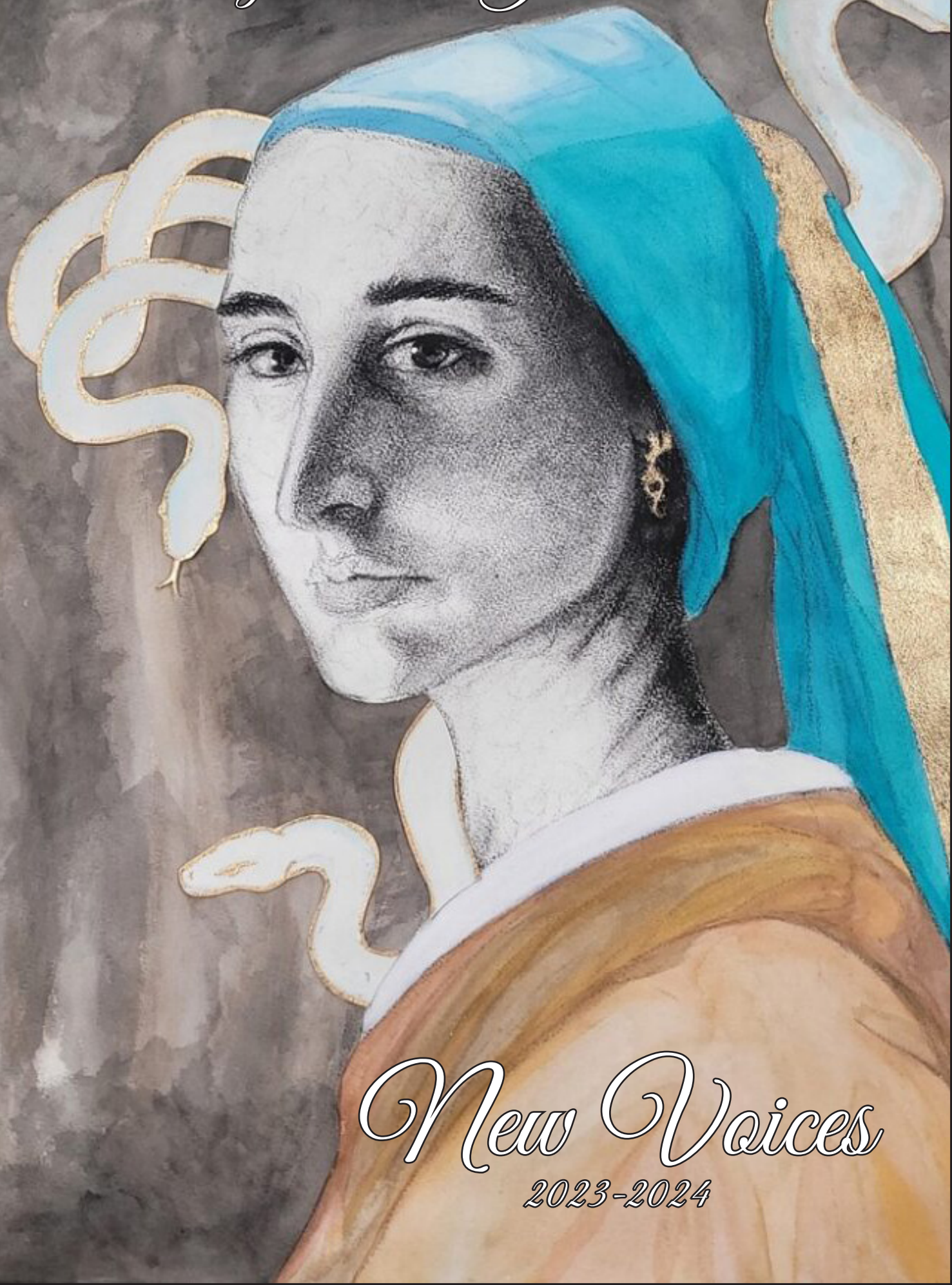


Lander University's Student Journal



New Voices
2023-2024

New Voices

2023-2024 Edition

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LANDER UNIVERSITY
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH &
FOREIGN LANGUAGES



LANDER UNIVERSITY
College of Arts & Humanities

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Brown Boy, I Love You

Julia Anhalt

A World of One's Own

I

There is nothing to do except listen to what is the silence of nature. At the end of April, everything about South Carolina is green, green, green. The kind of vibrant life that one doesn't realize is missing until it's back. Within the shadows of this new animation are the little singing brown birds, the rustle of moving deer, the running of a stinking creek. When long grass kisses bare calves, there is the fleeting thought of ticks and spiders and mosquitoes. But even these quiet, all thoughts inhibited, all quick feelings cooled. There is nothing but the distinct peace that comes with knowing only you have been here.

II

The world bears witness to the accomplishments of men: every brick and stone of the world's greatest architectural feats, every ion and atom spliced, every electron harnessed. God's second greatest gift to man was the power to create and discover. With these talents every weakness has been eliminated. Over two-thousand years the Great Wall was erected, lifted high peasant by peasant, forsaken by forsaken. With the tombstones of Jewish slaves rose the glorious Roman Colosseum. For gold, God, and glory, civilization after civilization crumbled beneath King Henry's stare. The cries of twelve million people collapsed into nothing on salty winds as their freedom drowned in the Atlantic. But Progress is calling your name.

III

All the world has been lost. No brooding images, no stinging worries. Muzzled by tranquility, settled by intense sunshine that thaws to the bone. Beneath hard soles, leaves crunch in a satisfying decay. There is nothing but the patter of the dog's feet as she explores. Never long out of sight, she dashes away to chase a buzzard which soon makes its escape by taking flight. Unperturbed, she returns with a new toy to play with—a plastic bottle missing its cap.

IV

Behind every proud man kneel a thousand women. There is the one who carried for nine months, and labored not just for a night, but every day of life that followed. Teaching, cleaning, guiding, loving. For nothing. Generation after generation of sons emerge the same; yet it seemed absurd, I thought...that a man with all this power should be angry.* As Troy burns, Cassandra speaks her prophecy: the ones who were loved, those who were hated, all alike are shoved aside and degraded. Ada Lovelace, Hedy Lamarr, Alice Ball. Friends, sisters, wives, mothers. The history of millions erased and forgotten to pave your future.

V

The creek follows the sewer line. It is her favorite place to play. On hot days she will take a drink before dipping her whole head under, tossing it up to jump after the trail of water that flies. She noses a deflated volleyball, and watches as it floats further downstream. She finds drifting leaves and shakes them violently. With her front paws she splashes herself and darts away as if in surprise. Sticking up in the sand, the edges of a broken beer bottle gleam. A spider crawls along its length to a jagged tip, before floating away on a gust of wind. There is nothing to do but watch. By the grace of men, women are equal. We earn degrees!

VI

When admission is granted, women dominate health care and social services. Leave philosophy and math for men; they are more rational anyway. We have careers! After each eight-hour workday with sore minds we return home to unkempt children, uncooked dinner, dirty homes, and busy lives. Now a soccer game, then a recital, tonight is church. Tomorrow is already yesterday. And still, only 80 cents to his dollar. We vote! For men to reach inside the womb that made him and snip away what little choice we have. To answer: what were you wearing? But this answer is always the same: I was wearing the possession of all those objectified before me. Women earn degrees, women work careers, women vote. What more do we want?

VII

On the way back, the ground grips a little harder around each footprint left behind—a mark of Cain. There is nothing but trees and grass and the little winding creek that follows the sewer line. Ahead, a pole. Its surface is coarse, never sanded or polished. Harvested and striped of its limbs by man, merely to be returned to its place as a skeleton. But this ghost is recognizable to its kind; green trundles climb steadily up its trunk as Nature reclaims its own.

VIII

Nothing of my past is by your grace. It is the sweat of Molly Pitcher. The writings of Mary Wollstonecraft. Elizabeth Stanton's revolutionary words on the Declaration of Sentiments. The preachings of Sojourner Truth. The articles of Ida B. Wells. Alice Paul's cries as you strapped her to a chair in jail and forced a tube down her throat. Jeanette Rankin and Betty Friedan's Feminine Mystique. It is the struggle of Claudette Colvin and Unita Blackwell. It is what you stole from Vera Rubin and Jocelyn Burnell. It is all the women who passed beneath you with half lived lives and buried achievements. It is the war every woman of this country has fought for the last two-hundred years. A room was never enough. Like the empires you built, your testimony is dying. And we are only beginning.

End Notes

*From Virginia Woolf's, *A Room of One's Own*

Nevaeh Harter
Sister



Camdyn Breazeale

Fleas

I watch you in your unnatural sleep. The spines along my exoskeleton quake as I listen and study your breathing. How deep is your unnatural sleep? Will you wake if I touch you? Will you wake if my claws scratch and creak against the worn floors of this place? I am quiet, and I make no moves to approach you or to run away. The maxillary lacunae of my mouth quiver with a foreign kind of anticipation. I don't want to wake you. There is a part of me that still trembles at the thought of you seeing me. But there is another part of me now, a part that wants you to awaken. I want you to open your eyes, bleary with the misery of your distilled existence, and fix them upon my form as I stand watching you from across the room, waiting in the doorway. I want to see the horror-stricken look upon your face; feel the vibrations of your rapidly beating heart throughout every part of my carapace. Looking at your body slumped in your chair, I feel myself buzzing. Then, I step across the floor. The dirty carpet that hasn't been cleaned since the day you took to this place is a distant discomfort beneath my claws. Look at me. Look at me. I want you to see me. I want your eyes upon my own as you realize what I am—what we are. Everything that you have done has led to this moment. I have studied your every move. I have watched you my whole life. Sinner. Glutton. That is all you are and all you will ever be.

★

I was brought to this place just yesterday. She kissed me goodbye and left me in a box at the entrance, off to find love somewhere else. I heard the old whimper of the door as it swung open on worn hinges, and then you picked up the box and brought me inside. Your hands were not as strong as they used to be. I could tell by the tremble in your fingers when you pulled me out. I was yours, but you were not mine: familiar but foreign. The red, glazed look in your eye. The sourness of your breath as it billowed against my face like a hot breeze that seared my skin and burned my eyes. Your skin was dry and cracked from head to toe. Everything about you seemed to make you a creature from Hell. Like the devils from movies and television shows. I was anxious.

But then I heard two distinct meows, as if they were calling my name in a foreign language. I looked down, and there they were. Two different shades of gold begged for my attention by rubbing against me and purring in unison, their tails pointed excitedly in the air. You let me go and shuffled back into the kitchen to place a dirty paper

plate face-down over the trash. Your dirty and calloused feet moved against the uncleaned linoleum like worn sandpaper that had been left to the rain and mud. Shht, shht, shht.

The living room is where I usually hid myself. In plain sight, so that you never came looking for me, never thought about me. I was there, but you never saw me—hiding within the shadows of the soiled and fur-covered loveseat. The cats followed me there. I was surprised that they still came to me seeking attention. I supposed any attention was better than none.

They hopped onto the seat cushions and pushed their faces against me, purring in expectation. I scratched one of them on the head, and I felt the familiar grit of flea dust catching under my nails. That sensation alone was like the crack of a whip that set me to work. I poked and pulled and picked, parting the fur on their bodies. I searched tirelessly, without end it seemed. I was looking for the small dark bodies that darted and crawled away as soon as they sensed that their presence within the fur had been exposed. The Fleas. I knew their patterns. Their favorite places were the base of the tail, the back of the head, under the chin, and on the chest. That was where they spent most of their time and was where they festered, feasted, and filched. It was always weird to me that they hid in places in which they were easily found. Why didn't they hide in places that were more obscured, harder to find? Maybe some part of them wanted to be found, to be seen. Maybe they hated themselves as much their hosts hated them, if not more.

Just then, I spotted one. A tiny carapace, disappearing quickly into the forest of fur around it. My heart rate increased with a new-found adrenaline, and I gave chase, using my fingers to part the fur with a vigor. My search led me downwards towards the belly of the cat because that's where they usually ran. There. I pinched downwards with precision and pulled harshly outwards, my fingers taking a small clump of golden fur with them. The cat snapped its head around at the sudden pain, but made no move to run away. Any attention is better than none.

I held my pinched fingers at eye level, inspecting the small creature trapped there. It wriggled and squirmed. Trying to fight. Trying to flee. My grip is too tight, too vice-like. The tips of my fingers turned white with the pressure. I wondered if that was why they were called fleas. They turn and run away from any sign of conflict. I pondered this as I rolled it between my fingertips, crushing its life away. For a moment, I felt pity. It was only trying to survive like the rest of us. Only, it had to take from others in order to do so. Then I was angry, and I did not spend time wondering why. I simply kept hunting for more because there was nothing more for me to do. All I could do was hide there on the dirty loveseat, analyzing your breathing as you sat in your chair with the outline of a bottle in your pocket. All the while you simply kept watching the people on the screen and speaking in circles.

Then it was nighttime, and I was laid in bed with the two golden cats curled-up around me. The bed was small, and they were large, causing me to contort my body to suit their positions. I lay awake with pain all over my body from keeping myself twisted like that. A deep, aching pain that felt as if it had always been there. There were times that I wanted to cry because of the pain. But the cats liked to sleep in the bed with me, so I never moved to a more comfortable position. I did not want to disturb them. I did not want them to leave me.

Then I heard your lazy steps coming down the hallway. The bottoms of your feet dragged against the linoleum flooring, creating that same sandpaper sound. Shht, shht, shht. Then you were at my door. I pretended to be asleep but watched you through slitted eyelids. I could see your dark silhouette in the doorway, looming there with a sort of lost intention. Thoughtless, unpredictable. You leaned forward as if you were going to enter the room, breathing heavily in the way that you did when you had lost yourself. My heart pounded throughout my body. It was pulsating in my ears, causing me to nearly tremble with every beat. If I stayed still enough, not moving a muscle, maybe you would leave. I did not know what I was afraid that you would do if you stayed. I simply knew that I was afraid of you. Then, without a word, without acknowledgement, just the same unsteady breathing, you turned and left. Back to the living room, back to your chair, and back to your distilled ignorance.

That was when they started attacking me. One at a time, I could feel them jumping onto my skin and sinking their maxillary lacunae deep into my flesh. And then all at once, they were on my legs, my arms, my neck, my face. They dug into my eyes, trying to push past my tightly shut eyelids. They crawled up my nose and into my ears. I gasped, and then they were in my mouth and in my esophagus and in my lungs. The Fleas were everywhere, eating away at me outside and in. I was shriveling. I was growing — transforming into something else. The cats dashed away in fright. My arms and legs were becoming long and spindly with sharp, bristly hairs sprouting this way and that. I rolled off the bed and fell to the floor. My back cracked and began to bend and round until I was perpetually hunched, disfigured. My skin turned hard, dark, and ridged. My eyes became beady, my ears disappeared, and my hair fell away to the floor in clumps. I tried to grasp at them as they fell, but my hands were no longer there. All that remained were jagged legs and claws.

I tried to scream in terror, but I found that I could only produce a low clicking sound that emanated from somewhere deep within my skin — my exoskeleton. I wanted to groan. I wanted to cry and plead like a girl in timeout, wronged and weeping at preschool, calling for the comfort of a father who could not hear her. Even if I could have screamed, you would not have heard me.

That was when I pushed myself up from the floor and stared at my faint reflection in the window. You would not hear me. You did not

want to hear me. Your head was in a bottle; a bottle that drowned you and anything else from your acknowledgment. You had turned from any discourse and refused to recognize the wrongs that surrounded you. I could hardly speak without you swatting me away with another swig. You do so because I force you to dig at yourself, at your skin, into the layers. I force you to scratch and peel and scream and sink. I watch you snap and punch and slur and drink. You could not bear to look at me. I force you to look at yourself and the mistakes you have made. You feared looking at me because you feared yourself.

I was suddenly aware of just how empty I was. I needed to be filled with what I had lost. I trembled with a new emotion, something foreign, something I should not have known of. I had experienced anger before but never like this. All that remained within me was ire and thirst. I was so very thirsty.

*

Now, here we are. I am going to drain the life from your body. Not just your physical life, a different kind of life as well. I don't only want your blood. I want the memories stored within it. Memories that are yours and memories that should have been mine. They are mine, but you stole them. Times that could have — should have happened. But you took that from me with your selfish sickness. Now, I am going to take them back, and I am going to steal from you instead; it's my life's blood.

I think then that I hate you. And with a suddenness, I lunge forward, my tusks piercing your flesh. You scream out in surprise and in agony as I bleed the life — my life — from your veins. I drain you dry. Before, you were a husk of the man you used to be. You are more of one now than ever. Withered and weeping, you grasp at me. Your hands claw at me, pushing me away, pulling me closer. My body shakes and trembles, and I realize that it is me who weeps. As I leech your blood away, I sob and hic and choke like a child desperate for the comfort of a parent who will never come. Your blood pours out faster than I can draw it away. It covers us both like matching sunburns over fair skin and freckles, wet with seasalt and coated in sand. Hot, sticky, boiling, rotten.

This flea is you and I. You stare into my beady eyes, quaking at the monster I have become — the monster that we are. Your mouth gapes open, but only a strangled croak comes out. Your grip on my carapace weakens and your arms fall limply to your sides. Your eyes begin to dim as I drain the last of my life from you, and they no longer shine like the backs of scratched DVDs, burned with children's movies. I think then that I love you.

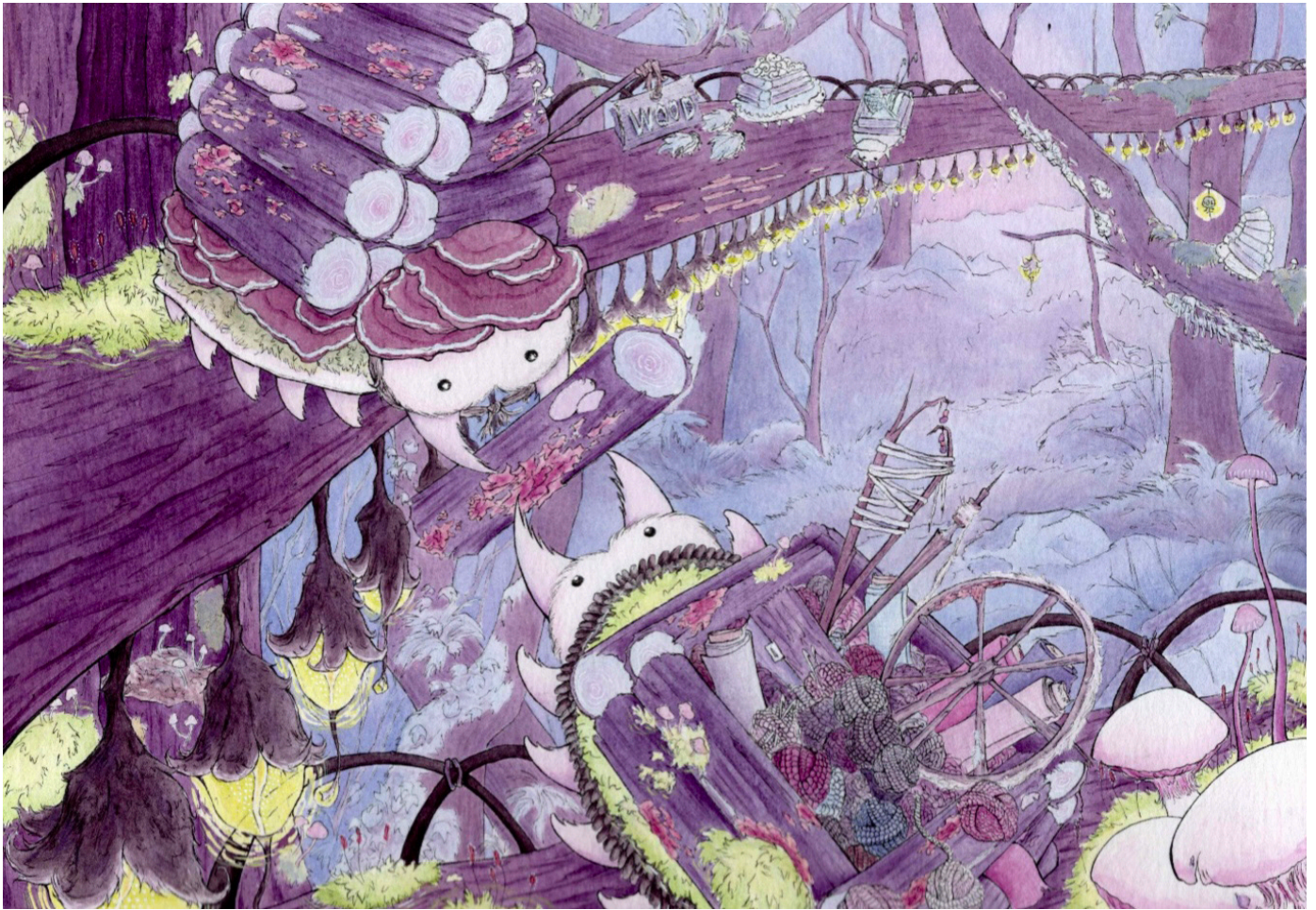
I pull away with a suddenness that leaves you convulsing and sputtering. You choke on nothing, and then you go still. And I am empty. I stumble backwards, away from your corpse. Your eyes are open, but they stare at nothing. I am nothing. I trip, and I fall, and I lay

there still on the dirty carpet. I am holding a small, clear bottle, for I must have grabbed it from you subconsciously. I am empty. I cradle the bottle to myself like a child with a toy her father gave her from the thrift store, and I fall asleep with the Fleas.

Then she is at the door again. I am surprised that she heard my calls. She quietly grabs me up, a small worthless creature in her arms. She smooths my hair and kisses my forehead, and I am no longer a creature of abandon. She tells me she is sorry. I am her Sunshine, she sings to me. Her only Sunshine. Yes. I am young, and I am a child. My soft hands wrap around her as she holds me close and takes me to the car.

Meaghan Nelson

The Purplewood Market



*Nakeia Pough &
Chantal Chandler*
If I Was a Bug

Irritated, sleepy, and calm,
Everything left is in my palm.
An exhale would be nice,
I thought about it most nights.

As I lay here on the ground,
I see many bugs around.

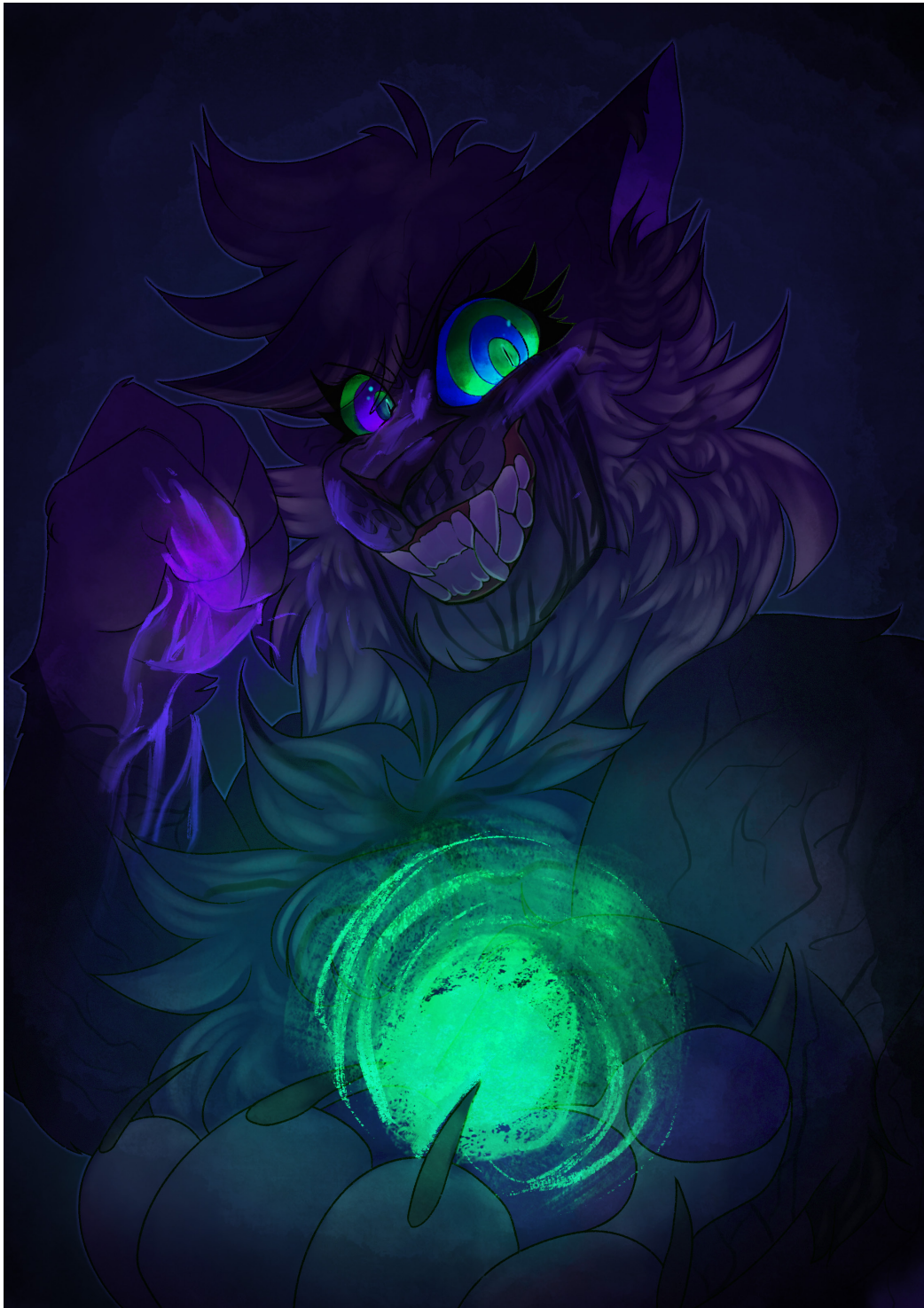
This makes me think about how free the bugs live.
So small, so fragile, stressless, instinctive.
As I laid here I wished,
And wished and wished.

I want to be a bug,
Living my own beat.
I understand the sacrifice;
I'd long for a hug,
Or a kiss on the cheek.

But that doesn't matter!
No! I'll hop on six feet!
I'll thrive in the darkness,
You'll hear my flighty cheeps!
You'll envy my bounces.
Oh, won't that be sweet?

But alas I'm merely a human,
I see six! No... Just two feet...

Cheyenne Swann
Corruption



Chantal Chandler

Splicing Through the Problem

For centuries linguistics has been a topic of discussion. Humans are naturally inclined to communicate resulting in the birth of its creation. Ideally, we would assume that a subcategory like syntax would be straight forward. Syntax dissects different word combinations and relationships to create a cohesive structure within written language. Usually, syntax is formal, with many rules and regulations to prevent grammatical error from occurring. However, this notion dissipates soon after we discover the amount of infighting comma splices stir, invoking thoughts of whether writing should be prescriptive or err more on the side of descriptive.

What is a comma splice or comma fault exactly? First, let's recall that a sentence consists of something or someone performing an action. An independent clause is a complete sentence. It is composed of a subject which is the something or someone and a verb which is the action. A dependent clause never can be a complete sentence because it's used to modify independent clauses by acting adverbially, adjectivally, or nominally. Commas can be used correctly for several different reasons: Listing for the purpose of separation, something you'd like to read as an aside, an introductory phrase, after an adverbial phrase or conjunctive adverb, at the beginning of an independent clause, linking an independent clause to a dependent clause, and much more. However, when it comes to the connection of two independent clauses, that's when the all too infamous comma splice steps in. For example:

Halloween brings out the true monsters within us, spirits lurk under the moon's shadow casting doubt among witnesses.

This sentence alone would make the eyes of many prescriptive grammarians twitch, but this "potential problem" is easy to fix.

One way to fix a comma splice is to insert a coordinating conjunction after the comma itself. A coordinating conjunction uses words like for, and, nor, but, or, and yet to connect two co-ordinate clauses, resulting in a compound sentence. The Complete College Composition reinforces the usage of a coordinating conjunction by arguing, "[t]he comma is the weakest mark of punctuation; the independent clause is the most important unit within the sentence. The comma, then, must be given the aid of a conjunction; or a stronger mark of punctuation, the semicolon, must be substituted for it (160)." So, correcting our previous example sentence with a

coordinating conjunction looks like this:

Halloween brings out the true monsters within us, and spirits lurk under the moon's shadow casting doubt among witnesses.

From a prescriptive stance this sentence has been cleansed of all syntactical sins. We could've always used a semi-colon because it's basically the equivalent of a coordinating conjunction and a comma being used to strengthen the bond between clauses.

Many grammarians would agree with *The Complete College Composition* by arguing, "[t]he mistake occurs perhaps more frequently because of carelessness than because of lack of knowledge; yet it has come to be the mark, at least in the classroom, of writing that is almost illiterate (217)." However, with no real evidence pertaining to the origin of this rule it's difficult to understand why grammarians developed such an aversion in the first place. Research only leads us to a book published in 1918 called *The Elements of Style* written by William Strunk Jr. who, to put it simply, suggests that we shouldn't join two independent clauses with a comma alone. Since *The Elements of Style* was published in the nineteenth century, there's a strong possibility that an academic purge on the comma splice occurred due to its publication. I wouldn't disagree with the rule syntactically. However, I'm skeptical of the harsh rhetoric prescriptive grammarians like those who wrote *The Complete College Composition* are using to justify it. Shrouded in mystery, the comma splice's alternative name comma fault created by who we presume to be grammarians, implies automatic error, reinforcing the negative narrative surrounding the rule. With that being said, we mustn't ignore those on the opposing side of history who often used comma splices to closely resemble speech.

Historically, comma splices are found during the eighteenth and nineteenth century. There are examples dating back to the seventeenth century too, negating the idea of comma splices solely being used in a classroom by mistake. For example, "As to the old one, I knew not what to do with him, he was so fierce I durst not go into the pit to him.. (Defoe 146)" As we analyze this text, notably written by an adult, we notice that there are splices, but they're being used to mimic speech rather than mimic scholastic writing. We get a sense of tone from the author, but potentially the downfall of this sentence is the mixed interpretation different readers may have, further suggesting that syntax is more complicated than it seems, creating somewhat of a competition between style and precision.

Presently, it isn't uncommon for one to see comma splices in informal writing or even novels when it is necessary. Take this sentence I crafted for example:

I noticed his eyes stare into the longing abyss, he sunk deeper and deeper into the unknown.

According to grammarians this sentence isn't necessarily strong

enough to stand by itself. However, one can argue that this sentence contains two complete thoughts. The second clause is creating tone while the comma acts as a marker to show close relation. Automatically, this leads us to question whether a comma alone truly is "too" weak in every instance where there's a combination of two independent clauses. "The use of only a comma to join such clauses or statements is the exceptional, not the standard usage in serious expository writing (290)." In what was previously mentioned, The Macmillan Handbook of English agrees that there are some instances where comma splices are acceptable though they're rare in academia.

At this point, according to Merriam-Webster, we should understand that the argument of joining two independent clauses with only a comma seems more of an elitist issue in academia or a pet peeve in writing nowadays. Comma splices are contentious today but,

[n]o one was correcting these writers back in their day; there was, in fact, nothing to correct. Eighteenth century punctuation did not follow the conventions that we practice today. But even as the standards of punctuation were evolving during the 19th century to those we're familiar with, the older, looser punctuation continued to be employed in the personal letters of well-known writers. ("What Is a Comma Splice? Examples and How to Fix Them (or Not)")

Comma splices were common in literature until prescriptive grammarians decided they were not, excusing them only in creative environments. Blatant animosity toward comma splices is illogical when they were at one point regularly used by writers. Prescriptive grammarians should recognize that linguistics has no real boundaries or limits when speech is constantly changing over time. As a result, syntax can seem unstable to writers trying to follow necessary protocol.

On the other hand, I will acknowledge that syntax is more about the structure of the composed sentence. A writer can't always make decisions based on how a sentence sounds when spoken. The goal here should be to leave no room for misinterpretation, hence why syntactically the comma splice is a sin. According to Harry H. Crosby and George F. Estey in the book *College Writing*, "[t]he skilled writer avoids the comma splice and instead takes advantage of the proper mark of punctuation to make his meaning clear (295)." It's best to use the previously mentioned suggestions when joining independent clauses academically or simply to use a period.

An honorable mention would be in the case of Irene Teoh Brosnahan's argument who agrees with the comma splice critics while sympathizing with the logic of writers who use them anyway. Irene states that a conjunction isn't necessary if the perfect conditions for the usage of splices are met using syntax, semantics, style, and rhetorical discernment. But where her focus differs specifically is that she's convinced that this may be an unsaid mutual understanding. In "A Few Good Words for the Comma Splice" she states that when, "the

clauses are short and usually parallel in structure...they can be in any combination of affirmative and negative clauses" (185). Parallelism occurs when two clauses contain the same grammatical form, and this is important because it aids the comprehension of the reader who will understand the affirmative agreement between the two clauses or the negative disagreement with a single comma displaying the relationship. Personally, I find this a logical middle ground for writers still looking to still use comma splices in their work.

In the end, what we can conclude is that comma splices have been around for hundreds of years maturing with time. Joining two independent clauses with simply a comma may work stylistically for those who properly use them, but they can still be frustrating to prescriptive grammarians who study the syntactic structure of writing. Obviously, we're allowed to make our own calls creatively, but we must also take into consideration the institution for which we're writing.

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Emily Bridgeman

Fresh



Andie Stringer

maybe one day

one day you'll learn,
once you reach the point of no return.
you say something you don't mean,
and wish you could wipe the slate clean,
to where you never said those things
or felt those stings.

one day you'll learn
how not to yearn—
for his touch or his kiss
but oh till then, you will miss
him,
you're no longer his beautiful gem.
your time together was so slim.

one day you'll learn,
he's never going to return.
was it really love?
did we fit like a glove?
please tell me you care,
because i couldn't bare
us being a stupid, teenage love affair.

maybe someday you'll learn,
and your heart will not burn.
but until that day, you'll cry
and wonder why,
why you hurt this truly amazing guy.

but today is not that day,
as much as it pains me to say.
but maybe one day,
you'll learn.

Macie Johnston

Sunset on the Beach



Autumn Carey

Little Ghost Boy

The low beeping of monitors filled the young boy's ears, but no matter how hard he tried he could not lift his eyelids. His other senses seemed to be working fine; he could smell the sanitized scent of the room, and he could feel his toes beginning to numb from the cold, and the dryness of his mouth. He felt the need to swallow, and tried his best, but just could not force himself to. He could feel tears welling up in the corners of his eyes. "I want my mommy!" he cried, but his plea remained unsaid as he tried to speak. He began to lose hope of ever being able to see or speak again before he was brought back by a voice.

"We're losing him! Nurse! Get me a crash cart in here and get them out!" There was a sense of urgency in the voice. It sounded familiar, but he could not quite put his finger on it. "Don't go anywhere, you hear me? I will not give up on you!" The voice continued, this time speaking directly to the boy. He felt something in his chest — some say it was hope, others believe it was his body going into cardiac arrest.

*

The boy awakens in a cold room. He sits up and analyzes his surroundings. He is sitting on a silver table in what appears to be a small lab. "Where's my jacket?" The boy wonders, "Mommy always has my jacket when I'm cold." He decides to get a closer look at everything and slowly climbs down to the floor. He slips and lands on his back, muttering a quiet, "Ow," before pulling himself up. Looking back at the table, he sees someone lying where he recently was. "Who is that? He looks like...me," the boy begins to shake with tears. Sniffing, he cries, "I'm scared! I'm lost! Mommy, where are you?"

He tries to slam the door open, but inevitably walks through it instead. The new discovery puts a stop to his shoulder-racking sobs. "Woah!" he stares intently at his tiny hands out of curiosity. "How did I do that? That's so cool!" He exclaims. Slowly, he pushes his hand through the closest wall, giggling, "Hehe, it tickles!"

He continues to run back and forth through walls, doors, and even people often muttering a, "Sorry." This goes on for about ten minutes before he becomes distracted yet again. This time though, he is diverted towards the sound of someone crying. He slowly stalks his way over hiding behind the door frame. Peeking inside, he sees a woman

with her head in her hands as her shoulders shake violently. He tiptoes over to get a closer look when the woman drops her hands to reveal her face.

Upon seeing a familiar face, the boy breaks out into a toothy smile, sprinting over to her. "Sissy!" he continues calling, "Sissy! Where were you?" To his dismay, his Sissy cannot hear him nor see him. He pokes his bottom lip out, quivering, "Why are you ignoring me? Answer me!" He tries and fails to poke her, hit her, kick her—anything to get her attention. She continues holding herself and letting waterfalls flow from her tear ducts. He sits on the cold floor next to her and cries with her.

*

A young man strides through the main entrance of the hospital. He looks very well-off, donned in a very nice suit and jet-black hair that has been neatly combed back, if he used any hair gel, not a soul could tell. He scans the waiting room before setting his sights on the receptionist. He gently raps on the counter to gain her attention, "I'm looking for the parents who just lost their son: James and Layla Cooper. Where might I find them?"

The receptionist looks up, "I'm sorry, sir. I cannot disclose that information; doctor-patient confidentiality, you know?"

The man looks deeply into her eyes, "Are you quite sure about that? How about just this one time — for me?"

She feels her mind go foggy for a second, "What are you-," she cuts herself off, "Why, of course. They are in the Pediatrics building in room 101."

"Thanks, sweetheart," he sends her a grateful smile before making his way to room 101. Upon reaching his destination, he peeks into the room to see two devastated women and a man trying to console them. You see, he is not here for them — no — but their late son. There, sitting on the floor, next to the younger woman is a boy. *This can't be right, he thought, the one I'm searching for is supposed to be six; this boy looks no older than two or three.* He is so small, so pale. The boy is skinny, and his blonde hair has been buzzed to prevent noticeable hair loss. His blue eyes look almost lifeless.

"Psst! Hey, kid. Yeah, you. Come here," he calls the young boy over. The boy makes his way over very cautiously, "Who are you?"

"You can call me Reaper," he pauses, "What's your name, kid?"

"I don't know..." he continues, "My mommy says not to talk to strangers."

"Well now, we're not strangers anymore — I told you my name," Reaper replies.

"Oh," the boy realizes, "I guess that's true. My name is Nolan."

This newfound revelation startles Reaper, *This is Nolan? He must*

have been sick for a while if it stunted his growth and development this much.

Reaper looks down at him, eyes drowned in pity, "Do... uh, do you... do you know what happened to you?" he stutters. *Damn, I've never dealt with a kid before. This is going to be hard.*

Nolan tilts his head, "Um... I think so. Mommy said I am really sick." Reaper sighs, "Well, yes. But you're not sick anymore."

"I'm not?" Nolan questions.

"No, you're not. You're just... dead. You died," he utters.

"Oh... What does that mean?"

Reaper sucks in a shaky breath, "Have you ever had a pet?"

"Yeah! I had a fish; his name was Fred! He was sleeping upside down, so we flushed him down the toilet."

"Nolan, fish don't sleep upside down. Fred... um... died."

"Oh. So, will I get flushed down the toilet?"

Reaper stifles a laugh, "No. But, nobody can see you or hear you. Except for me of course."

"So, I can't hug mommy, or daddy, or sissy anymore?" Nolan sniffles.

"Yes, I'm sorry. You have two choices here: you can go to Heaven, or you can be reincarnated."

"Re-ca-nated?" Nolan struggled to pronounce.

"Re-in-car-nay-ted," Reaper sounded out, "It means you can be reborn. Like the phoenix, born from its ashes."

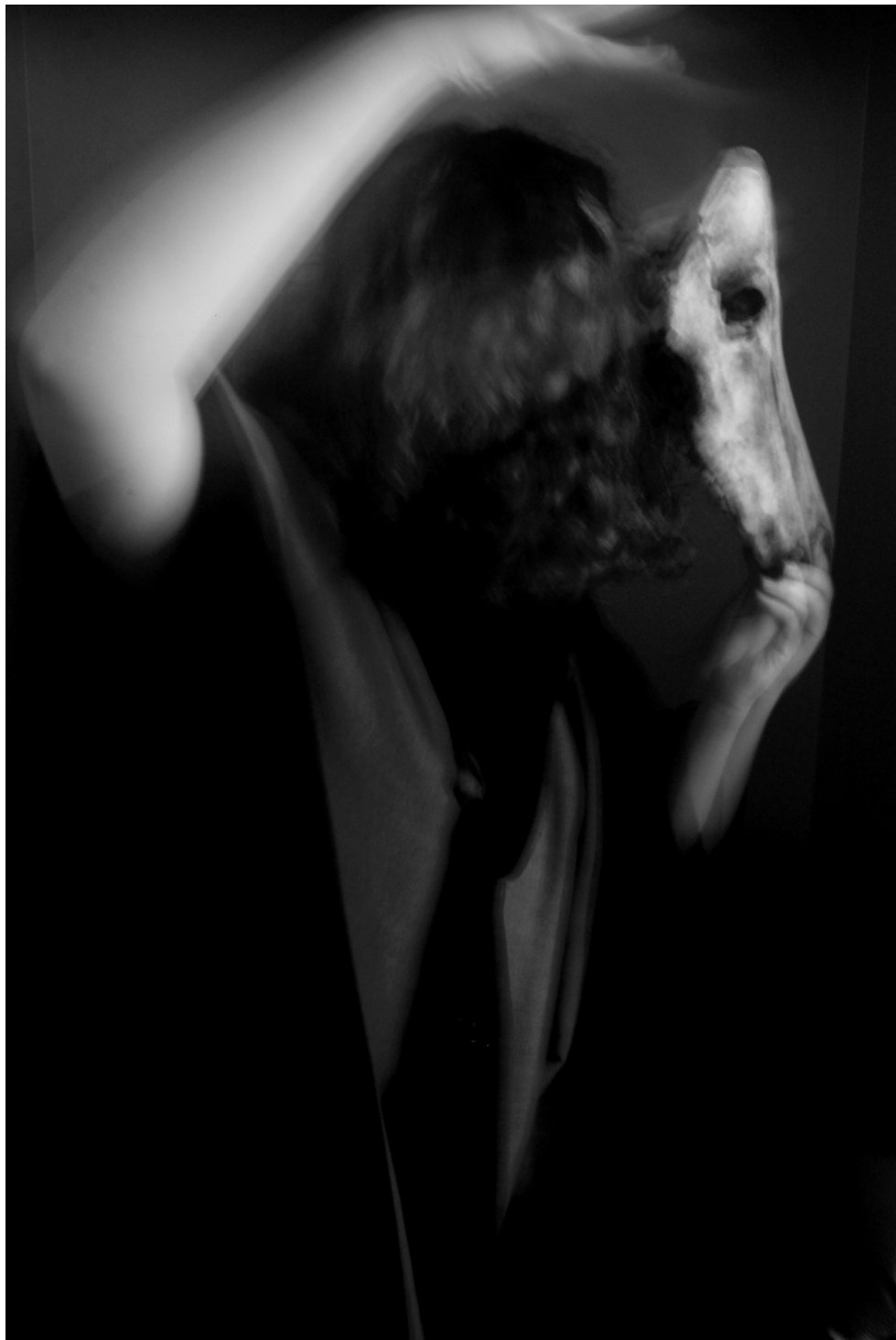
"Reborn?" Nolan questioned.

"It means you will be your mommy's baby again, but with a new name."

"I can see mommy and daddy and sissy again and they can see me?"

Ana Moreno

Skull Portrait

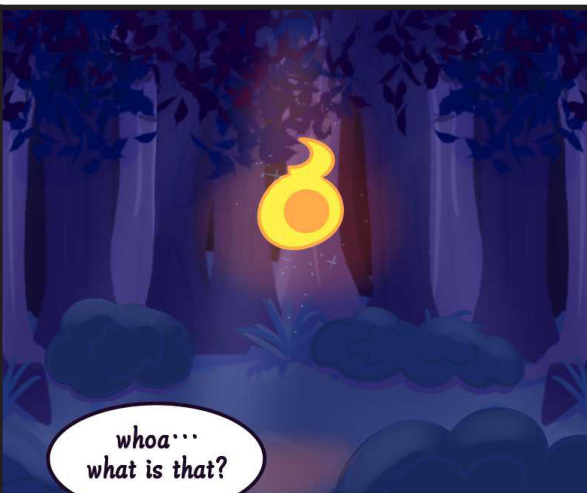
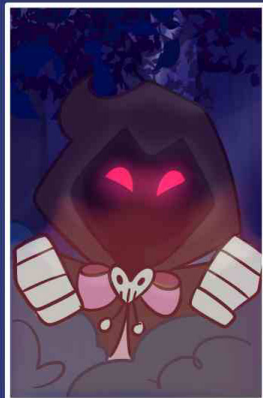


Kimberly Duclos

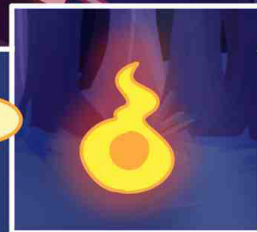
Magical Girl Grim Reaper

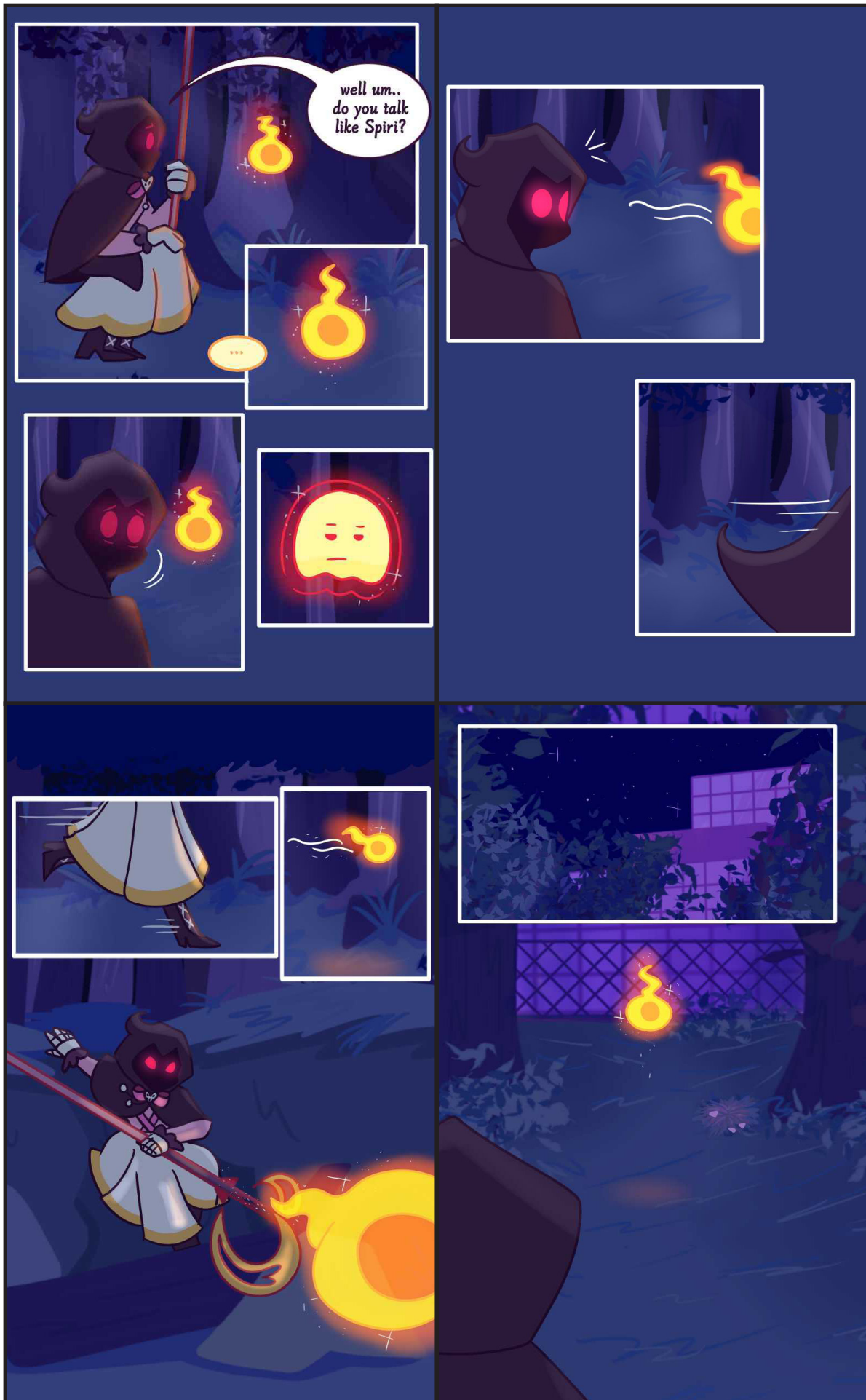






whoa...
what is that?







oh hey, we are near my school

but why are we here?

the pendant..?

Flicker

?

what do you.. want me to do?

you want me to place it there..? But I don't think I can help you without it though...

Dim

it's time for it to go now.

!





Marina Andrew

The Murder of Tiffany Sauers

Author's Note

Dear survivors of sexual assault, I want you to know that you are brave. You are brave no matter how it happened and who did it. You were brave while it happened. You were brave afterward, whether you came forward or chose not to. You have been brave every day since, as you have worked to rebuild your life. It was not your fault. It was not your fault even if you were drunk. It was not your fault no matter what you wore. The shame belongs to the person who assaulted you. So please, hold your head up high because you are the strongest of us all.

Content Warning

The content of this paper contains descriptions of physical and sexual assault. Reader discretion is advised. The events described are true, but many names have been changed or redacted to protect the privacy of victims. The dialog of this essay was written by the author. However, it was based on statements from interviews and official records.

Year: 2011

Clemson South Carolina is known for two things: football and the university, in that order. People from all over the country know the name Dabo Sweeny, the beloved coach of the Clemson Tigers. The University's name has grown in prominence along with its football team's prowess, but most people know the name Clemson to mean football and few people know the name Clemson to mean a town. The town of Clemson is unremarkable. There are two major roads, one filled with chain restaurants and the other sprinkled with student housing and mechanic shops. Even lesser known is the town of Central which has one stoplight. Central is so small it is almost synonymous with Clemson. They are sleepy towns, where not much happens. Young couples raise their children and neighbors' gossip about what so and so wore to church and how amazing the Tigers are doing this season. The mild DUIs and weed busts that do happen rarely make the news.

It was a typical overcast morning the day the little girl heard about it. She was buckled into her seat in the blue Honda family minivan as her mother drove down the pothole-ridden roads of Central to drop her older sisters off at school. She was only half listening as she gazed out the window at the trees and leafless shrubs passing by

when she heard a sentence that caught her attention.

"She was strangled with her own bikini" her mother said, her voice sounding tense and hurried. Her sisters repeated their mother's words in question. "Yes. She was a Clemson student. A construction worker stalked her, broke into her apartment, raped her, and strangled her with her own bikini." Her mother sounded breathless.

The little girl didn't say anything. She didn't understand it. Was stalking something people did to each other? She only knew the word "stalk" from watching Animal Planet when the lurking lions would creep up on the unsuspecting gazelle and then attack them, bringing them to the ground and devouring them. And what did rape mean? It all sounded so foreign and so far away. The girl who was strangled was in college, so ancient in the little girl's eyes. Her attacker strangled her with an item of clothing the little girl wasn't even allowed to wear yet. Nothing made sense.

Later, when it was just the little girl and her mother in the car, she decided to ask her mom what she had been wondering about for some time. "Mommy, what does rape mean?" she asked as they drove down the unremarkable grey streets.

Her mother sighed and waited a moment before responding by saying, "It is when someone takes something from someone else that they weren't willing to give."

The little girl was confused for a moment. Wouldn't that make rape stealing? The heaviness in her mother's tone told her that it was so much more than that, so much worse.

Year: 2013

Years went by and the little girl learned what rape really meant and what it meant to be a woman. As she reached her teen years, she learned that being a woman did not mean high heels or red lipstick. It meant you went about life with an entirely different mindset than your male counterparts. It meant carrying pepper spray, double and triple locking your doors, and always looking over your shoulder. Being a woman meant always being afraid of men and rape.

When cross country season came every June, she took to running every morning as soon as the sun rose. The South Carolina humidity and heat would climb into the 90s before 8 am. The best time to run was just before the sun rose or as it set, yet she would wait until the sun had risen and the temperature with it. She armed herself with a can of pepper spray and her phone with the dial pad open in case she needed it; and her dog at the end of a blue nylon leash, they would set out of their neighborhood. She would turn left onto Issaquena trail and then immediately turn right into Ingle's Parking lot and then onto Highway 93. The only shade that can be reached on Highway 93 comes from turning right into the Reserve apartments. She and her dog would run their 5k course on the dusty, heat-radiating concrete of 93's sidewalk. Cars and trucks would drive by blasting her with diesel

fumes and making her cough, but she would not run through the Reserve apartments. Every time she passed the student apartments on Highway 93, she would feel the urge to cross the road to the other side.

Part I Murder, Arrest, and Confession: Years 2005-2006

In September 2005, the gates of a Florida State Penitentiary opened to release Jerry Buck Inman. If you were to hear the story of his life you might pity him. In his 35 years, he had suffered sexual abuse from his father and severe mental illness, attempting suicide multiple times while in prison. However, if you heard his rap sheet you might reconsider. He was guilty of robbery, sexual assault with battery, aggravated assault, grand theft auto, and kidnapping. His appearance fits his crimes with at least 14 different tattoos including pentagrams, skulls, daggers, guns, and women. He had intense eyes that seemed to pierce you from underneath his high forehead. He was sentenced to 30 years in prison for crimes in Florida, Tennessee, and North Carolina; after only 18 years, he was set free. The day he was paroled, history was doomed to repeat itself.

Inman needed to make a fresh break. He couldn't stay in Florida, move to North Carolina, or return home to Tennessee. He was a registered sex offender in all three states. He couldn't settle in any of those places. He wandered around the South from Alabama to Tennessee and finally to South Carolina. One afternoon, he was prowling Central and Clemson looking for somewhere to rob when he saw the young blonde enjoying the spring air on her balcony, and a plan formed in his sick mind.

Tiffany Sauers was from Ladue, Missouri. Tiffany was gregarious and active. She was quick to make friends. Her contagious laugh had the power to draw people to her like a magnet. She was a member of a sorority and volunteered at charities, and a diabetes research center where she was named volunteer of the year. She was beautiful with long blond hair and blue eyes.

She moved to South Carolina to pursue a degree in civil engineering at Clemson University. She moved into an upscale off-campus apartment complex. She shared her first-floor apartment with three other girls, one of which was her best friend, Holly Bergman. The complex appeared to be the epitome of security with 126 security cameras. Despite living in a safe apartment complex, Tiffany was known to make wise safety decisions, although she did occasionally hide her key under the door mat.

In May, Spring had long since hit South Carolina. Bradford pear trees had long since bloomed and already dropped their petals. The temperatures had begun climbing up into the 80s giving Carolinians a taste of the balmy summer heat to come. The grass had turned green, and the grey clouds of winter had retreated. Flowers had bloomed and birds had returned to sing in the mornings. Butterflies burst forth to be freed from their chrysalises. Like the butterflies in their

chrysalises, Clemson University students began breaking free from their textbooks as the Spring 2006 semester came to an end.

With school being out for the year, Tiffany's roommates left for the weekend leaving her in the apartment alone. They saw her for the last time on May 25th at 11:00 pm. Little did they know that in less than two hours, she would draw her last breath.

Shortly after Tiffany's friends left, Inman saw his opportunity. He scaled the balcony rail and tried the door. He was in luck; it was unlocked. As he moved through the college apartment, he found Tiffany's bedroom. He entered and violently woke her.

"You," he yelled. "Get up. Give me everything you have." He expected the blonde to hand over her money quickly, but to his surprise, she yelled back. He demanded that she hand over her credit and ATM cards, but she just kept yelling back. He spotted her purse on the floor and began rifling through it and finding credit and ATM cards. He stopped hearing her until he demanded the pin to her ATM card. They continued to yell at each other until eventually, she told him the pin.

Inman wasn't there for money or ATM cards. He was there for Tiffany. He was there to do hateful things to her. He pounced on her and pinned her to the floor. She kept fighting back beating against him, but he ripped the clothes off her body as he forced himself on her. To make her stop fighting, he reached out and grabbed her bikini top and wrapped it around her neck. As choking her wasn't enough, he bound her hands putting him in control. Despite the burning in her lungs and pain in her body she kept struggling against Inman and the cloth around her neck until all the air left her lungs and her eyes closed forever.

Inman wrapped a bandana around his face and set out into the night. At three in the morning, he tried to use her ATM cards four times and then realized that in the frenzy, he had forgotten the pin. In his frustration, he decided to drive home to Tennessee discarding items from Tiffany's purse as he went as if to rid himself of the memory of what he had done.

Sun peaked into the first-floor apartment when Holly Bergman unlocked the door to find her best friend lying bound, nude, and dead on the floor. That day Holly lost her best friend and gained a lifelong nightmare.

The police arrived and began interviewing the neighbors. Tiffany's upstairs neighbor sadly admitted that he hadn't heard anything. He said, "I wish I had. I was right there." Tiffany's neighbors echoed similar sentiments. As fear seeped into the community, some of the girls living next door decided to book a hotel room for a few nights.

DNA samples were taken from the carpet and Tiffany's body was taken away for autopsy. In the following weeks, the coroner would conclude that Tiffany suffered traumatic sexual violence and died of

asphyxia. He would find the bruises on her wrists and ankles from where she fought to the end. On June 5th, 2006, at 11:45pm, Inman's DNA was matched to sexual assaults in Florida and North Carolina. He was found in Tennessee and arrested by Chief Deputy G. W. McCoig. Later that night, at 3:00 am, he confessed to Tiffany's murder and told the deputy "After that shit right there, I am a fucking animal."

Part 2 Trial and Sentencing: Years 2006-2023

Greenville, South Carolina is Clemson's opposite. It is a big city where there is always activity. Downtown Greenville is filled with gyms, shops, eclectic restaurants, and studios. Everyone from artists to athletes to bookworms can find something interesting to do in Downtown Greenville. It is a hub of every kind of entertainment and business. However, on June 26th, 2006, while Greenville residents were peacefully going about their lives in Downtown, the trial of Jerry Buck Inman began.

The case was atypical from the start. Rather than try to convince an entire jury of his innocence, Inman plead guilty to first degree murder and rape of Tiffany Sauers and begged for the death sentence. He waved his right to trial by peers because guilt and shame had begun to eat at him, and he had begun to slit his wrists and starve himself. He'd rather die than live with himself and Tiffany's memory.

The judge repeatedly asked Inman if he understood that he was waving a right to trial by jury and confirmed that Inman did it willingly without input or pressure from others. Inman reassured the judge that he understood repeatedly.

First, Holly Bergman took the stand. She told the judge how Tiffany could make friends with anyone, how Tiffany would spend hours on the phone with her family, and how finding Tiffany's body haunted her. After Holly, Christina Morello, another one of Tiffany's roommates stood up and told the judge how hard Tiffany worked in school and how kind and compassionate she was to everyone she met.

Holly and Christina's testimony revealed who Tiffany was and kept her alive but three different women took the stand and told stories that revealed who Inman was. The first woman stood up and told the story of how Inman broke into her home in 1987 and tied she and her roommate up and raped her while forcing her roommate to watch. The next woman's story took place on May 23rd, 2006. Two days before Tiffany's murder. She told the jury about how Inman broke into her home, bound her, stripped her down, and then abandoned his plan when he saw she was on her period. The cops determined that he had entered her home by cutting a hole in the floor. The last woman who stood before the judge told him how Inman had broken into her home on May 22nd, 2006, bound her and raped her in front of her child, forced her to wash herself with shampoo, and then locked she and her daughter in the bathroom. Inman was guilty of each assault. By telling their stories, they inadvertently told Tiffany's.

The trial continued when in 2008 when Dr. Eric Christiansen a forensic pathologist, testified that Tiffany had died of asphyxiation from strangulation with her own bathing suit. He described the bruising on her wrists and ankle from being bound and the evidence of sexual assault. When it came time for the defense to speak, Dr. Price a prison psychologist testified to Inman's childhood abuse and that Inman was likely trying to act out his own experiences with assault. Dr. Price described how Inman's shame had led him to suicide attempts, eating barbed wire, and slitting his jugular.

In 2011, Jerry Buck Inman was sentenced to death. However, in February 2023 the defense filed an appeal for a retrial claiming that Inman's trial had been a violation of his sixth amendment rights and the Supreme Court granted the appeal. Inman will be retried, but he has not retracted his admission of guilt.

Year: 2022

She felt his weight pinning her to the mat. She couldn't move her hips. She braced one arm against his hip and the other she wrapped around his neck attempting to control his movement. Her heart pounded and the muscles in her arms and chest burned with the strain of fighting the man on top of her.

The yells of her friends and coach reached her ears and motivated her to keep fighting. The mats of Clemson Jiu-Jitsu were filled with grapplers wearing rash guards covered in sweat. The drill is shark tank. Two grapplers have starting positions. To win, the person who is in the mount position has to submit the person below them. For the person on the bottom to win, they have to escape.

The little girl was no longer a little girl. She was a 20-year-old college student, the same age as Tiffany Sauers. She had started training in Jiu-Jitsu and wrestling because she wanted to learn how to defend herself. She wanted to believe that she could defend herself if she ever found herself at the mercy of a man as so many women do. For all her male training partners, jiu-jitsu was just a hobby sport, a little weekend recreation. To her, it was survival, life or death.

She knew in her mind that Brian, the guy on top of her, didn't actually want to hurt her and it was just a drill. Brian was her friend and they had been training together for weeks, but it felt so real. She felt panic start to rise in her throat. "No." she thought, "I need to know how to do this, for myself, for all women."

Minutes crawled by as she bucked her hips upward and pushed against Brian. Sweat dripped onto her. They thrashed around the mats until they bumped into the walls. The match was called when Brian reached a submission, and she tapped out. She looked at the clock and realized she had fought for six minutes. She rubbed the ache in her shoulders and chest. She and Brian fist-bumped as they lay panting on the mats.

Every night, before the young woman goes to bed, she sits in her kitchen looking back and forth between the front and back doors of her college apartment, double and triple checking the locks. She feels discomfort whenever she spots a man near her apartment. He could be the kindest gentlest man in town, but at that moment, it wouldn't dispel her fear. She keeps pepper spray by her bedside table. She avoids walking at night. She is afraid to do many of the things she wants to because she is a woman, and being a woman means you are never safe. She doesn't hike alone. She doesn't travel alone. She doesn't run on the shaded streets of The Reserve apartment complex. She is wary of all the boys who approach her, no matter how innocent their intentions are. That young woman is me and I am no different than any other woman in the world.

Bodily autonomy and physical safety are human rights that we should all possess but women are robbed of them the moment they are born. We spend every day looking over our shoulders. I am now 20 years old and a science major, just like Tiffany. Her death does not seem distant to me now like it did when I was a child. Her death could easily be my death or my roommate's, my friend's, or my sister's.

One in five women are sexually assaulted in their lifetime (Smith, S. et.al.2015). Tiffany's rape and murder are disturbing to talk about. Because sexual violence is so common and heartbreaking, it is tempting to dismiss Tiffany's death as an unfortunate tragedy or simply an anomaly in Central and Clemson's peaceful history. However, her death should not simply be accepted as part of the statistics because to ignore Tiffany's story is to ignore the stories of women everywhere. If we avoid talking about sexual assault the issue will only persist and women will continue to suffer violence and the dark shame and fear that follows. This issue should not sit on women's shoulders only, but rather we, as a society, should bare this burden.

There is no question of Inman's guilt. There is no use in continuing to debate whether his troubled past or mental health issues made this ruling unjust. All that matters now is that we work to prevent a murder like this from ever happening again. Inman was a serial offender. He was a registered sex offender in North Carolina, Tennessee, and Florida. While statewide sex offender registries are useful, their usefulness is limited to those living in that state. Inman was employed and working in South Carolina. His registration elsewhere was no help to South Carolinians. How were his employers to know he was dangerous? How was Tiffany? How was anyone?

The judicial system needs to adopt a federal nationwide sex offender registry. If a perpetrator commits a crime in one state, it should not be so easy for him to commit it again somewhere else. While the issue of ending sexual assault is complex, this change would give women and families a better chance at protecting themselves. Sex offenders should not be able to simply cross a state line and have a clear record. Because their crimes will likely haunt their victims

forever, rapists should not be able to shed their rap sheet by taking a road trip.

The switch to a nationwide sex offender registry is not just a matter of judicial efficiency, but a matter of American freedom. Our Bill of Rights states that everyone has a right to life and liberty, but women's lives are impacted daily by needing to protect themselves. Betty Ford once said, "The search for human freedom can never be complete without freedom for women." It could be argued that making the change to a national sex offender registry would be time-consuming and require a lot of manpower, but it is a small price to pay to protect the freedom of women everywhere. It is a small and temporary burden for our nation to carry when compared to the burden millions of women carry every day.

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Jacob Harry

Void



Kelly Pape

Mediocre Boy

Hollow insides,
The dirt underneath your fingernails
Gives your intentions away.
Sweet? As cherry pie,
But cherries are tart,
Teeth bared,
All lies,
I've had better conversations with a kitchen knife.

Jacob Harry

I'll Be Fixed Soon



CJ Doss

Erebus

No one ever knew what she was doing. She would lock herself in her room for weeks at a time. Most people assumed she was depressed. After all, 38 of her fellow students had gone missing. All of them had been taken by a man who called himself Erebus, but no one knew who he was or why he took kids. Erebus was the Greek god of shadows. What did he want with kids? She was the student body president and the prom queen. Of course, she would be affected, wouldn't she? Some people thought they saw things in her window at night, but everyone was so scared of being out alone that they thought nothing of it. They didn't realize that she was the true monster terrorizing the town. Kidnapping kids for her own creation.

Madeline had dreamt of the shadow realm. A throne covered in blood. There sat a man — if you could call him that. She could see every detail of his body, but instead of skin, he wore shadows. She found herself kneeling down to him as if he was her king. He stood and came to her. He took her hand in his, motioning for her to rise. She did as he said, whether out of fear or love, she did not know. He guided her to the throne and sat her down on it. When she sat, her eyes became the color of night. It was as if she had been hollowed out. All light had been taken from her. The creature leaned over and whispered something in her ear.

The next day, Brett Collins went missing. He was vulnerable and had just been kicked off the football team. He was an easy target. Three weeks later, Sarah Goldberg went missing. She had just been rejected by Yale University. Another vulnerable and easy target. Every three weeks another kid. Every one of them came from a different background. Their only similarity was vulnerability.

When Brett was on his way home, she made her move. She had stood in the middle of the road like she needed help. He pulled over the truck and ran to her to offer some. Little did he know that she hid a taser behind her back. She pulled it out and pulled the trigger. The taser was a lot less messy than a gun. It also kept him alive. He passed out cold. She had parked her car not far away. For a football player, he wasn't very heavy. She took him back to her house and forced him up the stairs. By this point, he had regained consciousness. She brought him food every day and, three weeks later, Sarah Goldberg. They stayed tied up in the attic and every three weeks a new person joined. They were fed enough to keep them alive and given

enough water to do the same. This cycle of events – a kid went missing every three weeks, gone without a trace – had been going on for 3 years. Then, Madeline had everything she needed. She took something different from every kid. She didn't know what she was doing with Brett Collins. After all, she had never killed before, let alone performed a medical procedure.

She had stolen some medical equipment from the school nurse and the science labs. Today was the day. She had skipped school and rushed upstairs. She started with Brett. After all, he was her first catch. She decided that his sacrifice would be bones. He had never broken one in all his years of playing football. It was perfect. She didn't bother killing him before she started her work. She laid down a tarp and tied him down. The others watched with horror. She had gagged them all, so their screams were inaudible, but they all tried anyway. Brett lasted all of 13 minutes into the procedure. She took every bone from his then lifeless body. She moved what was left to the other side of the attic. Then, she grabbed Sarah. She took a butcher knife, from her own kitchen, and sliced cleanly through the girl's neck. She cut carefully to ensure the brain's safety. That was her contribution. The day after Sarah's disappearance, she had received a letter. This time, it was from Harvard. She had been accepted, but that didn't matter now. None of it did. She worked calmly and swiftly while she extracted what she needed from every kid.

When she was done, she had every vital organ needed to allow life. She placed them one-by-one onto the plastic. She made sure each was in its place, surrounded by all of Brett's bones. When she had moved the last organ – the heart – into place, her eyes became empty and her soul disappeared, just like in her dream. A smile grew on her cheeks. She started to shake and seize. A stream of darkness, as black as her own heart had become, spewed from her body. A shadow drifted from her and covered the organs in a black cloud.

The creature matched the one from her dream. The shadow stood up, each organ following it, as though it had always belonged to the creature. His words sounded like echoing whispers that will never leave your mind. He congratulated her on her success in that horrible, distant voice. He loved his new body, and he loved her. She was his queen and he was now to rule this bright world of light. He was going to create a shadow realm. Only, he was creating it for her.

He reached for her hand and drew it to his face — if you might call it that. He gently planted a kiss on the back of her hand. A burst of momentary light filled the attic as the bodies of the kids vanished. Now, the creature's body mutated. The bones were enveloped in shadow. His eyes and mouth glowed a deep red. Blood red. The mouth curled up at the edges. Madeline could still see every organ she had stolen. Her own eyes were still black as night.

By this time, the sun had started to set. The colors in the sky pulled at her attention as she faced the window in the attic. She saw

the beautiful colors dancing amongst the clouds. The birds flew back to their nests, to their families. She thought of her mother and father. What would they think of her now? What would her friends think of her? She had taken the lives of 38 kids, just so that she could bring her lover into this world. What had she brought into society? Was she really that desperate? What had she done?

In this moment of hesitation, her eyes came back to their normal state. They were no longer empty. They were bright blue with a hint of green. Her soul had come back to her. At this moment, she realized that she had just unleashed the devil. She realized that she was his weakness. He loved her and that could be used against him, to destroy him. Inspiration struck her as hard as a boulder, or to be more accurate, a knife. She had been holding a long blade in her hand the entire time.

She stepped forward and embraced the creature. He pulled her in. He longed for the embrace of his queen. He didn't see it coming. She struck from behind. The knife drove deep into his blackened heart. He hadn't fully formed in this world yet. His heart was still vulnerable. He pulled away in shock, but it was too late. In a moment, the beat of his heart stopped and the creature toppled to the ground. The shadows sunk into the floor, leaving only the remains of those poor kids she had killed. She fell to her knees and, in an act of desperation, struck the knife into her own heart. The taste of blood filled her mouth as she gasped for breath. She collapsed to the floor, still clutching the knife.

Her mother found her body the next morning; however, this was the only thing she found. There was no evidence of what had taken place. Only a knife sunk deep into her daughter's heart. It wasn't long; however, before they found the creature. What Madeline hadn't realized was that, by killing herself, she relinquished her bond with him. She had been the only thing holding him back. He didn't need a beating heart to live. He only needed the human frame. He was now free to roam the Earth and take whatever he wanted.

The students at Madeline's high school had been called to an assembly to commemorate her tragic death. So many souls in one room. The creature's lips twisted into the closest thing to a smile he could manage. The sky outside turned a deathly black. The wind picked up, yanking the doors of the gym open. Most of the kids screamed. The black shadow entered through the open doors.

The room fell into silence. You could hear a pin drop if anyone had the courage to do it. As he entered the room, the eyes of every kid traced him. He made his way to the center of the gym. Without saying a word, that deathly grin still on his face, he brought his arms out in front of him. His hands came together, forming a triangle between his palms. He muttered words, completely incomprehensible to the human mind.

In a burst of momentary light, just like in the attic, every kid

started to shake and seize. A string of shadow burst from the chest of every kid to the hands of the creature. More strings of shadow burst through the doors. The window shattered and more shadows came in. The creature had taken the souls of everyone, not only those in the school. He had the souls of the entire world.

This world of light was now his world of shadow. Here, the dead lived. When Madeline took her life, she left her soul weak and malleable. The creature took advantage of this. He stole the little bit of light that was left and replaced it with darkness. These seem like dependent and independent clauses, and they could be combined to make Now that this realm was his, he brought back his queen. He and his queen will rule this realm forever. They would rule as Nyx and Erebus. They were more than king and queen. They were gods.

Ana Moreno

Sorrow



Delainey Brummage

Somewhere Between Now and Then

My skin-tight jeans turned into long, floral skirts.
I grew to hate the feeling of denim.
The sturdy, twill fabric seemed to suffocate my skin,
Leaving no room for air to breathe.
I like my long skirts.
I enjoy having the ability to move freely.
While it can be daunting when the wind blows,
I find security in knowing I'm finally able to breathe.

My desire for new and popular brands turned into thrifted outfits.
I don't like new clothes.
The stiff, unworn fabric and chemical scent
Makes me uncomfortable.
The thrift store is my sanctuary.
Scrolling through the past keeps my mind here on earth.
Once before me, there was another soul
Who shared my kind of style.
I can't help but to think of them as I browse
Through the many aisles.
I question whether or not they made it out,
Or whether they were too confined
Within the stitches that held their clothing together.

My drugstore makeup turned into a bare face.
My mascara, foundation, and blush would melt away in the rain,
Revealing my true humility.
I sure felt pretty on the outside,
But I was never fond of makeup.

Behind the thick layers of liquid beauty stood the little girl that once was,
Trapped within the barricade of society's standards.
She grew to acknowledge the rain —
It melted her away from the ropes that had once restrained her.

Brummage

Status updates turned into words on a page.

No amount of likes or comments

Could ever express the insecurity that haunted my mind.

Jericho Lincoln

The Ends of Earth



Rida Hirani

Uncharted Territory

Millions saw the apple fall, but Newton asked why? "The Important thing is not to stop questioning. Curiosity has its own reason for existing." This quote is ascribed to Albert Einstein, one of the most brilliant brains of the twentieth century. His words exactly encapsulate my upbringing, which was filled with wonder, awe, and inspiration. Because my parents were usually busy with their employment, I used to have a lot of time to explore my interests as a child. I discovered a Rubik's cube one day when I had nothing better to do. Like any typical primary school student, I looked into what I could do with my limited resources. In my first experiment, I thought to test the durability of the cube. It seemed strong to a six-year-old but putting it under my dad's car seemed an appropriate way to test my hypothesis. Having survived the environment, I began shifting the cubes around and tried to color-coordinate them. This taught me that with enough effort and self-learning, anything is possible.

My early childhood experiments were the start of my voyage into uncharted territory, which I felt could be explored through my sense of independence. I was told how to approach things at a young age, or how to perform a given task exactly, from a young age. As a result, finding myself alone with only a Rubik's cube marked a watershed moment in my development. I was able to teach myself to do something for the first time in my life. Before that point, everything had been a failure; learning on my own without guidance felt impossible. Children are notorious for their impatience and fickle-mindedness. Anything that is difficult when you are a child is guaranteed to make you want to quit. I, on the other hand, with my stubborn insistence on getting it right, and my ambition to learn and master a talent, kept me engaged and continually practicing, despite setbacks. This sense of pride I felt after teaching myself how to align the cube simply by seeing others do it still motivates and encourages me to try and persevere through obstacles in order to overcome them. Simply putting the cube back together taught me a valuable lesson: if you're curious, you'll find puzzles all around you, and if you're determined, you'll solve them. The experience had a major impact on my life because it shaped it; nevertheless, failure is significant because it represents the ability to rise beyond adversity. Frequently, I have the impression that anything I'm doing is impossible to complete. Had I not considered the same thing while mending the Rubik's cube, even though it was highly possible? This thought is what keeps me going and shapes me into the capable teenager I am today, driven by a desire to be proud.

Macie Johnston

A Winter Encounter



Armani Canty

Love is Love

relationships with girls are never easy
if you are Bisexual.
you remember things like coming out to your friends
with no family around,
and if you had a relationship,
they never talked about how happy you were to have someone who loved you and
how well her hand fit in yours
and somehow when you talk about her,
it never gets across how much you
loved her presence and her kisses
as your dad spouted homophobic remarks at every opportunity,
and even though you remember
your family will never understand
your pain as she walked away from you forever
and another relationship goes.
and though you are Christian, it is not Bisexuality that
concerns you
but you love your parents anyway,
and it is not your father's prejudice that matters
but only that she and you were together and she
and you had good dates and even better
Valentine's Days,
and I really hope no homophobic person ever has cause
to write about me
because they never understand
Love is Love, and they will
probably talk about my sinful lifestyle
and never understand that
all the while, I was in love with a girl

Kenneth Morrow
Garden of Eden



Catherine Jordan

Media Literacy: Witches on Digital Media

Media moves as fast as a swipe on TikTok. During the pandemic TikTok subgenres such as #spiritualtiktok and #witchtok rose in popularity. This sub-genre of the app was for witches to explain in short videos their way of life or help those who wanted information on their practices. According to Rebekah King, "This format lends itself to fast-paced, visual appealing content, and this has shaped the kind of magic on WitchTok." These videos can be entertaining and informative, but they can also spread misinformation.

Learning media literacy is important on these platforms so one doesn't get entangled with the heavy amount of misinformation. Media literacy is the way a person understands, analyzes, and sees the media. This goes for all types of media. It is the viewer's job to navigate through media with critical analysis skills. This can be more challenging than it seems. News outlets come out with information faster than they used to, which can impact their reliability. A good example was the Gabby Giffords controversy. Gabby Giffords was a congress woman that was critically injured in a shooting in Tucson, Arizona. The controversy was caused by the many news outlets that used each other as a source and claimed she was dead instead of waiting to hear from officials that she was in fact alive. The demand for fast news may make the news unreliable, which is a problem that is compounded on social media. No one is fact-checking TikTok.

One solution to this problem is implementing classes about media literacy, not just to help students in school, but also to help them navigate media in everyday life. According to Edward T. Arke, "there is a lack of teacher education opportunities associated with media literacy" (100). He also added, "the world wide web providing such a multitude of information, sometimes very difficult to identify sources, educators interested in developing curriculum that helps students evaluate information they are gathering and are exposed online" (Arke 101, Kirby 2003). Since there is a plethora of information online, it's easy to get captivated by the misinformation within the media. So, it is important to navigate media with a critical mind so the viewer can determine the media's credibility. This is also important when researching spiritual practices online.

Exploring further, in 2020, rumors spread that a group of

beginner witches were involved with putting a hex on the moon. This caused an uproar in the wiccan community because the moon is very important to witches and their craft. Despite the controversy, there was no evidence; there was never a video of witches claiming they did this. It went so viral that people outside of the community were tuning in to the scandal. Because the news had gone viral, it is possible the origins of the story were hidden under the confusion and shock of a lot of people. What was the reason behind it in the end? Where did this come from in the first place?

A TikTok user by the name Riot Addams made a video with a lot of information about the moon hexing. In his video he says

In North American folk magic, mostly surrounding Appalachian there is witchy lore into becoming a witch... and this rite of passage is known as killing the moon... this involves shooting a silver bullet into the moon. During the origins of this lore is when people believed that a silver bullet was the way to end a witch. You would shoot a silver bullet at the moon, if the moon bled you had become a witch. (Addams)

He also mentions in the video, "this rite of passage was symbolic...I think a group of young rogue witches read a book and found this rite of passage, this ritual to become a witch, and they took it literally without understanding the context." This is important because there are many more videos about the accusation and that don't consider the potential root of misinformation. This controversy has changed many people's perspectives on the modern-day witch. There were a lot of videos with mixed reactions and retellings of what happened during this event. It's easy to get lost in mountains of information on the internet, which can make thinking critically and assessing the validity of sources more difficult. How people take in media messages and interpret them can influence their understanding of the people around them, even if those messages are based on false or misleading information.

We can also look at witches through the lens of media psychology. Media Psychology is the study of the various types of media and how it affects human behavior. Emotion is a big factor that influencers use to persuade people, and it is powerful enough for them to believe false information in subjects like religion and values. There are professionals in every hobby or interest that people might have, but it's easy to believe false information online because of the way influencers make us feel.

The most effective way to navigate around media such as #WitchTok is to be more critical in analyzing the content being presented. The internet is a big, unregulated place, and a lot of people tend to have a parasocial relationships with people they follow online. According to Konijn, "Users may feel emotionally attached to virtual humans that portray emotions, and interacting with such emotional embodied computer systems positively influence their perceptions of humanness,

trustworthiness, and believability” (196). These content creators appear trusting and are influential, which draws people into their content and craft. Viewers should be cautious of emotional tactics that influencers may use to persuade them. It’s important to analyze the situation critically before taking influencers at their word. What are the sources these people are referencing? Are they trustworthy? Do they confirm the influencers’ claims? According to Konijn, “the fabric of our emotional system seems to help contemporary media exert even more influence than any of us would admit (197).” This means that media messages play an important role in which of our emotions get affected by how we interact with media. In the WitchTok community, the hexing of the moon caused emotional turmoil in part because of a lack of media literacy from the people discussing the incident.

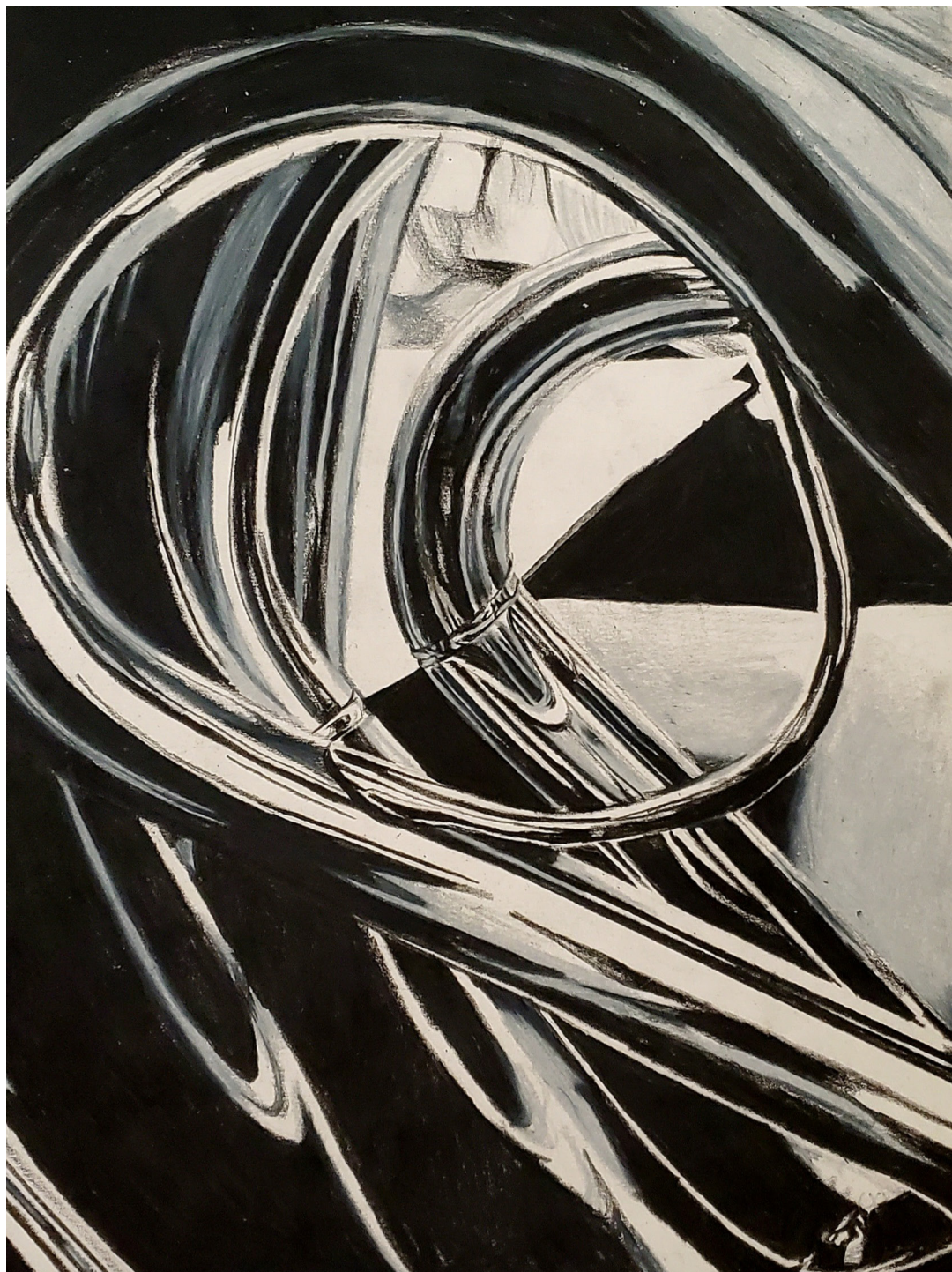
Media literacy is important when finding reliable sources online, or when entering complex discussions about unfamiliar subjects such as witchcraft or religious organizations. Navigating through media without being critical could create false information as shown in the Gabby Gibson controversy and the aftermath of the hexing of the moon controversy. Furthermore, Konijn highlights the impact of human emotions when interacting online through media psychology. WitchTok, shows how important media psychology can be as viewers make critical decisions about what they believe on the internet.

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Mara Pilgrim

French Horn Noire



Alyssa Campbell

Hero

At 4 – I needed a superhero with big strong arms to help save Barbie

At 5 – I needed someone to save me from the dragon's lair

At 8 – I needed someone to teach me times tables and fractions

At 13 – I needed someone to show me how a man should treat me

At 16 – I needed someone with ice cream and jokes after my first heartbreak

At 18 – I needed someone to help me pack boxes to move into college

At 4 – there was no superhero

At 5 – there was no redemption from the dragon

At 8 – I taught myself

At 13 – I saw violence

At 16 – I cried myself to sleep

At 18 – I packed boxes alone

Why was nothing right?

You

You left

You abandoned me

You brought me pain

You never cared for me

You brought home anger

You were gone

You quit

You

You didn't care but I did

I collected me

I took care of my business

I am my own hero

Nevaeh Harter

Rose



Chantal Chandler

Empress Wu

In ancient China, the Dragon Throne was sought after by the highest of all men. Those who kept it received blessings from the Mandate of Heaven. Those who failed usually lost their lives in bloody rebellion. Each ruler played a dangerous game that was refereed by the Chinese people. Those who lived through the chaos of fire considered the usurping of countless emperors predictable. One thing no one did foresee during the Golden Age of China was the ascendance of Wu Zhao, better known as Empress Wu Zetian. Empress Wu Zetian influenced China's history through politics, art culture, and introduced Buddhism to court; underhandedly, she gained the favor of both her people and the gods.

Wu Zhao was no stranger to the high life during a time of Confucianism supremacy. Already born into East Asia's nobility, she used her free time focusing on education. Noble women studied things, such as writing, music and other essentials that benefited the empire, including law, gaining the attention of their current emperor, Taizong of Tang. Zhao was to become his consort at the age of thirteen, sporting an affair with his son Gaozong during the relationship. Out of at least a hundred women in Taizong's harem, her personality at the time was known to be quite amusing with a touch of charm flourishing in beauty to match. Traditionally, after an emperor's death their consort was to join the others at the convent, but Wu Zhao refused convincing Gaozong to choose her to become one of his own and gaining three sons out of the agreement. The mysterious death of her daughter led to the dethroning of former Empress Wang, who was a primary suspect in the child's demise, marking the beginning of Wu Zhao's gory mists of controversy. Following the incident, Gaozong soon offered Wu Zhao a marriage proposal. After her second husband's death, she found herself a proxy to the throne mentoring their sons while ruling China as its new emperor, later earning the title Empress Wu Zetian, thanks to her experience and wisdom.

Before Empress Wu Zetian took center stage, China's society systemically thrived on patriarchy. "The political ideal presented by Confucianism, which is the traditional state doctrine of the imperial China, refuses female participation to political arena and identifies the emperor as the Son of Heaven" (Tezel 4). China's patriarchal system at the time enabled many skeptics to doubt the empress' ascendance to the Dragon Throne. How can a woman gain the Mandate of Heaven when it specifically calls for a man? Her efforts couldn't

completely wash away Confucianism, despite the Tang dynasty favoring Daoism; however, Empress Wu Zetian chose to enlighten China with more Buddhist traditions, catering to its major following of people at the time by going through great lengths to create several temples and statues in the name of Buddha. Empress Zetian was known to often visit the locations she created showing her devotion to all Imperial China,

The most spectacular are the stone temples and statues chiseled into grottoes at Longmen, near her capital. In the largest cave there is a statue called the Grand Vairocana Buddha. Carved in limestone, the colossal statue is reputed to have been carved in Wu's own likeness. Whether true or not, it is what people believed. (Reese)

The discovery of the statue could be the pinnacle of why Buddhist monks never truly grew fond of her in the first place, seeing themselves as a steppingstone to validate one woman's march to power. It's said that she would recite Buddhist scripture to validate many of her actions, hence why we have so many negative accounts from the same monks during this era. Later in her lifetime, she would repent for many of her sins, and its debatable whether using politics and religion were one of them. To be fair, most monks were men and who knows what their true motives of slander were? After her death all evidence of abhorred feelings for Empress Wu Zetian were symbolized in the act of destroying a prime minister's tomb ordered by her successor.

Setting aside her ulterior motive to secure China's throne, Empress Wu Zetian was an emperor of the people. For years she influenced the decisions of many emperors, her sons especially, which may have been another reason why people were so skeptical of her true intentions in the first place. After becoming a key player in China's politics once she was designated emperor, Empress Wu Zetian utilized the education she received growing up as a child to analyze China as a whole.

During her reign, Empress Wu expanded the borders of China by conquering new lands in Korea and Central Asia. She also helped to improve the lives of the peasants by lowering taxes, building new public works, and improving farming techniques. (Nelson).

With her controversial image, it was very wise for the Empress to appease the very people she wanted to rule over. After all, how can an emperor keep the Mandate of Heaven if they aren't satisfying those who truly carry judgment? She was a ruler of international regard that improved the Silk Road with wise decision making. Merchants often came and lived in her capital Chang'an, bringing many imports to the city for trade. Silk was one of the biggest items on the market at the time. Rice farming and storing seemed to be the other agenda she took on for the sake of curing hunger in the area making China one of the wealthiest nations

satisfying her people.

With her education, there was no doubt that she learned from the mistakes of her predecessors. For example, "she surrounded herself with competent and talented people by promoting people based on their abilities rather than by their family history" (Nelson). One of the focal points of Empress Wu Zetian's leadership also consisted of letting women play their own role in the Chinese Empire. This leader knew that she wasn't the only one getting oppressed in a patriarchal society, allowing more freedom to happen for women. Basic examples of empowerment for women would be in the areas of clothing, hunting, and horseback riding; however, she wanted to change more than that. She hired women to work in higher positions of court dealing with politics which was considered a scandalous affair to many at the time who were still fixated on the crazy thought of her even ruling, thus negatively gaining the attention of men despite all of their accomplishments when it came to advancing China as a nation. While acknowledging all of her good intentions, the emperor still had her suspicions for good reason. Where there is power, usurpers aren't too far behind. She was rumored to have hired secret police in order to gather intel on whatever was going on at the time creating controversy pertaining to her rivals in court.

Every wise emperor knows that the Mandate of Heaven could be taken away as quickly as it is given. "Empress Wu was very strict on her own relatives. Before Empress Wu had the chance to join in political activities, she had written a pamphlet about 'Commandments to In-Laws'. It was because she had read in the history books that the collapse of a dynasty was often caused by in-laws of the emperor" (Woo 60). This pamphlet was a small demonstration of her paranoia when it came to other family members or those in her palace. Now that she rightfully earned the Dragon Throne, Empress Wu Zetian couldn't risk losing it to anyone, and writings of her tyranny mainly stemmed from what went on behind closed doors. Her people not only held her responsible for her daughter's death, but she is also held responsible for Ex-Empress Wang's dethroning in the beginning of her ascendance. Empress Wu Zetian soon gained the reputation of possibly involving herself in the death of many other relatives of the Tang dynasty including her very own son during her reign, Li Hong's death ultimately ending with a struggle for power.

As time progressed during her reign, people saw a constant struggle of duality in the emperor. On one hand she contributed to the bloodshed in China when threatened; on the other hand, she crafted beautiful pieces of art in architecture that improved the country's elegance and refinement in the city of Chang'an, truly sticking to its meaning of "Perpetual Peace" in the empire. In murals we get historical events of meetings between traders and other diplomats. Through trade China was able to taste other foods and expensive clothing ingrained with priceless gems and silk displaying the luxury in their culture. The empress' people received Grand Vairocana Buddha to meet their culture's need of religion. But one of

her other greatest visions of art was the expansion of the Imperial Palace. "The Danfeng Gate of Daming palace, just looking up at it conjures a sense of awe. It's a statement. It provides a sense of Imperial grandeur. It makes anyone sort of standing before the gate feel a sense of their own smallness and insignificance" (Timeline, 00:19:20 - 00:19:45). Frankly speaking, Empress Wu Zetian wanted all her subjects to look at her in this way—not only her, but a China under her reign. To skeptics who doubted this belief, The Imperial Palace expansion may have just been a demonstration of her ego.

In conclusion, Empress Wu Zetian was a very controversial emperor that dared to play a game crafted only for men. In my opinion she won, leaving us with the task of figuring out whether she cheated using her looks and knowledge to influence those around her. Scholars who spoke of Empress Wu Zetian can say whatever they wish according to her monument at China's Valley of Kings; however, they can never take away from her the credibility of being a good ruler during China's Golden Age. Empress Wu Zetian, like any emperor before her, contributed to China's history spreading peaceful messages of Buddhism instead of warfare. She used politics to craft a perfect court she could trust, extinguishing the flames of her enemies and elevating the art culture of a nation that first saw beauty within her. These points alone validate her Mandate of Heaven to the people and the Gods. Finally, my last thought brings me to the death of her daughter. Do I think she did it? No, and I'm saying this with slight hesitation for Empress Wu Zetian was not ancient East Asia's greatest seductress, but the Dragon Throne was.

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Ana Moreno

Dreaming of the Cloud Room



Chantal Chandler

Behind a Smile

My fear doesn't crawl on eight legs,
or slither between the damp crevices of a forest floor.

Its curtains of incisors, canines, and molars create an illusion of appeal,
lulling its victims into a false sense of security before it strikes.

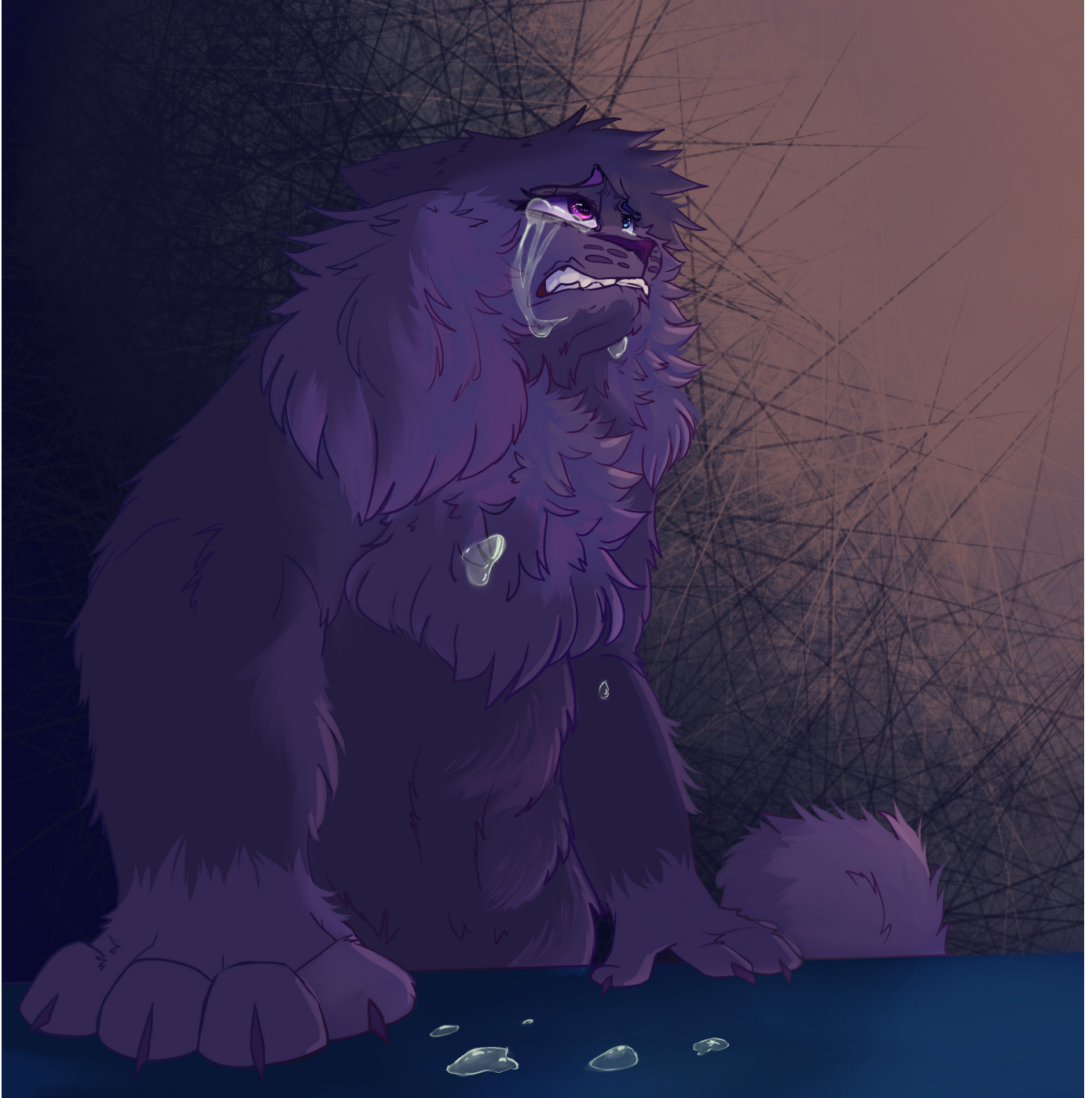
A bite, no matter how small, can crush one's joy, thoughts, and dreams,
resonating first within the confines of the rib cage before it numbs the cerebrum.

It is capable of breaking the strongest of creatures,
humbling the surest of individuals.

Its name is rejection.

Cheyenne Swann

Pain at Its Highest



Glenn Williams

My Miracle

I built a house almost single-handedly — a purple house on the corner of Reynolds and Grace. People seemed to be amazed that I painted the house purple! I explained that the reason was “Biblical”. I had purchased the lot from Mrs. Lydia Wofford. I happened to be studying the following passage in the Bible on the morning of the “color decision.”

A certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, one who worshiped God, heard us; whose heart the Lord opened to listen to the things which were spoken by Paul. When she and her household were baptized, she begged us, saying, “If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house, and stay” (World English Bible, Acts 16.14-15). So she persuaded us.

The house was “precious” as my wonderful neighbor, Robert, stated. A lady yelled out her window one morning: “That is the prettiest house I have ever seen! My children love it!” I loved it.

That brings me to the purpose of this story. I experienced the strangest event that has ever happened in my life while working one winter afternoon at the purple house. Before I explain I must preface this story with the following.

I am a Christian, and since my 27th year, I have been a faithful follower of Jesus Christ. God has guided me and protected me in miraculous ways that hindsight now reveals. My wife, Allie, and I prayed the very first day we began laying out the foundation, for protection and guidance while building the purple house. God made that house the most comfortable, the most fun, and the most maintenance free house we had ever lived in. I love to build. I don't hunt, fish, golf, drink, or travel much. Building is my hobby. Since my dad hired me one summer when I was thirteen to help carpenter Oscar Vines build a storage building behind our house, I have loved building. I was amazed at how I could nail wood together in such a way as to create a structure that would stand a long time. I was hooked.

So, I began building this purple house in August. Working alone through the wettest winter on record, I finally “dried in” around February. It was such a relief, and to celebrate one Saturday afternoon, I decided to clean up the site. I was tired and very careless, and while picking up scrap wood I stepped on a 2-inch nail sticking through 5/8 plywood penetrating the sole of my Hoka sneaker. Ouch! Oh well... I had done this many years ago and was familiar with

the feeling of a nail penetrating the ball of my foot. I hollered, but I didn't panic. After all, I still had tools to put up before I could leave the site. My foot hurt, but I reasoned that it shouldn't bleed too much before I could get home and let Allie "doctor" on me. I began to feel the squishy spot in my shoe but dared not take it off until I got home.

I finally finished securing and locking my tools, and then I jumped into my truck heading home. I really shouldn't do Allie that way. She's usually the first responder to my "boo boos", and I have had a few. Thinking about how I couldn't wait to get my foot cleaned up with a little Neosporin and a Band-Aid, I broke the speed limit crossing town. I knew Allie was at home, and I ran into the house and hollered for her to come fix my foot. I plopped down on the couch, kicked my shoe off, and waited for her expression of disgust at the bloody sight. She came in with that "here we go again" look on her face and reached out to hold my foot.

"It's awful I know!", I said. Her expression wasn't her usual. It reminded me of a puppy quizzically turning her head side to side studying a strange bug.

"What am I supposed to see"? she asked.

"My foot! I just had a nail go way up into my foot!"

"I don't see anything."

Pastor Phil had introduced me to healing prayer a few years ago. At a seminar in February, he asked for a volunteer to receive a prayer of healing. My hand flew up! I had Achilles heel tendonitis and couldn't run. Pastor Phil prayed for my heel, but I limped out of the seminar with no change. That same night God woke me up and told me that I would run a marathon in December. I felt such joy at that moment I wanted to wake Allie up and tell her, but wisely decided to wait till morning. The healing came, and I did, in fact, run a marathon that December. I believe in miraculous healing.

Am I crazy? Did I imagine stepping on a nail? I discussed it with Allie who is also my therapist, and we decided to claim a miracle. But I still had doubts and didn't sleep much that night, replaying the incident over and over in my mind. I knew the feeling of a nail penetrating a good distance into my foot from years before, and the feeling is unforgettable. But where was the blood? The hole was in my shoe. I found it, and the strangest thing- there was the tiniest red sparkling gem on my sock. It looked like a tiny sparkling ruby.

I study The Bible every morning. For years I have made a habit of reading scripture on my iPad before I do anything else. The following week, one morning, I read the story of the raising of Lazarus. Jesus called Lazarus out of the tomb. His sisters warned Jesus that there would be an awful smell from the decaying body. Lazarus walked out of the tomb. When Jesus told the people to remove the grave clothes and set him free, I am sure there were no smelly grave clothes. They were as clean as when they first covered Lazarus. Jesus would leave no blood

in my sock!

Now, every morning before I begin to build, I raise my hands to the sky and tell God that I love Him and praise Him. I understand at that moment, that God Is Good all the time. I feel like my soul will fly up to heaven if not weighed down by my earthly body. I tell Jesus that I will help Him build a house today. Hanging 24 foot long, 2x12 lumber, 12 feet in the air, is no problem for Jesus! He's very strong.

What to do with my miracle? God woke me up at 2:30 in the morning to write this story. It seems like a silly little miracle story when I am reminded of so much suffering in the world, and great miracles that are happening all the time. I know God is real and active in my life; I'll claim my miracle and testify about how amazing God is, and about how me, and Jesus, and Allie built a purple house, and I will praise God. That's what I'm going to do with my miracle!

Kenneth Morrow

Back home, the power
lines followed me



Kiara Wright
The Renaissance



Rayshawn Trapp

Alumni Feature



Rayshawn Trapp works as a Professional School Counselor in Greenville, SC. She has always had a love of reading since she was able to pick up and read books on her own. This appreciation served as a part of her motivation to earn a Bachelor's Degree in Elementary Education from Lander University to share the love of reading to future generations.

During her enjoyable time at Lander, she spent time on the LU Cheer Team, as a Presidential Ambassador and Orientation Leader, while dedicating much of her time serving as a member of the Lambda Chapter of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc.

After graduation from Lander, she spent time as an elementary school teacher in Greenwood, SC, where she gained valuable teaching experience. She decided to pursue higher education and earn a Master's and Educational Specialist Degree in Counselor Education from Clemson University.

When she is not working as a School Counselor, she enjoys spending time with her family, reading, traveling, binge watching her favorite shows, trying new restaurants, and serving on the Lander University Alumni Association Board of Directors.

She became inspired to write and publish *Brown Boy, I Love You* in an effort to help brown boys build a loving sense of confidence for themselves and to have a positive representation of book characters in literature that look like them.

I love the
way I feel
each ounce of
your love
in my inner core.



I love to
cuddle and watch
you sleep as you
peacefully grow.



I promise to love you
each and every day,
more than you will
ever know!



Contributors



Marina Andrew is a senior Exercise Science major and a member of the Honors College. She plans to pursue a Doctorate of Physical Therapy. Currently performing research in women's exercise physiology, she teaches group fitness for campus recreation and helps lead the PEES and Powerlifting clubs on campus. In her free time, she trains in jiu jitsu, hikes with her dog, and writes poetry. Marina is curious about everything and is torn between her love of literature and love of science. She loves the power of literature to communicate the human experience and the power of science.



Julia Anhalt is a student athlete from Littleton, Colorado who loves to read. She graduated from Lander with her Bachelor's degree in English and a minor in Political Science in May 2022 and currently works as the GA in the LU Writing Center where she gets to organize lots of fun events and help design writing workshops, develop Essay Guidebooks, and even create educational stickers and bookmarks. Julia's favorite hobbies include walking her Pitbull Nala and any arts and crafts projects such as painting or crocheting. Her full-time job consists of buying books she can't afford (due to lacking a real full-time job) and never attaining her life-long goal of reading all the books gathering dust on her shelves.



Camdyn Breazeale is a Junior dual major in English and Spanish. An Officer of the Anime-niacs, History Club, and English Club, she enjoys reading, writing, and birdwatching in her free time. Her writing often explores themes surrounding addiction, grief, and introspection and is inspired by her own experiences and the people around her. Focusing mostly on creative writing because she values the importance of stories and the effect that they can have on people, she believes that stories are the way we relate to one another. It is her goal to empathize with others through her story-telling.



Emily Bridgeman, from Clinton, SC, is a sophomore and second-generation Lander student. As a biology major and general studio art minor, Emily hopes to work with animals in the future while focusing on conservation. She has always loved art and plans to continue creating. Her preferred medium is pencil or colored pencil, but she also likes to make ceramic pieces.



Delainey Brummage was born in Tampa, FL on September 20th, 2004. She grew up in Florida until she was seven years old. In 2012, she and her family moved to Chapin, SC. After graduating from Chapin High School in May 2023, Lainey began attending Lander University in hopes of achieving a major in Early Childhood Education. She is a member of the Phi Mu sorority and is working on creating a new school club.



Alyssa Campbell is a sophomore English major from North Augusta, SC. Alyssa loves cross country and track, and she pulls inspiration from those in her life. She loves to sit outside and soak in nature while she writes poems and fictional stories. Inspired by singer songwriters, especially Halsey, Alyssa hopes to capture the world around her and release a book of poems one day.



Armani Canty is a freshman and a creative writing major from the small town of Cottageville, SC. She's a member of the Lander University Honors College and is on the Leadership Council as the journalist and co-chair of the social events committee. Because she has an interest in different forms of media, she joined the XLR Radio Station Promotions Team. One of her main hobbies is photography; she uses her film camera to explore new towns and capture experiences. In her spare time, she practices writing and enjoys reading. Her favorite genres are dystopian fiction, mystery, and thriller books.



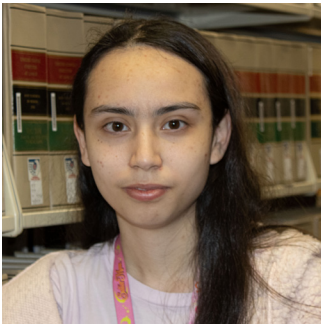
Autumn Carey has always been intrigued by the supernatural. She often wondered what happens after death. She explored the possibilities of spirits, ghosts, and poltergeists. Of the many books, movies, and television shows she read, one favorite was *Under the Whispering Door*, which followed a new ghost struggling to comprehend his death. This book gave her the inspiration to write her own short story about a ghost facing the same dilemma.



Chantal Chandler is a senior at Lander who loves to dive into the unknown of imagination. She enjoys experiencing new worlds and learning about the different perspectives of others and always feels accomplished when she helps those around her. In her opinion, a creative is someone who enjoys what they do while inspiring those who understand the underlying meaning of a piece. She is never afraid to make new friends anywhere and loves to spend time bonding with her family. Chantal absolutely adores all things horrifying, magical, and medieval, and she one day hopes to create something everyone, including herself, can enjoy in whatever fashion it may come in.



CJ Doss is a college freshman from Williamston, SC. She grew up around her Jewish community where she first began her love for literature. She found her passion for writing throughout her teenage years as a way to express her curiosity for the world. She loves music, theatre, and overarching creativity. After being diagnosed as a type 1 diabetic, she decided to focus her curiosity on helping others, specifically through the medical field. However, this does not stop her from writing short stories and sheet music. CJ enjoys playing her guitar and piano as a way to open her mind. She hopes that her work will inspire others and is very excited to continue writing.



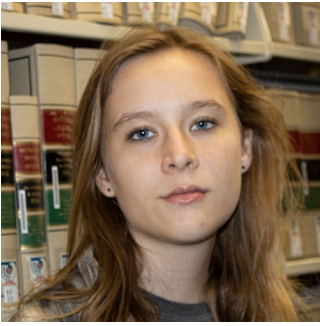
Kimberly Duclos was born on July 10th, 2003 in California. She moved, at the age of 3, to Branchville, SC. Kimberly's parents weren't around much to raise her. Instead, she was raised by Robert Berry, who became her father figure. Throughout her childhood she loved to draw. However, 7th grade was when she started taking the hobby more seriously. She was inspired by her middle school friends to make comics about their adventures. Over time, Kimberly wrote more stories to make into comics. After graduating high school, she attended Lander University to pursue an art degree in graphic design. While there, she started making comics for Magical Girl Grim Reaper, which can be found on Webtoon Canvas. Once she graduates, she hopes to make comics professionally and to publish her stories.



Alyssa Glazer is one of the many art department students here on campus. While she does not leave the art annex much, you can see a lot of her work around campus, such as her paintings hanging in Starbucks, as well as in the CC building. The creepy horse sculpture in the library is also one of her pieces on display. Outside of school, Alyssa has a deep passion for her pet snakes, Tango and Gala. She is often surrounded by friends and enjoys traveling.



Jacob Harry is a South Carolina born artist and a Senior at Lander working toward a 3D BFA with a focus in ceramic work. He has also created a multitude of sculpture and photography work that can be seen around the Lander campus and had a multitude of works accepted into exhibits. The most notable ones being the 2022 and 2023 Peach Belt Conference art exhibits; at the latter he won 2nd place for the Campus Spirit category. He also had a piece published in the previous 2022-2023 New Voices journal.



Nevaeh Harter is a Sophomore at Lander University. She was born in Greenwood and raised/lives in a small town nearby, Ninety-Six. She makes a variety of works, but specializes in 2D art, such as painting, drawing, photography, etc. She enjoys portrait work, and loves to capture the personality and unique aspects of the people depicted. She is currently working towards a bachelor's degree in 2D art.



Rida Hirani is a sophomore pursuing a B. S. degree in medical biology. She has already had two of her creative, research-based essays published by Lander's New Voices and was given special recognition for her first article, released in the spring of 2022. Because of her involvement, commitment, and devotion to Lander University, she was given the New Student Leader Award 2023 and the Hall of Leaders Award. Her GPA has also placed her on the presidents list and her current leadership positions on campus include those of social media director for the honors college leadership council, vice president of ESSO, and senator for the student government.



Macie Johnston is a creative mind with a love for learning. She can be found taking pictures of the flowers around campus, working at the ITS Help desk, rapidly typing a story away, sketching out ideas, with her nose in a book, studying, or having random conversations about her various interests. A psychology major who wishes to work with children as a social worker, she hopes to be a published writer. One of her biggest dreams has always been to study abroad and learn more about other cultures. An ambitious daydreamer filled with knowledge, she is brimming with excitement to learn more.



Catherine Jordan is a junior Media and Communications Student at Lander University. After transferring to Lander University in the Fall of 2022, she intended on taking advantage of every opportunity in front of her. A member of the Audio Drama Club and Table Top Association, she is working hard to become a voice over artist and is trying her best to make her dreams become a reality. She also won the 2023 Speech and Performance Academic Award, and is left-handed.



Jericho Lincoln, a senior BFA student, is a rising artist and author. He's been on his own since the death of his father in early 2019, but that hasn't stopped him in his journey towards success; Jericho will graduate from Lander University in 2024, and he's determined to complete his journey with a Master of Fine Arts to pursue a career as a full-time artist and novelist. With a heart filled with a passion for traveling and creating, there is nothing that will get in his way of creating the life he so desires.



Ana Moreno is a 23-year-old artist from Simpsonville, SC who transferred to Lander University in 2020 to pursue a degree in graphic design. However, after taking Sculpture 1, she changed her major to a 3D BFA and has been taking sculpture classes ever since. Ana has worked with materials including but not limited to clay, felt, metal, papier mâché, fabric, plaster, and more. Also having experience with both digital and analog photography, her work is inspired by emotions, dreams, and narrative. Eventually, she wants to channel her ideas into making her own animated tv show and start a multimedia creative company with her younger brother, Alex.



Kenneth Morrow, a South Carolina based photographer, creates self-portraits, working in photo transfer and oil paint. Their work explores themes of self and their place within society. They invoke ideas about their Cuban Heritage and religious practices within their photographs. They earned their bachelor's degree in visual arts in the Spring of 2023. In their time at Lander University, they sharpened their skills of abstraction. They have mostly exhibited at Lander university at their Annual Juried Art Exhibit.



Meaghan Nelson is a multi-media creator who likes to find inspiration through anything they come across. Their early life was spent traveling the world with their family, living in places like Germany and Japan. They've visited parts of Europe and Korea and finished high school at the height of Covid in an RV traveling coast-to-coast across the US, until settling in South Carolina for college. After spending two years at Trident Technical College for their associate's, Meaghan has landed at Lander to earn a bachelor's with hopes to develop an independent practice, work in museums, and eventually teach at the college level.



Kelly Pape, a transfer to Lander and new to South Carolina, brings pieces of artistic value from Colorado and her home state of New Jersey with her which translates throughout her works. At a young age, she started expressing herself through poems and short stories. Being published is not new to her; at age 12, her poem: Love is a Razor was published in a statewide journal. She finds poetry and journaling a pillar of her mental health while also shedding light on some of the current issues she faces. Mediocre Boy is a prime example of her own trials and tribulations of online dating.



Mara Pilgrim, originally from Brunswick, Georgia, moved to Greenwood when she was young. She enjoys spending time with her family and loves going out with friends and family on free days when she isn't working. Having grown up playing outside and finding ways to occupy herself without too many electronics. drawing was one of her favorite outlets; she also enjoys singing. She includes these passions in her everyday life, taking art and chorus classes, and plans to continue to have the arts as a part of her life no matter where her journey takes her.



Nakeia Pough is a sophomore nursing major at Lander University. As a RA and nursing major, she has a lot on her plate, but she gets through it. When life gets hard, she goes to the park or watches something entertaining. She loves her "me time" because she is required to put herself out there more than other students and is the type of person who always holds herself accountable. At the end of the day, Nakeia is just a simple girl just trying to get through life.



Andie Stringer is a 17-year-old freshman here at Lander. She considers herself to be hard-working and dedicated, having graduated from high school a year early and deciding to continue her academic career here while working. As a nursing major, she wants to become either a Travel Pediatric Nurse or Pediatrician, and she has a passion for working with and helping children in the medical profession. Andie has always had a love for reading and writing, but was never one to share her poems until she saw the New Voices email asking for submission applications. She is very pleased that she decided to step out of her comfort zone!



Cheyenne Swann is a visual arts major at Lander University working towards a BA degree and a minor in creative writing to assist in her journey of writing her book. The book is still in development stages, but she is working hard to complete it. Cheyenne enjoys drawing and creating artworks based off her story and characters. She strives to become a known animator with her own series, similar to VivziePop with her series Helluva Boss. You can catch her working at the Jackson Library; stop by!



Glenn Williams is a 69-year-old student who is retired as a forest consultant and real estate broker. He has two sons, two daughter-in-laws, two granddaughters and two grandsons. He loves Lander, and will encourage his grandchildren to attend. One day, he may be in a class with one of his grandchildren!



Kiara Wright is from the small town of Johnsonville, South Carolina. Growing up in Johnsonville, she often felt out of place, and weird to society. "I felt like a wonder in a foreign land." She didn't know her purpose until she met God. He's the author of her story, and she's grateful to be a part of HIStory. She's always had a passion for art, but never knew where she would be, until she came to Lander, and she looked into the art program for photography. She was hooked. Ever since she picked up a camera, she's been in love with the intangible intimacy a photograph can create. If Kiara could give a word of advice through life, it would be resilience. "You need it to bounce back from tough situations."

2023-2024 Contributors

Marina Andrew
Julia Anhalt
Camdyn Breazeale
Emily Bridgeman
Delainey Brummage
Alyssa Campbell
Armani Canty
Autumn Carey
Chantal Chandler
CJ Doss
Kimberly Duclos
Alyssa Glazer
Jacob Harry
Georgia Harter

Rida Hirani
Macie Johnston
Catherine Jordan
Jericho Lincoln
Ana Moreno
Kenneth Morrow
Meaghan Nelson
Kelly Pape
Mara Pilgrim
Nakeia Pough
Andie Stringer
Cheyenne Swan
Glenn Williams
Kiara Wright

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