

Tenth Street Miscellany

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Tenth Street Miscellany

Mission Statement

Tenth Street Miscellany is a literary and arts journal produced by the students of Chadron State College. We seek to offer aspiring or unpublished writers and artists in the High Plains area an opportunity to express their individuality through various artful mediums.

Our editors work to provide a place for creators of the region to come together and put their works forward in a publication dedicated for them. In an area that can often feel overlooked, we think it's important to provide writers and artists with this opportunity to learn and share their skills with fellow writers.

Submitting works can be an intimidating experience and we hope to build a positive and encouraging experience for all aspiring creators.

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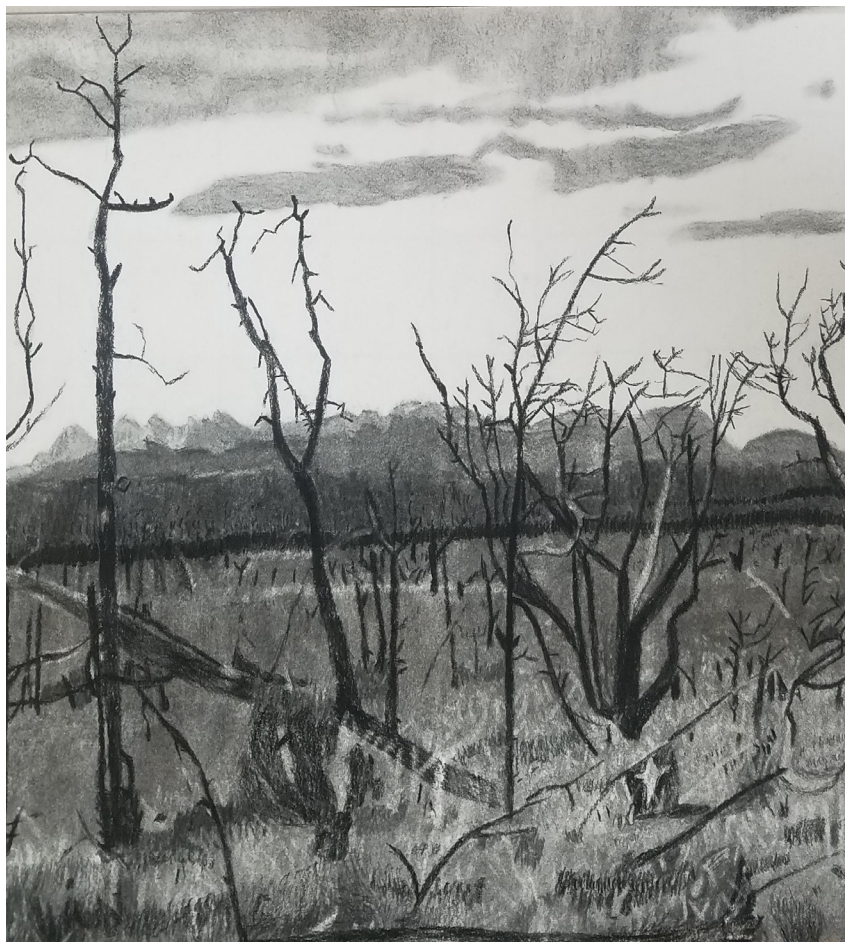
Art



Up Up Away
Sara Taggart



Butterflies & Lavender
Jaedyn Gronemeyer



Burnt

Jaedyn Gronemeyer



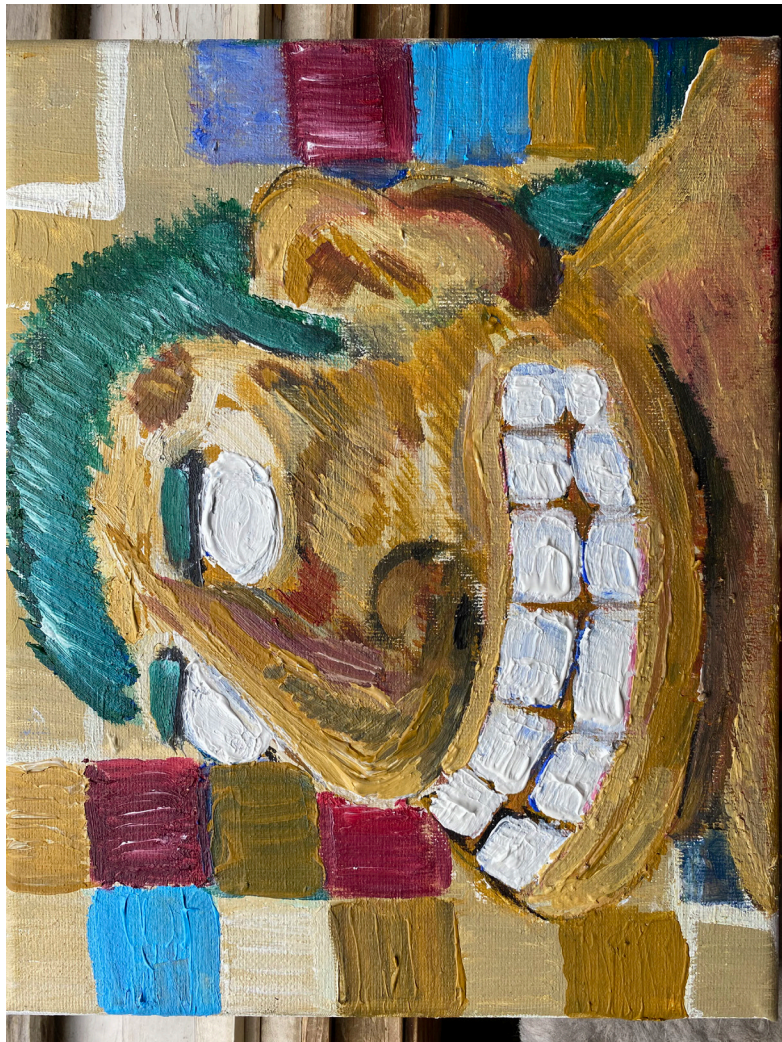
Beyond the Haybales *Angelyse Perez*



Why So Blue?
Angelyse Perez



Messenger
Chris Reisig



Portrati in Excess *Samuel LaRive*



Through the Pines
Kamryn Kozisek

*Creative
Nonfiction*

Maroon

Hannah Pfeifly

You once told me that I'm a genius. Not because I have an extraordinary IQ. No. You said, "You're a genius" because I could paint what you could not. I took words and experimented with the brush strokes. Made them precise, calculated, and beautiful. A funny thing beauty is. I read recently that beauty is subjective. Beauty, in all her glory, is interpreted by our taste. Taste is just our ability to judge objects. Judgment may result in beauty. Beauty is based on our emotions.

I walked around a museum in South Dakota recently. They said that in the construction of Mt. Rushmore, nobody died. A lady next to me said, "Oh, how beautiful. No one was harmed." My immediate thought was yeah, only the indigenous people we lied to and cheated. I did not tell this lady that the monument was a big "Fuck You" to the original people of this land. A sacred, beautiful mount they called "The Six Grandfathers" now defaced with old white men as a symbol of American "pride." We would've discussed this, us history nerds, I think to myself.

When you left me, I drowned. Drowned in myself. No one in my life knew what to say. What do you say to someone you don't understand? Someone who doesn't understand herself. I sink at the sound of all these voices. Not real ones, metaphorical. A bumper car ride of ideas and thoughts only soothed by medication. They all agree on one thing though. Foolish one, learn your lesson. You are not a sublime exception. Sublime is a comparison with which everything is small. A grandeur that out-matches beauty.

The first time I saw you I knew nothing could stop me. You'd

be mine. After all, I am a mastermind. Fate placed us in the same place at the same time. Or in our case, the same dean's green at the same time. When fate brought us together romantically, I asked about that day on the grass.

I asked, "What did you think when we first met?"

You said, "That you were the prettiest girl on campus."

In retrospect, you never said I was beautiful. Just pretty.

Did you know the Stoics rejected passions, not emotions? We were too passionate. It blinded us.

I find it poetic. The day we met. Two souls with a love for the same thing met. Sewn into the same fate not knowing if it's a tragedy or not. You laughed at my jokes. Humored my opinions of old white men. It's funny. I never knew you liked me. Even funnier when I saw you in the same light—I thought twice. Afraid. Afraid you'd destroy me.

I think I destroyed you. Correction, we destroyed each other. Demolition at its finest. But Honey, don't you know? Love is all for show. You've got to work for it.

You took me home that weekend. You know which one. Our last weekend. We just, we kind of fused together. Sparks flew, at least for me. I met your mother. The woman who birthed you. She loved that I could make you smile.

Time etched itself away. We grew apart. We moved too fast. It's human to cut what you don't understand. Kill the things we deem beautiful. Why do you think we pick the prettiest flower first? Then again, I was just pretty to you. I had a good appearance, but I didn't shine inside and out. After all, how can you love a Mirrorball? Several shattered pieces of glass sparkling, reflecting. Someone who changes everything to fit in. Someone who's never been a natural and shows you every version of yourself.

I turned twenty-three in January. People told me the difference between twenty-two and twenty-three, but I didn't think I'd notice. At twenty-two you're just dancing through life. Normally, you've graduated by that point and the world is your oyster. When you turn twenty-three, the quarter-life crisis kicks in. The magic of your early twenties—which you're still in— begins to fade away. Now, I'm closer to twenty-eight when it seems like yesterday, I was sixteen. When you're twenty-three people expect you to have your life together. I've been asked if I have a career lined up. Everyone, and I mean everyone always asks why I'm not engaged yet. You. It always comes back to you. My first love.

You called me a few nights ago. The call didn't go through. You tried again and again before realizing I blocked your number. It struck you to check your social media only to find I blocked you there too. You didn't understand. Correction you never understood. It's hard to understand someone you loved only to realize it too late. I told a friend that I bet you think about me. It was a joke. I didn't think I was right. But you dug the grave and came to the wake too late. Beauty withers away once it loses its value.

Champagne Problems (noun):

A trivial first-world grievance.

When you fractured us, you said “We can still be friends.” Oh, how naïve you were. Darling, that's a word we can never use again. Because we were never just friends.

I never expected your jealousy. God, you hated all my guy friends. I mean, I know you said we were going in different directions—you were right. Do correct me if I'm wrong. It was jealousy, right? Jealousy over our friend? It never became anything. They distanced themselves from the wreckage. No one wants to watch the bodies burn.

Why can't I move on? Part of getting older is letting the past stay in the past. I can mature in my personality, and my taste, and grow into who I am. But God, I need to let you go.

Earth and fire. You and me. "A potentially challenging, yet exciting match," said my friend, the seer. Then again, she once said my aura was violet after three glasses of tequila.

I sicken myself writing about you. About us. I reconfigure my diary all in the name of originality. In the name of being a genius. It's hard, hard to write about you. Tears stream down my face. Even when I wipe them off, they return. Unlike you, I can admit I am emotionally unavailable. I thought I loved you. I think I did. Maybe that's why I hate to write about you.

Wordsworth once said, "We have no knowledge, that is, no general principles drawn from contemplation of particular facts, but what has been built up by pleasure, and exists in us by pleasure alone." Poetry should create pleasure. I think about this quote occasionally when I try to write about you. I try to find the pleasure, pleasure about you. To write about you. To let you go. Maybe one day I'll be a genius. A true genius. Like Kant or Wordsworth. Be a Romantic. Not romantic like a candle-lit dinner. No, a writer who depicts emotional matters through writing. For now, I'll write what I know. I'll write about old feelings. Things I didn't understand. Things I wish I knew then. Huh, maybe I am a Romantic.

We spent a summer apart and I thought it would mend things for us. I should tell you I tried. Tried to be your friend. But like I told you on that walk, we were never just friends.

You said, "I don't think we should ever date again."

I told you I agreed. Might as well have shot you with a rifle. After a few blocks into the walk, the walk I had invited you to, you grumbled you had to go. You left me. You always leave me.

When my cat, Penelope, jumps me for treats, I tell her, “No one likes a beggar.” Rilke wrote a poem called “The Beggars.” I associate that poem with you. Not that you beg. I don’t know. I read it and my mind went to you—subconsciously. “They show the sightseer their mouths full of filth, and let him (he can afford it) peer at the mange eating away at them.” Maybe you’re the sightseer. Maybe I’m the beggar. Our subconscious doesn’t always make sense.

I skim these entries. Make them poetic. It’s a therapy of mine. Writing. So, I hope that maybe this is the final piece. The final piece I write about you.

A boy asked me out a few nights ago. I said no. I do that a lot. Say no. They just don’t appeal to me. They’re not beautiful or sublime. They’re not you. It’s funny how many times fate placed us in a room together against our wills. Fate tried to mend us. We’re stubborn, though. So, you ran away to another state. Meanwhile, I’m right where you left me in the corner we’d haunt. Time went on for everyone else and I’m still twenty-two living in a daydream. How things were supposed to be.

Delusion is an old friend of mine. She wraps me in a hug when the world closes in around me. She runs a hand through my hair and shushes me. Maybe that’s why I’m a writer. I use her fantasies and create an image. An image with fine brush strokes. Maybe that’s why you said I’m a genius.

I’m tired. So, so, tired. I want to be like the girls in the movies. The ones who have a glint in their eyes. I want to be what my name means. Gracious. I want to be me again. I want to find pleasure in life again, not stuck in the past that imprisons me. Lord knows I loved you. I shouldn’t have. After all, we moved too fast. I’m sorry, by the way. Sorry I couldn’t be more mature. I hope one

day we can be what you wanted us to be. Friends.

Edmund Burke discussed pain and pleasure. He said, “For my part I am rather inclined to imagine, that pain and pleasure in their most simple and natural manner of affecting, are each of a positive nature, and by no means necessarily dependent on each other for their existence.” Pain comes from the extraction of pleasure. I’ve been wounded all this time. But maybe now, I am finally healed. Maybe, I can find pleasure in life again.

I hope one day you can forgive me. I also hope you forgive these cheesy Taylor Swift references. Though, as I recall, you did enjoy her music. I hope you still do. I hope at the very least I didn’t ruin her for you.

The last time I saw you there was a sea of people between us. You stood on top of the world, all the pride held within your fingertips. A friend said, “He’s looking at you.” I told them I didn’t notice. I lied. Once the formalities ended, the current picked up. Friends and families hugging each other. I flung my arms around his neck and just barely spotted you over his shoulder. You paled. Your mother asked what was wrong. Her gaze followed yours and she understood. She placed a loving hand on your shoulder. Your eyes bore into me. So, I vanished into the black and maroon.

Hello?

Vernon Plenty Bull

The faint lights of campus and the small town grow bright like a shooting star. A chill breeze curls its icy fingers around the buildings. Dead leaves trapped within the crevices dance. Very few cars drive on the desolate roads, their lights push through the shadows. A security vehicle races by the empty buildings. It signals right toward the Athletic complex. The 80s Rock stops in its tracks when the hand taps the volume knob. The hand moves to turn off the engine and the vehicle rests.

The car door slams shut. Jingling keys bounce against the right hip of the lone security guard. He stares down at his phone. 2:42 AM. Time always manages to drag on until the early sunrise. His radio pops off his belt, the elastic band of the mic ricochets the radio off the ground.

Thank God. I would've been in deep trouble.

He glances at the building, windows clear as the night sky, yet the blinding lights of the city block the stars above. Whipping out his set of keys, he unlocks the main door. He tries to beat his previous time of twelve minutes. Boredom washes over the guard and decides to race with himself. He runs to the gym, smacking every locked door. He books it down the stairs and repeats the process. Running out of breath, he stops for the time being. A loud thump erupts from the hallway next to him. He whips out his flashlight and investigates, proceeding with caution down the long hallway.

The first locker room door is locked from the inside, so he moves on to the second door.

Damn B-Shift. Why am I the one to turn off the lights?

He inserts the keys into the door and finds the door to be unlocked. He sneaks in, fearing of what may be in store. Pushing on the door, he sees nothing, but the small piles of clothes scattered across the floor.

“Hello? Security,” he yells out in the room.

No answer.

He flicks off the lights and locks the door behind him. He moves into the dark room, holding his keys. With one click, he turns on his flashlight and aims it at the small corridor. The thumping returns, only getting louder and louder. He walks a little more to see—the laundry room, the washers currently on and the far light still illuminates. The guard sighs and continues to move closer to the trophy room.

When he turns the corner, a figure stares right at him. Fear courses through his veins and leaves him standing in place. With the keys in one hand, he’s ready to fight for his life.

An Essay I wish I Didn't Have the Inspiration to Write: Having a Bad Dad vs. a Bad Dad

Jenna Seelye

Growing up, I knew there were differences between me and every single one of my friends. I knew my family tree didn't fit any normalized family stereotypes. Only my dad would abruptly disappear for months at a time. Only my dad went to parent-teacher conferences, confined to his wheelchair. Only my dad's proved throughout my childhood they were not going to raise me the way I witnessed my friends being raised. Now at eighteen years old, I have a bad biological dad and a bad stepdad.

My biological dad was an explicit example of a bad dad. His consistent pattern of poor choices ended with him losing his life. It's painful to be reminded that he will never have the opportunity to become anything more than my bad dad. He did not have the capability of raising me or taking care of himself. All his choices should be connotated as bad.

Incorrect.

Erroneous.

My stepdad demonstrates what it is to be a bad dad. Every day, he survives with a rare and aggressive neuromuscular-autoimmune disease, which has turned him into a person I no longer recognize. He should have had the capability of raising me, but he did not. It's painful to be reminded that he didn't take the opportunity to be more than my bad dad. All his choices should be connotated as bad.

Awful.

Gruesome.

My biological dad made one bad choice, initiating a

turmoil of more bad choices. While I don't know the connections or reasoning behind it, I do know he abused hard drugs. My mom didn't tell me about his history, or his incarceration for drug abuse until I was older and more aware of his absence.

My stepdad never thought of me as his own child. We have a decade-long duel, a two-way battle, of me fighting to be heard, while also fighting not to be seen. It was clear he didn't love me the way he loved my step-sister and half-brother. He persisted in being angry with me. I received negative remarks on anything and everything he observed me doing. I could never meet his unreachable standards.

My biological dad relapsed every time he got clean. It wasn't until the last, and final, time I saw the signs he started using again. Regardless of what my grandparents told me, I knew he was using. After I learned about my dad's past, learning that he chose drugs over me again, I was forced to make a decision. I did not want to see him on drugs. I did not want to be in any place his drugs could have been. I gave him the choice of me or drugs and he chose drugs.

I went two years with no contact before he passed away.

My grandparents, his parents, became hostile with me after I ended all communication with my dad. They couldn't fathom my reasons why I wouldn't help "fix" my dad. They didn't understand I needed to put my health, safety, and mental well-being over my absent parent. To them, I made the wrong choice. I felt an astronomical amount of guilt for not reaching out before he passed away. I was stuck on the thought of what our relationship could have been if I somehow, somehow, fixed him. But I found drugs in his belongings, and that told me I was right all along. I had made the correct choice. My grandparents still told me I was wrong about his addiction until his toxicology report came back. He died in a car accident. He swerved into oncoming traffic while high.

My stepdad's disease causes significant brain abnormalities. His angry outbursts used to be more hidden and only happened every so often. As his disease progressed, they became sporadic and constant. Until these progressions, no one saw his unforeseen explosions of rage. With every choice I made, I had to consider the reaction I would get from my stepdad.

My stepdad's parents fed into his antics, though they didn't have a disease to excuse their behavior. I was not like the rest of their family. I grew up eating different food, having a different type of relationship with the grandparents on my mom's side, and having interests in things considered unworthy. My stepdad never came to my choir concerts. He never showed up on the days I sang at church. The artwork I made, which hung on the fridge, never received compliments. My good grades went unnoticed. I was only recognized when I was being reprimanded for making different choices than my siblings.

It has taken me a long time to find forgiveness with my biological dad. Some days, I still feel the hurt from him and the guilt that came after his death. Finding peace in an ugly situation does not happen immediately. I learned to accept what happened and push forward. Lingering in the past and wishing things could be different will not change how our relationship ended. I know my dad is in a better place. He is clean and cannot keep hurting himself or others. He is no longer a bad dad because he is no longer able to make those choices anymore.

It will take me a long time to find forgiveness with my stepdad. I don't have any expectations of him. I do not expect him to call or text. I do not expect him to check up on me. I do not allow him to make me feel less than who I know I am. You cannot let people make you feel inferior without your consent. I cannot fight

for him to acknowledge me. He is the adult. He is the one who's supposed to be the parent. He is, and always will be, a bad dad.

But the little girl who dreamed of having a happily ever after, and who crossed her fingers, and made wishes on shooting stars, just to have a dad who loved her, still makes those wishes. She's not eight years old anymore—she's eighteen.

The Best Gift of All

Kayleigh Sughroue

College is hard. Anyone who tries to tell you any different either didn't go or didn't give enough shits. There's always reading to be done. Assignments need to be worked on. Classes need to be attended. It never ends. Sometimes when my mountain of work crashes down around me, and I can't intake enough air I just lay amongst my scattered work and think. I think about how at one point in my life I didn't know if I'd get here.

I'm getting a bit ahead of myself, let me take you back to May of 2013. At thirteen years old my life had just gotten started. I recently joined a new set of friends. Best of all Devin finally reached the end of his high school career. That meant that I'd be the only kid in the house at last. It meant no more fighting over the remote, no more hiding my food, and no more arguments about who got to play their video games that day. My friends and I made so many plans about sleepovers and just hanging out together that I can't even put into words how excited I was for summer.

Of course, life never has the same plans that we do. Devin's graduation party somehow managed to be so boring that my younger cousin and I did what we did best.

We disappeared.

We trekked down into the canyon that stretched out behind the house. We climbed trees and traversed the tall grass while keeping an eye out for rattlesnakes. Rule number one of going into the canyon: always be on the lookout for things that could get you killed.

This rule applied from snakes to coyotes, from barbed wire fences to holes in the ground. It, however, didn't cover the one thing

we probably should have been looking for that day. Ticks. I know that they're hard to spot, impossible even, but if we had checked just a little bit better I think that summer could have turned out very different. You see in our bliss we failed to notice a single tick that decided I looked like its next meal. It latched itself onto the very tip of my left ear and I didn't find it until the next day.

Growing up in a family of hunters it wasn't unusual to find a tick or two over the course of a summer. So, I plucked it from my ear and flushed it down the toilet like I did with all the ticks I found. It soon became lost in the sea of thoughts flowing through my head. I needed to plan my birthday party, after all, it was only three weeks away.

It didn't take me very long to figure out something was wrong. A small pimple-sized bump appeared on my head right behind my left ear. It ached like all good zits do, so I asked Mom to take a look at it.

"Looks like an ingrown hair. It's not ready yet, I'll get it tomorrow," Mom said.

"Alright," I said.

If I knew then what it really was, I'd have begged Mom to take me to the hospital, but I didn't. No one did. Besides, it wouldn't have done any good to go in that early. The doctors would have had no clue what they were looking at.

Life moved on at its normal pace after that. I created the perfect indent in the couch because at thirteen driving was a no go and no way in hell would I walk the two miles to town in the scorching summer air. After the day Mom had looked at my ingrown hair it disappeared into the swelling around it so Mom couldn't really tell if it was ready to pop. The ache turned from a mild inconvenience into a persistent throb that wouldn't go away no matter what I tried.

Every day after that my neck swelled more and the pain increased right along with it. I began icing my neck at least four times a day in the hopes of reducing the swelling. Within the week the pain became so excruciating that even the act of opening my mouth too far blurred my vision from unshed tears. I no longer could turn my head to the left. I'm sure Mom and Dad already decided to take me to the doctor, but I don't remember the conversation. I just remember the day we were going I was ripped from my peaceful slumber at four in the morning to the most agonizing pain.

White-hot lead must have been running through my veins. I thought I must have broken my neck and jaw in the middle of the night with all my tossing and turning. The pain almost blinded me. I somehow managed to stumble my way to the kitchen to retrieve the life-saving ice pack. I didn't grab a towel to protect my skin. It dulled the numbing cold that I needed so desperately. I collapsed back into my bed and pressed the ice pack against my neck. My body shook with silent sobs. My lips trembled and hot tears poured down my face. I swore sleep would elude me for the rest of the night.

I ended up falling asleep at some point. The next thing I knew Mom and I were at the doctor's office. The doctor glanced at my neck and with so much confidence claimed that it was nothing more than a plugged oil duct. She prescribed an antibiotic that would make me burn very easily in the sun, so there went any chance of me spending time outside, and told me to put a warm washcloth on my neck instead of the ice pack.

Not long after this Mom decided that I needed a haircut. The pain in my neck decreased but it still hurt quite a bit. So this haircut ended up traumatizing me in two aspects. One it hurt more than any haircut before or after it. Two by the time the hairdresser finished I had a straight from the eighties style mullet. Not only did moving

my head cause a great amount of pain, but I looked like a glam rock star and no one told me.

After a while the pain subsided and so did the swelling. Well for the most part. You see, since I couldn't spend a lot of time outside, I spent most of my time putting a warm washcloth on my neck about every twenty minutes. This resulted in a lump forming behind my ear. I'm not talking about the ingrown hair reemerging.

Oh no.

This lump sat right behind my left ear and it matched the length and width of my ear. At this point, I also noticed that the place where the tick had bitten refused to heal. Whenever scabs formed on it they were gooey and fell off with no effort at all.

The lump fascinated me. Each night I'd stay up for an extra thirty minutes poking it. The middle squished each time I placed my finger on it. I thought it formed because of the plugged oil duct. I believed the doctor with all my heart because they never made mistakes right?

Wrong.

Maybe this is why I don't trust what most people say without a second opinion. You can never be too sure. After my mom discovered my new friend she made a new appointment for me. The doctor still claimed that my friend had formed from a plugged-up duct, but after Mom insisted she decided to lance it, they whisked me off to a back room of the hospital with a chair that reminded me of a dentist's chair. They sat me down and pulled out a needle that looked like it was six inches long. I'm sure it wasn't, but at the time my fear exaggerated the length.

The doctor stuck the needle into my friend and the numbing fluid shot back out at her. So, she went back in at a different angle. Then came the hard part. She began to cut open my friend and up

to this point I had never been in so much pain. The hot lead felt like nothing compared to this. I gritted my teeth and squeezed Mom's hand so tight that she thought I might break it. Even though they numbed me it didn't do anything. Though I did think I could handle it until she began to squeeze.

I swore up and down she was trying to push one of my bones out of my neck. Screams were bubbling up in my throat, but I wouldn't let them out. I prided myself on being stronger than that. That's one of the stupidest things I ever convinced myself of. I was a kid I should have bawled my eyes out. Who would have blamed me?

She had almost finished with me when she asked Mom if she wanted to see what it looked like. She took a small glance since she thought it would be similar to a zit. Apparently, it was not. Running out the side of my head were streams of just blood and puss that the doctor sampled and sent away to a lab.

The thing about the lancing is that they end up stuffing a piece of thin gauze into the newly opened wound. It's so the infection will continue to drain, so that has to be changed every so often. The first time mine got changed happened on my fourteenth birthday. The gauze had hardened from the blood and puss. A different doctor than the one who cut me open tried to dampen it before they pulled on it, but it didn't help. The pain was excruciating. It burned. I swore that the doctor was ripping my ear off of my head.

This time I couldn't hold it in. I screamed like I'd been attacked and in a way I guess I had been. I sobbed. I begged Mom to make it stop. I didn't want to sit there anymore. The doctor had just gotten the first part out by this point and that only made me cry harder. I can't imagine what it must have been like for Mom to sit there while I begged her to make it end and she couldn't do anything but hold my hand. After the doctor finally finished torturing me she

stuffed a new piece of gauze in and covered it back up. I'd be back either the next day or the day after to do it all again.

One of the happy moments that happened was when I got to celebrate my birthday with my family. Aunt Steph, Aunt Kristy, their families, and Grandma came over to the house so we could have a party. By that I mean we ate spaghetti and cake. I got an easel because I claimed I wanted to become an artist. Considering that I'm writing this instead of making a painting inspired by this story, I think we all know how that dream turned out.

After about a week of gauze changes, the doctor finally began to see some healing tissue in my neck. He said to help with the process we should stick a Q-tip soaked in warm soapy water into the hole in my neck. I couldn't do it because I can't see that part of my head and Mom got squeamish at the idea of doing it herself. So, that left Dad. He stepped up to the plate without hesitation. That night he had me sitting on a stool in the kitchen as I tilted my head so that he could see what he was doing.

I braced myself expecting to have the burning return, but it never came. The nerves in that part of my neck became so damaged that all I felt was a small bit of pressure. So, I sat there relaxed for the first time in about a month. Dad stood there and talked to me about anything and everything. Mom stood at the stove making dinner that night. Instead of dreading this part of my day, I started to look forward to it.

Not long after this Mom and Dad got a phone call. The lab had my test results back and the news didn't bode well for me. I no longer could interact with people outside of my immediate family. I got to quarantine before quarantining became cool. At least I didn't have to go to the wedding Mom and Dad planned on dragging me to, but I couldn't have the party with my friends that I'd been look-

ing forward to and to top it all off I needed to go see a doctor that worked for the infectious disease people for whatever the lab results revealed.

The next morning my parents dragged me from my slumber bright and early. We drove all the way to North Platte and parked in front of the specialist's office. The building dwarfed our car. It loomed over me almost in a mocking way while I scuttled inside with my parents. The inside of the building did nothing to ease my nerves. Everything rested in the proper place. It was so clean it hurt.

I don't recall waiting. We ended up in a room so cramped that the little bed I sat on almost touched the counter on the other side of the room. The doctor came in with a folder in his hand and began speaking to my parents in a funny accent that made it hard for me to understand.

"She has Tularemia," He said. It flowed from his lips like it wouldn't change my life forever.

"What's that?" I asked.

"Once it reaches zee spleen there is nothing we can do. You die," the doctor explained.

He smiled at me before explaining with words too big for my brain to comprehend at the time. I didn't understand then, but over the years I learned from my own research that Tularemia is a rare disease that you get from infected animals. Most of the time rabbits are the ones to pass it on. The tick that bit me bit an already infected rabbit. I can't stand wild rabbits because of this, like sure they're cute, but you can't blame me. They almost killed me. Tularemia affects the lymph system and only five people on average get it a year.

The world fell away at that moment. The doctor kept talking or at least his mouth kept moving. My ears didn't want to take in any more noise though.

I could have died?

That's not right.

I'm fourteen, I'm way too young to die.

My parents' faces remained neutral while they took in all the information needed. The next thing I knew they whisked me down to another part of the building so they could take a blood sample. My dad sat next to me while the nurses poked and prodded me. He kept me calm and just talked to me like my world hadn't just imploded. It's his specialty to be able to stay calm in the face of crisis.

We ended up back in the tiny room and the doctor told me I'd need to get a picc line, a catheter that goes into someone's arm in order to feed medicine straight into the heart. Yeah, that's right I said catheter. When Mom told me that I got really confused because as far as I knew, catheters were for old people who couldn't pee. I still think it's a little funny that I thought I'd be peeing out my arm or something.

I'll never understand how my parents stayed so calm after this information, but they did through the whole treatment. I don't think I've told them, but I'm grateful that they were. If they weren't panicking then I didn't need to either and it turned into just something I needed to do. The only time I saw them crack was after we left the doctor's office.

They insisted I pick where we went to eat, but in light of everything that got thrown at me I didn't really want to eat anything. When I told them to pick they said no and that I should, so we went to Applebees. I just wanted some mozzarella sticks. So, that's what I got. I sat there and watched my parents frantically typing on their phones.

"Whatcha doin'?" I asked.

"Texting your Aunts and Uncles," Dad said. He didn't even

look up.

“Why?”

“Just to let them know what’s going on.”

“Oh. Okay.”

I remember they both looked so much bigger than me. They weren’t that much bigger than me though. I mean I think I stood above Mom at that point, but they were giants at that moment. It settled the nerves that began to stir in me again. What could hurt me with titans like these as my parents?

The next morning Mom and I were in our local hospital for my treatments. They laid me on a bed and had me stretch out my right arm. I turned my head hoping that not knowing would speed things up. Of course, my luck still hadn’t changed and it took three tries on my right arm before they decided they needed to switch sides. I turned my head right away. I came face to face with a pool of my blood resting next to my arm. I gasped and my eyes went wide.

“Oh no sweetie you don’t want to look yet,” a nurse told me.

“Okay,” I said. I came out more like a squeak than a word.

My left arm went much smoother, one try and it was over. They took us to a room with a TV and began a slow drip of medicine into the picc line. I spent three more hours there and found out that for a week and a half, this is what I’d be doing three times a day. I also discovered that hospital food sucks ass. The oatmeal was just a slimy goopy mess with no flavor and the eggs were like rubber in my mouth.

I remember how tired my whole body felt after a few days of doing the treatments. All I ever wanted to do was curl up on the couch and sleep until Mom woke me up to go back to the hospital. Sometimes I would fall asleep while the treatments were going on. This deep-set exhaustion is the most probable reason I didn’t no-

tice my bad haircut at the time. I didn't want to face myself in the mirror. I knew I resembled a zombie and if I were to have seen that the sickness would have become so much more real. It's not like I didn't know how sick I was, but seeing it would have brought back the all-consuming panic.

I developed a habit of sleeping on my right side because of my picc line. Each night I would put my three-foot-long stuffed elephant, Ellie, between the wall next to my bed and myself in the hopes that I wouldn't be able to roll over in the middle of the night. I didn't want to rip the picc line out even though they wrapped it up after every treatment. Better safe than sorry.

I did find things to take comfort in throughout all of this though. The first was Mom. She went to almost every appointment with me. It didn't matter if we were waking up at the crack of dawn or going to be at midnight. She was always there with a new way to make me laugh. She didn't sit there and tell me that I should try to be positive about my situation. Instead, she led by example. She showed me how to look tough situations in the eye and find things to laugh about.

The second was Dad. He took care of things at home for Mom when we were at the hospital. One morning he took me to treatment instead of Mom so she could get some sleep. It was actually a fun treatment at that time because he wasn't exhausted like Mom and I were. He made me laugh and somewhere floating in the cloud there's a picture of me hooked up to my slow-drip IV. He showed me what a man is meant to be like and I'm forever grateful for him.

The third thing to bring me comfort was books. I spent almost all of my treatments with a book in my hand. They allowed me to escape to a world where my sickness could not follow. In them,

I didn't have a tube sticking out of my arm that prevented me from doing extraordinary feats. In my books, I could be just like Katniss. I could spend all of my time outside and stick it to a government hell-bent on killing me. I could be like Bella and have a romance to end all others. I know that sounds weird that I wished to be in The Hunger Games or Twilight, but at least in those worlds, a sickness wasn't ravaging my body with the intent to kill. It's funny how something so simple can really dictate your future.

The final thing was my best friend in the entire world. She did something I believed to be impossible. She made me feel normal. If we weren't messaging then we were talking over the phone between every treatment. She never asked me about my sickness, she let me open up about that at my own pace. Instead, we rambled on about how when a character died in one of the books it felt like someone shot us. How Katniss could treat Peeta the way she did and how hard Twilight was to read. She'd give me songs to play while I read at home. I'm forever in her debt for all of this and I don't think she'll ever know how important she is to me.

By the end, my whole body refused to wake up until eleven o'clock the morning after my last treatment. My friends were allowed to come over for my birthday party after about a month and a half of actual hell. They gave me One Direction themed presents because what teen girl wasn't in love with them? I remember being so elated that they were there that the presents didn't matter.

Soon I pushed the ordeal to the back of my mind. I never forgot, but I chose not to think about it. I did all the normal things teenagers did. I was happy. The fact that I almost died got buried in my attempt to cope and move on. I didn't tell most people about it other than my friends and family. While all of my classmates were talking about how they did all of these fun things over the summer

like swimming or going to sports camps I sat and listened. I imagined what it would have been like to spend my summer the way I planned it. It took a few years before the full weight of what happened hit me.

It was like any other day. Mom sat at the dining room table paying the bills for that month. This always made her pretty irritable so when I asked her how she was doing she answered in a way I didn't expect.

"Fine. Still paying your hospital bills," she said.

"I'm sorry," I said.

"You don't need to apologize. You're still alive so it's fine," she said.

It hit me with the same force that it did when the doctor first uttered those words. I brushed it off in front of Mom, but inside the same white-hot lead began flowing through my veins again. I trudged back to my room. Cranked my music and sat on my bed. The whole thing seemed like a weird dream at times before that.

Even then I don't think I really tried to process what happened to me. Sure, hearing I almost died scared me, but I coped the same way. I pushed it aside. Pretended it didn't happen. This is the hardest thing I've ever had to write. It made me face down something I'd chosen to ignore for eight years of my life. It makes me wonder how that summer could have turned out if I didn't get sick. Would I have the same friends? Would I have continued to walk through life oblivious to the dangers that lurk in such small places? I don't know, but I think it made me stronger.

Now I'm all too aware of how close I came to no longer being on this earth. I'm painfully aware of ticks. They freeze me where I stand and I need someone else to take them off of me. I'm always asked if I'm cured or if there are any lingering effects from

the disease. I am indeed cured, but the lingering effects get a bit complicated. The doctors say that I shouldn't have any, but ever since I got sick I only get headaches on the left side of my head.

Looking back on it, I realize what my real present was that year. I lived through something that ten years earlier would have killed me without question. I lived. So, yeah college is hard and it can suck sometimes. High school sucked more, but I got to experience them. I get to keep living and that's the greatest gift I've ever received.

Poetry

Collateral

Chris Reisig

I ~~love you~~ know you like the glass I dropped in the bathroom—
it shattered and I locked the door
My fingers smell like citrus and blood
I wonder if I took my meds enough
or too much
I recognize something in your face that makes my teeth ache like
chocolate
Would you, if I let you
(hurt me badly?)
I ask the moon if I will ever see your eyes that close again
she says oh baby not even if you wanted to
She asks instead about the girl who took me home—
Who showed me where her fish tank used to be when she was five
years old
Whose parents cared more about my tattoos than my star-crossed
chromosomes
We made our own stars for one night only and she kissed me in the
bathtub where
they washed the dog after she killed a skunk
And that was love, love, love
If I was a worm I'm afraid you would
spread my thin pink skin across the pavement with your heel
And I would die with ten hearts breaking
knowing I could never taste an apple rind again
But in my closet there is still a sandal used for killing spiders
And I am ashamed when things are too fast to trap
how little my love covers

A Moment

Jawny Gill

There's this moment

when you're lying so still in the bath
when the water is just the right temperature
when you close your eyes and breathe
and the subtle swell syncs to your sighs

There's this moment

when you wake up to an orange sky
when the impatient kitten paws at your face
when you check the clock and groan
and the dawning day daren't deviate

There's this moment

when you think you've finally had enough
when reality's missing elements drive you mad
when you realize there is little else
and the absence of adventure apprehends you

and yet

There's this moment

when you're lying so still in the bath
and you can barely stand the mundanity
but the subtle swell syncs to your sighs
and you can't help but smile at the new experience

Secondhand sounds

Abigail Swanson

I tried to listen
for your cowbells

floating from
mountain
fog.

I walked wooded trails
and waterfall valleys,

woke pre-dawn
bundled against
crisp air

free
from farm,
car, or bell.

One last afternoon
I climbed a neighbor's hill

to fill a trailer
with stable muck
for the fields.

My pitchfork hurls
mud, straw, manure
up
into the spreader.

Brown
streaks face
colors shirt
and burns nose.

Soggy boots
squelch sludge
and stabled cowbells clink.

Passing Through the Seasons

Roan Haugen

a ballad for her new beginning
an impulsive decision to change her hair—
cherry blossom pink and loose curls
she smiles at her reflection...genuinely
when the gentle patter of rain falls,
she's the first to run outside and dance
she doesn't care who watches her

a bonfire party lights the sandy beach
boisterous laughter and pop songs collide
she intermingles with friends and strangers
the youth of her generation cheer and toast the sky
they live today because they may not have tomorrow

she finds she has a talent for something she loves
she fills hundreds of pages with her imagination
she strolls through parks colored with nature's change and
catches falling leaves in her shaking palms
she still overthinks, but the street lights and
cobblestone paths beautify her stress

the fresh powder muffles the city noise
ice seeps into her chest and injects loneliness
she yearns for the sunlight and the warmth,
begging, hoping, to feel better
her mind locks her in self doubt

but, the sun is setting
the snow is shining and

she smiles

Cognitive Dissonance

A collection by Hannah Pfeifty

succubus

I exist in your dreams
when I emerge
in your reality
fear grips you

I am no demon
you do not believe
me—

you reach for me
and wake up
alone—

I enchant you
I am real
he says,
she's bewitched you

Perhaps this is why I panic you.

tours

The air chokes us as we go along
the streets packed with suckers.
They're going to be disappointed, I said.
Why? You asked.
The Darkness.
The Darkness?
Yes, it'll swallow them whole.
Winter is a killer around here.

societal genocide

I always wanted to be a mother
from the age of five.
those damn baby dolls
they've tricked many of young girls

impose the idea that, that
all we will be is mothers.

of course, as I've grown
that is not always the case

but we've lost many a woman
to motherhood. to marriage.

we've lost them to patriarchy
that believes all we can do
is cook, clean, and mother.

they strip me of my rights
piece by piece
they romanticize
a time, a time we prayed
we left to history—

but no, here I am
I relive the past
it started with
an overturn in the court

now, I wait for the other pin
to drop— when they swallow
all women
whole.

Float

Angelyse Perez

Sometimes I feel trapped by my own mind.
She likes to play these tricks.

One day I am the happiest I can be.
The next I feel nothing.

She likes to make me believe things.
Things that don't make me feel very good.

Like that my body
is not real.

Like I am a husk
empty and hollow.

A soul floating,
within my own shell.

Maybe, I could peel off my own skin.
As if it were the wrapper of a candy bar,
or the peel of a banana.

And if I am to strip off this flesh,
the flesh layering on top of my shell.

I would be free.
My soul could finally fly away.

But I know that feeling is not real.

That's just my mind playing tricks.
She likes to do that sometimes.

I Love My Scars

Roan Haugen

I love the scars dispersed over my pale skin
each one is the story of a memory, and a lesson learned
some I tell as truth and some I tell as sin
as I share my tales, many gaze upon me concerned

I love the different hues and shades in each scar
they remind me of times that would have otherwise been forgotten
some I like to remember, and some I bury deep inside
it doesn't matter, not when they all decide I am ruined

I love admiring the way my scars fit in among the galaxy of freckles
they decorate my skin with beautiful shapes and textures
as I grow older, many of them wither like spent candles, lost legacies
people don't like scars like I do. people think they're gross.

I love the pain that gave me these wounds
the phantom swallowing my nerves traps some of the pain in each one
the world around me has left me marooned, abandoned, shunned
with a single glance, a judgment is made and they leave me

I love my scars because they don't let me forget my suffering
and if I don't have that then, who am I really?
if I am not filled with stories and tragedies, my identity is smothering I
don't care what they think of me

I need the pain to feel human

Olfactory Memories

Jenna R. Ellis

Their memory was never good. In one ear and out the other,
“Do you remember—” probably not
But if they’re met with a scent, a specific scent,
One that’s connected to a memory
They remember, as if it happened yesterday
Though details are blurry, the image is there
And it’s enough

The other day they drove with a window down
Letting that cool breeze fill the car, their nose caught a scent,
Taking them back to a memory they had put aside.
The odor was anything but special—an old
Coffee bean tree freshener
One that had lost its scent long ago,
But for some reason, had given another chance.
Another chance to remember, and
To go back to that memory
One that they had let go of, despite holding on tight to once.
This scent appeared one last time—one last
Reminder of this memory, that would have
Faded otherwise

The smell of memories.
The memories of a scent.
And the association between the two.

How the Sky Rolls Up at the End of the Day

Samuel LaRive

A wide and infinite blue,
Deep golden orange slides into a perfect blend of pinks and reds,
And then, for a long and calm moment,
A heliotrope wash soaks everything,
Until it is just silver stars against the night.

I'm on the frozen prairie.
The snow has grown gray.
The grass pokes through brown.
My home is black behind me.
But this sky is ever-changing.

Like Memories

Abigail Swanson

Ten hundred birds roost in chains above
my desk, a sunset of creases.

Silver cranes sculpted from gum wrappers
pile beside the shoebox of pop tabs.

Birds bend starburst shells,
hundreds reclaim wrapping paper.

Peers chatter. Skittle
size cranes convert junk mail.

Professor unfolds tale of birds flown
to former girlfriend across the sea.

Friends fledge fold,
deform birds for approval.

Gifted birds perch
desk and dresser tops. Bits of paper
collecting dust.

Roses Leave Scars

Autumn Mills

His petals lure in the unsuspecting.
And the fragrance seduces the mind.
Almost surreal, senses begin to fade.
While his nectar clouds the brain.

Calloused leaves grasp onto two breasts.
'No' means nothing to his pistil.

His thorns penetrate deep beneath the skin.
Deeper and deeper before they rip out.
Rip out what once was innocence.

Unbeknownst to the cruel reality.
The trickle of blood down his stem.
Water droplets only revive the roots.
But the season moves on.

His leaves ripple across skin yet.
Still, 'no' means nothing to his kind.

Fingertips heal and pain subsides.
But a scar on the soul remains.
Left behind and never forgotten.

The first time I went to Church

Adeline Beason

I didn't believe in God

At least, not in the candles or hymn books or great big collection plates

I didn't believe in church
not in the stained glass or dresses below the knee or Mark 16:16

But as our car rounded the corner of trail ridge road, I realized in an instant how gloriously wrong I was

He was there, staring at me through the curious eyes of a passing hawk,
bathing in the gold reflection of light on freezing lake water,
laughing through the rustle of wind through a thousand thousand pine trees

Wiping away the sinful stains of barbecue chips from my fingers,
I suddenly understood why they tell you to take your shoes off on hallowed ground

Peering through binoculars at a sparkling snow-capped peak, The holy lightheadedness of high altitude burned in my chest like a baptism

As I witnessed a mother elk watch her newborn take its first steps into the bright and shining world, I wondered if I'd have one of my own

God may not be real in buildings or bible camps or the pious following of rules, but I know God is at least real in Rocky Mountain National Park

Fiction

Cherry Red Bike

Angelyse Perez

The metal bucket thrashed with each unstable stomp. I pushed the plank overhead the green musk trap. The plank teetered out and onto the dirt way. Tristan hoisted himself over the edge and clutched onto my arm. He took my hand and pulled me up to the dumpster's edge.

I leapt onto the ground but fell back onto my butt. Brook walked over to us with Jack, a city boy. And her boyfriend from outta town. She picked me up from the dirt road. Brushed the dust and muck off my summer clothes. My pants pocket rattled with each pat.

“I’m gonna do it,” Benny insisted. He stared down hill.

“You ain’t,” Tristan said. He picked up the wooden slab and poked it at Ben.

“Yeah, I am. Watch me.”

The round boy yanked the board out of the skinny kid’s hand and sat it on some cinder blocks from another trash pile. He waltzed up the gravel road with his trusted steed beside him. He passed by the rows of other trailers. Pits growled and chihuahuas snapped. He stopped at the top point of the park. I’m sure he could see the twists of back roads and mountains from there.

Brook sat on an old semi tire with Jack. Tristan nodded me over to the dirt patch where everyone in the park flicked their cigarette butts. I turned my attention up to the tall fellow. Tristan shook his head with crossed arms.

Tristan picked on Benny a lot. Brook told me that before I moved to Long Creek, he once dared the kid to lick a dead mouse they found near the crazy cat lady's bus fort. I didn't believe her at the time, of course. Tristan was always real nice to me. But maybe it's because he was paid to be.

Benny jumped up top his chariot, no helmet on his noggin. One foot held his stance, the other pushed down the pedal. He stuttered.

The three older kids chuckled at the fat boy. I laughed along with them. I shouldn't have. I couldn't even ride a bike myself.

Benny regained his composure. Our eyes followed secondhand Augustus Gloop. The bike shifted forward and sped on down. His body bumped along the uneven ground, like a lopsided sack of potatoes in a farmhand truck. He whooshed on by us and dust followed behind him.

I took my inhaler out of my pocket and gave it a squeeze.

Gravel kicked up behind his tires. One pelted Tristan in the head. He rubbed the red dot on his face, "You mother fu—"

"Holy shit, guys. Porky might do it." Jack said. He grabbed onto Brook's hand.

Benny pushed harder, each pedal pressed toward the ground. The rusty thing squeaked and crunched at every movement. His face painted with determination, confidence, and—

Sweat. It dripped off his face and followed down his back. Grey t-shirt on a sunny day? Not the best choice. Brook's face curled at the sight of it. Benny made one last kick. The hillbilly child slid

atop the plywood and into the sky.

We hopped up from the rocky roadway. The rocket boy and his dingy space ride soared straight into the air, like we just witnessed Tony Hawk perform a kickflip on live TV. Everything moved in slow-mo. We chanted the big boy's name.

“Benny! Benny! Benny! Be—”

CRACK.

Like a boulder thrown off a bridge and into the Mississippi River, his body plummeted right to the ground and skirted across the gravel. Our eyes widened and souls fled. Curse you science and gravity. You killed all the little dreams made by our fat boy.

We raced towards Ben. Our sandals slapped against the surface. He lied on his back splayed out on top the earth. His figure abstracted, a real Picasso painting in the making. Not a sound came from him.

“Is he—is he dead?” Jack screamed.

Tristan walked up close and examined the beefy blub. We stood. Quiet.

“He's breathing. He's fine.” A sigh of relief escaped everyone's chest.

We gathered around the remains of our fallen friend. His bike changed from a rusted muck to a cherry red. Chunks of gravel and dirt mixed in with crimson. His right leg intertwined into the chain and wheel, like a silly straw. A large bump popped out of his arm. The same color of a fresh plum.

“Yep, that's gotta hurt.” Brook knelt down closer and poked

the dead whale. She touched the open gashes.

“Brook, why would you do that?” Jack asked.

“Cool. You can see the tissue,” she exclaimed.

I bent down with her to look. She was right, you could see the tissue. Hard to scout from all stones and dirt lodged into his crevices, but it was there.

“Ah— I think I’m gonna be sick.” Jack whipped the other direction and hurled chunks of his lunch. Corned Chowder. At least that’s what I thought it looked like.

“Andy, get up. Brook, stop poking the dude,” Tristan said. His hand yanked the back of my shirt.

He always stood above us all. The oldest kid in the park, and therefore the most responsible out of all of us.

Brook gave Benny one more jab. A gasp of air escaped the dead boy. Brook stumbled back from the revamped corpse. Air jolted from our bodies. Benny propped himself upwards with his one non-broken hand. Dazed and to us, amazed.

“What happened?” he said. His eyes fluttered open and shifted to Brook, who looked as if she saw a ghost, then to us towered over him. “Why are y’all just starin’ at me? And why does my knee hurt so—” His eyes moved to the bike and to his silly straw leg.

Benny’s mouth dropped open, and hell broke loose. Never in a million years, I’d think I’d get the chance to hear a fifteen-year-old boy cry. Let alone one who screamed out for his mommy.

We all snapped out of the gory scene. Our fascination for the undead turned to panic.

“Jack, what time is it right now?” Tristan shouted over Ben’s banshee cries.

The city boy flipped his hand over and checked his digital watch. “It’s six. Why?”

“Shit. We gotta go.”

The slam of a Dodge pickup rang throughout the park. Our heads perked up like deer caught in a set of headlights. My inhaler shook in my hand.

Only two modulars down away from us. A tall heavy woman in dark denim overalls staggered around the corner. Oil drenched her entire being. Big black worker boots pressed deep into the dirt. Eye bags drooped with her cheek flaps. A half-gone cigarette perched out of her lip.

Mama’s home.

Tristan herded us away from Benny’s body. He stared down the beast and guided us away from its cub. It didn’t work. A roar escaped the mother’s lips. She snatched the cigarette from her mouth and pitched it to the dirt patch. She ripped her gloves off her hands and trampled to our direction. She loosened the black belt around her waist. Her eyes filled with rage, and she seethed through gritted teeth.

Brook pushed Tristan and I forward. She ran away with Jack right behind her. Tristan turned and scowled to Brook’s behind. Then to me, with the same expression. I didn’t like it.

His eyes eased and he let out a small sigh. He grabbed me by the wrist and squatted. He gestured me to hop on. I hesitated, but

one glance behind me and on top the boy I went. A small thunk hit the road. Tristan sprinted away before I could catch a glimpse of the sound.

We raced up the road and deep into the woods, far away from our crime scene. The crunch of dry grass and beer bottles followed. We blurred into the pine trees, hidden. One moment we saw Benny splayed out like an egg, the next we neared Ms. Catty's bus home and her yard of strays. What's four more?

The teens' jagged breaths replaced the serenity of the forest. Brook and Jack flopped to the ground and leaned against a rotted stump. Tristan let me down from his back and patted my head. I smiled.

"Why'd Andy get to ride on your shoulders?" Brook heaved.

He slumped down against a tree. "Brook, she's, like, eight. And probs a lot lighter than you."

"You callin' me fat?" she joked.

"Yeah. I'm callin' you fat," Tristan said. But he didn't laugh.

"Seriously?" Brook shot up and hovered over Tristan.

Jack stepped between them. "Okay, let's just take a minute, Brook." He ushered her to sit down again.

She rolled her eyes but followed his direction.

"It's also 'cuz her mom would kill me if she got an asthma attack," he whispered out.

Asthma. The word echoed in my head. I checked my left pocket but nothing. My chest tightened. I checked the right, and

again. Nothing. I slapped every opening in my clothing.

“Andy, what’s wrong?” Tristan looked at me odd. Almost confused? But I didn’t like how he stared at me. How all of them stared at me.

I dropped to the ground. I buried my face into my knees. The tears fell. The teens circled around me, their eyes pierced through my skin and I waited for it. For them to laugh at me like they do Benny. My face grew red hot, and my cries faded from fear to something worse. A pit in my stomach twisted over.

“Andy, what’s the matter. hon?” Brook placed her cold hand onto my arm.

My stomach untwisted. I glanced at her. All their faces soft and their brows raised in concern. “I—” My breath escaped me. I choked on every word I tried to sputter out.

“Calm down, Andy. Where’s your inhaler?” Tristan asked.

I sobbed harder than before.

“Tristan, I think that’s what she’s crying about.” Jack came up behind me and rubbed my back. “Andy, did you lose your inhaler?”

I nodded.

“Dude, we gotta go back.” Brooks voice calmed.

Tristan furrowed his eyes. He darted his gaze around the woods for an answer. A sign. He looked at me again, all huddled into my ball of salty tears. His body relaxed and his eyes softened. He took a deep breath.

“Andy, it’ll be okay.” He stared into my eyes. “If you think

about it, it'll only get worse. What's something that calms you down?"

I sniffled, "...math?"

"Who the fuck likes math—"

"Shut it, Jack." Brook and Tristan yelled. The one time they could agree on something.

I held in my smile.

Tristan pointed to the dirt. He took his finger and scribbled onto the surface below me.

5x5

I wiped my warm face and traced into the dirt with my own finger.

25.

"That's good! How about this." He drew in the dirt again.

10x6

I drew once more.

60.

The dirt lodged under our nails. The summer sky filled with orange gradients, and the ground flooded with numbers.

My eyes drew heavy, and my head swung forward. Tristan caught my sluggish being and threw me into his arms. The teens left the woods. I closed my eyes and drifted into a dream.

I awoke to a cascade of red and blue lights. Sirens echoed

and bounced off the trailers. Tristan paused before our final turn to home. He gazed out forward and down the hill.

“What is it, Tris?” I asked him.

I followed his eyes. The cherry bike and plank lie in the middle of the gravel road. My inhaler right after it. We didn’t want to retrieve it though. We didn’t want to move.

Benny sat in a crash cart. His head stuck to the sky from a vibrant colored brace wrapped around his neck. He couldn’t see us, but his mom could. Another half-gone cigarette perched her lips. She didn’t utter a single word. We felt a chill scurry through our spines. She flicked the cigarette into the dirt patch. Eyes still set on us. She entered the ambulance car with her son, and they wailed out of Long Creek.

Benny never hung out with us after that.

Working Through the Ick

Roan Haugen

Her eyes are chestnut pools. I don't like them. She sits in one of those big, cushy black swivel chairs. Every piece of furniture in her office is modern and sleek. The cool tones and dim light comfort me.

She drapes her leg across the opposing knee. "So, Silas. Why don't you go ahead and start from wherever you feel comfortable," she says.

"Uhm, I don't know where that would be." I force my eyes to the plain carpet to hide from her stare. The core of my stomach twists itself into a Hercules knot. My lungs are collapsing. I can't breathe.

"Are there any memories that stick out to you that you'd like to talk about?"

"I don't know." I pick at my nails.

"You could talk about your parents, siblings, friends. Or, we could start with how you're feeling at this moment."

"Well, Laura, right now I feel like a fuckin' three headed horse wearing purple leg warmers at a funeral." I pull my legs onto the black couch and hold them to my chest. I hate this couch. It's uncomfortable and the squeak of the leather drives me nuts.

"That's an interesting comparison," she says. "I just thought of it."

"Is this your first time coming to therapy?"

“Yeah. My friend told me I should try it,” I say.

“Why is that?”

“Cause I have a shitty mom that fucked me up.”

“How do you think she messed you up?” She leans forward and her eyes fixate on me.

She’s the tamer, and I’m the circus lion in a cage.

“A lot of ways.”

“Wanna tell me about one?”

“Like what?” I roll my eyes up to the wall behind her. The floral frames encase elaborate pieces of art. But, on the wall behind her desk, there’s terrible children’s drawings. One of them is a depiction of what I think is a circus tent drawn in red and blue crayon.

“I don’t know. You tell me.”

“What if I don’t wanna tell you?”

“I can’t help if you don’t talk to me,” she says.

“I don’t need your help,” I say. I cross my arms over my chest.

“You wouldn’t be here if that were true.”

“Maybe.”

“So, what do you say?”

I groan and run my hands down my face. “Fine.”

“Good.” She smiles again. That smile is way too perky. I

hate it.

“I guess there was this time, back in elementary school,” I say. My eyes flick to the typical classroom clock on the wall behind her.

I zoned out into the primary colored clock above the whiteboard. Addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division haunted me. The world of big kid math. Big kid math is hard. How do I use long division in the fourth grade? It’s stupid. I’m not good at math. I always had to ask for help from my friends and classmates. My teacher got mad when she had to help me, so I stopped asking for help. I failed my test.

I went home in shame. My monster hurt me. Its claws scratched my chest. I didn’t want to go home.

I padded through the front door, trying to be quieter than a mouse.

“Silas! Get your ass in here!”

My hands dug into the straps of my worn backpack, and I tiptoed into the kitchen.

She didn’t bother to look at me. Mommy didn’t like looking at me. Stale alcohol clung to her clothes. Cigarette smoke singed my nostrils.

“Let me see it,” she said. She faced me and placed the bottle on the table. It was one of those really big ones, with the fancy label and lid. Mommy called it a cork.

I shrugged my backpack off and placed it on the dirty tile floor. It almost smelled as bad as mommy. I fished my test out of my

folder and placed it on the table. She picked it up with both hands and looked it over. The results would determine the world's fate.

“What the hell is this?” she said.

“M–My test.” I picked at my fingernails until the skin around them reddened.

“Are you fucking kidding me? If this is your test, you’ve failed me as a son.” She crumpled up the paper and threw it at me. It struck my forehead.

I flinched. “I–”

“Shut the fuck up. You don’t get to speak. You’ve done nothing but ruin my life since the day you were born. I could have had everything I wanted if it wasn’t for you, you ungrateful little shit,” she snapped.

Her words drove themselves into my core. She snatched my wrist and dragged me around the table to the oven. She turned on the burner.

“No, no. Please, mommy. I’m sorry. I–I won’t do it again.” I sobbed until my voice gave out. My monster forced my heart to pound in my chest. I squirmed and fought against her but I wasn’t strong enough. I’m weak.

“That’s right. You won’t,” she said.

She pushed my right palm onto the burner. I screamed. A putrid smell clogged my nostrils. I could taste charred meat in the back of my throat. Tears flowed down my cheeks like waterfalls. She held my hand there until my knees buckled. Mommy let me go and I laid down. The tile floor was cold. I sobbed without air. Blood

red leathery skin coated my palm. My hand wouldn't stop shaking. Spots of charred brown welled on the heel. The red reminded me of the cherry on mommy's cigarettes. I saw it every time she snagged my arm and shoved it into my skin. I'd watch the smoke slowly wither and die.

"M-Mommy." The word almost didn't make it out of my throat.

"Shut the fuck up Silas. Act like a man." She stormed out of the room.

The hands on the clock haven't moved. I shift my gaze to my palm. "It's kinda funny, y'know. I can still feel that burner sometimes and I can't feel anything in this hand but, at least my mom had the decency to burn my non-dominant hand right?" I catch a glimpse of my scars and pull my hoodie sleeves over my hands.

"That isn't funny, Silas," Laura says. Her eyes soften to pity.

I hate that. "You take that back right now." I jerk my arm forward and point my finger.

She breathes in and her shoulders slump. "How old were you when this happened?"

I drop my hand into my lap. "I dunno, like, nine I think?" I release my legs and let them fall over the edge of the couch.

"Okay. And how does this memory make you feel?"

"How does it make me feel? Are you serious?" I jump to my feet. "I was a scared little kid. I was hurt and...and confused because I didn't understand why my mom hated me. Everyone else had moms that were nice, moms that loved them and took care of

them. I didn't get that mom," I shout. Tears bubble in my eyes and clog my vision.

"You're right. You didn't get that mom."

"I know I'm right, dammit."

"Silas, you need to understand. That wasn't your fault," she says.

"That's not true." My frown deepens. I fall to the couch and grab the edge of the cushions on either side of my knees.

"What do you mean?"

"My parents divorce was my fault. They only stayed together because of me. If I wasn't born, my parents would have been happier and I wouldn't have—" my breath shakes, "suffered like that. It would be better if I...if I didn't exist." My grip on the cushions whitens my knuckles. I close my eyes.

"That isn't true," Laura says.

"I think so."

"I'm sorry, Silas." She tries to smile.

"It doesn't matter," I say.

She shakes her head. "No, Silas. This is abuse you've been through. It's a lot to process. I understand that it's difficult for you to talk about this but this is the first step into working through it."

I exhale heavily and allow my shoulders to slump forward.

"It will get worse before it gets better, however," she says.

Phantom insects crawl through my skin and the lump in my

throat drops to my stomach.

“I don’t know why my friend told me to come here. This is a waste of time. Do you realize how fucking stupid you sound?” I scan the boring carpet.

“Okay.” Laura exhales and nods. “Tell me about your friend.”

“His name is Leo,” I say. Laura doesn’t say anything though. I know that means she wants me to keep going. God, why do therapists have to be so fucking pushy? I lean against the back of the couch. The leather groans. Stupid fucking leather.

“We met after he asked to sit with me at lunch and then we just started hanging out more.” My eyes flick to the coffered ceiling. “I’ve never felt comfortable around someone like I do with Leo. He’s the first person I’ve ever talked to about how I’m feeling.” I stop fidgeting with my fingers and grab the cushions again. It was all I could do to keep myself from dissociating. My chest rose and fell in short, rapid breaths. A piercing pressure surrounded my skull. I’ve been through this before.

“Hey, Silas. Look at me man.” Leo snapped his fingers.

My gaze snapped upward. He smiled. “You can do this okay? What’s one thing you can touch?”

“You,” I said.

Leo chuckled and squeezed my hand. “That’s right. Tell me two things you can smell.”

“Uhm, your...your cologne and uhm,” I paused. I looked around his room. Soft bulb lights frame the window. Posters and artwork cover Leo’s walls. Lemon wafted into my nose. “Your

candles.”

“Good job Silas,” he said. Leo wrapped an arm around my shoulders and tugged my body into his side. “Now, can you tell me three things you can see?”

I nodded. My eyes drifted across the bedroom once more. More dim bulb lights framed the headboard behind us. The bulb lights were the only source of light in the room. Leo did that on purpose when he noticed I started freaking out. He had turned off the main light and turned on the small ones to help calm me down. We shared the same blanket, a queen size black comforter.

“I see the lights, your tv, and uhm, your hand,” I said. I squeezed his hand interlocked with my own. By now my breathing had slowed. I cuddled into Leo’s side and smiled.

“Good job Silas. I’m proud of you. You did so well,” Leo said. He ran his fingers through my dark hair. “How do you feel?”

“Better.”

“I’m glad.” Leo kissed the top of my head.

The pressure in my skull eases and I release the cushions. A soft exhale creeps past my lips and my eyes draw down the clock to the floor. “Leo means a lot to me,” I say.

Laura’s smile brightens. “That’s very sweet.”

“Yeah. I confided in him about my parents divorce and how I felt responsible and shit. That’s when he told me to see a therapist because he saw one for his issues and it helped a lot. I didn’t like the idea, but I trust Leo. I did this for him.” My palms press flat against my thighs and my breathing evens out.

“You’re very lucky to have a friend like Leo,” she says. She uncrosses her knee and leans back in her chair.

“Yeah.” I let myself look at her. Her smile isn’t that bad.

“Silas, your mother did not behave in the way a mother should. I’m sure you have a hard time letting people in.”

“Yeah.”

“But by here you’re taking the right steps,” Laura says.

“If you say so,” I groan.

“How did you find your way here?” She grabs a pen and notepad from her desk. “I left. I cut my mom off, and I left.”

“That’s healthy,” Laura says. She smiles and makes a quick note.

“Yeah?” My voice is soft.

She sets the notepad and pen on her lap and gives her attention to me. “Yes. You’re setting boundaries and putting yourself first by doing that.”

“I didn’t think of it like that,” I say.

“Well, I’m proud of you.”

Those words stop me for a moment. I stare at her. I can’t remember the last time an adult said that to me. My mom never did. I exhaled and nodded.

Laura grabs her notepad again and flips to a different page. “Silas, I want to challenge you. I want you to work on a list of ten things you love about yourself or your life.”

“Are you fucking kidding me?”

“No, I’m not.”

“Why do I have to name shit I love about myself? That’s fucking bullshit.”

“Is it?” She cocks an eyebrow.

“Yes. It is Laura. It’s bullshit.”

“If that’s the case, tell me one thing right now that you love about yourself that is not about your physical appearance.”

“This is stupid.” I pause and think hard anyway. I don’t want Laura to have the satisfaction of being right. But the more I think, the more I don’t know. My mind runs blank. An ounce of half bullshit comes to mind. “I love my creativity.” I shrug.

“That’s good, Silas.”

“Yeah?”

“Yes,” she says. She writes on the paper again. This time, she tears it off and hands it to me. It’s a reminder. “This has been a good session, Silas.”

“I guess so.”

“I know you think this is all a waste of time,” Laura says.

“It is.” I cross my arms over my chest.

“However, Silas, all I did was guide you today. You’re the one who allowed yourself to open up and be vulnerable in a safe space.”

“I guess .” I shrug. “But I hated every second of it.”

Maybe Leo was right about this. Maybe this could be a good thing for me.

Bullseye

Jaedyn Gronemeyer

Mack zips his jacket and opens the door. Cassandra covers her shoulders with a large flannel shirt. She holds his arm and follows. The air cools their heated faces. She stops on the concrete step below Mack and dodges around her. He passes the red Ford. He stands in front of his dark green Chevy. The car exhaust bounces along the cement.

“I’ll make it back. I promise,” Mack says.

“Mack, you don’t have to do this,” she says. She holds his hands. Their silver bands brush past each other.

Mack shakes her hands off his. “I do.”

“But—” Cassandra’s breath puffs from her mouth.

“Please, Cassandra,” he says. Music tinkles through the car windows.

“I’ll go get the boys from their aunt’s.” She clutches her sleeves in her fists.

“When they ask for me just tell them you’ll see me soon,” he says.

She wraps her arms around him.

He kisses her hair. “I’ll be okay.”

She turns away and shuffles to her car.

Mack’s eyes trail after her until she drives away. He pulls the cold door handle and gets in. Grasping the warm buckle, he pushes

it into the latch. The ink curling around his arm catches his attention. His fingers trace the black lines. He closes his eyes. He lowers his head onto the steering wheel, then sits up and reverses.

He stomps inside the looming building. A man with a white beard stands outside and asks for handouts. Mack glares and steps inside. He pushes through the crowd. Rows of supplies line the walls. Bits of objects scatter the floor, and feet trample the remnants. A scream drowns the jingling bells. The first victim claimed. He takes a deep breath. His attention is dragged to a commotion. A hand reaches for a box, a second, a third. A woman in a black sweater with a white blob in the center grasps one end of a box with a small guy wearing white and green on the other end. She pulls it between the grasping limbs and dissolves into the mass.

A woman in a red shirt cowers behind a counter before forcing a smile and standing. Across from her is another set of counters where a man stands in a green apron under a sign. Steam lifts off the cups of the people who have succeeded in their desires and returned home. Their baskets flowing with sparkling wrappers.

Mack turns. Packaging shimmers alone, isolated from its previous clones sits on a shelf in front of him. He lunges toward it and wraps one hand around the edge of the box. He pulls it to his body. Another hand stops him from putting the package in his basket.

“Come on, man, give it up,” the woman with the white-blob sweater says.

“I can’t do that. I need it,” Mack says.

The small woman wrenches her arm back. He jerks the

packaging toward him.

“Are you going to fight me for it?”

“I have to.” He pulls it out of her hands.

She stumbles back. He catches her shoulder and pulls her upright.

“Why?”

A box lies on the ground. He picks it up and holds it out.

“There will be so many victims today. Good luck with the rest,” he says.

She takes it and turns. She disappears into the swarm.

The corners of his mouth lift. He shoves through bodies. A person collides with him. His foot tangles in a piece of fabric. A shelf grows closer to his face. Bringing an arm up, he halts the momentum and pushes himself up. He runs his hand through his hair. Swishing a box into his basket he stalks toward his next item. Mack weaves between racks.

“No!” someone yells.

He falters in his step. He continues forward to a new aisle. Mack turns toward his next item. His eyes shift from one side to the other. An old man grabs a woman’s hair and pulls her to the ground. He winces. A young woman with half her hair sticking in the air tackles a man in a button-up.

Mack swipes the last cardboard box on that shelf into his arms. He avoids a blonde woman throwing another woman’s basket. He steps over plastic and cardboard shredded across the floor.

“Please.” The voice echoes throughout the metal shelves.

He sneaks to his destination. Handfuls of small toys are added to his basket as he passes the shelves. Mack peeks through the shuffling groups. Fabric glints on a shelf. Three of them slouch on the shelf. He sprints. One is ripped from its position. Two. Another is pulled into a basket. One.

He extends his arm. A hand grips his forearm and forces it down.

A tattoo of a dragon twists around the arm. Mack turns to the person.

“Don’t do this, Doc,” he says. Doc wraps an arm around Mack’s shoulder. Pine attacks Mack’s nose.

“I have to. I’m sorry, Macky,” he says.

“You don’t have to. We can work this out,” Mack says.

“No.” Hooks cradle the last of the articles.

“Please, Doc.”

“I can’t give it up. My wife has been asking for this.” Doc pats his shoulder.

Mack shudders. “After everything you’re going to let this tear us apart?” he asks. Piano chops through the speakers.

“We can be friends again after,” Doc says. He takes the bag into his hand, his nails red against the blue fabric.

Mack wraps his hand around his wrist. “We both know I should be taking it. I got here first,” he says.

“Mack.”

Mack drops his basket on the empty shelf and rests his hand on Doc’s holding the bag. Doc sets his basket by his foot and a paper cup on the shelf. He pulls away from Mack. Mack tightens his fingers around Doc’s.

“Let go,” Doc says.

Mack presses his lips to Doc’s forehead. Doc grimaces and his hand loosens around the straps. Mack takes the thing and lays it in his basket.

“I’ll see you on the other side,” Doc says. He picks up his cup and basket. “If your sister doesn’t kill me first.”

Mack nods. He elbows his way to the front and places his collection on the counter. The young woman in a bright red shirt counts them.

“You’re lucky to have gotten out of here in good health and haul,” she says.

Mack says, “I know. I had really good luck.”

“Would you like them wrapped?” she asks.

He nods.

She wraps the biggest items and hands them back.

He piles them in his basket.

She smiles. “Be careful out there,” she says.

“Thank you.”

He barrels outside and hunches over his prizes. Mack drops

a few cents into the bearded guy's bucket. He prances to his car. He stows his loot on the floor and ducks inside. His nails dig into the steering wheel. He backs out and drives to the main road. His eyes catch the red doughnut sign in the mirror. Now, he can go home.

Til We Fester and Perish

Autumn Mills

One year, seven months, and twenty-three days since...

The fiery horizon of another day cowers behind the skyline of the disintegrated and desolate skyscrapers of modern-day New York City. Behind us, the ever so slight bit of a waxing crescent slides down the hellish ether and reminds us that we have lived through one more night.

Weighed down with enervation, our feet scrape against the decrepit and abandoned car filled Palisades Interstate Parkway. Tinkling shards bounce across pavement, and sprigs of growth wiggle up from the porcelain fractures of the asphalt. The stains of liquid that had streamed from under the mutilated scraps of cars still bare their marks as our bodily shadows pass over.

Challenging the forgotten concern of deforestation, saplings sprout from the ground. Trivial numbers of humans remain to cut them down.

Humans of the past now lay sprawled amongst the garbage and waste. They scatter the once busy roadway. One or two have decayed further than the others. Dried blood smears over the peeling skin of some while chunks of white bone shine through the others. Their hands have resorted to either hollow remnants of life or black and purple joints barely holding on by a once living ligament.

On the corpse of a near woman, her limbs have converted to brittle stripped attachments. Her eye sockets fill with a limitless abyss. With every one of our trips, the remains disappear more and more. Either eaten away by animals or bacteria slowly decomposes

their fleshy tombs. All we can do is fight and move forward to not become a mirror of these withering souls. So, we must walk.

Feet grow heavier. Our group of immune pass by a dented suburban. With its doors wide open, it reveals a mud strewn stuffed animal.

Dirt covered hands reach down and pick the lonesome creature up, careful of the stuffing that spews from its side. A once green triceratops with only one eye stares back. Three spikes are missing from its extended frill. My fingers glide over it and search for the feeling of its once soft fur. I can only find crumbling earth.

I miss the feeling of soft fabric under my fingertips. We can no longer find joy in little things anymore.

“Don’t worry bud, we’ve been through our own end too. Now its time to see where we begin again,” I say.

“Ugh Everly, quit being all sentimental and shit,” Noah says. He glances back at me. “This isn’t fucking English class.”

I raise my middle finger at him.

“Would you guys stop?” Josephine’s head shakes back and forth, annoyance rippling in her voice.

“We are literally a few miles away. Can you guys just like not fight for one second?” she says.

I raise my hands up in defense. “Hey, he just needs to learn how to grow a filter.”

If Noah should be calling anyone sentimental, it should be Jo. Heaven knows the girl worries over everything. Her emotions rain down like acid.

“Says you,” Elliot says. He chuckles, and I punch him on the shoulder. His laugh resounds, and he rubs his arm.

Jo’s lips fall in a straight line, and she tilts her head to the side.

She’s clearly not on my side.

“Yeah, but you egg him on,” she says.

Not wanting to cause a disagreement, I answer. “Gotta keep the trip interesting somehow.” I shrug my shoulders.

We turn back to the mission. Our small group of four continues down the vacant highway towards Fairway Market of 74th Street. Our past sixty-eight trips have been to the local grocery, pharmacy, or appliance stores right off of Palisades. Smack dab under the letters of New York on the map we have back at camp. Fairway is one we haven’t been to yet.

We hope it hasn’t been completely cleared out. It’s always a fifty-fifty chance of finding something in one of the stores, but with a group of twenty back in Mt. Ivy, we need to find supplies otherwise the children and elderly won’t make it much longer. Some already resemble the bodies of the highway.

Another grueling two hours pass on our familiar road to life. The sun shines above us. We begin to see some of the older stores we’ve hit. Barren as when we left them. A few of them had amounts of supplies back in storage that we could take two trips to gather what we needed from them. It all depended on what we found and how much we could carry.

We step over debris and worm-infested bodies. Our group

takes one more turn from 72nd to Broadway, and we can finally see the yellow faded letters of “Fairway” on the dark green overhang above the front door. “Like No Other Market” was written below it.

God, I hope so.

Noah takes the lead. He thinks he’s some big alpha leader and needs to protect the rest of us. He’s first to the door. A tug on its handle and it doesn’t budge.

Elliot points towards an alleyway we passed. “Maybe the backway is ope–,” Elliot starts.

The shatter of glass interrupts him. A metal pipe drops from Noah’s hand with a clang and it chips on the dirty pavement below. He takes off his jacket and breaks off the remaining fragments.

“For real Noah? What if someone heard that?” I seethe through my teeth.

I was tired of Noah never thinking before doing. His impulses are going to end up getting us all killed. If someone heard that, we may end up having to deal with extending issues. The anxiety that clogs my throat sure isn’t helping.

My teeth glide over my swollen lips. They find a piece of lose skin and strip it away. Once a previous living part of me, now dead.

He picks up the pipe and tosses his backpack inside the entry way. He raises his leg and takes a step over the metal frame. “Damn, calm down. It wasn’t that loud,” he says.

One by one, we each tiptoe over the broken shards of glass into Fairway. A dank musty smell penetrates our nostrils. Our eyes

acclimate to the darkness. We grab our flashlights from our bags and click them to life. We split into our usual two groups and search through the aisles.

My eyes skim over the moldy bread that crawls with bugs. I step towards the boxes of granola and oats. “Yes! Elliot come here.” I wave him over.

We shove containers of oatmeal, granola bars, and whatever other non-perishable items we could find into our bags.

My hand reaches for the last box left on the shelf.

Jo’s scream echoes throughout the store.

I sling my backpack over my shoulder and take my hunting knife out from my sheath. I take off and run towards the direction her voice emanates from. My throat runs dry.

My eyes swell with hot burning tears. They fall from my lower lashes onto my cheeks and down to my chin. They drip off onto my shirt and leave little dark splotches.

I sprint through the aisles. I could feel beads of sweat form on my forehead, unsure of whether they were from running or from the thought of losing Jo.

The scream falls silent, but in the furthest corner of the store I hear shouting. Elliot’s footsteps follow close behind me. They drown most of the voices out.

“Jo!?” Worry gushes from my throat. Thoughts race around my mind.

What would I do without her?

An unfamiliar voice breaks through. “Wait, please!”

“Who the fuck are you?” I recognize the bite in Noah’s tone.

Elliot and I aren’t that far away.

“M-my name’s Luke,” the person says.

I round the last aisle to the canned goods and find Noah holding the pipe behind his head, arm shaking, ready to swing at any moment.

Down on the floor backed into a corner is a boy with his arms covering his head.

“Wait, wait, wait!” I scream. My hands grab the end of the pipe trying to diffuse the situation.

“No, this asshole tried to jump us! Nearly took Jo down,” Noah retorts.

“No, I fucking didn’t!” The boy shouts. He lowers down his arms to look face-to-face with Noah.

“Oh? Then what the fuck were you doing,” Noah says. His arms cross each other.

Luke puts his arms down to his side. “I was trying to get behind you and out the door you prick!” He says.

Noah raises the pipe again to strike Luke. “Say that again, you stupid little shit!”

“Woah okay, calm down.” My hands go up, and I step between the two.

“Everly, shut up. I got this handled.” Noah’s eyes shoot

daggers into mine.

“Obviously not, Noah. Just because you have a small dick doesn’t mean you have to make up for it in your attitude,” I spit out. My eyes glare back at his.

He switches the pipe from one hand to the other. He lowers his hand to his groin, grabs himself, and thrusts into the motion.

“Fuck off pig,” I say.

“I need your fucking attitude like a bullet to the head.” He rolls his eyes and brings his finger to his head like a gun.

“You guys!” Jo interjects. Her voice carries around the store.

“How did you get in here anyway?” Elliot’s voice pipes up from behind me.

Jo pushes off the shelf near Noah and shuffles behind me to Elliot’s side.

“The back.” The boy points towards the door next to the dead refrigerators. We turn our heads to glance underneath a once-glowing exit sign.

Elliot claps his hands together. “See, what did I tell you,” he says.

“Your name is Luke, right?” I slip my knife back into its sheath on my belt and lower down to the ground at his level.

He nods his head.

“Are you by yourself? Where is your group,” I ask.

“Gone.” He lowers his eyes.

“I honestly just wanted to slip behind you guys and out the front door. This walking steroids bottle was blocking the back.” He motions towards Noah. “Hell, you could’ve been one of the M.E.’s for all I knew, why would I try to attack a group when I’m by myself?” He looks up towards my face.

“No, it’s alright. It’s totally understandable. This asshole here,” I point towards Noah and he grunts, “made a big ruckus out front anyways. I’d expect anyone else to be frightened by a loud noise in an empty city too. Especially with the times.” I show him a small smile and hope he relaxes just a bit.

Luke nods.

I reach out my hand.

He takes it.

I lift him off the ground.

Once he stands, he takes another step back, but he hits his back against the wall.

I give him a small bit of space and take a few steps back.

He looks around on the floor and picks up the broken end of a broom. He points it towards us.

I raise my hands to show we don’t mean any harm. “Well, we found a good surplus of supplies if you want some to take back with you. Least we could do for this big oaf threatening you,” I say.

Noah mumbles under his breath. “Bitch.”

I turn my head and feel the flames rise from my eyes towards him. I look back to Luke and let my bag drop down from my shoulder.

I tug on the zipper.

I open it towards him and show him the multiple boxes stuffed into the body of my backpack. I pick up one of the boxes full of oats with my left hand and let my bag drop on the floor. “Here,” I say. An inviting smile reveals my dimples. My arm extends at the elbow, and I reach the box out a small bit.

Luke lowers the broom down a few inches.

I step closer towards him. My eyes shift from his open hand to his face, and back to the other hand.

His hands tighten, knuckles white from gripping the broken broom.

My smile twitches, and my heartbeats quicken. Standing face to face with the possibility of imminent death is quite a rush, almost exhilarating.

Moisture emits from my clammy hands, and the box slowly slides down my palm. I could either be impaled this very moment or he could end up with the box in his hand, and my group can carry on with our mission.

I lick my lips, my tongue catches on their dry cracked scabs.

With barely any space between us now, he looks directly at my face.

I lower my right hand down to my side and try to make it seem like a minimal threat.

His fingers wrap around the boxes’ corner and a gulp makes his adams apple constrict.

My fingers release the remaining cardboard. I watch the lump descend his throat.

Before it can reach the bottom, my arm swings up from the right, knife in hand. I plunge the serrated blade deep into his chest until only a small bit of silver remains. I grip the hilt tighter and twist the knife in deeper for good measure until the shadow on the wall shows the tip of the knife protruding from his back.

I snicker.

His eyes rise from the wound to my face.

‘Clink... clink.. clin.. cli. cl.’

The broom reverberates against the tile floor. Luke’s face contorts into one you would see in horror movies almost two years ago.

I cover my mouth with my left hand and stifle a laugh. I turn my head away from the rupturing hole, and I pull the knife from his chest.

He gasps. “Man... eaters” slips between his lips. He stumbles to the ground. Dark red pools on top of his chest and underneath his back. The liquid soaks his blue shirt. Blood spurts from his mouth and lands in droplets on his pale face. His body shivers and his hand reaches for the stick.

“Dumbass.” Jo saunters up and kicks the stick away from his hand.

Elliot strides to my side. “Surprised such a gullible one has lasted this long,” he says.

I wipe my knife off on my pants and slip it back into its

sheath.

Luke's pupils dilate. He drowns in his own blood. His body rises one last time before it shrinks back down and stays that way.

Noah chuckles, yanks his body up off the floor by his arms, and throws him over his shoulder. "Survival of the fittest kid," he says.

I walk towards the front door. The other three follow behind. I keep my eyes trained forwards. "You know Noah, you're getting better at portraying the asshole of the group," I say. A smirk forms across my lips.

"I do my best," he says. I can sense the Cheshire smile spread across his face.

Luke's arms swing and leave trails of blood on the tile floor behind us.

I glance back towards Elliot, Jo, and Noah.

"Well, that was a successful shopping trip."

Sally

Olivia Freeze

My name is Christian Capgras. I am twenty-four years old, and I talk to dead people. I avoid that being my first introduction to strangers, but seeing as it's my job and is important to the story, I figured I had better disclose that information at the very beginning.

I talk to a lot of dead people, so not much phases me. I work in Deadwood, South Dakota, which, if you don't know, is one of the most haunted towns in America. However, a recent conversation with a spirit got me thinking about what I do. What my purpose is. Why do I have this, what some would call, gift?

I had traveled to Rapid City for a house call. A family's teen daughter had passed by her own hands, and they wanted me to come by to communicate with her. Many people reach out to mediums like me to get closure for traumatic losses.

I went to the family's home to try and reach their daughter's spirit. It was an apartment right above a coffee shop. The family owned and ran the coffee shop and lived right upstairs. They had a son and a daughter. Sally had committed suicide a few months prior, and the family was still having a hard time coping with their loss, rightfully so.

Souls lost to suicide tend to be the hardest to communicate with. They wanted to go. They want to be alone. These cases are difficult for me, as well. I can feel the emotions of the spirits I talk to, and suicides add a weight to my heart more than any other cases.

Sally's family met me in the coffee house, offered me a drink (pumpkin chai if you're wondering), and then brought me upstairs to their home. I walked in, and I could feel a heavy energy:

desperation, abandonment, and an overwhelming sense of regret. We sat in the living room and began the session.

I skip the whole, ‘tell me about your daughter’ part. That’s for the fake mediums who just play guessing games and say generic shit. I go straight to finding the spirits and talking to the lingering souls.

“Sally,” I announced into the house. “I’m here to talk to you.”

After a moment, the soul of a teenager peaked her head out of the bedroom. I could sense her anxiety: my heart pounding and my breath becoming shallow. I knew it was her fear. I’m a new person in the space, and I am talking directly to her. I’ve done this hundreds of times. I’ve never been scared to talk to the dead, but sometimes the dead are afraid to talk to the living. I could see her long, blonde hair dangling down into the hallway as she leaned through the frame of the door. Her eyes were still stained with mascara from the tears she shed in her final moments.

“Don’t be shy,” I said as I motioned to an open seat next to me. “My name is Christian. I just want to help your family communicate with you.”

Her mom was already sobbing. Her dad clearly didn’t believe I was telling the truth. I could tell whose idea it was to have me here. Their son, about fourteen years old, was pretty quiet. I think he was still making up his mind.

Sally slowly made her way to the seat next to me. Despite her being a spirit, the chair creaked the slightest bit when she sat. I heard the dad scoff a little bit. I bet he was thinking, ‘When did this twink get time to tie fishing wire onto the chair?’

I then turned to the family. “What do you want to say to Sally? Any questions you want to ask?”

Her mother, through a downpour of tears, asked, “Why did

you do it?”

I looked at Sally. She winced. She knew that question was coming.

“Marcus Porter sent my nudes to all the boys in school. I’m sure they still have them...” Sally then looked at me with a blank stare. Her icy blue eyes stared through me, right at my soul.

“Jesus,” I said. “I’m so sorry.”

Her dad chimed in. “What? What did she ‘say’ to you?”

I looked him in the eyes. “Some kid named Marcus Porter sent her nudes to all of the boys in the school. She said she thinks they still have them.”

Her dad’s face went white. He believed me. “That wasn’t in the news. The papers just publicized that she was bullied. How did you know that?”

“Cause she told me. That’s why you brought me here.” Douchebag. “What else do you want to ask or say to her?”

Their son, still nervous, chimed in, “What is your Xbox Live password?”

“Alexander James!” her mother said. “That is so rude!”

“What? We’re still paying for her account! She’s not using it anymore.”

Sally giggled a bit. Her energy lightened ever so slightly. I could feel the love she had for her little brother. “It’s flower power. No spaces or caps. And zeros instead of o’s.”

“She said it’s flower power. No spaces or caps with zeros instead of o’s.”

The kid grabbed out his phone to try to sign in. “Holy shit! It worked!”

“Alexander! Watch your mouth!” her mother said.

Her dad was even more baffled than before. “Holy shit! You

are telling the truth!”

“Robert! This is where your son gets his potty mouth from!”

“But Martha, this guy isn’t bullshitting us right now! He knew her Xbox password! How would he know that unless he’s talking to our daughter!” Her dad started to tear up. At least he was finally taking me seriously.

For the next two hours, the family asked Sally a bunch of questions, said their final goodbyes, and apologized for the loneliness she felt in life. Then came the final question.

Her mom asked, “Are you at Peace, darling?”

I looked at Sally, and she started shaking.

“No. There is no Peace for me.”

I was torn. We made so much positive progress for the family. I couldn’t let them know she was still miserable. So, I lied.

“She said she has found Peace.”

Sally’s bloodshot, dead eyes snapped onto me. She was pissed. The family, however, was overjoyed. They gave me hugs and thanked me for everything. I know I helped them. I just wish I could’ve helped Sally, but a soul that solemn cannot be saved.

As I was on the street walking to my car, I felt a hand grab my shoulder and flip me around. It was Sally. I’ve never had a spirit interact with me so physically. One word flashed through my mind: Poltergeist. What have I done? Could I have possibly pissed this girl off so much that she could become a poltergeist?

“How could you!” She screamed in my face, I wanted to reply but there were so many people around. This is a business district on a Saturday: I couldn’t make a scene fighting with ‘nobody’ on the street in broad daylight.

“Follow me,” I told her as I walked to a nearby alleyway. When we got there, she asked her question again.

“How could you lie to them like that!?”

“Sally, they hired me to talk to you. That part is true. But the real reason they hired me was to tell them you’re okay. That you’re happy now. They got what they paid for. Whether or not it is true won’t matter to them in this lifetime.”

“Won’t matter to them!? I’m their baby girl! They need to know I’m not okay!”

“Why? So they can be just as upset as you? What good does that do them?”

“They need to know that I’m still in pain!”

“No, they don’t! They need to move on! And so do you!” At this moment, some old guy hollered at me from the street.

“Who yuh talking to there, champ?”

“The Virgin Mary!” I yelled at him. I stormed off to find my car. As I walked past this fellow, I received a message to share with him. I stopped and put my hand on his shoulder.

“Your brother, Keith, says you still owe him \$300 from that Thanksgiving poker game in ‘98. He said you can dig a little hole and bury it next to his headstone. He says he still loves you, but he’ll love you more after he gets his money.”

His jaw dropped and he froze.

I patted his shoulder and said, “Have fun digging, Mike.” I continued to my car. I turn back to see Mike checking out the alleyway. He was probably looking for the Virgin Mary.

As for me, I was done dealing with spirits for the day.

Since that day, I’ve been torn. I gave the family closure, but did I help in the long run? Was it Sally that I should be giving closure to? Did my lie make Sally strong enough to harm someone physically? Did I just make it worse? Should I go back and tell the family the truth? Whose closure is more important? Will Sally’s soul

ever get to pass into the light? Is it my fault if she doesn't?

Why is it me? Why do I have to be the one to connect the spirit realm to the living? What did I do to deserve this?

The Web of Wyrd

Roan Haugen

The weight shifted on the bed. Rods of rusted metal grinded against one another. The box springs squealed with each shrieky tug. Pale gray panel boards lined the walls. Brown frames with simple pieces of floral artwork surrounded the room. One hung centered above the bed. Another rested above the TV. The last hung beside the window on the back wall. Each one depicted the exact same bouquet of white lilies in a green vase.

“Are you sure we have to leave?” Oliver brushed his fingertips over the cotton sheets for the hundredth time. He tugged the fabric, balling it into his hand. He flattened the sheet back out and repeated the motion.

“Yes, Oliver. We’ve been over this,” Erik said. He folded another shirt and placed it into the open suitcase.

“But—”

“No more buts. It’s safer this way. You know this.”

Olivier nodded. He inspected the carpet. He discovered one stain after another. Some were various shades of brown; others had tints of red. How many people had come through this motel and left these stains behind?

He shook his head and shifted his gaze to the other side of the room. He would rather not think about where those stains came from. The burgundy curtains stuck out. They were out of place. Just like Oliver and Erik.

They each had their own suitcases, but Erik insisted on packing both. He folded each article of clothing in the perfect way and organized them. That left Oliver with nothing to do but sit on the

bed and contemplate everything they were doing. He brushed out the folds in the sheets one more time. He adjusted to sit cross legged and shifted his body to face Erik.

“I hope you know that when we get on that train in the morning, I’m sleeping the whole way,” Oliver said. A giggle left his throat. He wanted to change the subject. Since last night, the air around them held a thick, heavy weight. Their future, their lives, rested on their young shoulders.

“Oh, don’t worry. I know.” A small smile cracked Erik’s stoic expression. “I also know that you’re going to drool all over my shoulder again.”

“Yep. It’s how you know I love you.” Oliver placed his hands in between his legs. He rocked side to side.

“Uh, huh. Sure, elskling.”

“Very sure,” Oliver said.

Erik wrapped up Oliver’s suitcase. He pulled the buckles over the inside and zipped it up. He grabbed the handle on top, and lifted the heavy bag with one arm to the floor with ease. He wrapped his knuckles against the already beaten wooden table.

“Knock on wood we make it to the train in the morning,” Erik said.

“C’mon, Erik. Do you have to be so morbid?” Oliver crawled off the bed and padded over to his boyfriend.

“I’m not being morbid, Oliver. I’m being realistic,” Erik snapped.

“No, you’re being a pessimist.”

“Elsking, I love you, but you’re not seeing the bigger picture here. Like always.”

“That’s not fair.”

Erik sighed. He pushed a hand through his hair and bit his

bottom lip. “You’re right. I’m sorry.”

Oliver walked up behind Erik and wrapped his arms around his torso. He pressed his face into his back. “It’s okay. We’re gonna figure it all out. Isn’t that what you always tell me?”

“Yeah,” Erik said. He placed one hand over Oliver’s. “It’s just hard for me not to worry. I want to keep you safe.” He sighed and turned to face Oliver. “I want to protect you, but I don’t know how to do that where we’re going.”

The smaller boy nodded. “I’m scared too. Really scared. If I’m being honest. But then I just remind myself that I have you. No matter what happens, we’ll make it.”

Erik’s smile grew a little bigger. He placed his hands on either side of Oliver’s face. “How dare you use my own wisdom against me,” he chuckled. He leaned down to kiss the top of Oliver’s head.

“Well, maybe you should listen to yourself more often.”

“Yeah, maybe I should.” Erik slid his thumb side to side under his boyfriend’s eye. “God, you’ve got the most gorgeous eyes, Ollie. They’re like a forest in the moonlight.”

A soft pink crossed Oliver’s cheeks. “Shut up,” he said. He stood on his toes to wrap his arms around Erik’s neck. He closed his eyes, and he pressed his lips to Erik’s.

Erik’s arms wrapped around Oliver’s torso, pulling him close. He closed his eyes and buried his nose into the nest of dark cedar hair. One hand slid up and down Oliver’s back. The other moved up to hold the back of his head. Erik’s fingers threaded through Oliver’s hair.

“I love you, my elskling,” Erik said.

“I love you too.” Oliver eased down to his heels and tilted his chin up, resting it against Erik’s chest. “So, the train tomorrow,

and then we're free right?"

"That's right." Erik moved his hand from the back of Oliver's head to his cheek. "No one can keep us apart. Our families won't find us. As long as we have each other, we'll be okay."

"There's the Erik I was talking about." Oliver smiled.

Erik kissed his forehead.

Oliver turned his head to the side and pressed his ear over his boyfriend's heartbeat. He closed his eyes and matched his breathing to the steady rhythm. His gaze drifted up to the painting hanging above the bed. The white lilies stared back at him. A new life awaited them.

"To our freedom, my elskling," Erik said. He smiled. He placed one more gentle kiss on his boyfriend's head. "Are you ready?"

"Yeah. I'm ready."

Academic Works

Masochism

Megan Hodgson

Masochism is the derivation of sexual gratification from being subjected to physical pain or humiliation by oneself or another person according to the Merriam-Webster dictionary (Merriam-Webster, 2022). As stated in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, 5th Edition, in order to be diagnosed with a Sexual Masochism Disorder the arousal period has to be at least six months or longer. It is also stated that the fantasies or sexual urges have to cause “clinically significant distress or impairment in social, occupational, or other important areas of functioning” (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). According to the DSM-5, the population of people who have this disorder is unknown. The APA states that in Australia there is an estimated 2.2% of males and 1.3% of females that have partaken in masochistic tendencies within the last 12 months. The average age of individuals with this paraphilia, that have been reported, is around 19.3 years. This is just an average as the APA has found that earlier ages have also reported onsets of masochistic fantasies (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). Masochism needs to be comprised of a few contributing factors in order to be properly diagnosed as a mental disorder. The main factor is subjective distress like shame, guilt, and loneliness. Others include hypersexuality, sexual impulsivity and psychiatric morbidity. Research has been done on this paraphilia since 1886 when a German psychiatrist by the name of Richard Von Krafft-Ebing used/coined the term “masochism”.

Masochism originally got its name after an author and Austrian writer. His name was Leopold Von Sacher-Masoch. In

his writings and in his life, there were common themes involving masochistic tendencies. He was attracted to dominant women in furs and actually pressured his wife to act out his fantasies. Krafft-Ebing's definition of masochism was:

A peculiar perversion of the psychical vita sexualis [sexual life] in which the individual affected, in sexual feeling and thought, is controlled by the idea of being completely and unconditionally subject to the will of a person of the opposite sex; of being abused. This idea is colored by lustful feeling; the masochist lives in fancies, in which he creates situations of this kind and often attempts to realize them (Actsocimedia, 2017).

Because of the normalization of BDSM (bondage and discipline, domination and submission, and sadomasochism) the APA admits that “many healthy and psychologically functional people practice masochism” (Actsocimedia, 2017). The line between masochistic tendencies and actually having the masochistic disorder is blurred. To clarify what has been covered, in order to be a masochist a person must have the contributing factors talked about earlier. I think since the term has become so normalized it is easy to apply it inappropriately. Because masochism is a generally safe paraphilia, there isn't much research done on how it affects society or if it causes any problems that require the need of law enforcement. Masochism is usually entirely consensual as the one who has the paraphilia is the one asking.

There is not a universally accepted root cause for sexual masochism but there are plenty of theories. One theory explaining paraphilias, as a whole, describes origination from sexual fantasies being “forbidden”, and that the more the individual tries to repress their feelings the stronger they become. Experts have also explored the idea of biologic factors. This feeds into a nurture v.

nature theory. Other theorists have looked into education levels and addiction tendencies. Since it is classified as a mental health disorder in the DSM, enough research has been done on the psychological factors including personality traits and disorders.

Many masochists will use physical restriction (handcuffs, bondage), pain play (spanking, whips, or electric shock), verbal abasement, gagging, autoerotic asphyxia (choking), and many other activities in bed (Bennett, 2022). When sexual masochism includes asphyxiation, it can be dangerous, but so can anything that involves asphyxiation. There aren't many other issues associated with sexual masochism.

If no harm is being done, masochism does not require treatment. However, there is treatment for diagnosed sexual masochists. The first being psychotherapy, where you can work through some underlying issues and unwanted behaviors with a licensed professional. The second method is medication. There are certain prescriptions that can decrease testosterone levels and reduce the occurrence of erections (Bennett, 2022). Other than these treatment methods, there are no cures for masochism. The sadistic and sadomasochistic disorders outshine the masochistic disorders in terms of research.

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The Telegraph as an Instrument of Globalization in the Mid-Late Nineteenth Century

Ethan Tussing

The impact the telegraph would have on the world was evident from its origin as a product of simultaneous invention. Two pairs of men, working independently of each other, developed the technology that all later telegraph systems were based on in 1837.¹ By 1903, a transpacific telegraph cable was completed, resulting in an unbroken connection of telegraph lines that circled the world. While an infinite number of other ideas, actors, and technologies had already begun the process of globalization, telegraph technology as a form of near-instantaneous communication brought about global change to a degree never seen before.² Although telegraph systems were mostly developed by the British Empire and the United States, the connections the telegraph made across the world came to be important to many other nations. The creation of the telegraph was the genesis of rapid communication, and its function as an instrument of globalization during the mid-late nineteenth century was apparent in many sectors including

1 The invention of the telegraph is attributed both to an American pair, Samuel Morse and Alfred Vail, and a British pair, William Fothergill Cooke and Charles Wheatstone, both of whom are said to have established the credibility of their inventions in 1837. Roland Wenzlhuemer, *Connecting the Nineteenth Century World: The Telegraph and Globalization* (Cambridge UK: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 66-67.

2 As defined by most anthropologists, globalization is “the contemporary widening scale of cross-cultural interactions owing to the rapid movement of money, people, goods, images, and ideas within nations and across national boundaries.” Welsch and Vivanco, *Asking Questions About Cultural Anthropology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 82.

economics, administration, news, and society.

The electromagnetic telegraph system was comprised of four primary components: a transmitter, a receiver or sounder, a battery, and the wiring that connected them.³ The telegraph system was the first technology to utilize battery power and electromagnetism as means of facilitating long-distance communication. It remained the primary use for electricity for almost a century.⁴ Thus, research and development centered around the telegraph allowed for the use of electricity as a utilitarian technology rather than one reserved for curiosity projects. While these components and functions were generally the same across telegraph systems, there was distinct variation between the Cooke-Wheatstone (British) and Morse-Vail (American) telegraph technologies.

The biggest difference between the two systems was the method of reading messages. The British ABC system avoided using a method of coding and instead came up with a system that allowed for the messages to be transmitted and read as a series of letters not unlike the dial telephone system. On the transmitting end, someone turned a wheel and punched in the desired letters, at which point a rotary switch sent pulses of electricity down the line to the receiver; then, a needle spun on the receiving end to point at

3 The electromagnetic telegraph is opposed to the optic telegraph that had been in use previously. The optic telegraph was much more limited in its capabilities and could not traverse extreme distances, as such, it was not as much of a globalizing force as the electromagnetic telegraph and will not be discussed in this essay.

4 E A Marland, "British and American Contributions to Electrical Communications," *British Journal for the History of Science* 1, no 1 (June 1962): 43.

the corresponding letter.⁵ This meant that the telegraph operators only had to understand the technical workings of the system without additionally having to memorize a method of coding and decoding.

The American system, on the other hand, used a system called Morse code and was reliant on trained telegraph operators who could quickly understand it. The American telegraph relied on pulses of electricity across lines in the same way the British system did, but that is where the similarities end. On the transmitting side, an operator pressed down on a single key that transmitted a current for however long it was pushed. Thus, the length of time the key was held indicated what letter was being formed in a series of short and long pulses, labeled dots and dashes respectively. These pulses showed up on the receiving end as a series of clicks, the length of time between which was then interpreted as either a dot or dash. In the early years of the Morse system, a strip of paper and a pencil were used to mark these pulses. However, operators found it much easier to just interpret the clicks, and the paper method was largely abandoned.⁶

It is also important to note that the differences in telegraph technology were not only stark in their methods and composition but in their use internationally as well. While the Cooke-Wheatstone system remained the primary system in Britain and some smaller countries and territories, the Morse-Vail technology became the international standard for telegraph technology by 1865.⁷ The precedent for the use of the Morse-Vail system was set even earlier when the transatlantic cable was first laid in 1858.

5 Marland, 40.

6 Marland, 42.

7 Wenzlhuemer, 73.

This connection linked Britain and America and utilized the Morse coding system rather than the Wheatstone ABC system.⁸ In summation, while the telegraph technology utilized by the British became very widespread due to the empire's desire to connect its colonies, the American telegraph technology was equally, if not more, commonly employed on the international stage.

Another important difference between the American and British telegraph systems was their range. The American system was primarily overland while the British created both an overland system and an extensive submarine system. This difference was the result of the different administrative capabilities each nation required. The British Empire had colonies across the globe and wanted to connect them with telegraph lines to England to establish a stronger imperial authority. While they did develop a proficient overland system in the United Kingdom, this was a small space and was not the extent of the Empire's realm of governance. On the other hand, the United States had fewer overseas territories at the time and, as a result, did not require an extensive submarine telegraph system. It focused its efforts on its overland cables instead because the United States governed a massive expanse.⁹

Even though the telegraph was invented in 1837, it was not until 1842 that its usefulness was demonstrated. In the United States, it was in this year that Samuel Morse finally convinced Congress to approve an experimental telegraph line between Washington and Baltimore; in the United Kingdom at nearly the

8 Ainissa Ramirez, "A Wire Across the Ocean," *American Scientist* 103, no 3 (May-June 2015): 180.

9 When discussing differences between the U.S. and Britain, this essay is going to be referring to the submarine cables of the British and the overland cables of the Americans.

same time, William Cooke convinced the Great Western Railway Company to allow him to, out of his own pocket, implement his telegraph lines along a section of their railway.¹⁰ This is the year that the telegraph left the notes and minds of its inventors and became an instrument capable of global change. However, this new technology had not yet left its birthplaces and faced many challenges before it could be considered a global technology.

The next demonstration of telegraphic capabilities came in 1851 when a length of submarine cable connected Britain and France across the English Channel.¹¹ This accomplishment showed that telegraph technology had the potential to be a serious globalizing force as it could now connect regions across large bodies of water. An even more impressive development in the world of telegraph technology came in 1866 when a permanent connection between Europe and North America was created using submarine telegraphic cables.¹² This awesome feat led historian Simone M Müller to suggest that, “with the transatlantic submarine cables, a Euro-American ‘humanity’ had accomplished mastery over the Atlantic.”¹³ This achievement established the telegraph’s existence as an instrument of globalization due to its ability to connect people across one of the largest bodies of water on the planet. A little over three decades later, this feat would be matched as a transpacific telegraph line was finished in 1903.¹⁴

10 Wenzlhuemer, 71.

11 Wenzlhuemer, 74.

12 The first connection had been made in 1858 but failed after a few weeks. Simone M Müller, *Wiring the World: The Social and Cultural Creation of Global Telegraph Networks* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016), 4.

13 Müller, 107.

14 Wenzlhuemer, 118.

This cable completed the circle of submarine telegraph lines that now encircled the entire world, connecting every continent except Antarctica.

After these major successes, the development of submarine lines expanded exponentially. The majority of submarine cable development was driven by the United Kingdom as it worked to connect its colonies to the imperial center in England. Even though the British government was the primary driving force behind the expansion of the international web of telegraph lines, this growth was precarious due to the required collaboration of multiple players. According to Roland Wenzlhuemer, “The global cable network was formed by a powerful and not always easy alliance between private corporations and governments.”¹⁵ While most telegraph systems were government-run, many required private companies to facilitate the construction and operation of international lines because, as Müller states, “governments were reluctant and even opposed to granting landing rights to foreign governments.”¹⁶ This resistance to cooperation between nations made it necessary for the establishment of transnational entities such as private corporations, engineers, and operators.

Telegraph operators and engineers quickly became key players in the evolution of telegraph technology as a globalizing entity. Not only were they the ones who laid the telegraph lines and established the connections across the world, but they were also a largely transnational body themselves. As described by Müller, “No other profession in the nineteenth century so fully incorporated the entire globe in its representation as submarine

15 Wenzlhuemer, 83.

16 Müller, 13.

telegraph engineers.”¹⁷ This transnational existence is largely due to the Society for Telegraph Engineers, an organization formed in 1871 and based in London. It essentially brought together hundreds of telegraph engineers, operators, and scientists into a membership dedicated to, “the exchange, generation, and homogenization of telegraphic knowledge around the world.”¹⁸ While this goal of creating a transnational entity committed to the global exchange of telegraphic knowledge was largely a success, it was not entirely global.

Like most organizations and “transnational” ventures of the nineteenth century, the Society for Telegraph Engineers was Euro-American-centric. Most of the members and associates of the society were from Europe or the United States; even those who represented other countries like Japan, India, and Argentina were generally British scientists.¹⁹ In addition, few nations outside the Euro-American sphere were permitted to add their knowledge to the collection created by the society. Japan was the sole exception to this arrangement due to its emergence as a Westernized industrial power in the mid-to late nineteenth century.²⁰ As such, the Society for Telegraph Engineers was a transnational organization dedicated to the sharing of telegraphic knowledge but just like the telegraph system itself, it was predominantly reserved for elite Europeans and Americans.

One of the reasons the telegraph was able to connect the world was a British need for strong imperial control. The British Empire wanted to connect its vast territories across Africa, Asia,

17 Müller, 165.

18 Müller, 157.

19 Müller, 163.

20 Müller, 163.

Australia, and the Americas with telegraph lines to facilitate high-speed communication and, by extension, more power. However, the idea of telegraphic connections was not seen as particularly useful early on. It was not until the Indian Mutiny in 1857 that the telegraph demonstrated its effectiveness in administrating a large, turbulent space. In an example provided by Wenzlhuemer, the overland telegraph in India, “enabled Montgomery, and the commanding officer at Lahore to disarm the native troops before the news of the revolt reached the barracks; and to flash their warning over the lines to Peshawar.”²¹ This instance demonstrated how the telegraph could prevent violence and instability through rapid communication.

The growing unrest in India also expressed the need for stronger control of the British Empire’s territories. While sending more administrators and soldiers to the colony to solidify British rule might help reduce the risk of rebellions, the government needed a way to enable more authority from London. Before 1857, the fastest method of communication between the imperial homeland and its colonies was via steamship. It took over six weeks to send a message and another six to receive a response.²² That is why, after the turmoil in the 1850s, the British government began working to establish reliable submarine telegraph lines between India and England. It was not until the 1870s that such a line was completed, but after it was finished, it provided both a tool for more direct British control in India and a springboard for other telegraph lines to other British possessions in the east.²³

The telegraph also acted as an important administrative

21 Wenzlhuemer, 211.

22 Müller, 51.

23 Wenzlhuemer, 241.

tool in the United States, but not in the global way that it did for the British Empire. The nation was in the opening period of the Civil War when the telegraph was first being recognized as a useful technology in America. While the telegraph in Britain was utilized to maintain order in its colonies, the telegraph in America was initially used by the military to provide organization both on and off the battlefield. In an example provided by David Hochfelder, “the telegraph allowed him [General McClellan] to oversee events there [Missouri] while he operated in the Kanawha Valley [West Virginia] some six hundred miles away.”²⁴ As demonstrated by this example, the telegraph allowed for important leaders to nearly be in two places at once, allowing for greatly improved coordination between military regiments and, consequently, improving the odds of victory.

The telegraph in the United States was also an extremely useful administrative instrument outside of wartime. In 1877, a railroad strike caused most transportation and industry to shut down across the nation for over forty-five days. Luckily, the telegraph system remained operational and was capable of sending regular messages to the federal government to inform them of new developments. According to Hochfelder, “these dispatches [via the telegraph] proved essential to [President] Hayes’s decision making during the strike.”²⁵ Thus, as realized by British colonial authorities in India two decades earlier, the telegraph demonstrated its effectiveness in providing vital information for resolving civil disputes and establishing order in the United States as well.

Another realm on which the telegraph had a massive

24 David Hochfelder, *The Telegraph in America, 1832-1920* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2012), 9.

25 Hochfelder, 93.

impact was the economic sector. As Wenzlhuemer asserts, “from its very inception, the telegraph was intimately connected with the world of business, finance and trade.”²⁶ A significant impact the telegraph had on economics was that it allowed for shipping merchants to communicate their desires to ships’ captains instead of having to rely on written instructions. Wenzlhuemer notes that, “This [lack of contact between parties] was of particular concern in tramp shipping when ships do not have a fixed route but respond flexibly to market opportunities.”²⁷ The absence of long-distance communication caused problems when goods the merchants wanted to purchase were either of lesser quality or quantity than they anticipated. In this way, the telegraph allowed merchants to respond to these issues directly rather than having to rely on captains to make decisions for them.

The stock exchange was another economic sector that was heavily influenced by the invention of the telegraph. During the nineteenth century, knowledge was essential for success in the stock exchange, and the telegraph helped facilitate the rapid exchange of information between companies and shareholders. However, this new technology went beyond a mere shift in communication; it completely changed the nature of stock trading. Hochfelder states that, “Participants came to regard markets less as places to trade tangible things and more as the flow of quotations printed by the ticker and posted on distant blackboards.”²⁸ The telegraph not only dematerialized flows of information, but it also dematerialized the process by which stocks were bought, sold, and traded.

26 Wenzlhuemer, 84.

27 Wenzlhuemer, 34.

28 Hochfelder, 102.

Possibly one of the most well-known fields that was transformed by telegraph technology was the news system. While most people did not get their news directly from the new technology, newspaper companies got many of their stories from telegrams.²⁹ The use of the telegraph by news-reporting corporations could be seen on both national and international levels as newspapers were able to obtain national information from overland systems and international news from submarine cables. These large-scale developments caused major changes to how and what news was reported as information became dematerialized to the reporter, then rematerialized for the average news consumer.

The telegraph also shifted the interests of newspaper companies from more localized stories to national and international news. Richard du Boff argues that, “Mechanized ‘top- down’ news reporting undermined localism.”³⁰ Top-down news reporting caused a decrease in localized news because, to be cost-efficient, news needed to be collected in one location to be sent out in bulk by telegram. Thus, most news companies desired the best and most widely applicable stories so they could send the same articles across the nation. In this way, while local news was not completely discarded, the telegraph system shifted the focus of news reporting to much broader stories. This period in the late nineteenth century was the first time in history that the “ordinary” citizen could receive international information within days of an event happening.

Of course, the telegraph also had a tremendous influence

29 Hochfelder, 74.

30 Richard B du Boff, “The Telegraph in Nineteenth-Century America: Technology and Monopoly,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 26, no 4 (October 1984): 582.

on society after it became a widespread technology. One of the main social changes it caused was a growth in the divide between classes. The telegraph system was generally limited to a select few in the early days of the technology. In the colonies of the British Empire, very few people outside the colonial authorities had access to telegraph services. As Wenzlhuemer asserts, “the British Indian telegraph network of the nineteenth century was designed with the needs and demands of a very small elite community of colonial administrators and mostly white businesspeople in mind.”³¹ This shows that while the telegraph connected many parts of the world through the use of rapid communication, it also widened the social gap between elites and colonial subjects as elites were generally the only ones who could access the technology.

The use of telegraph technology in colonial India not only divided the colonial authorities and subjects but the different local populations as well. Wenzlhuemer notes that in the early 1870, “the biggest parts of British India and its populace remained completely untouched by the telegraph.”³² This was a result of empire-run telegraph lines that were only established to connect certain key urban areas to secure British authority. The existence of telegraph lines in cities and not the countryside further cemented the social divide between the rural and urban subjects of British India.

The telegraph also caused class division in the United States due to elitism, but not in the same way as in colonial India. Rather than being limited because of the needs of administrators, the telegraph’s usage in the U.S. was primarily limited due to its high cost.³³ This high cost was attributed to the monopoly that the

31 Wenzlhuemer, 232.

32 Wenzlhuemer, 231.

33 Hochfelder, 4.

Western Union company had in the U.S. The monopoly created a similar situation to the one in colonial India in that, albeit in a different manner, elites were the only ones who could access the telegraph system. And just like in colonial India, some groups opposed the limited use of the system in the United States.

Opponents of the Western Union monopoly suggested that the telegraph system be nationalized to make it more accessible to a larger population. Hochfelder states, “According to this logic, such a system could charge far less than what Western Union charged and would make telegraphing a popular medium.”³⁴ This was tried briefly in 1918 and 1919, but it failed spectacularly and drastically reduced the enthusiasm about a publicly owned telegram system.³⁵ Both the cases of colonial India and the mid to late-nineteenth century United States demonstrate that even though the telegraph brought countries closer together through quick communication, the world at large was still not globally connected due to elitest and economic restrictions.

While this monopoly kept the majority of the American population out of the realm of the telegraph system, many elites used it extensively. According to Wenzlhuemer, “telegraphic communication had quickly become a feature of daily routine for certain groups of people in the late nineteenth century.”³⁶ An example of this daily routine is provided by Roland Wenzlhuemer where a telegraph was sent to a wealthy man from his wife to let him know she was going to get tea with one of her friends.³⁷ This interaction demonstrates that telegraph technology was used for

34 Hochfelder, 35.

35 Hochfelder, 36.

36 Wenzlhuemer, 93.

37 Wenzlhuemer, 92-93.

more than just administrative, economic, or informative reasons but for trivial purposes, at least by those who could afford it.

In addition to causing shifts in class structures in the United States, the telegraph brought about changes in the way women participated in the workforce and economics. According to Ronnie Phillips, “during the period of the Civil War, women entered the labor force as telegraphers.”³⁸ This demonstrates significant social change because, at the time, the telegraph industry was a very lucrative and skill-heavy field, the type of industry that women were generally not permitted to take part in. In addition to the increasing presence of women in the telegraphic workforce, there was also a sharp increase in the investment by women in the telegraph industry. As asserted by Müller, “women played a considerable role within the story of the globe’s telegraph network as financiers.”³⁹ This newly established role in the telegraph industry allowed for more women to become essential players in the development of globalization. Without their significant financial and labor contributions, the telegraph industry could not have grown to the degree that it did.

From its invention in 1837 to the end of the nineteenth century, the telegraph proved to be a key instrument in furthering globalization as it made exceptional changes to the ways administration, economics, news reporting, and civil society functioned. From imperial and military administration to the development of modern economics to a news revolution to

38 Ronnie Phillips, “Digital Technology and Institutional Change from the Gilded Age to Modern Times: The Impact of the Telegraph and the Internet,” *Journal of Economic Issues* 34, no 2 (June 2000): 274.

39 Müller, 78.

dramatic social changes, the telegraph changed many aspects of human life. Through the British and American developments of important telegraph technologies and the establishment of a global network of submarine cables by the British Empire, these two nations advanced globalization on a massive scale. But within all the connectivity and global shrinking, there were still elements of separation that the telegraph enhanced. In conclusion, telegraph technology cemented the interconnectedness of the world and brought permanent changes to the way people interact with each other.

Meet The Editors

Erin Hayhurst- Editor in Chief

Erin is a senior from Scottsbluff, NE, majoring in Advanced English Studies with a focus in Creative Writing. She has been a staff member of Tenth Street Miscellany for three years, taking on the role of editor-in-chief for the last two. She is the secretary of Sigma Tau Delta and has presented at various regional and international conferences. She hopes to pursue an MFA and a career in publishing, with the ultimate goal of creating a rural regional literary journal—a goal that this journal has helped her realize.

Erin is a fiction writer, focusing mainly on genre fiction like fantasy and the supernatural. She is currently working on the first book of a supernatural thriller trilogy along with other stories of fantasy worlds and snarky leads. When she isn't writing, editing, or reading, Erin can usually be found spending time with her friends, playing rogues and rangers in Dungeons & Dragons, hiking with her dad, or hunting down the perfect writing spot in National and State Parks. (She highly recommends Bismark Lake in Custer State Park, SD)

Her time at the journal has given her skills she will take into the professional world, but even more importantly, it has given her friends that will last her a lifetime. She would like to give a special thanks to those people who have helped get her through all of the chaos—the sorrows and the successes, the laughter through the tears, and the many late nights of watching comfort shows that have no business being comfort shows. She would also like to thank her professors at Chadron, especially Markus Jones, without whom, this journal (and honestly most of her personal writing projects) would not exist. Erin may be ending her tenure as editor of Tenth Street Miscellany, but she will carry this experience in her heart forever.

Thank you to all those who submitted to this edition of Tenth Street Miscellany. Your voice and creativity are the reason this journal exists. Erin looks forward to seeing what future holds for the journal and she can't wait to read it from wherever she ends up.

Rebekah Scheiderer- Creative Non-Fiction and Poetry

Bek Scheiderer is in her final semester at CSC, and she will graduate with a degree in Literature and Creative Writing. She has been an editor for Tenth St. Miscellany since 2022. Being on the Tenth Street team has been a rewarding experience, and Bek has spent countless hours drinking coffee and chatting with her fellow editors in the Tenth Street office. (It's also a great spot for homework and naps!) Along with Tenth Street, Bek has also been in Sigma Tau Delta since 2021 and will be presenting a paper at the 2024 international convention.

Bek plans on working in outreach at some point in the future—or doing whatever else comes her way. She is currently working on a couple of short-form fiction pieces, along with some poetry. In addition to writing, she loves her cat, her friends, and her fellow editors. Even after she graduates, she will always remember the friends she has made on this team, and they have all made a great impact on her life. With their help, she has a great time in between classes and she always has someone to talk to. Plus, they laugh at her jokes.

Bek is grateful for the other writers and instructors in her program, as they have given her endless support and helped her grow as a writer and as a person. She hopes to one day encourage others as much as they have encouraged her. She sends her thanks to her fellow editors, submitters, and sponsors for making this publication possible.

Isabel Manchego-Pena- Fiction and Academic

Isabel Manchego-Pena is a senior pursuing an undergraduate degree in English Studies with an Emphasis in Literature at Chadron State College. After graduating in May, Isabel hopes to acquire a Master of Arts in Education for School Counseling through CSC. Once she graduates, she plans to move back to her hometown in Loveland, Colorado to help support her family's new business that's focused on physical health and wellbeing while pursuing her graduate degree.

On campus, Isabel is involved in a variety of educational and extracurricular activities. She currently holds the positions of president of United, treasurer of Zeta Alpha Kappa, secretary for Student Senate, backup CAB representative for Sigma Tau Delta, and is a member of AFB. In previous years, Isabel enjoyed participating in other clubs such as Esports, Familia, Social Work Club, Chadron Criminal Justice Club, and the Campus Improvement Committee.

Over the course of her senior year, Isabel flourished as an editor for Tenth Street Miscellany. She solidified bonds with her fellow editors over these past semesters, being able to love and learn with them. They have supported, encouraged, and inspired her to step outside of her comfort zone and push herself as a writer and a person. Being surrounded by such astounding writers and learning new methods of reaching within herself has strengthened her writing capabilities and understanding of herself. She's discovered parts of herself she didn't know and watched the words flow from pen to paper in a way they never have before.

Isabel's experiences in this last year of college have given her entirely new perspectives and life lessons. Fueling the fire of her passion for writing and dedicating herself to making the changes in her life she wants to see have given her new meaning. Her time as an editor is one of the most memorable experiences that she will carry with her through her next steps of life. She is incredibly thankful to the friendships she's made, the memories she'll cherish, and the motivation she's found to live her life the way she sees fit. Thank you to the dreamers, readers, writers, and believers for making this year's Tenth Street Miscellany journal a reality.

Ashley Burrows- Fiction and Poetry

Ashley Burrows is a Senior at Chadron State College. She is a double major in Legal Studies and English Creative Writing. She is involved in various clubs and activities on campus as she is the President of CSC Sigma Tau Delta club, involved in Chi Alpha, and the Criminal Justice club.

Ashley loves writing fantasy, historical fiction, and poetry. She adores reading all genres of books, particularly historical fiction and fantasy. She hopes to publish her book one day and work with other writers across the globe. When she is not writing, she is playing video games and hanging out with her cat. Ashley adored her time working with the other wonderful editors of Tenth St. Miscellany and seeing the amazing talent and creativity of the Chadron area.

Ashley joined the Tenth St. Team because of her love of writing and connecting with fellow writers. She loved collaborating with the other editors and working together to create this publication. She looks forward to future projects and participation in Tenth St. and other clubs at Chadron State College.

Sadie Vander Wey- Fiction and Academic

Sadie is a junior at CSC studying Advanced English Studies with a focus on creative writing. She aspires to be a published author in the near future while also studying for an MFA in creative writing after graduating in May of 2025. She was born around Valentine, Nebraska, and lived around the area, raising cattle with her family on their ranch. She has always held a love for reading and writing that started with Laura Ingalls Wilder's series Little House on the Prairie. Sadie mainly writes creative fiction in the fantasy genre, but she has recently had a speculative fiction story accepted into the 2024 Sigma Tau Delta Centennial Convention. Her other interests include quality time with friends, playing video games, and cuddle time with her cat.

Sadie joined Tenth Street Miscellany this year to enhance her editorial skills as well as spend more time with her friends who made this journal possible. After having a story accepted into the 2023 journal, she wanted to help other authors publish their work.

Sadie would like to thank everyone who submitted to this journal. Without them, this journal would not exist. She would also like to thank Editor-in-Chief Erin Hayhurst for all of the long hours, blood, sweat, and tears she poured into the making of this journal. Finally, she would like to thank Professor Markus Jones for his constant encouragement to join the Tenth Street Miscellany crew.

Aarikah Johnson- Creative Nonfiction

Aarikah Johnson is in her third year at Chadron State College. She is working toward a bachelor's degree in creative writing with a minor in art.

While Aarikah currently lives in Chadron, she grew up hiking the red cliffs of southern Utah that inspire the stories she loves to write.

Outside of school and work, Aarikah enjoys drawing portraits and landscapes in graphite and charcoal, working with ceramics, fishing in the Black Hills, and spending time with her family.

Aarikah joined Tenth Street to hone her editing skills and connect with other writers. She is deeply appreciative of the invaluable guidance and encouragement of the amazing editing team here at Chadron State.

Kayla Campos- Poetry

Kayla is a junior from Alliance, NE. She is majoring in English studies with a minor in Creative Writing. Other clubs she's involved in at CSC include International Club, DEI Committee, Sigma Tau Delta, ZAK, and Familia.

She is a lover of words and colors. Writing and painting bring lots of joy to her life. Dogs and botanical gardens hold a special place in her heart, and being a foodie adds a recent adventure to her days. Kayla is also fluent in two languages, currently on a new journey of learning Japanese and Arabic.

Kayla is excited to participate as an editor this year and she's learned a lot when it comes to the editing process of writing. She's had a great time working with everyone on the project and learning more about the process.

The staff of Tenth Street Miscellany gives special thanks to

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for sponsoring this publication. You have made this edition of Tenth Street Miscellany possible. Thank you so much for providing a place for High Plains voices to be heard. Thank you!

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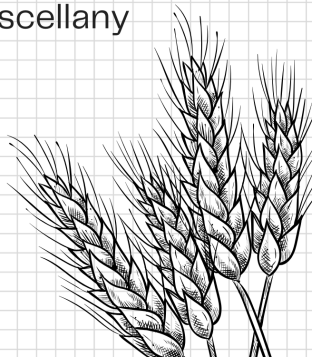
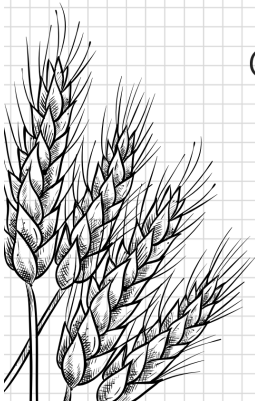
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We hope you've enjoyed this journal, and we have decided to leave you, dear reader, with a prompt and the white space necessary to explore your own stories.

Write a poem of things you'd like to say to your past self.

Take a moment from this past year in your life and describe how it influenced you. Dive into your memory and use your senses.

Write the story of a journey. This can be a literal or an emotional exploration for your character, but think about the themes of growth and opportunity.