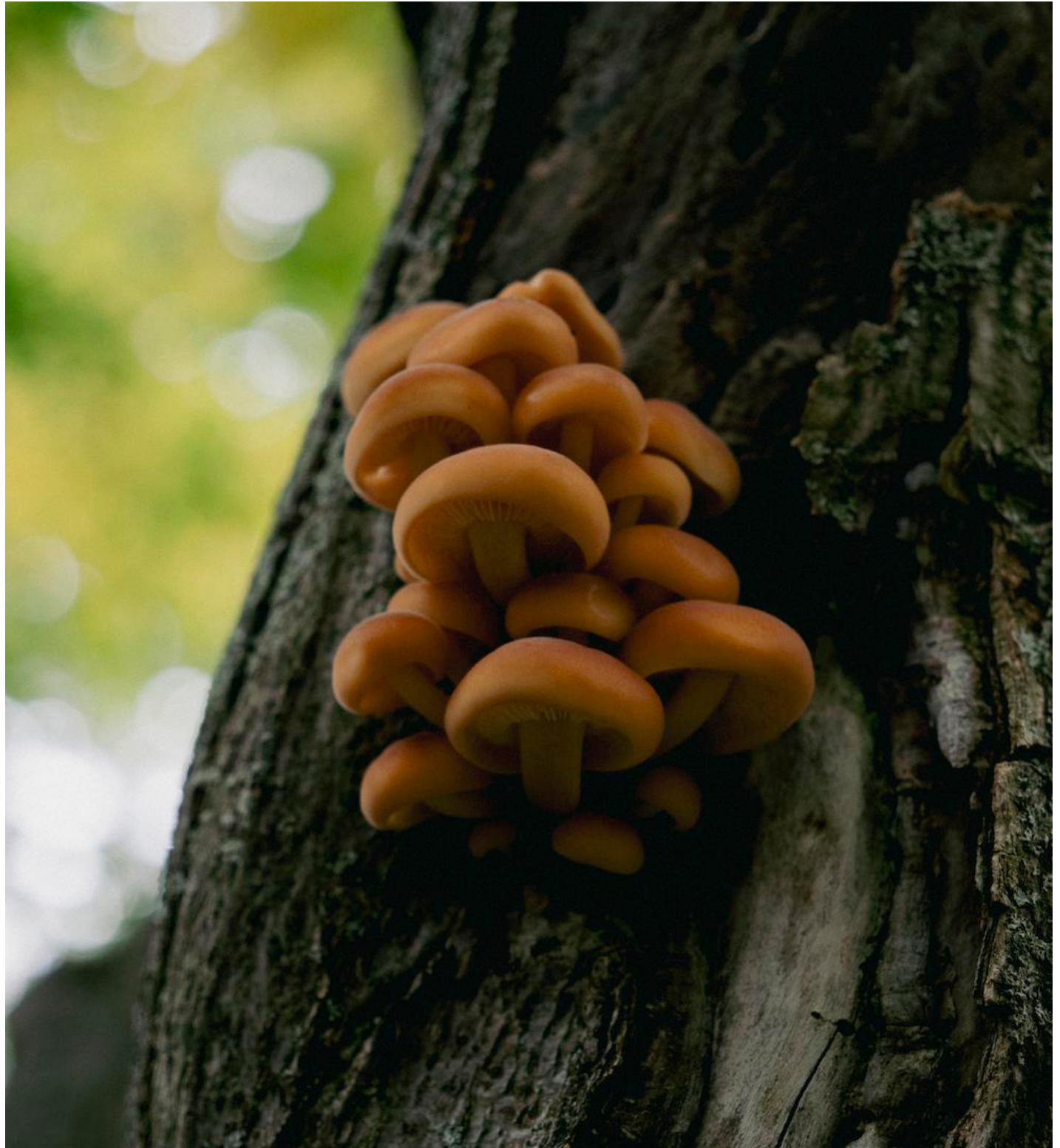


NORTHWEST BOULEVARD



2023

FALL ISSUE

UNDERGRADUATE LITERARY MAGAZINE

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We love to build lasting relationships with the writers and artists we publish, and encourage you to submit even if we have published you recently. If you would like to join the staff, please email us.

All EWU undergraduates interested in publishing, graphic design, reading, writing, public relations, and visual art are welcome.

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Editor's Letter

Dear Reader,

It is truly a gift to share expression. I find myself coming back to these words and all it can mean, while in the midst of creating. All the places or depths creating can take you, from epiphanies and urgencies to curiosities, to even what can feel like madness, the world needs all of it. To share this gem of a magazine and be a part of its revived legacy, I'd like to say as my final reflection that, creating, in all forms, is endlessly piecing together bits of our souls and bracing them for connection. We write and make not just to be heard and tell stories, but to leave parts of ourselves behind, and that is an endless curation of art and life.

Being an editor for Northwest Boulevard these past three issues have taught me more than enough about how powerful a group of creatives can be—especially undergraduates. Reviving the magazine during the pandemic, I felt a sense of light, that this too can be a new beginning emerging from a dark time. Then, jumping to our first in-print 2022 issue (since 2018) led me to think in immense excitement, that there's so much more we can do! I was determined that this 2023 issue would be published before my time as an undergrad was through. Give and take a few bumps and dry spells, and a small, dedicated, passionate editorial staff, we did it.

I find this issue well curated to the means of connection, and I hope you, reader, can immerse yourself in these pages, not just as passive readers but as active participants. Engage with the pieces that stir your soul and inspire your own creative avenues. Because in the end, art can live anywhere you let it, if you just let it.

With heartfelt appreciation and anticipation for the creative horizons ahead, thank you for joining us on this incredible journey of making, doing, and aspiring. To many more!

—Noelle Bowden



From the Northwest Boulevard Staff

For all the undergraduate students at Eastern Washington University and our professors who have taught us, inspired us, and showed us the pen.

And to the Fine Art Departments and faculty for their tireless dedication in the promotion of the arts at Eastern Washington University,

Thank you

Front Cover by: Michelle Robertson
Back Cover by: Noelle Bowden



Bee Afterlife

By E.W. Here

There is a place
where the ocean is replaced
with honey

the sand
merely looks like sand
but if tasted
with the tongue
it is undeniably
unmistakably
brown sugar

cotton candy flowers
watch from the sky
it is frivolous to desire wings
to swim through the air
the fish think themselves birds
wriggling above the wind
with their hollow fins

always

I wonder
I wonder

where do the beekeepers go?



May

By E.W. Here

Some flakes of snow
never got to fall during Winter's reign

so May took them up in her arms
and blended them with them with the fluff of the clouds

now they can tiptoe down from Heaven
as angelic children of cotton.



Do You See What I See

By Zach Lumsden

Nathan Exley never thought that his art would be featured at a gallery.

There had to be a catch. The owners of The Crescent Gallery just wanted junk to sell to rich people looking for a tax write-off, so they just told Nathan what he wanted to hear under the guise of “promoting local artists.” Besides, galleries aren’t reserved for people like Nathan; they’re for artistic prodigies. Men and women who have dedicated their lives to their craft can effortlessly transfer breathtaking landscapes from mind to canvas, and have had their paintings celebrated for centuries.

And yet here it is. His paintings. His metalwork. All in one location for everyone to see. People are talking about his creations and trying to decipher their meanings. For this one night, Nathan Exley took center stage, and it felt unreal. As if he was gonna wake up at any moment and return to his hum-drum existence.

To compound this surreal moment, Nathan spots a blond-haired woman in a flower dress. “Wait, is that—” Nathan tries to get a look at the woman’s face to confirm his suspicions. The woman stares back at him, wielding the most beautiful smile in all of Seattle. “Anna is here. Jesus Christ, Anna is here.”

There was no girl in Seattle that was as radiant as Anna Weber. The two had met while mingling at a combination wine bar/painting studio, and they bonded over how much they thought that Picasso was an overrated sociopath. Their bond never escalated any further beyond the occasional small talk, so Nathan didn’t think Anna would be here.

And yet here she is, analyzing his earliest painting: a blood-soaked man in a suit stumbling down a gray flight of stairs. Nathan doesn’t know if another opportunity like this will come up again, so he jaunts over to the men’s bathroom to plan out the impending conversation with her. He wants to come off as knowledgeable enough so that he could maintain a full conversation about his artwork, but lax enough so that he doesn’t come off as condescending. After five minutes of planning, Nathan leaves the men’s room, grabs a bottle of water in case his nerves overwhelm him, and makes his way toward Anna.

“Anna!” Nathan exclaims. She was still staring at the painting of



the bloody man. “I didn’t think I’d see you here.”

“Well, I saw an ad on Crescent’s Facebook page, and I wanted to see what you’ve been working on.” She points at the painting of the bloody man. “Can we talk about this painting real quick? All your other paintings are so vibrant and futuristic, and yet this one just—it feels like cover for a death metal album. Like, what the fuck is this?”

“Oh yes, Pyrrhic.” Nathan chuckled. He can already feel his confidence deflating. “That was the first painting I made when I moved to Seattle.” Nathan began staring at the floor in an attempt to choose his words carefully. “I was in a bad place when I made Pyrrhic. I felt like I had this phantom constantly looming over me, and I thought that if I drew this figure that’s been in my nightmares, then it would, I dunno, scare me less? I probably shouldn’t have included this painting, but the gallery owners thought it was a nice comparison point between where I was and where I am, and convinced me to include it.”

“No, I like that this painting is here. It gives the collection some variety.” Anna takes a quick look around the gallery, then gets closer to Nathan and whispers “Can I tell you what I see when I look at this painting?”

“Sure,” Nathan says, taking a sip of water to calm his nerves.

“I see a wayward ex-marine who returned to the United States after 8 years of service, only to be thrown into an apathetic society that didn’t know what to do with him and didn’t care enough to give him a shot.”

Nathan nearly spits out his water once he hears the words ‘ex-marine’. “What gave you--”

The smile on Anna’s face grows wider. Nathan has taken the bait and Anna is reeling him in. “I see a shell-shocked murderer killing men and women alike in service of the one person that would actually give him a job: Angus Griffith.”

Nathan’s heart skips a beat hearing Angus’ name mentioned again. He can feel sweat trickling down his face. “Uhhh...I’ll give you points for creativity, but--”

“I see a remorseless psychopath who heard through the grapevine that Angus Griffith was diagnosed with dementia, and so decided to give karma one last middle finger by testifying against him in exchange for a fresh start somewhere else!”

“OK, that’s a FUCKING LIE--” Nathan begins to shout, but stops as



other people glare at him. Not at the sociopath spilling out Nathan's life story, but at the giant towering over the girl in the flower dress. "Look, I get what you're implying, and whatever you think you know about me is wrong. You...you have me confused with someone else, so if you can just--"

Anna's smile finally leaves her face. This time, it's replaced with a glare that could've stopped a raging bull in its tracks. "Bullshit. You don't even believe what you just said. You can try to entertain this charade by telling yourself that you've changed, but you and I both know that you're still the same remorseless killer that you were back in Dallas! Isn't that true, NATHAN?"

With the benefit of hindsight, Nathan should've just called security and had Anna escorted out of the gallery. But Nathan hadn't heard his real name in months, and Anna wouldn't stop rubbing his past life in his face. His brain felt like it was short-circuiting, and he didn't know what to do. So he did the wrong thing.

"...How do you know all this?"

"Because I'm amazing at my job. Now, unless you want Ciaran Griffith to know that his father's favorite hitman didn't actually die in that warehouse shooting, you're going to do everything I say." Anna pulls a business card out from her purse. The back of the card contained an address and the word 'killer' capitalized and underlined, presumably to drive the knife deeper into Nathan's chest. "Go to that place tomorrow at 11:30 AM. If I don't see you then, or if I see you going to the cops or whichever Marshal is assigned to protect you, then your life is basically over. If something happens to me, then the gates of Hell will open wide and tear Seattle apart to make sure that you die a forgotten man. Capiche?"

Nathan's heart is beating so fast that it would probably explode. There's so much that he wants to ask (and probably should've said in hindsight), but he's so frazzled and so exposed that nothing can come out.

"I'll take your silence as a yes." Anna glares at him for a few more seconds, before finally smiling and reverting to the Anna Nathan thought that he knew. "Great! See you tomorrow!" Anna sauntered out of the gallery, leaving Nathan to drink a considerable amount of water and sweat profusely. She makes sure to hold the door open for an elderly couple hoping to see Nathan's exhibit.





Overprocessing
By Elizabeth Mendiola

I Saved a Slug Today (perhaps)

By Irie Browning

I saved a slug today (perhaps)
Perhaps he would have been fine.
Perhaps he would crossed the
width of the sidewalk
and reached the cool grass.

Perhaps slugs enjoy to cross sidewalks.
My cat likes to roll on concrete.
Perhaps Mr. Slug is the same, wanting
a nice massage as he slimes across
a grey man-made river.

Yet as I passed him, the sun grew warm
and I slipped out of my leather jacket.
Slugs have no jackets to remove.
(Did he know how strong the sun would
shine upon his little body in crossing?)

When I was eleven, my brother put a slug
in my cat's food bag on April First
so I would touch it accidentally
in my rush to feed her before Sunday school
and scream—and yet,

I turn and walk half a block back to
where I remember seeing the slug but
nothing. Did I imagine it? No—There!
The size of the first joint of my finger,
his back mostly dried already.

Two tiny antennae goggle up at me.
Perhaps the salt in my finger will harm him,

so with two broken leaves I gently
lift him from the concrete and
place him in the cool grass.

Pink Silk and Cardboard

By Irie Browning

//foot-binding in china as brought on
and kept up
and encouraged
and held
by the women,
not the men.
the mothers and
daughters
crippling themselves
for the sake of Mine
I will ruin my feet
for my beauty
like the dancer
who did it
First/

*(You will not
take this from Me)*

/I cannot judge them as
at sixteen i begged
my mother
to let me get pointe shoes,
my teacher said
I was ready
2.5 years into lessons, yes
I knew about the blisters yes
and the bruises
and the blood,
a rite of passage:
pale pink silk
stained Red.

for eight months
I wrapped my feet
in pink silk and
stood on just the



tips of my toes
on compact cardboard.
extension.
turnout.
“get all the way
over the box”
a hundred of
my own
hard-earned dollars
for
pink silk and
cardboard.

why did I dance
why did I want
these shoes so badly that
(had Death not cut
in, spilled grey
into what-once-was--)
I Would have bruised
and broken
and bloodied my
own flesh within
pale pink silk
while my soul
stayed beating
to five-six-
seven *and*—

to dance ballet.
to grand jeté into
splits-in-the-air.
to freeze with the
smallest
point of connection
between my toe
and the floor.
to launch into a
quad pirouette,

spotting on the
tutu hanging
in the corner
and land it
Perfectly

to dance ballet.
to ruin one's feet.
to sew ribbons and
pack cotton
and duct tape
around bruises from
last night and
last night
and last night's
lessons.

a hundred
and twelve
Dollars
for pink silk and
cardboard
waiting for sweat
and blood

(I am Better now.
In time,
hope bleeds through
grey.

were money
and time
and access
no
object,

I would dance with
pink silk
and cardboard again.)



Because

to dance ballet—

to dance ballet;
to make My feet
My Own
within pink silk
is the closest I
have ever come to
flyin g//

Deutschland

By Irie Browning

I have never been to Germany.
Not really.
 Not a footstep on the soil.
Yet my first breath of Europe's air,
 a step off the jet, ninety-eight degrees.
 Frankfurt for three hours,
Airport only,
 (There is no decaf here?)
 I handwrite a story until the next
Plane arrives.
 Boarding.
 45 minutes to Prague.

I have never been to Germany:
 just two train transfers
 in between Amsterdam and Prague.
The bicycles disappear, fade out
 slowly as I read & eat &
 anticipate the next station
I hope I find the right train
 right car right seat—
 three different trains over
half a day, and the last three hours?
 Twixt Dresden and Prague
 (I hope I am in my seat)
podcast in my ears, and outside
 the most beautiful land I have ever seen
 but never touched

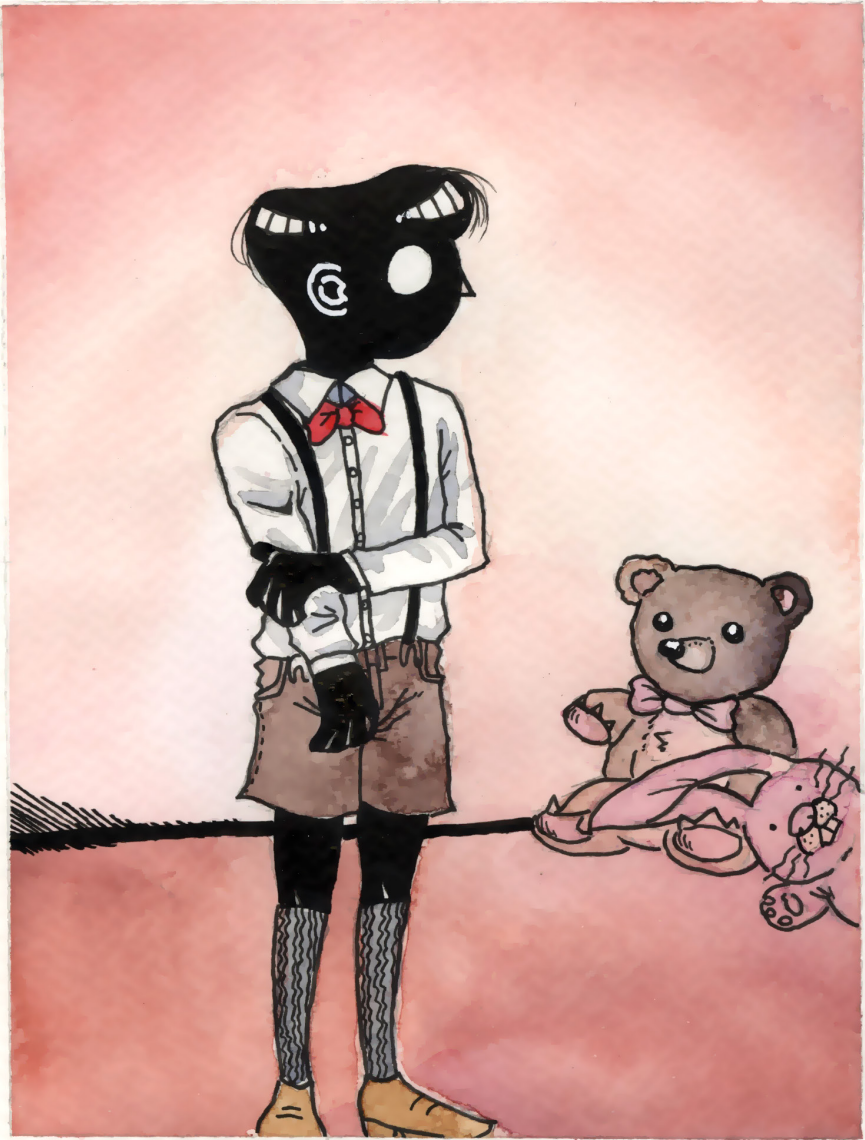
I have never been to Germany;
 but I bought the last salted pretzel
 in the Frankfurt terminal
and I re-entered a plane



while my luggage stayed behind with
Europe's air fading from my lungs.

I have never been to Germany,
not a footstep on the soil,
but I passed through,
and even if I never return, the breath
and the color and the taste
are memory enough.





Tell Your Secrets to Luu Melon

By Luu Melon

Ink and watercolor on paper

A Nesquick Iced Coffee Date

By Daisy Noelle

Something that must be noted about John's character is that he is and always has been inherently personal. Not the kind of personal that makes it hard for him to share things with others, no, he's an open book if you just ask. John's kind of personal is that he likes to keep to himself; he is content in his own being, and has never needed anything more. Every morning, John makes his coffee. He drinks it black, because he is content without anything added.

"No need," is what he says when his coworker asked if he wanted sugar.

John wakes up every morning the same. 7:00, every morning, even on holidays. Coffee and toasted wheat bread with butter every morning from the coffee shop on 4th and Main, even on special days. Black slacks and a blue button up shirt, every day, even on his days off.

A walk to work, even on bad weather days.

John has been doing this as long as he can remember. When he was a kid, it was the same, but instead of work, it was school. And as soon as he graduated, working at The Big

Office was his purpose and glory.

John doesn't really have any friends. He just has his dog, Charlie. He likes to take

Charlie on walks in the morning to get his coffee and toast before work. In fact, that's what John is doing right now. 7:25 in the morning and John is tying Charlie's leash to the bike poles outside the coffee shop.

"I will be right out, so be good," he says to Charlie like he does every morning, "and I will maybe bring you a treat." Charlie wags his tail, excited. Charlie knows that his owner will bring him some whipped cream, or maybe even a biscuit.

As John stands in line, all he thinks about is that day at The Big Office. What paperwork he will file. He doesn't handle the phone lines, because that is too unpredictable. Unpredictable and John are not something that go together.

That's why when a woman with curly brown hair down to her waist, a white cropped tank, cargo shorts, and a tote bag walks in,

John instantly looks away. She is the definition of unpredictable. Well, he thinks she is predictably unpredictable. She seems like the type of woman who wants to be unique, therefore she will purposefully do actions that would confuse John.

John doesn't understand these people. The type with the big headphones, the dog who isn't even on a leash, the type who always gets a different coffee and bagel order. Why are they not satisfied with the way that their life is? Why do they need to change it every day?

The woman gets in line behind him, taking off her headphones and tapping him on the shoulder.

John turns around, heart pounding because this is not in his schedule. Human interaction doesn't happen until he talks to the cashier. "Yes?" John asks, confused.

The woman smiles. One of her front teeth is crooked. "I just wanted to know what you recommend getting. I try something new every day."

John doesn't smile back. He knew it. She thinks she is unique, but she is really the same as everyone else. That thought calms John, because she is really just the same as all other unique people.

"I get black coffee every day."

She is shocked. "Every day? Don't you get bored?"

John shakes his head and replies, "No, I find repetition satisfying and rewarding."

"Hmm. Then I will simply get what I got yesterday, and I will let you know if I get bored."

John turns back, because he doesn't have anything else to say. He orders his coffee, pays the three dollars and sixteen cents with his card, like a normal person. The woman behind him goes next.

"May I have a 16 oz. vanilla iced cold brew with 2% milk, chocolate syrup, and Nesquik?" She pays in quarters and pennies.

As soon as he has his black coffee, John leaves. But a minute later, the woman is chasing after him.

"Hi, I'm Ophelia."

John keeps walking, not even turning his head to look at the woman. "I'm John," he says.

"Nice to meet you," Ophelia says, adding a slight jog to her step to keep up with John's long strides.

John doesn't say anything. He just walks. He is trying to show



that he is not capable, in the slightest, he might add, of socializing right now.

Charlie, however, is very excited and ready to socialize. He is kind of upset with his owner because John forgot to bring him a treat. So he is more than excited to socialize with Ophelia.

As Charlie tugs on his leash, John exclaims, “Charlie! We must continue walking! What is getting into you? This isn’t part of our routine!”

Neither is forgetting my treat, thinks Charlie.

“Your dog is just the cutest! What kind of dog is he?” Ophelia asks, playing with Charlie’s ears to make him look rather silly.

“He is a Russian Black Terrier,” John says flatly. He starts tugging on the leash to get moving. “Now, if you will excuse my Russian Black Terrier and I, we need to continue walking.”

Ophelia jumps up excited and Charlie copies her jump. “May I walk with you both?”

John is annoyed. Who does this woman think she is? John is just trying to get to work, but this woman is slowing him and his dog down.

“No. We are headed to work. Good day to you. Bye.”

John turns on his heel, walking away. Charlie dutifully follows, despite still being annoyed about his lack of treats.

John didn’t mean it when he told Ophelia to have a good day, but societal rules said he must close his interactions with that statement.

As John walks away from that routine-ruining woman, he tries his best to forget about her. He thinks about his schedule for the rest of the day. He has three reports to finish up. Light work. Two new client profiles to look through and see if they are a good fit for the company to be involved with. They rarely are. John finds most people lacking the common simplicity required to be successful with The Big Office’s programs. He also has a meeting to attend. Today would be a regular, average, completely normal amount of busy.

He drops Charlie off at The Big Office’s dog care, where all kinds of terriers are playing and resting. And one Shih Tzu. John always frowns when he sees that Shih Tzu. It is just proof that Wanda was a horrible addition to the company. He didn’t know what The Bosses were thinking when they added her to the marketing team. She is probably the reason why so many new clients haven’t been good

fits for the company. Bad marketing.

After he clocks in, two minutes late, John starts on his first report, delving deep into his analysis of the result of the recent employee training. All lingering thoughts of Ophelia completely drift out of his mind as he plugs numbers into excel.

Then, one of The Bosses comes in. For the second time today, someone interrupts his schedule.

“Hello John, how are you?”

“I am feeling a little unexpectedly disheveled and unorganized today, sir. But don’t worry, the work will get done.”

The Boss nods his head understandingly and comes farther into the office, taking a seat in the chair across from John’s desk. “I just want to check on you. Is there anything going on?”

John sighs. He is so behind on his report, and The Boss is making him think about the woman he is trying to forget. “There was a woman this morning,” he mentions, “who threw me off.” The Boss’s face shows no signs of reaction, so John continues. “She’s the kind of person who thinks she is special in the way she dresses- though she’s not- she gets strange coffee orders, she’s, she’s,” John struggles to come up with what he wants to say. “She’s probably a freelancer!” he finally gets out.

The Boss’s gaze darkens. Why would John even think that word, let alone say it aloud, here at The Big Office. He stands. John stands too.

“John, be careful around her. I don’t want this freelancer,” he says, practically spitting the word, “to ruin your career. She is the same as every unique person. Same clothes. Same lifestyle. Repetition triumphs, even in chaos. Just don’t let that chaos affect you.” He exits the office, but turns his head at the last second. “Your job will be in jeopardy if you continue to associate with this chaotic woman.”

The Boss leaves John’s office, and John is too stunned to move. His job has never been in jeopardy. Not even close. John has always been one of the best employees, making The List every quarter.

John must push any thoughts of Ophelia away. Permanently. She cannot be a lingering influence in his life. Why did she have so many already lasting effects? John shakes his head and says aloud, “this woman has ended her stay in my brain.” And with that statement, John doesn’t think about her for the rest of the day. He goes about his work, finishing the reports. Light work. Looking over both potential client profiles, he curses Wanda again for her bad marketing. Neither client is a good fit. The Shih Tzu should’ve been a sign, he thinks.

At 5:00, on the dot, John stands to go. He exits his office, heading down the stairs to pick up Charlie from dog care. Wanda is there, picking up her Shih Tzu.

“Isn’t it funny how I’m the only one that doesn’t have a terrier here?” Wanda says to John, adding a little laugh, as if the subject is funny.

John doesn’t laugh. Obviously. Because it’s not funny. It is.....

“What are you doing?” asks Wanda.

“Looking up synonyms for irritating. I can’t seem to think of the right word,” replies John in all seriousness.

Wanda hmphs with vexation – there’s a synonym for him – grabbing her Shih Tzu and dodders off. She is vexed with John, and everyone else in this office. Nobody seems to think that she is good at her job. Not even the women at The Office have Wanda’s back. But she doesn’t need the validation of anyone here.

John doesn’t care about what Wanda thinks of him. He was just being honest, and she didn’t even let him finish his thought. He was peeved at her. Still is, for the record. But it doesn’t matter. She doesn’t matter. John walks to the check out desk, signing for Charlie’s pickup.

Charlie is so excited to see John. He missed his owner, and loves spending time with him. Charlie can’t wait for this evening. Just like every evening, they watch The Andy Griffith show, and John eats a bowl of beans with steamed broccoli, while Charlie has his vegan kibble. Charlie doesn’t mind being a vegetarian, because he likes to match his owner.

The walk home is uneventful. John and Charlie walk by the bench dedicated to Marilyn Stevens and the trash can painted to look like an alien. They avoid the community board with lost animal posters because John knows how it bothers Charlie. Charlie gets sad when his friends go missing.

When they get home, John cooks his beans and steams his broccoli, while Charlie pulls the blanket onto the couch in preparation for the show.

At 9:00, when the show ends every night, John reads to Charlie an excerpt from “The Alchemist”. Then they sleep. Ready to start the day in the morning, exactly on schedule. Exactly as normal. Back to routine, forgetting the morning ever happened.

In the morning, John wakes up at 7:00. He showers and puts on his black slacks and blue button up shirt. Charlie is excited to leave just



like every day. John smiles. Today will be perfect.

The walk to the coffee shop on 4th and Main is uneventful. Just as John likes it. He ties Charlie's leash up to the bike poles, and heads inside the shop.

"Excuse me sir, would you mind moving from the doorway?" someone says to John. He is frozen still. Petrified. Ordering at the counter is none other than that routine-ruining woman. Ophelia. The Freelancer.

"Nevermind," the person says, "I will use the other door."

John's heart is beating fast. His blood is pounding in every vein in his body. He doesn't understand. This woman is not supposed to be here.

Ophelia gets her coffee. She turns and instantly, a smile spreads across her face. "John!" she exclaims, rushing to him. She is holding two cups of coffee, one steaming, while the other is filled with ice. "I was hoping you'd be here! I bought your coffee for you, since I knew you come here every morning!"

John is still petrified, a white-knuckled hand gripping the door handle of the door, wide open. A fly had been let in, and it was zooming around the ceiling of the shop.

Ophelia is waiting for John to say something, but after a moment of silence, Ophelia realizes he isn't going to say something, so she continues. "I was hoping you would let me walk with you and Charlie today. I even brought Charlie a treat from home! My brother has dogs, so I usually have a bag of treats on hand."

John can't move. One ear is hearing Ophelia, processing the words she is saying. Coffee, walk, treat, brother, dogs. The other ear is replaying the conversation with The Boss the day before. "Your job will be in jeopardy if you continue to associate with this chaotic woman." He is frozen in the doorway.

"You look pale," says Ophelia. She sets her iced coffee down, grabs John's arm, and hands him his warm coffee. That seems to take him out of his trance. He looks down at it, then takes a sip. "So that's a yes, I guess!" she says, jumping up and down excitedly.

Before John can tell what's happening, she pushes past him, grabbing his arm as she does, pulling him out the door and on their way to work.

This is a catastrophe. Not only is John conversing with The Freelancer, but they are headed to John's work! What if The Bosses see

him walking with her? Their office is at the top of the building, so they can watch all that happens along the property. John's career could be over.

Ophelia's feelings are a little hurt. John hasn't said a word to her the whole walk so far. Not even a "Thank you for the coffee". At least Charlie is excited to see her. She looks at John, begging with her gaze for him to make eye contact. He doesn't. Ophelia knows that if she were to stop walking, he wouldn't even notice. Or even if he did notice, he wouldn't stop. He would probably say good riddance and keep walking. This is enough.

Ophelia steps in front of John and he knocks right into him. They both let out a yelp as John's coffee spills on them. They both freeze and Charlie starts barking, confused. John looks down at his once perfect shirt. He never came into the office without a perfect blue shirt. No wrinkles. No worn out buttons, and definitely no stains. The brown splotch seems to stare back at him, laughing at John's internal pain. The splotch doesn't care that this is the second day in a row that John comes into the office disheveled. The splotch doesn't care that this morning has been made even worse than the one before, which John didn't think would be possible. The splotch doesn't care.

"That makes sense. It's a splotch," John says aloud, still looking down at the big brown circle.

Ophelia, for once, is speechless. She doesn't really know what John meant by that, but she can't focus on deciphering his words when she just spilled coffee on him. "I'm so sorry, John. I didn't mean to...to spill on you."

John looks into her eyes for the first time since they started their walk. "Well, that doesn't change the fact that this splotch is staring right at me."

Charlie barks at John. It was kind of rude to say that to Ophelia. John looks down. He reaches out to pet him, but Charlie ducks, still offended for Ophelia. He has a right to defend Ophelia. After all, she gave him a treat today. John has forgotten two days in a row.

Ophelia looks very concerned, still staring at the splotch. "We can head back to your house, so you can get a new shirt?"

John scoffs. "Of course we can't. I am already running late for my job. Charlie already missed Doggie Meditation, and The Bosses are for sure going to notice I am not there. This is bad."

"I'm sorry," Ophelia stammers.

John takes a deep breath, releasing the air very fast, and takes a large step forwards. Speed walking is his only hope of getting there before the half hour late mark. He will salvage the day. It will be ok. His job is not in jeopardy. He is still the best worker The Bosses have at The Big Office. He can still be successful, even with Ophelia on his heels.

“Hey,” Ophelia says, “To make it up to you, do you want to come over to my house after work and watch The Andy Griffith show? I can make a delicious vegan lasagna and apple cookies.” She looks at him, hopeful that he will accept her peace offering.

John sideeyes her. “How did you know I like that show? Are you stalking me?? And how did you know Charlie and I are vegan?”

Ophelia throws her hands up defensively. “I watch that show every week with my Grandparents, because it’s their favorite show, but they’re out of town this week, so I need a watch buddy. And I mean, you seem like the type to watch it. And for the record, I am vegan too!”

“You are?” John asked surprised, “and...you do?”

Ophelia nods.

They have reached The Office, and are waiting outside the big gold doors at the front of the building. John and Ophelia stand across from each other. “Kiss! Kiss! Kiss!” Charlie chants, but of course all the humans hear is “Bark! Bark! Bark!”

John had never met anyone that watched Andy Griffith, and he was intrigued. Intrigued. John didn’t know that feeling. Intrigued. It was new. He kind of, almost, really liked the feeling.

Ophelia was waiting for an answer. She was nervous about what he would say. Ophelia was interested in John, curious how someone could live the way he did, every day. She thought it was exciting, in a contradictory, opposite kind of way. She liked the feeling.

“Sure.”

The eyebrows on Ophelia’s face shot up, surprised. “Really?”

“Mhmm. Email me your address, the time you expect me, and the time you expect the event to end,” John says, handing her a business card from his shirt pocket.

Ophelia takes the card, looking at John’s headshot on the card. His brown hair combed perfectly to the side, the slight smile of a businessman, and his dog seated on his lap. Then she sees his last name. “John Biddercombe? What a unique name.”

John visibly winces. He hates his last name. And he hated the word unique even more. “I prefer not to be associated with it. I prefer

to be called simply John.”

Before Ophelia could say anything, the doors of the office open. The three Bosses are standing in the doorway, their arms behind their backs. John goes white. Ophelia reaches a hand out without hesitation. “I’m Ophelia. I’m John’s friend.”

The Bosses look at John. The Boss in the Middle speaks. “John, you are half an hour late. We’ve been watching you stand here for several minutes. This woman,” he spats, “is taking up valuable company time.”

John nods. “Yes, sirs, I apologize. I will get to work quickly.” He rushes in the building, pulling Charlie with him, without saying a word to Ophelia.

As John disappears down a hall, out of sight, The Bosses turn to Ophelia. She gulps.

“What do you do?” the Boss on the Left asks.

Ophelia squeezes her thumb nervously. “I’m a freelancer. Mainly photography and journalism. But I dabble in film and illustration.”

The Bosses look at each other, knowingly. What do they know? What do they think of Ophelia? She starts to tremble, her legs shaking. There’s a reason she is a freelancer instead of committing herself to a large business like The Big Office. She used to be in the corporate world, but it wasn’t for her. The nervous conversations, the stressful stares. She hated it.

“Well, Miss Ophelia, the Freelancer,” says The Boss on the Right, “we are very unkindly asking you to leave. Your kind lack the common simplicity required to be successful with The Big Office, so we don’t allow those kinds of profiles on our property. Thank you. Have a perfectly normal day.” With that, The Bosses turn on their heels in unison, the golden doors closing behind them, leaving Ophelia standing alone, tears starting to form in her eyes. A tiny droplet fell and splattered on the pavement.

“Please do not vandalize the pavement. We are asking you to leave our property,” a robotic voice comes from a small speaker above the doors.

Although her legs feel heavy, Ophelia manages to drag herself home, trying to hype herself up about the watch party later today.

Meanwhile, John is up in his office, on the 4th floor, doing his tasks for the day. He is so behind, but is trying to catch up. However, his mind isn’t on his work. Not entirely. John is thinking about the

watch party later. He isn't completely sure how he feels about it. He knows how he should feel about it- he should not be excited. He should be wanting to cancel! His routine! His evening plans! There is every reason why John should not want to go to the watch party.

But yet, he does. John wouldn't admit it aloud, or even in his thoughts to himself, but he can't wait for the party. He is thrilled that someone else watches his show, and they are vegan! If only she wasn't chaotic in other ways. Perhaps, he considers as he stacks paper into his printer, he should create a pros and cons list. I mean, surely, at this point, the lists would be somewhat even, or even perhaps a tad weighted on the positive side. John shakes off his thoughts. He has work to do.

Not fifteen minutes after he started, The Bosses come in. "Hello," they say in unison.

"Hello," replies John normally. He is not nervous about The Bosses coming in. He had regular conversations with them, seeing as he had been on top of The List for so long.

"Why are you keeping company with a Freelancer?" asks The Boss in the Middle.

John shrugs. Now that he had started to come to terms with associating with her, John didn't see why anyone else would have problems with his budding friendship with Ophelia. "To be honest, she just keeps showing up. At first, I detested her. However, it has come to light that we have some...shared interests...and Charlie really likes her. She intrigues me." The Bosses share a glance, but don't say anything. So John adds one more statement. "In fact, we are meeting up tonight." He says this casually, because he doesn't think it should be a big deal.

The Bosses do think this is a big deal, but they decide not to say anything. They will let this little playdate run its course, and John will see how people like this Freelancer ruin lives, and he will swiftly return to being the most perfect employee The Big Office has.

"I hope your meetup is eye-opening for you," The Boss on the Right says vaguely. The other Bosses nod in agreement, but don't say anything.

"Thank you," says John, oblivious to their true meaning.

The Bosses leave, and John is left alone with his reports and client profiles. He can hardly focus throughout the day, but he knows how important the work he's doing is, so he finds a way to stay on track.

At 5:00, John practically leaps out of his seat, walking quickly to the elevator on his way to pick up Charlie. On the way down, he checks

his email. An unexpected smile spreads across his face when he sees an email from “oh.feliuh”. Usually, John would’ve rolled his eyes at such an email name, because it is exactly the type of email to come from a person who thinks they’re quirky but aren’t. But not this time. This time, John is happy to get a message from this email. Ophelia’s email says to come as soon as he got off work, and he could leave when the show ended, or later if he cared. It has her address, and actually, it is the apartment complex two blocks down from his.

Charlie is a little caught off guard; he doesn’t know why John is doing everything so quickly. From the check out to the leash to the walking out the door, he is going at hyperspeed! Not the normal, leisurely walk. Almost a jog! And not only that, but they’re taking a different way home!

John can barely contain his excitement. He doesn’t really know why he is so excited. To be honest, he has never really had a friend before. As soon as he thinks that, John scolds himself for what he is implying. Are he and Ophelia friends? No. No. She isn’t like him. But maybe, maybe that’s ok? I mean, as long as they had two things in common? That’s more than one, which is more than most people have in common with him. And more than that, Charlie likes her. So she at least has his dog’s approval.

John stops suddenly. He is here. His chest is rising quickly, lowering even quicker. He didn’t even notice how he was getting tired on the way here. A bead of sweat dribbles down his face, falling onto Charlie’s forehead. Charlie is annoyed. But that annoyance is gone as soon as Ophelia opens the door.

“Hi! You actually came!” Ophelia says, surprised.

John looks at her blankly. “Of course. I said I would. I’m not a liar. I consider myself to be much of a truther, actually.”

“I know, I just kind of thought you were still ‘anti-freelancer’, so I wasn’t sure you’d come,” she chuckles.

“I am anti-freelancer.”

“Oh.”

The silence is loud. Too loud, for Charlie’s liking. So he barks, naturally.

Ophelia puts her hands together in a small clap, then gestures inside. “Why don’t you both come in and get settled? The lasagna just

came out of the oven a few minutes ago, and Andy Griffith is

about to be on!”

All settled on the couch, John looks around Ophelia’s living room. The first thing he notices, he didn’t even have to notice. It is in your face. Almost an overwhelming amount of plants adorn the 2 cabinets, the 5 shelves, the 4 small side tables, and the 1 coffee table. There are tulips, Silver Dollar Eucalyptus, a random vase of Italian Ruscus, another random vase of Baby’s Breath, a whole Monstera, a Fiddle-Leaf Fig plant, and 3 arrangements of wildflowers.

Besides the plants, there is a whole swarm of decorations hung up or placed on the various pieces of furniture. Random, however the unique people call them, knick-knacks line the tops of shelves, a record player on one of the small tables, and a typewriter? Not to mention the mug wall. A whole wall full, like completely full, of mugs hangs on the wall.

“Ophelia!” John screeches to the kitchen, where she is preparing the lasagna on plates.

She runs into the living room. “What’s wrong?” she asks, worried. Was there a mouse? She thought the rodent-man had gotten all of them. Was it the ants? Yes, she knew that was a problem too.

“I am overwhelmed!” John screeches again.

Ophelia blinks at him. “Why?”

“The plants! They’re like a small army! They’re closing in on me!” He looks at Charlie, who is biting a leaf off of the monstera.

“Charlie is my only defendant!” he says, pointing at his faithful dog.

Ophelia walks over to Charlie, carefully encouraging him to stop eating her favorite plant. “They’re my friends. They won’t hurt you. I promise. If they hurt you, I will throw them out. Is that ok?”

John looks at the baby breath in what could be its eye, if it had eyes, and nods. “I guess that’s fine.”

Smiling, Ophelia sits next to John. “How about I get our plates, and we can start watching our show?”

John scoots to the side of the couch, because they are sitting far too close to each other to not be friends yet.

“Why are you schooching away? I thought we were friends?” Ophelia asks, feigning offense.

Oh. John was wrong. They are friends. He scoots back.

The rest of the evening goes absolutely wonderfully. Although John almost has a panic attack taking his first bite of Ophelia’s vegan lasagna (he has never had lasagna before), he ended up thoroughly en-

joying it, even asking Ophelia for the recipe. The show is exactly as normal, which eases John's overstimulated heart. Ophelia and John laugh together, and Charlie takes a nap. After the show ends, John doesn't even notice the time. He and Ophelia talk for another hour about the show, telling stories about growing up watching it with their grandparents.

It isn't until Ophelia starts yawning when John notices how late it is. He almost has a heart attack seeing how late it is, but he thinks to himself to calm down. He hasn't died yet, and it's already two hours past his bedtime. What will a few more minutes do? Ophelia offers to walk him home, and John gladly obliges. Charlie is silent the whole way home. He is shipping Jophelia. Or would it Be Ohn? Or possibly even Johnelia? Whichever one, he is shipping it.

The three of them reach John's door. Ophelia and John stand across from each other. Charlie sits between them, looking between the two, practically begging for them to kiss. They don't, unfortunately.

"I had a really great time tonight," Ophelia says, batting her eyebrows. She kind of wants John to kiss her. He is different than other men. He is straightforward, gets excited about the things he loves, and doesn't care what people think of him. She likes that. She had fun with him, and she thinks he did too, despite practically hating her guts earlier that morning. She thinks he had a change of heart tonight.

"Me too," replies John. Why is Ophelia closing her eyes and leaning forward? That's a little strange. "Well, goodnight," he says, opening his door. He waves at a confused looking Ophelia, smiling. He shuts the door.

Charlie paws at the door, barking. How could John forget him? And secondly, how could John leave Ophelia without a kiss?

John opens the door again and gasps, kneeling down to apologize to Charlie. He looks up, noticing Ophelia, jaw dropped lower than John knew was possible. "What?" He asks.

Ophelia throws her hands up. "I wanted you to kiss me!"

Gulping, John asks, "You did? How?"

"Like this," she says, kneeling down, placing one hand behind John's neck, the other on his chest, and pressing her lips against his. His lips are soft (he applies Vaseline religiously). The kiss is quick, barely a second.

With their faces only an inch apart, they look into each others' eyes. It's silent for a moment, but John speaks. "You forgot to ask for my

consent,” he says quietly. Ophelia’s eyes widen, and she starts to apologize, but John cuts her off. “But you have my consent to kiss me again.”

And she does. This kiss isn’t very long either, but it’s beautiful. John’s heart explodes in his chest, the excited butterflies seeming to fly up from his stomach, out of his mouth, fluttering on Ophelia’s lips. Her lips are magic on his, and he finds himself smiling through the kiss.

Ophelia stands, a goofy smile on her face. She pushes her curls behind her ears and giggles. “That was nice,” she says.

John is speechless. He can’t do anything but nod.

“Goodnight, dear John,” she says, turning. She starts walking away, but keeps turning to wave at him. John and Charlie wait on the porch for many minutes after she is out of sight.

Eventually, after John gets over the shock of what just happened, he practically passes out on his bed, 3 hours after his bedtime. Charlie curls up next to him, smirking.

The next morning, John wakes up late. So late, he has to skip the coffee. He rushes out the door, Charlie and John going for their second jog in 24 hours. Although would usually be stressed about skipping coffee and not following the routine, John can’t be worried about that. He is still riding the high of Ophelia kissing him. Even though both kisses were short, her lips were still the most magical thing John had ever experienced.

Entering the building, John throws the leash to the Doggie Care worker. He runs up the four flights of stairs, because he just cannot wait for the elevator. He has to talk to The Bosses.

Reaching the fourth floor, John races down the hallway to the last office. Without knocking, John throws open the doors. The Bosses are all sitting at their Big Desk, and stare at John in surprise.

“What are you doing?” The Boss on the Left asks.

“Freelancers are magical!” John announces.

The Bosses look at each other, confused. “What do you mean?”

John launches into his story, telling them about all his encounters with Ophelia, from the coffee to the walk, to the Andy Griffith party. When he gets to the kiss, John struggles to explain what happened. “It’s like, like a firework exploded inside my brain and my heart at the same time, and all I felt was that everything was perfect. Nothing was out of place. Everything was perfect!” he pauses.

“She is perfect,” he says quietly.

The Bosses all have a small smile on their face. “It sounds like you

are in love with this freelancer,” The Boss on the Right says.

The Boss in the Middle chimes in. “From the sound of it, she makes you happy. And we saw this in your report yesterday. You wrote the best report you had ever written. We endorse this relationship. Not only that, we think you should spend more time with her.”

John grins, so big his cheeks hurt a bit. “May I leave to go ask her a question?” He asks.

They nod, and John is out of the office without even waiting for another word. He races down the hall, down the stairs. Passing DoggieCare, he yells to Charlie, “I’ll be back for you, buddy! I need to ask Ophelia on a date!” Charlie barks in support.

John runs the whole way to Ophelia’s apartment, smiling as his legs bolt down the road. He is replaying their kiss in his head, replaying their watch party, replaying every moment with her in his head. He needs her in his life.

John rings Ophelia’s doorbell. Nothing. He waits. He fidgets and fumbles with his shirt sleeves. Nothing. He knocks. 27 seconds. The door opens. Ophelia, standing there, hair up in a towel, a toothbrush in her hand.

“John? Is something wrong?” she asks.

John is so happy to see her, he is bouncing on his feet a little bit. “No, nothing is wrong. I have a question to ask you, Ophelia. Please can I ask you?”

“Yes, of course.”

John reaches out towards Ophelia, taking her hand in his. He looks into her beautiful eyes and asks her the most important question he has ever asked someone. He has never felt like this. Never wanted to ask someone a question like this. But this feels right. Ophelia feels right.

“Ophelia, will you go on a date with me? A coffee date? Maybe even a Nesquik iced coffee date?”

16 Days and 12 Hours

By Daisy Noelle

When you love them,

Distance is only a matter of miles,
your heart longing for another.

Phone calls become a life line,
And good morning texts,
A breath of fresh air.

Tears aren't uncommon,
Happy, longing, sadness, joy,
Fear, jealousy, missing them,
It's like missing part of you.

It's a Thursday night, 9:31,
The countdown on my phone says 16,12,
That's 16 days and 12 hours
A Sunday morning, 10 am,
That's how long I have to wait.

What sucks the most about distance
Are the reminders you see
It's all over tv, it's over campus,
It's over your feed, the posts, the stories,
You see couples holding hands
And I just wish, I wish it was me.

I wish it was mine and their hand,
I wish it was mine and their arms,
I wish it was mine and their lips,
I wish it was their voice I heard daily,
I wish it was them,
Because I miss all those things,
I miss the way their hand feels
Their fingers interlaced with mine
Their lips on my forehead



I wish it was us.

But it can't, it's not, all I have is a screen
I can't touch you, your voice is distorted,
No, instead, I have to wait
For 16 days and 12 hours,
Til I can be with you,
With my best friend, my love, the one who has my heart,
Because when you're in love,
The distance isn't really that much,
3 hour train, 8 hour drive, now an hour and a half,
we've done it all,
So I guess, for your love, what's 16 days and 12 hours?





Unusual Cloud
By Kayla Vanderhoof

The Event Horizon

By Kayla Vanderhoof

my body is a beer can
and god is shotgunning
my soul
down his gullet

there's a galaxy inside me—
unfathomably brilliant and beckoning
a reservoir ready to burst

though galaxies are choking hazards
the universe's super massive maw
can't read warning labels

black holes may swallow everything
but they'll never swallow me

god can choke.



I Am Not Ready for a Valkyrie to Take Me

By Kayla Vanderhoof

When Odin
hanged himself
 from the branches of Yggdrasil
 the World Tree,
he sought
 the language of the universe—
the runes we read
to divine our futures.
Eons later,
I waver at the precipice of an epiphany, watching my convictions
rally instead of wither,
and
I wonder:
how
can
I
be
more
like
Odin
?



Calico

By Kayla Vanderhoof

There's a calico cat outside on my window sill. I put my hand against the glass; she bonks the glass with her head. I open the window and she jumps into my lap like she has napped there her whole life. Maybe she has.



Lilac

By Kayla Vanderhoof

Nothing compares to the scent of new lilacs—the epitome of purple. I pause to fully occupy this color, with the warmth of the sun and the cool morning mist a cloak around my senses. Beyond the cloudscapes, raindrops gather. Soon, puddles will surround me and the lilacs will hide behind the petrichor; until then, I breathe this moment deep into my lungs.





Rest

By Jenn Ramsdell
Collograph print

Home

By Rachel Rickards

The tawny peppered pelt of a coyote flashes in the dark foliage. Shadow to light then back to shadow. In the quiet, a small panting noise rattles the air. Shrubs and low branches shake as the scrawny frame brushes against them. The pace slows as a clearing in the trees appears. Small paws slow to a creep.

What could be out there?

A small brown nose pokes out of the brush, sniffs three times. Then a tentative paw reaches out. The ground swallows the foot. The paw snaps back. In the dark brown soil, a print remains. Bright amber eyes peek through the leaves.

No danger.

The sleek face parts the bushes. Slowly, an athletic body follows. Standing straight, nose to the sky, sniffing.

Not familiar.

The head drops to the squishy earth.

Not familiar.

A whimper escapes.

The air. It is too damp, cool, and crisp to be home. Strange animal scents fill the clearing. She cannot tell if they are friendly or not. Nothing smells like her. Some musks fill the area, others are mere wisps. The stronger scents mean the creatures frequent the clearing or might be close.

Don't be around here when they return.



The coyote makes a circle around the trees on the other side, smelling the whole way. Back under the dark, damp foliage. A few drops fall onto her nose as she passes; a sneeze follows. A stick cracks. Her legs fly out as she falls low to the ground. Ears snap to and fro, trying to locate the sound. Snap.

Behind. Run.

Swift brown legs flash. Trees blur together. Bushes turn to haze. Brown and green merge into one. Light paws fly over the earth like beating wings. Weaving around stumps and tearing through bushes, no thoughts of stealth remain.

Faster. Faster. Faster.

Fumbling over roots, she runs behind a trunk and peers around. Ears forward, listening for the sounds of pursuit. Nothing except labored pants. She stays behind the trunk, stuck like sap to the bark. She stays until the silver light leaves the sky. Brilliant colors splash across the eastern expanse. Sleep starts to work its way up the tense muscles. Against her will, muscles unwind. Next to the large tree, she digs a small hole to nuzzle her frame into. She curls up and scans the area one last time. She does not understand the new environment. She did not mean to come. The coyote had only been curious of the lumbering trees by her sand. Only wanting to know more, she travels in. Now there's no way back. Slowly, the shining amber eyes close. As sleep murmurs in her ear, a familiar smell returns to her, warm, dry, and harsh.

Home.

Sleep takes hold, but is not very tight.

...

Warm, shifting earth rubs against toes. Above, a dark expanse of black sings overhead. Small white dots light the way. Leaping and bounding through the fine sand, she pauses to sniff, letting out a chirp.

Jumping onto her paws, she blinks sleep away. It rushes the dark green. Damp air assaults the nose and the earth squelches through the toe pads. The sky is hard to see between the canopy above. Purple and pink fill in the cracks.

Ears droop close to the head in disappointment. Home is nowhere close. Still as lost as ever, the bushy tail drops.

A fluttering sound fills the large ears. Spinning, the coyote smacks her nose on the tree. A sharp yelp fills the silence, swallowed by the foliage. Shaking the slim head, a green shape floats by in the air. The bright eyes following the leaf's dance come to a stop on the ground. The brown nose gives a half-hearted sniff as the eyes shift back and forth among the trees. The frame raises to its full height before disturbing the leaf.

The tight stomach is sucked in to keep it from growling too loud. The nose and ears twitch, looking for familiarity. As the light fades, more and more noise fills her head. So many new, strange, loud, quiet, rough, sweet, sappy, quick, noises ring and echo throughout the skull. Paws stop. With each new sound, the head moves to and fro. A cry of delight that way, death's scream another. A shiver racks the frame and raises the hackles. Pink tongue rolls from the mouth; air puffs from the chest. Dark leaves swim closer, leering overhead. A scream vibrates the air.

Whimpering, the small body falls to the floor. Paws scratch at the ears, trying to block out the sounds. Failing that, they lie on her still nose.

I want to go home. I want to be warm. I want the silence of sand.

Trembling, a noise catches the sensitive ears' interest. The sound pushes its way into the foreground of thought. Everything grows dim once it is recognized.

I know that.

The coyote's head lifts, stares off with one ear tilted higher than



the other. Waiting, she appears to be made of stone. Paws resting before her, head listing to the side with eyes full of fear and hope.

There.

A small squeak is barely audible. She tentatively stands, stalking in the direction to the right. Creeping past a couple of trees, she hears another squeak and angles to the left. This pattern of stopping, listening, and adjusting continues until she hears the loudest squeak. Nocturnal eyes scan the ground.

I know you're out there. I can hear you.

A small brown body hops out from behind a tree root. The small mouse rubs its face with its hands, methodically cleaning whiskers and massaging chubby cheeks. The body is angled slightly away from the coyote's position. They do not see the coyote frozen slightly behind them. Drool fills the mouth and the stomach flips. The coyote creeps closer and closer. A crack rings out only a few feet away from the meal. The mouse's head snaps. Brown eyes meet amber.

No.

The coyote looks down. A stick is under her paw. Eyes flash back to the mouse. Only the root is there. Hopping the last three feet, she inspects the root. The scent is still fresh. Pressing the nose against the ground she finds the mouse's smell. Raptured by the scent, she forgets to look where she's going. She sees the mouse dive under a tree.

She speeds up a bit, almost crashing into the tree where the scent ends. Pawing the tree's base, she circles to find the entrance. A deep growl vibrates the air. Hackles raise as the body jumps and spins toward the sound. The thick smell of blood punches the coyote's nose. The ground vibrates with the air. Large yellow eyes command attention.

A large grey creature lies in the small clearing. Blood drips from the enormous bared teeth. A torn body lies between gored paws. The growling gets louder and the teeth snap. A paw drags the meat closer to

the massive frame. Raising to a crouch, a bark rumbles into the clearing.

Stalled limbs reanimate. No further warning is needed. Turning, the coyote rushes back through the trees, body flying through the layers of foliage. There is no crashing snarl of pursuit.

Are they not following?

The need to run evaporates. She walks away, but the smell of bloody meat makes the stomach growl. She performs a small dance, hopping forward and then backward. The beast does not pursue. The coyote creeps back, the tearing of flesh delightfully loud. Curving around a tree, the grey pelt comes into view. The large ear flicks forward, and the yellow eyes watch the coyote. She does not dare walk past the trees. Now, looking at the bloody mountain of fur eating, it is easier to see that it is a bulkier version of the coyote. Head cocked, saliva filling her mouth, she watches the meat tear from the bone. After minutes of watching, the wolf finally licks its paws and muzzle. At the wolf's own time, it lifts its mass and sulks off the other way. Drool hangs from the coyote's jowls, swinging as the head turns to follow the wolf. She creeps out on her stomach to the destroyed body once certain the wolf is gone. She gnaws on demolished bones, tail thumping on the dirt. Bones licked clean, she stands. Panting, she begins to dig in the dirt looking for water.

The wolf stands, watching the twig of fur eat the scraps of the kill. The tail swishes in the air. The yellow eyes blink lazily as the head turns. The light thump of paws brush the air as he saunters on.

...

The wolf returns for days on end, always with some critter. The coyote watches from the trees and steals the scraps once the wolf leaves.

The coyote becomes familiar with the wolf. The brown body comes out of the trees. The beast does not snarl until one tawny paw crosses the tree line. Seeing the line, the coyote scoots back and plops down. The grey head drops back to its meal, not looking away from

the small scavenger. Once done, the wolf retreats a bit but stays in the clearing. Unsure, the coyote crawls forward a bit.

No growl.

She pauses and slithers toward the food. The wolf watches. Yellow eyes flicker from the kill to the coyote. Snatching the food, she jumps back. The wolf's mask stays placid. At the first tear of meat from a bone, the wolf rises.

...

One day, the wolf finishes but does not back away. They lie next to the meat, watching the coyote sitting in the thicket of trees. The coyote cocks its head at the wolf, drool swinging back and forth. They eye each other. The wolf crawls backward a bit but sits at the ready. At an impasse, they stare. A rumble of hunger pushes the coyote to take a tentative step forward. The wolf stays silent. The coyote stumbles to get the meat.

Close enough to touch her, the wolf rises, towering over the cowering coyote. They smell the small head and body. The coyote stands frozen, head lowered, tail tucked. The wolf makes its rounds, sniffing, then goes back to lying down. The coyote eats under the tranquil, yellow eyes.

Once full, the coyote sits down, licking the angular muzzle. Lumbering to their feet, the wolf walks away. They look back at the coyote waiting. Hesitant, she follows after a moment.

...

The coyote is slow to catch onto the wolf's teachings. Eventually, she learns how to catch mice in the new area. The wolf shows her how to hide behind trees and lunge out. After tripping on roots and sticks more than once, she becomes comfortable with the terrain, easily hopping over falling hazards. He shows her where the streams are. One does not need to dig in the ground or find plants to get a drink here.

She is taught how to identify smells that are warnings. Certain marks show the boundaries of dens or pack hunting grounds. She can tell by the number of marks left these are areas the wolf avoids. While still learning the new smells, the coyote stumbles upon a hole. There is a strange smell to it. She vaguely remembers the smell and it stirs something in her. The wolf is behind her somewhere. She had run ahead of him. She sniffs and slowly moves into the hole. There are soft noises inside: a whimpering coo sound. The coyote again feels a stirring of deep memories long lost.

A growl sounds from inside.

She jumps back as a large wolf lunges for her face. This wolf is much like her wolf, but something is different. Her wolf is by her side in a second, shoving her with his body. He worms his way between the coyote and the she-wolf. He dances back from the dripping white fangs and raised hackles. Once shoved far enough away, he runs, knowing the coyote would follow. From then on, the coyote knows not to go near places with strong smells and lingering blood.

When she is first introduced to the stream, she doesn't know how to act. The loud, harsh rush of noise makes her hide in the trees. The wolf stares at her with a cocked head, then walks forth and laps. The coyote knows this is water as she watches the wolf drink like she would. Still put off by the noise, she only gets frightened. He turns his shaggy head, water dripping from his mouth. At the sight, her tongue sticks to the roof of her mouth. She approaches slowly. Watching the clear water run by, she lowers her head and laps. The water feels cool and sharp on her tongue, nothing like the water in the holes in the sand. She drinks greedily, long after the wolf had stopped. She plops down beside him, stomach bulging slightly, when she'd had more than enough water.

Chasing small creatures becomes more spirited. Alone, it was easy to catch and devour. Together, it became a hunt. They would chase the animals around trees. The wolf's long legs gave him an advantage. He would charge ahead and capture the creature with ease. The coyote would try to keep up, thin legs pumping. Losses were piling up. One day, the wolf snaps a neck and turns to see the coyote missing. Ears prick the sky, listening. He hears her thumping around in a bush

nearby. He drops down and begins to eat. After a while, the brown fluff shows through the trees. The coyote comes prancing out, a small mouse dangling in her jaws. The wolf huffs as she eats beside him.

They developed a routine where the wolf would catch and eat first, and the coyote would get the scraps or any mice caught. The more the coyote learned, the less all the new sounds overwhelmed her. Images of sand and prickly plants became less frequent. Warm air changed to warm fur, leading light became the deep footprints of the wolf.

The wolf travels ahead, walking with lumbering patience, while the coyote trots behind him, tongue lolling out of her mouth. Often, the wolf would lie down while the coyote, trying to play, would jump in his musty fur and paw at the large caterpillar tail. The wolf huffs and closes its eyes. Once the coyote wears herself out, she curls up with the giant fluff ball.

Warmth surrounds and calms the body, guiding sleep in. As sleep comes to take hold of the wolf and coyote, a scent fills her small nose : warm, musty, metallic, and friendly. As sleep calls, a pair of warm, steady yellow eyes flare in the mind. The last thought that fills the coyote's mind before she drifts into unconsciousness.

Home.



To the Girl

By Rachel Rickards

To the girl with the sad eyes
Do you know you are beautiful?
I don't mean that in a
"You should smile more because you are too pretty to frown" way.
No, I mean do you know you are beautiful.
The unsteady tears look like the glass rains of HD 189733b.
People think it harsh, painful.
But how beautiful that rain must be
Thousands of prisms reflecting everything they see.
Oh how I want to grab your face and wipe those tears away
To feel the sharp cut of the glass on my skin
To the girl with the sad eyes,
I wish I could know your reflection.
Do you know how beautiful you are?



Long Distance

By Rachel Rickards

A 10 hour shift;
And no one to come home to.



It Gets Easier to Say Goodbye

By Rachel Rickards

What bullshit.
If anything it gets harder
It has been well over two years
It feels like the first time
Every single time
Always like the first time
You got on that damn plane

I still want to run after you
Hold you until you miss your flight

Instead I'm in bed
Laying here, fine,
Until I roll over
To where you were
Next to me hours before

I can't breathe
I can't see
Where do these tears keep coming from?
Why did you have to leave again?
Why do I have to cry for the next day?
Why doesn't it get easier?





Untitled
By Brandi Permin

Beautiful Beasts

By Sam Cash

I watched your soft face, your gentle smile, as I tore the eye out of the teddy bear in my hands. The bead only held on by a thread, though no matter how hard I tugged, it wouldn't relent. But I didn't care about that. It wasn't anything special. I don't even know why I have this memory, but as you strolled through the isle, idly peeking through the forest of clothes strung up on the poles, you looked calm. You leaned on the cart, muscles relaxed as you pushed us along. Your lips bounced to whatever song that played in the speakers overhead as you perused through the isles. I don't even think you realized you sang along, but your head bobbed up and down like a gentle stream. I wish I could have heard your voice.

Next thing I remember was your fingers combing through my thick curls. I remember your frustration with them, how they'd never untangle. No matter how many times you yanked and no matter the product you used, nothing worked. You hadn't given up though. That's one thing I can say with confidence. You never gave up.

I sat, cross legged on the top of the bathroom counter, fiddling with the sink tap. Our reflections in the grimy, old mirror stared back at us and I couldn't help but watch your face as it contorted in thought. Your lips pursed and your eyes narrowed as your hands twisted my hair into various styles. Your hip jutted out to the side and my hair ruffled from your warm huff of breath.

But despite that, I remember you meeting my eyes in the mirror. You smiled.

The feel of your long nails scratching my scalp sent shivers racing down my spine.

Papa entered the bathroom then. All three of us filled the room and your shoulders brushed as he passed by. The crow's feet at your eyes disappeared, although your smile lingered. Goosebumps littered my skin. I let go of the tap and held my hands together in my lap. I watched him in the mirror. As soon as he started rubbing your shoulders, the frigid cold of the counter tickled the small hairs on my legs.

You shut your eyes and rolled your head back, letting your hands



fall from my head. Your head lolled back and forth before finally falling back and resting on Papa's shoulder. You said something to him, but I couldn't tell what it was. Your lips buried themselves in the side of his neck.

I sat there, staring at my complexion in the mirror. I watched as he picked you up and carried you out of the bathroom.

My reflection sat there with me. I reached out. My fingertips brushed against the mirror slick with grime. I opened my mouth. The rumble of my throat felt as if I swallowed pounds of spiked rocks. I strained myself to hear what I had said, but all I felt was the cold wrapping around my shoulders like a blanket.

I looked up in the mirror, half-expecting you to return. You didn't. I was alone.

I couldn't blame you for that, not when I saw the happiness on your face a few weeks later.

You leapt from the bathroom, crying. But as I sat at the kitchen table with that worn out teddy bear, you jumped up and down, mouth open in a scream. Papa dropped the remote and rushed over to you, fear stricken in his face. His skin was pallid, worried sick. But when you showed him the pregnancy test, the greatest smile I'd ever seen broke out along his face. He said something I couldn't read, kissed you all over your face, and couldn't stop looking down at your stomach.

I think you guys were happy then.

I remember you showing me the pregnancy test as well. The positive test. I didn't know what it meant, then, but you knelt down and smiled at me. With your hands, you wrote out baby.

Baby.

I didn't know what it meant. But your smile made me smile. Papa's cheering made me cheer.

He whispered something in your ear. Your face fell. I wish I knew what he said at the moment, but I think I know now. He was happy he could finally talk to one of his children, wasn't he?

It took several months to be able to see the bump in your stomach. At that point, I knew what it meant. I remember standing on the stool, rubbing vibrant yellow paint all over the walls of my bedroom with my bare hands. I knew he would have to share my bedroom, but at that point, I was too excited to care.

A giant list of names strung down the back of the door, some crossed out, some with question marks, some with hearts. Two of your

favorites were Luke for a boy, and Lily for a girl. I secretly wanted a little brother. I remember thinking of Luke over and over falling asleep every single night.

Those glow-in-the-dark stars stuck up on the ceiling around the mobile as it spun idly in the gentle draft from the open window. My old crib sat in the corner across my bed, newly painted, a pale light blue. You painted puffy sheep jumping around the wall, Papa did the trees. They weren't as good as yours, but I think you loved them anyway. I just slapped my hands wherever they could go, splashing paint and leaving faint handprints all over the wall.

That memory stuck with me. Even now, staring into the void of inky blackness, flecked with thousands of little white holes, I can remember the way your feet danced along with the music. Your head bobbed up and down and your hair whipped around your face. I remember laying my hand on the old radio and shaking my body along with the vibrations.

Although, the next day was even better. Several faces I hadn't recognized appeared with gifts and smiles. Everyone wore either pink or blue, and more pink and blue balloons dotted the ceiling, but I couldn't tear my eyes away from the cake. It had to be the most expensive thing in our house. The cracked walls and dirt-covered windows had never seen something so magnificent. Now, I've seen even grander cakes— this one was nothing compared to my wedding cake. But I hadn't seen anything like it at the time.

White frosting blanketed the cake like a glove, pink and blue piping decorated the sides. The piping spelled out BOY OR GIRL on the top, surrounding a single, tall candle. I sat at the dining table, wearing my best red shorts and blue shirt. You had insisted I wear that.

Papa stood in the corner of the room, wearing a pink shirt, and drinking a beer with two other men. I think they were his brothers, but I didn't know my uncles well enough to recognize them. They never talked to me, anyways.

You stood behind me, hands on my shoulders as you talked to other people I never met. Your fingers grazed my shoulder, thumb brushing over my bone every so often. I still miss the shape of your hands, your fingers touching my skin. I've never felt anything like it since.

I remember how excited you were for that day. Your hair was up

in a brilliant curled braid, you wore your best pink dress that made

your stomach puff out ever so slightly more, and you spent hours in front of the mirror doing your makeup. I helped you with your nail polish, so it was messy, but you flaunted it anyway.

I wanted to help you cut the cake, but Papa refused. You tried to reassure him it would be okay, but he shook his head and refused to allow it. But we had secretly cut an extra piece just for me when he wasn't looking.

As soon as the slice of cake slid out, everybody gathered around and watched in bated breath. You and papa cheered. It was a girl.

Your little Lily.

I sat in the chair, smiling because of the tears of happiness running down your cheek. Everybody else in the room shared hugs and tears of joy. Some pumped their fists in excitement; others hugged. But everyone's mouth was wide open expressing their love.

The silence was unbearable. I longed to reach out for anybody, just to share a shred of that happiness, to hear your voice yell out Lily, but I couldn't. No matter how hard I tried.

I had run out of the room at that point, straight to my bedroom. As soon as my eyes fell on those painted sheep and old crib, I burst into tears. I wouldn't be able to hear her cry, nor her first words. I couldn't tell her stories when she struggled to fall asleep.

That worn-down teddy bear stared at me from the head of my bed. It stared at me with those emotionless black beads. I don't remember why I did it, but before I realized, its eyeball finally snapped. It sat useless under my bed. I threw the teddy bear down with it, never to be found again.

I remember you bursting into my room then. Your smile disappeared and you watched me with big, sad eyes. You held me in your arms as I screamed, wailed, and punched my little fists into your shoulder. I didn't know what else to do.

It took a few weeks to come to peace with the idea that I would never be able to hear my little sister, although I still don't think I'm over it. You reassured me every day and gave me the nickname Baby Bug. It helped me feel less alone. Your signing had improved significantly, too. From the way you studied before going to bed and your focus on my hands as we talked, you tried harder and harder. We could hold steady conversations. I was learning, too. As soon as I learned Baby, I wouldn't stop signing baby, baby, baby.

Papa didn't try as hard as you did, though. He was either too busy



with work or too tired. Despite everything, you did it.

Your bump was massive by the time my birthday rolled around. I think you only had a month left at that point. You struggled to lean over, had to take breaks far more often, and couldn't play with me like you used to. So instead, I would put on little shows, trying my best to sign along to the subtitles on the television. It was hard, but I think you enjoyed watching.

Papa couldn't come home when you baked the cupcakes. You decided he didn't deserve one, so you only made two. That was our little secret.

They were small vanilla cupcakes. Mine had a mound of frosting barely balancing on the top. You sacrificed your own frosting so I could have extra.

It was my sixth birthday, and as I stared at the lit candle, my mind blanked on what to wish for. I wanted you to be healthy and for Lily to come home safely, but I'll admit, I was selfish that day. What I wished was for Papa to come home.

After blowing out the candle, you brought out my present. I knew we were financially tight that month with all the expenses for Lily, but you still found something. You still found a way to make sure I was happy.

Inside the box was a new toy race car. It was a vibrant, brilliant thing; sharp and deep red with sharp, yellow racing stripes running over the top. The wheels were massive as well, all four of them.

Without a second thought, I raced it along the table, flashing my teeth in a wide grin. I still have that toy. It's on my desk at home, still as pristine as ever. Kind of. I tried my best to fix it.

I could tell, though, Papa hated the car. I didn't know why, but putting the pieces together, I think it sounded awful on our rickety old table. Both of you winced and cringed away every time I ran it around. Papa tried taking it from me several times but you never allowed it. It was the only thing I had. I wouldn't destroy this one.

One night, while you were cooking dinner, Papa came home later than expected. He swayed inside, eyes half-lidded and red. He leaned against the wall and let out a long sigh, dropping his coat to the floor.

You turned to him, fury written all over your expression. Your

brows furrowed and your nose flared. You looked him up and



down and jutted out your hip. I couldn't read your lips by then, so I didn't know what you asked him, but now I have a clue.

He waved his hand as if trying to brush you away, and pushed off the wall. You didn't let him go down the hallway, though. With your hands on your hips, you blocked his only way to the bedroom. Your eyes were glossy and you bit your bottom lip, trying to hold back the tears. Papa looked at you and curled his lip up in disgust. He narrowed his eyes, and mumbled something. You shook your head.

I didn't even realize I was running the car back and forth on the table as I watched until papa turned and yanked the car from my grip. He spun faster than you could catch him. The toy flew through the air and slammed against the wall. A single wheel broke off from the car and landed under the coffee table.

You were too frozen in shock to stop him from pushing past you and into the bedroom. He slammed the door behind him.

I remember you running and falling on your knees as you collected the pieces of the toy. Luckily, most of it was still intact. Over the past days and weeks, though, no amount of glue was able to keep it together. You tried over and over again, but nothing worked.

I still played with it, though. It didn't roll well on the table anymore. It was lumpy, awkward, and shuffled along at a sad pace.

You and papa talked less after that day. You didn't say goodbye when he left for work, he barely showed me a passing glance, and you didn't look at him if you didn't have to. The tension in the air felt as if you both pulled on opposite sides of a rope, tense and uncertain, with me in the middle.

You had been too tired to get up one morning, so as I sat at the table, I rolled the car along my leg instead of on the dilapidated wood. My thumb brushed over where the tire should have been. Instead, there was nothing but a vast, empty hole.

I still remember the day after. Even as I stare out into the great expanse of nothingness, I can see, vividly, your horrified face. Crimson shone underneath your skin like a light to paper. The tears streamed down your face, free flowing and glistening in the dim light. Papa stormed into the house and paced around the living room. You just locked yourself in the bathroom.

I stood in the middle of the house, holding my racecar to my chest.

I don't know what the doctor said. I don't know why Lily died.

The shattered looks on both of your faces in the doctor's office broke my heart. You immediately burst into tears, but Papa was frozen.

Now he was screaming. The cold enveloped my skin again and I shuffled away from him. But he stopped, and the veil of silence settled over my shoulders. I slouched from the invisible weight, and shifted over to a chair where I fell limp.

Papa cast me glances every once in a while, but always looked away when I met his eyes. He seemed distant, thoughtful, as he stared out the window. He bit his lip and shut the blinds, hanging his head. Ripples of shivers raced down my spine as he came over and hovered next to me. His dark eyes watched me with some solemn regret. He knelt down and placed his hand on the table. It was only inches from mine. Every bit of my body wanted to leave – to run to the bathroom and wrap myself in your arms. With you, the warmth spread from the tip of my head to the soles of my feet. The second you left, the cold numbed my bones.

He reached out and grabbed the car from my lap. He pulled the other wheel from his pocket and leaned on the counter. For several minutes, I watched as he stared in deep focus, trying to force the wheel back on. He did everything you did: glue, force. It stuck on for a few seconds. His face lit up, but fell as soon as the wheel once again dropped to the floor. It couldn't be fixed.

It sat lifeless in his trembling hands. When I thought he was just shaking from shock, I looked at his face and froze from the bulging veins across his temples. His jaw set. Fingers clasped around the toy and slammed it back on the table. He wrung his fat fingers through his hair and paced the living room before punching the wall. Red crept up his neck and painted his face. He gritted his teeth.

But just before I thought he'd take it out on me, he leaned against the wall. He slid down and hid his face in his hands. There, on the floor, he looked smaller than I was. Red blotted the tips of his ears. His shoulders shook. I didn't know what was happening, but when he lifted his head and the streaks of tears glistened on his skin, I realized what he was trying to do. It was too late. Lily was dead and the toy was broken.

I grabbed the car and scooted off the chair. He didn't spare me a glance when I scuffled out of the living room. The frozen metal from the bathroom handle tickled my skin as I twisted it open.

There you were, curled up on the floor.



We sat there in the silence together. I let your tears fall on the top of my head as you held onto me.

When you stopped crying, you stood and eyed the tub. There were several bath bombs, soaps, fragrances, everything. You turned back to me and smiled before twisting the handle. A thick stream of water poured into the bath as we stripped out of our clothes. Your stomach was still round and you held it as if it was about to fall off as we climbed into the bath.

Within minutes, bubbles sat atop the waving water and the fresh scent of lavender and coconut filled my senses. The water was warm and it wrapped around my shoulders. I tried to run the race car on the wall and the side of the tub, but it was just as awkward and lop-sided as it was on the table.

Tears still stained your face and anytime I looked at you, you sniffled them back. You smiled every time you looked at me, even when your muscles didn't want to. You tried your best for me.

Mountains of bubbles layered on top of each other as you popped in more bath bombs. Soon enough, both of us were giggling as we smothered each other with the bubbles.

I couldn't hear your laugh, but I imagined it was the most beautiful sound in the world. I can't describe it, but the thought of it warms my heart. Even now.

I remember when your laughs descended back into crying. The tears wouldn't stop no matter what I did. I tugged on your arm and plunged below the surface of the water. You followed me and there, the water absorbed the tears so you could cry as much as you want without fear.

Under the water, I didn't have to hear a thing. I didn't have to hear Papa's yelling in the other room. I didn't have to hear your pained cries. Under the water, we were alone. You closed your eyes and let yourself relax, suspended there with no responsibilities or expectations. Far below the giant mounds of bubbles, you looked at me. You never tore your eyes away.

As I sat there, floating in a bottomless pit of nothing, I let the fear, the pain, the loneliness wash from my shoulders.

I remember how my car skated along the side of the bathtub walls. There, under the water, cars can drive with only three wheels.

We Are Flowers

By Emma Reincke

For now, let us sit in the darkness. In our field, tucked away in the crook of mother nature's arm. With the fireflies and their blinking lights that bring life to our sunken eyes.

We see all.

We see the sun through the bottom of the earth, painfully crawling its way up over the mountain.

We see the birds that nest in the thorn bushes, pierced every morning, they feed their young with their fresh blood.

Here there is no breeze and no rain. We shower in the saliva of beasts who drool in their sleep.

Should we wake them up and ask them to rip us away and drag us to our end? They would not hesitate to tear us from our home, to end us if they could. For we could wrap ourselves around their throats again and again until they fell to their knees. Then we could shower in their blood. Feed our young like those birds in the thorn bushes. Breathe again in their suffering.

Today we let them wake peacefully, we don't need them to fall.

We have the fireflies.

We have the darkness.

Please let us sit in the darkness.



Contributors

Daisy Noelle – is a Creative Writing major at EWU in her junior year. She grew up in the rainy weather of western Washington, so reading fantasy and fiction novels was her way to escape the gloominess outside. This love of reading turned into a passion for writing. Daisy loves telling stories through short stories, and recently finished her first full-length novel! She also dabbles in poetry, loving the way she can portray raw emotions on the page.

E.W. Here – lives and breathes for writing. Every experience becomes a possible seed for a poem or fuel for a story. She is drawn to the enchanting nature of poetry and fiction that captivates the mind and remains a meaningful gem forever in hearts of readers. She writes whenever she has the chance and aims to keep improving as she finishes up her Creative Writing degree at Eastern.

Elizabeth Mendiola – is a multimedia Chicana artist born and raised in Washington. She is passionate about creating an immersive experience for viewers and creating interactive paintings, installations, and sculptures to create artwork that bridges the gap between physical and digital realities and how our current usage of technology impacts the day-to-day.

Emma Reincke – is currently pursuing a degree in film at EWU. She tends to latch onto one specific object or perspective for a poem or story then blast white noise through her headphones and just write down whatever comes to mind first. She says this is both a blessing and a curse because she finds it leads to some interesting lines but then also requires a lot of editing.

Contributors

Irie Browning – is a 4th year philosophy student and McNair Scholar at Eastern Washington University. She hopes to continue her study of philosophy in graduate school. Along with academic research papers, she writes novels, poetry, and creative nonfiction. When she isn't writing, she can often be found reading books with her dog and cat or playing Dungeons and Dragons with her friends.

Jenn Ramsdell – is a multidisciplinary printmaker who has a particular fondness for collograph printing's rich textures. Within their dark and playful works, they question the concepts of healing by talking about connection, cyclical trauma, and mental illness in society. They are a graduated EWU BFA student who currently resides in Spokane, Washington, with their partner and cat.

Kayla Vanderhoof – enjoys experimenting with different media as she cultivates her many ideas like flowers in a garden. Photography, sketching, ceramics, painting, poetry, and narrative fiction are just a few of the creative hobbies in which she engages.

In her free time, one could find her working on a project, wishing for a rainy day, petting a cat, or teaching herself something new. She admires Tolkien, Poe, Sarah J. Maas, and Leigh Bardugo, and aspires to their capabilities. If you'd like to follow her work on Instagram, her handle is [gloomshine_press](#)

Luu Melon– is a comic artist and illustrator with a love for film and other sequential media. Luu's storytelling is centered in character exploration and capturing the small scope, organic events that transpire through life. To explore the lives and people hidden underneath the surface. Luu is currently working on their first graphic novel and other projects at the Hive.

Contributors

Rachel Rickards – is an undergraduate student at Eastern Washington University. She was born in California and raised in Spokane. She is engaged to a military man and will be moving back to California by the end of the year. She is a fiction writer who dabbles in poetry. One of her poems has been published in an online magazine called “Folio.” Her Instagram is @rachelrickards645, though she never posts.

Sam Cash – is a senior at EWU. He is studying English Studies with a focus in literature and has been reading and writing his entire life. For the few past years, he has been writing a book with his best friend and hopes to get it published soon. As he will be graduating soon, he is excited to see where life takes him!

Zachary Lumsden – is a senior and Creative Writing major at Eastern Washington University. His time at Eastern is coming to a close and he’s excited to see where his education is going to take him!

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2023 Contributors

Daisy Noelle
E.W. Here
Elizabeth Mendiola
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Luu Melon
Rachel Rickards
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