SNHU, and it is refreshing to be able to put together a journal for those that have a passion for writing, art, and reading in and outside of the Creative Writing major.

To my Editors that have supported me through this (rocky) first year: thank you for lending me a hand whenever needed. Not only is there talent to be found at SNHU, there is kindness. Without your help, this edition would have been a lot rougher around the edges, and a lot shorter. Thank you for your constant help in finding new submissions, and for keeping up with me and my needs. Thank you for working with me so diligently and for taking the time and care needed to work with your pieces.

I would also like to give a warm thank you to Jaime Karnes, the second semester advisor, for so graciously taking over *The Manatee* while Allison Cummings (the long-time advisor) was on sabbatical. Without you, I do not believe I would have stayed sane throughout this process. I wouldn't have gotten the opportunity to include interviews from some of the authors you have opened my eye to, nor do I think I would have completed this edition in a timely manner. I believe we did a fantastic job at showcasing both of our personalities within this edition. From the bottom of my heart, thank you for being the best mentor.

I'd like to give a final thank you to Jayne Anne Phillips, T Kira Madden, and Rebecca Morgan Frank. Having your interviews in the 2019 collection is something that has never been done before. I am so thankful that you were all willing to answer my questions and take time out of your days. It was a great honor to have you all be a part of this edition and offer much needed advice to those of us still learning.

I hope that this edition lives up to the expectations that it has in previous years, and that you find some new, wonderful reading material suggested in each of the interviews. This has been an experience I will never forget.

Happy reading!

Lauren Borry, Editor-in-Chief

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My Time in the Music Business

Eric Bruno

My late mother, bless her heart, told me that If I were to ever visit a grave, I should bring flowers. In her mind, there could be no exception to the rule. It was a sign of respect and, if you didn't have the best relationship with that person in life, also one of peace. Fights and grudges didn't matter once one party passed on, she said. As I stand over the grave of Chris Fairchild, empty-handed and a day late to the funeral, I wonder how she'd react.

I didn't hate him. After all he did for me, for my career, I couldn't hate him. That doesn't mean I valued his friendship. Like most things in life, my relationship with Chris Fairchild couldn't be measured on a black and white scale. Most things can't be, I realize. Maybe that's why I bothered showing up at all. Maybe I just needed to see his grave for myself. Plain and grey, indistinguishable from all others surrounding it for miles. If he could see it now, he'd scoff and shake his head. The epitaph, ONE DAY I'LL RUN OUT OF SIGHTS TO SEE, his own choice. Engraved over his body, it stands as his last attempt at stroking his own ego. At least, I assume so. Even after all this time, I never could tell with him.

My first few months in New York went the same: wake up on a couch, go out and play some songs for tips, search for a new couch, rinse and repeat. Just a kid with big dreams and a shit voice. I put my soul into each strum of my guitar, to make up for my vocal failings. Never once did I consider a more realistic choice of career. Blinded by my optimism, I stayed on the path I chose for myself, one where you either get lucky or fall to the wayside.

Of course, I got lucky.

I don't remember when he started to watch me, I just remember looking up one day and seeing him. Clad in a garish

and bright suit, with skin and hair so flawless they appeared almost porcelain. He'd spend hours as my audience, fixated by me, a childlike wonder in his eyes. After a few days he made the effort to talk to me. We came away from that conversation with two main takeaways. The first, and slightly less important one, was that we knew each other's names. Sometimes I regret allowing him to call me by that pet name he used. Both my first and last names start with a B, and so Chris called me BB. I hated that stupid name, still do, but I didn't want any confrontation. The second takeaway was an invitation to sign onto his label, Renaissance Records. I jumped at the chance, even if it did sound a little too good, just to get myself out of that rut.

The studio itself took me out of the city, onto his own land, right next to his mansion. As it turned out, his father amassed a fortune through his construction company and careful investments. When both he and his wife passed, it all fell to their only son, a son that found more interest in the world of art than business. Before Renaissance Records, Chris Fairchild was a rich idiot with no day job. With it, he was a rich idiot who at least had something to do. The studio itself didn't exactly welcome you in. Speakers blasted classical music 24/7, everywhere but the booth and control room. All sorts of music memorabilia adorned the bright burgundy walls, drawing your sight from one event to the next. Chris also had a love of incense. He kept a good twenty or so lit during our sessions, flooding the place with an overwhelming smell of cinnamon. At least it cleared my sinuses.

When I managed to make my way through the assault on my senses for the first time, I found not only Chris but a short woman in a sundress and straw hat awaited me. Chris had ditched the suits for a simple jeans and t-shirt look. It looked natural compared to his formal wear.

He welcomed me with open arms. I thought he'd crush me with that hug of his. He introduced the woman as the vocal

half of our act, Air Hearts. He told me her name's Amelia, and he assured me she has one hell of a voice. She'd be the face, inspiration and vocals for the duo, and I'd deal with writing and playing the actual music. I agreed because I preferred not to have my face plastered front and center. Even if my looks received compliments, with Chris describing them as "lithe and beautiful," I wanted to be known for my music. In all my time with those two, neither one of them told me her last name. I started to think she didn't have one, and I never bothered to pry. Her voice, a dreamy contralto, betrayed her cute, reserved looks. I figured that she was full of surprises and as long as the act went well, her past, or lack thereof, didn't really matter.

And so, recording for our first album went underway. I took issue with how Chris went about the process. One of us would write and record our part first, then the other would write in response. I wanted both of us to be in the booth at the same time, wanted some sense of camaraderie. We'd alternate the lead on each song, and I thought for sure we'd end up with nothing but a mess of noise. Of course, looking back on it, I have to admit that it worked, and I grew to accept that was just how it was to work with another person. That's not to say everything went smooth as butter, oh no. Plenty of arguments and disagreements formed in those walls, mostly between myself and Chris. Amelia hardly ever objected, and when she did, we knew to concede and let her have her way. When it wasn't arguing over the music, I still had to deal with Chris's antics.

Sometimes he'd bring gifts, usually clothes, though I always did wonder how he got my measurements. Other times he'd go on and on about the history of some song or painting or artist or whatever caught his attention that morning. Everything he did, in his mind anyway, was for the simple purpose of helping us, keeping us happy and content. He did have a weird way of following through on that sentiment. Once, when I decided that coming into the studio early wouldn't hurt, I found

Amelia and Chris in the control room. Amelia sat in the chair with her eyes closed and Chris, down on his knees, was sucking her toes. Amelia did her vocal warm-ups while Chris slobbered over her feet, giving each individual toe the time of day before popping in the next one. When he finished her feet, he ran his tongue up her leg, leaving a trail of saliva. Amelia shuddered and opened her eyes, and it was about that time when I realized I probably shouldn't be watching so intently. She just smiled at me and nudged Chris with her big toe, still glistening with saliva, which made him turn and smile. I shut the door and booked it out of the studio. The next day Chris explained that what I saw was something he did on a regular basis on Amelia's request, to help her relax before recording sessions, and if I had any similar requests, he'd be happy to oblige. I think the explanation and offer were meant to make me feel better, but if that was the case it certainly didn't accomplish that goal.

One other thing: Chris loved to drink. With the amount of times he still managed to function during the sessions I figured he had a high tolerance, but when he passed it things got strange. He wasn't a sad drunk, or a violent drunk, or a happy drunk. The incident I remember with the most detail occurred close to the end of our first album recordings. Amelia and I came into the studio at the same time, and we found Chris in the lobby, which reeked of alcohol. He stood stiff as a board, eyes trained ahead. He neither acknowledged our movements or hell, I don't even think he blinked. We watched him for a few minutes to see what would happen, and eventually Amelia decided to try to rouse him. When she went to place a hand on his shoulder, he bent out of the way, twisted himself to the right and returned to his state of zen a few inches away from her. She continued to try to touch him, with the result being the same with each new attempt. Judging by her giggles, the happiest I had seen her, it turned into a sort of game for her.

Eventually, I had enough. I got up from my spectator seat and went to slap him, having heard that would help make a person sober. Instead of twirling out of the way, he didn't let me get six inches from him before he stepped forward and punched me in the face. I crashed back into the chairs and Amelia rushed to my side, checking to see how bad it was. I thought Chris had just been faking the whole thing just to get that hit in, but when I looked back up at him, he was right back to that stiff stance. I called it a day to go tend to my face, while Amelia stayed to make sure he didn't get into more trouble. The next day he apologized and explained that things like that "just happened" when he drank. He offered to let me hit him to make it even, but I turned him down.

Even after all that jazz, the last hurdle came down to the album itself. Chris wanted to end the track listing with a grandiose power ballad, the only thing he specified throughout the entire process. He liked the lyrics Amelia came up with, but when it came to the instrumentals, nothing seemed to stick for him. We tried all sorts of different instruments, some synths, a good amount of editing, which he usually held back on; whatever we tried, nothing pleased him. As time went by, he grew more and more restless, until he started going on a rant about "music from the soul" for the umpteenth time. Must've flicked a switch in his head, because he stopped and laughed. He told me exactly what would happen to make it perfect: I would play the instrumentals while holding my breath. It was certainly a Fairchild idea, but I could only hold my breath for about thirty seconds at a time. In the end, we got our final ballad, recorded in thirty second snippets edited together. I don't know if it really sounded so much better than everything else we recorded, or if it was just the relief of finally getting something, but as he listened to it he started crying. This is real music, he said. From then on, every album we made would end with one of these "Apnea Ballads."

Our pride and joy, *Lost in Flight*, debuted with little fanfare, but unforeseen to any of us except for maybe Chris, it shot up the charts. Critics agreed with his “rawness of passion” spiel, so it was good to know that he hadn’t just been full of hot air. With the rising popularity came interviews and the inevitable tour dates. Playing my guitar for a cheering audience was the exact thing I joined this business to do, so I couldn’t wait to get started. But of course, Chris wanted each of our shows to finish with the Apnea Ballad, and he wouldn’t let a little thing like the fact it was physically impossible for me to play get in the way of that goal. So for the first few shows, I played it with my normal breathing. The crowd still loved it, but Chris sulked after each show. Eventually he demanded I use a pre-recorded track to get across the true experience. I caved, expecting the worst, but not one single technical issue reared its head. That didn’t stop people from hearing the differences between our first few shows and the rest.

Word came out about the pre-recorded instruments a few days after the tour ended.

Rumors grew as overbearing as redwoods, with some even accusing us of being proxies for the actual artists. A Milli Vanilli 2.0, if you would. A few quick interviews and behind the scenes into the creation of the Apnea Ballads brought some clarity to the situation, and while skepticism remained in some circles, we earned praise for our unorthodox method. We moved on to the recording of our second album, with Chris spurring us on, cheering our talents to the public. In the studio however, he took the insinuation that we may be fakers to heart. It did a number on him, and his mood soured from then on. His perfect teeth hid behind a frown, and he never bothered to light the incense.

Not even an eighth into the next album, Chris decided to take us out in celebration. He booked an entire restaurant for just the three of us, and even though Amelia had to help me with my

suit, we all looked rather nice. Chris even went back to his old self, smiling and giving history lessons on William Blake. It brought a wave of nostalgia over me. We were back to the days before we entered the public eye, and I hadn't realized how much I missed those simpler times. Though, all good things come to an end. In that case, an errant waiter, intending it as a compliment, approached Chris and said that he didn't care if the *Apnea Ballad* wasn't authentic, it still sounded amazing.

Chris blew up at the poor kid, berated him about what real music was, and how he'd be lucky to experience even a tiny sliver of it in his pathetic life. He stormed out of the building, leaving the waiter slack-jawed. We tipped 50% and ran after Chris, who brushed us off and drove back to his mansion, his face grim and cracked. Amelia promised me she would go check on him in the morning, just to make sure she didn't do anything stupid. There wasn't anything else I could do, so I crawled back to my apartment, with the expectation that everything would be different the next morning.

Sometimes, I hate being right.

I watched as they wheeled two bodies out of the mansion the next morning. The rumor mill spun back up as to what exactly caused the deaths, and people turned to me for answers. I knew nothing about it, however. I wanted them just as bad. The truth came out after a nail-biter of an investigation: Amelia died from multiple gunshot wounds, while Chris OD'd on some sort of custom speedball. The common conclusion reached by the public was that they were together because they'd been involved throughout the tour. I gave up trying to convince them otherwise after a few days.

And that was it. The Air Hearts were no more, the world went back to its rut, and I remained to pick up the pieces of my life. My place, the place I called home, gone along with the closest things I had to friends. Once again, I became the small fish in an uncaring pond. As I read over his gravestone once

more, I wonder what, if anything, went through his head that night. I wonder why he just couldn't let anything go, what caused that chip on his shoulder. For all his posturing and lecturing, I guess when it comes down to it, I really don't know that much about him.

He helped me. He gave me hope. Then he took it away. This is my way of paying it all back. Once I leave this place, the memory of Chris Fairchild stays with his body, six feet below me. That might be the most fitting punishment for him. Or who knows, maybe when I pick up my guitar and play a few chords I'll see something different about him. Maybe I'll write a song about him, about us. A ballad for the Air Hearts.

Either way, I'll enjoy every breath I take up here.

Study Abroad

Gabby Ryman



Right Love, Wrong Time

Leilani Ann

I reimagine our love to be something
Unstoppable,
Bulletproof,
And beautiful—
The way it was when it first began;
Out of nowhere; random, pure, and coincidental.
I paint a picture of you in my head,
This time less volatile and more awake.
I hold memories of you sweetly in my hand
And let go of the ones I elect not to remember,
For they dampen the ones I hold deeply in my heart.
I wonder what I could have done
To make you stay, if anything—
I could have been
Softer,
Calmer,
Warmer,
Quieter.
In another life, we would be perfect.
I'll see you then.

Northern Star

River Arya Matis

I clutched my phone tighter; the emanating heat made my ear and fingers sweat. My insides were swirling as I listened to my best friend of twelve years try to convince me to sign a contract.

I heard him take a swig of something, “Listen man, we have to sign this.”

“Sam, we would need to move out to California. I can’t do that. You were at the funeral today. I need to be here.”

“Blake, I understand, I do, I loved them both like family. When you told me about what happened, it was all I could think about. It was all over the news.” He exhaled, “but this is our one shot, we’ve worked five years for this. I can’t go back to bussing tables at Chips.”

“I’m sure there’s a way to solve this. I’m only the bass player, I can be replaced.”

“Not to me, not after twelve years of friendship, five years of hard work, and sixty-five minimum wage gigs.”

I took a deep breath. We had been going back and forth since I stepped foot in the bar and dialed his number. “Sam, we went over this already. I just can’t leave, not now and not in the foreseeable future.”

The silence seemed to last an eternity, and I became aware that there was no void trapping me, where my only company was the phone and the disembodied voice of my friend. Around me the bar became fuller as the late-night crowd wandered in from the cold.

Finally, Sam responded, “I just can’t deal with this right now, I’ll call you tomorrow.”

I sat at the crusty wooden bar for some time afterwards. My stomach somersaulting inside my gut. I tried taking small sips of my whiskey to calm myself down. I refused to get myself drunk, I knew I would be walking home. No one needed another funeral to attend.

I looked down into the glass and saw my ragged reflection staring up at me. The bags under my eyes had doubled in size over the past couple of days. I let my hand trail up from my chin to under my nose. Instead of smooth skin, I felt the beginnings of a beard. The people coming in from the outside to warm up from the snow probably thought of me as another drunken depressed bum that lived on his favorite barstool, or one of the poor saps who write sad engravings on the tables to loved ones long gone. Maybe, with my luck, they saw me as one of the drunken fools who piss all over the bathroom floor because they see three toilets instead of one. If it was any other night embarrassment would have taken its tight grip of me. I would have gone right home shaved, bathed, and greased my hair, but tonight, I cared less.

I felt someone's eyes on me, waiting for me to acknowledge them. I lifted my head to see the bartender staring at me, his brow furrowed, and forehead creased. "Hey buddy, I'm going to need you to either keep drinking, or leave, I don't appreciate loiterers."

I scanned the room, nearly full, a change from when I had arrived an hour before. A group of bikers sat by the Christmas tree chugging beers and shouting. Several of the neighborhood drunks begun their usual descent into a euphoric haze at the corner table. I turned my attention to further down the bar and watched as the waitress promptly rejected a drunken guy in a creased grey suit, (as evident his friends' raucous laughter). I looked at the grandfather clock in the far corner, I could barely make out the time from the shattered glass, it was nearly midnight.

“Christmas,” I whispered to no one.

No one could have heard me, the noise had grown exceptionally: shouting, cursing, and a very loud conversation from suit-guy and his buddies.

“I’m telling you the payout will be at least over a million each.”

“Isn’t the airlines fault, it’s the engineering firm.”

“Naw it’s the,” suit-guy burped “the pilot’s fault.”

“And who does the pilot work for? Dumbass.” The guy took a swig of his beer, “With a plane crash as big as this one, the families are gonna be going for the top dog.”

Plane crash floated in the air around me. A vapor that lurked in the shadows of my life. The plane crash was on everyone’s mind, especially today.

I paid for my drink and left.

I walked out to see a near abandoned street. When I first entered the bar, I could still see the pavement. Now, a fresh layer of snow covered the sidewalk. I pushed away the thought of calling a cab. I couldn’t let some poor driver risk his life, just so I could get home faster.

Sam’s words still echoed in my head. Five years I had been in that band, before then me and Sam were stupid high schoolers cutting class to play guitar in the courtyard.

The courtyard with its broken bench, its splintered shed that had become a feeding ground for termites. Almost every day we sat in the walled in square adding our sandwich wrappers to the pile of trash that replaced most of the pavement. Our friends who drove would sneak off school grounds to grab us whatever greasy delights we decided to fill the air of the courtyard with. Hamburgers, French fries, fish and chips, the cheapest options.

When we finished eating, Sam took out his guitar and the bass guitar I borrowed from him. We sang and strummed

Johnny Cash, the Beatles, Green Day; whoever we'd been practicing. Our group grew over time. We crowded the courtyard with more sandwich wrappers and melodies.

When the principal finally caught wind and posted a teacher by the door to our little inner sanctum, we began to move into basements, garages, even living rooms. We ate cold pizza and pooled our petty cash together until we could afford better equipment. Our sound grew from out of tune screeches, to refined harmony. When we all practiced together it was better than any drug trip in the entire world. I would be lost in a haze of notes and strums. Every nerve in my body would dance to the rapid bass as we gradually improved.

I stopped at a crosswalk to let a car go by, across the street a group of people had just knocked on a door. Though the darkness I could see their bright red Santa hats. When the door opened, they began to sing. I observed them for a moment. from their backs it appeared to be three small children and two adults, perhaps a family. They sang "Hark the Harold Angels sing," by the time I was down the street they had begun "Silent Night." Perhaps it was the snow, but my vision blurred. It had only been a few years before that I was Christmas caroling with my family.

"Christmas," I whispered to myself, "why Christmas?"

I reached Sam's block. He long since moved out, but his parents still lived in the house. His mother used to invite me in for hot chocolate when on my way home during the winter. She put a sprinkle of cinnamon on top of the whipped cream. I licked my lips. I last drank her hot chocolate after our first gig.

It hadn't been a huge event, we had to pay the guy at Froggie's so we could perform to the high schoolers (who were totally not getting carded). We all agreed afterwards that it was worth every penny we gave the stingy old jerk. It all began with us getting up on stage and being blinded by the bright blue lights. That in combination with the freezing temperatures made

me feel like I was flying above the clouds when the first notes started playing. The audience below me were ants as I flew above them, their cheers a distant echo moving further away as I drifted into the music. When the show finally ended, I realized I shivered from the cold, my fingers numb. Sam's mother had two cups ready when we returned, ready to hear all about the show.

His house drenched in darkness. Hanukkah was over, so the menorah was gone from the window. I wondered how they felt about what went down that night. They knew my situation. they witnessed it that afternoon. I wondered what Sam would tell them. Would it be words of understanding, or scorn for my decision?

The snow began to thicken beneath me. Each step became a labor, and the snow reached halfway up my boot.

I quickened my pace. The snow sloshed and shifted beneath me. I felt some of it slip down into my socks, the moisture sticking to the fabric, soon to freeze if I stayed out longer. I heard my mother's voice telling me that I should have worn thicker socks and pulled my jeans over my boots.

"I'll be fine mom. I'm not too far from home" I said to the empty street and to the canvas of snow with its unapologetic frostiness.

I used to hate the snow. My father threw me into it as a child, not out of spite, but because he found it funny.

"Swim Blakie boy," he would cackle as I sputtered and spat. Looking back, I found it funny. I probably looked like a fish caught on a very large hook, flopping around to try and free myself.

My father loved his practical jokes, but at times, he was serious. When I told him Sam and I were forming a band, he helped us out. He helped sort out the finances and he never once doubted my skills as a musician. Neither did my mother. In fact, it was her idea to buy me my own bass guitar. On my sixteenth birthday I came home to a silver wrapped guitar case. As soon

as I tuned it, I played for my parents. They looked at me with a sense of pride. I could only imagine what swirled in their mind. Concerts at Madison Square Garden, or perhaps a platinum record that would be immortalized above our fireplace mantle. They saw an amazing future in me, a future they wanted to encourage, not dismantle. Yet that was no longer the case, the future had rusted and fallen apart. Even if I could go to California with Sam, it would be tainted. I would look out at crowds and see not the proud eyes of my parents, but only the shallow admiration of strangers.

I knew home was close. I just passed Star Moving and Storage warehouse. They had a big neon green star that shown though the white fog. As a kid that's how I knew that we were close to home, just go north from the star.

When I finally reached the house, I took a deep breath, snowflakes flew into my mouth. I needed to breath - even if it was a frosty inhale - before being reminded of what lay inside. I opened the door.

Casseroles by the plenty lined a card table in our living room. The fire still crackled in the hearth, smaller than when I had left. The rhythmic *tik-tok* of our house-shaped clock was in harmony with the flame. My grandfather lay asleep in the rocking chair (he was awake when I left).

My little sister was curled up on the couch, a wool blanket pulled over her. One hand drooped over the side. Below it, a grey teddy bear she was given as an infant. The photos of my parents smiling faces still stared at the front door from the easel that had been given to us by the funeral home. behind them, lay our Christmas tree, ready with open arms to receive the presents that still lay unwrapped in the back of my parents' closet. The mail still rested unopened on the coffee table. The water bill, some condolences, and a letter with the sigil of Eastern Airlines.

I dropped my keys on the coffee table and picked up the envelope. I traced the emblem: gold wings with a navy-blue sun. I promised myself I would not open it until I settled things with Sam. It could be the payout the suited-guy and his friends were rambling about, or it could be some kind of halfhearted apology for their “technical mishandlings,” or whatever excuse their lawyer cooked up.

My grandfather begun to snore. I saw the lines in his face. They had grown deeper, more jagged and defined. He wasn't young anymore. he couldn't do what he needed to do, what I wished he could do.

I sat on the empty couch space and looked at my sister. Barely ten years old, so much of life ahead of her. I brushed some of her long black hair out of her face. She slept soundly, a change from the night terrors she'd been having since she turned onto the news footage of the plane crash by mistake the day after it happened.

I replayed my conversation with Sam in my thoughts, now a distant echo. In that moment, I believed that the echo would reverberate in the years to come, haunting me for the rest of my life.

The echo was disrupted by my sister stirring. Her eyes fluttered open.

“Blake, are you going to leave again?”

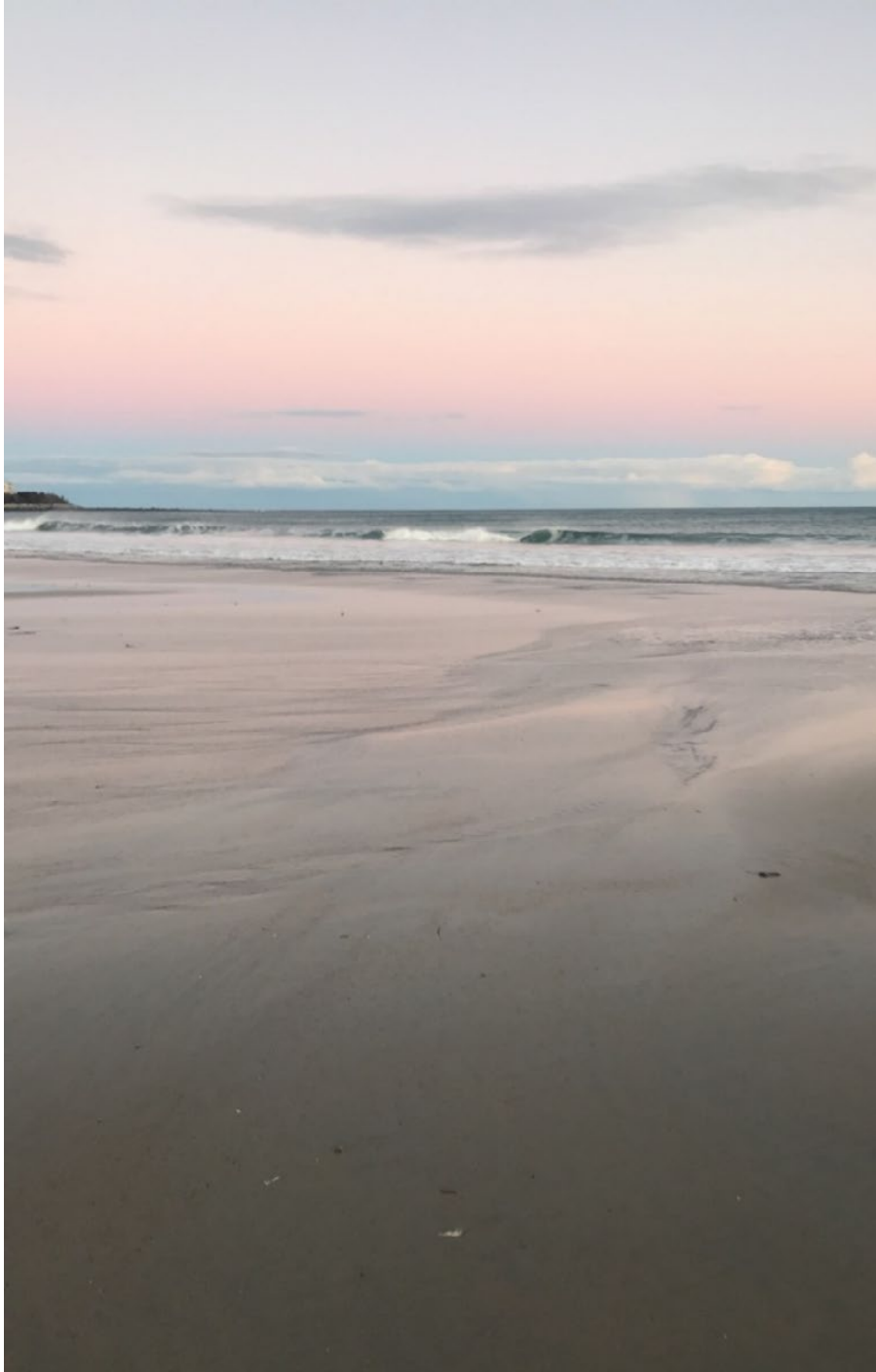
I still wore my jacket and snow boots. Perhaps she thought I was going out to the bar again, or out with Sam; yet I saw a look of fear on her face. Her eyes were small pools as she stared at me, the question hovering to the ceiling.

I leaned over and kissed her on the forehead,

“I'm not going to leave sis, not now not ever,” I whispered softly, “now go back to sleep, Santa is coming soon.”

Hampton Beach

Pearl Morrison



LOL

Hannah Lewis

there is something particular about the way
my laugh echoes. a cackle of sorts
that lingers even after the joke is far gone.
my belly aches with joyous pain
and asthmatic noises escape my mouth
because I am gasping for air. air that
will calm me down. I have a *cards against*
humanity laugh--putting down a card I know
makes no sense but the thought of its
absurdity causes me to snort and let out
a silent scream. except it's not silent. it is
a loud one and then the cackle follows,
along with the stomach throbbing
and, finally, trying to find my breath. there
is no forgiveness given to my laugh
because I could care
less about its effect on you or me. unapologetic
laughter is the best kind. the kind that brings
tears that pour rivers from my eyes
and fall down my bouncy cheeks that are in
serious soreness from the permanent
smile across my giddy face. people say
laughter is the best medicine. I say *cheers*
to that and throw out my pill bottles
and pop one laugh, two laugh, three laugh--
laughter is the best medicine,
laughter is the best medicine,
and I am the most loyal customer at the pharmacy.

Antidepressant

Hannah Lewis

a pill.

50 milligrams.

square in shape

and burnt

orange in color.

this pill

gazes up at me

from the bottle.

take me. take me,

he says.

he laughs at my

expression.

as if he thinks

I should be

more inviting

of his

presence. I

s h a k e

the bottle and

he struggles

to come

out amongst

his brothers

and sisters.

he forces

his way out

to charm his

way

into me.

tongue.

sip.

swallow.

gulp.

he maneuvers
his way through
me.
he makes no effort
to be gentle
because he wants
control.

power.

he releases
what energy he
has into the body
of one
who has none left.
he plays a game
with my brain.

tranquility.

delight.

fatigue.

depression.

desolation.

this game he
plays
has no formal
rules.
the protocol
changes
each time
I place
the
square,

burnt orange

pill

in my mouth.

he told me
one morning
that I
should feel

fine by now.
his work
is done.
me? I am
here for
your sanity.

just

a placebo
now.

I open the
bottle
each morning.

take me,

he snickers.
he has taken
me, all of me,
and I

am b r o k e n.

we can be friends!

I reach for the pill

move over, brother

and begin again.



Teeth

Ruth Way

She sat at the other end of the stainless-steel table, unflinching. She did not react as the fluorescent light made a screeching little hum; did not react to the imperfectly painted green/blue walls; did not react to the man sitting on the other side of the table- the one in an orange jumpsuit and handcuffs.

“Mr. Rogers.”

He looked up, wondering if her orange hair was the color of a rotten pumpkin when wet.

“I’ve heard you have a very interesting mind, Mr. Rogers.”

He smiled, rotten teeth peeking from peeling, dried lips that proceeded to push a puckered kiss her way.

“What are you thinking about? Right now?”

“The human nose can detect one trillion odors.”

“And what makes you think of that?”

“We both have noses.”

“Yes, we do. What else do we both have?”

“Eyes, elbows, ears, feet, toes, fingers, kneecaps, legs, arms and-”

“Teeth?”

He looked up, a fever starting to form just under his skin, hairs standing on end.

“How many teeth do we both have, Mr. Rogers?”

“Th-Thirty-two.”

“Oh?” She opened the file in front of her, “I thought you had more.”

The hum above their heads seemed to grow, working its way into Mr. Rogers’ ear like a fucking drill.

“How many teeth do you have, Mr. Rogers?”

“Thirty-two.”

“Mr. Rogers,” she sighed, “You don’t have to lie to me. I already know the answer.” She plucked one paper from her pile, stood slightly as she slid it to him.

“All of America already knows the answer. You don’t have to lie anymore.”

He looked at the page- a printout from the news website. His chuckle moved his whole chest until his mouth finally agreed to open and let the laughter out.

“416!” Spit flew onto her face as he screamed it, “416!”

“And from how many mouths?”

“Twelve!”

“And twelve times thirty-two is?”

“384.”

“Mr. Rogers, you must be forgetting someone.” She shuffled through bloody pictures, names, descriptions, “Someone must have slipped your mind. We are still missing one of your victims’ names.”

“No. No, no, no, no. Its 12.”

“No, Mr. Rogers- you said yourself you have 416 teeth. So what mouth are the other thirty-two from?”

“I already answered that.”

“No, Mr. Rogers. Not in this interview or any before it.”

“Yes, I did!” She did not flinch as the handcuffs clashed with the table’s metal in the mad man’s thrash.

“Well forgive me for not being as interesting, but could you simplify it a smidge? Please?”

He just sighed.

“How many teeth do we both have, Mr. Rogers?” He mocked her, voice raised and shrill, “The other thirty-two are from me.”

And with his “me” came a smile, bottom and top row of brown and indented teeth on display. She collected her pictures, her notes, and nodded at the man.

“Thank you, Mr. Rogers.”

“You’re very welcome.”

She stood, knocking on the interrogation door to be let out.

“Miss?”

“Yes?”

“You have a very pretty smile.”

Dinner, Shower, and a Show

Correy Pelletier

Characters:

Alan: A white gay man, a Journalist, and boyfriend to Collin. He wears a pink work shirt and red khakis.

Collin: White gay man, works as a Concierge at a Hotel and a published author. He loves Alan and in casual attire, he wears jeans and a tight pink t-shirt.

Bluetooth Speaker: Monotone, female automated voice, and turned on when devices are connected to it.

Gloria: Straight, into singing and originally from the country. She's from Northern New Hampshire.

Locations: An apartment on Newbury St. in the city of Blackberry. It's similar to New York City, but there are no trees, only blackberry bushes and vines. They intertwine throughout the buildings and sidewalks. Galaxy Fitness, a gym for everyone no matter their sexuality or gender.

(Collin waters the flowers on the outside of the kitchen window sill and checks out a woman jogging and a man bending over to grab his wallet. Alan eats his scrambled eggs. Collin cleans up the mess he made from cooking. Collin finishes cleaning and pours himself a bowl of Bran Flakes. He sits down next to his boyfriend).

COLLIN: How are the eggs?

Collin fumbles his right hand.

ALAN: They're okay, but I've had better. *Shrugs*

COLLIN: What? It took me all morning to make these.

(Collin throws up his arms in anger. He rips the dirty pan from the counter and tosses it into the sink).

COLLIN: Why don't you make your own breakfast every morning?

ALAN: Uh, no.

(Alan shoves the remaining egg morsels into his mouth. He grabs his wallet, keys, and his black satchel).

ALAN: I'm sorry, I'll make breakfast tomorrow.

(At the gym, later in the early evening. They meet to work out together. They enter at different times, but alas meet up together. They plug in their headphones and start with the treadmill. Alan and Collin shake and dance a little as they listen to each song).

COLLIN: That was fun. What's next? *Points to the elliptical machine and dumbbells.*

ALAN: How about we use different machines and meet back up later?

COLLIN: That's fine with me.

(Collin walks up to the elliptical machine. Alan walks to the dumbbells to work out and check out guys. He glares and stares at almost every man, strong, weak, hairy. He gazes at the thin and muscular men as he listens to the tunes of Superfruit, Britney Spears, and Maroon 5 with earbuds. After an hour, Collin walks back from the treadmill, all while looking at men lift dumbbells and gazing at women stretching).

COLLIN: How was the workout?

ALAN: Good.

(Collin leans in to whisper into Alan's ear. They leave the gym and walk out. Outside, they walk past the coffee house and white clouds appear. They change to dark grey and rain pours hard. They open their umbrellas and run back to their apartment. Upon arrival, they walk upstairs and enter their apartment door).

ALAN: I got to go do something. *Points to his bedroom door.* If you want to join me.

COLLIN: No, I *need* a shower.

ALAN: Can I join you?

COLLIN: Nah.

(Collin takes his cellphone into the bathroom and wirelessly connects his phone to his Bluetooth speaker).

BLUETOOTH SPEAKER: Powering on...paired.

(Ariana Grande's old songs play in sync with his YouTube playlist. In which, their neighbor, Gloria knocks on the front door. The music stops).

GLORIA: Hi, could you turn the music down. I'm trying to practice for my next concert.

ALAN: Sorry, that was my boyfriend. I'll tell him to turn it down.

GLORIA: Okay, good. I gotta get back now. See you later.

(She walks back to her apartment next door, 3B).

(About an hour later, the analog clock in the kitchen strikes seven. They sit together at the round table).

ALAN: Can you believe it was raining all while we're having dinner?

COLLIN: Yes.

(Collin plays with his hair, caressing it and adjusting it).

COLLIN: I have something to tell you, I don't think I'm fully attracted to you anymore.

ALAN: What do you mean?

COLLIN: I'm bi, I enjoy both men and women.

ALAN: What now? Where does this take our relationship?

Adjusts his red long sleeves and black rectangular glasses.

COLLIN: We could still be together, I still enjoy you.

ALAN: No, I need you to only enjoy me.

COLLIN: I do, but I will be attracted to both sexes no matter what. Like you'll only be attracted to men, no matter what.

ALAN: So, what do we do now?

COLLIN: I don't know.

(Alan storms out of the apartment and he calls an Uber. The Uber driver arrives and takes him to a nearby hotel. The next morning Alan returns and packs his things).

ALAN: I'm sorry, I can't live with you anymore. Your sexuality is an important part of our relationship.

COLLIN: I'm sorry to hear that. *A tear falls down his face.*

Maybe the stars will align again, and we'll see each other once more.

(Alan finishes packing every ounce of his existence in the apartment, trinkets, clothes, bowls, plates, etc. He pulls in his car in front of Collin's apartment. Alan thinks, "Will I see him again? It doesn't matter, I guess. I was living a lie." Collin thinks to himself, "I don't think we'll see each other again. Except maybe at the gym.").



Study Abroad

Gabby Ryman



Better

Jasmine Tyrance

Why do you do this?
I always ask myself that.
What will you get out of it?

The two of you are beautiful girls.
I'm not blind.
How much more trouble can you find?

First, you take that poison.
Second, you use your fist.
Third, you have been in a prison.

Often make love without love.
Brand yourselves with their names.
Life has no room for your games.

You are better than this.

You are now adults.
This is reality now.
Don't blame others for your faults.

I love both of you.
But sometimes,

I don't understand why.

Why do you make the toxic decisions that you do?

You are better than this.

Look at Me

Jasmine Tryance

I walk on the street,
and people look at me.

They don't look at my outfit.
They don't look at my smile.

They only see my skin.

I walk into a classroom,
And the students look at me.

They don't expect my straight As
They don't expect my kindness.

They only see my skin.

I get pulled over by a cop
and he looks at me.

He thinks I am a criminal.
He thinks he should shoot me.

Because he only sees my skin.

I walk into a room,
And my friends and family look at me.

They see someone who is a treasure.
They see someone they love.

Please.

Don't look at just my skin.

Please,
See me.

Lost Tears

Jasmine Tryance

I walk through the winter woods.
Into the storm that brought the end.
I have a family filled with love.
Now there is nothing but grief.

He was a great man, but his time was short
And even shorter with poisoned lungs.
He asked for one more cigarette.
Who would have thought we'd feel regret?

I dare to approach the frozen lake.
I think the ice is strong and won't break.
The same goes for him I thought.
I couldn't be more wrong.

As my gullible foot steps onto the ice, I think I'm safe.

Until the news came.

Suddenly.

The ice shatters from underneath me.
He has passed away, he won't come back.

The water makes my body freeze,
Just like my tears.
As I sink into the darkness,
I wonder why it had to end like this.

As I keep falling deeper into this frigid loss.

My tears don't.

Through a Doll's Eyes

Sabrina DiSorbo

Of Shattered bones within unbroken skin
With a charming smile and pretty clothes
Caught under the pressure of being thin
I long for more feeling than just death throes.

Of porcelain features, I watch and wait
Looking without life till I am taken
The thoughts of others entwin me with fate
Within imagination I awaken.

Of rigid stillness I hold no value
But in your small hands I grow warm with love
A feeling that is so long overdue
With you, I no longer suffer above.

Once a lifeless doll, I now have a friend
Even if to you, it is all pretend.



No Matter Where

Kaylee Vance

A mixture of dried leaves and sticks crunched underneath the weight of his beat-up work boots and my brand-new, black Adidas sneakers. The cool fall breeze danced across both of our faces and sent a quivering shiver down our spines. Interlocked hands were the only source of warmth, but even that could change in seconds. As he squeezed my hand, a beaming grin spread across my lips. I was completely unaware of what events were going to unfold that evening.

After what felt like an eternity, our feet thudded against the decaying wood of an abandoned bridge. We both fell still, almost as if we were on some sort of cue. Neither of us spoke, only silence echoed within our imaginary walls. This should have been a clear sign that something life-changing was beginning to brew. Below the barrier, the faint flowing of a serene river orchestrated the only noise in an otherwise silent serenade.

Letting go of her hand, Travis turned and walked to the center of the structure and stopped. Angled away from me, his head was tilted as if to study the narrow body of water before him, but I noticed that his eyes were fixed upon his keys. Glinting in the fading sunlight was the keychain that I'd given him as a birthday present two years prior.

We had been here countless times before, but this time felt different. There was something off in the way that he smiled, laughed, even spoke. Making a quick decision, I climbed over the loose wooden railing and met him face-to-face. Almost simultaneously, he averted his beautiful hazel eyes from meeting mine. My hand reached out and rested momentarily on his arm, but he pulled away. Any trace of a smile was wiped clean off my face, I knew.

“Maya,” He paused, “I don’t want to hurt you anymore.”

“What do you mean?” I asked, drained of all emotion.

“We’ve been arguing about random shit for months now,” He paused again, “I don’t think we should continue seeing each other.”

A chuckle escaped my throat. He was definitely kidding. This was clearly a joke and he’d laugh about it too, as he couldn’t ever lie to me and keep a straight face. Except, he didn’t laugh, and his serious face remained cold. Words couldn’t formulate fast enough; my lips were left slightly agape.

“What?” I asked, forcing out the only word that came to my mind.

He repeated himself, but this time in almost a whisper.

My body felt unsteady as my knees threatened to buckle beneath me. Travis reached for my hand and pleaded for me to climb back over the railing to him, to what is still considered my safety. Even the sun thought so, it bathed him in its fading light. A tear beaded at the corner of my eye and was soon wiped away with the fleece sleeve of his jacket.

It was getting later in the evening and the sun was beginning to set over the river beside us. Brilliant vermillion and golden yellows mixed together creating a vibrant painting in the sky. To my surprise, I was the one who began walking away and Travis followed closely behind. An entire range of emotions filled my brain to the brim: anger, sadness, shock, even momentary relief. Until now I held it all in, but when the dam breaks where does all the water go?

“So, everything you’ve said to me these past two and a half years was a lie,” I tried to grasp at a conclusion- any conclusion, “I wasted two and a half years of my life with you.”

His face winced with pain at the hate entwined within my words. Unexpectedly, his arms enveloped me in a hug. I

pressed my ear to his chest; his heart was beating fast. If time could stop here for the rest of my life, I'd be content.

"Maya, you know that isn't true at all. Everything I said? I meant. You of all people should damn well know that," Travis spoke with what little passion there was leftover for me.

Beneath his hold, I squirmed. I wanted to get free, to escape the situation. His grip grew tighter around me, and I could no longer keep the tears from cascading down my cheeks. I saw our entire relationship vanish before my eyes. All the happiness, fights, and love filled moments just disappeared as if it were nothing. The only thing that I could remember was my favorite memory of us, happy and so in love with one another. It replayed in my mind for a final time. My pain and despair were replaced by comfort and joy.

"Be careful!" Shouted Travis, "I don't want you to slip on the rocks and get hurt!"

I threw a toothy grin back at Travis, who was carrying a bag full of takeout from the Beach Plum. The sun would soon be disappearing behind the ocean, leaving us in a hurry to snatch up the perfect spot to watch. One by one, my feet danced across the surface of rugged and slippery stones. That's when I spotted a ginormous boulder big enough to fit the two of us.

I looked back, "I found one!"

Carefully, I maneuvered my way over. Picking up his pace, he finally caught up to me and wrapped my hand in his. We both couldn't stop smiling at each other; the sunlight highlighting the features on his tanned skin. Without saying a word, he placed the plastic bag on the surrounding pebbles and hoisted me onto the smooth boulder. In response, I gently kissed him on the lips as if to thank him.

"I love you to the moon," Travis began, "I really mean it."

"Why to the moon?" I asked, already knowing what the answer would be.

“Because that way we can finally be alone together, so I can finally give you the entire world,” Travis looked deep into my eyes as he climbed up next to me.

“Are you telling me the truth?” I asked with a radiating glow.

“To you? Always.” Travis’s goofy smile was now replaced by a serious face.

His hands scurried around inside of the plastic bag for a quick second and then removed two cardboard food containers. Placing one into my lap, the seagulls started to gather in around us. I opened up the container and unveiled a plain old cheeseburger and fries. The seagulls went crazy; some inched closer, while others sporadically sailed above our heads.

“Rats of the sky,” I muttered, throwing a single French fry in a random direction.

Travis was too busy biting into his burger to laugh. It had been a statement I repeated almost every time we went to visit the beach but was always a hit in our conversations. I rested my head on his shoulder and looked out onto the water.

By now, the sun started to set. We had made it.

As quickly as the memory unfolded, it faded into the air surrounding us. I was back to breathing and living this horrendous night. My head slowly tilted up towards him, only to find that his face was coated with nonexistent tears. Never again were they going to be shed for me. Inside, I could feel my heart shatter into a million unrepairable pieces. He didn’t care. He never did. As much as I wanted to control that, I couldn’t.

“Maya, are you even listening?” Travis asked, jolting me back to my reality.

Often, I’d get lost in thought. It was an escape for me, especially now when I needed one the most.

“To you? Always.” I spoke the truth.

We were silent on the walk back to our cars parked on the outskirts of the forest. My hands clung to the car keys so

tightly that an indent was left behind. I pressed the unlock button and the headlights flashed on and off, twice. Reaching for the door handle, Travis put his hand over mine. Inside his palm, he loosely held onto something cold and mental. Tears began to gather behind my eyes, I had known exactly what it was. For one final time, I pleaded for him to stay.

As he shoved both hands into his jacket pockets, he shook his head.

Unsuccessful of trying to keep him in my life, I slammed the car door shut and let out a stream of never-ending tears. I carefully unfolded my hand, only to find out that he had discreetly placed the key chain in it.

“No matter where, m♥t.” I read aloud, shuddering upon each word.

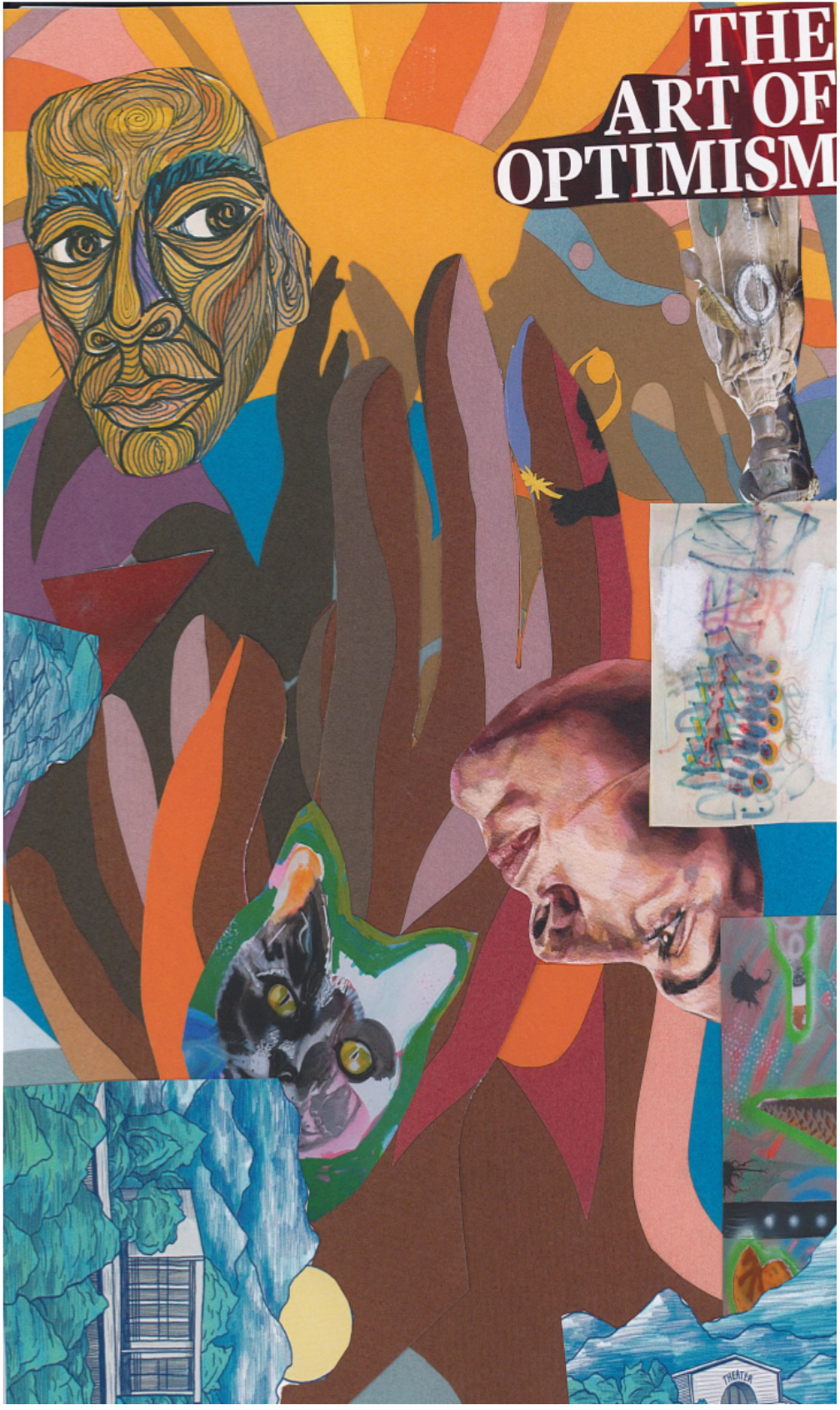
Above me, a scatter of gleaming silver clusters speckled the black velvet sky. Being completely alone left me with a weird sense of comfort because I now knew that I could finally focus on myself. It was a feeling that couldn't be bought or given, but one that had to be picked up and taken. It was a moment where I could finally gather all the thoughts and emotions that ran through my mind. To feel emotionally secure while the rest of my world threatened to fall apart, I needed to leave him behind. I turned my keys and the car roared with life.

Messabesic Lake Manchester, New Hampshire

Pearl Morrison



THE ART OF OPTIMISM



Rebecca Morgan Frank Interview



Q: Do you have a specific writing practice/process? A place or habit that helps your writing?

A: I love working in simple quiet spaces, like libraries, and I like working during the day, when daylight lets me look out the window. I like having a cup of tea and a pile of books- both

research books for poems and books of poetry- in reach.

Q: What inspired you to start writing poetry? Did you find your talent at a young age, or was it discovered by an excellent teacher?

A: I was a voracious and fast reader as a child. As soon as I was old enough, I walked to the library almost every day, and I probably read at least one book a day, mostly fiction. But there was poetry in our home, and I distinctly remember reading Robert Louis Stevenson's *A Child's Garden of Verses* and T.S. Eliot's *Old Possum's Book of Practical Cats* into a tape recorder for my own "radio show." I would also type out "novels" on an old typewriter I found in the attic. My first memory of writing poems was in the 4th grade, when they brought a poet to my fourth-grade class as part of the Poets in the Schools program.

While I would continue to read widely, and even be an English major in college, that elementary-school class would be the last time I was taught poetry writing until I was in my late twenties and took a free one-evening workshop with Akilah Oliver at a feminist bookstore in Boulder, CO. Her encouragement that evening sent me down the road to studying poetry writing seriously.

Q: What are the best and worst parts about running a literary journal of the size you do?

A: The best part of running *Memorious* has been meeting new writers and being part of the larger community of poets in this country. And I love discovering a poem that I am very excited to publish! I am overjoyed when our pre-book contributors publish their first books; it has been an honor to publish so many wonderful writers early in their career and to watch wonderful things happen for their work over the years, including being finalists or winners of awards such as the National Book Award, the National Book Critics Circle Award, the Kate Tufts Discovery Award, and so on. Being invested in so many other writers has been so fulfilling.

But running a magazine as a volunteer, with volunteer staff members, is a lot of work, and the challenge is finding time to do the work while also teaching and doing my own writing. Social media has allowed us to reach wider audiences, but it also has meant a lot more work, especially as there are so many more magazines competing for readers attention now.

Q: Best advice for aspiring writers (including poets)?

A: Read. Read broadly. Read old and new work, dead and living writers. Read poems like the ones that you want to write and

poems that are different from what you think you would write. Go to readings and hear poetry, absorb the different rhythms, internal the different music.

Bio:

Rebecca Morgan Frank is the author of *Sometimes We're All Living in a Foreign Country* (2017) and *The Spokes of Venus* (2016), both from Carnegie Mellon University Press, and *Little Murders Everywhere* (2012), a finalist for the Kate Tufts Discovery Award. Her poems have appeared in *The New Yorker*, *American Poetry Review*, *Ploughshares*, *Guernica*, *Orion*, and elsewhere. She is co-founder and editor of the literary magazine *Memorious*, and she is the Spring 2019 Distinguished Visiting Writer at Bowling Green State University.

T Kira Madden Interview



Q: tell us about your new book! How long did it take you to write? Is there one specific essay that started it?

A: the first words of the book, the first glint of it, is still the beginning—the piece about the mannequin. After losing my father

(he died in 2015) I kept returning to the image of the mannequin my mother rescued from a dumpster when I was a toddler. The way she and I changed the mannequin's socks the same way we changed my father's socks in his hospital bed. The father standing in. The flashes of body. From there I was under the spell of this book, obsessively, for a couple of years. All together, with no days off, it took three and a half years, which is extremely swift for me.

Q: As a writer sharing personal experiences of survival (who also has anxiety disorder) are you comfortable telling us if how or in what ways you're able to share your life's struggles? Do you need a certain amount of time or space from the incident before writing about it?

A: I think the generative process for this book was pretty interesting because two thirds of it took place long ago, but the final act is present day; I wrote the final act in real-time, as the events described were unfolding. I think there's a definitive narrative shift because of that difference; there is no retrospective knowledge; there are more jagged edges (for better and for worse).

That said, I don't believe we can properly render our experiences and elevate those experiences to art until our bodies allow it. If it's too painful, if it feels too much like therapy, perhaps you're not ready to go there—perhaps your body is protecting you. Once you do feel ready to wrangle the questions, once you're burning for the page, write it. I'm with Annie Dillard here: "Spend it all, shoot it, play it, lose it, all, right away, every time." You don't want to find ashes.

Q: Do you have advice for writers who would like to write creative non-fiction about their own trauma? It reopens a lot of wounds and brings forth feelings once suppressed—is there any secret to not allowing it to overwhelm you?

A: I'm only one person with one point of view, but I've found that you need to bring craft to the page, not the trauma. The trauma is for actual therapy, and difficult conversations, and late nights laughing with your friends, and long walks, and puppies, and anything that historically soothed and healed you. The page is for chiseling. The page is there for you to bring what you've processed in actual therapy and whatever notes or journals you may have used to go through catharsis; it's there for you to move forward by transforming it. To shape it and fill it with dramatic tension and character development and electric language. If you're forgetting about craft and drifting in the trauma, take a break from the page. Go back to the long walk. The page will still be there when you get home.

**Q: Could you tell us a little about your literary magazine?
What type of writing do you look for?**

A: *No Tokens*, is always looking for work that surprises. Every genre editor reads and votes across all genre submissions, so the poets have to be moved by the nonfiction, the fiction editors have to love the art, etc. It's my sincerest hope that the work we choose to publish transcends tidy genre boxes. We always appreciate a care for language, and we'll always take a piece that stirs up a heated argument over a piece that brings on silence. We want dialogue. We want the piece that only *you* could write. I'm always after the piece of work that will make me pause for a few minutes (at least) after the first read. I want the world to shift for me in that after-space. I want to grieve it.

Q: Lastly, what current books are inspiring you/inspired you? Any recommendations for aspiring writers?

A: The books and writers that inspire me most—Grace Paley, Lynda Barry, Heather Lewis, Alex Marzano-Lesnevich, Jayne Anne Phillips, John Edgar Wideman, James Baldwin, Richard Yates, Melanie Rae Thon, Lidia Yuknavitch—might not be the right writers for you. My advice is to read widely, and read weirdly, and read for craft but also for comfort. Resist the urge to get snobby about genre writing or YA writing or poetry writing or whatever kind of writing isn't *your* writing; snobbery is the greatest indication of an amateur. We're all playing with words and harnessing imagination and doing this really, really strange thing with our time because it makes us feel alive and charged and cosmically connected. Let's support anyone trying to do that. I read more Encyclopedia Brown books than "literary" fiction. Read what nourishes you; read what made you fall in love with reading in the first place.

Bio:

***T Kira Madden** is a writer, photographer, and amateur magician. She is the founding editor-in-chief of No Tokens, and facilitates writing workshops for homeless and formerly incarcerated individuals. A 2017-8 NYSCA/NYFA Artist Fellow in nonfiction literature from the New York Foundation for the Arts, she has received fellowships from The MacDowell Colony, Hedgebrook, Tin House, DISQUIET, and Yaddo, where she was selected for the 2017 Linda Collins Endowed Residency Award. Her debut memoir, Long Live the Tribe of Fatherless Girls, is available now.*

Jayne Anne Phillips Interview



Q: Line editing is one of your strong suits and something you are well-known for. Do you have any tips for students who may not have that skill or don't know where to start?

A: I think line editing is a skill learned over years of voraciously reading good writing. One can learn to look at a line and almost immediately see how to compress the sentence, take out unnecessary words, or make the phrases more fluid

by changing the punctuation. I suppose one might also learn line-editing with an exhaustive study of grammar and composition, but line-editing as a writer is informed by a more sensual sense of language.

Q: It is often said that writers have their “place” to write—is this why you only write in daytime? Are there any other writing rituals you'd share with us?

A: I consider writing pretty scary, and I'm more courageous in daylight, mid-morning, when my energy is not diverted. More

than a place, I need privacy—the knowledge that I am free for weeks to attend only to my own work.

Q: Could you describe your process for writing a novel? Do you work from a single idea/outline/plot map?

A: I often work from a single sentence or paragraph, the voice of a single character. That line may not begin the book in the end, but the words open into a mystery that is compelling enough to stay with me over the years it will probably take to write the novel. I don't do outlines, which I think limit the structure to a 'plan,' when the process itself is more like a search conducted in layers. Or being "led by a whisper," which is how I described writing to a reporter from Newsweek (a now defunct magazine that had a huge circulation in another era) after I published my first book...at 26. Over many years, the whisper has not become louder or more discernible. It's almost like an auditory hallucination that one listens for.

Q: What has been the best part of teaching writing for you?

A: Certainly, the best part of teaching has been encountering some of the amazing students I've had the privilege of mentoring (and the relationships as colleagues that sometimes follow), and the pleasure of talking about books, and writers, past, present, future.

Q: What are books that aspiring writers must read in your opinion?

A: *The Blue Flower*, by Penelope Fitzgerald, *A Death In The Family*, by James Agee, *Fat City*, by Leonard Gardner, *Things Fall*

Apart, by Chinua Achebe, all of Chekov's stories, all of Alice Munro's stories – these are just to start.

Bio:

Jayne Anne Phillips is the author of five novels, ***Quiet Dell***, ***Lark And Termite***, ***MotherKind***, ***Shelter***, and ***Machine Dreams***, and two widely anthologized story collections, ***Fast Lanes***, and ***Black Tickets***. ***Quiet Dell*** was a *Wall Street Journal* Best Fiction of 2013 and a *Kirkus Reviews* Best of 2013 selection. ***Lark And Termite***, winner of the Heartland Prize, was a Finalist for the 2009 National Book Award finalist, the National Book Critics Circle Award, and the *Prix de Medici Estranger*. ***MotherKind*** won the New England Book Award; ***Shelter*** was awarded an Arts & Literature Award by the American Academy of Arts and Letters. ***Machine Dreams***, a New York Times Best Book of the year, was a National Book Critic's Award Finalist in fiction. ***Black Tickets***, awarded the Sue Kaufman Prize for First Fiction, is often cited as a book of stories that influenced a generation of writers. Phillips is currently Board of Governors Distinguished Professor of English and Director of the MFA Program at Rutgers University-Newark (www.ncas.rutgers.edu/mfa). Information, essays and text source photographs on her fiction can be viewed at www.jayneannephillips.com.



Confusio

Harrison Quinn

Lead flies through the puppet-strings
Stark white and bleeding with ant-dreams and Gods' malignant musings

Men become hollow logs drifting down the river of
Soured promises made to the children of goats

The end of possibility and the beginning
Of a song whose ending you will not enjoy

Everywhere the brilliant pink and perpendicular birds fall from
the sky
The sky the sky the sky is falling around your legs

What legs your legs are gone
Good lord what is going on

The fire never stops
Thunder in the earth
Why did you ever leave home you stupid child
Go back to your mother oh wait you can't your home is flowers

Flowers under lightning and hate and
pretty yellow clouds that dance around the tears

these clouds are mean they stole your mouth
clarityisanenigmathatmandoesntdeservetopossess

returntothesaltedandfecundearthtodieyouheapofweepingmeat

In Time

Rebecca Martone

She stares down at the sandwich in her hand, cheese melting over the side of marbled rye bread. Her phone, with the large crack marring the upper corner of the screen, is lit up in her hand. They went from everything to nothing in a matter of hours. No longer even friends online. The marker beneath her name reads “single.”

Two boys, no older than ten, skateboard across the pavement in front of her. She watches as they try to mimic the other’s tricks. One messes up, falls, scrapes his knees on the cracked asphalt. Tears wet her cheeks.

Nothing, she thinks. The word reverberates through her mind. She means nothing to him now. What does that make her? Six years with the same person. Living through defining moments, growing up alongside him. With him. Becoming who she was today because of him. Six years of knowing she’d always have someone for guidance, for laughs, for hope. Knowing that with him she would never be alone.

But what now?

One boy helps the fallen stand. He pushes his friend away. Wipes the tears from his eyes. Spits he is fine. He grabs his board and skates away.

She wonders if she can shake off her pain so easily. If she too will ever be fine. What is a broken heart after all? Is it so much different than a scraped kneecap or broken arm? All injuries heal with care.

She bites into her sandwich. Locks her phone. Her garbage falls away into an overflowing trash bin. The bench darkened by years of rain sits abandoned behind her. She decides she’ll be fine.

In time.



Our Apartment

Rebecca Martone

Annabelle gripped the key, lifting it from where it hung in the middle of her collarbone. The tarnished metal thing was a constant staple in her everyday attire whether it hid beneath the buttoned collar of her work shirts or clashed with the tangle of necklaces she wore out at night. The key remained on its chain. For the first time in two months she took it off.

It slipped easily into the lock. One turn, a click. The knob twisted and the heavy door swung open. The loft was just as she remembered it. Tall ceilings. Light, hardwood floors. Big windows. It felt too big. Too empty. There should be furniture scattered about the place. An area rug, coffee table, and comfortable couch. A modern dining room table surrounded by plush chairs. The grey counters clear except for, say, a bowl of fruit, maybe some cookbooks, a drying rack, a bottle of olive oil. Whatever you put on counter tops. Magnets should hang on the fridge. Decorations on the walls. Maybe a mirror above a slim table where she could set down her keys.

She made her way through the place. Her place. Footsteps echoed off naked walls as she entered the bedroom. The empty space should have a bed inside. Maybe a plant, a dresser, some drapes to keep the morning sun from peeking through. She leaned against the windowsill, a slim thing above exposed brick. Her possessions would dress it all up soon enough. The apartment was everything they could have asked for.

But one thing was missing.

She waited, training her ears through the silence for the creak of an opening door. She imagined him dropping his bags in the doorway. His image came clearly into her mind. Tall, broad shoulders. Comfortable and solid. Warm and loving. His

dark hair in that stage right before he got it cut – she loved that one the most – where it was full and curled at the ends. She would run her fingers through it. Push it out of his green eyes. Kiss the tip of his nose. Her hands found their place along his jaw with the scruff of his beard beneath them. His arms wrapped around her body. She nestled into his chest. Took in each steady breath and the scents of autumn that lingered on him. He kissed the top of her head. She looked up and placed a gentle kiss on his lips and then he’d—

The buzzer shrieked through the empty apartment. Annabelle sprang up like a frightened cat. It took her a minute to find the intercom in her new home. “Hello?” she said, half hoping his deep voice would reply.

“Belle,” Nancy’s high voice blared. “Let me in! I want to see the place.”

Annabelle’s body collapsed against the wall as she buzzed her best friend in. She felt stupid for thinking it could be him. She combed her fingers through the fading purple of her hair. It had been over a month since she retouched the color. She couldn’t decide what to do with it now.

Nancy banged on the door. Annabelle always thought her friend’s actions resembled that of a small yappy dog. With her dainty features, high-pitched voice, and affinity for colorful clothing, people often mistook her for young and weak. She burst into the apartment, blue eyes widening at every nook and cranny.

“Belle, your *apartment!*” Nancy grabbed Annabelle’s forearms and jumped around in a circle with her. “This is so much better than that place we lived in college.”

Annabelle gagged at the thought of their college apartment. She could still smell the lingering mix of mildew and apple-cinnamon air fresheners. The cramped space made their old dorm rooms look like 5-star hotel rooms. However, that apartment gave the girls a foreign sense of independence. Living

alone made them feel grown up. On top of the world where nothing and no one could hurt them.

Annabelle leaned against the column in her new apartment. It would be her first “grown up” place. She’d saved up money since the end of college and looked forward to moving out of her childhood bedroom. It was *his* idea that they get a place together. His house hunting that finally found them this place. The perfect place.

“This place is going to be so cute,” Nancy called from the bedroom.

Annabelle found Nancy sprawled out on the floor. She joined her.

“Who needs furniture,” Annabelle said.

“Oh, yeah.” Nancy wiggled on the ground. “This hardwood. Like sleeping on a cloud.”

Movers arrived soon after. Annabelle watched as they filled her home with hand-me-down furniture and cardboard boxes, waiting for it to feel full.

Nancy started unboxing the kitchenware. Most of it was stuff leftover from college or hand-me-downs from her parents’ house.

“Ugh – I can’t believe how many mugs you have, Belle.” Nancy held a ceramic mug in either hand, with one dangling from her index finger.

Annabelle collected coffee mugs. Every time she’d visit a new place, she’d get a mug. Holidays, birthdays, graduations, random shopping trips to Goodwill. She hadn’t brought all of them with her.

Annabelle took one of the mugs from Nancy. It was mint-green and looked like a vintage diner mug. “Well, we’ll never be without glasses.”

“We’ll be the classiest girls. Drinking our Rosé out of UNH mugs.”

Annabelle reached into a box and pulled out an oversized baby pink mug that read *Rosé All Day* in black script.

Nancy rolled her eyes. "I can't with you, Belle."

Nancy was the only person who called her Belle anymore. All throughout her life she'd been Annie or Anna. Her father called her Belly as a child, but her mother loved the name Annabelle so much she refused to use a nickname. Nancy dubbed her Belle in college when they met as roommates Freshman year. Annabelle's heart shattered the last time he said it.

A hot pink nail appeared in her vision, stabbing the tip of her nose. Annabelle jumped, dropping the mug. Nancy bent down to pick up the pieces which had scattered in large chunks. "Jeez, are you okay?" She tossed it in the trash.

Annabelle walked over to the window, sinking into the well-worn cushion of the couch. Her eyes found the swirling pattern on the ceiling above her. A slow breath escaped her lungs. Nancy knew the whole story. Beginning to end. In good times and bad.

Nothing she said now could change it.

Annabelle could have moved into her new apartment two months ago. She'd signed the lease with her name alone and planned to officially move in a week later. A few packed boxes waited for her at home. She went to the apartment to see if she could do it. The front door grew menacing, mocking the longer she stood in front of it. She couldn't do it.

Two months of excuses later and she ran out. She wanted her own place. She had her own place. She just needed to get over herself and move in.

"Things will get better," Nancy reassured. Her hand stroked Annabelle's back in slow smooth motions.

Nancy said the same months ago when they'd first broken up. When Annabelle sat on the concrete steps of her friend's apartment waiting for her to arrive home. She'd done a

terrible job keeping herself together. Mascara pooled beneath her eyes. Tears darkened the sleeves of her sweater.

She struggled to imagine when things would get better.

Annabelle wished to be one of those people who could function in life without letting their sorrows get in the way. Someone who could bury their feelings with a smile. Fake it until they made it. But she was the fall fast, fall hard, fall apart type. Translation: things weren't going to get better any time soon.

Nancy took it upon herself to unpack boxes, finding a temporary home for everything. Her face twisted in judgement as she made Annabelle's bed. "Really," she said, smoothing the paisley-patterned duvet. "You're not eighteen anymore, Belle. You can ditch the twin mattress and sheets from freshman year, you know."

Annabelle tossed a pillow at her. Nancy volleyed it back with force. The apartment started to resemble a home, although lacking decorations. They could fix that later. Annabelle changed from her sweaty moving clothes, and the girls went out for dinner. They ordered a pizza – pepperoni – and beers, a nod to a college tradition.

"To another new beginning," Nancy said, clinking her bottle against Annabelle's.

Annabelle's smile faded after the toast ended. She always associated new beginnings with excitement. In college they were the calm before the stress of finals. A happy obstacle before real-life. This one didn't leave her with the same idyllic feeling.

"Who still lives around here?" Nancy picked up a slice and dropped it on her plate waving her hand. "Oh, that's hot."

"Um, no one last time I checked." Annabelle and Nancy were the only one's of their friends from school who hadn't fled far away from their college town. They'd all gone to the west coast. One or two friends even left the country altogether. The

girls stayed close, though. They'd lived in the state all their lives and never really found a reason to leave.

"Damn. Well then, I guess we'll just have to invite all of your neighbors for a housewarming." Nancy always found a reason to throw a party, bring people together.

"We don't need to do that." Annabelle shifted in her chair. They sat at a high-top table adjacent to the bar. Indistinct music played over the hum of the clientele. Laughter bubbled up from the patrons drinking on stools at the bar.

"Suit yourself," she shrugged, eyes scanning the crowds. She stopped, covering her mouth with her hand. "Oh my gosh, Belle, that guy is staring at you."

Her back stiffened. She imagined turning her head to the bar. Seeing him. Staring at her from the corner of a house party junior year. A friend's apartment off campus. Dark and crowded and soaked in the smell of marijuana and sweat. The music sounded as foreign to her ears as the faces looked. They'd arrived late into the party and everyone was already drunk, inhibitions be damned. Their meeting was by no means romantic. Perhaps that was a clue for the future.

"Try something new," Nancy preached as they got ready that night. Annabelle was against it. She wanted to stay in and watch movies like they'd planned. A girl's night with pizza and beer and rom-coms. Annabelle thought about how she wished the night would have gone as she stood alone at the party. Her name from a stranger's tongue pulled her out of her head and back to the party.

In the bar, Annabelle shifted in her seat to get a better view of the crowd. A man sat amongst the rowdy group with his eyes on her. A friend laughed beside him, slapping his shoulder. He smiled at her.

Nancy poked and prodded with every pleading look she could muster, but Annabelle stayed glued to her seat. She envisioned how speaking to the stranger might go, much like the

way things had turned out at that party junior year. A good-looking guy she'd never met, knew her by her nickname. They bonded over their mutual unwillingness to attend the party. They exchanged numbers. Talked for hours. Met up in the days that followed and established a relationship that Annabelle thought would last.

In the time following the break-up, Annabelle often wondered if trading away the pain would be worth it. If she had to give away the memories, both good and bad, in order to stop seeing him, imagining the two of them happy everywhere she went, it may just be worth it. Without the memories, the pain wouldn't matter. She could live her life as if he never existed.

That, of course, was an impossible thing. Magic can't wipe away memories. Pain can't be cured in an instant. Despite the time she spent wishing for quick fixes, Annabelle knew that only time and herself could heal her broken heart. She may never see him again – a truth which hurt to admit, but a truth, nonetheless.

Nancy disappeared from the table and reappeared with the sandy-haired stranger. She smiled back and said hello.

“My name is Belle.”

The Cherry Blossom Road

Braden Wilcox

Step by step the stranger moved down the road, holding his daughter's hand in his right while his left rested upon the hilt of his sword. The road was long and straight, flanked by a sea of beautiful pink: the cherry blossoms were in full bloom. Coming to a halt, the man reached above his head to grab a blossom. However, it was just out of reach; letting go of his daughter's hand, he slashed at the nearest branch, severing a single twig with a blossom on the end. He picked it up from the ground and placed it in his daughter's raven black hair, brushing her cheek with his fingers as she smiled. Together they walked onward down the road.

Cherry Blossom, she thought, touching the petals in her hair with light fingers. *Papa always did call me that ever since I was a little girl.* She imagined the woman in blue and placed a hand in her pocket as she remembered the dark blue silk ribbon that Papa had given her for her birthday this year. A wonderful idea came to mind. They would be making camp soon and Papa would leave to hunt for dinner. She would soon start her tasks for the night. As the time passed, she found herself picturing the woman in blue with hair dark like hers once more.

She held the doll in her hands as she checked over her work. It was perfect, or as close as it could be. The doll looked just like the woman from her memories – the one Papa tried not to talk about. She had made the woman's blue kimono out of the silk ribbon her Papa had given her. The body itself was made from a cloth they kept their rice in. She had brown buttons that she used for the doll's eyes, sewed on with some thread she carried. For the hair, she used dark fur cut from the blanket they shared at night. She sewed the hair on and brushed it down until it was soft. Finally, she used a small piece of

thread to sew in a smile. Papa taught her how to sew long ago; he had always been kind to her ever since she was a little girl. He never even yelled at her. *Papa is coming back soon with dinner – I should get the dishes ready.*

Carrying the large boar had slowed him down, so it took him longer to get back to camp than he would have liked. It was almost dark, and he hated leaving Atsuko alone. Not much farther now – just a little further and he would be home with his beloved daughter. He pushed through the brush at the edge of the woods and stepped into the clearing where they had made camp. His face relaxed– Atsuko sat safe by the fire. He approached with care, stepping lightly so he would not startle her. He placed a loving hand on his daughter's head as she worked diligently at creating something. A doll maybe; he wasn't sure. His eyes fixed on the small stack of beat up old books as he entered the tent. They were all the educational books he could manage to get through trade, but he wished they were better. He grabbed them and headed back out to the fire.

Staring at the large animal her father had brought home for dinner, Atsuko waited for him to return with her studies. As she saw him return with the well-worn books and scrolls, Atsuko ran to him.

"Papa, look what I made for you!" Atsuko exclaimed as she handed him the doll.

"You made me something, Cherry Blossom? How sweet of you," he said as he knelt beside her.

"It's a doll!" Atsuko watched as her father smiled and began to cry as he looked over the doll.

"Cherry Blossom, you have done a wonderful job, but tell me – do you remember who this woman was?"

"Only a little, Papa. You two were hugging but you were sad. She seemed special."

“She was very special, and it’s time I told you more about her. You see, the woman you remember was your mother, Atsumi. Beautiful, kind, and talented, she was truly a unique and loving woman with a gentle smile that never left her face. A smile she passed on to you, Cherry Blossom. She was the first person to ever call you that, after we named you Atsuko. Together we raised you for three years and no one in our hometown had ever known a happier family. Until the day my lord ordered me to do something I could never do.”

“Your lord, Papa?”

“Yes child, my lord. I am a samurai and samurai are sworn to serve and protect their lord.”

“He wanted you to do something bad?” asked Atsuko as she climbed onto her father’s lap.

“Very bad, yes Atsuko. You see, this man had a lot of money and many of the people in our village were poor because he did not take care of them as he should have. So, one day a group of young orphans broke into the lord’s home and stole his money so they could eat, but they were caught. As punishment, the lord ordered his samurai to execute all of the offending children. Now, Cherry Blossom, my sword is a tool for survival and protection. I could never raise it against a child, and I refused to obey this order. He wanted to execute me, but that was not cruel enough, so instead he ordered the death of my first born, knowing I would fight an army to defend my family.”

Atsuko shivered at her father’s tone, but he wrapped his warm arms around her, and she relaxed. He continued:

“Atsumi also knew this and to avoid mine and your deaths, she offered her services as a healer to our lord. She was a very skilled and beautiful, so the lord coveted her abilities and body. He agreed to this on the condition that she would live with him in his palace and that I leave town in disgrace. After relaying this to me, Atsumi asked me to take you because she wanted you to know a loving father instead of being raised by a

cruel tyrant. I agreed with her and we promised to write each other secretly to stay in touch.”

Atsuko could see the shimmering reflection of firelight in her father’s eyes as they began to water. His voice stopped as the first tear fell but it was brushed away by her small finger. She then grasped one of his hands and held it tight. A soft smile came to his face as he went on.

“We parted that night with sweet tears, sad we would be apart but happy we would all be alive. It is that parting which you remember so well, Cherry Blossom. The next day I left with you for the nearest town. Through the years, I wrote to your mother about your progress in your studies and how much more like her you became as the time passed. She would write to me about the pain she felt from missing the two of us. One day, her letter was about a recent visit she had with a healer from Kyoto. Your mother had fallen ill with a terminal sickness. I imagined the tears in her eyes as she spoke of the pain of not being able to see us again before the end. Stained with my tears the letter fell from my hands as I read about the inevitable death of the woman I love. The next letter I received was from her father telling me of her passing. A river of tears formed at my feet as I grieved. That night I held you close and told you how much I loved you.” *The painful truth has been told*, he thought. His face was wet, and he wondered when the rain began.

Wrapping her tiny arms around his neck, she said, “I wish I knew her.” She brushed another tear from his cheek. “Papa, don’t cry.”

He brushed the tears away with the sleeve of his gi.

“I wish that too, Cherry Blossom, but I know she is proud of you. Now get some rest; we will be arriving at our destination tomorrow.” They entered the shelter and laid down on the bed of furs in the corner pulling the blanket over themselves as they went to sleep.

The next morning, they packed up camp and headed back onto Cherry Blossom road. Atsuko's present hung from the man's waist where he had tied it. Together, the two of them had traveled for most of the day. It was early in the evening when they had reached their destination: a large hill by a small town that overlooked the road on one side and the sea on the other. They stood near an ornate stone that was carved to a point at the top. The stone had an engraving:

*"Atsumi Ito
Devoted Healer
Loving Wife
Caring Mother"*

Below the inscription there was a picture of a cherry blossom tree. He choked back his tears as he knelt and spoke softly to the stone, "They always were your favorite, my love." He took something from his bag -- the one thing he had taken with him from home. He smiled as he unwrapped the picture of the three of them. As he propped the picture against the stone, his eyes watered and he held his daughter's hand. Together, they left the hill and walked back down Cherry Blossom road.

The Time Share in New Castle

Amber Krane

I am your time share in New Castle
I am the place you can no longer bring yourself to call home
I am the twice annual visit you take instead of taking ownership
You are not the only name on this insurance policy
Even though you've decided that no one else should stay here
while I am under construction
So why couldn't you keep me
I'm not seeing the problem
This stone front cottage with a garden patio
with the wrought iron trellis
My copper roof could keep you safe from any storm
My hearth can pull the chills from your skin
And my bay windows can show you all seven seas

My willows weep whenever you want them to
All of this, and all you see is the crack in a foundation left for
you by the last inhabitant
The dip in the floorboards where I stood waiting for you
The missing stones in all my walkways
Why will songbirds stay where you will not?
This house is ready to be a home
My body is for so much more than twice a year
It's been raining since you left

There's water in the basement now
And you will complain as if it is not your fault
You say there is so much more work that needs to be done
Before I am ready to be lived in
But how would you even know that?
If you only come twice a year

This is the emptiest my rooms have ever been
Because no one dares walk pass the no trespassing signs with
your name on them
Over time I will collect dust, waiting for your return
Not like you had any intention of cleaning it up
But rather the expectation of having dinner ready by 6:00
And a gin and tonic in your hand as you walk through the door
Well, the next time you come to visit there will be a surprise
waiting for you
Dinner will not be ready by 6:00
No gin and tonic will engulf your hand
Your signs will be gone replaced by wind-chimes
And all you will hear is the laughter leaving the bay window

Study Abroad

Gabby Ryman



My Sweet Magician

Abby Elise

i told my sweet magician,
a master of the disappearing act,
that i never volunteered to be
the girl she sawed in half.

i fell for her illusion,
she's a master of deceit;
a girl with neptune's eyes,
and a few tricks up her sleeve.

she had me trapped in her hypnosis,
and while i was asleep,
she had gotten herself tangled up
in someone else's sheets.

Everywhere, Anywhere

Abby Elise

i wanna go far away,
but i don't wanna leave.
i am ready for the world,
but is the world ready for me?

i want more sunshine,
but i love the rain.
i want to be in a new place
where no one knows my name.

i want to go everywhere,
but i know that i'll miss home.
i want to go anywhere,
but i don't know where i'd go.

i just want sidewalks
and more things to do.
i need more opportunity
& that's what i came to pursue.

so, why is there a piece of me
that wants to stay home
if all i've ever wanted to do
is go off on my own?

i keep thinking that i'm stuck,
that i'll never see another day
outside of these new england streets,
but i'm about to break away.

2:21am

Abby Elise

i'm sorry to the boy i swore i liked.
there was so much i didn't know then,
but you helped me learn it all,
you helped me find myself.

i'm sorry to the boy i didn't say bye to.
i now understand how much it hurts
for someone to disappear
and never knowing why.

i'm sorry to the boy i left behind.
there is still so much that you don't know.
if i got the chance to talk to you again,
i'd tell you everything.

i'm sorry to the boy who opened my eyes.
you showed me what i was scared to see.
i now realize i was restricting myself,
forcing myself to love who i can't.

i'm sorry to the boy i ghosted.
i really hope you know it's not your fault.
i didn't have the words to say,
i didn't know how to tell you the truth.

i'm sorry to the boy i talked to every night.
real conversations happen between twelve and three,
but they never include apologies
and words left unsaid.

i'm sorry to the boy who fills me with guilt.
i really want to tell you how sorry i am.
i know that it's far too late,
but i hope you're doing well.

i'm sorry to the boy who isn't a girl.
disappearing granted me freedom;
the freedom to love in color.
i hope you understand.

Derry, New Hampshire

Pearl Morrison





DEVoured IN SECONDS.

How to Stay Alive

EAT

Like You

Healthy.
Happy.
Comfortable.

LIKE

How to
REJECT THE
DIET
MENTALITY

IT

Kofta

Nicholas VonSchantz-Ricci

As I approached the modest, unadorned doorway, I became overwhelmed with excitement. The subtle aroma of oregano, onions and sumac could be detected from the sidewalk. My hunger soared as I rushed inside, my stomach moaning and my mouth tingling with anticipation.

With over an hour and a half to kill before my dinner shift at the restaurant, I decided to eat. I recently picked up a habit of eating hefty lunches before work, with the intention of being less tempted to pick at bread during my shift. It never worked, but the idea made sense, and it provided justification for eating a big lunch.

My craving for Mediterranean food is always acute, but it reached new heights today. I have always found the complex flavors and bold combination of fruit and nuts with meat to be captivating. The herbs and spices make my tongue dance in a special way that no other cuisine can emulate. I even managed to get my notoriously picky parents to develop a liking to it. Therefore, when I first heard that a new Turkish eatery recently opened mere footsteps from my workplace a month earlier, my ears perked up with excitement.

The modestly decorated restaurant managed to strike a balance of being comfortable and casual, while still appearing appropriate for a date night. High-top tables and booths surrounded by colorful Middle Eastern art and ornate white tile walls created an enthusiastic atmosphere. Two televisions featured clear photos of almost the entire menu to provide clarification to the uninitiated.

I needed no such visualization. I knew how to navigate the menu of kebabs, hot and cold mezze, wraps and entrees. I settled on a kofta wrap with garlic sauce and an arugula side salad. Despite my Italian heritage, if given the choice between an Italian (well, Italian-American) meatball and a Turkish one, I always choose the latter.

I entered the empty restaurant during that awkward, in-between meals period. The staff wandered aimlessly, and my server forgot to give me water and barely spoke in complete sentences.

I waited impatiently for my meal as my hunger continued to consume my psyche. If there is one thing I have learned during the past several years of dining alone, it is that passing time when you're both alone and hungry is difficult. However, I'd rather eat alone than be forced to engage in small talk. It is not uncommon for people to have to extract conversation out of me, especially in a one-on-one setting. Creating awkward situations is a genuine strength of mine.

When I saw the server carry my lunch to me, it seemed to be floating on a cloud. The subtle aromatic scents that perfumed the restaurants were no longer subtle. When I took my first bite, I was overwhelmed by a myriad of intricate flavors and textures.

Grill marks embraced the somewhat chewy homemade wrap. The battery of spices in the kofta complimented the subtle gaminess of the lamb very well. A crunchy salad of tomato, onion, and cucumber dressed in olive oil tamed the bold and creamy garlic sauce. Crisp red onion and peppery radishes garnished the bright arugula salad served on the side. The delightful package made me want to buy a plane ticket to Istanbul and never return.

Toward the end of the meal, I noticed a small group of people who appeared to be the owners and their children sitting down in the dining room to a feast of pita bread, hummus and hot dishes that I could not identify. The adults of the group seemed to be in charge of the restaurant throughout my time there, but now they were taking a break. The sight of a family eating together in the middle of the day is a rarity here in the U.S., but I presume that it is not in the Middle East. They ate, laughed and conversed with one another. The event unfolding in front of me provoked a sense of unrefined wholesomeness that I wanted to be a part of.

Restaurants are infamous for distancing families working in them. A parent works constantly, the children never see them. The restaurant needs your attention more than your children do. The restaurant pays your bills. It's a cruel reality of the industry. I began to experience this directly ever since working in restaurants. My family and I became increasingly distant, and I seemed to be the one at fault.

Simultaneously enchanted and saddened by the scene that I just witnessed and comforted by the food I consumed, I scurried out of the restaurant and reluctantly made my way to work.

I walked out feeling satiated, yet uneasy, as I knew that I would not be home until eleven at night when everyone in my household is asleep.

Borrowing Freedom

Kaylee Vance

A time I truly felt at peace was back when I did my first equitation course for horseback riding. The cold burned my cheeks and ears like a torch. We headed for the first jump which appeared before our eyes, standing at three feet tall. A few years ago, an apprehensive feeling would have taken over me, but I had progressed further in my training and the feeling no longer came. My horse, Bella, kept an even pace that wasn't too fast nor too slow. I flew over the first jump with such grace and determination. I felt as if I were a bird, a hawk maybe. Hooves thudded on the earth beneath me and we proceeded around the corner to a diagonal blue-painted vertical with a brown box underneath.

When jumping diagonals, the angles at which they were placed made them look intimidating. The horse had to be set up precisely before the jump in order to proceed in a straight line afterwards. The word 'effortless' was what my trainer, Sheryl, had described equitation courses to look like. My gaze swiveled over towards her as I looked for a sign of favor, but she gave none. My mother, who was sitting next to her, looked like she was about to freeze with her face buried deep into her jacket. My focus came back as we started to approach the jump. Automatically my heels sank down and I brought them back behind Bella's belly. When we lifted into the air, I pushed my hands up on to the crest of her neck and made my back parallel to hers. In seconds, we were cantering on the ground again, but the butterflies fluttered in my stomach. I wanted Sheryl to be proud of me, to see that I could complete the course without making a flaw.

We rounded the corner that was furthest away from Sheryl. The next jump was a black and white lattice gate. I

began to count out the strides before the jump; Four, three, two, one. We were in the air again. Power surged me forward and then subsided, landing us on the other side. My lungs begged for me to breathe as excitement rose inside me, like a little child watching a clown make balloon animals. Other riders around me watched in amusement while they stood in the middle of the arena. My heart yearned for their attention. It ached so bad and wanted them to see that it was my time to be at the top during this show season.

A tight rollback from the gate, to a red plank was set on the course. I protested within my mind at that decision: ‘was I good enough?’ We bounded around the diagonal blue-painted vertical jump and I breathed in and let out a breath. The cold made me look like an ice breathing dragon. My face contorted into a cringe at the distance between my boot and the standard of the first jump, and I chuckled as it barely slid past it. At base of the red plank, I let my body go through all the motions, but I wanted to feel free just for a minute. Free, as if nothing could hurt me, and Bella was my protector. We landed softly and cantered half of the arena counter clockwise until I could see Sheryl's face again.

Two jumps remained: a blue and white cross rail and a solid wooden box painted to look like bricks. Bella jumped the cross rail as if it weren't there; almost like it wasn't big enough for her. Bella cantered deeper into the circle after landing and we passed Sheryl. She was seated within her little corner, wrapped in a horse blanket, watching me with intense hazel eyes and eating Andes Mints. My left Ariat boot pushed Bella off the rail and my sturdy right hand led her over the right side of the wooden brick. Before I knew it, the course was completed. A smile spread over my face and my hand reached out to praise Bella. In that moment, we were one.

"Come over here and let's talk about your trip!" called out Sheryl.

I led Bella around the wooden brick and over to her. She told me what I had done right and some places where I could improve upon. Overall it was a good course.

I began to walk away when I heard, "She's beginning to out ride all the horses here."

The voice was familiar, but it wasn't my mother's voice. A huge grin swept across my face because that was one of the few compliments that Sheryl gave.

"Thank you, Sheryl!" I yelled over my shoulder as Bella, my mother, and I left the ring to walk back to the barn.

As we began walking back, I heard Bella's footsteps crunch the iced-over ground below her. My thoughts began to wander back to a few years ago; to that girl who didn't care if she won at shows and who didn't care to put in any extra effort. I thought about how much further along I would be if I had horseback riding as my top priority all along.

My mother interrupted my thoughts, "That was a great ride!" she exclaimed.

"At least I'm further along than I was a year ago." I whispered to Bella.

She nickered in agreement as we reached the barn door with two big metal handles; both cold to the touch.

The Ascent

Kaylee Vance

My brain clouded over as every breath drained from my lungs,
As a vibrant rubicund oozed throughout his golden-kissed
complexion.
Soot splattered the uncertain hand that branched off towards me,
Urging a response to its proposed question.

Feelings of enlivenment spread like a rash throughout my petite
frame,
Obscure mahogany orbs fixated on restless hazel.
The floor transformed; naïve and wavering like the ocean,
Entrancing vivid green marbles mixed with café au lait speckles.

I've built an enclosure within myself,
Few have seen behind the impenetrable barricade,
But when he spoke to me,
My heart leaped.

Talking with him,
It made me slowly slink over,
Unfastening each lock,
Pushing out every thought of doubt,
Blotting away the pictures, memories and people,
That belongs to the barrier, that belonged to the past.

Uncertain of what the question was asking,
My hand joined his.

Study Abroad

Gabby Ryman



Melodic Memory

Michael Franco

A broken heart walks down the street
with just the shoes on his feet.
He meets a lonely looking girl
with a crown on her golden curls.
And as they walk the street of dreams
they wonder what is and what should be.

They keep their dreams alive inside
two foolish hearts that are free of pride.
They'll soon create a fantasy
made up of what they used to be.

Now these hearts will beat as one
and all the chains have come undone.
Her smiling face still shines
inside his heart for all time.
Now that they've paid their dues
there is nothing left to lose.

And maybe just a melody can keep the pain away.
It could create a memory when our words start to sway.
It could open up your eyes and open up your heart.
It could create the starry sky and let you leave your mark.

Love is Love is Love

Correy Pelletier

Love comes in all shapes and sizes.
Love between a man and a man,
a woman and a woman,
a man and a woman.
But what is love?
Does a person love another person
when they first see them?
(Love at first sight.)
Or does one learn to love another?
Either way, love is love.

Love isn't about distance.
It's about loving one another,
supporting each other,
and being there for each other
in times of distress.
Finding solace in one another.

Love is infinite,
a person's love for another is *infinite*.
Love is endless,
even after death,
the love for the other will continue on.

Love is not all good.
There is heart-aching and physical pain,
regret,
sorrow,
and jealousy.
But all of that is worth it
to have another person who cares for you
and supports most of your decisions.

Burn Free

Dominique Treadwell

Claire took a seat across from a wide mirror. Fingerprints littered the bottom edge, a hazy glow reflected in the top from the fluorescent ceiling lights. Her hand reached out and grasped the cold bar they had mounted on the table. Holding on tight, she pulled back with all her strength, feeling the joints pop in her shoulder. Releasing, she collapsed back into the steel chair. A woman with a stiff back and short clipped nails sat across from her.

“Ms. Mosely do you know why you’re here?” The women sat with her arms folded in front of her. Thin. The blue fabric of her dress stretched across boney shoulders and crawled up a pale neck. Close enough to touch, but as far away from Claire as she could be. The woman had brought pictures, a notepad, and a pen. Claire fumbled with the bar on the table, making the cuffs clink against the metal. She kept quiet.

“Ms. Mosely,” the voice slightly more sympathetic but fake. “Can you please tell me what you are doing here?” She smiled at Claire. Her head tilted to the side and her eyes feigned sympathy, but the sides of her mouth dipped. The mirror caught Claire’s eye again and her attention wondered.

“Ms. Mosely,” the women interrupted again, “you must answer my question.”

Must answer. Always have to tell the truth. But not when it’s a stranger. Not when it will get yourself in trouble. No, Claire will remain silent. As Claire has been taught.

Everyone who met Claire’s mother, Mrs. Mosely, believed her to be sweet and charming. She never lost her temper. Even when Claire would share a bit too much about their home life.

“Momma threw a glass at me. It hit the wall instead,” young Claire said one day in class. Claire’s teacher reached out to Mrs. Mosely and inquired about the out of character outburst. Her mother laughed it off, flashed her plastic smile and said simply;

“Silly thing, I dropped a glass. She loves to create intrigue,” then in a low whisper, “I give her so much attention, but she just can’t get enough.” At this the teacher laughed too and the Mosely’s went home. During the drive, Mrs. Mosely’s vein bulged from the skin on her neck. Her hands gripped the wheel tight. Claire knew better than to speak and break the tension. When they ended their travels in the house, Claire waited for her punishment. Running would only make it worse. So, would crying, or talking her way out of it. The belt was thick leather, and only used for when Claire made a mistake.

“You know what to say.” The belt came down like a whip over Claire’s back.

“I won’t talk about momma.” One. The other scars tried to make a shield to protect the unbroken skin.

“I won’t talk about momma.” Two. The belt moved to her upper thighs. The skin sang and protested the burning of the lashes.

“I won’t talk about momma.” Three. This one always came out as a sob, and the following whips came down harder.

“Clean yourself up and get your homework done.” Only five this time. Mrs. Mosely must have been tired.

Claire trudged off to the bathroom and ran water in the tub. Getting in it turned rosy pink. Her back and sides burned. She went under all the way to her neck then stopped and waited for the burning to turn to stinging. The bruises and cuts would be covered by her school uniform. The memory would be covered by Mrs. Mosely. The belt would be covered by the drawer her mother kept it in. As she bathed in her own blood, Claire wondered if her mother knew how much the belt hurt.

Mrs. Mosely was never caught drinking or driving recklessly. Though for such hard-working mothers people had their exceptions. She brought her daughter to school on time, and promptly picked her up after the last bell. She made the best cookies in school for the bake sales. Mrs. Mosely was a single, independent mother, whose husband likely ran off with a younger woman. By all credible accounts, she did her best. She was, as all stereotypes go, the perfect mom, neighbor, woman.

“Ms. Mosely?” The woman’s hand, outstretched, almost touching Claire’s. It gripped the bar on the table again. Her knuckles went white, just like her mothers had when it gripped that genuine leather. Claire had used the belt, but only one time.

“Do you know why you’re here?”

Claire moved out when she was eighteen and had lived peacefully for nearly five years when her mother came knocking. Claire sensed her mother missed her only child and didn’t understand why they never spoke anymore. They sat together in Claire’s shared studio apartment at the makeshift coffee table. They sipped on decaffeinated tea in silence. Her mother glanced about the room, judging.

“Where are all your pictures?” Claire liked to keep the walls bare of her past. Save one of Claire and her father, they did not bring her back to a better time like they were supposed to. Her roommate decked the walls out in her own family photos, and the occasional motivational cat poster. Claire liked those ones. Mrs. Mosley got up to closer inspect the beige walls. She ran her perfectly polished nails along every crack in the plaster. Her fingers worked their way to the dent Claire’s knee has made during an intense dance off. Claire had never danced

before, and never knew knees could pack such an impact. Gliding forward, Mrs. Mosely eased her way around Claire's futon and into the kitchen. She stepped on the creaky floorboard. Claire and her roommate operated around it on muscle memory alone. Mrs. Mosely pushed down. Once. Twice. Three times, testing its ability to withstand her.

"I brought some of us from years ago, you'll love them." She took her purse from the floor and dumped it on the coffee table. Pictures filtered out along with the classic red rouge lipstick that her mother never wore, a wallet, and a long brown belt.

Claire leaned back far in her chair, hands gripped white against the table. Her mother's voice droned on in the background. Something about the memories from the photos. A birthday where Mrs. Mosely had made Claire's favorite cake, strawberry with vanilla frosting. A Halloween costume that Mrs. Mosely had made for Claire, because she had insisted on being a dinosaur. A mother/daughter trip to zoo, and how the giraffe had eaten right out of Claire's hand. The belt. She brought the belt here. To Claire's home. With the walls that only knew pain from terrible dancing. With cat posters that only saw Claire as she was now. Burn free.

Leaning forward Claire gripped the belt in a shaking hand. Her knuckles still white and the small lines of wear pulled themselves apart as she lifted it from the table. Standing, she looked at her mother and again wondered if she knew how the belt felt. She wondered if Mrs. Mosely knew how much it hurt to be her daughter. Claire looked her mother up and down, wondered if she had scars, burns. Claire decided that she should.

"Ms. Mosley? Claire, do you know why you're here?" The woman, pale thin lips and gray hair that strayed out of her curls, asked, "Do you know what you did to your mother?"

Claire looked down at the pictures on table. The belt photographed, stained red. Her own hands stained the same color. Her mother's driver's license tucked slightly under the belt; but Claire could still see the plastic smile.

“No. No, I won't talk about momma.”

The Fight

Pearl Morrison

Another win, but there are more to conquer
I lie here in this pit not amused
Tired, beaten, distraught, fired up!
With this achievement, why am I the one abused?

You throw me in my cage, my only safe haven
I see you count the bills
Trying desperately to close my wounded eyes
Why does this give you such cheap thrills?

My paws, cut up as if from barbed wire
My head pounding like my opponent's heart
Body, too weak to even get up
My bones could break apart

Starved, just like the others,
But in my dreams, I roam
Waiting, hoping for that one day
Where I can be in a real, loving home.

Home

Pearl Morrison

Home, with its darkest day it still shines
The maple trees speak when the wind flows
Home, from the intricate streams to the warm, little houses
Which line the streets in rows

Home, where the sun glistens on each blade of grass
Thunder and lightning crash down with the rain
Yet, I still feel safe
Safe here where I feel no pain

Home, where children play games and have a ball
Elders sit on their porch and read
Home, with family and friends all around
There is pride here which we all bleed

People change, and the kids are full grown, but still
Home, the only place I can call my own

Study Abroad

Gabby Ryman



Contributors

Eric Bruno is a Creative Writing major who hopes to graduate in 2019. He enjoys taking in the beauty of nature in the small town of Bedford, NH from the comfort of the indoors. Always up for a good discussion and some wonderful synth, he nonetheless prefers bad media over good. After all, he believes it a more enjoyable experience to dissect something terrible.

Gabby Ryman is a senior studying History with an Art History minor. She really enjoys going to art museums.

Leilani Ann is studying English, music, and philosophy and is set to graduate in 2020. In her free time, you will find her either writing, playing piano, or cooking for her friends.

River Arya Matis is from Stratford, CT. they are graduating in 2020 with a BA in creative writing. River loves to write across various genres and play video games across various genres. they are an avid fan of the TV show Friends and can name most of the Western Roman Emperors.

Pearl Morrison is a senior and majors in both law and politics and sociology. Her interests include reading/writing, and binge-watching YouTube and Netflix. She loves to spend time with her family especially her twin brother Logan as well as her two cats Willie and Brady.

Hannah Lewis is a senior studying Creative Writing and English. She is from Nashua, NH, but has found her home here at SNHU. Her spirit animal is a squirrel, she loves reading, and is always smiling and drinking iced coffee!

Ruth Way is a double major in Creative Writing and Communication with a minor in video production at Southern New Hampshire University. She enjoys going to the gym, and spending time outdoors. In a perfect world, she would spend all her time writing and traveling. No matter where she ends up, she strives for happiness above all things.

Correy Pelletier is a senior at SNHU. He's a writer and editor and he works for the Manatee. He likes writing short stories, SU fanfics, poems, and songs.

Jasmine Tyrance is a Creative Writing major from Nashua, New Hampshire. She is a junior at SNHU and in January 2019 she will be running her own writer's blog "DragonetteJ" where she will be showcasing her work as a writer, poet and book critic.

Sabrina DiSorbo is a sophomore from Connecticut, majoring in Forensic Psychology and will graduate in 2021. She gets lost in her own head but will often write. She has become an avid knitter.

Kaylee Vance is a freshman and majors in Creative Writing. She was adopted from Guatemala as a seven-month-old and currently resides in Greenland, New Hampshire. Her passions include snowboarding, horseback riding, laying on the beach, and reading. Since she lives only eight miles from the coast, she can always be found at the beach with a smile and a book in her hands.

Harrison Quinn is a sophomore and is majoring in Game Art & minoring in Interactive Storytelling. He is most passionate about worldbuilding, art, writing & reading fantasy, and videogames.

His life goals are to strive to do what he loves every day, and to transcend the human form and become a god.

Becky Martone is a senior studying creative writing and English. She thrives off of a Lorelei Gilmore level coffee addiction, copious videos of cute dogs, and the hope that one day she'll travel back to Edinburgh, Scotland.

Branden Wilcox is a junior who majors in Creative Writing. He enjoys films and mystery novels. His dreams include traveling to Japan and France and to one day write screen plays for films.

Amber Krane is a 3rd year student at Southern New Hampshire University that will graduate in the spring of 2020. Her home town is Litchfield, NH. Amber is currently pursuing a major in Literature and English Language. During this academic year, Amber is studying abroad at the University of Essex in Colchester, England. Amber models, cosplays, sings and writes on the side. While over in the UK, she plans to travel and to expand her knowledge of writing as well as the world

Abby Elise is a Creative Writing & English major from Raynham, Mass. She is a poet and a young adult fiction novelist, primarily writing in the LGBT+ and dystopian genres. She has two self-published dystopian fiction novels (Placement and Outlaws) and a self-published poetry book (Love In Color).

Nicholas VonSchantz-Ricci is a Junior from Londonderry, NH. He is among the last remaining culinary management majors. He

is a writer and copy editor for the Penmen Press. His dream job is to be a food writer/critic. He currently works as a line cook at Republic in downtown Manchester.

Michael Franco is an undergrad majoring in Accounting/Finance with a minor in Creative Writing. He will graduate in May 2019.

Dominique Treadwell is a Communications major in her junior year, graduating in 2020. She is from Salem, NH. Fun fact: she was a soccer goalie for 10 years.

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