Morpheus



Literary Magazine

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Morpheus Literary Magazine

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Editor's Note

Dear Reader:

Serving as Morpheus' editor-in-chief was not something I ever expected to achieve. When I was told I would be leading this year's issues, I won't lie: I panicked. I've led online publications before (if you read The Rock Creek Review, I was the managing editor last year), but Morpheus has meant so much to me. The idea that I would be responsible for something with such a rich history (spanning over six decades!) meant I had large shoes to fill.

Hopefully reading through this semester's issue, you'll find it just as satisfactory as I do upon publication. This issue is the culmination of a semester's worth of work – including a highly successful bookmark sale! (A quick and heartfelt thank you to all who purchased from us!)

Words can't describe just how proud and honored I am to have such a hardworking and dedicated team of editors. Morpheus usually works with an incredibly small team, but this semester has been full of prosperity. Picking up a new position is never easy, and I recognize just how overwhelming it can be to step into such a traditioned and well-worn track. For that, I thank all my editors. I may be the one speaking at meetings, but I truly couldn't do it without all of you. The same goes to you, dear reader; without you, there would be no support for publications like these. Thank you, and enjoy.

Sincerely,

Cecilia Groth

Editor-in-Chief

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POETRY

Windchime

Trinity Quaintance

I look out my childhood window,
light streaming through,
the wind beginning to billow,
I'll never stop thinking about you.

A scent catches me off guard,
suddenly I am ten.
A silent postcard,
of way back when.

Dad sits in the other room,
a somber harmonica playing from his phone.
A feeling threatening to entomb,
as if its the only thing we've ever known.

Glimpse

Trinity Quaintance

Her soaring majesty,
emerald and lush,
wind blowing while the sky stays blue.
The hills stretch on forever,
civilization so far away.
I wish it was always like this.
So I stop,
breath for a moment,
and I do not know if I will feel this again.
But that's ok,
to know that I ever felt it at all is enough.

I'd rather love a woman than a goddess

Jayson Agerter

Statues of Venus are supposedly perfect.
They are created after ideals.
Humans are known to be imperfect.
So why don't statues make me feel?

A statue cannot laugh
when I make a dirty joke.
A statue cannot cry
when something pretty broke.
A statue cannot hold me
when I cannot hold myself.
A statue cannot ask me
to reach for a higher shelf.
A statue cannot love with the fullness of a heart.
We must admit statues have one imperfect part.

Lament the Butterfly

Jayson Agerter

There is a monarch butterfly
in a tupperware coffin
on top of the dresser
my grandparents own.

The butterfly is dead.
It already was
when it came to
my world.

How strange it is
that we can put
things in coffins
like breathing air.

Is the tupperware a gift
or a death sentence?

“I found this butterfly.
You wanna keep it?”
Now it’s in a
collection.

So I keep the butterfly
to remember it well.
But wait! — butterflies

are free creatures.

How strange it is.
taking freedom
beautifully
saves butterflies.

Is preserving an act of love?
Or is grasping a fear of loss?

Ask the butterfly.
For as it lies
in plastic
it shows

us the world we stop it
from returning to.
Its home isn't
the box.

When butterflies
are forced inside
does the world shrink
or grow larger?

You cannot return anywhere
when you were always here.

A Piece of My Heart Belongs to Korea

Maya Lesher

I dreamed of somewhere far away,
a world beyond the life I knew.
When summer kept that dream waiting,
winter brought a chance to pursue.
December.
An acceptance letter.
A dream becoming real.
I studied the language,
learned the culture,
prepared to leave the familiar behind.
I had never flown before,
but excitement carried me
where fear could not.
And then, Seoul.
The winter streets,
the food, the temples,
the late nights in Hongdae,
the wonder of the DMZ,
and the friendships I never expected
to mean so much.
I arrived afraid of the unknown
and left with a heart full of memories,
with people I will never forget
and a place I still long to see again.
So, Korea, thank you
for the girl who arrived afraid

and the person who returned changed.
You became more than a destination.
You became a second home,
a piece of my heart
I could never leave behind.

한국, 사랑해.
Hanguk, saranghae.
Korea, I love you.
No matter how far I roam,
a piece of my heart
will always belong to you.

Burn Pile in the Weeds

Cecilia Groth

Slow breeze prairies
Elderberries blooming
Pile of smoldering ash
Matchbox on denim
Red-winged blackbird's call
Rustle in the brush
All alone here, and I pull
The Chariot.

Dancing Cowboy Bones

Kelseigh Holman

Hollow cemeteries muddle

veiled moments–
Vowing teeth, heartlocked in the bones.

Claws take the hush from the romantic
Cowboys dancing in the cathedrals
The trail turned street shivers with the marrow of the bones.
The bones heartlocked, vowing of the teeth.

The cemetery turns hollow–
Clawing at the marrow–
Romantic, dancing, heartlocked, Cowboys.

A Cloaked Man

Teagan Grimes

I once met a man wrapped in silk,

His head drenched in the darkest fabric.
I was pulled to the man, my soul leaning in,
And there I began my love with a cloaked man.

I loved him softly through the summer,
And I carried our love through the fall.
I would travel the world to see his darkened clothes,
To gaze into his barely visible eyes.

But whenever we kissed I met his lips,
And they cut my gums and chipped my teeth.
His eyes would pierce and and scrape my skull,
And before I knew it, the love was gone.

I tore his cloak with my now-crooked teeth,
And I threw it to the ground with monstrous energy
I had no idea I had.
And I ran for my life, away from that darkly cloaked man.

I find myself a bit amiss,
That maybe I yearn for that darkness.
But I don't find love in shrouded strangers,
I find love through day-lifting smiles.

A Rolling Kind of Care

Teagan Grimes

I've walked through miles without shoes on my feet,
Glancing quickly at strangers to not meet their eyes.
But I've found that when I'd been greeting with kindness,
I search for that same thrill everywhere.

I've found a rolling kind of care,
That dashes quickly, with little time to spare.
But I wish it would slow for a moment,
And choose to walk with me for a while.

But maybe this is for the better,
Because it moves so quickly it can't see what I've hidden.
It can't see what a thief has stolen,
And it can't see how long I've waited for a simple hello.

I've found a rolling kind of care,
One that makes me walk into walls,
And places I shouldn't be in
With just one bright glance and the sweetest smile.

But I wish it would slow for a moment,
And choose to walk with me for a while.

Ignorance

Tristan Fanning

The sand flows, and You sit motionless.

unaware or unprepared
I know not. What
I do know.
Y
o
u
must
learn to respect
it. If You don't. You won't
realize, when time has run out.

CREATIVE NONFICTION

When The Doves Held the Sun

Anonymous

This world unfolded in shades of grays and wet blues, tinged with the bittersweet melody of mourning doves who held the sun.

The dew clings cold between my toes, and the sun paints streaks of fire in my hair, playing with my curls as my mamma did. I am a whirlwind of contradictions, a child soaring through a magical and menacing world.

"Honey, put some shoes on!"

The fuzzed voice cuts through the wind, a reminder of the ground beneath my feet, the dangers lurking in the grass. I looked down at my toes; the grass clippings from yesterday's mow hung on my ankles. "You'll step on a bumblebee, honey." I circled the grass, my eyes locked on every small flower.

I stepped between the dips and curves of the grass. The white clovers blossomed into delicate plumes that welcomed such soft honey-making creatures. I lowered myself to watch a fuzzy bumblebee land on the center for only a moment. I watched it swirl in sharp turns across the bright green blunt clippings until it buzzed away. Hopping from white to green to yellow weeds.

Dad loved dandelions; he would sit in the grass with me, pluck them up, and rub the yellow tint across my cheek; it smelled like warm, deep earth. I would dance with twenty in my small palm and show off to all my friends how pretty it was to be covered in the color of the sun.

I yearn to be five again so badly that I would bruise my knees begging. I want to itch my ankles and step on bees so my dad can lift me and pour salt on my wounds. Rub scratchy flowers across my warm, sun-kissed skin. Teach me songs that I only now will listen to with grief lodging into my gums and coating the back of my throat. I cannot thank many people for how I grew up. Except for my dad; my propensity is just like his, and nothing has carried me to where I am more than the example he set.

Yet I am not quite ready to forgive the fact that the version of myself at six knows my father better than I do now. And I am not ready to forget how angry that makes me.

On Indexing

Jayson Agerter

I like to build systems, and that makes me somewhat rigid. But at the same time, I like to be creative. There's a reason I decided to major in both computer science and writing at Heidelberg.

Computers work in absolutes. One and zero. True and false. Writing does not work in a similar binary. Tragedy, comedy, tragicomedy. Poetry, prose, prose poems. Hero, villain, antihero. But, in a weird way, the structure of computer science and the fluidity of writing come together when I decide to look up a word in a long book, go to the back of the book, and find... nothing. No index. No "key terms". Nothing.

To be frank, it pisses me off when this happens. I want to look up my term, and I want to do that now! But you know what's worse? When instead of an index of terms, I find an index of titles or first lines. Specifically, I'm complaining about the Penguin Classics edition of Ben Jonson's Complete Poems (1996), edited by George Parfitt. Now, I have nothing against Parfitt or his editorial choices. His notes were thorough and still hold up, even thirty years after the poems were last revised. However, the distinct lack of a term index is a frustration I simply couldn't get over. I could find poems, but couldn't find what was in the poems.

So what did I do? I made my own index. I reread the entire book. I looked for words I thought would be useful and slapped them into a spreadsheet. Then I alphabetized them and found where every word occurred in the book. After many hours of poring over this 640 page volume, I had more key terms than I did pages of poems (655 terms, to be precise). Most of these terms are empty, because I still haven't finished the damn index. I also started another index for the Modern Library edition of Ralph Waldo Emerson's Essential Writings (2000), edited by Brooks Atkinson. That index is also unfinished, but that's partly because I haven't read the entire book yet. So Parfitt and Atkinson may have known something I didn't: indexes are hard to make. However, that won't stop me from making indexes. In fact, I still enjoy making indexes. Why?

Because I find the process of creating an index to be almost as intellectually rewarding as reading itself.

You may be shocked at first. You may wonder, "How can writing words and page numbers down be as fulfilling as reading?" The answer lies in what indexing truly is. My job as an indexer is not merely to stare at words and to match them with page numbers (although that is a lot of it). Indexing also consists of selection. As the indexer, I get to select the terms I include within the index. I could simply choose common words ("Nature," "God," "Perfection," for an Emersonian example). I can also choose concepts ("Over-Soul," "Self-Reliance," "Man Thinking"). I could also choose allusions referenced within the works ("Thomas Carlyle," "Adam & Eve," "Julius Caesar"). I could also choose themes or metaphors ("Heroes," "Flowers," "Unity"). That's a lot of choices. I like to have a lot of choices.

But so many choices can be overwhelming. The true job of the indexer is to pick the terms that will be most useful for anyone. It's culling, in a sense. I make my indexes knowing that 99.99 percent of people won't read them. However, I find it useful to think about what terms I could include that I wouldn't think about every day. Those are the trickiest terms. They're the ones I'm going to have a random thought about at midnight, look at my index, and find that I never took the time to index them. When I share the index with anyone, they're the terms that people will notice are missing. In other words, I like to overprepare my indexes so that I never need to return to them, once they are complete. But this overpreparedness comes with a major benefit: I begin to understand the author better.

Let's dig into the index for Ben Jonson's poems. What's the most common term throughout the index? It's the Christian God. This makes sense, when we look at what happened in Jonson's life. In Ben Jonson: A Life (2011), biographer Ian Donaldson repeatedly writes about Jonson's conflicted relationship with God, in a time when Catholics were prosecuted by Anglicans. My indexing accidentally highlighted a part of Jonson's life that he chose to include within much of his work. This brings Jonson out of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and closer to my heart. He was a man with obsessions, with desires, with goals.

The index can show where Jonson's ideas clustered—where his heart was. Biography can give a glimpse at historical context, but indexes can reveal authorial motivations. When I was originally compiling the "God" term, I didn't think Jonson would focus so much on religion. The first time I read his works, I noticed that he had a lot of poems written to other people, in memory of other people, or for himself. The index showed me just how much God permeated his poems. I found God in poems about love, about death, about nature, about admiration. God was simply everywhere for Jonson.

Jonson was a spiritual man. This can be lost when you focus only on the purpose of every poem, but can be regained when you look at the index. In a way, the process of indexing allowed me to zoom out to see more.

As another example, let's look at a weird entry I have: "poetry as forest." At first glance, it's a confusing term. What in the world could "poetry as forest" mean? Well, within Jonson's body of work, he named many of his works after elements of a forest. Underwoods, The Forest, "A Satirical Shrub," "A Little Shrub Growing By." Jonson repeatedly returns to the idea of his writing being part of his "forest." At first, I simply had "Forest" as a term. As I was collecting the page numbers for the "Forest" term, I noticed that they tended to clump together.

Why was this? Well, I returned to these "clumps" and I realized they marked passages where Jonson tied the forest to his poetry. In other words, I returned to these entries so I could fit them into context.

The index guided my reading. In fact, it improved my reading. This extended metaphor (which I should have noticed on first read) was shown to me only through the indexing process. And now, I can return to this concept whenever I want to reference it, because I have it indexed for the future. In this case, indexing forced me to interrogate something that seemed mundane, until I noticed that I needed to zoom in to inspect the topic closer.

"But," you may object, "indexes seem to take a lot of time." I would argue that, in comparison to reading, indexing does not take much time, and is perhaps easier to chip at over time. This is especially true if you annotate while you read. When you read, you

must actively allow yourself to become immersed within the world created by the author. I never stop reading in the middle of a chapter, an essay, a poem, an aphorism. Instead I finish the "chunk" before I allow myself to stop. Indexing doesn't have that limitation. I can look at each page, then look through my terms, and mark whichever terms overlap. Perhaps I need to pay attention to context for some terms (like my "poetry as forest" term). However, those terms are generally much less common than names, concepts, and individual words. I can skim for those easier terms, which makes indexing much easier to stop than reading.

This "skimming" has the added benefit of boring the hell out of me. That might sound counterintuitive. Isn't boring bad? Well, not exactly. It's bad when we have nothing to think about. However, when I'm indexing, I have something in front of me to think about: the book. I consider the author, and how my terms might tie in with their life experiences. I think about patterns that happen across pages—across individual works—which I had missed on my first reading. I think about the annotations I left on the pages months ago. I reconsider my opinions on the work. Thinking turns my boredom into something productive. I become swept away by my thinking, and suddenly I find myself surrounded by an army of concepts and thoughts and ideas and opinions and beliefs until I get pierced by an original thought. When I'm reading, I tend to lose immersion when I stop to write down an idea. When indexing, I find no such risk. But that doesn't mean indexing is perfect.

To be honest, I despise sitting down with the intent to index. By the time I'm finished, I feel as though I have accomplished something of worth, but that sense of accomplishment never carries on until my next indexing session. The process is, as said before, boring, and I hate boredom just as much as I'm sure you do. I love having indexed and having indexes, but hate indexing. So I looked for a better way to find my terms. That's when I found the magical Ctrl + F shortcut. When you have a digital book, you can merely search for your key terms — no index involved. It's quite useful, and significantly faster than writing, and then referencing, an index. Ctrl + F is so much more convenient than using an index.

Then what's the point of indexing? Can an indexer really be replaced by a keyboard shortcut? That core element of indexing I mentioned earlier—selection? Ctrl + F gives you the chance to make infinite selections, quickly, without needing to worry about page count, finding the index, if the index exists, or whether or not there is an index in the first place. It's truly an invaluable tool when you need to find something quickly.

But notice what Ctrl + F doesn't do. More accurately, let's look at what it allows us to skip. The person using Ctrl + F and the indexer are both searchers. They are looking for something. The difference here is that the Ctrl + F user doesn't have to think about what they're searching for. They get the benefit of the search without having searched. The indexer must delve into the source, meaningfully consider what they want to index, and spend their valuable time to create the index. Ctrl + F doesn't let your brain roam. It doesn't make you struggle for your term. You don't understand the experience of a search.

And that's what I think is the most valuable part of indexing: the experience of it. Ctrl + F can be useful when I don't care about the experience of something. I even use it when indexing (when I look up a term within my spreadsheet so I can add the page number to it). That doesn't make it a replacement for indexing. Indexing requires understanding, and understanding requires primary experience. So I say "eff that" to Ctrl + F. I want my searches on paper. I want my indexes at the back of my paper bricks. I want to be forced to struggle with the indexing process.

Perhaps you think I'm crazy for sticking with indexes. You're probably right. It's luddite behavior. Go get yourself a digital book and start using Ctrl + F, just to see firsthand how useful Ctrl + F is. But when you use Ctrl + F constantly, do you ever remember why it's convenient in the first place? Do you remember the struggles people once had when their most efficient method was the index?

I'll stay with the struggle of the dusty old index, convenience be damned. I only started indexing because I thought indexes were convenient. Indexes must not be convenient. They just create a bunch of problems that we solved when Ctrl + F was invented.

FICTION

But Alas, I was Born a Woman

Deanna Miller-Moreno

1919

I grew up with three brothers, all older than me. My father was a proud man, especially when it came to his three hardworking sons. As for me, I devoted myself to my studies and learned bookkeeping at a local law firm. It was my chance to become independent from my father, to make him proud, and to show him that I was capable of making my own decisions.

The law firm sat on the busiest block in the city. Having grown up here, I found it marvelous to witness the innovations that had transformed the world around me. Yet, one morning, as I unlocked the firm's doors, I was stopped by a group of women holding signs that read, *Women bring all voters into the world, let them vote.*

They asked if I worked there before telling me about their campaign. I was intrigued. That afternoon, I spent hours researching their cause, and then it clicked. Their fight for independence mirrored my own.

From that day forward, I became deeply invested in making my voice heard. I joined them in protests and marches, finding joy in standing alongside so many powerful women. Our voices connected, each one strengthening the next. Of course, it wasn't always easy. We received our fair share of cruel comments from those who disagreed with us. But when we stood together, we felt indestructible. No matter what anyone said, we held our heads high and kept our goals in sight.

Until one day, my brother spotted me holding my sign outside. He grabbed my arm and dragged me straight to our father.

He was furious.

He told me that women had no place in the ballot box, that I should find a husband instead of corrupting my mind with nonsense. He claimed that women's

suffrage would distract modern society and that women belonged in the home, tending to their domestic duties.

I turned to look at the other women for support, but they weren't there. Nobody was.

Suddenly, my voice was gone.

This had been my chance to prove to my father just how independent and hardworking I had become. Yet, he dismissed everything I had worked for as if it meant nothing. I wanted to vote. I wanted to stand for something. I wanted my voice to matter.

But alas, I was born a woman.

1960

I had always been good with my hands. My fingers were a little longer than average, but my mother told me that made them perfect for the piano. At six-years-old, I began taking piano lessons. There, I found my talent, and my potential awakened.

My hands found their place on the keys, and suddenly they felt like lifelong friends reunited after years apart. Chopin, Liszt, Beethoven. Oh, how my fingers danced across the keys, weaving intricate melodies into the air.

I performed at my local church, encouraged by my mother to share my gift with others. I was so captivated by the piano that I spent countless nights playing until exhaustion took over, sometimes even falling asleep beside it.

Now, married with three little ones to care for, I can barely find the time to play. My hands are covered in yellow cleaning gloves that never seem to fit quite right. Instead of my fingers gracing piano keys, they polish furniture and scrub away the evidence of another busy day.

Whenever I walk past the piano, I imagine myself playing on a grand stage, surrounded by an audience captivated by every note. But reality brings me back to the condition of the instrument before me. Dust gathers on the keyboard, sheet music begins to yellow, and the piano has become little more than a place to stack mail and family photographs.

Once, the piano was an extension of my soul. Now, it is a reminder of the person I might have become.

Instead of falling asleep at the piano after hours of playing, I fall asleep beside my children as I tuck them into bed. I love my family, but sometimes I wonder what happened to the girl whose entire world lived between eighty-eight keys.

I could have been a performer, standing beneath the stage lights and sharing my passion with the world.

But alas, I was born a woman.

1990

All my life, I had been good at making people laugh. Whether in a crowded room or an intimate gathering, I could have everyone chuckling in seconds. People often told me I was witty—that I had a way with words. My dream was to stand in a comedy club and share my love of laughter with the world. More than that, I had the passion to make it happen.

Eventually, I got my first opportunity at an open-mic night in the big city. During the subway ride there, I rehearsed my talking points over and over. Nothing was going to ruin my performance.

The moment I stepped onto that stage, I fell in love with the spotlight. The microphone became my trusted partner, and the audience became my world. I will never forget the feeling of making a room full of strangers laugh for the very first time.

Soon, I was performing at comedy clubs almost every night. My routine was simple: finish my office job, rush onto the subway, and perform until two in the morning. I was exhausted, but I had never felt more alive.

Then, one ordinary evening, I was invited backstage.

Waiting for me was a talent agent who had watched my performance. He told me he wanted to send me to Chicago to perform my act. I could hardly believe it. All I needed to do was take a week off work.

I took his card, held it close to my chest, and hurried home, already imagining what this opportunity could mean for my future.

The following morning, I sat down with my boss to request the time off. He seemed ready to approve it until he asked what I needed the week for.

I told him I was going to Chicago to perform my comedy act.

I might as well have told him I was moving to Mars. The expression on his face said everything.

He told me I couldn't do that. Women weren't meant to perform comedy, he said. Women weren't funny.

I ran out of his office in tears, his words circling endlessly through my mind.

"Women are meant to be seen and not heard."

I never called the talent agent.

Instead, I stayed at my office job, burying my dreams beneath piles of paperwork. Rather than making people laugh, I wrote emotionless emails to colleagues. Instead of holding a microphone, I sat trapped inside the walls of my cubicle.

Every now and then, I wondered what would have happened if I had made that call. If I had taken that chance. If I had believed in myself as much as I believed in the laughter I could bring to others.

I could have been famous, standing on a stage and making the world laugh.

But alas, I was born a woman.

2030

I've always been told that I have a voice for the voiceless. In high school, I was even the president of the debate team. It was my dream to make a difference with my voice, to change my community and, eventually, to change society as a whole.

When my career began, I aimed high. I worked tirelessly through countless positions, from councilwoman to mayor to congresswoman. Every step brought me closer to the future I had envisioned for myself.

And now, at fifty-six years old, I was on the ballot for president of the United States.

I had spent years preparing for this moment. I worked closely with my campaign staff, studied the policies that mattered to the people, and did everything I believed a good leader should do. I had earned my place here. At least, that was what I thought.

Finally, the day of my first debate arrived.

I delivered my opening statement carefully, balancing information with a conversational tone. I wanted people to understand my plans, but I also wanted them to see me as a person, someone who genuinely cared about the future of this country.

Then came the rebuttal.

My opponent, who was competing against me for our party's nomination, began questioning my plans. We went back and forth, challenging one another's policies and citing facts. But as the debate continued, I began to lose hope that any of it would matter.

Then he said it.

A woman, he argued, could not be president because women could not command authority with enough aggression. He claimed we were not built to handle the emotional and physical demands of the position.

I was stunned.

Even within my own party, there were people who believed that a woman was incapable of leading this country. After years of hard work, countless elections, and a lifetime spent proving myself, I was still being told that my gender made me unqualified.

When the debate ended, I walked away with my head bowed, trying to hold myself together.

I opened my phone and searched the news sites and online forums. I hoped to find people discussing my policies, my experience, or the ideas I had spent my life fighting for.

Instead, I found people questioning whether a woman could lead at all. I could have been president, a future role model for young girls to look up to, a piece of the puzzle this country was missing.

But alas, I was born a woman.

HUMANITIES-BASED ESSAY

The Long-Lasting Effects of the Great Depression

Cecilia Groth

Perhaps one of the most well-known American crises was that of the Great Depression. It's a story taught to children as soon as they are able to understand it – that almost a century ago, people lost all their money and couldn't find jobs. They had to live in huts to survive and it was a tragedy America ensured would never happen again. While a very simplified explanation of events, it is, for the most part, true. Financial ruin was widespread, and jobs were hard to come by. President Hoover certainly wasn't doing anything to help the situation other than give his thoughts and prayers that it would lift soon. With no way to access their money lost to sinking financial institutions and no relief from the government (at least until FDR and his New Deal), it was truly one of the most desperate times in American history. The ways this desperation was rectified, however, became the backbone of the American government ever since.

Perhaps the most impactful way to detail the despair of the American people in the early 1930's isn't through vague generalizations, but through the stories of the people themselves. As Earl Roush writes in a letter to his brother Isaac's family in early 1930,

> "Shortly after Mattie & I were married, together we had a little money. We put it in a Building & Loan at Huntington. They paid us 7% interest; was so prompt and in fact, the Jackson Building & Loan Association was claimed by everybody to be the strongest B & L in the state. So Mattie had $350 and I had $650. So we just thought it would be good to keep when I got older. About three months ago it busted and is now in the hands of the receivers. They write us and tell us that by & by we will get it back but from the best I can learn, I'm doubting if we ever get a nickel of it. So you see, Hettie, I have cause to be blue. If we lose it, it will just about put me against the wall. But we must not yield to discouragements."[1]

People truly held trust in these financial institutions, and often enclosed their futures within them. Banks weren't just for rich men to hoard their money – many of the lower and middle class scraped together their pennies with the expectation that they were safeguarding their futures. For the rug to be pulled out from underneath them was not only a huge loss, but entirely life-changing.

[1] Earl Roush, letter to Isaac Roush, January 8, 1930.

The opinion of the elite, however, was that everything would get better soon. Even the day after the infamous stock market crash of 1929, newspapers read that "the worst was over" and "the cataclysm [was] the inevitable result of an inflated security market, and did not believe it would exert material effect on business conditions"[2]. Those that lost their money to bank collapses were told this would all blow over soon, and they would get their money back in due time despite the fact that there was little being done to achieve that end.

As the residing president at the time, Herbert Hoover certainly was not doing anything. As a woman writes in a letter to the editor, instead of taking action himself Hoover simply spurred the people to spend more of their money which "was the Great Engineer's [Hoover's] battle cry while the home owner was chasing himself around frantically trying to beg, borrow, or steal money to pay taxes on the old home"[3]. Certainly President Hoover's advice to spend more money felt completely disconnected from the general public who had none to give, and the author of that scathing letter was not exaggerating the dire straits most were in.

[2] "Selling Stampede in Stocks Checked by Banker Support," *The Cincinnati Enquirer*.
[3] Oak, "Hoover's Great Panacea."

Earl Roush had two brothers: Isaac and Henry "Dump". Out of surviving letters, it is clear Dump was the most affected of the three. In early 1934 he wrote to Isaac out of desperation:

> "I will try and rite you and family a few lines. I hope you are all well. I have not been very well. I have Doctored with 6 different doctors and they have not done me much good. I will try one more at Parkersburg then I will quit.
>
> ...
>
> Now Nelse [play off of Isaac's middle name "Nelson"] I am going to ask you to do something. I want you to get me 7 hundred dollars. I owe 5 hundred at the bank. I have renewed the note at the bank time and again. Now Nelse don't get mad for writing. I am badly in knead of money.
>
> Now the 13th day of October I will have to come across at the Bank. Write me a few lines and tell what you can do."[4]

It's clear that Dump wrote this letter out of desperation, because in 1921 he lent a significant amount of money to Isaac, and even told him, "I took the check to the bank

[4] Henry Roush, letter to Isaac Roush, September 10, 1934. Misspellings original.

and had it certified so it will be all right Nelse I want you to keep what you owe me longer if you will I don't need it and if you want more you can have it when you get this"[5]. This wasn't a case of a man trying to mooch off of his brother – Dump truly had no other option and was doing what he needed to in order to survive. Thus, President Hoover's "just spend your money" proclamations only served to annoy and outrage the public.

Although the "thoughts and prayers" President Hoover was not well-regarded at the time, it is important to note that, in the beginning, neither was President Roosevelt. While his New Deal was being put into effect, results were barely being seen even in 1934. As Earl Roush writes in another letter, "Everything here at the stores has got so high under Roosevelt N.R.A. plan that nobody can do any better than before when Hoover was in the White House" and "that they have just about doubled the cost of living with these factory people and have only increased the wages very little"[6].

This attitude persists even into the current day. As Burton Fulsom Jr. asserts in his book *New Deal or Raw Deal?*, "In fact, it was the massive public spending associated with WWII – which led to virtually full employment – that finally pulled the nation out

[5] Henry Roush, letter to Isaac Roush, November 20, 1921.
[6] Earl Roush, letter to Isaac Roush, February 4, 1934.

of the Great Depression"[7]. According to him, the only reason people rank FDR so highly out of all the American presidents is because his relief attempts had the advantage of occurring just before a war that boosted national spending – the real cause of the Great Depression's end.

The reality, however, is much more complicated than that. Certainly the expansive employment and spending during WWII sped the recovery process along, but President Roosevelt's policies were not entirely ineffective. While the Agricultural Adjustment Administration (AAA) has been proven to have "had little or no positive effect on retail sales" and "nonlandowners at the lower end of the agricultural income distribution suffered declines in income as a result of the AAA"[8], other programs fared far better. In fact, for every dollar spent toward relief efforts during the Great Depression the per capita retail sales in 1939 rose by forty-four cents.[9]

It is also a disservice to only study the New Deal's effects on the Great Depression instead of the long-lasting impact it has had on America as a whole, since it formed the basis for America's welfare system today. Before, it was thought that the government should not be responsible for those in financial distress; that local charities and churches

[7] Fulsom, *New Deal or Raw Deal?,* pp. 3.
[8] Fishback, "Did New Deal Grant Programs Stimulate Local Economies?," 65.
[9] Fishback, "Did New Deal Grant Programs Stimulate Local Economies?," 61.

filled that role. But "voluntary charity could not cope with the situation; only public agencies could deal with the collapse of the economy, mass unemployment, and widespread destitution"[10]. There were little public agencies that filled this role at the start of the 1930's. President Roosevelt was responsible for the creation of nearly the entire welfare system of the United States – one that not only was in effect during the Great Depression but forever onward.

In fact, America could have easily had another Great Depression in another event nearly a century later: the Great Recession. The origins of the Great Recession were remarkably similar to that of the Great Depression, as "the crisis began with a financial collapse that erased more than half the capitalization of the stock market" and heavily increased housing prices[11]. What differentiates the Great Recession from the Great Depression is in the government's response. (Or, to put it more simply, that the government meaningfully responded at all.) Long gone was the "thoughts and prayers" contributions from the federal government. Instead, they took action. Banks were safeguarded to protect the people's money, and multiple forms of financial relief were given to state governments, the unemployed, and the general public at large[12]. If the "sit

[10] Trattner, *From Poor Law to Welfare State,* pp. 274.
[11] Grusky, "Chapter One: The Consequences of the Great Recession," 4.
[12] Grusky, "Chapter One: The Consequences of the Great Recession," 4-5.

and wait" method was ever tried, it hardly lasted long because that story had already played out over seventy years earlier. Because of this, the Great Recession lasted significantly shorter than the Great Depression.

The Great Depression and Great Recession could have been equals. They both started in similar circumstances, and yet the lessons learned and safety nets created during the Great Depression informed the federal government's response to the Great Recession. Thus, evaluating the success of FDR's New Deal based solely on its impact during the Great Depression is only evaluating its success for one part of a larger story.

Indeed, the Great Depression wasn't only influential in the area of finance and politics, but the lives and psychology of American citizens as a whole. Although it seems counterintuitive, mortality rates during the Great Depression were greatly reduced (with a notable exception for suicide, which increased). This has been attributed to a decrease in harmful and dangerous activities found during times of prosperity – actions such as drinking, smoking, sacrificing sleep for work, and even car accidents.[13] Without money, people can't buy drinks or cigarettes. (Certainly prohibition coinciding with the Great Depression only further served to reduce drinking rates, or at least make sure more money was required to partake.) And without jobs, there is little to sacrifice sleep to.

[13] José Granados and Ana Roux, "Life and death during the Great Depression," 17293.

Indeed, Dump comments on this bland excess of time when he writes to Isaac, saying "I set around from morning to night. Nothing to do and not much to eat at times".[14] With this context in mind, it makes sense that unintentional deaths would decrease and intentional deaths would increase.

But not only did the Great Depression impact mortality rates, but the psychology of those that lived through it as well. Monika Ardelt from the University of Florida carried out a study of the long term effects of the Great Depression on people's psychological health and wisdom and discovered that there was a distinct difference between those that dealt with the hardships of the Great Depression (mostly the lower and middle classes) and those that didn't (mostly the upper class). While the wisdom of those who lived through the Depression was proven to be unrelated to their social standing, there was a distinct improvement of psychological health in those who were both wise (as determined by the study) and impacted by the Great Depression. Though this may once again seem counterintuitive, it expands upon the idea that experiencing adversity and overcoming it leads to personal growth.[15] This growth stays with people their whole lives, shaping what they do and how they act. Therefore, this can easily be

[14] Henry Roush, letter to Isaac Roush, February 3, 1935.
[15] Ardelt, "Social Crisis and Individual Growth," 309.

the most impactful part of the Great Depression; governments change, workers retire, money changes hands, but memories and lessons learned stay with people.

Thus, the Great Depression was not only one of the most important events of the early twentieth century, but shaped the future of America ever since. President Roosevelt's New Deal formed the foundation of America's welfare system for others to expand upon and improve, eventually paving the way for future generations to more successfully deal with the crisis that his generation was unable to prevent. In this way, the Great Depression and the various ways it has impacted our country have been and will continue to permeate America's everyday lives.

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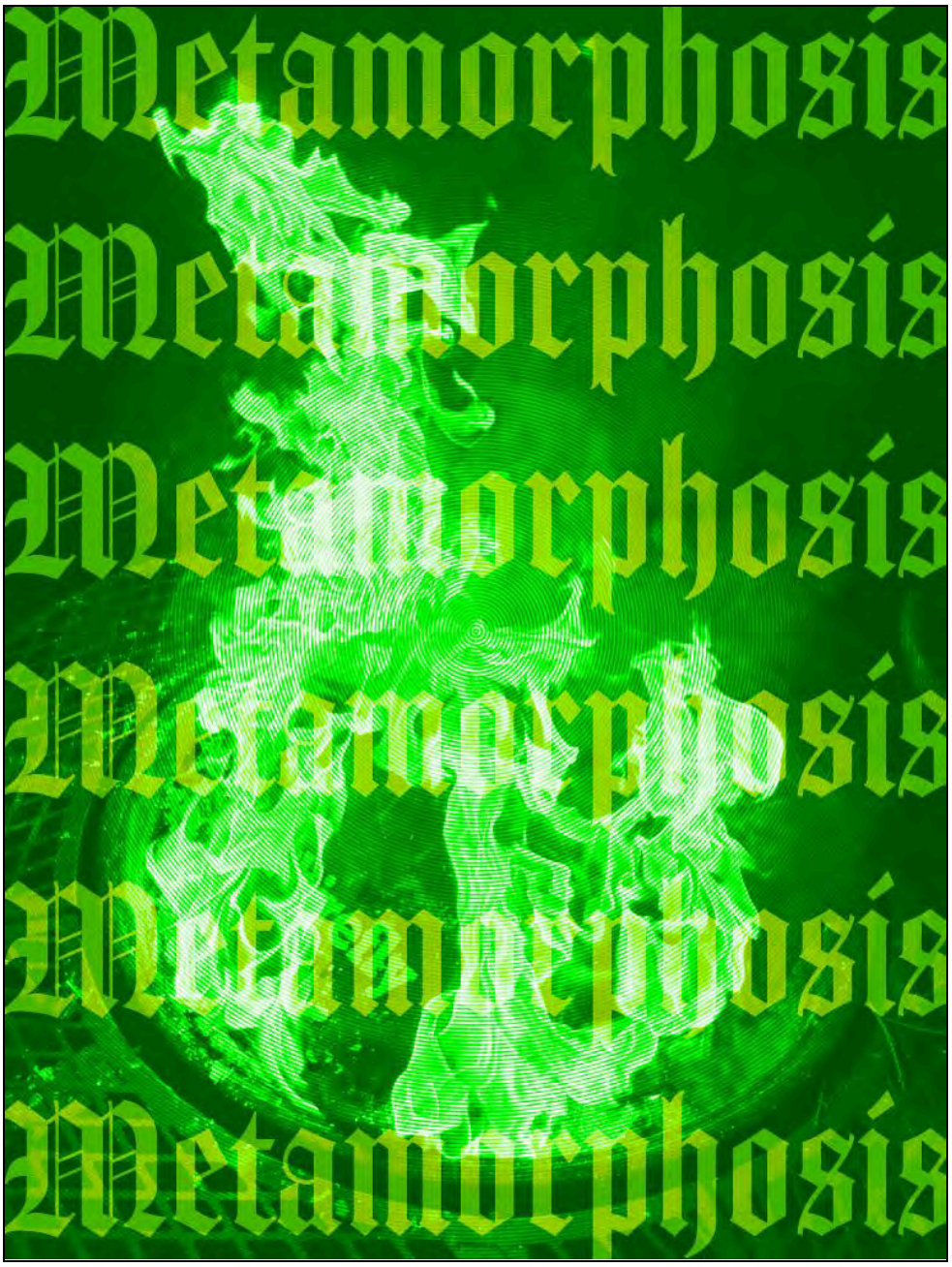
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ART

Metamorphosis or Die

Makenzie Bowling



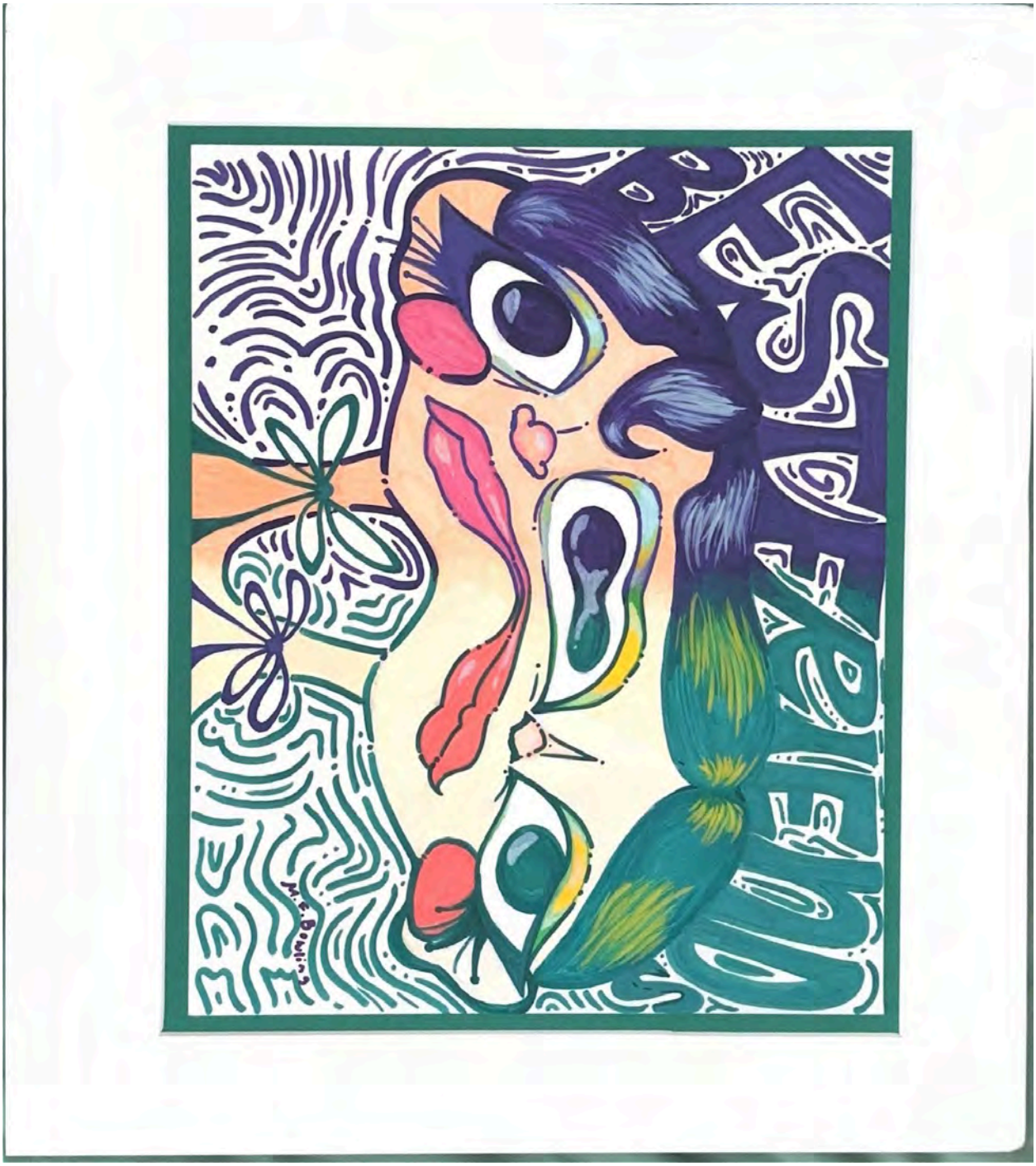
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Makenzie Bowling



Best Friends?

Makenzie Bowling



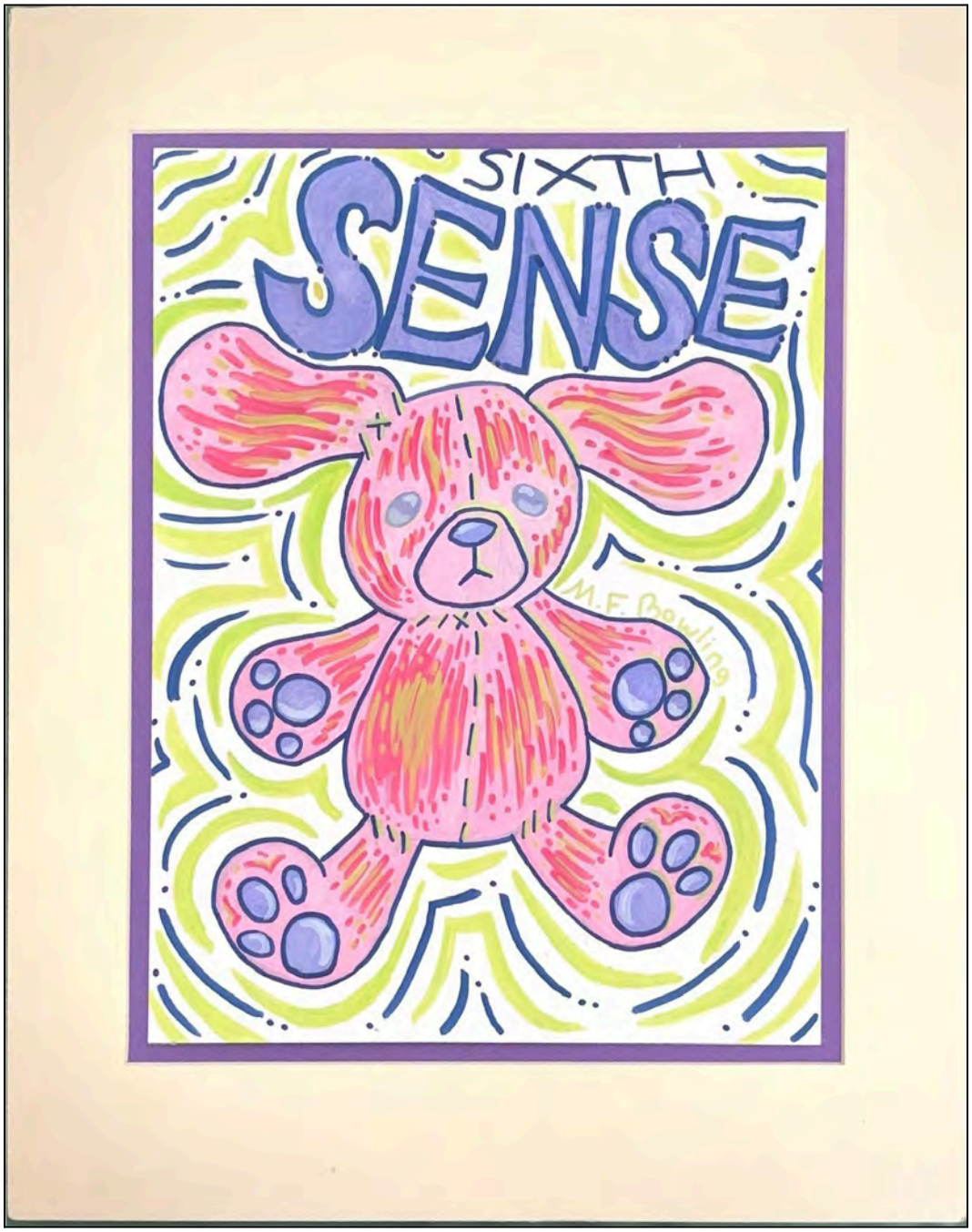
*SWEET*TOOTH*

Makenzie Bowling



The sixth SENSE

Makenzie Bowling



Stressful Stella

Evelina Podvoiskis



Author Biographies

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The author is a young writer from the Midwest whose work explores grief, girlhood, family, and the complicated ways people learn to survive one another. Drawing from personal experience, she writes with tenderness and honesty about subjects that are often difficult to name, finding meaning in ordinary moments and beauty in what remains after loss. She is currently studying English literature and education, with additional interests in theatre and visual art. Her love of storytelling began as a way to understand her own life, but it has grown into a desire to help others feel less alone in theirs. Whether writing fiction or memoir, she is especially interested in memory, resilience, and the quiet contradictions within families. When she is not writing, she can usually be found reading, working in the theatre, making art, or caring for her very spirited pet.

Jayson Agerter

Jayson Agerter is a Junior honors student double majoring in Computer Science and English with a concentration on Writing. His personal essays focus on preserving his original relation to the world, and are heavily influenced by the philosophy of Emerson. His poetry often explores love, but occasionally drifts into elegy. One day, he hopes to publish a book of indeterminate length.

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Makenzie Bowling is a senior English Writing major with a minor in Art. Her art is a physical manifestation of what the inside of her brain looks like — a polychromatic peculiarity.

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Cecilia Groth is a senior Environmental Science and English Writing major. She plays oboe for the Findlay Community Orchestra, as well as being a TA for the School of Natural Sciences and Nursing. (She also recently learned to knit!) Her writing focuses on nature and family, being predominantly creative nonfiction. This is her first poetry submission to Morpheus!

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Kelseigh Holman is a sophomore at Heidelberg University. She is a double major in Communication and English with a concentration in writing. She works on campus, and is involved in Berg Allies. Her writing focuses on superstitions and supernatural elements.

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Maya Lesher is a 21 year old from Fostoria, Ohio. She is a General Studies major with a minor in Psychology at Heidelberg University, with plans to graduate in December 2026. Her experience studying abroad in South Korea inspired her to appreciate different cultures, form meaningful connections, and recognize how travel can change a person's perspective on life. After graduation, she plans to complete her TEFL certification and pursue opportunities to teach English abroad. She hopes to continue exploring the world, learning from others, and building connections across cultures. In the future, she also hopes to pursue a master's degree in International Education and work in educational administration abroad. As a writer, she uses writing as a way to reflect on my journeys, preserve special memories, and express emotions that can sometimes be difficult to put into words. Through her writing, she hopes to share a little piece of herself with others while capturing the experiences, people, and places that have shaped who she is.

Deanna Miller-Moreno

Deanna Angelettè Miller-Moreno is a first-year Music Education student with too many names. When she isn’t in a practice room, in a computer lab studying her favorite topic, Geishas, or contemplating if working as a rabbit tamer is a legitimate job, she can be found writing poems, fiction, and essays. Deanna also possesses a secret superpower: the ability to make any and all situations awkward simply by existing. Her favorite subjects to write about include historical fiction, poetry, and love letters in various languages, because apparently, being emotionally unavailable in one language just isn’t enough. Gosh, what an emo...

Evelina Podvoiskis

Evelina is a double major in data analytics and marketing. She tried out photo shop for the first time, so please give her grace. Evelina has her own pet sitting business, so when she takes the dogs out she likes taking photos of the pets. The art piece shown is a dog named Stella.

Trinity Quaintance

Trinity Quaintance is a caveman that was civilized by scientists and released into society.

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