

2020

Tapestries

WEAVING THE THREADS OF CREATIVITY &
INNOVATION

Each year the School of STEAM hosts the Gunard B. Carlson Creative Writing and Visual Arts Contest, a competition open to all Saint Francis undergraduates. Students may submit written entries of up to 3,000 words in the following categories: (1) fiction, (2) creative nonfiction, including personal narratives and memoirs, (3) essay writing, and (4) poetry, with a minimum of five poems per submission. Students also may submit works of visual art, such as photographs, sculptures, paintings (oil, water, and acrylic), sketches, and collages.

The Department of Literature & Languages also hosts the annual Father Callan Poetry Contest, which aims to celebrate Father Thomas Callan's love of literature. This contest, funded by the generous donations of SFU alumnus and published poet Paul Martin, is open to all undergraduate and graduate students.

The winners and honorable mentions of each contest are published in our annual edition of *Tapestries*, Saint Francis University's literary and visual arts magazine. This particular edition includes the winning entries and honorable mentions of our 2019-2020 contests. Opinions expressed in this magazine do not reflect those of the contest judges and magazine editor or those of the Saint Francis community.

For more information about the Gunard B. Carlson and Fr. Callan Poetry contests, please contact:

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Tapestries

Weaving the Threads of Creativity and Innovation

Faculty Editor

Brennan Thomas

Cover Artwork by Samuel Bumbarger

“Autumn Path” (1st Place Winner in the Visual Arts Category)

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Mr. Paul Martin, for his establishment and sponsorship of the Fr. Callan Poetry Contest, for which he also judged all submitted entries;

Drs. Lauri Chose and Patrick Farabaugh, who judged all writing submissions for the Gunard B. Carlson Contest and selected the winners and honorable mention recipients in this category;

Ms. Carol Stoltz, for judging all visual art entries for the Gunard B. Carlson Contest and selecting the overall visual arts winner and honorable mention recipients;

Ms. Colleen Krug and Ms. Kristin Hann, for carefully overseeing that all winners and honorable mention recipients received their award certificates and other prizes;

Ms. Marie Young, Ms. Kara Illig, and other members of the Marketing and IT teams, who expertly uploaded our magazine to the university's site to ensure all students, faculty, and staff are able to access it;

And all students who submitted writing and artwork for the Gunard B. Carlson and Fr. Callan Poetry contests. This past year was unlike any other, filled with fear, struggle, and isolation. Your eloquent writing and stirring artwork are a testament to that familiar adage that beauty blooms in adversity.

Gunard B. Carlson Writing Judges

Dr. Lauri Chose, Associate Professor of English

Dr. Patrick Farabaugh, Associate Professor of Communication Arts

Gunard B. Carlson Visual Arts Judge

Ms. Carol Stoltz, Head of Library Access Services

Fr. Callan Poetry Judge

Mr. Paul Martin, SFU Alumnus and Published Poet

Contest Coordinator & Magazine Editor

Dr. Brennan Thomas, Associate Professor of English and Writing Center Director

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A Day on the Subway by Jacob Bowen

The Pit of Doom by Alyssa Baxter

4th Place Winner, Gunard Carlson Contest

I stand on the threshold of the pit of doom. Light flickers and flashes inside, casting the dirty grey floors in slithering shadow. I take a breath, filling my nose with the stuffy odor of the place. The worst place on Earth, this was. I take a shaking step forward, letting my eyes adjust to the almost constant flicker.

I look around, stomach churning with dread. Where was it? I had to find it. If I failed in my task, I would never be regarded in favor again. I had said I could retrieve this item from the pit of doom. I must deliver. She wouldn't have it any other way.

I step into the labyrinth, its walls rising up on either side, crowding me. Others wander here, lost souls sucked in, led around by some mysterious force of evil and then deposited with no real knowledge of how or why they had come to be there. I shiver as I pass one such person, staring blankly at one of the walls, as if searching for something there. I know what I seek is not in this part of the labyrinth, so I move on. I truly feel sorry for those poor souls forced to come to this burning place of misery. I wouldn't have set foot here if my quest hadn't demanded it be so.

I reach a crossroads in the maze and stop. Which way? I look around. There are signs above some of the paths in the labyrinth, but they could be lies. Lies designed to trick unsuspecting travelers like myself into losing their way here. I will not fall for these vile traps, even if they are not lies. I will find my own way without the signs, just in case. I walk through passage after passage, eyes darting back and forth. There were monsters in this labyrinth, oh yes, there were. I must be wary. If a monster saw me trying to retrieve the item, I would be dragged from the labyrinth and out of the pit of doom. This meant failure, and failure was not an option.

I had to duck back into the labyrinth as one monster glided past. He pushed wispy strands of cloth in front of him with a long pole. Those strands were what caught you. They were doing their horrid job right now! The floor behind the monster was much cleaner than the floor ahead, the strands having devoured everything in their path. I was almost sick as I watched this monster with his tool. That could have been me. I gather my strength. No, I would do this. Giving up meant displeasing her.

With a mighty bound, I leap the cleaner stretch of floor and dash for one of the paths on the other side of the crossroads. Some of the poor lost souls looked up from their weary travails. It appeared I had momentarily freed them from the grip of this place's madness. I felt a spike of pride at that. I now knew that this place could be beaten. I could survive the trials set in front of me. I would do this!

I scan the labyrinth, looking for the item I sought. Nothing yet. I turn corner after twisting corner, almost losing myself in the dark bowels of the place. I pull myself out of

the awful mire the pit tries to sink its victims into. I would not fall victim to the witchery of this place! I wander for what seems like hours. Still no sign of the prize. My quest goes on.

Suddenly a screeching fills my ears. The sound comes from the roof above the walls of the maze. It is tinny and gravelly. I duck into an alcove in the labyrinth wall to see if something was coming. I wait for the count of one-hundred, still crammed into my little alcove. When no monsters come to drag me away, I sneak out. Looking around, I see no other person in this part of the maze. I can hear the shuffling feet of someone, probably one of those poor lost souls, walking on the other side of one of the towering walls.

Despair begins to set in. I feel the crushing weight of the place trying to drive out any spark of humanity from my soul. I fight it. I must fight it! I could not disappoint her. I stumble on, eyes ever watchful for my goal. It seems that years have gone by. How long had I been wandering these desolate pathways in vain searching for the thing I sought? I begin to think of the rest of my life. How would anyone find me if I perished here in this horror infested place? I realized that I would need to make arrangements in case this comes to pass. I would give all of my possessions to her, of course, not that they didn't belong to her already. I would want to be buried in our family plot with a white marble tombstone and flowers all around. The service needed to be small, though; I didn't want the extended family to know of the cause of my death. They wouldn't be invited, of course. Funerary plans made, I continued to hunt my elusive prey.

I enter a new section of the labyrinth; this one looks much more promising. I slow, scanning the walls for the alcove my item will be hidden in. Finally, I see it! I hurry forward but am stopped short by a trembling in the ground. I freeze, my eyes widening in horror. Someone else has come searching for my prize! It is a giant hairy beast, its skin wrinkled and pocked with ugly brown spots. Its eyes, sunken into the folds of its skin, are protected by round, clear shields. It hunches forward, coming closer. Its red mouth splits wide in a grin of triumph as it reaches a gnarled hand for my prize.

NOOOOOOOOOO!!!!

I leap forward, heedless of the hideous creature, and grab the item. The thing lets out an earsplitting shriek of absolute rage and gives chase! I bolt down the hallway and turn corner after corner. Soon the sound of pursuit dies away. I am panting heavily, both from terror and from my exertion. Now, all I have to do is pay the Guardian the price for taking the item. I wind my way up to the Guardian's lair, having to dodge the monster and its path of too clean death once more.

Upon reaching the Guardian's lair, I set my item down triumphantly before it. It has the face of a young man today, but I am not fooled. This thing has many faces, all unassuming. All hiding the true being of malice beneath. The Guardian looks the item over and then in a voice too bored sounding to be anything other than a threat, says the price. I gasp. Oh dear goodness! It truly is a steep price, but I pay it. She would be so very wrathful if I came back without this prize. The Guardian gives me a glare and I grab my prize and

bolt out the door. The maw into the pit swings closed and I breathe a sigh of relief. I am free at last! I have succeeded in my quest! She will not be angry!

* * *

I check the slow cooker, lifting the lid and letting the smell of stewing beef, potatoes, and carrots rise to meet me in a cloud of steam. I push down my annoyance at having forgotten to get the green beans. I couldn't leave the kids and taking them to the store would have been a nightmare. I'd sent Don, but he'd been gone for almost an hour. That man. All I asked was for him to run to the store ten minutes away for a can of green beans. What was taking him so long? I swore that if he came home with anything but those green beans...

I ponder whether it would have just been better to take the kids to the store for the beans myself. Screams from the next room tell me that it probably would have been as awful as I imagined it to be. Lily and Joseph couldn't sit together for a minute without one of them screaming about the other. Anyone who thought twins were a blessing was crazy.

I hear the car pull into the garage, the door slamming closed. Lily runs to the head of the stairs, quickly followed by Joseph and the dog. All three bark merrily at him, each seeming to get louder than the other. Don barks with them, earning delighted shrieks from the twins. He walks up to me, holding the plastic bag high, a look of supreme pride all over his face. He bows like some knight of old and hands me the can of beans.

"Your item, my lady," he says. He gives me a quick kiss on the cheek before heading off to play with the twins. He turns back just as he leaves the kitchen. "Oh, and dear, you wouldn't believe what they're charging for those green beans now. I nearly dropped dead when I saw how much they'd cost."



Don't Dream It, Drive It by Katelyn Diehl

Bloodstained Capital by Ryan Alu

Chapter I

In my street-roaming generation, prior to drowning in the sea of red money I fashioned for myself, I had just one belief. Through the dusty gray streets of New York City, I acquired that an illusion is just an allusion to an elusive reality. After my parents perished in a tragic car accident, I had to fend for myself. I existed as an excellent magician but received tragic pay. I held my own fantastic and awe-inspiring and empty shows in a little colorless theater on the corner of 7th and 8th street. Understanding that the money refused to come to me, I traveled to the money. I hit the streets. I went from corner to corner with my hat on the ground, amazing the cigarette butts on the concrete with my confusing magic. After years of my empty hat snickering at me, a blue irritation permeated through my fingers and into my magic. At that very moment, with the tingling at my nails, money turned from gray to red.

* * *

"Sir! You don't look too good!" I lied.

"What?" The man said in confusion.

I hurried to keep him in his confused state.

"Sit down, sir. Sit down. You look terrible."

He reluctantly sat down on the bench beside us.

"What's wrong, young man? I'm fine. What are you talking about?"

"Here. Just hold this," I hastily said while giving him a small gold breakaway watch I pulled from my pocket.

The man reached out and it snapped in his scabbed palms.

"Oh my God," I cried, "It's worse than I thought. You have muscletensionitis."

"What? Wait... How do I fix it?" The man said, now very concerned.

"I am a doctor. I can fix you. Just close your eyes."

He closed his eyes. I repeatedly poked him on his cheek with my blue index finger to distract him while I ran my other hand through his pockets.

"Do you feel that in your arms?" I lazily asked.

"Oh! Oh my God! I do! It's working!"

"Oh brother," I mumbled under my breath. "I'm almost done."

I gave him one more flick on the cheek, stepped back, and melted away into the sea of cars, people, and the daylight of New York. As I walked away, I heard a faint cry for help from the old man, but the sound expired in the wind, and the uproar of pounding feet and

roaring cars regained supremacy. I gazed down at my red treasure and in my hands were a wallet with twelve dollars inside, a small candy, tweezers, and my breakaway watch I reacquired.

“Welcome to New York,” I angrily muttered to myself. I stood up and looked about. A swirl of gray assaulted me and dragged me away with their silent drone. I turned but my vision didn’t follow. I slowly reached out with my icy blue hand and picked out a gray dot from the sea. I peered into his eyes and whispered, “You don’t look too good...”

Chapter II

“Sir! You don’t...” I began, for the 43rd time that day.

“Shut up.”

“...What?”

My magic didn’t fool everyone, for not everyone was a fool, but no one saw through my illusion so early on. I was terribly confused. As he stared down at me with fast and flickering glances, I gazed into his endless, contaminated, and misty eyes; they were like unclear and deceptive mirrors with a glare of danger that attract my attention. I peered deeper into the abyss and I saw myself.

Hesitantly, I continued my trick. “Here, hold this...” I began, but he smacked the watch out of my hand. The two halves of the bluish gold watch went spiraling through the air. They sparkled, swirled, and seemed to reach for each other as if longing to be reunited, two halves wanting to become whole to complete themselves and find a meaning to the universe surrounding their entities.

I looked back at the man. This time, I thoroughly examined the figure. He was finely dressed with slicked back hair. His Egyptian silk shirt indicated he was an upstart wealthy, but a deprived and poor atmosphere still lingered around him. At first, I thought it was my poor and contorted numbness leaking onto his tremendous persona. But as I continued to scrutinize him, I comprehended he was once poor like me. His aura burned blue. I gasped a little and stuck out my hand. He shook my hand ecstatically but in a calm matter.

“My name is Anthony Morella. Come with me, my gentleman.”

“Jimmy McCale,” I slowly said as I followed him to his cobalt limousine.

I was attracted to the man in an inexplicable way, for I wanted to draw closer to him but was scared of his wealth; he was a higher caliber than I, but I couldn’t help feel as though fate distorted our paths so a catastrophic intersection would ensue. I knew my world would be transformed with the first step into his vehicle. For the first time in years, I wasn’t alone.

Chapter III

We arrived at a luxurious azure mansion. The rays of the sun reflected off the house in strange, unexplainable angles while the birds sounded in the trees, alarming each other

that a human had arrived. A majestic fountain of the Greek god Zeus stared down at us with a blue lightning bolt poised at my chest. I looked back at the statue in absurd defiance.

"You don't control me," I whispered to the god.

"What's that, my gentleman?" Anthony asked as he glanced back at me.

"What? Oh. I said, nice statue."

"Thanks."

"Hey. What are we doing? Why are you so... interested in me?"

"You will soon find out, my gentleman."

We walked up the pristine, glowing blue steps to the front door. He opened it and I was taken aback. The entire house was crystal. Crystal floors, crystal walls, and a giant crystal chandelier begged for my attention. The beauty of it all was unspeakable. It was like true love entwined with pure happiness, with a pinch of boastfulness. We walked down a wide hallway to a crystal round table and our footsteps echoed through the vast halls. He pulled out a chair for me to sit in. I sat down and he placed himself in the chair across from me.

"Where did you get all the money to own a place like this?" I inquired.

"Well you see. I'm in a... special kind of business. And you see... I want. I would like. Well. I would like you to join my business."

He stuttered these choppy verses like I was a pigeon. If he said too much, or got too close, I would fly away.

"What kind of business?" I wondered, extremely interested.

"Well... here it is. I go to banks and... borrow money from them. Actually, I borrow all their money. And I don't give it back."

"You're a thief?"

"No! No! Not really, well... yes."

"Oh."

"Don't be alarmed, my gentleman. It's perfectly safe."

"Then, why do you need me?"

He smiled at me with great delight. A smile that paraded a new, reborn self-assurance while maintaining a welcoming feel; its corners reached to his eyes like a baby crying for milk from its mother's bosom and shuttered a little with excitement. He knew I was hooked. He looked at me now with fire in his eyes; they shimmered and flickered with intense heat that drew me closer. He was about to create a masterpiece.

"I started out with my business perfectly fine. But the more and more I borrowed, the better and better the security became. They know my tendencies. I need fresh, innovative, and new ways to steal, I mean *borrow*, money. Do you know what I'm saying, my gentleman?"

"Yeah, I think so. How much of the borrowed money do I get?"

"I was thinking 25 percent for you and 75 percent for me. What do you think, my gentleman?"

I got up to leave. Anthony jumped out of his seat and nearly tackled me. Clawing and begging, he panicked and started to sputter nonsense.

"Please! Wait! Don't go! Come stay a drink. Wash your hands. C'mon. Food? You want lobster?"

I kept walking. He managed to regain his composure. He straightened his blue Egyptian shirt.

"How about an even fifty-fifty split, my gentleman?"

"That sounds better. I have two questions."

"Anything, my gentleman."

"Why me?"

He paused and a deep sorrow lingered in his eyes. He trembled.

"I've been watching you for quite some time. I saw you conning people with that brilliant trick you use. I also noticed that you are extremely poor. I was just like you. I had no money. I was angry. I..." He paused and looked deeply into my eyes. "When I look at you, I see a more creative me."

I wavered. I began questioning the man's sanity. But if I questioned his sanity, then I questioned mine, for we were one and the same, a never ending paradox of two items that are one but not.

"Why do you want all this money?" I asked.

"To prove an evil man wrong," he rapidly replied without falter.

I waited for a further explanation but received none. I looked around, and blue blinded me. I felt right at home.

"So, what bank should we borrow money from first?"

He smiled and whispered, "My gentleman."

Chapter IV

Business was booming. Anthony and I floated in a sea of reddish money. It was all a fast blur of blue and red confusion. Anthony would pick a location, I would create an elaborate plan, and then we would travel there together. I would perform a confusing and

illusive trick with my blue magic and we would ostentatiously vanish, hundreds of thousands dollars richer. How many banks did we rob? 40? 50? 60? I questioned Anthony about the numbers one day.

“How many banks have we robbed?”

“However many you want.”

“How long have we been borrowing money?”

“Time is a myth.”

He was right. Time was a myth. The clock froze in our lives, resulting in an ageless endlessness. I glanced over at the clock and the faint ticking of the second hand was mute, for it failed to travel; it sat there retired, unwilling to move in a clockwise fashion for a powerful force seized it in its grasp.

I created a replica of Anthon’s mansion right next to his. It had a connecting sky bridge that adjoined the two masterpieces. We both had 15 customized cars and 45 servants. Our houses and lives were disproportionate in comparison to the rest of the neighborhood. The mansions loomed over the tiny houses and scared but awed the residents in a terrifying yet mysterious way. Our mansions were also disproportionate to the world and even disproportionate to God. From my bedroom, I looked down upon the Zeus statue. We had endless power and endless connections. The people of grayness and rubble quailed in fear of our blue magic and red masks.

“Hey, Jimmy! Jimmy, my gentleman!” Anthony swirled into vision.

“Yeah?” I asked, while blowing my nose with a hundred dollar bill.

“My dad is coming to see my success,” he said, almost aggressively. “I wanted you to meet him.”

“Are you sure?” I asked hesitantly.

“Why, of course, my gentleman.”

“If you want.”

At that very moment, the doorbell sounded its obnoxious, classless sound. Time began to tick sluggishly and the swirl of vast confusion halted. I turned and looked at Anthony. He had a peculiar expression on his face. He presented a bottomless, dusky, and heated neediness that spread upon galaxies, centuries, and eras. He walked with false elegance to the intimidating front door. He seemed very practiced, like he had rehearsed this scenario hundreds of times in his head. He slowly reached for the door like a faded man reaching for death; his hand turned the knob, and the door creaked open.

The gate to hell was now opened and the two similar looking men stared at each other. Arrogance and fury blinked between the two like bolts of lightning. No one spoke. The world slowed down as if it were waiting for the commencing of a showdown. Anthony broke the silence.

"Hello, Father."

"Hello, Anthony."

Another long pause. The world leaned forward.

"Nice place you have here, Ant."

"It's Anthony. Thanks. I did it for you,"

"For me?"

"Yes. Please come in." He unnecessarily bowed.

Anthony's father strolled into the room. He attempted to act big and powerful, but he was swallowed by the enormity of the blue crystal mansion.

"So. I guess you proved me wrong. You did become a successful magician. Just like you said you would," he said as he sat himself down. "I congratulate myself for that."

Anthony took the seat across from him. I stood next to Anthony.

"Not exactly. I'm actually in the borrowing and investing money business. This is my partner, Jimmy McCale."

I stuck out my hand. He looked at it in disgust, then looked back at Anthony.

"Oh no. You're... you're not thieves, are you? What do you do, steal from banks?"

"Yes. That's what we do," Anthony responded sharply.

The world leaned closer, then tipped over. Life swirled around, confused and mad, then exploded.

"I knew it! I knew it! I knew you would always be a failure! You're a crook!"

Anthony's father screamed at the top of his lungs and flipped a crystal chair. The crystal shattered in large reflective pieces that scurried across the floor in a puzzling way. I looked at the glass pieces and saw my reflection. The image wasn't blurred or confused. It was just me.

"What do you mean?" Anthony screamed back. "I did just what you wanted me to do. Look around! I'm a success! I am the wealthiest man in the world! Everyone knows me! Everyone fears me! I look down upon God."

"You are a cheater and a failure. Just as I predicted. Just how I always told you. You are not my son. You will never be!"

Anthony's father stormed out the door with great swagger, as if he had just accomplished a lifelong goal he'd been waiting a while to complete. The door slammed. Anthony turned to me. Fire danced in his eyes and his presence attacked me.

"Come on, Jimmy. We need to steal from another bank. I need more money!"

"Why don't we just relax and take the day off?" I said slowly.

“No. Come on!” He ran outside into his one of his cars.

“Wait, I didn’t even make a plan yet!” I called after him.

Before going to the car, I stopped myself and looked at the shattered crystal on the floor again. I saw myself and woke up. The world stopped swirling and the confusion of life melted away; it was replaced by a clear and concise precision. I looked at my hand and observed that it didn’t have the bluish hue that it did a second before, for it was now just my hand, only my hand with five fingers and five nails. I looked around and the mansion stopped glowing and the crystals seemed bland and boring; the house shrunk and lost its inspiring atmosphere. I looked at the clock and it was ticking consistently; it was always ticking. I ran outside and was amazed. The world was no longer gray sadness for it was now full of color and light; rainbows of colors shined pure and correct as birds chirped in the trees, promising me an unswerving, unfailing tomorrow. I glanced up at the Zeus statue and he stared down at me. I reached into my pocket and pulled out eight one-hundred dollar bills and saw that the money was green, just green. But I still felt a miserable sadness wave over me like a sea crest submerging and engulfing a miniscule, defenseless sand castle just clutching it in my hand. I tossed it back on the floor in the mansion.

“Come on, Jimmy!”

“No.”

“Now! I’m not asking you. You are my sidekick. Look at yourself. I made you!”

“You didn’t make me. You fed my corruption.”

“Come here or I will kill you!” He pulled a gun from his glove compartment and pointed it between my eyes.

“Anthony! Stop!”

“Move!”

“Okay. I’m coming,” I panicked.

I reached the car and opened the door. I looked at him as we pulled away into the road. I didn’t see a magical man anymore. I saw an injured and dangerous man.

Chapter V

The car came to a screeching halt. Anthony exited the vehicle with the gun still pointed at me. I reluctantly got out with him. He gave me a wicked glare and exploded into a mad sprint into the bank, leaving me standing at the entrance. A large clatter erupted from inside the building. The orchestra of panic played its conglomerate sounds of cries, screeches, and melodramatic woes of a million soldiers as Anthony stirred up trouble. Three minutes later, Anthony emerged from the building with a garbage bag full of money. Sirens were heard in the distance and were getting louder. I stepped in front of his path.

“You must stop, Anthony,” I demanded.

"I'm almost there, my gentleman. I just need a little more money to impress him. If I could just..."

"Stop, Anthony! Stop! You're drowning in your own money! Don't you get it? It doesn't matter how much money you have, you will never impress him. Why can't you just be happy with yourself? Why do you have to impress *him* but not yourself?"

He stared at me. His eyes floated around wildly and then fixated on me. His face relaxed and a certain peaceful sense washed over him. His hand gripped tightly around the gun. His lips quavered and he opened his mouth. A sound emitted from Anthony's throat, but it was not Anthony's. The voice belonged to a different man, a new man. The new man—happy, sad, peaceful, sad, and angry, croaked out.

"You see, I will never impress myself. I will never love myself, but that's okay. I'm glad I met you, my gentleman. You were the best thing that's ever happened to me."

He looked around with new eyes. Eyes of precision, accuracy, and practicality. He raised the gun to the side of his head. He paused for a moment and looked at me with sadness.

"Love yourself, my gentleman. Love yourself."

His muscle tightened, his face scrunched, and a crack sounded. Anthony twisted and slumped to the floor.

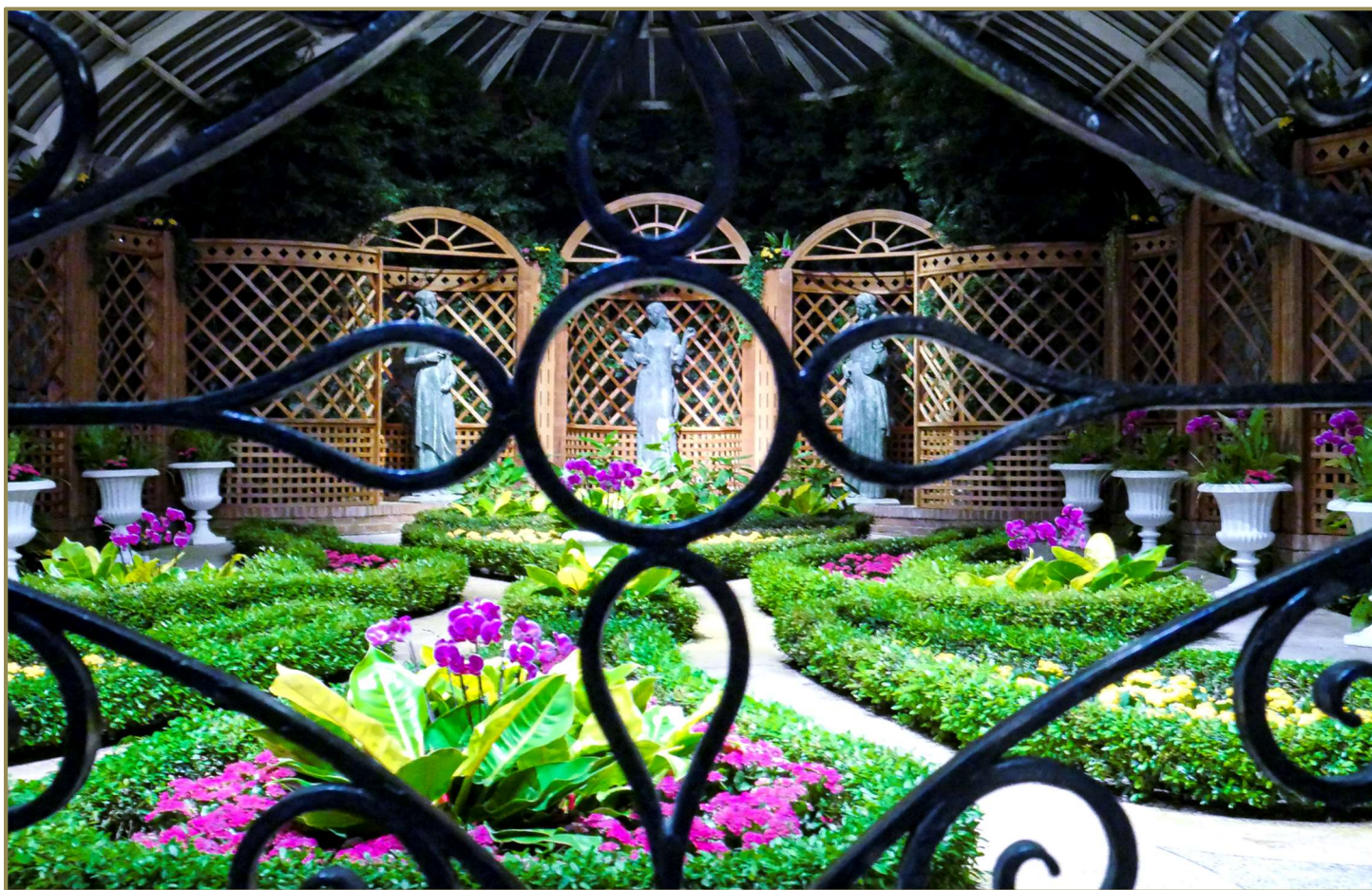
"Anthony..." I whispered.

The sirens grew louder. I took one last look at my fallen friend and melted back into the sea of realism.

Chapter IV

Anthony was destined for death. He was like a bugged program. He devoted his entire life to perform one command. He did everything to impress his father, which was an impossible task. The program could never successfully function and Anthony finally realized this. The program malfunctioned and terminated itself. He was a great man, a fine specimen, but his life was tragically wasted. I guess his father was right: Anthony was destined for failure. His father can thank himself for that.

As for me, I sold the two mansions and donated all of my money to refund the victims of the bank robberies. I had no money and no home, just how I liked it. I quit magic for it was too disturbing and confusing and reminded me too much of Anthony's death. So, I held seminars on the importance of loving yourself. The seminars became widely popular and I began to receive quite a wealth profit, but I always donated the money. I'm a poor boy. I'm real and I love myself.



North of Eden by Vittoria LaRosa

how to mourn someone you never knew by Liz Catalano

1st Place Winner, Fr. Callan Poetry Contest

my name comes from a dead woman
a lead woman
a heavy-feet woman who still seems to claim my
pronouns and signatures.
spunk woman, pizzazz woman, woman who smoked too many cigarettes.
she left two sons in two worlds, two little girls,
and me.

I never knew her,
never had the chance.
I am told I am *just like her* but how would I know,
all she left me was a necklace
(in the safe bank, for safekeeping)
and my name.

as a child, I prayed to her.
I believed in angels back then,
believed that my namesake and I could communicate,
relate to the difficulties of my father and
having a name that's too long.

always
she was silent,
even when I was alone.

Don't Psychoanalyze Me, Please by Anthony Vassalotti

Trust is a two way street
That I'll never be used to.
I've been your passenger for years
And you've done nothing wrong.
You're the perfect driver.
But I've been in enough accidents
That my hand has a death grip on the handle.
It's human nature,
But it upsets you.
You read my posture
Without knowing my past
And you assume
Assume
That I think you've done something wrong.
That I'm angry
Upset
Distrusting
And you feel it boiling inside you.
You haven't done anything wrong,
And we argue.
I try to talk you down,
Help you focus
But you're so blinded by anger.
You won't listen
And we crash.
One more reason to hold my death grip on the handle.

Vassar Miller's "Subterfuge": Her Talent Belies Her Impairment

by Shelby Allen

2nd Place, Gunard Carlson Contest

Critic and university professor Bruce Kellner became a close friend of poet Vassar Miller, but it was an uncomfortable friendship. Kellner wrote, "Once aware of Vassar's catastrophic limitations, I found that I could unlock a lot of poems . . . as any attentive reader will discover with considerable discomfort" (Kellner 2). "Subterfuge" is a short autobiographical poem of just 18 lines, describing a girl feeling very much like a sideshow freak attempting to manipulate a typewriter into telling who she is and how she thinks. As Kellner suggests, it is a poem that demands attention. A poem of eighteen lines arranged in six stanzas, "Subterfuge" makes readers uneasy, if not downright uncomfortable due to the images created in each stanza. The poet is brutally honest about the life dealt her and shifts uneasily between past, present, and future, first person "I" and third person "she."

The title may cause the reader to be unsettled before reading the poem. Most people do not know the meaning of the word "subterfuge" and therefore must look it up to know what to expect. It means "deception," which is born out through Miller deceiving her audience of reality. Through her poetry she shares such meaningful thoughts and imagery even though some of her readers may think she is too challenged both physically and mentally to have that capacity. Miller was born with cerebral palsy, which is a disorder of movement, muscle tone or posture caused by damage to the brain before birth. Symptoms of cerebral palsy will display themselves during infancy or preschool depending on the severity. From person to person, the symptoms can vary greatly. Some experience favoring one side of the body like Miller while others experience tremors and problems eating and swallowing.

In the first stanza, we meet the poet's father, Jessie Gustacus Miller, a "slight man," "staggering," no doubt from the weight of the typewriter that is his odd gift to his daughter, which, in this time could have been in excess of thirty-five pounds, but also from the weight of what he has to bear in life with a physically challenged daughter; what her future would consist of, who would care for her, and how would she be cared for all surely weighed great upon his mind (Tyer). Oddly enough, the typewriter was her father's, which he used for his real estate business. Perhaps because she could not use regular toys, he brought it home just for Vassar to play with, never quite expecting where this would lead to her life's work. She began composing works of poetry as a child on the typewriter her father brought home ("Vassar Miller Poetry").

The second stanza, also of three lines, describes in third person how the poet as a child had to sit in order to use the typewriter. Cerebral palsy prevented her from sitting at a desk to type; instead, she crouched "on the floor/ one knee on the frame of the

typewriter” (Miller 55). She explains her difficulty, so the reader understands how determined she was to express herself through poetry. The description of her position while typing makes us uncomfortable, but one can sense Miller’s frustration through the reference of the effort involved in managing her limbs.

From the last line of the second stanza to the third stanza, we are shown Miller having to hold her left wrist with her right hand in order to “peck at the keys” and having to use one of her knees to hold the frame of the typewriter (55). She uses a comparison to a sparrow to further describe how precise and persistent she was while typing, like a bird with only one task in mind. Like Miller, sparrows have to be determined, especially when searching for and eating food. Although they both might have a challenge to survive, they are hardy and making the best out of all gifts. The sparrow reference seems to refer to the famous line from the Bible, “Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?” (Matthew 6:26). Miller does not blame her creator for giving her cerebral palsy. She attended two different types of churches and felt that one of her purposes in life was to serve God (Poetry Foundation). She, in fact, does the opposite of blaming and seeks out her God more than most people.

In the fourth stanza, the length of the lines remains fairly constant when comparing them to the lines from the first and third stanza. Within the fourth stanza, Miller introduces the assumption about a handicapped person’s inability to succeed. Any success or originality they receive happens by accident. In the third line, Miller states, “spellbound by life’s clashing in accord or against itself” (55). Miller is expressing the collision of the physically challenged versus those who are more advantaged.

The final struggle Miller describes in “Subterfuge” is her going through childhood backwards. Miller had to mature earlier in her life than most children due the difficulties with which her illness plagued her. She was not able to run around and play with other children. Due to this, she matured at a very young age. By the time she learned to walk at the age of seven, she was already much older than most children are walking. However, while speaking in the third person, Miller says, “she does her childhood backward as children do” (55). The end of the line suggests that many children experience having to mature early in life. She does not specify how some children mature early. Adults may not realize that children are wise due to the limited amount of experiences. However, a child’s viewpoint may bring in a new dynamic to a situation.

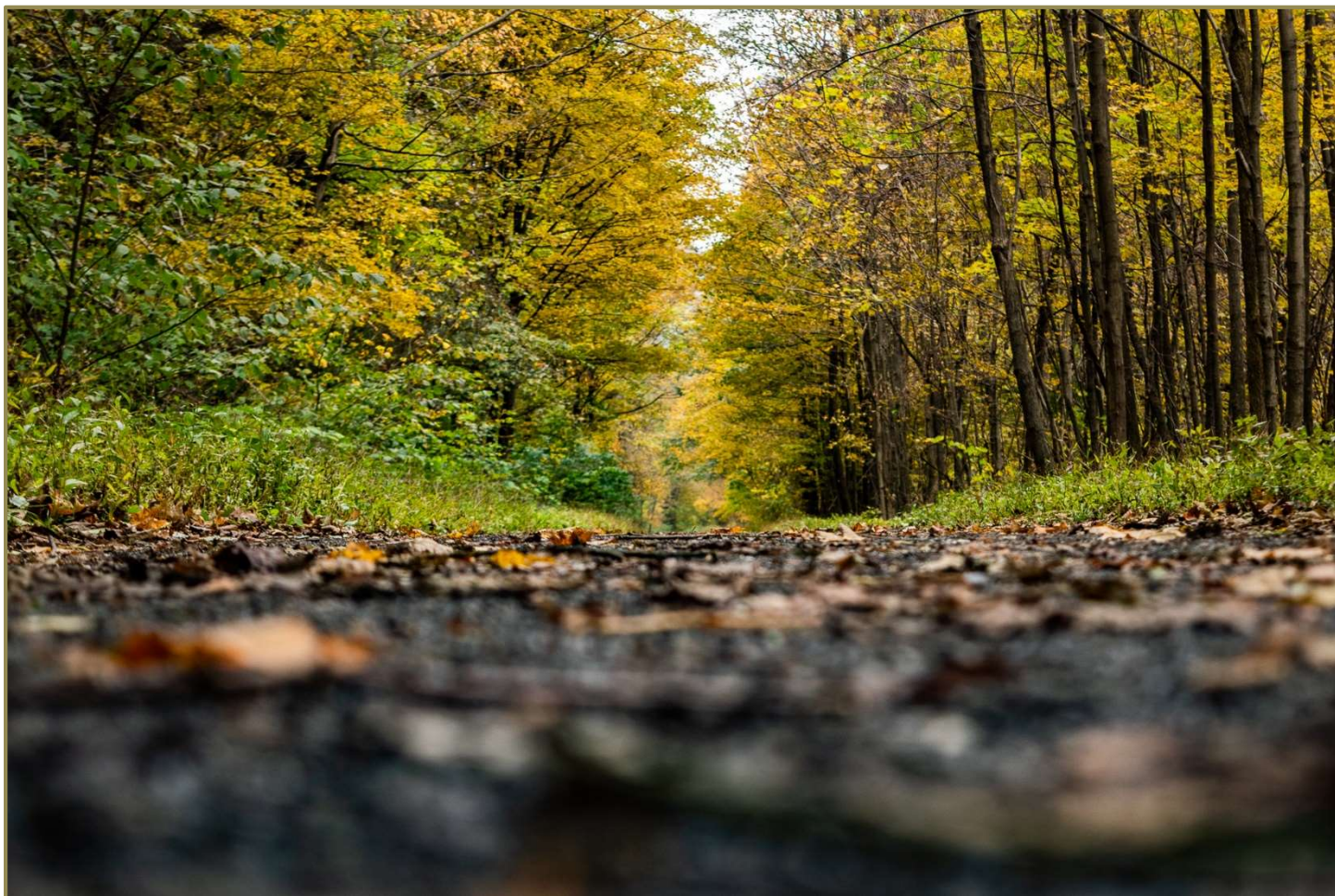
In the sixth and final stanza, the poet describes her father while referring to herself in the third person, as from a distance, and how he lost the ability to have a normal child. This is seen when in the poem she says, “[my father] will lose the terrible favor that life has done him as she toils at tomorrow, tensed at her makeshift toy” (Beauty 55). The repeated *T*’s within this line add a sense of harshness and uneasiness within the poem. She would not comment on being tense while using the typewriter if she did not

feel pressure to succeed despite the many struggles of her early life. These struggles continued for her throughout her adult life as well.

In “Subterfuge,” while Miller is switching between past, present and future, as well as between first and third person, she has the ability to make readers uncomfortable through being brutally honest within each stanza. Miller acknowledges the image she projects, the image others see of her, and the resulting surprise with the realization that the words and associated impact, as well as the corresponding afterthought, are the direct result of someone most would consider unable and incapable of such depth of feeling and emotional expression. Miller’s close friend, Bruce Kellner, even acknowledged and was open about their uncomfortable friendship.

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Autumn Path (1st Place Winner) by Samuel Bumbarger

The Landscapes of Edna Pontellier's Awakening by Kathryn Dunleavy

3rd Place Winner, Gunard Carlson Contest

"I have been feeling very clearheaded lately and what I want to write about today is the sea. It contains so many colors. Silver at dawn, green at noon, dark blue in the evening.

Sometimes it looks almost red. Or it will turn the color of old coins. Right now the shadows of clouds are dragging across it, and patches of sunlight are touching down everywhere. White strings of gulls drag over it like beads. It is my favorite thing, I think, that I have ever seen. Sometimes I catch myself staring at it and forget my duties. It seems big enough to contain everything anyone could ever feel."

--Anthony Doerr, *All the Lights We Cannot See*

This scene represents what Edna Pontellier is feeling as she walks out into the sea at the end of Kate Chopin's novella *The Awakening*. Freed of the chains of land and the men who rule it, Edna can finally be her true self. Through Edna's journey from the cottage on Grand Isle and the house in New Orleans, to the pigeon house, to staying with Robert on the island, and finally into the sea itself, she progressively displays more of her inner self. Moving from the land, which is ruled by men, to the sea, which is ruled by God, shows Edna's desire to be independent and allows her to find her voice. As Edna moves from the land to the sea, the controlling voices of men fade while the voice of God echoes within and allows her to reveal her true self.

Edna's journey of self-discovery begins, as does the story, on Grand Isle, then moves to New Orleans, where she lives with her husband and children. This section of the story is told from the man's perspective, almost as if Edna is a secondary character in her own story. There is dialogue from Mr. Pontellier intermittently throughout the first part of the novella, yet Edna hardly speaks. Furthermore, when she does speak, it is only in regard to her husband's needs: "Here, take the umbrella" and "Coming back to dinner?" (1650). This is due to the fact that Edna is living on a land that is completely ruled by what men want and what men allow. According to Patricia Yaeger, Edna's "very absence of speech works productively, in which [her] silence offers a new dialogic ground from which we can measure the systematic distortions of her old ground" (435). Simply stated, the deficiency of dialogue from the main character, Edna Pontellier, shows how the system by which the land operates—using man's rule—is completely distorted.

The first landscape that Edna encounters is the land. On the land, it is apparent that Edna is struggling with her burdens of being a wife and mother. The reader meets Mrs. Pontellier at the summer cottage on Grand Isle with her husband and children. Grand Isle is referred to as an island yet is connected by a bridge to the land mass that is Louisiana. Grand Isle is made up of women who adore their domestic duties to be good wives to their

husbands and mothers to their children. Many women stay the whole summer on the island while their husbands travel back and forth between long work weeks and relaxing weekends. However, Edna is not like these women. While she does her best to give the outward appearance of a good wife and mother, Edna dreads completing the obligations that are expected of her. Edna is “not a mother woman. The mother women seemed to prevail that summer at Grand Isle. It [is] easy to know them, fluttering about with extended, protecting wings when any harm, real or imaginary threatened their precious broods. They [are] women who idolize their children, worship their husbands and esteem it a holy privilege to efface themselves as individuals and grown wings as ministering angels” (Chopin 1653). In her mind, Edna studies these women from afar. She knows that she will never be like them and is not ashamed of that. Yet, she does not make this known because she is confined to the societal expectations that are surrounding her. The cottage on Grand Isle demonstrates the expectation that Edna will care more for her husband and her children than she will for herself.

Moreover, Edna is confined to the rules and expectations of men when she is in her home city of New Orleans where she and her husband live comfortably. Her husband, Leonce Pontellier, makes a good living and is a popular figure in society. He allows Edna to spend plenty of money, indulges her interests, and sends her care packages full of the “finest of fruits, pates, a rare bottle or two, delicious syrups, and bonbons in abundance” (1653). In fact, “all declared that Mr. Pontellier was the best husband in the world. Mrs. Pontellier was forced to admit that she knew of none better” (1653). That said, while Leonce is the best husband in terms of gift giving, Edna is completely trapped in her relationship with Leonce for several reasons. First, Mr. Pontellier believes that Edna is his property. While he does give Edna all of the materialistic indulgences that she could desire, he expects the material goods to be repaid with good wifely behavior. He also expects Edna to look feminine and lovely all of the time, no matter what time he arrives home in the evening. This is evident when he exclaims, “‘You are burnt beyond recognition’ [and] look[s] at his wife as one looks at a valuable piece of personal property which has suffered some damage” (1649). After six years of these types of interactions, Edna has had enough and decides to buy her own house in order to salvage some of the freedom that she has lost through marriage and motherhood. When she approaches her husband with the idea of purchasing “the pigeon house,” he predictably responds negatively and demands that she remain in the house that he has provided for her. Nevertheless, being the defiant woman that she is, Edna follows through with her plan and moves into the pigeon house, despite the societal implications of moving out of her husband’s home. The pigeon house “please[s] her. . . . There [is] with her a feeling of having descended in the social scale, with a corresponding sense of having risen in the spiritual” (1717). It allows Edna a space to be alone, and to think, act, and dress any way that she pleases. Unfortunately, Edna feels comfortable only doing what she pleases *inside* of the pigeon house. This change in landscape is the beginning of her exploration of

freedom and removal from the social order, as well as her transcendence into the spiritual guidance of her inner voice.

After Edna leaves her husband and stays in Robert's house with his mother and his ex-lover, she moves into the second landscape, the Grand Terre Islands, and begins to find more of her voice. At this point in the novella, Edna is in a female-dominated environment, a household that is completely run by women with occasional visits from Robert. Edna has to adjust to this because for her whole life, she has been controlled by a man, from her father in Kansas to Leonce in her marriage. Through this experience Edna learns that it is okay for women to be in control of themselves and to be open about it in society. Furthermore, the story begins to be told more through Edna's perspective and even through her own words. Robert gives Edna what Yaeger describes as a "continuing story, a mode of discourse which may be chimerical, but unlike Edna's talk with her husband is also potentially communal" (436). Thus, for the first time, Edna is able to communicate with her partner as an actual partner. She is allowed to have her own ideas and opinions when talking to her significant other. She is able to ask the tough, assertive questions like, "Why have you kept away from me, Robert?" without facing repercussions for not acting as a lady should act (Chopin 1726). However, as Pat Shaw points out, this could be due to the fact that "Robert functions metaphorically in the narrative design as a child lover" (199), meaning, that Robert is not a man, but a boy, and has no real authority. Therefore, when Edna stays with Robert, he is not a man who rules the land, but a boy who allows Edna to show her true self a little bit more than she can with Leonce. When Edna is with Robert, she declares that she is "no longer one of Mr. Pontellier's possessions to dispose of or not. [She] give[s] herself where [she] choose[s]" (Chopin 1727). In this second landscape, when Edna gets away from the land ruled by man and closer to the sea ruled by God, she makes it known that "[i]nstead of being property 'to dispose of or not,' she intends to" do with herself what she wishes, Margit Stange explains.

It is when Edna transcends into the third and final landscape in the story, the sea, that she finds her voice and unleashes her true inner self. Additionally, the voice of the sea is revealed to Edna; this voice is Edna's inner voice, instilled in her by God, who rules the sea. At the beginning of the novella, Edna fears the sea because she cannot swim. The reader can also believe that Edna fears the water because it is a symbol by which her true self will be revealed. At the beginning of the story, Edna tries to remain a good wife, and, consequently, the idea of her inner self who is not a "good wife" scares her. However, at the end of the story, Stange argues, "she walks to the beach from which she will swim to her death 'not thinking of [Robert's departure nor her children]'. Withholding herself from motherhood, insisting on her right to refuse to 'sacrifice' herself for her children, Edna owns herself" (513). Additionally, as Edna enters the water, she is entering a landscape that is not ruled by men and she is in complete control of her decision. While land represents patriarchy through the entirety of the novella, the sea represents freedom. Edna hears the voice of the sea as the voice of God in her— "seductive; never ceasing, whispering, clamoring, murmuring, inviting the soul to wander for a spell in abyss of

solitude; to lose itself in mazes of inward contemplation" (Chopin 1657). This is just what Edna does; when she reaches the sea she takes off her bathing suit, leaving herself naked—in her most original and pure form. In taking the steps into the sea, Edna allows the "sensuous" voice of freedom to enfold her "body in its soft, close embrace" (1732). She makes the sea her final destination by losing herself in finding herself.

As Terry Tempest Williams states in *Red: Passion and Patience in the Desert*, "We need wilderness in order to be more complete human beings" (181). Similarly, Edna Pontellier needs the sea to complete her journey for self-actualization. Through the three different landscapes—the land, the island, and the sea—Edna is able to reveal her true self and go from living a miserable life to living as her true self. What is more is that Edna is able to escape the patriarchal society that confines her and move into a state where she lives by her own terms. In *The Awakening*, Edna Pontellier takes a journey through different landscapes to free herself of the patriarchal standards that are placed on her and reveal who she was created to be through the voice of God in the sea and in her. This voice, then, is a feminist voice that speaks to Edna in a way men's voices—on the land—never could and shows her what it truly means to be a woman.

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Into the Depths of Waterhouse's *Hylas and the Nymphs* by Wendy Bintrim



Hylas and the Nymphs (1896) by John William Waterhouse
Approximately 38.7 in × 64.3 in, Oil on Canvas Manchester City Galleries-Gallery 10
Viewed at manchesterartgallery.org/collections/search/collection/?id=1896.15

John William Waterhouse's oil on canvas Pre-Raphaelite masterpiece, painted in 1896, contains eight Greek mythological figures: the half-nymph, half-human youth Hylas (Heracles' companion, servant, and lover) and seven naiads (water nymphs) ("Hylas and the Nymphs," "Nymphs"). The beautiful naiads stand in a pond with foliage of yellow irises, waterlilies, rushes, and a shrub. Hylas crouches in the littoral zone with his empty pink water jug. Pallid from living in the murky pond, the nymphs all have auburn hair, but what leaps out is their nakedness, although their nipples and areolae are hardly visible, nearly as white as the rest of their skin. Seven lookalikes, they wear yellow water lily flowers in their wet hair. Some of the nymphs have hair knotted in the back; one is in the act of letting her hair down (or is she just playing with it flirtatiously?). Another nymph holds pearls in her hand. Tanner than the nymphs, muscular Hylas is less pedomorphic than they. The nymphs look disturbingly young with their big eyes, upturned noses, and small breasts. The light is coming from behind Hylas' back, so his face, which is in profile and in shadow, is obscured. The faces of some of the nymphs are also in profile, but we can

see their expressions because they are in the light. One of the nymphs turns her head so that we cannot see her face. All the nymphs gaze intently at Hylas.

While the painting is rich with symbolism, I will focus on the color choices because the Pre-Raphaelites and the Victorians in general were fascinated by the medieval language of color. Color forges unspoken connections between characters in the painting and characters outside it in other works of art.

The nymphs beckon Hylas in an attempt to make him forget about domestic errand and to seduce him into the dark blue pond. In marked contrast to their nakedness, Hylas wears a dark blue tunic, which calls to mind the favorite color of medieval artists for the Virgin Mary's dress and perhaps foreshadows his being lured into the pond ("Blue, Why Does Mary Wear"). At the beginning of the Pre-Raphaelite movement, subjects were largely religious, so if Waterhouse imbued some meaning in the color of Hylas' tunic, it would make sense if his choice was a lingering allusion to a religious figure like the Virgin, even 48 years after the foundation of the movement ("The Pre-Raphaelites," "Art Term: Pre-Raphaelite").

Although the blue tunic signals his virginity (at least in a heterosexual context), Hylas' garment is cinched by a crimson belt. In contrast to the associations of red in contemporary Western culture (warning, sin, love, lust, et cetera), red was associated in the Middle Ages with martyrdom, in reference to the blood shed by saints (Murray and Murray 316). He may be wearing the Virgin Mary's signature hue, but his carmine belt possibly represents his potential for carnal love, which balances out with the nymphs' nudity. The nymphs' lips are red like his belt, suggesting that Hylas may be martyred by the nymphs' love for him; in Hylas' myth, the naiads magically transform him into an echo ("Nymphs"). Why is one of the nymphs offering Hylas the pearls she clutches in her hand? The pearls are the same alabaster as the nymphs' skin. But, to complicate interpretation, again there is a Virgin Mary connection here: paintings of the Virgin often contain pearls, symbolic of her purity (Hibbard). Taken together, perhaps the nymph's handful of pearls symbolizes her offering her virginity to Hylas. Thus, both the nymphs and Hylas are sexually inexperienced like the Virgin Mary but are eager to fulfill their natural attraction. So Waterhouse may actually be credited with balancing passion between the sexes in this work; neither sex is more lustful or innocent than the other.

Unfortunately, due to the female nudity in the painting, *Hylas and the Nymphs* was taken down briefly in January 2018 during the #MeToo campaign as a statement against sexual harassment, assault, and sexism in general ("Hylas and the Nymphs"). While I agree with the sentiment of solidarity with victims, I think that Waterhouse's painting was misread. I don't think the painting objectifies the nymphs just by displaying their bare upper bodies. Instead, the painting concerns love, not lust, primarily. It is a positive, sentimental portrayal of youthful desire. To interpolate, if Waterhouse, a heterosexual Victorian male (Cavallero 8), had wanted to objectify and sexualize the nymphs, he probably would've painted them with more prominent breasts, nipples, and areolae. But

he didn't. Admittedly, we moderns might think it creepy that the naiads look young, but Waterhouse might object that nature spirits don't age as humans do. The youthful nymphs don't look as menacing as traditional femmes fatales. And it is the nymphs in the painting who have erotic and supernatural power over the youth! The naiads behold Hylas thoughtfully and lovingly. I think we should relax about this (mostly) innocent Victorian mythological fantasy and realize that some Victorians were ahead of their time as far as sexual equality goes. It would be a shame if this painting's beauty were to sink into the depths of storage without an echo.

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A Shadow of Doubt by Scott Riner

The early morning air, chilly with February frost, sent a shiver down Dawlings' spine. The sun, which was beginning to creep up over the cloudy horizon, would not be enough to warm him up. He wished more than anything that he had been allowed to wear a coat—or even just a hat. Anything would be better than what he wore now: a bright colored jumpsuit, made out of the thinnest material known to man. The jumpsuit did little to keep him warm, although it *did* set him off from the rest of the crowd as one of the event's guests of honor.

"Hurry up," Randolph grunted, prodding Dawlings in the back with a heavy baton. "We haven't all day, you know."

Dawlings said nothing—what was there to say, after all?—and began to walk forward once more.

"It's a bit nippy out," commented Lazenbee, a dark-skinned man dressed in the same bright jumpsuit. "Wish I had a pair of gloves."

Dawlings nodded in agreement, yet remained silent. The two of them walked side by side, with Randolph behind to escort them to the front of the crowd. Perhaps if Randolph was not behind them, Dawlings would have talked freely to Lazenbee, although it was doubtful; Dawlings had little to say on that cold morning, and nothing at all to say to Lazenbee. People like Lazenbee...weren't Dawlings' cup of tea.

"It's too fuckin' cold," continued Lazenbee to no one in particular. "You know it's a cold day when you can see your breath."

"Can it," Randolph instructed, thumping Lazenbee's shoulder with the baton.

Lazenbee cried out in pain. "What was that for?" he asked, rubbing his shoulder where Randolph's baton had connected with it.

"For being rowdy," Randolph said.

"I ain't rowdy, you dumb fuck," Lazenbee said indignantly. "I'm just saying that I don't think it's fair that you're dressed from head to ass in warm clothes and me and Dawlings don't get to wear nothing but our jumpsuits."

"It's policy," was all Randolph said.

Lazenbee snorted. "Policy? Yeah, well, I guess that makes sense. It's policy that we have to freeze our asses off while you get to be all bundled up, nice and toasty like."

"I'm sure you two will be nice and warm by the end of the morning," Randolph chuckled.

Lazenbee didn't say anything, which surprised Dawlings. He had a mouth that kept on running, no matter what, that Lazenbee. Maybe, Dawlings thought, Lazenbee had accepted that their situation was no laughing matter.

Randolph steered the two of them to the platform, which stood in front of the crowd. As they made their way through the crowd of people, Dawlings heard many obscenities directed to him and Lazenbee.

“You’ll hang for your crimes!” shouted one, a large woman with an ugly sneer on her face.

“Baby killer!” spat another, a man in a dirty work uniform.

“I hope the judge doesn’t see his shadow!” another woman growled.

Dawlings kept his head down as he passed the people in the crowd, not wanting to look at their faces. He knew what he’d see: the contempt, the hatred. Hatred, which was born not out of truth, but out of lies and speculation. Lazenbee, however, did not intentionally avoid eye contact. Instead, he looked right at those he passed and waved, with a such a smile on his face that Dawlings could easily imagine how the black man was able to lure his victims so willingly.

“How you doing?” said Lazenbee to a young woman in the crowd. Lazenbee stopped dead, halting the procession. “You’re pretty nice looking,” he told her. The woman blushed, either with embarrassment or anger or perhaps a combination of the two. “Maybe after we’re done here we can check into a motel and soil some sheets. What do you say?”

The crowd, united as one in their anger toward Lazenbee, roared. A few men even broke free to the front line to fight Lazenbee. They were not able to make it past Randolph, however, as the large man was charged with protecting Dawlings and Lazenbee until judgement was passed upon them. With a few swings of his baton, all the men who raced to lynch Lazenbee were lying on the ground, groaning and holding their heads.

“Come one,” Randolph hissed, shoving Lazenbee by the scruff of his neck. Lazenbee marched forward obediently, but not before he held up his pinky and thumb up to his ear and mouthed “Call me” to the young woman.

As they walked onto the stage, Dawlings looked out into the crowd, searching for a face he knew would not find. Maybe she’ll confess, Dawlings thought desperately, knowing fully well that that would not happen.

The three men joined the others on the platform—six other men and two women dressed in similar jumpsuits, each from a different part of the country. Four others dressed like Randolph stood on the stage, alongside a man dressed in a fine black suit and a top hat. Dawlings immediately wondered if the man in the suit was pursuing a career as an Abraham Lincoln impersonator—the resemblance was uncanny. Dawlings laughed quietly. It was so strange, he decided, what the mind thinks about when one is nervous.

In the center of the stage was a tree-shaped box, positioned right next to the podium where the man in the hat stood.

The man in the top hat cleared his throat. The crowd, who moments ago was charged with fury, settled down. It was common knowledge that the man in the suit, “the

handler” as he was known, was the most important man in the country. He was the only one who was trained to understand the language of the judge.

“Thank you,” the handler said. “I know it is quite a crisp morning, so I will be brief.” The man in the suit turned his attention to Dawlings and the others wearing jumpsuits. “When I say your name, please raise your hand. Allen.”

A gruff looking man with yellowing teeth put up his hand. The crowd booed, yelling insults and casting accusations.

“There will be none of that,” the handler said sharply, and the crowd died down. “Remember: everyone is innocent until the judge proves otherwise. Barkley.”

One of the two women raised her hand. The handler nodded and she put her hand down. “Dawlings.”

Dawlings raised his hand, conscious of all the eyes that were upon him. He could feel their hatred through their stares. He sweated nervously, and was beyond relieved when the handler gestured that he could put his hand down.

The handler called out the rest of the names without incident, until “Lazenbee” was read aloud. Lazenbee, ever the clown, stuck his hand up in the air and waved it around like the Queen of England. His actions were met with jeers from the crowd and a reprimand from the handler, who told Lazenbee that “theatrics were not appreciated in a ceremony of such great importance.”

A silence drew over the crowd in Gobbler’s Knob once the handler finished calling out the names. Everyone knew what came next.

“And now for the ceremony to begin,” the handler announced, his voice breaking the hush. He glanced down at the podium where a list with names and offenses sat neatly for consultation. “First up is Miss Barkley.”

Barkley stepped forward, a woman with short hair and a permanent scowl.

“Miss Barkley. On the Seventh of February last year you were arrested for arson, which led to a fire in which seventeen people were killed. Are these charges correct?”

Barkley nodded.

“Miss Barkley, we require a verbal answer,” the handler said calmly.

“Yes,” Barkley hesitated. “They’re correct.”

The handler nodded once. “Thank you. And you plead?”

“Not guilty.”

The handler nodded once more. “As is your right. Who came with you?”

A muscular man dressed in the same attire as Randolph stepped forward. “I did, sir.”

“And you know what you must do if the judge does not see his shadow?” inquired the handler.

“I do.”

“Very good.” The handler hunkered down and unlatched the door on the tree-shaped box. He reached inside the box, feeling around inside before triumphantly pulling a squirming rodent free from the box. The presence of the judge was enough to elicit an audible gasp from the crowd, including Dawlings. He had heard of the judge, as had everyone else in the country, but seeing him in person was a different thing entirely.

“Behold, he who decides your fate,” the handler introduced. He held the groundhog—still squirming—above his head, arms fully extended.

“I hope he doesn’t see anything!” one spectator from the crowd yelled.

“Burn in Hell like you burned all those people!” snarled another.

The handler paid no attention to these insults and instead scrutinized the wooden floor beneath him. After a minute, he said: “On the Second of February, the judge finds Miss Rebecca Leigh Barkley...not guilty!”

Dawlings let out a breath he did not realize he had been holding. Generally speaking, whatever the groundhog saw for the first person was what he saw for everyone else, which meant that Dawlings might find himself alive by the end of the morning after all.

The crowd of people were not as pleased as Dawlings was, however. Cheers for a redo was taken up by the masses, and the handler had to hold up a gloved hand to silence their chanting. “Please, please,” he said loudly into the microphone. “The judge’s decision is final.”

While the crowd was not satisfied by his answer—they had been expecting the gruff looking man in the uniform to avenge those who perished in the fire set by Barkley—they did respect the judgement of the groundhog. The judge, it seemed, knew the true intentions of people and if he decided they weren’t guilty of the crime they supposedly committed, then they had not committed any crime.

Dawlings sent up a prayer to a God he no longer was sure existed. Please, he thought, please let the judge see his shadow. Don’t let them wrongfully kill me.

Lazenbee was up next. “Darnell Lazenbee,” the handler called. With a grin on his face larger than the crowd amassed to see his judgement, Lazenbee stepped forward.

“Mr. Lazenbee. On the Twenty-Eighth of March last year, you were accused of the rape and murder of four young girls, between the ages of nine and sixteen. Are these charges correct?”

Lazenbee shook his head. “I actually raped and killed five young girls,” and then added with a smirk, “*allegedly*, of course.”

The crowd reacted exactly as one might expect. The handler had to quickly calm them down by addressing Lazenbee. "How do you plead, Mr. Lazenbee?"

Lazenbee stroked his chin in thought. "Hmmm. What happens if I say guilty?"

Randolph stepped forward, menacingly hitting his hand with his baton. "Then we don't need to bother consulting the judge."

"Well, then," Lazenbee drawled. "I guess I'd have to go with not guilty."

"This man," said the handler, gesturing to Randolph, "is he the one who came with you?"

"Uh huh," Lazenbee answered.

The handler held the groundhog up in front of him once more and studied the ground. After several minutes' consideration, he said, "On the Second of February, the judge finds Mr. Darnell Lazenbee...not guilty!"

The reaction to Lazenbee's case received even more backlash than Barkley's; instead of just yelling their displeasure, a few of the people in the crowd charged forward to get to Lazenbee. Randolph fought them off, as was his duty, but the smile on Lazenbee's face made Dawlings wish the bigger man's job was not to protect Lazenbee.

"Ha," Lazenbee laughed, doubled over. "Some judge you are. You just let a guilty man walk."

The decision, already rendered, could not be overturned, so Lazenbee feared no repercussions. Randolph unlocked his handcuffs and the dark-skinned man was escorted off the platform, still laughing, to ensure his safety.

The handler read name after name. Each time, the judge found them not guilty. Each time, the crowd got riled up over the groundhog's inability to accurately gauge the guilt in criminals. Dawlings, having been arrested at the tail-end of November, was the second to last name to be called.

"Mr. Dawlings, please step forward."

Dawlings, heart beating fast, did as he was bade. Above him, the sky began to cloud over, preparing for a fresh February snow.

"Mr. Dawlings. On the Thirtieth of November of last year, you were arrested for the murder of your girlfriend's nine-month-old son. How do you plead?"

Dawlings opened his mouth to answer, but his voice, overcome with emotion, caught in his throat. He closed his mouth, opened it once again, then closed it once more. Dawlings was keenly aware that the repeated actions made him look like a fish—an extremely guilty fish at that.

"Mr. Dawlings?" the handler repeated levelly. "We need an answer."

Dawlings let out a deep breath, then said in a voice that was barely audible: “Not guilty.”

The handler nodded. It wasn’t too often that anyone chose to plead “guilty” for obvious reasons, but every now and again someone would; usually, it was a person whose conscience nagged at him to accept punishment for his crime.

“Who came with you today?” the handler asked.

Dawlings turned to Randolph and pointed. “He did.”

“You know what must be done if the judge finds you guilty?” the handler said, addressing both Randolph and Dawlings. The two men nodded, Dawlings doing so as his stomach tightened into knots.

Please God, Dawlings prayed, if you are real, let them see the truth. Let them know what really happened.

The handler held the judge up at arm’s length. Up above in the sky, the sun sought shelter from the cold morning behind a gray February cloud. The handler stared at his feet, looking for a shadow that would not be cast. Dawlings gulped, palms sweating, glancing between the floor of the platform and the clouded sky. After what felt like a lifetime, the handler called out: “On the Second of February, the judge finds Mr. John Dawlings...guilty!”

The crowd cheered, but their voices were not audible to Dawlings. The world swam before him, dizzy and swirling. He was acutely aware of how loud he was breathing—no panting—but the sound was almost drowned out by the rapid beating of his heart.

The handler mouthed something to Dawlings—no, Dawlings realized—to Randolph who was behind him. Dawlings turned his head to see the big man raising his baton high above, high into the sky which was now glistening with yellow light. Dawlings wanted to move, wanted to rush off stage, but his legs were stuck onto the platform. In a sudden burst of speed, Randolph brought the baton straight down. It connected with his target, striking Dawlings squarely on his forehead.

Dawlings fell to the ground, his hearing restored perhaps by the blow or perhaps by the adrenaline. He heard the crowd call for Randolph to hit him again, to hit him until he was a bloody mess. Dawlings looked up into Randolph’s face, pleading, but found that Randolph was gone. In his place was Samantha, a beautiful woman whose baby he had allegedly murdered in cold blood. Beautiful Samantha, so charming and elegant. Beautiful Samantha, who was able to convince Dawlings to take the fall for her, and then visited him only once in prison, along with her new beau.

“You bitch,” muttered Dawlings furiously, unable to articulate the anger he felt toward his ex-girlfriend. How could she let him take the fall for her? He glanced up and at once Samantha was replaced with the hulking figure of Randolph.

Another blow to the head sent Dawlings on his back. He gazed, blurrily, into the sky. The sun peaked out from behind the cloud it had requested shelter from. Dawlings let out a cry, lamenting the cruel injustice in which his country served its people. The sun was blocked out once more, but this time it was the shadow of Randolph, ready to strike again.

“Stop!” the handler yelled. “Stop this at once! The judge—the judge sees his shadow! There is a shadow of doubt!”

The handler’s cries were lost in the commotion of the crowd. Randolph, being so near the handler, may have heard the handler’s change of heart and simply ignored it, or may have not heard him at all. Whatever the case, the outcome was the same: Dawlings felt one final blow to the head, and everything went black.



Oh, Deer by Katelyn Diehl

Artistic Integrity by Renee Angle

2nd Place Winner, Father Callan Poetry Contest

When your poem burned, I wasn't there;
I was writing another one.

Your parchment was swept into unattended flames,
Carried by capricious, uncertain breeze –
I never dreamed, full of hunger, ill at ease,
Unraveled; driven mad by buried shames –
Hands ink-slathered, I ached as I labored,
Too complacent to see that the story was done.

Quite content in unrest,
Though my life's work was done.

My happily ever after – but all foresight gone,
Engrossed, I fitfully sought to write on;
The Artist, bleeding; more anxiety than brawn –
So I painted a beautiful sunset I'd dreamt
With my back to a setting sun.

I had there a panorama beyond conception,
But the catatonic blind seek a better one;
In agony, striving, colors blend, false perceptions –
Until the last filtered threads of the twilight had gone.

And so now, she stands hopeless in reckoning darkness,
All her pretty self-deceptions winding swiftly undone...

Too late for her pinnacle; the fires have come,
And they've long since languished, well ahead of the sun.

But then, the Artist opens filmed eyes and sees –
(Alchemy...)

Enlightened, I perceive the path of absolution,
With your poem reduced to black carbon ruin...
So now, I shall follow it into the embers;
Immolating, white-hot, my body may be – but never again will the sun set on
Me.

Conclusion averted, the Creator stays free,
She need only restructure all Destiny.

(There are harder roles I could have been called to be...)

Transformed to the ashes of my true masterpiece,
And mingling in smoldering Eternity
(Where Form has no bearing on being Free!),
We're indiscernible ashes, martyred artistry –
...This may very well be the device I conceived,
But nothing is too strange to soothe Love's bereaved:
Not too late for a last draft,
(Never.)
My Love –
Do you see?
I have sacrificed body for the spirit it freed.
All things are as one in Infinity.

Thus – even the sun now left behind in our story:
As we realize our live dream state's transparent glory;
Final crumbling fall sacks a once-noble city –
But... I'd seen her finite futility
Already.

And loosed from such delusions, joined again we shall be,
So I burn, screaming out my apology:
Please forgive me; I know you've by and by come to see
That the sun cannot set now
On you within me.

No, the sun can never set again –
Not on the dust of You and Me.



Best Friends by Michael Yahner

Home by Jack Weidner

Home.

A Mother

A mother dreamed. She hoped sick, dying in bed; waiting for a better world to come. She wished for her children, her friends, and the rest of her family a better life. She clung to a thought that in her passing, the home she loves will still be able to support what she has left behind.

A Father

A father vacated. He left behind a constricting home that he felt *suffocated* the life out of everyone it supported. He abandoned what he had, forgot, and started anew elsewhere, with little thought of the past—still it follows him. But he got out, and he found room for change.

A Grandfather

A grandfather watched. He witnessed the rise and fall of a home; the birth and death of its livelihood. He saw the people turn from honest to deceiving, loving to despising, hopeful into deep desperation. He saw light to end the dark, and he felt he must follow—to save a home.

A Grandmother

A grandmother loved. She cared for her home so much and needed to save it. She knew not of the hopelessness, not of the despair, but rather the positivity for life to exist again. So she succumbed, and turned her attention to a world she didn't know, but promised a future.

A Brother

A brother escaped. He packed what little he could and got out; to run from nothing other than fear of being stationary—stuck. Ran to promises of a better life through education and school. He left and changed, now home has little to offer. A day came where he did not return.

A Son

A son abides. He waits for a better life far from these walls. But is scared to leave. Home needs him, family needs him, and he loses himself. What does he need? He knows not, but one day he is aware of the need to fly out and away. Away from the dying home that raised him.



Autumn Leaves and Pumpkins, Please by Katelyn Diehl

I Just Need to Write for Myself Again by Elizabeth Catalano

Excerpts from 31 days of creative Instagram captions, a modern exploration of personal writing on social media.

Today was the day I woke up and realized that my cilantro was suffocating the tomatoes, so something had to be done. It turned into a full-on pruning, featuring my over-enthusiastic use of kitchen scissors, and now my countertop is covered in herbs.

However, what I was thinking about today was not my clear lack of gardening prowess but rather the qualities of the things I am growing. I dare not show the wide world the cilantro plant in question because there is not a doubt in my mind it is a weed that would stop at nothing to achieve total world domination. And yet I have allowed this weed, this force of nature, into the most sacred part of my backyard (alongside another power player, spearmint, if you can believe it).

After hacking through the undergrowth, I meandered over to the edge of our property, where the trim lawn is sharply transformed into a few cubic meters of *wild*. And I was looking at these plants and weeds and nothing made sense anymore. There were weeds that looked like flowers and flowers that looked like weeds. It was order and chaos happening at the same time and I started to sneeze.

This is the story of how I slowly lost a habit. I'm not proud of this story, but I would rather be honest than enviable.

For many moons, I woke myself up at 5:30 in the AM and did great things like yoga and meditation and reading and waking up to my alarm like a responsible adult. It was both terrific and annoying, and I realize both only in hindsight. Terrific because I genuinely love early mornings and would have no problem becoming a hermit with strange and mysterious habits. Annoying because I missed out on fun nighttime things and I never sleep enough.

As I have taken on more jobs and pushed myself to keep everything turning, however, my prized 5 AM habit has taken the back seat. If you ever look at what time I post these caption essays, it is usually close to midnight or one o'clock. For most people that isn't a big deal, but it is for me.

I know why I'm doing what I'm doing, and staying up late is something I'll have to do a lot of in the coming months. It's okay. I'm learning to make it okay, to not beat myself up over it. I want to see the things that I used to sleep through. I want to explore what I'm

uncomfortable with, and maybe one of those things is releasing a year's worth of body clock training.

Okay, that's a bit of a lie because I'm not giving up on it (like I said, the day I go full-hermit is the day it all comes together). I just want to make the most of this time, here, now, in the inky darkness of night. I want to enjoy these moments without guilt and without reserve.

A clear memory that comes to mind from time to time is 5th grade. Not my peak, I will say that up-front, but I do remember being comparatively happy. My teacher was young and had bright red hair and I'm pretty sure she wore leather jackets. We had an assignment, the one day, and I have a general sense that it concerned self-confidence. There was a question that I still turn over in my head sometimes.

What do you like about yourself?

If you've seen me in person within the last five years, you know that I am rocking a progressively shorter haircut and it's great. But at the time, I still had an actual *mane* on my head. It was wavy and black and I did absolutely nothing with it, because, you know, 5th grade.

I wrote down that I liked my hair. I thought it was pretty cool and it was my only feature worth mentioning. It was the only thing that I liked about myself.

My teacher wrote back that I had lots of wonderful qualities and I shouldn't define myself by my hair. And yet I didn't listen. I still think about this moment and I wonder when everything started to crumble. I wonder why the only thing I liked about myself was my hair. I've worked to repair the damage for over a decade but still, I know my weakest points all too well. I trace my fingers over the cracks and wonder when I can be whole again.

A list of things I am glad exist:

- books (because I have a lifelong love affair with the library and nothing can tear us apart)
- antique teacups (because they are lovely and not out of my very dubious price range)
- the moon (because of tides and whatnot but also because it's nice to say goodnight to someone before I pass out each evening)

Things that should exist but do not yet:

- waterproof books (see above)

- anti-microwaves (some sort of device that cools things very quickly at the touch of a button but also doesn't give me cancer)
 - allergy cure (not medicine, but an actual procedure that could make me stop sneezing *all the time*)
 - Google alerts for real life (wouldn't it be nice to know when people are talking about you when you're not on the Internet)
 - Instagram formatting that makes it easy to write aesthetically-pleasing captions (an absolute must)
-

It was around 7th grade that I stopped telling myself I was smart.

Instead, I created a narrative of "hard work" that I continue to believe and live by and that's okay. I am really not sure what to do with this information. Was this was the Perfectly Normal Dissolution of Young Girls' Confidence or was it me waking up to the fact that there are many, many, *many* smart people in the world and I am not necessarily one?

I have to work tremendously hard to succeed academically, a fact that I realized when concepts stopped coming to me naturally. I've known people who can pick up and put down information faster than I can read it the first time, which is humbling. I have met people with prestigious, intelligent careers who are doing wonderful things with their brains. I have met smart people who fit in neither of the above categories.

But here's the thing. I don't believe I've ever met someone who I would say is dumb or not intelligent. The real-life experiences I have had over the last five years have taught me that test-taking has approximately zero bearing on how smart you are or how successful you'll be. It sounds so cliché, but everyone has strengths, including the ones we don't give gold stars to.

I still don't (and won't) call myself smart because it is a word that I have distilled out of my vocabulary. It's easier for me to appreciate my work ethic than some lucky genome. But it also helps me look for both genuine intelligence and real resilience in everyone around me, no matter how "smart" they are supposed to be.

Or maybe it was just the pre-algebra that broke me, who knows.

Here I am, compulsively shopping for plants the way some people shop for clothes or new romantic partners. Plant shopping is about making a connection, about really understanding which beings you need in your life, and I do not take the decision-making process lightly.

All of a sudden, I feel a tap on my shoulder. One of the staff gardeners at the greenhouse stands there with her silver hair and a dirty smock and says, "Do you want to see a huge

moth?" To which I reply, "Of course, I want to see a huge moth!" And then I follow her as she leads me into the pouring rain to find the huge moth.

She stops suddenly on the gravel and points. And indeed, this moth is quite huge. It is perched, perfectly still, on a weathered cinder block, and apparently hasn't moved all day. I snap a few pictures, ask some dull, small talk questions that the gardener generally ignores and then we both wander off. I buy some succulents and drive home.

I keep thinking about the huge moth, though. The invitation to come see this relatively unexciting creature was completely unexpected and kind of weird. It's not like it was a *butterfly* or anything.

And yet. This gardener invited me to take just one moment to stop thinking about my worries and troubles and the aesthetic of my room to appreciate this tiny piece of a miracle. Sometimes I need accountability to shut up and listen. To appreciate the tiny things while I have them. To crouch down in awe at the sight of a yellow moth on a cinder block.

Holding Peace by Kristen Toth

The sound of booming thunder wakes me and I can't get myself to go back to sleep. The rumbling is so loud I can feel it shaking my bed and filling my ears, allowing me to hear nothing but the thunderous booming. I pull my covers up over my eyes and place my head under my pillow, hoping to block out the storm. As I lay and listen to the thunder, I can't help but notice the noise is somehow still growing louder and closer.

Beads of sweat form across my upper lip from the hot, thick, humid air in the room. Finally, I tear back the covers to my bed and rush over to the small window in the bedroom whose frame is in dire need of a new paint job. Hopefully, the air outside is a little cooler than it is in here. As I stand on the old wooden floor of our small farmhouse, I can feel the ground shaking beneath my feet.

Just as I am moving the old yellow drapes that hang across my window, I hear a scream. A familiar scream...that sends my blood rushing and my heart racing. It's a blood-curdling, heart-pounding scream. I don't know why she is screaming; it's only a thunderstorm after all.

But my sister is indeed screaming.

I look over to her bed located right next to mine, but what I initially thought was her body is only just her pillows and a pile of blankets. Even though she's ten years old, she sometimes does still get frightened during thunderstorms. She says they give her nightmares, but she never tells me what they are about. So I just lie with her until she falls back to sleep. So where could she have gone?

I turn away from the window and open the small creaky door to my bedroom. I can feel the doorknob shake against my hand as I turn it. That's when I hear her scream again, only this time, it's my name.

"Chastin!"

There's urgency in her voice, an urgency that wasn't there before. I don't know where to look. I'm standing on the floor of the small, cramped kitchen when suddenly I hear a door squeak open behind me. I turn and see my brother, Clive, come running out of his room. He is hastily putting on a torn white shirt and his brown hair is a tousled mess. But when he looks at me, I see his eyes are full of horror. Did he hear Carrie screaming, too? He runs to me and grabs my shoulders, shaking them as he yells over the thunder.

"Are you okay!? Are you hurt?" I shake my head and open my mouth to find out what is going on, but he cuts me off. "Where are Carrie and Mother? Where are they?" Clive's words stumble and slur out of this mouth. Even though he's yelling over the thunder, I can still barely make out what he's saying.

"I'm not sure!" I yell back. "I'm trying to find Carrie. What's wrong? Did you hear Carrie screaming, too?" The last words out of my mouth turn his face a pale white color. I don't know what's wrong with him and why he looks so frightened, but before I can speak again he grabs me by the wrist and pulls me across the small kitchen. My feet stumble across the floor, but after just a few steps, we are met with another scream coming from

my parents' room. Clive fumbles with the knob and opens the door, but nothing could have prepared us for the scene in front of me.

Carrie is kneeling on the floor with Mother's head in her lap. Carrie's eyes are closed, and through the darkness you can just make out the shine from the tears on her face. Mother is unconscious, her leg a gory bloody mess. What the hell is going on? But when I look up from Carrie and Mother, my question is immediately answered...and I wish it hadn't been. The back wall of the bedroom has been completely blasted away, illuminating a whole new horror. The thunder I had been listening to was apparently not thunder at all, but something much worse.

"Bombs."

I hear Clive whisper the word as he looks out at the streets. The scene beyond our house is something I wish I could have avoided seeing my whole life.

I can hear earsplitting screams as we see people running frantically through the dirt streets. Bombs are sending out flashes of illumination into the blackness of the night, revealing all of the horrors hidden behind the thick clouds of smoke.

But things are worse than that. Much worse.

The bombs don't seem to be targeting anything specific. We're in the farmland, a couple miles out from town. We live in a part of the country called The Harvest where farming and bartering are how most families survive. There are miles of farmhouses all centered around Market Square, which is bustling on weekends as everyone goes into town to trade crops and get together. But the nearest city would take hours and hours to get to.

As I look down the road through the wall of our house that no longer exists, I can see houses that are engulfed in flames, some of which have already collapsed on the individuals who couldn't get out fast enough.

"Where's Father?" I manage to choke out, surprised I am able to find my voice. Carrie looks up at Clive and me, but then turns her attention back to Mother. Her fingers are stroking through Mother's hair with gentle, delicate strokes.

"He went out to get Mrs. Kelter to see if she can help Mother's leg," Carrie speaks through her tears, no doubt trying to be strong for Clive and me.

I go over to kneel beside her and wrap my arms around her and she leans her head against mine.

"Are you hurt?" I ask.

"No I'm okay. It's just Mother," she says quietly. "But who would do such a terrible thing, Chastin? Why are they trying to kill us?" I know her head must be pounding with questions because mine is, too. I try to think of a way to explain this to her without telling the gruesome, frightening truth.

The question isn't why are they trying to kill us, but rather who. And the only cause I can figure from all those lessons in school is that Codfrig, our country, is being attacked by our neighboring country, Squal. This feud between us for land started hundreds of years ago. Before there were two countries, there had been just one. We were all just Codfrig. In the history textbooks, they refer to it as Pangea, when the continents were all one. But

then as Pangea slowly split into seven different continents, Codfrig was split into seven sections, and several of them rebelled to form the new country of Squal. Then the continents moved back together hundreds and hundreds of years later to cause “Pangea II,” as it is called, only to split apart again. However, this time they split into two continents. After many battles and a lot of bloodshed, Squal came to control the larger continent and Codfrig controlled the smaller one. In the past, we have had several wars with them, and once Codfrig decides it doesn’t have enough resources to continue fighting, it usually hands Squal a piece of our country in exchange for peace. But the peace only lasts as long as Squal wants it to. They are so much bigger than us now, have a much larger population and more resources that they clearly have an advantage. And while I’ve never been alive during one of these wartime feuds, I know that luck is not on our side. However, I refuse to tell that to my sister.

“Carrie?” It’s my father’s voice. I hear the sound of his shoes against the floor in the kitchen, along with a second pair of feet. It must be Sans Kelter. Sans lives in the house next door and is the only doctor in The Harvest. She is a plump, cheery woman who invites Carrie and me over to garden with her in her yard. Father went to go get her to help Mother.

However, when Father enters the room, it is not Sans Kelter who follows him, but her son Luke instead. Even though he is only a year older than me, I have never really seen him or talked to him before. He never seemed to be at the house when Carrie and I were over with Sans. Yet here he stood in my home, gripping Sans’s medical bag and staring at Mother’s bloody, torn up mess of a leg.

“Luke came over to help.” My father’s voice sounds shaky, and I can only imagine the horrific sights he must have seen out in the streets. Luke walks over to Mother with hesitant footsteps. Father comes over to us and guides us out of the room. I am reluctant to leave Mother, but I see Clive has refused to leave and is standing with his back against the wall with his arms across his chest, his face as serious as stone.

Carrie and I sit against the wall, my arm wrapped around her shoulders. Father goes back inside the bedroom and comes out carrying Mother, followed by Luke and Clive. Clive gestures for us to stand up and follow him downstairs.

“Where are we going?” I whisper to Clive.

“We’re moving somewhere safer. We’re going to the cellar.”

No. Not the cellar. Ever since I was ten years old, I have hated that cellar. The place where my mother gave birth to her last child and my youngest sister, a beautiful girl named Castry.

Mother and Father decided long ago that all of their children’s names were to begin with the letter C, in honor of my grandmother Cosette, who died giving birth to my mother. Out of all of us, Carrie was especially excited to have a little sister whom she could play with and look after. She had talked non-stop about it for months. When Mother finally went into labor, Sans Kelter came over and took Mother down to the cellar to give birth, as it was during a nasty storm and our house is surrounded by towering trees. After many long, hard hours of waiting on the floor of the kitchen and listening to Carrie ramble on

about how excited she was, Sans came upstairs and announced that Castry was born. We all went downstairs as Carrie was screaming with excitement. When we reached the bottom of the stairs, Sans walked over to the bed Castry was lying in only a few yards away from Mother. Carrie followed Sans with her arms already extended and ready to hold the baby, but when Sans was a few feet away from the bed, she stopped moving instantaneously. She grabbed her medical bag and rushed over to Castry. I tried to see what was happening but her back was blocking our view of the bed. After a few moments, she turned around slowly with red and puffy eyes and pronounced Castry gone.

I was enraged. I launched myself at Castry. I wanted to grab her, to save her. There was no way she could have been dead after only having a few short breaths of air. But just as I was about to get to her, someone grabbed my waist and pulled me back, picking my feet up from the ground and carrying me from the room inch by inch. I thrashed my arms about and kicked my legs out from under me. All I wanted was to bring back the little sister I didn't even get to see alive. There was a pinch in my arm, and then I can't remember any more from that day. The worst day of my life so far.

When we reach the cellar door, I turn to look at Clive, who also looks somewhat hesitant to go down.

"I think I am going to wait up here," I tell him.

"Father wants us to go down. It's the safest place." He gives me a look of sympathy that I didn't want before pulling me through the door. As we walk down the steps, I am instantly reminded of that day again as if it just happened yesterday.

Father is placing Mother in the spare bed that she was in on that terrible day. She is completely still, but her eyes are open and looking around the room. Luke is speaking to her calmly, but I can't make out what he is saying. Father walks over to me, his face grim.

"Where's Sans?" I ask him.

"She's gone," he replies. "Luke said she was killed shortly after the bombing started." He pulls at his brown scruff of a beard before continuing. "I ran into Luke and he volunteered to come do what he can. He said his mother has been training him."

Now I remember Luke's eyes when he walked in. Swollen, red, fighting back the tears that were hiding behind them.

I sit down next to Clive on the cold stone floor, my eyes lingering on the worried look in his eyes. Clive is someone who never really expresses much emotion at all. He grieves in solitude and his pain is unknown to the world around him. But I know him, well...probably better than just about anyone. I know the creases around his eyes reveal what he's thinking, and the wrinkles between his brow show when he's deep in thought.

"You knew it was bombs when you came out of your room, didn't you?" I ask him, searching his face for any inclination of what he might be feeling.

"I looked out the window when the bombs woke me, and the scene was...well, you saw it. You know."

I sure do know. We sit in silence for a while. I watch Mother on the bed, her brown curly hair everywhere yet still she looks beautiful despite the hell she's going through.

The ceiling above us suddenly shakes as a bomb undoubtedly hits close by. I look around at my family and Luke, sitting in silence as we hide beneath the ground. Suddenly, Clive jumps to his feet and darts towards the stairs. Father tries to grab him but he must have anticipated it because he swerves out of the way perfectly. I hear his footsteps on the stairs and then the closing of the cellar door. Should I follow? My Father glares at me and I back up and resume my position along the wall. I don't dare mess with that look.

It seems like an eternity has passed and Clive still doesn't come back down. The continuous sound of bombs continues to haunt me. Finally, Luke walks over to my father and breaks the sickening silence.

"She's stitched up, but we'll need to monitor it for any infection. I debrided it as best as I could, but the supplies I have are minimal. She should be regaining consciousness any minute, though, if you want to talk to her."

Father and Carrie walk over to the bed to see Mother, but I can't seem to move my feet. Then, before I even know what I am doing, I dart up the steps and run through the cellar door back to the upstairs world. And there in front of me is my home...or what remains of it. Only the foundation is still standing while everything else has been destroyed. I scan the area to find Clive, but the smoke and dust are so thick I can barely breathe, let alone see very far in front of me.

Clive is nowhere in sight. I run through the rubble, stumbling across our old memories. As I turn around the remnants of our living room wall, I see a dark figure squatting down on the ground with recovered objects filling his arms. I walk over, and as the smoke clears, I see Clive with his arms full of random things. There is an old photo album, a pocketknife my father gave him, and Carrie's old doll.

I put my hand on his shoulder so that he knows I am here. When he looks up, I am not prepared for what I can see in his eyes, see what fills his eyes. The amount of pain, hatred, and anger is enough to make me say the only thing I know we should do as the sounds of bombs continue around us.

"We have to go back to the cellar, Clive." He turns his head away and goes back to shuffling through the rubble.

"Don't you see what they've done? It's all gone. Everything is gone, Chastin."

"I know, Clive." I crouch down, looking at him eye to eye while not knowing what else to say to my older brother. He stares right back at me before he stands up, his arms still holding our precious memories.

I can't blame him for what he feels now, because I feel it, too. How could anyone intentionally inflict so much harm and pain on so many innocent people? In one night, my life as I knew it was taken away to be replaced with this new horror. Who can tell what the future will hold from now on?

All I know is that I cannot and will not go down gently.

Whatever the future may hold, I will not go down without a fight.

I Am Iron Man by Katelyn Diehl



Blue, Yellow, Red by Jack Weidner

1st Place Winner, Gunard Carlson Contest

Tommy was three. He sat in his room, just playing with his blocks. Blue, then yellow, then red. He had decided this stacking order about 10 minutes ago, and liked the way it was going. *Blue, then yellow, then red*, he thought, *the best order for stacking*. CRASH! The blocks had fallen. Tommy needed Jacob's help. He could never get the placement of the higher blocks right to keep the tower steady. Jacob always stopped the blocks from falling. But his parents said that Jacob wouldn't be back. He went to some place far away, so Tommy knew that he must try to make due until Jacob returned. Then they could make the tallest towers. He tried again. Blue, then yellow, then red.

Tommy was able to get it higher than before—just by a little. He sat, incredibly proud of himself. Jacob would be proud. CRASH! The tower had fallen as his dad walked in the room and shut the door. He was wearing all dark colors. "Judy is here," he said. Tommy had met Judy once. She wasn't the normal babysitter, but Mom said Jessica was *very* busy today like his parents, even though school had been canceled for the week. Jacob had a huge crush on Jessica. She was four grades ahead of Jacob. Tommy hadn't seen his mother much these past couple days, which was odd to him. She seemed very sad when he looked at her. Or angry. She kept yelling at Tommy's dad one night, "Get rid of the guns! Get rid of them!" She was crying. It was very loud. The "guns" were the toys Jacob and his dad used for fun in the woods. Tommy didn't know what they did, but he knew his mother hated them. Tommy's mother brought Judy upstairs. His mother was still very sad and dressed in all dark like his father. Tommy didn't know why people wore all black...maybe Jacob would know. He'd have to ask him. Tommy wanted Judy to come play blocks. He told her the order. Blue, then yellow, then red.



Camp by Monica Gregg

One Thousand by Mamie Kyle

I have tried and I have failed,
Failed to find the place that made me feel safe.
The place where past memories were unveiled,
Where I never once felt unsafe.
And I have tried a thousand and one times
To find some way, anyway, back to that place.
Where creeks flow easily over rocks and winds sing through the pines;
Where time moves slower because there, it knows it has nothing to race.
It's the innocence that comes with being there that I miss.
It's the ghosts of childhood I find myself searching for, running desperately to.
I'll find a way to reach them, pull them out of the abyss...
I have to... one thousand and two.

Tapestries

2019-2020

Weaving the Threads of
Creativity & Innovation

