

Department: The Promethean, The Velvet Night (2016-2017)

THE PROMETHEAN

THE LITERARY ARTS JOURNAL

OF CONCORDIA UNIVERSITY-PORTLAND



THE VELVET NIGHT

2016-2017 ISSUE

Baptize me, now that reconciliation is possible.

If we're going to heal, let it be glorious.

~Warsan Shire

EDITORIAL STAFF

Managing Editor

Kathryn Willoughby

Assistant Managing Editor

Amber Bains

Student Editors

Marissa Alvarez

Gretchen Anderson

Tyler Bonnette

Haley Bucher

Jalyn Gilmore

Julia Guzman

Timothy O'Brien

Emily Ponce

Sydney Quintana

Amber Reeves

Kristin Rothell

Faculty Advisor

Dr. Kimberly Knutsen

The Promethean is an annual journal of the College of Arts & Sciences of Concordia University-Portland. Its publication is made possible with funding from the Associated Students of Concordia (ASCU). The content is chosen by a staff of student editors. The opinions expressed in the journal do not necessarily reflect those of the College of Arts & Sciences, ASCU or *The Promethean* staff. All works are copyrighted.

Manuscript submissions and correspondence can be sent to promethean@cu-portland.edu. Since *The Promethean* uses a blind review process, contributor's names should not appear on their manuscripts; instead they should be included in an accompanying email along with the titles of their works.

The Velvet Night

In these divisive times, we are at the precipice of greatness.
Instead of subduing our voices or using them to antagonize others,
we write. We type madly and scribble hurriedly.
We communicate boldly and kindly.
And, when we're done, and really proud of it,
we publish a literary journal.

If America is going to heal, let it be glorious.
And what's more glorious than writing?

On behalf of Dr. Kimberly Knutsen and Sonja Baumeister,
the assistant managing editor, Amber Bains, the student editors and
contributors, and myself, I present this year's issue of
The Promethean, *The Velvet Night*.

Kathryn Willoughby, Managing Editor

Table of Contents

Locker Room Talk <i>Kathryn Willoughby</i>	9
The Earworm's Song <i>Randilee Sequeira Larson</i>	11
Recipe for Loneliness <i>Timothy O'Brien</i>	16
Sticky Coca-Cola Kisses <i>Marissa Alvarez</i>	17
The Pen Is Mightier... <i>Amber Bains</i>	18
Fireflies <i>Amber Reeves</i>	20
3 a.m. <i>Shelby Bonomo</i>	21
Soldier On <i>Chris Houck</i>	23
Nature Watch: It's Spring <i>Gregory Hutzell</i>	24
Party Time <i>Ryan Connelly</i>	26
Her <i>Haley Bucher</i>	27
Move-In Day <i>Ayla Johnson</i>	33
Fowl Play <i>Ana Delgadillo</i>	34
Mother Is A Criminal <i>Julia Guzman</i>	38
i need feminism because... <i>Sydney Quintana</i>	39
Carnival Haiku <i>Shelby Bonomo</i>	41

The Half-Life of Love	
<i>Short Story Contest</i>	42
The Radioactive Half-Life of Love	
<i>Alena Willbur</i> 1st place	43
Purgatory	
<i>Alyssa Moreno</i> 2nd place	46
feminism is for boys, too	
<i>Kathryn Willoughby</i> 3rd place	48
Attendance Rosters	
<i>Dr. Hill's American Literature I Class</i>	50
Shadows	
<i>Chris Houck</i>	53
in memoriam: shit mug	
<i>Amber Reeves</i>	54
Endangers the Corn	
<i>Gretchen Anderson</i>	55
Through Hell and Back	
<i>Brandi Barbosa-Brown</i>	57
Tweets to Your Last Kiss	62
In Comparison	
<i>Torrey Woolsey</i>	63
A battery. A dragon. A reason to move across the country.	
<i>Timothy O'Brien</i>	64
To Be Other Than Me	
<i>Julia Guzman</i>	65
thank you	
<i>Kathryn Willoughby</i>	66
Photo: Friends for Life	
<i>Gregory Hutzell</i>	67
Ivy	
<i>Chris Houck</i>	68
Komorebi 木漏れ日	
<i>Jeszy Shiroma</i>	70

Copper Begonias	
<i>Jalyn Gilmore</i>	72
Dear Friend...	
<i>Julia Guzman</i>	75
A Knight Known	
<i>Zachary Rothell</i>	77
Touch Me	
<i>Jalyn Gilmore</i>	78
The Pug of Life	
<i>Alyssa Moreno</i>	81
Alive	
<i>Sierra McWaters</i>	82
Anna and the Wobbly Star	
<i>Timothy O'Brien</i>	85
Darkness	
<i>Mackenzie Pollock</i>	86
The Good Book	
<i>Torrey Woolsey</i>	88
Skin	
<i>Timothy O'Brien</i>	90
Note to Self: Please	
<i>Chris Houck</i>	91
An Open Letter to John Mayer	
<i>Jalyn Gilmore</i>	92
The Bridge	
<i>Tijera Johnson</i>	94
If Only	
<i>Ayla Johnson</i>	97
Popcorn Ceiling	
<i>Marissa Alvarez</i>	98
The Old Pali Lookout	
<i>Missie Yamamura</i>	100
Skin Cycles	
<i>Amber Reeves</i>	102

Now You See Me <i>Kaelyn Buettner</i>	103
Graydaytions <i>Ayla Johnson</i>	106
I Don't Need To Breathe <i>Kristin Rothell</i>	107
<i>MET + A + MOR + PHO + SiS</i> <i>Josey Meats</i>	109
Never Sink: Lessons from White-Jacket's Man-of-War World <i>Ayla Johnson</i>	110
Love Letters <i>Kathryn Willoughby</i>	112
<i>Our Writers</i>	116

“certainly i’m not proud of it, but this poem is just locker room talk”

Kathryn Willoughby

1. my mother teaches me about scary men at age four. she shows me on herself places that a scary man might try to touch. still small enough to be curled up in her lap, she has me practice screaming. “good,” she whispers, nuzzling my cheek. “again. louder.”
2. ryan kisses me in kindergarten. my cheeks get sticky with his five-year-old saliva. even when he’s across from me in our reading circle, he makes kissy-faces at me. i tell the teacher again and again. “i don’t like it,” i say. she tells me he must like me. that he’s being sweet. “now, drink your orange juice.”
3. my mother tells me at age eight to never wear sleeveless shirts. “i read a story about a man who was compelled to follow a girl around home-depot because of her shoulders. it’s just tempting for men.”
4. my parents have a book called “preparing your daughter for every woman’s battle” that i borrow at age ten. in the section for the daughter, the female author explains her rape at fourteen was because she wore a tight green sweater. there is a chapter on going through your closet and throwing out clothes. in the section for the parents, the male author assures fathers that generally, they won’t get turned on hugging their pubescent daughter. don’t worry.
5. a family friend i cannot name hugs me with his arms at my skinny, age eleven waist. by twelve, they’ve slipped to my hips, then lower. i meet with my aunt cheryl one day and tell her everything. she tells me he’s creepy. “you know, if you don’t like the way he hugs you, you can say no. you can say no to a hug. do not forget that.” i don’t forget it, but it feels so radical it cannot be true. it would be really impolite.
6. the first time a boy pins me against a wall, i am thirteen. his name is joshua and we are at school. his beady eyes are predatory and before

i can check myself, i raise my right foot and kick him in the balls. a rush of power flows through my veins and he yells “YOU BITCH!” anna pulls me away, later telling me that his friends were not so immobilized and they’re looking for me. “what were you thinking?” she whisper-yells. “i don’t know,” i sputter. i spend the rest of the week hiding.

7. at age fourteen, a boy pulls me onto his increasingly uncomfortable lap. he holds me there for a moment, my body used for a deviancy i did not consent to, before allowing me to twist myself out of his grip. he complains “your ass is so bony,” like the purpose of my body’s softness is to be a cushion for his erection. everyone laughs.
8. walking in the snow from the bus stop to my boyfriend’s house, i am a tiny sixteen-year-old wrapped up in miles of scarves and sweaters. i am excited to see him, so i don’t hear the sound of a teenage boy running up behind me. it is only when he puts his hands on my butt and pushes me to the ground that i realize i’m not alone. i look up and see his face, his mountain lion smile full of canines. i grab my bag and run, too scared to stop and look back in case i turn to salt.
9. at age sixteen, i am trying to figure out whether or not i want to keep doing sexual things with my boyfriend. they’re escalating, and i want to be sure. one night i say, “please, no, i don’t want to do this. please, no.” i make my decision and start to sit up. he doesn’t let me. he looms over me like a cloud covering up the sun and with his right hand he – well, i’ll let donald trump finish that sentence.
10. twenty-two years old and waiting at a bus stop, a tall man in all black appears in my line of vision and pins me against a wall. it is all too familiar, but i am smarter now. quieter. i enunciate carefully, firmly. “you need to leave me alone.” miraculously, he does. still, as he steps back, he yells into the portland night, “YOU FUCKING BITCH!”

11.

The Earworm's Song

Randilee Sequeira Larson

My mother has always been a character. Even when I was little I knew she was... different than other moms. She was eccentric. Deidre had enough strange habits and strange stories to keep my sister and me delightfully enthralled our whole childhood.

For example, she wasn't Christian or Catholic, like all the other moms in town. She was a witch, a self-proclaimed witch, with a penchant for the superstitious. It compelled her to own a rosary, usually several, at all times.

"You never know when you might need one," she explained, "for emergencies. They're good juju."

I inherited that superstitious habit. They say these kinds of things tend to be genetic, passed on from mother to daughter to granddaughter. Years of soul-crushing, institutionalized education hasn't made a dent in it. I've never lost touch with my superstitious side. I still pray the rosary when I need that good juju:

Hail Mary, Full of Grace.

Mom used to tell us stories about strange medical phenomena too, leprosy, elephantiasis, small pox; all the good, gruesome ones. My favorite was L.S.S.—"Last Song Syndrome."

L.S.S., my mother said, could afflict anyone, not just musicians. She said it was caused by these funny little creatures called "earworms" and that, like all good diseases, it had the potential to be *fatal*, a fact that excited my morbid little mind and got my imagination running wild.

She'd often tell a story about an unknown pianist, from an unknown point of history, who hung himself with one of his piano strings just to get away from the earworm's song.

The Lord is With Thee...

Later, when I was in the army, I had a Drill Sergeant who knew all about L.S.S.

I'd wake up in the morning, make my way to CQ, glue my ass to a seat, and the stereo would already be screaming out the day's song. Sometimes it was the Jeopardy theme. Sometimes it was a crappy, early 2000s pop-rock ballad. Once, it was "The Song that Never Ends." But his favorite was a children's song from a recent animated movie about LEGOS:

Everything is awesome!

Everything is cool when you're part of a team!

Everything is awesome.... When we're living our dream!

He would play the song, whatever it was, on a loop all day. Sometimes it'd be a couple of hours before you'd really notice it, but once you noticed it, you could never ignore it again.

The words, that stupid tune, they would wriggle their way between the folds in my brain and grab onto my neurons so tightly it'd take a scorched earth policy just to weed the fuckers out. If only I could find a way to crack open my skull and napalm my grey matter into oblivion.

I'd squeeze my eyes shut and try to drown it out with the only thing I could think of:

Hail Mary, Full of Grace, the Lord is with Thee.

Blessed art thou amongst women and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.

The reason for the rosary, like my mother said, is to amass some good juju in your life. “Juju” is a word we used all the time around my house growing up. It was the Karmic force my tribe adhered to. It shaped the family code of ethics. Things either brought good juju or bad juju. Rosaries brought good juju, obviously. Using a handicap stall when you weren’t handicapped brought bad juju. Giving away your last cigarette to a stranger is good juju. Taking the last biscuit at dinner is bad juju.

In case you were wonder... Yes.

Constitutional, low-key, torture via a techno-beat and appallingly obnoxious lyrics is definitely an example of “bad juju.”

Besides the rosaries, Mom had only one other article of Christianity in our home: a framed photo of Jesus Christ hanging over her bed. Not one of Him on the cross, or as a baby, or weeping on the Mount in fear of His coming death; she had one of Him laughing, as if He’d just heard a funny joke.

She loved that picture so much. When I asked her why, she said, “Nobody ever shows Jesus smiling in pictures. But I know he laughed. I know he made jokes. They don’t tell us whether he did or he didn’t, but I know he did. Jesus had to have been fun to hang out with. He wouldn’t be God if he didn’t laugh sometimes.”

While that might seem like a sound argument, I have my doubts. Nobody ever shows pictures of Drill Sergeants laughing either, and there’s a reason for it.

Back in CQ, two days after it was introduced, the same electro-trash tune is still assaulting my ears:

I feel more awesome than an awesome possum!

Dip my body in chocolate frostin’!

Three years later, wash off the frostin’!

Smellin’ like a blossom, everything is awesome....

My palm is marked with moon-shaped indents from clenching my hands. The inside of my lip is raw from chewing. My soul is desperately trying to leave my body but my flesh keeps getting in the way. It takes every ounce of willpower not to peel it off myself.

When I think of Mom's old stories, and the unknown pianist, I begin to worry.

Hail Mary, Full of Grace, the Lord is with Thee.

Blessed art Thou amongst women and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.

*Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners now and at the hour of our death,
Amen...*

Back when I was little, I imagined earworms as funny little bugs. I pictured them as tiny, blue caterpillars, dressed in fancy clothes and carrying around Seussian-style music making devices. They'd hitch a ride to your brain on some kind of sound wave, preferably a catchy, not-very-well-liked tune; they'd get settled in and make themselves at home somewhere between your frontal and temporal lobes. Then, with no regard for your sanity, they'd kick up their feet, pull out their instrument, and play the same tune on a loop until you cracked:

Trees, frogs, clogs

They're awesome!

Rocks, clocks, and socks

They're awesome!

Figs, and jigs, and twigs

That's awesome!

Everything you see, or think, or say

Is awesome!

Now I understand that earworms can come in many shapes and sizes. Perhaps there are little blue earworms with their little conductor's outfits and their "Seussical" instruments somewhere, but I haven't found that particular breed, yet.

My earworm is 6'2", camouflage-clad, and permanently attached to a set of earplugs. That sneaky little bastard.

By day three I'm visibly shaking in my seat. At night, I dream of piano cords and napalm; if only I could sleep. The soldier next to me, who has been ripping a tiny pink eraser into smaller and smaller pieces for the past hour, nudges me gently, reminding me not to let my brains leak out on the table.

"That's what the trash is for," she says, and I agree, reaching for a tissue to sop up the mess.

And then I pray:

Hail Mary Full of Grace

Everything is Awesome

Blessed are thou amongst women

And blessed is the fruits of chocolate frosting.

Holy Mary,

Mother of Awesome Possums,

Pray for us sinners...

Right now.

Recipe for Loneliness

Timothy O'Brien

Ingredients

3 cups of bitterness
2 cups Social Anxiety. Set aside 1 tsp.
A Defiant handful of "Fuck everyone, I don't need no friends."
1 isolated cabin in the woods
½ part obscurity (The type that haunts you as you eat alone in the cafeteria.)
A hint of opiates (For Flavor)

Instructions

1. Create a meringue by whipping the bitterness until your desire to run away overwhelms your love for life.
2. Take 2 cups crippling Social Anxiety and slowly fold into the meringue. Chill in fridge for a month or until it completely overshadows all your relationships.
3. Next, take your delectable creation to an isolated cabin in the woods and drizzle a pinch of opiates for flavor.
(Have an emergency contact in case of overseasoning.)

This recipe serves at most 1
(With the exception for an optional animal companion)

Pairs well with:

2 helpings of Resentment or Depression
or
Dry white wine, or whiskey and a guitar

Sticky Coca-Cola Kisses

Marissa Alvarez

Sticky Coca-Cola kisses leave sweet bubbles on my tongue,
Bubbles that escape into mouse pitch giggles and micro-pig snorts
Small hands graze ember hair, while big hands entangle cherry-wood locks
Pink lips reveal white gems, and button noses touch
Long lashes beat at each other
And time halts
As lips meet again

The Pen Is Mightier...

Amber Bains

Love is sand slipping between your fingers and feeling every grain drop in despair.

Love is being told no, not yet.

Not yet. Tick tock.

To the point where love is gone.

I used to love the feeling of a pen between my fingers, the stack of papers – clean, untouched, virginal—that I would bleed the ink of my pen onto.

But that love is gone.

That feeling, the spark in my chest when a new idea would form, and I would tear sheets upon sheets of paper until it displayed itself in angles and shapes called letters that merged into beings called words that would give the idea a meaning, that would give it a life.

I thanked the pen and paper for helping me put my nightly dreams onto them, so that they might help me translate them to anyone willing to read.

But the ink dried up in my pen when it was halted. When my fingers were told to stop moving so much. When my brain was told to stop thinking in tetra-chromatic colors and told to see in black and white.

Writing gets you nowhere in the 21st century, they say.

This is a time of machines. This is a time for tapping fingers onto black squares rather than holding a pen. How outdated the pen has become. Rather than letting my fingers take the virginal paper, I inserted it into a bulky machine, which stabbed and poked the paper until it produced the words it wanted.

Slowly, with each stab and poke, with each tap on black squares, with each tick of time of days gone by, the love stopped.

Responsibility piled on. My time was filled with more than just sheets of paper. And as things piled and piled, what could be seen of the paper thin?

Sometimes, I try to fall in love again.

I remove the heavy burdens, one by one, tossing them to the side for the time being. I find the thin sheets at the bottom, now crumpled. I hold the pen in my hand and try to force the ink to the sheet, but the ink has dried as my mind struggles to break out of the monotone.

Sometimes I see pastels. But they fade back to white.

I yearn to see vivid colors again. I yearn to have ideas pop into my head that are original, that are mine, that will light that fire in me again.

Sometimes I see pastels, but I yearn to see vivid colors.

Fireflies

Amber Reeves

I remember fireflies
sizzling, yearning,
lost

I let go of willow branches
knuckle-deep in the mirror

I remember staring into,
skipping memories off its surface

I have lost touch.

But I have found feeling
cascading through stardust

I have forgotten
the velvet whisper of goodbye
the searing silence of forever

I am found

3 a.m.

Shelby Bonomo

It's 3 a.m.

And I'm still waiting.
You're probably just busy
Studying for an exam
Or finishing some paper
You waited to do
Until the night before.

It's 3:10

You're probably playing
Some dumb video game
And just haven't bothered
To look at your phone.

It's 3:15

And I don't want to be
The first one because I'm afraid
I'll annoy
Or bother you.
So I'll wait.

It's 3:20

Maybe you lost your phone
And want to say something
But you can't
Because the universe hates
The idea of us.

It's 3:30

And I'm tired of waiting
Maybe I should just give up
But I know you're home
And I really just want to talk to you.

It's 3:31

The two small vibrations
Echo through the cosmos
Of my mind
And my heart
Does full-out aeriels in my chest

"Hey, you up?"

Read: 3:31 a.m.

Soldier On

Chris Houck

This disease called PTSD
Consumes, and suffocates
Who I used to be, bleeds
My emotions and
Forces me to embrace
The black portion of my soul which
Released the pain and anger that has purged
My heart, and life
All that's good within
Me has died but
I'm fully aware that most of
Every day is absolutely worthless, and
You will never hear me say that
I am happy to be alive, and
You can tell from my face
The pain is all too much to bear
Even though
I'm still standing

Now read from the bottom to the top

Nature Watch: It's Spring

Gregory Hutzell

This is a glorious time of year.

Spring is the season when the door opens and Mother Nature's nursery is on display. If we're patient, and most often lucky, we'll see little ones swimming, scurrying, and bouncing about. Certainly, mallard ducklings are the common little ones we see about our ponds and lakes. To see them line up in single file behind mother mallard, and follow her wake in perfect rhythm, always brings a smile and a gush: "They're so cute." I've seen batches of six, eight, and ten ducklings with their mothers, all within a few meters of each other. Apparently, these little ones aren't allowed to splash about together like kids at the community pool.



We're together © 2016 Gregory Hutzell

On land, while not so organized, are the pheasant chicks, colored like the hen, with browns and buff for camouflage. Interestingly, they were a present to all of North America in 1882, courtesy of Oregon by way of China. Seeing these chicks assures their legacy lives on, and we'll one day pause in awe when we observe the most extraordinary male of the species, who always comes dressed for the most elegant of balls.

Other little birds are busy as well. The song sparrows, tree swallows, and red-winged blackbirds are introducing their fledglings to the world. How exhausting it appears, those adults busily finding food for so many anxious open beaks.

I've been lucky in nature many times. Last spring, I happened upon an adult great horned owl and her three owlets: she in a pine, and twenty yards away in a leafless oak, her owlets, all with equally penetrating stares.



Who are you? © 2016 Gregory Hutzell

Yet for all their cuteness, the stars of the nursery are the black-tailed deer fawns. Recently a set of twins, each about the size of a large yellow Lab, appeared in a meadow lush with dark green grass, their attentive mother a few feet away. She saw me, though I stood motionless. The watchful doe is ever so cautious. Somehow, perhaps with a low guttural sound, she is quick to communicate when to stop and drop when she senses danger. The fawns then lay motionless, out of my sight.

The spring season is vibrant wherever outside you find yourself. Whether you see a bouquet of pink rhododendrons, red elderberry, black highlighted swallowtail, or the pesky yellow scotch broom—in Mother Nature's nursery it doesn't matter what you fancy, it's all a wonderful show.

Party Time

Ryan Connelly

Ready to help us celebrate,
you got together the perfect recipe
for our graduation party.

A table full of jello shots and
an ice chest full of booze,
hoping there would be no party foul.

Partying until 3:00 in the morning,
we had a crazy amount of fun—
the ending was going to be a *bang*.

Ending the evening i couldn't see
walk or think in a straight line—
i was half conscious
you, fully aware.

Her

Haley Bucher

I. 1930

From the grand balcony we observe the party, set apart from the other guests who are mingling, sipping, and chatting below. Nobody knows we are here. We cannot be seen or heard and unlike those poor, ignorant people, we know what we are looking for. We know there is something here, something not quite right; a presence that is not objective like us but malevolent. We are tracking it; we are watching it evolve.

We spot June across the room. Small and timid with shoulder length brown hair, a raccoon mask of freckles, and hazel eyes, she is dressed in a flattering but forgettable forest green shift. June is observing the party from a safe distance, conscious of the fact that she has only been invited because she had been standing next to a friend of the host who had felt inclined to extend the invitation to June after inviting her friend Pearl. The tall and slender Pearl always seemed to showcase her plain beauty in a distinguished and unafraid manner that drew others to her. June picked her out of the crowd after only a minute of searching. Pearl had chosen a most becoming dress for the occasion, a light pink, satiny, A-line number that clung subtly to her waist and hips. *Of course*, June thought.

Pearl was looking for someone. She needed a man, an intelligent, likeable, mysterious man. She entered the room and knew he'd be there. She spotted Johnson lounging near the muted sofa across the room, engaged in polite but heated conversation with a visiting gentleman. Sly movements, confidant gaze, and such presence! Yes, he'd do quite well.

"I'm sorry to interrupt gentlemen, but may I have a word with you, Mr. Johnson?"

"Of course, Ms..."

"Diveré, but please, call me Pearl."

She led Johnson to a corner. She had imagined the way the scene would play out in her mind. She smoothed her dress across her hips, looked up and arched her brow. She saw the corner of his mouth twitch almost imperceptibly and knew that she had chosen correctly. She watched his eyes carefully. He looked amused, curious, *interested*. Good. Pearl clasped his hands as if they were old friends, and began to speak, making sure to keep eye contact. His hands were warm, hearty hands, and well maintained, much like her own manicured fingertips, a shade lighter than her blush colored dress, Johnson noticed.

“Mr. Johnson, I must say...” she began, before twisting those fingertips into his palms in a practiced manner. He felt himself lean forward before closing his eyes.

We watch Johnson teeter before collapsing. He is dead but no one notices him, not now. There is nothing we can do for Johnson. And she, this Pearl whose identity She has stolen, is undoubtedly dead as well. This is our third encounter with Her. We are no closer to stopping Her, but we are beginning to discern Her patterns.

II. 1954

Each time She appears it's closer to the present. We're running out of time.

We watch Dick enter the house. He takes his coat off, hangs it on the hook, and places his keys on the entry table. He slips off his shoes and sighs, rubbing his forehead. He's had a long day at work. He can't wait to relax in front of the television with a beer. Usually he's an early riser and preps dinner for himself in the morning so he has something to eat when he gets home, but this morning was particularly rough and he didn't have the time. Before, he wouldn't have had to worry about cooking for himself, but since his insane ex-wife, Jane, had been sent to prison six months ago after a series of incidents ending in an attempted murder, he had been on his own.

We know something Dick doesn't though. Jane is not insane. Jane is dead. *She* is Jane now.

We see Dick digging through the refrigerator for leftovers, which he warms and brings into the living room. He turns on the television and relaxes in his chair. We see the size eight nude pumps

resting in the hallway that he did not, and we know he should have turned on the overhead light in the living room before settling into his chair with his dinner. But he is tired.

Though the room is already dark and the only light comes from the animated television and the lamp across the room, Dick feels a shadow pass over his face and shivers. He opens his eyes but the room is just as he'd left it a moment before. *That's strange*, he thinks. *I must just be really out of it today*. He swallows a bite of rice, realizing as he does that the whistles and voices on the television have gotten noticeably quieter. He stands and goes to turn up the volume, noticing as he does a small cylindrical tube resting on the top of the set, which he instantly knows to be Jane's cherry red lipstick. He frowns. *I thought I'd finally gotten all of her things packed up. I don't know how I missed this*, he thinks. Shaking his head, he replaces the lipstick and turns off the television. *It's time for bed*.

Dick gathers his dishes and places them in the kitchen sink. He walks through the living room on his way to the bedroom, feeling uneasy. It isn't just him, something is off. Quite literally. The lamp he had left on is off. Trying not to panic, he turns around as quickly as he dares and goes instead through the sitting room to get to the stairs. He is oddly calm, considering he's finally realized what is happening.

Dick takes a deep breath and rounds the corner, knowing that she is watching. The light at the top of the stairs is off. *Leave*, a voice in his head says. *Get out, now!* But he can't. He doesn't know why, but he can't. Instead he reaches the stairs and climbs the first two, his hand trailing behind him on the banister. The hall light flickers on as he takes a third step, and all he sees is her face. He looks into those far off brown eyes framed by tangled blond hair. *Poor Dick, if only you knew. She's not your Jane*.

Dick is compelled to climb the stairs. He freezes when he reaches the top, fully aware that she has come to finish what she started, what she attempted, before being carted off to prison. Dick falls into her arms and is dragged into the bedroom. She shuts the door. We do not see it, but we are aware of the moment he goes. The hall light goes out.

We couldn't have helped him. But we are closer.

III. 2002

We lost track of Her for a while. We can't afford to lose Her again. We're running out of time.

We see Katie retie her apron around her baby blue, grease-stained uniform. She sighs at Sam, busy tossing a sticky wad of dough, and nods when he asks if she is covering for Renee again. Today is the fifth day in a row Katie has pulled a double for the girl, always coming up with last minute reasons to get out of work. She'd have fired her by now if she was the boss, though seeing as Renee is the owner's niece, she doubts that'll happen any time soon.

We watch Katie inhale, close her eyes, hold the breath for as long as she can, then slowly release all of her air. She is ordinary at best, on the shorter side with shoulder length mousy brown hair, brown eyes, and a slightly crooked smile. And unlike Renee, she is paying her own way through college, waitressing at the diner just down the street while also working as a hostess at the pizza parlor, just allowing her to scrape by. Though she is exhausted, sweaty, and stressed from getting behind on her homework, Katie puts on a smile, reminding herself that kindness and customer service pay. Literally. She grabs her pen, making her way to the back booth where a tall blonde woman has taken a seat.

"What can I get for you tonight?" Katie asks.

"Just a soda for now. Coke," answers the woman, surveying the dining area.

Katie walks behind the counter to grab a glass, noticing that the woman seems jumpy and reaches for her side when the child sitting a few booths over gives a sudden yell. *Weird*, Katie thinks. It isn't her place to judge, however, as she's seen much weirder and has other customers to attend to.

"Here you are. Let me know if you need anything else," she says with a smile, dropping off the woman's Coke as she greets the family of six that has just entered the restaurant. She looks at the clock behind the counter. Five more hours to go. After seating the family of six and listing the night's specials, she returns to the blonde woman who has hardly touched her drink. The woman asks if there is a phone that she can use and mumbles an excuse about needing to check on some business of hers.

“Of course,” Katie motions, leading the woman behind the counter and through the swinging door marked, “Employees Only.” “It’s on the wall right over there,” she says, pointing to a dirtied white phone, the cord hopelessly tangled and attached to a chipped handset. To the right of the phone stands Sam’s work station and to the left, the large sweaty oven used to cook the town famous wood-fired pizzas. The fire inside is calm and the small dying flames lazily lick the burnt brick sides. Katie stokes the flames, adding several large chunks of wood and stirring the ultra-hot embers around them. She sighs, weary of the heat and exhausted from her double shift.

We know what is going to happen but we cannot do anything to help, not yet. It must happen in order to for us to stop Her.

The woman hangs up the phone and comes up behind Katie. She pushes her headfirst into the oven, cracking her head on the brick. Katie’s hair ignites and sizzles with her blood. Katie must burn. But now so will She.

IV. 2020

Then, for that moment, she had seen an illumination; a match burning in a crocus; an inner meaning almost expressed. But the close withdrew; the hard softened. It was over – the moment. ~Virginia Woolf

We watch Her awake to unfamiliar surroundings. She is not where She had fallen. She is lying in a hospital bed in a cramped room with small windows and heavy drapes that let through minimal light. The room smells of stale urine and bleach. There is a chair next to Her bed; empty. Another bed within arm’s reach of Hers; empty. The solid wooden door is shut tight and three of the five fluorescent ceiling lights are out. The two that are still functional flicker and hum, the only noise She can discern.

She gets the impression that this room is rarely used. She is right. She worries She has been forgotten. She is very, very wrong.

We watch Her struggle.

She opens her mouth to call out but finds Herself unable to do so; She can’t form the words. She tries to sit up but can’t; Her muscles won’t respond. Her neck is the only extremity She can move, the rest are

limp and uncooperative. Her eyes grow wide with panic as She realizes she is paralyzed, realizes She is trapped in this body; a pale, frail, limp vessel. She cranes Her neck as far as She can, taking note of the three discarded needles on the bedside table and the scalpel that sits on the filing cabinet in the corner, the only clean instrument in a room blanketed in dust. Then She hears two distinct sets of footsteps in the hallway outside, a slow and heavy clomping next to a hurried stiletto tap.

Now *we* are the footsteps; *we* enter the room. We are no longer objective. We are no longer confined to passivity. She is vulnerable.

We watch Her shut her eyes and try to reach the light again.

Our touch sends Her into blackness.

Move-In Day

Ayla Johnson

We should have known
that problems
are like shadows.

Maybe that's why
our things
arrived
already shattered.



Sunset Sky © 2017 Julia Guzman

Fowl Play

Ana Delgadillo

The April sunlight streamed through the windows as my Advanced Spanish class stared at our teacher and tuned out. I was one of two sixth graders taking this elective surrounded by ten seventh and eighth graders. Our teacher, Mrs. Planck, taught with enthusiasm for Spanish culture, flailing her arms with excitement, her eyes going from little pebbles to ping-pong balls as she continued the lesson. She was the most un-Hispanic looking teacher, but she had a flawless accent. She looked to be about sixty, was blinding white, and had short platinum blonde hair that swayed with her arm movements. The white foundation caked on her face cracked over her wrinkles and pronounced her dark red lipstick more than it needed to be. The blue eyeshadow and thick black eyeliner became less pronounced as her eyes grew wider. Taking all of this in every Tuesday and Thursday proved to be too much for my sixth-grade brain and it became boring. I began to feel the sun's rays wrap around me as they soaked into my back, and my head dropped into the crook of my arm in a light doze.

"Wah wah wah wah..." Mrs. Planck droned on. Meanwhile, in my dream: *Why am I wearing a dress playing soccer? I can't kick anything...*

"Wah wah wah wah..." *I can't move fast enough. I just want to score. Move stupid dress!*

"Wah wah are going to put on a play at the end of May! Won't that be great?"

Twelve heads immediately snapped to full attention. Taking this sudden movement as eagerness, Mrs. Planck continued bouncing in place with a childish smile. "Yes yes! We are going to host a Spanish play for the whole school at the end of May. Like a school treat before everyone leaves for summer. Let me tell you what it's about and then we'll decide roles."

A mortified look passed from one student to the next. *I did not take Advanced Spanish to do a stupid play. I just wanted to get out of reading and writing electives. This was supposed to be EASY.* I shrank myself down to eye level with the table as she explained the plot of the play:

“It’s about an old farm dog that saves his farm from the evil wolf who keeps trying to eat all the animals. The farmer considers getting rid of the dog because he isn’t stopping the wolf. But the dog wins in the end and runs the wolf off the farm. Here are the different roles in order of most speaking.”

She smiled as she handed out the papers and met each of our eyes, expecting us to be jumping for this grand opportunity. However, the collective response was a couple of sheepish attempts at smiling and everyone else frozen in whatever position they were in when she first announced the play. I was ready to bolt out the door and claim an incurable disease that I only got in the afternoons on Tuesdays and Thursdays until summer started. It was the stupidest play I had ever heard. I could barely stand up and give two-minute book reports in front of twenty kids, let alone three hundred and fifty. I was one of the shyest people in a class where I had gone to school with every person since kindergarten. But my parents would tell me that because I had signed up for the class, I had to respect the teacher’s instructions, which meant I had to be part of this stupid play. So I sat and stared at the roles. *Old farm dog, turkey, wolf, farmer, farmer’s wife, pig, horse, cow, chicken...* *Maybe I could get a backstage role.*

After a few moments, Mrs. Planck asked, “Has anyone got play experience?”

Without thinking, I spoke. “Yeah, Sarah does. She was the lead role in last year’s Christmas play.”

I clamped my mouth shut after realizing I had spoken out loud. I never spoke up. I could feel every single eyeball on me. The heat in my sweatshirt turned up twenty degrees and rose to my face. My toes were crushed, and my ribs received a hard jab. I turned to my left and my fellow sixth-grade Spanish compadre was glaring at me. I could almost read the words “I’m going to kill you” in her eyes. She was my friend, and I had just forced her into Mrs. Planck’s spotlight. I sank even lower in my seat, hoping that an incurable disease would attack at any minute.

However, Mrs. Planck hadn’t noticed that Sarah was two seconds from punching me and turned to her. She clapped her hands and said, “Oh good! You can be the old farm dog!”

Sarah’s immediate response was, “Fine, but Ana is the turkey.”

Mrs. Planck looked at me. “Delightful! All right, so who else?”

As the roles filled up, I felt absolute terror. In two months, I was going to speak in front of three hundred and fifty people. And I

wasn't even speaking English, so no one would know what the hell I was saying. I knew I deserved it for throwing Sarah under the bus. At least Sarah was less pissed now that I was forced to join her as a lead role. She was still my ally. When I got the script, I saw that the turkey only had a couple of lines less than the old farm dog. *Damn.*

Every Tuesday and Thursday, we rehearsed our lines in class. We went scene by scene, with Mrs. Planck correcting our pronunciation. She declared every time we met, "Oh they are all going to love this! This is so much fun!" The whole class would exchange wary looks, and Sarah and I would die a little more inside.

For the first two weeks, I didn't bother looking at the script. It made me shiver and sweat thinking about performing. My parents kept nagging me to practice. So I told myself lies to feel better. I began to tell myself that this was a shot at stardom. The more I dwelled on this and repeated it to myself, the more my heart quickened with anticipation. I even started to smile thinking about the play. I held my head higher, stood up straighter, and filled myself with hope and confidence.

During boring science class, my mind daydreamed: *Maybe this will be my big break. Maybe God made me do this to show me what I am supposed to do with my life. It was meant to be.* I imagined myself hearing "Encore! Encore!" from the audience, maybe red roses thrown up to the stage while cameras flashed, leaving spots in my vision. My parents would cry with pride and my sister would brag, "Yeah, that's *my* sister. Wasn't she absolutely wonderful?" Maybe I would be a legend passed down among the generations of students. True, I still could feel that incurable disease coming at any moment, but my thoughts of fame and glory uncoiled the tightening in my gut. I became so enamored with the way my life would change after the play, I memorized all my lines in three days.

Our last week before performance, we practiced on the stage. My classmates were impressed by how often they heard my voice, and I was proud to be on speaking terms with the seventh and eighth graders. My friends were impressed that I knew older kids but were skeptical about the play. They didn't say anything more than "Nice!" because they didn't know what to expect. Plus, being in a play was *so* elementary school.

The one important aspect I had neglected was now forced to my attention. I needed a costume. I went to my dad, the creative idea generator and the least busy parent at the moment.

"Dad, I need a costume."

“When?”

“Tomorrow.”

“And what are you again?”

Exasperated sigh coupled with rolled eyes. “A turkey, Dad.”

Long pause.

He stared off into space and pondered the many possibilities for a last minute costume. Then the sparks of ingenuity brightened his eyes and an innovative smile crept onto his face, the one that only appears when he’s got a great idea.

“Okay, I know what we are going to do.”

And walking with confidence, we went downstairs to find my turkey costume.

Twenty minutes later, I emerged from the basement clutching my masterpiece and beaming. I had a costume that would steal the show.

I should have consulted my mom first.

[Want to know what happens next? Read the short story in full at commons.cu-portland.edu/promethean. It’s this editor’s opinion that she *definitely* should have consulted her mother.]

Mother Is A Criminal

Julia Guzman

She pulled me out of school
Saying I shouldn't worry,
I watched her play the fool;
She'd learned to embody ignorance so well.

She took me to my grandmother's
Thinking she could keep me.
Even as I suffered the weight in grams,
Of the crime committed last evening.

Their badges shined as they came to the door
Towing along my crying sister.
Whose eyes grew red and sore,
While I refused to comfort her.

In my home discipline had become an illusion;
An explanation for pain,
For the bruises on my thighs,
The cause claimed was a migraine.

Laws allowed a class as a cure;
A falsehood she worshipped like nothing before it.
With a signature as proof, easy for her to procure,
I reentered her merciless domain.

The only thing she didn't plan,
Was that she'd beaten fear from me.
Now when command comes with raised hand,
I now know the right reprimand.

i need feminism because...

Sydney Quintana

i was 9 the first time my mom told me to put on a jacket over my tank top in 90 degree LA weather

all because my uncle was coming over and my growing breasts drew attention

i need feminism because i was taught my body should be censored instead of teaching every 9 year old boy that my body is not for his perusal

i was 15 when some guy asked if my first girlfriend and i would make out in front of him because it's hot

when we broke up, that guy tried to comfort me and said "it's okay. at least it wasn't like, a real relationship"

i need feminism because my love is not fetish and it is as real as any other

i am 18 and my grandma calls me every night to make sure i am safe on my college campus

all the stories on the news of rape on campuses haunt her, yet she doesn't call my male cousins

i need feminism because 1 in 4 college girls get raped and i don't place bets for odds as low as 25%

i need feminism because i'm asked my bra size more often than my IQ
when i'm having a bad day, it's reduced to a bad case of pms

when i'm better than a man at something, it's because he went easy on
me

when i'm not friends with a boy, i'm a bitch

when i'm friends with a boy, i'm a tease

when i'm wearing too much, i'm a prude

when i'm not wearing enough, i'm a slut

when i'm walking to my car at night, i hold my breath

and when i'm walking down the street during the day, i hold my tongue

the catcallers who are yelling for me to "smile, baby" don't know that i
am more

i am more than an expression to please them,

more than a body to please them.

Carnival Haiku

Shelby Bonomo

I walk in under
The electric flashing bulbs
A different realm

New lights popping up
Remind me of my PET scan
I don't really mind.

The carnies are like
Doctors, lurking where they think
No one can see them

Lost kids stay the same
Surgical floor or fairground
What's the difference?

Fun new equipment
And monitors that flash bright
When something goes wrong

The screams are still there
But not for the same reason
No longer for fear

The Half-Life of Love

Short Story Contest

Our annual short story contest was inspired by Junot Diaz's quote, "*The half-life of love is forever.*" Of the many beautiful submissions we received, the following are our winners and why our judge, former CU English alumna Hana Whisman, loved them:

1st Place - The Radioactive Half-Life of Love

This piece captures the internal struggle of love and logic, as well as the chaos of heartbreak. By personifying Heart, Brain, Pain and Love, the author articulates the push and pull - the conflict - that love brings. The beauty of this story is that these concepts are grounded not just with character, but vivid and powerful imagery.

2nd Place - Purgatory

This haunting piece captures the emotion, love and frustration that comes with a newborn baby. Emotion is developed through vivid imagery, which escalates throughout the story. The twist at the end is what really gives this story its weight.

3rd Place - feminism is for boys, too

This story shows the heartbreak of society's strict expectations toward gender. The argument of the piece is presented clearly via scenes of a broken child and his struggle in a world of toxic masculinity. The strength of the piece is its ability to capture the reader's emotions.

The Radioactive Half-Life of Love

Alena Willbur

1st place

Thump thump, thump thump.

I grew within a body within a womb, wrapped in the warmth of fluids and other organs. After nine months, Momma Heart decided I was ready to beat on my own.

Brain tried to rationalize my actions, but it did not know the uplifting pleasure of *feeling*. It was a blessing that made me pity Brain.

Until radioactive Love came.

I think I was sixteen.

Although Momma and I were long separated by then, I heard her nagging from Brain's ears and the annoyance made me pound in frustration or tremble with tears. And though I relished in the freedom I felt when I dipped to Stomach while falling on those roller coasters, I hated it when Brain sent me stings of acid through veins that connected me to every organ—that's Pain.

Pain sucked.

But one day, I felt something I had never felt before. It came from a kiss and touch—kiss, touch, then more kisses.

Brain sent a shocking jolt, making me leap in unexplainable happiness. Sparks danced around me and elevated my body higher than I have ever been before and all of a sudden I felt another beat against me. . .

Faint, at first. But warmth radiated from this beat, making me swell and swirl against the walls that separated us so I could be closer to that music. *Thump thump, thump thump.* It sounded just like me. Together, we wrote a symphony. Brain said this was called Love. And Love radiated such warmth that it melted Pain away.

We composed a sweeping waltz with every finger that swept across our bodies, every kiss on the lips, and every word whispered in the ears. I

flew in clouds and swam in the colors of auroras and sunsets. Love felt so ethereal, yet I believed in it with all I had. I gave Love my all—my oxygen, my music—*me*.

Then Love got sick. It began to decay, like radioactive isotopes: in half-lives. The first blow of radiation is always the most powerful, and we made music that generations will make Love to—that's how beautiful it was. Until half of Love left.

Brain told me to fight—yell, scream, let anger and jealousy poison our music green and bitter like weeds on fire. The shocks no longer sent me leaping in a happy dance—they made me whimper.

Pain came back, stronger than ever. Kicking, thrashing, slashing Love away from me with its stone, cold hand.

I tried to reconcile any remnants of Love by tugging my veins, urging Brain to feel that we could not let Love die. But Brain ignored Pain's abuse. So the gaps left by Love's decay were filled with Pain. Parts of me cracked—ice. I could no longer pump life into the other organs as fast as before. I thought I was dying. Though I still felt Love, a mere flicker of candlelight inside me, Pain made icicles.

I cried for Love to get better, to come back and save me from Pain. But radioactive Love decays. And I felt Love decay, half by half, crumbling, withering, like the pages of a thick novel burning in the smolders of fire, no longer warm enough to melt Pain.

Then our music faltered into decrescendo. The songs in my chambers became solo performances—the harmony too distant for my own ears to hear. Music that once swelled my soul left me to shrivel as notes escaped from me in the form of tears. Maybe Momma was wrong—I was not ready to beat on my own. I no longer wanted to feel.

Thump. . . thump. . .

thump.

Half by half, Love decayed until it was a stable, microscopic isotope, barely even there.

This is the radioactive half-life of Love. Upon the first hit of radiation, its atomic cloud begins to fall back to the ground, for none can reach heaven as long as gravity pulls us to earth.

Yet, for some reason, I still beat on, waiting for Love to vanquish Pain again.

Waiting. Hoping.

Beating.

Thump thump, thump thump.

Purgatory

Alyssa Moreno

2nd place

It was the kind of home that everyone dreamed of getting but would immediately regret. We'd been living there four years previous to the twins being born. Each little flower cried the day they crossed over the threshold beneath the warped and worn doorframe. Their cries floated up to the vaulted ceilings and were absorbed into the wood.

Before their presence infected the gingerbread interior of our Victorian heaven, we were ravenous for each other.

We had no concept of time; we didn't even own a clock.

We woke with the pale color of downy sheets and egg whites.

We loved with the heat of a fresh pot of coffee and the sharpness of a new book.

We fought with the dull power of a first time hangover.

We slept under bleary stucco stars.

Once the twins arrived our fire lost its kindling. The thing we once ignored now ruled all of our days. We bought a clock and planned our days by the hour.

5am feeding, burping, and changing.

6am early morning nap.

7am adult feeding.

8am to 5pm was a blur of work and hourly checkups on the twins.

6pm feeding, burping, changing.

7pm adult feeding.

8pm off to bed on a good day.

Our days repeated on a loop of burnt toast, incessant cries, and dreary expressions. We had left our Victorian heaven and walked right into purgatory. While there, I slept under the diminished stars in a bed devoid of life. He had taken a liking to occupying the stairs at night. There he would sit, softly whistling, drifting in and out of consciousness. A ghost of the night, ensuring they slept soundly. He would peer through the dull shadows of the pansy nightlight and look in on their soft-pink faces. Watching the rise and fall of their protruding bellies. There on the stairs he would wait until dawn, when their tiny hands would open up like flower petals awaiting the first ray of sun.

feminism is for boys, too

Kathryn Willoughby

3rd place

My brother is afraid of showing emotion.

When he was twelve, Joseph was beaten up. His American accent among the sea of British ones made him an easy target for years. The bullying culminated with a punch to my brother's stomach. They left him on the ground, cheeks scraped by gravel, eyes filling with tears.

As his friends showed up, Joseph cried. He cried, and they laughed. Not the people who hurt him—his friends. They called him a girl. They said he was weak. They humiliated him, and the well of tears permanently dried up.

My parents called Joseph "sensitive" as a child. When he was born, he got a blanket and, by age two, named it Bee. He slept with it his entire childhood. Carried it with him unashamedly. People at our church knew who Bee was, and asked about him. Joseph would reply, "He's right here," because, duh, it's rude to talk over people instead of talking to them.

When he was six, my mom taught him to tear up his old socks to make them into rags, and Joseph cried. "I don't want to hurt them," he whimpered into my mother's shoulder. "They've been good socks."

He was the subject of all my fights with my mother. "You favor him because he's emotional," I spat at her again and again. I took her failings out on him. Screamed at him, "I hate you!" with all the venom a bratty eleven-year-old can carry.

He hated that I was sad, so he responded with apologies I didn't deserve. His lip trembled as he cried, "I'm so sorry. I don't want her to like me more. I swear." He wrapped his arms around my waist, a crying cherub cuddling a sinful mortal.

My brother is nineteen and I have not seen him cry in years. Last Christmas, he told me he was sad that I moved away. His face was so expressionless it almost felt sarcastic. I near slapped him.

But then his lip twitched, almost imperceptibly, and I saw the fight for stoicism in his eyes. I felt the demands of masculinity weigh on him. I charted the muscles he'd gained like a map toward acceptance. Like a white flag of surrender to the bullies of middle school.

That night, I spotted his blanket, Bee, in his hands. He doesn't take it to college—no one there knows—but in the safety of his room, he still clutches it every night. Wrapped around his right hand, he sleeps like it's been there all along.

[illegible]

Shadows

Chris Houck

Head so unclear and full of fright
I walk alone this lonely night
Shadows dance in the pale moonlight
Impede and haunt my inner sight

A part of me has this madness become
No feeling can help this feeling so numb
Born in darkness I roam this catacomb
Undone

succumb

to whatever

may come

in memoriam: shit mug

Amber Reeves

why have
they left
you here
 alone
 and full
 of shit
well used
well loved
brightly glazed—
 and full
 of shit
here in
the rain
I ask
myself:
 will no
 one come
 to save
 you now?
will you
stay here
forgotten
 alone
 and full
 of shit



Endangers the Corn

Gretchen Anderson

Lilly grew up on a farm. She lived on that farm for twenty-five years.
Then she and her husband started their own.
For seventy-eight years she lived on a farm.
But not anymore.

Her daughter's place couldn't be called a farm.
A few vegetable plots and a pig do not a farm make, she told herself.
She didn't care what her daughter said. This was no farm.

Lilly sighed as she gazed blankly out the window.
Her daughter had a bit of a black thumb, in her opinion,
And those corn stalks looked terrible.
Sighing, she marched out the front door.

Corn has to be protected from overgrowth, you see.
When it reaches a height of three feet, some of the leaves must be
plucked
In order to ensure it grows to the proper height, and to reduce insect
damage.
As she'd done hundreds of times before, Lilly plucked the leaves.

Shriiiiip, shriiiiip, shriiiiip. Lilly reveled in the satisfying sound of ripping
leaves.
Her daddy taught her how to care for the vegetables when she was
seven.
It seemed like just yesterday she saw her daddy.

Grasping ahold of another stalk, Lilly let go to examine her hands.
Hands that used to be tough and calloused from labor had grown soft.
Small pearls of blood adorned her fingers and palms.
Mustn't stop now or we'll go hungry, Daddy used to chirp.
Ignoring the pain, Lilly continued on a new stalk of corn.

Rosaline drove slowly up the winding driveway to her house,
Happy with herself for finding a sweater that Mama might actually wear.
Parking before the garage, she gaped at the sight beside her:

An old woman in a white nightgown plucking the petals off her rose bushes.

Barefoot in the dirt and shrouded in pink and white should be a beautiful sight.

Mama was confused again, and this time the roses paid the price.

Slowly approaching her mother, Rosaline laid a hand on the frail old shoulder.

“Oh Rosie! You startled me. I was just taking care of your corn patch here.”

“Thank you, Mama.”

“You mustn't let it get so overgrown, sweetie. Flea-beetles and mice will feast on it. You must pluck the leaves regularly; otherwise, it endangers the corn, you see.”

Through Hell and Back

Brandi Barbosa-Brown

I was fifteen when I first saw her, and I still remember it as if it were yesterday. It was the first day of my sophomore year in high school. I was standing on the risers in the choir room, and I was nervous as hell. I had never taken a choir class before, yet alone an advanced choir class. At first I regretted my decision of auditioning for a spot, but the moment I saw her I was excited to be there. She had dirty blonde hair, fair skin, blueish green eyes that would lean towards one color depending on the color shirt she was wearing. And to top it off she had the cutest smile. It was weird; I had never had feelings like this for a girl before. But there was something about her that awakened the butterflies in me. Her name was Emily; although we're no longer together, she gave me six years of unforgettable memories.

I was raised in a Catholic home and although we weren't religious, my family would refer to the bible when they had no other argument on why something was wrong. When I was eleven, I remember being at my grandmother's house listening to my mother and my aunts ranting about a cousin of mine. He was in the Santa Clara Vanguard Drum Corps, a marching band that I would later wish to be a part of. But instead of being in the horn line or the drumline, he was in the color guard. One of my aunts blurted, "Ugh, the color guard? Really? That's just so gay." I didn't think much of it. I mean, I used to call my friends gay all the time for shits and giggles. That's what everyone did, right? Wrong. They weren't saying this for shits and giggles; they were doing it out of disgust. They were ashamed that a Barbosa could be ever gay. But I didn't know that. It wasn't until a couple of hours later when my mother, my brother Brandon, and I were walking to our front door. My mother stopped dead in her tracks, turned around and said, "If I ever find out either one of you are gay, I'm kicking you out of the house."

I cried when I realized that I liked Emily. I kept repeating what my mother had said to my brother and me all those years back. Over and over and over again in my head. I didn't know what to do with

myself, I had no one to talk to. I was drowning in my own guilt, and I knew that if I were to come out to my family, I'd be the subject of the talk. I'd be looked down upon. I'd be rejected by my own family. I would go from being everyone's favorite niece to the outcast of the entire family. But...even with all of these thoughts going through my head, I didn't let it stop me from pursuing Emily.

I asked Emily to be my girlfriend on February 11, 2010 and I never expected her to say yes. In fact her exact words were, "I thought you'd never ask." We were able to keep our relationship a secret with the exception of a few friends. After a couple of months, my brother started to catch on. He started to ask me questions in front of my mom like, "Are those cupcakes for that girl you were hugging from behind the other day?" or "Who's that girl that you keep holding hands with?" I'm not quite sure when he found out we were dating but when he did, he caused some hell.

Before I continue on with my story, I want to go into some background about the relationship I had with my brother at this time. As a kid, I was very tomboyish. I mean, that's what happens when you're the only girl in a family full of boys. I always had my hair up in a ponytail, I always wore baggy clothes and I loved playing sports. I rarely had crushes on boys but when I did, I got teased for it and when I didn't, I still got teased for it. It was always a lose-lose situation for me: when I did have a crush, my brother told me that they would never like me back because of how boyish I was. When I didn't have a crush, he called me a lesbian. Either way, he loved telling all of my friends. My brother was my only bully growing up. He always picked fights with me and knew how to push my buttons. And it was like that from elementary school all the way up to high school. I was never able to escape it.

I felt like my brother made it his mission to expose my sexuality to my mother. I can recall multiple times when he tried to catch me in the act of talking to my girlfriend, but there is one specific time that will always stick with me. I was sitting on the couch in our spare bedroom, and I was direct messaging Emily on Twitter from my iTouch because I had gotten my phone taken away. At one point, my brother came into the room and asked to see my iTouch. I closed out the Twitter app and handed it to him. Minutes later my mother stormed into the room and shoved my iTouch in my face with the Twitter app open. I could hear

her yelling, but couldn't make out what she was saying. All I was thinking was, "Oh god... She's going to kick me out of the house... Where am I going to go? What am I going to do?" My heart dropped into my stomach and I could feel my blood rushing to my face. Finally I heard, "ARE YOU DATING THIS GIRL?!"

I stayed silent, so she repeated the question again. I took a deep breath and said "no." She stood up straight and looked at me with a burning rage in her eyes and said, "You don't talk this way with someone you're just friends with, Brandi." She left the room and my brother just stood in the doorway with his arms crossed, a disgusted look on his face. My blood was boiling and all I wanted to do was punch him until my knuckles started to bleed. Instead, I pushed him out of my way and left the house. Why was he doing this to me? Why did he want to see me in so much pain? Aren't your siblings supposed to have your back?

Weeks passed, and my brother and I were getting ready to see our biological father. I was excited I was going to be able to get away from all this madness. Boy was I wrong. Brandon was able to ruin this trip like he ruins everything else. All I wanted to do was get away from home and not think about all the crazy shit that I was going through. But when you have a brother who doesn't support you, that's close to impossible. I used to find ways to try and get a hold of Emily, and this time I used my half-sister's phone. Terrible idea. Brandon told my stepbrother Shawn about my sexuality, and it was like I was going through hell all over again. They took Shania's phone, read through all of our messages, prank-called Emily, and made fun of me.

After the third day of taking their bullshit, I couldn't deal with it anymore. I walked to the park that was just down the street from our house and Brandon and Shawn followed me. "Dude, get back home. There's a curfew here, you'll get us all in trouble!" But I didn't care, I wasn't going to put up with their bullying any longer. I just kept walking until they left me alone. Twenty minutes later, I found myself standing by a lake. I had no clue where I was, but what I did know was that I wasn't ready to stay in this world where no one accepted me for who I was. I felt my blood rushing to my face while tears ran down it. My entire body felt numb. I don't remember much of what was going through my head. But what I do remember is seeing the sunset and how beautiful it made the water look. The fiery sun cast shades of red,

orange, and yellow that clashed with hints of blue. I could hear the wind blowing across the water, making small ripples on top of my feet. The next thing I remember is feeling the ice cold water wrap around my body. It felt surprisingly nice. It felt like something I could get used to. My vision went dark. It was so peaceful.

Just when I thought I could stay in this peaceful place forever, I felt the water ripple and heard a voice screaming my name. It was my cousin Derek. I had no clue how he found me, I didn't even think he knew I was in town. He pulled me out of the water. The next thing I remember is him wrapping me up in a blanket that he pulled out of the trunk of his car. While my teeth chattered, I told him that I didn't want to go home. He took me to his place, made me dinner and asked me what I was doing at the lake. I answered his question with a question. "How did you find me? How did you know I was there?"

His answer still amazes me to this day, "Your dad called me. He called everyone. You scared him shitless. I didn't know you'd be there but I figured I'd check 'cause that's where I go whenever I need to get away from everyone."

We never mentioned that night to anyone, we didn't even bring it up when we saw each other, but his actions that night changed my life forever. I knew that I had someone who was willing to be there for me no matter what. No one in my family except for my cousin knew about that night. And I never intend on telling any of them.

When my dad took my brother and me back home, things were still the same. I felt like Rapunzel stuck in her tower and never able to leave. The only time I was ever allowed to leave was for school. I had to be home within fifteen minutes after school got out. I wasn't allowed to go out with friends and for a while, my stepfather wouldn't allow me to see my family. And what really bothered me was that I could tell my mother felt guilty for it. When they would leave to go see my family, she would give me this look of, "I'm so sorry that this is happening." But this wouldn't be happening if I had just felt safe within my own home, within my own family.

It took a long time for us to get where we are right now. My parents never apologized for how they treated me, but I'm okay with it. My brother, on the other hand, did apologize. He explained to me that if

60

my grandfather were still here, he wouldn't be happy with my sexuality. But I disagree; I was my grandfather's favorite grandchild, and he made that very clear. I'm not sure he would have understood me, but I know for damn sure that he would have loved me unconditionally. I wouldn't say that my family fully understands me, but they definitely accept me for who I am now.

Many people ask if I wish things had played out a different way. And my answer: Of course. No child should ever go through something like this. No child should ever feel lost and alone. But if I had the chance to go back in time to change anything, I wouldn't. This whole experience has shaped me to be the person that I am today. It's my story. I was dragged through hell only to be put back in a place that I can never take for granted.

Tweets to Your Last Kiss

We asked, you answered — here are a few of our favorite tweets “to your last kiss.” For the full list of submissions, check out @prometheanCU on Twitter. (Spot the professor’s submission!)

That was the kind of kiss people write songs about.

I don’t remember her name but she was from Ireland...so that’s cool.

It was in a condo. And condos are awful. And, randomly, there was A LOT of spaghetti.

I buried my face in her velvety ears, kissed her atop her fuzzy head, rustled her fur. She woofed in reply and licked my face.

Last night my boyfriend shoved his tongue in my mouth and told me it tasted like teriyaki.

If you love me, cremate me, and kiss my ash daily. #ivearnedit #PKrocks

Pouring rain.

We looked and looked at each other. And then, we kissed.

In Comparison

Torrey Woolsey

Nothing longed to be Something
But couldn't find her worth.
Something sauntered around
With Everyone fawning after her.

Something longed to be Nothing
For she seemed so sure.
So content, so confident,
Not needing the justification of others.

Something peered into the mirror
And Nothing was all she saw.

A battery. A dragon. A reason to move across the country.

Timothy O'Brien

I once had a friend who would urinate on electric fences and not understand why he had degenerative hair loss.

It was a tragic sight to behold.

Someone who would constantly forget they were the source of their own problems, their own devices, being for us an experimental freelance epiphany.

If his father had not joined the war and given up halfway through (which consisted of shooting his own leg off), I would like to think he would be a better friend to us all,

but you never can judge someone based on their family.

We keep a beach ball on our couch to throw around in case people are feeling dreary. I find solace in the fact we can have an insta-fun-party-time.

It is definitely more fun than electrocution or amputation.

To Be Other Than Me

Julia Guzman

I'd love to be the arteries
That flow through lungs.
I'd stretch to the beat of breath,
And swell with the crimson tide.

I'd admire being a rare bush,
With the sweetest of berries.
I'd grow my tempting treats,
And make my young friends smile.

I'd prefer to be the rarest of flashes,
That escape with the sunset.
I'd spark up the sky with green,
And grant a new wish each day's death.

I'd enjoy being the ocean's current,
Forever a playful fiend.
I'd taunt gravity, my greatest foe,
And dance with the smiling moon.

I'd like to be the color of rose petals,
The darkest pink along the edges.
I'd tint the velvet unexpectedly,
And tempt all to brave the thorns.

I'd find it interesting to grow on a tree,
Cringing at the thought of being plucked.
I'd happily grow a ripe, rounded red,
And enjoy the adventure of my fall.



thank you

Kathryn Willoughby

It is a Thursday night and I feel as if the depression is cracking me open

I seep, drip, leak through every purposeful step in the grass

I wonder if the moon feels as alone as I do, sits in the sky and wishes
for whispers of starlight

There is a lump in my throat the size of the sun and I don't want to
swallow it anymore

It needs to be sobbed, needs to burst through my eyes, needs to find its
way to the lonely sky

Jessica finds me waiting outside for her and ushers me in for a hug

Her smile brightens like the sun too far gone. "Let's go for a walk"

The sob escapes later: fake grass, soccer field turf, navy-black sky. The
moon is our only light and we are starry shadows. I'm wearing a dress
but I say I want to do a cartwheel and she screeches "Go for it!" So I
do. My dress falls around my head and I don't stop to wonder if my
underwear is weird or not. I am too busy flying. She laughs, a sound that
could make real grass grow beneath her if she wanted.

We lay down on the grass and talk. I am struck by how easy our
friendship is. How easily she can piece together my unfinished sentences
to find my meaning. How easily the world can go from dark to light.
The sun also rises, Hemingway wrote. Earnestly, I believe him. And with
that, I sob into my strongest friend's shoulder. Her arms envelop me
like vines with grapes just about to ripen. I cry messily. My glasses are
lopsided. I ask, "Will you pray with me?" She nods. Her smile tells me I
matter, and earnestly I believe her.

We sit in the exact center of the field, center of the world, and seek out the God of the universe. Hands held, hearts open, Jessica's voice warms the moonlight. She prays our way through the night, her hands anchoring mine, ready to shield me from whatever dark thing might creep on me through this fake grass.

It does, and she does, and when we open our eyes, we find that mine are dry.



Friends for Life © 2016 Gregory Hutzell

Ivy

Chris Houck

A gentle breeze caresses my face
As I sit in the middle of an old logging road
That this hillside wears like a battle scar.
Trees creek as they sway back and forth,
Spreading their pine needles and leaves
Across the forest floor, like a blanket.
Everything that surrounds me is natural,
So raw and exposed
It leaves me feeling superficial.
But the trees, they tolerate me, and
This hillside that provides my seat
Leaves me with a sting,
The kind which a bull provides when
It strikes you from behind, but
It tolerates me, too.
If I sit here long enough
I think they all will.
The dirt, rocks, brush, moss,
Bugs and even the ivy.
Oh, the ivy,
Give her enough time, and
She'll consume my very existence.
The same way she did the old dog
I laid to rest a few yards beyond my perch.
There's a busy world pressing on
But inside this vortex, time
Slows to a crawl.

You see this place. It seems surreal
And leaves you with the illusion that life
Goes on forever.
But with this cigarette pressed between
My lips, burning my time away,
I know better.
We're all just rats trapped
In the delusional maze
Of our own minds,
While our bodies aimlessly walk
This life on the blind.
For every second that ticks by,
We get deeper into the maze,
And the ivy, it creeps closer...
There's a few bucks in my pocket—
A lot of good it does me out here.
Yet we spend over half our lives
Trying to attain it.
Instead of trying to retain
What's in this moment.
Perception isn't the key,
Or maybe it is.
Or maybe we're just
To see things for what they are.
Either way, there is meaning in time,
And I'm sure I'll find it, deep within the ivy.

Komorebi 木漏れ日

Jessy Shiroma

It is:

“the sunlight that filters through
the leaves of trees”

I imagine:

a quiet moment.

And a flood of tilted sunbeams
and green shadows the shapes of
tumbled,
jumbled
words.

I also imagine us:

me with a braid—

you in

a cotton t-shirt.

Tawny-skinned bliss.

channeling the sun,

channeling the sin.

Streaks of light; of love

(or what appeared to be.)

Visions of each other's venom,

—flecks of neon—

in our dilated eyes

I miss your inky hands
And the way you sauntered—
Like a loose continent
floating away
into the afternoon.
Free

Goodbye

Copper Begonias

Jalyn Gilmore

Tuesday 7:05 p.m.

“How could you do this to me?”

Rue said nothing, merely kept her eyes down with her hands in her lap.

“Rue!”

Finally Rue lifted her head. “Babe, I’m not doing this to us. There hasn’t been an ‘us’ for a long time. And you know that.”

“You can’t do this. Please. I—I need you. What am I supposed to do without you?”

“Char, c’mom.” Rue stood and extended her hand.

Char recoiled bumping into the mantle above the fireplace still cradling the flickering remnants of a fire. The gentle waves of heat wafted up Char’s back, drying the cool sweat.

“Char,” Rue said once again, reaching for her.

“No!” Char swatted at Rue, catching a fingernail in the back of her hand, birthing fresh pearls of blood.

Rue wiped the blood on her jeans. She sighed. “Goodnight, Char.” She headed for the bathroom, cuddling her scratched hand close to her heart.

9:45 p.m.

Char pounded another shot of brandy. Having run out of Coke a little over half an hour ago, she took it straight. The fire flickered and snickered as the smoke crawled up the chimney. She sat at the bar watching the living room. Everything was so red, Rue’s favorite color.

Even her hair was a glossy burgundy. Most of this furniture belonged to Rue. Would she take it with her when she moved out? Char clenched her fists and gritted her teeth against the thought. She tried and failed to blink the image away, Rue packing up and leaving just to move into some other woman's house. Leaving Char alone...again.

"It's not fair," she whispered.

First her father, then even her mother, and now Rue? When did 'goodbye' become standard practice? Char glanced out over the living room again and caught a glimmer from the mantle. Stumbling over her own feet and once over the leg of the coffee table, she stood before the mantle, gently lifting the silver picture frame. It was the two of them the year they met. Rue laughed at Char trying to get the perfect shot. Her deep amber skin glowed in the summer sunset, her box braids a warm hazel fay. And Char with her carnelian auburn hair in the bob that took her three years to grow out. She ignored a tear racing down her cheek as she gazed at the photo.

There hasn't been an 'us' for a long time. And you know that...

Char tore the photo out of the frame and threw it into the fire. She staggered back to the bar for another drink, but not just a shot. She stood on her tip-toes reaching for a glass when her wrist knocked another mug to the ground. She watched wide-eyed as it shattered. It was Rue's R mug. It matched her C mug that Rue had made for their first anniversary. Char fell to her knees trying to piece the mug back together only to cut up her fingers. She froze and retrieved her C mug, holding it softly between her fingers. She smashed it to the ground. Her chest heaved as she surveyed her work.

"There," she whispered. "Now they're together. Always together." She looked over her shoulder at the fireplace where their photo smoldered. "Always together..."

10:01 p.m.

Rue gasped and shot up in bed. She was drenched head to toe, completely doused in water. Her head whipped around when she saw

Char standing a foot away, face expressionless, her cream skin glowing an ashen white.

“What the hell, Char! What’s your problem?”

Char said nothing but stepped closer into the moonlight. Her emerald eyes shone bright and feline.

“Just because you’re mad doesn’t mean...”

Rue caught a glimpse of the bottles around Char’s feet—bottles of lighter fluid normally kept under the grill. Rue’s eyes traveled down her own body glistening and sticky. She pulled her tank top up and sniffed it. Rue’s eyes returned to Char, who was also damp now that she took a better look. Char held out the lighter she’d given Rue for Christmas last year.

“Char, please. Don’t do this to me.” When she still said nothing, Rue whimpered, “Please...”

Char clicked the lighter; the tiny flame danced about, waiting for purpose.

“Char—”

“Don’t worry. We’re together. Always together.”

Rue held her breath as the lighter slipped through Char’s fingers.

Dear Friend...

Julia Guzman

Dear *Promethean*,

What makes you feel the most un-alone?

Sincerely,

A Friend

Dear Friend,

I don't know what makes me feel un-alone. I think distraction can make you feel un-alone. I think feeling “alone” is feeling useless or pointless; like... because in that moment, in that room, you don't have anything to do but people watch, so you feel alone.

Not true. The only person who can reverse those sentiments is you.

Student Editor for *The Promethean*,

J. C. G.

Dear *Promethean*,

Why do you need feminism?

Sincerely,

A Friend

Dear Friend,

I need feminism because... I shouldn't need it. I should be equal because I'm a living being, and as such should be treated like anyone and everyone deserves. I shouldn't need feminism because in the end it is simply asking to be acknowledged for what I am, and I am human.

Why ask for gender on a job application? Why not ask for height and natural hair color? Why ask for gender on social media accounts? Why not ask for shoe size and whether your teeth are perfect? If gender bothers you, shouldn't everything else?

Student Editor for *The Promethean*,

J. C. G.

A Knight Known

Zachary Rothell

To reap and sow through fields furrowed,
A lonely knight hath pondered.
To what vile end does glory play
In a world drowned in both night and day.

To be a harbinger of what always comes,
To do the deed that must be done.
Oath sworn thus, bound to the end,
Nothing can overcome.
And to sit here, now, gazing out at the field,
Looking at those oblivious,
Unknown to all but themselves,
And me.

Their happiness a stream that keeps flowing,
Joyous and swollen in their own desire,
Must it come to them as well?

Yesterday, the man a town over
Two days past, the craven hidden in the woods
And now them.

They know me not, nor ever will.
I am neither a burden nor a concern, So that
For where they are, I am not
And when I am, they have gone.
Though the journey slow,
With all I know to come and go,
Maybe I will find myself.

Touch Me

Jalyn Gilmore

I want you to touch me
if only for a moment

I want you to reach through my skull and
caress my lukewarm flesh
Feel every bump, scar and the chiseled bones beneath—I want you
to peel back each layer
and dig your thumbnail into my collarbone
and carve out a greeting

Take your hand and clench my chattering teeth
reach into my mouth and pull out my tongue and see the truths, lies
and actual falsehoods tattooed there

Wade your fingers into my sockets
feel the sticky residue of my corneas
slip your fingers in deeper until your nails find my optic nerve
then you see through my eyes (your hands)
that I have been searching for you

Wrap your hands around my neck
find my nape (there is a little silver zipper there)
pull it down to my tailbone then,
my magician, with a flick of the wrist
yank me
inside out

See how my blood crawls in my veins back to my heart
how it slinks in my capillaries
down to my feet

Can you find my liver?

it's festering, peeling and gushing bile
the liver filters
it has to find the good in everything that we choose to swallow
that we don't remember swallowing,
that we shouldn't have swallowed
everything else that is crammed down our throats
It has to find the good. It doesn't have a choice

It is sagging

Once firm tissue stretched and worn
like a woman who spent so many days roasting herself under scorching
sun
in hope of honey caramel skin akin to beaten leather
It can't hold any more because this girl doesn't have any more

For every drop of evil I swallow my liver becomes
saturated
and most of it passes into my blood
through my beating heart
comes to a halting standstill
(I can't remember its rhythm)

Press your finger into the weary tissue
watch the depression it leaves
now press deeper until you tear it open

and let the sludge drain pool around my ankles

Now flick the wrist and turn me
outside in

Fold my hands in yours
I'm sorry they might come undone
they are made of Copper and Aluminum
Glass and Plastic
but they are mine and I will go as they do

Now without second glance,
take me where I'm meant to go...

The Pug of Life

Alyssa Moreno

Rolls of jelly fur
A tiny loaf of round bread
Jiggly jumping pug

Big eyes go both ways
An audacious plumpy pig
Bashful buoyant pug

Face is all squished in
Adored, start to snuffling end
Soundless slumb'ring pug

Alive

Sierra McWaters

In my hands, I hold five items.

I hold you,

A powerful woman with stars in her eyes

and a song in her heart.

Your future stands right in front of you,

Like the bangs that fall into your line of vision

and tangle between eyelashes with each blink of
wonderment.

You are young—

But old enough to know that life is not like the movies

And you are not Dorothy clicking her heels to go

Home.

I hold the house where it happened.

A place once held so dear,

now littered with cheap pick-up lines and red Solo cups.

The bathroom.

You—pressed against the counter with your eyes staring into your
reflection

as the rhythm takes hold.

Your image is blurry,

But not blurry enough to see those same stars

fade from your retinas.

You taste the bitter liquor climbing back up your throat.

The acid silences you as if to say,

“This is all your fault.”

I hold a weapon.

Though it is not one that can slice or
physically puncture.

It is your trust.

Just like a gun, something that was once used for your own protection
is now pointed straight back at you.

The bullet of betrayal rips through your chest
like a bulldozer tears through the earth,

Leaving you empty—vacant.

The one you trusted with your deepest longings and dreams
has violated you in more ways than one.

You didn't know trust could destroy you like this.

I hold a picture of you as a child.

Small curls frame your face
as sunbeams pour from your teeth.

Your stars shone brightest then.

You are sitting in your father's lap
nestled in his shirt collar
with his 5 o'clock shadow scraping your forehead.

He was the only man you trusted then,

A fact that is only truer now.

You were always taught not to talk to strangers.

But you never knew that those closest
could destroy you more than any outsider.

I hold your gray hair.

Time has passed steadily since that
fateful night—

Your bones creak like the floorboards of
the house where it happened.
You are alone—but you like it that way.
Though your stars have dimmed,
they still flicker on—
Twinkling among the nebulae of your mind.
Your stars will never die,
Reminding you, always, that you are
Alive.

Anna and the Wobbly Star

Timothy O'Brien

Anna had always considered her granddaughter her favorite wobbly star. Tonight was the night the sky came down. The roof of the hospital would peel away and, as the large open space pulled on Anna to return, she would bring her wobbly star with her.

The doctors were skeptical as to how she had lived this long. Being a rancher and ingesting the amount of asbestos she had was sickening and would cause the most healthy to become terminal in a matter of moments.

Anna was strong. She was the wind. A moving gale that pushed through her family and grasped them all at the same time. Being the reason for her family's success, she had started coddling and grooming her little star for the same bright future. And now she was determined to carry this star with her to her next adventure, as the time approached.

Anna weaved between rooms and beds, cables and machines. She knew the time was coming, as the ceiling tiles started rattling and gravity became less reliable.

Anna was ready. She leaned towards her star and, reaching out, beckoned her star to come with her. As her star started to cry, Anna realized a precious fact: Sometimes the wind must die down to see the sky.

As she slowly let go of her most dear one, her strength failed and a sense of air disappeared. The trees stopped rustling and the lake turned to glass. The wind had died down.

Darkness

Mackenzie Pollock

The Darkness swirls and presses on every inch of your mind
All-encompassing sounds, scratching and ringing, screaming to be heard
The self-deprecating words looping around and around
Useless, Freak, Pathetic, Weak, Useless, Freak, Pathetic, Weak
They spin, twisting, turning, leaking out and coating everything you do

So you put on a mask
One with the brightest smile and the easiest laugh
A mask that projects color to cover the Darkness behind it
You fake the light
Because Darkness fears the light

You start the tasks
The clicking of pens, The tapping of feet, The pulling of hair
Repetitive tasks to try and replace the repetitive words
Anything to pretend you don't feel the Darkness building
It never works

The thoughts start
'They're late, maybe they were in an accident?'
You hear a crack as a line forms in the mask
'That group is laughing, it must be at me, what did I do wrong?'
A piece flakes off, the first chip in the mask.

Thoughts connect, each creating a chip or crack in your perfect mask
The more thoughts, the more cracks
The more cracks, the more thoughts
The cracks twisting and turning creating beautiful spiderwebs of
negativity
Until it shatters

The pieces falling away as the Darkness surges
Each piece embedding in your skin, causing rips and tears where more
Darkness seeps out
It slithers out enveloping you in its cocoon of madness
All you see is black, all you hear is scratching
Wanting anything or anyone to make it stop

You may force it back once more
Maybe build a new mask
But it will always be there
Waiting for you to break once more
To swallow you up, to suffocate you

In total Darkness

The Good Book

Torrey Woolsey

1 I lie on thy bedside table
Untouched.... for several days.
Skin tattooed by water rings,
spine broke from forced backbends
in search of the truth.

2 Pages brittle and stained,
a clear representation of Sunday.¹
Doodles etched: I bore you;
I shepherd your wandering thoughts.

3 I have an opinion or two
and what I say should be absolute.
I have consumed stories that are supposed to emit hope
but what I regurgitate is fear and judgment.

4 I am a walking contradiction.
If I were your counselor,
One session I would tell you to stop persecuting those around you.
Enforce the reminder that we are *all children of God*.
Prompt that *it is right to love thy neighbor*.

5 The next session you will beam at the progress you made.
Expressing how you loved all:
Those who have sinned,
Those who are gay,
Those of a different religion.

¹ A wave of judgment as you reflect on the sins you've committed. You will never be good enough.

6 You are the epitome of proud.

I will allow your confidence to overflow
then I will empty it by telling you that you are wrong.

You will be damned.

Some people deserve to be delivered to the depths of hell.
I have the power to make you feel defeated.

7 On the outside, my simplicity is seducing and intimidating
but welcoming and familiar.

On the inside I am confused and misunderstood
(more often than not.)

I suffer from Kalopsia.²

² A condition, state or delusion in which things appear more beautiful than they really are.

Skin

Timothy O'Brien

It peels its skin off.
Against the pavement.
Against the bricks.

Its skin slides off.
In the river.
Against the current.

(The skin of our Mothers)
(The skin that birthed us)
(The skin that shields us)

Thick skin.
Skin that can withstand the scalding winds.
Skin that encases you as a tank.

slip on silk soft skin
skin bathed in milk
skin fresh borne

The skin that peels off.
Against the pavement.
Against the bricks.

The skin that slides off.
In the river.
Against the current.

Note to Self: Please

Chris Houck

Confined in this chrysalis

Oscillation brings surreal calmness

Mind overwhelmed by burdens

Emotion impedes purpose

Hostage of innate situation

Ominous sun pierces through

Montage of haunting motion

Elusive heart breeds destruction

An Open Letter to John Mayer

Jalyn Gilmore

Dear John Mayer,

When you came up with the song “Daughters,” who were you thinking of?

Who were you trying to love? Was her heart trapped far too deep in the recess of her chest quaking like a small insect caught in a web? John Mayer, who were you trying to love? I can imagine she was a woman just too complicated just too elusive just too much too soon and not enough time. You said yes and she said not quite. You held your heart out and she wasn’t ready to take it. So her father just didn’t treat her right. And maybe he didn’t. Maybe he was a shit show of a dad. Maybe he was a bull in a china shop and shattered every memory into small glistening shards that she just couldn’t put back together. Maybe he packed his things along with her smile and walked out of the door only to return on weekends or never at all.

And this woman is left in his wake using her hair to sop up her own tears and wash her face like Mary Magdalene and she is waiting for the right man to come in and replace him and put her back together again. She asks herself what she did wrong, what she could have done, what she didn’t do. She wants to carve her love into his back and have him cloak her in his arms until the bitter cold locked away in her memories makes her stop trembling.

Or maybe not.

John Mayer, why do you want fathers to be good to us daughters?

Is it to make your job easier after we have been released into the wild like captive animals tossed out of captivity? You don’t want a complicated woman. You don’t want a woman with too much history. You don’t want a cautious woman. You don’t want a broken woman. Nobody does. So preventative measures are needed. Fathers, you call, be good to your daughters. Love them and we’ll only have to fight half the battle. Once you break a woman, it’s just too much trouble to put her back together again.

John Mayer, I would like to tell you this in response: Fuck you.

What is it? Is it too much? Is our love coated in barbed wire soaked in vinegar? Are you worried if we see a father playing with his children, we'll break down in tears and you won't have enough tissue and glue to fix us? Are you scared you'll come home and find pieces of us scattered across the apartment and you won't want to step in it?

I want to let you know, sir, I don't need you to fix me. You see, we broken girls know exactly what we are. We know that boys are scared of girls like us because we are more than what they are willing and accustomed to working with. They fear our tears are hair-trigger grenades nestled in gunpowder ready to ignite at the slightest provocation. We are not the girls you marry. "Son, don't marry a girl with daddy issues." We already know exactly what you're thinking. You want a love that is open and bursts dams releasing the floodgates of affection and patience and understanding.

But our love is not of that brand.

You see, a girl with "daddy issues" has her own type of love. She loves quietly because the last time she loved too loudly, she was silenced before she even knew what she wanted to say. She loves on the edge of her seat because this wouldn't be the first time her love was disappointed. She loves with her heart tucked away for safekeeping because you are asking too much, too quickly. You are reaching for something that is not yours to have only to hold. Her trust is not a rose that blooms bright and fresh during the spring. Her trust is waiting, lying dormant for just the right season.

John Mayer, our fathers may not have been good to us but we are not broken. We have spent every day of our lives collecting our ragged pieces as we go. We "broken" girls keep superglue in our back pockets, staples in our purses and duct tape in our nightstands.

So, John Mayer, don't call on our fathers to love us so it makes your world a little easier. Call on them to love us because we are worth loving. Because we try twice as hard to love everything else. Not because the broken need to be fixed. But because the broken already know the never-ending cost of repairs.

The Bridge

Tijera Johnson

We all knew it was coming. The news broke twenty-four hours prior. The only thing left to ponder was how we were going to end it. Time. Most chose to spend it with family or have marathon sex. As a single, twenty-four-year-old woman who aged out of the foster care system, neither was an option for me. But I need to do SOMETHING on the eve of the end. There was one place... When life gives you lemons, I guess. It's four in the morning and the last sunrise is ascending.

I found this gem while looking for pots of gold. I never did find the end of a rainbow, but the adventures always produced treasures like this place. It's an iron bridge that hasn't been used for decades. Surrounding the giant relic are unfinished buildings and eroded rocks that once belonged to a river. It's quiet here in this forgotten corner of the city. Which is why I'm surprised when I see her.

It's not like I thought I was the only one who knew about this place, I've just never seen anyone else. She's tiny. Petite. Her hair is the biggest thing on her. Full, bouncy curls of dark auburn dance in the breeze. Her windbreaker devours her frame and does little to chase the morning cold. She sits on the rail, legs swinging between two rods as she gazes over the horizon. It's only as the bridge protests my weight as I sit that she notices me. When she does, her eyes widen in surprise.

She's older than I thought. Maybe my age, plus or minus two years. She stares for a while, looking me over. Not one to waste an opportunity, I catalog all the features you can only observe close up. Her eyes are intense. Not their color—warm honey—but the look in them that suggests her mind is working a mile a minute. Her skin is a few shades lighter than mine. I notice the pink earbuds in her ears a second before she pulls the right one out. She offers it to me after one more quick look. Her slight accent is a surprise.

The next song comes on as the sun starts to peek through the clouds. It's about the desert and the danger of getting lost. The fear of being buried alive. It was the soundtrack to a popular movie back in the day. I think. In the silence before the next song, she tells me her name is

Priyanka. And that's how we spend the next six hours. One at a time, we share pieces of ourselves between lyrics. I learn her parents are in India—there was no time for her to get there. She's an only child. She started making this playlist the moment the news broke. She found the bridge three years ago, when she first moved here, after getting lost on her way to a pizza parlor. I tell her about having no one. About my first kiss with Alina when I was fourteen. I tell her about my tattoos. We share our passions, fears, hopes and dreams. We share things we've never told anyone else.

Eventually, the need to eat arises. After the first song, there is an unspoken agreement we will spend this day together. So I swing my legs back toward the ground and stand before helping her do the same. We are still connected by a pink wire, so we stand as close as we can without touching. The music is still playing, so we are silent. I lead her out of Tea Leaf Street onto Blueville Avenue. Yesterday, the street was teeming with traffic. Today, it's as vacant as the voices on an instrumental track. After foolishly realizing no shops or restaurants will be open, I start walking toward my apartment. Two blocks before we reach our destination, a man wearing a beard, little ducky socks and nothing else runs past us never uttering a word. We clasp hands and run the rest of the way laughing uncontrollably.

I live on the third floor in apartment #315. Usually, it takes forever for the elevator to get to the lobby, but not today. It really is the little things that make us happy. As we try to catch our breath, I notice our adrenaline is as high as the bearded man. Priyanka's pupils are blown wide and her smile is radiant. She's breathtaking. Something is amiss though. As she looks around my apartment, I finally realize what it is. My pink earbud fell out during our run. We are still holding hands.

When she notices, she slowly slips her fingers from mine. Embarrassed, I scavenge the kitchen for food. My grocery day was scheduled for tomorrow and there was no hope of getting inside the stores once the news broke. Priyanka's gaze lingers on my wall of photography and tower of books. My place isn't anything to brag about. Just four walls, a kitchen, and the door by the window that leads to my mini-bedroom and "en suite bathroom." But, it's home and mine. Sadly, the best I can come up with for lunch is fancy turkey sandwiches and mint Oreos for dessert. As I start to gather ingredients—lettuce, tomatoes, jalapeños, relish, cheese, avocados, spinach, bread—she comes into the kitchen and starts gathering items from the pantry. I forgot I had some of them. She wraps her pink earbuds around her

phone, places it on the counter, rolls up her sleeves, and gets to work. We work seamlessly together and talk freely as more music plays. We laugh and sing. Once the meal is prepared, we sit on my tiny couch and take in the feast before us: fancy sandwiches, pita bread chips, mint Oreos, white wine, chai tea and water.

It's two o'clock when we finish eating. "Sunset" is scheduled for eight p.m. I ask her if she wants to call her parents. The phone towers are overwhelmed. No calls are getting through any time soon. Thankfully, she said what she needed to say the last time they spoke.

Six hours. What shall we do? We open the bottle of red wine and play Truth or Dare. It's fun.

Five hours. We play Scrabble. I lose.

Four hours. We paint. Mine is better.

Three hours. We put the earbuds back in and dance because talking is getting too hard. Making things too real.

Two hours. Still connected, we make some more chai tea that neither of us drinks. We walk onto my balcony and stare. We only talk between songs.

One hour. We walk into my bedroom and close all the windows and blinds. The only light comes from the cellphone as it projects stars onto my ceiling. Hands clasp. Legs intertwine. Silence is our friend. We lock eyes and brace for impact. Her eyes are my anchor. I never look away.

Tonight, the sun won't set.

It will fall.

We will fall.

Together.

Into the great aby—

If Only

Ayla Johnson

My shadow
 likes to wander
naked
 through Forest Park.
Likes it when the trees
 feel her up
and the creek
 whispers sweet
nothings in her ear.
 Likes to spin
with the Earth
 and dip
with the stars.
 She is a full moon
pregnant with joy.
 A setting sun
more beautiful
 the closer she dances
to the edge.
 She is Adam
and Eve.
 Forbidden fruit
drips
 from her cherry
red lips
 and I know
she'd kill me
 if only
I were
 Able.

Popcorn Ceiling

Marissa Alvarez

The winner of our Halloween Spooky Story Contest!

Shivers run down my spine like a racehorse on a track. Goosebumps break the soft layer of my skin. My hair stands up in spikes. There is that cold chill in the air, the one that tells you something is near. *You're being stupid. There is nothing in here.* Still grasping my royal blue duvet, I slowly uncover my clenched eyes. *Open your eyes, you're fine.* I slowly open one eye, then the other. They reveal a white popcorn ceiling.

This is nice. I can deal with this. A soft breath tickles my ear. My eyes turn into globes and my eyelashes tickle my eyebrows. I am paralyzed. *Nothing is there, you are imagining it. Turn your head.* I start breathing hard, the noise filling up the room. I slowly turn my head to the left, where my bed dips off a foot or two to the floor. My left cheek finally reaches my pillow. I sigh. *When, nothing there, I'm o—*

My scream catches in my throat as I catch a glimpse of its face. Scratched out holes embody two beady white eyes, void of eyelids. Two curved slivers in the center of its face flap as it breathes in and out. Its smile stretches up past its eyes. Rows of jagged yellow teeth line its open mouth, and drool slides down its grey skin. My throat suddenly remembers that it is a cavity for sound and a blood curdling scream escapes from my lips. The creature erupts with a gurgling laugh and inches closer toward my face. *I can't move! Someone help!!!* It rests its curved flaps on my nose, its skin like wet rubber. Tears drip from eyes as I let out one more scream. It chuckles in response, then sinks its X-Acto knife teeth into my face. Its teeth hit my skull. I hear the bones cracking over my cries of pain. It laughs again, shaking my head in its mouth.

My eyes shoot open. My breath is two strokes below hyperventilating. I take a moment to study the popcorn ceiling. It is relaxing. *It was only a dream.* I wonder what it would be like to push the

paint-crested bubbles on the ceiling. Would they crumble? Or just squish around like balloons do? I sit up in my bed and rub my eyes. My room is completely empty. I smile at it. I start to giggle at my scaredy-cat ways, then realize how sore my throat is from screaming. *Water sounds wonderful right about now.* I set my feet down on the floor and stand up. A large hand grabs my ankle and I fall face first onto the beige carpet. I scream as it pulls me under. I dig my nails into the floor but fibers rip off my nails. My blood draws perfect linear lines from the floor to the wall. I scream again.

Everything is black.

The Old Pali Lookout

Missie Yamamura

2nd Place in our Halloween Scary Story Contest

Aside from being a hot tourist destination, Hawaii is one of the most isolated island chains on Earth. Add to that a mix of Hawaiian and immigrant cultures, each with their own supernatural beliefs, and you have a potent recipe for eerie late-night stories. I grew up reading Glen Grant's *Chicken Skin Tales*, a compilation of ancient Hawaiian folklore, as a kid. My mother quickly noticed my obsession with the book, so in fear of her having sleepless nights over my festering nightmares, she hid it from my reach. Everyone on the island knows someone who's seen or felt something, and we readily share these stories over family dinners and pau hanas, recounting every chilling detail until it's almost as if we've experienced it ourselves. Most amateur ghost hunters make the rookie mistake of hanging out at graveyards, hoping to spot an orb or some ghostly figure. Despite this notion, I realized from the countless myths I had read that hauntings usually occur in places where people died or spent the majority of their lives. As Halloween was approaching, my twelve-year-old self secretly hoped to see something. Out of all the stories I had read, one myth piqued my interest for a potential haunting centered around the Pali highway.

All locals know that you just don't carry any pork products over the Pali Highway, especially at night. That's because the pig god Kamapua'a lives on the windward side of the island, and his ex-girlfriend, volcano goddess Pele, lives on the leeward side of the island. Because of a dispute, they agreed not to bother each other; as a result, we commoners aren't supposed to take pork from one side to the other side, since it would technically break that agreement. Adjacent to this chilling highway lies the Old Pali Lookout, where King Kamehameha defeated four-hundred warriors by throwing them off this cliff.

Countless nights of my imagination growing more elaborate and restless, I finally divulged my game plan to my older sister...who was in. As soon as night fell, we stopped by our nearest 7-Eleven to pick up manapuas (pork buns) and pork hash, taking our new purchases to the lookout point. When our car came to a complete stop, I was immediately covered in goose bumps that felt like minute cactus needles had lodged into every pore of my skin. While carrying the pork items, I stood frozen at the invisible line from the windward to the leeward side. My sister yelled to put the food on the ground. As soon as I dropped the items, our flashlights slowly flickered, then gave their last breath of life. A few seconds later our flashlights came alive again. As we ran back to the car, I shined my light on the food. I swear it looked like the two pieces of pork hash were missing that night, but there was no way I was going back for a closer look. My sister and I will never know if the pork actually disappeared that night, but one thing is for certain: there is something very real about that pork over the Pali highway.

Skin Cycles

Amber Reeves

1.

scarred skin crashes like
tidal waves across bones; a
natural disaster

rows of cracked tombstones:
a body count / a record
of my lost battles

skin can sew itself
back together—but it can
never be the same

2.

point of impact
flowers into
bruise

bruise
erupts into
a black hole

a black hole
consumes the
galaxy

galaxy
fissures into
a faded memory

Now You See Me

Kaelyn Buettner

Step one: Survey the crowd.

The bartender is overworked and underpaid, with a wine stain on his left arm cuff. He notices my gaze and offers a gentle nod toward my direction. Sweet guy really.

An older gentleman is nursing what I believe to be an Old Fashioned, but with his sunken face that close to the countertop, I am unsure whether or not the glass is empty or full.

Feeling a little unsettled by his intoxicated sight, I further sweep my gaze to those around me.

Ah.

Step two: Assess candidate.

There he is.

He is one of the more handsome ones I've come across, I must admit.

Tall, seems to have medium build. So not overly strong, but definitely can hold his own. Good.

The beige-toned suit fits him quite well, notably tailored to his physique. Leathered shoes adorn his feet, seemingly just polished. As my eyes travel further up his torso, I catch sight of a flash of metal. The luminous molten gold caresses his wrist, peeking out just enough from his sleeve.

Must be at least late twenties... Maybe early thirties? Not shy, but sure of himself.

Curly chestnut locks frame his face, absorbing the light that seeps through the dusty windows. An almost halo-like effect is present, making his golden skin seem lighter than it is.

So he travels.

His fingers tap the top of his knee in a repetitious rhythm, legs crossed casually ankle-over-knee.

I rest my cheek to my hand, preparing myself for the inevitable.

Step three: Let him come to you.

I flutter my eyes at the floor and hesitantly lift my sights to his frame, starting from the feet up. By the time I get to his eyes, I see he has already begun to look back at me, matching my gaze.

Our eyes lock, and I quickly try to hide my blush at getting caught.

Again.

I sit up a little straighter, and cautiously turn my head in his direction once more.

We lock stares again, although this time I flash a small smile, letting my eyes linger on his lips.

I glance once more to his eyes, tempting him to take action with my interest. I quickly turn my head forward, attempting to seem embarrassed.

One...two...thr-

“I’m sorry for bothering you, but do you mind if I join you in a drink?”

His voice is deep with traces of a light rasp, but pertains a slight accent.

American no doubt.

My cheeks pink slightly, motioning my hand for him to sit beside me.

“Couldn’t help but notice an attractive specimen such as yourself looking at me, and I thought I could at least know your name. I’m Raymond, Raymond Lewis at your service.”

Raymond takes hold of my hand, raising my knuckles to his lips. A slight peck is given, and I pause to notice the softness of his lips.

I let a smile spread over my lips, reluctantly taking my hand back.

“I hope you give good service.” I sip the remainder of my drink, sweeping my tongue around my lips. “My name’s Alex.” My eyes dance with mirth, and he’s drawn in.

Step four: Establish connection

“Well Alex, how about I buy you a drink, and we can discuss the quality of my service.” He smirks as an arrogant air starts to swirl around us.

He waves to the bartender. “Can we get another drink here?” Raymond turns to me, an eyebrow raised as a questioning gesture. I slip my hand to his shoulder, lightly rubbing the nape of his neck.

“Order me a cosmopolitan.” I slide my leg to Raymond’s, our calves now touching.

The bartender overhears my order and jests, “You know a name that’s on the rise for that drink? The Graceful Gay!” He continues to chuckle whilst prepping the drink.

I give a slight laugh as well, and place my other hand on Raymond’s knee. Our gaze brings a familiar tension.

Step five: Secure the prey

I clear my throat. “So Raymond, what’s a free-spirited man like you doing in a place like London?”

We talked for what seemed like days, but were really only a few hours. He was dazzled by my charm, and I in turn actually enjoyed his company. After hours of heated stares, brief touches and innuendos, we finally started the trek up to my room. As we gathered our things to leave, I heard a word slurred by the Old Fashioned man...

“Faggots...”

Graydaytions

Ayla Johnson

Smog putt-putters
out of exhausted
auto bodies
hob-hobbling on
their last leg.

Rises up slowly,
fogs my vision,
and hides
the storm clouds
in your eyes.

I didn't mean to dirty
your wedding dress mind
with my black coffee soul.
But—I'm a writer.
I can't help but leave
charcoal pencil smudges
on all that I touch.

I Don't Need To Breathe

Kristin Rothell

It suffocates.

It destroys.

It consumes.

It hurts.

Blood red on bone white,

Scorched skin on fragile frame,

Everything gone, gone in a

Split

Second.

I can't breathe.

It grows.

It learns.

It breathes.

It lives.

Blistering heat blackens uncovered skin,

Pain a distant thought until adrenaline fades,

Everything alight in

Dancing

Shadows.

I can't breathe.

It invades.

It spreads.

It overruns.

It kills.

Breath overcome by pain,

Blessed air no longer sweet,

The dark of oblivion beckoning—

So

Close.

I can't breathe.

It hurts.

It lives.

It kills.

It's here.

I feel it in my lungs, stinging in my eyes,

My legs burn with every stuttering step,

My very self is being consumed.

Slowly.

Deliberately.

I can't breathe.

I no longer have to.

MET + A + MOR + PHO + SiS

or

The Skin i Live In

Josey Meats

I

the skin i live in,
my chrysalis, my cocoon,
hides Me from the world.

///

II

madness lurks within,
i am ice and i am fire,
up and down again.

///

III

i am a kite caught
inside a hurricane's wake.
manic brain scramble.

///

IV

welcoming pressure;
chills chase blades tracing my arm.
dark depression nights.

///

V

harness the madness.
take the pill, it's just treament.
BrIef stability...

Never Sink: Lessons from White-Jacket's Man-of-War World

Ayla Johnson

[The following is an excerpt from this gorgeously crafted essay on Herman Melville and America. To read the essay in full, go to commons.cu-portland.edu/promethean. If you've looked at politics in the last year and panicked – and we *know* you have – this essay has a lot to inform and encourage us.]

Waking from the American Dream is painful. Opening your eyes to the corruption, discrimination, and immorality that permeate American society is an action that can never be undone. The reason so many American youths are currently distraught is because for the first time in their young lives America has failed to live up to her ideals. In an election that was advertised as love versus hate—hate won.

That is a hard truth to swallow. Where do we go from here? In trying to answer this question, some will respond in anger. They will fight fire with fire and not realize that by hating those who hate them they become the very person they despise. Others will respond out of fear or hopelessness. They will either retreat physically by leaving the country or emotionally by disengaging with the political scene. However, American culture cannot change unless our youth are willing to participate in the national dialogue. Unless we learn from the “beating hearts” of the past, our ideological differences will continue to escalate until our instruments of war turn inward once more. According to the lessons of White-Jacket, the only way to save a world of war is through pacifism and baptism into shared humanity.

“So long as a man-of-war exists” (Adler 29), there will always be conflict. As previously stated, a man-of-war creates men of war. The tyranny of the Neversink “stems from the fact that the ship’s primary purpose is war” (Adler 29). In Melville’s opinion war is the “greatest of all evils” because it turns humanity against itself. The only way to end our world of war is to rid ourselves of the war machine and all of its many accessories. In White-Jacket he depicts this theme of disarmament with an image of the Neversink with “her guns hoisted out—her powder-magazine, shot lockers, and armories discharged—till not one

vestige of a fighting thing is left in her, from furthest stem to utmost stern” (Adler 29). War mentality has so deeply penetrated American culture that online discussions often feel like ambushes, political campaigns are more representative of guerilla warfare than democracy, and constituents are treated as POWs rather than citizens. We need a pacifism that informs more than just our foreign policy. We need a pacifism that informs our social media practices, journalism, protests, and relationships. In a world of war, hate will always win because it doesn’t concern itself with morality, legality, or humanity. It will always win because love was never meant to be a weapon. The “beating heart” of White-Jacket tells us we must respond to our hostile society with peace, nonviolence, and passive resistance; rather than fight for control of the machine, we must disarm it.

But, peace alone will not heal our broken spirits. Pacifism will not return our innocence nor will it overcome our disillusionment. White-Jacket’s answer to the question where do we go from here is into the sea. The scene in which White-Jacket falls overboard and is freed from his jacket is one of the most dramatic and celebrated baptisms in all of American literature. “Encased in his jacket, a garment fantastically contrived, patched up from wishful thinking, childhood dreams, and escapist hopes, White-Jacket in his isolated retreat high on the main top, far from the harsh realities of the deck, hopes that his garment will protect him from the storms which rage around Cape Horn (evil)” (Vincent 308). The garment marks him as a “white sheep in a black flock” (Vincent 307). It symbolizes his self-sufficiency, isolation, terror, and innocence. Ultimately, his jacket fails him. His innocence cannot protect him from the corruption, disillusionment, or sin prevalent on the man-of-war. When he falls overboard he must choose between life and death; between baptism or drowning.

Love Letters to the Person Who Called Me “Everybody’s Favorite Pink-Haired Nightmare” on Yik-Yak (and to everyone who up-voted it)

Kathryn Willoughby

1. Ahhh, hello. Probably thought you wouldn’t hear from me. Maybe didn’t even know that I saw it. And, of course, social media always seems anonymous. You probably thought you were in the clear, but that knot now tightening in your stomach says otherwise. You thought being anonymous meant the blame does not rest on your hunched-over shoulders, your smirk illuminated by a phone screen. You didn’t think liking it would contribute to its cruelty. You were wrong.
2. When I saw the thread “who is the most annoying person at CU?” I clicked on it so I could type, “guys, it’s National Kindness Day. let’s not do this.” I went on the thread to defend other people. Do you know what that says about me?
3. When I read it, my limbs went numb. I heard about ten separate heartbeats in my head. Out of rhythm, out of time. Somehow, I sent a screenshot to Kelsey and stumbled over to her room, landed on the floor, and sobbed until my vision went purple. Until my vision went nightmare-pink. Sobbed some more. I told her: I want to die. I wanted to die. I asked, If this is how people see me, why do I even exist? I could not stop crying. It felt near unsurvivable. Liz and Kelsey’s voices were the last thing I remember before the darkness swallowed me whole.
4. Those words haunt me every time I redye my hair an average, quiet blonde. I hate that I surrendered sunset pink hair in order to hide for the rest of that semester. My hair was rosewater and honey. Now it doesn’t taste of anything at all.
5. I nearly did it, you know – killed myself. And if you are a particularly terrible person, you might laugh, reading this. You might say I’m being overdramatic. But I would have died. And no, no one would know who you are. No one would know you had a part to

play – except you. You would always know. It would tick behind your eyes for the rest of your life, a twitch that never settles. Someone would have lost their daughter, sister, friend because you found her annoying. You would always carry that. It would be a secret you could never share. You are lucky I am as brave and strong as I am. You are lucky I know Jesus. You are so lucky it was me. If it were anyone else, you would regret that post until you die. You would never find forgiveness.

6. I'm leaving Concordia after this semester, but it's important to me that you know it isn't because of you. You didn't scare me away – I came back for two more semesters. You do not have that power over me. Last Spring, you decided to play a game with my deepest fears, but I've played Monopoly enough times to know you gotta think long-term. Gotta see the whole board.
7. I am so sorry that the world has made you so cold. That isn't passive-aggressive, I really am. You are a shard of glass in the street, a memory of a mirror now broken. Someone broke you. I'm so sorry. I don't like you, because you were cruel. But I love you, because I have been you. I have said cruel things. I have been a cruel person. But I learned to reach into my past and find what caused the hatred. Only love can heal the brokenness. I know you are broken, because this is all just insecurity. So I hope you find healing. I hope you find peace. I hope I am the last sweater that snags on you. You are capable of so much more than what you have said about me. **I love you.**

Our Writers

Marissa Alvarez is a graduating senior who is majoring in English. She likes to spend her extra time exploring different writing styles and types. She's written mostly poetry and short stories, but hopes to one day write a successful book series. In the meantime, she plans to pursue a profession in book publishing so she can remain around literature for the rest of her life.

Gretchen Anderson is a senior at Concordia University majoring in English. She comes from the Oregon coast where her family also lives. Gretchen hopes to get a job in the editing/publishing industry in Oregon when she graduates.

Hailing from the Pacific Northwest, **Amber Bains** is 21 years old and a university student working on a degree in Marketing. Amber is also a fashion and beauty blogger and has loved to write since she could first hold a pen.

Brandi Barbosa-Brown is a junior in the Exercise and Sports Science program here at Concordia University and hopes to one day become an athletic trainer. She was born and raised in Northern California where she attended De Anza College before transferring to Concordia. Music has always been a huge part of her life, and in her spare time you can catch her making covers with her guitar or ukulele.

Shelby Bonomo is a current sophomore at Concordia, studying education with an emphasis in English. She hails from Phoenix, Arizona and is not particularly a huge fan of the Portland rain. She hopes to teach high school English and travel to teach abroad. These are her first submissions to *The Promethean*.

Haley Bucher loves cats and her fiancé.

Kaelyn Buettner is a sophomore pursuing a degree in psychology. She has always loved writing, but this is her first time ever submitting to *The Promethean*. She greatly appreciates being published! Some of her loves are poetry, a wide range of music, and traveling. She has a sick road trip playlist, so hit her up if you ever want some good tunes!

Ryan Connelly is a first year student at Concordia University from Anacortes, Washington and is attending school for a Bachelor's degree in English.

Ana Delgadillo is a junior majoring in psychology and minoring in history. She plays soccer for the women's team, and her favorite food is spaghetti. On any given day, she is probably watching "The Office" and drinking tea.

Jalyn Gilmore is an English major who runs on the power slinkies and chocolate snacks. She needs all things chocolate and all things lazy shorts. She has been writing all her life yet somehow hasn't seemed to get it down. But it's fine because perseverance counts for something, she guesses. Maybe. Don't stop believing (?)

Julia Cecilia Guzman is a freshman at Concordia majoring in English. She and her elder sister were raised in Southern California by a single mother, who taught them to have great pride in their Cuban roots. Julia started taking a literary interest in fifth grade and has since raided every library available to her. She is greatly involved in her family's business and loves to spend her time psychoanalyzing the outcomes of movies with friends.

Chris Houck grew up in rural Southern Oregon. After high school he worked as a wildland firefighter before joining the army in 2009. Chris enjoys writing poetry and working on his novel in his free time. He is a father to six and is currently working toward his Bachelor's Degree in English at PSU.

Gregory L. Hutzell is an Associate Professor in CU's School of Management. Besides teaching, he's had a long career in financial services, most recently as a consultant to leadership teams of banks and credit unions. He's been married to Christine for thirty-four years, and they raised four children. He has 3,000 books, mostly on business and natural history, especially birds. He's a musician and finds great pleasure having his morning coffee while reading *The Wall Street Journal*.

Ayla Johnson lost some pieces of herself. She's trying to find them so if you happen to see any lying around please let her know. She's the girl in the trench coat waiting for the elevator.

Tijera Johnson is a sophomore majoring in Secondary Education. She likes to think about the world and different scenarios. Sometimes she writes words to the scenes in her head.

Sierra McWaters is a sophomore from Ventura, California. She majors in secondary education with an endorsement in English Language Arts. Sierra has been writing poetry since she was in middle school; however, her subject matter has shifted drastically from drama-filled boy-crush chronicles to women's rights issues and nature. She has a passion for working with kids and hopes to make an impact on future generations through the power of education.

Josey Meats is a sophomore studying secondary education. Once, when he was young, he sneezed and no one said “god bless you”; because of that, a demon rose from hell and cursed him with the need to write. It will haunt him until he dies (and then some). He owes his current success in college to his parents, the group known as W.E.A.S.T., and his love, Christopher.

Alyssa Moreno was born and raised in Southern California. She enjoys biking, hiking, camping, climbing, and being out in nature. Alyssa’s family and friends are her favorite people and she is very thankful for them. She aspires to own a pug one day and thinks dogs in general are great. She has dabbled with writing in the past, but sharing her work is new to her so she hopes it is enjoyed.

Timothy O’Brien started life in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma as a composer. His early years were spent composing for the piano, organ, and brass instruments, on which he was being classically trained. Having started university with thirteen years of composition experience and lessons, he was unchallenged and bored, gave up, and pursued a degree in writing. Now that he is in the Pacific Northwest, music, visual art and writing have a much broader scope for him. Tim has published a novel in verse, and a collection of poetry.

Mackenzie Pollock is a Junior Education major at Concordia University. She has long been a fan of *The Promethean* and is excited to publish her first poem here. “Darkness” highlights the effects of depression and anxiety, which Mackenzie has been afflicted with for many years. She is excited to be able to share her feelings with her readers.

If you cut **Sydney Quintana**, she bleeds chai tea and memminist tears.

Amber Reeves is a runaway from the Midwest currently toiling away at an English Major. When they aren't documenting possible UFO sightings on campus, Amber enjoys dismantling oppressive power structures while catching up on the latest episode of River Monsters.

Kristin Rothell is a girl who finds solace in the words on a page, loves the smell of old books just reopened for the first time in years, and struggles to comprehend the world when she realizes no one else understands the new hole in her heart when a beloved story ends. So, she writes. And her feelings end up spewing forth into stories and poems - some even good enough to share.

Zachary Rothell is from where potatoes come from: the illustrious region of Idaho. He finds himself, outside of the perpetual workload that is the chemistry major, bereft of time. There is not enough in the world to enjoy activities ranging from video games, jigsaw puzzles, hiking, archery, and everything in between. Though he detests nearly all forms of writing, drafting some poetry is a whimsical way to balance out the bad stuff.

Randilee Sequeira Larson is a fifth-year Concordia senior, working on a BA in English with a minor in Christian Theology. She enjoys alcoholic authors, neglecting her post-graduation plans, hanging out with her cat "Cocaine Greg," and tending to her colony of flesh-eating beetles. Randilee plans on becoming an urban legend one day, and hopes to retire to a comfortable life of drinking mojitos and scaring neighborhood children.

Jessy Shiroma is a junior majoring in secondary education with a focus in language arts. She is from Honolulu, Hawaii and graduated from Moanalua High School. Jessy loves nature and draws inspiration from it. She also enjoys Korean BBQ, *Nacho Libre*, and anything ocean related. She hates comic sans. Jessy is also grateful to *The Promethean* for accepting her poem and to you for reading through this.

Kathryn Willoughby is twenty-three-years-old, which is basically forty-seven. She likes art history, red lipstick, and making jokes about being senile. She can be spotted drinking green tea and dancing to Lorde. Being the Managing Editor of *The Promethean* this year was ridiculously cool and she's ridiculously grateful.

Alena Willbur grew up in Vancouver, Washington and later studied abroad in France and attended a boarding school in Southern California. Despite the drastic changes in her life, writing has always been her constant friend. From the wallpaper with flowers that came to life, to the mermaid adventures in her bath, her imagination has become her stories. She is currently working on a collection of poems and a novel.

Torrey Woolsey was born and raised in Fallon, NV. She is number 4 of 5 children. She moved to Portland to attend college.

Missie Yamamura is a third-year secondary education major. She aspires to become a high school English teacher while involved in a side business of either wedding planning or letter press stationary. She was born and raised on the island of Oah'u, Hawaii and moved to the City of Roses to pursue university. When she's not studying or working, she loves the outdoors, yoga, journaling, thrifting, and any DIY activity.