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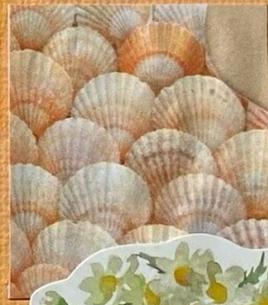
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Morpheus Literary Magazine

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Cover By Emma Wright



Editor's Note

Dear Reader,

After a long hiatus due to the pandemic, *Morpheus* made its first comeback in the spring of the 2021-2022 school year. We are excited to announce that we are continuing to revive the publication, beginning with returning to publishing two issues a year.

The collection of pieces we received this semester is nothing short of incredible. In some years, we have found a theme amongst the submissions. This year, there was no discernable theme; each submission is instead an extension of the author and their passions.

In this issue, we have poetry, short stories, personal essays, and artwork, all of which capture the diverse creativity of the Heidelberg community. This issue features dark, twisted stories in the spirit of Halloween, as well as poems describing journeys of self-love and acceptance.

No matter what genre you prefer, we have a little bit of everything for you to peruse. We thank you for your support as we get the publication back on its feet and we hope you enjoy the Fall 2022 Edition of the *Morpheus Literary Magazine*.

Sincerely,

Emma Wright
Editor-in-Chief

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Mystical

Carolyn Schutte

Dust sparkling in a beam of light
Leaves reflecting orange and gold
Stars winking on a lonely night
All seem so mystical.

The sun marching 'cross the sky
Trailing colors in its wake
Causing those below to sigh,
“That must be mystical.”

Stories told under the blanket of night
Whispered softly in a child's ear
Shadows dancing in the candlelight,
Could only be mystical.

Untitled Haiku

Anna Zeller

A warm cup of tea,
A little something cozy,
Free to be happy.

My River

Carolyn Schutte

The river within me won't let me rest.
Its ruthless current drives me,
Pulling me by the hand through the day
Like a parent drags an unwilling child.

I watch it happen, hovering over,
The impotent part of me who wonders
Who is this puppeteer, this powerful force?
In a way, it is me. I am it. We are we.

My river rushes and gurgles,
Laughing at my desperation
As I try to build a dam, to head her off.
She laughs and she roars.
She breaks through my defenses
And I am lost.

Ode to a Scholar

Lily Roth

Addressing his audience,
Dr. Ph.D. flaps his lips
invaluable spit cascades from his unstoppable mouth
into my skull.
I claw at my flesh to regain my purity.

He sneers and chortles,
parading his high status,
waving his perfect typing fingers,
flashing his perfect reading eyes.

Dr. Ph.D. commands the room,
but speaks only to the worthy
who share his fortunate upbringing.

He chooses the best, most complicated words
to illustrate a point he is confident only he
will have the prowess to speak on.

His perfect reading eyes land on me,
swiftly darting away,
fearful of my low class,
blue collar,
lowbrow,
nonacademic averageness.

I sit still.
I am quiet.
If I don't move, he won't devour me.

I twirl like a top for his pleasure.
You're welcome, he says.
I am told his presence is a blessing.

If he is so grand,
so intellectual,
so admirable and wise,
why must I spend the rest of my day
ridding myself of his lingering occupancy,
cleansing my being of his aura?

A Heartbreak

Carolyn Schutte

I felt the heartbreak, long before,
When we were just butterflies unfolding our wings.
Nervously touching antennae, a gesture of youthful attraction,
Losing our hearts piece by piece,
Losing control.
In the moments of young love, I knew
I had lost the fight, my heart was won.

With my heart in your hand, you have to be careful,
Hold it gently, it's fragile and trust is even more so.
And even now I feel the terrifying, pounding feeling
Of when you let it go.
Please don't let it go.

The cracks started as soon as I felt myself losing it to you,
And I fight the urge to fill them in and turn my heart stone-hard,
Dull the pain and grow too heavy for you to hold so I can be free.
Free and without you, free and handicapped
for a hardened heart cannot beat for anyone the same way
I still beat for you.

When I was a child, I'd swing out on a rope over a lake
Ready to splash into the water below.
I'd always grip too tightly to let myself go
Dropping with a snap I'd swing listlessly
Over cold depths that sparkled like dragon's eyes beneath me.

Maybe someday I'll be brave enough to let go and fall in.

Liminally Me

Kelsey Stanfield

Sometimes I wish I'd been born one way or the other,
A singular, enterprising self out of supposed nothingness,
Not feel the pressure to make anything of it all.

I've suffered through this change of heart,
I don't understand why.
I have no control over it.

I'd hooked on to that one word, "Pretending."
Think about who you are,
Searching for identity,
Trapped in the limbo.

You can fly, but do not belong in the air.
In conflict with who you are,
Crisis of identity.

But I realize that
Everything I'm insecure about-
One can simply experience it and enjoy it.

The words slide from my brain and knot in my stomach.
"I am me."
Just another inscrutable woman.

Are You a Boy or Are You a Girl?, Sarah Savage; *Are You There God? It's Me, Margaret*, Judy Blume; "Drinking Coffee Elsewhere," ZZ Packer; "Driver's License," Olivia Rodrigo; "Five Non-Binary Adults on Finding the Words- and the Strength- to be Themselves," Bobbi Ullinger; "Five Non-Binary Adults on Finding the Words- and the Strength- to be Themselves," Darren Rosenblum; "How I Learned to Fly," George Tucker; "Losing Your Identity," Teresa Smith; "Right as Rain," Alexandria Goodson; "The Coming-of-Age Con," Cody Delistraty; "The Alumni Interview," David Levithan.

How to Fall in Love With Me

Emma Wright

I often sit on my bed
and wonder what I might look like
to some omniscient being,

Narrating all my thoughts,
Watching me work,
And truly knowing me,

What might they see?
Is it enough for them?
Is it enough for me?

If he sees the twinkle in my eyes
every time I laugh, but knows
it's a different one when I cry --

If he sees my hair a mess
first thing in the morning,
bathing in the rays of light --

If he sees how I soak in the music
and pore over every lyric,
creating my very own soundtrack to my life --

Is this what he sees?
Is it enough for him?
Is it enough for me?

As I fantasized about all of the things about myself
that might make someone fall in love with me,
I realized that I had, in fact,
fallen in love with myself.

Angel of Death

Alyssa Amor

I didn't mean to kill her. But death lurks around every corner and window, picking and choosing his victims with careful evaluation. I didn't want to kill her, but I had to. She was trying to escape, and I had no other option available. I left her alone in the cellar, littered with cobwebs and spiders hanging from the ceiling. The sounds of mice squeaking and scattering on the ground. She was trying to escape, and I couldn't let that happen. Her dark, burgundy blood covered the ground, body sprawled out on the floor as if she had just fallen asleep. Death was peaceful. The victims I chose were those who had wronged me in the past; I never wanted to hurt them, but they had to pay for their sins.

Alexandria was a previous partner of mine and she had taken advantage of me. I only wanted her to feel the same pain that I did when she took that part of me away. I was never the same; I'm still not. I knew I had to be careful when taking away the lives of individuals who had wronged me. I had to ensure they would never trace the murders back to me and that their deaths would only be coincidental. Alexandria, Alex for short, deserved to die. A part of me died with her when she took my innocence from me; for that, she deserved to suffer.

I didn't think I had it in me to kill anyone; part of me knew this wouldn't end well. However, it was like I had turned into a different person when I committed these heinous crimes; the real me left to clean up after what they had done. I always wore gloves, kept my hair tucked into a hat to avoid leaving any trace evidence, and wore clothes that didn't quite fit my body. Alex was only my second victim, but I knew I had to keep changing my M.O. so people wouldn't trace the various murders back to me. That's why there was a different weapon with each kill. I switched my gloves, pocketing the bloodied pair and pulling on the longer ones I used to clean up the scene before me. You could say that I felt guilty and always cleaned up the area surrounding my victim.

A tall, cheap closet housed my cleaning supplies in one corner of the basement room. I pulled out the mop and bucket, followed by the bleach mixture I used to wipe away the

blood. Most people would say I was insane, but I was doing everyone a favor. These people, my “victims,” deserved to die a painful death. My mind always wandered while cleaning, wondering when I would get caught, if they would trace it back to me, and what Cyrus would think of this if they found out.

Cyrus, my sweet, sweet Cyrus. They were the calm I needed after acting out. Cyrus had no idea this was happening, and they would never find out I had this dark side. Even if that meant hiding everything from them, I would go to those lengths to protect them. I hadn't felt that love and comfort since being with Alexandria, and even then, it was only at the beginning of our relationship, but Cyrus was different. I quickly finished cleaning up, knowing they were waiting for me at my apartment. I had told them I had to stay late at work to get things done.

Once out of the dirty, musty cellar, I tore off the clothes I was in and stuffed them into the bag I kept in the trunk of my car. The clothes I had on underneath were protected from all the blood but stunk like no other. I had no choice but to take those clothes off and put on clean ones before leaving. I went to great lengths to separate myself from my crimes. When I got home, Cyrus patiently waited for me at the door, their warm arms engulfing me in a hug. They smelled of cinnamon and pine; it was the most comforting scent. They looked at me before speaking, “How about we go on a walk?” I nodded my head, not knowing what was lurking around the corner.

We stepped outside. It was a cool night, with a breeze blowing briskly. You could feel the wind moving against your skin. There was a specific smell; dewlike and coated my nose. Cyrus and I were walking our regular route when I felt a hand reaching out and jerking me slightly. Cyrus felt this sudden movement and turned their head.

“Touch her, and you're dead.”

I had no clue who they were talking to until I looked to my right and then back to the left at Cyrus. Their piercing grey eyes were staring into the man's soul. The man who had grabbed me was much taller than Cyrus and had a much bigger build. He must have been crazy to think that was a good idea and that Cyrus' words were just some sick joke. The unrecognizable man stuck his arm out again, grabbing at my wrist. If I had blinked, I

would've missed it, and I would have missed Cyrus tackling the bigger man to the ground and asserting their dominance. Our nightly walk just got a hell of a lot more interesting.

I turned to my right and entered the dimly lit alleyway, where I could see Cyrus sitting on the man's chest. Fists were flying and before I knew it, so was blood. I couldn't tell if the crimson blood was coming from Cyrus' bloodied-up knuckles or the man's face. I didn't know where the blood was coming from until I saw the pocket knife in Cyrus' hand. They had gruesomely murdered this man in cold blood. Cyrus stood up, serving a couple of swift kicks to his side before grabbing my wrist in his hand.

"Aspen, we need to go." Their tone was quiet and calm. They knew they had just killed a man, but they didn't care. I didn't care. They beat the life out of this man, and they did it all to protect *me*. No one had ever cared enough that they were willing to risk their own life to save mine. There was a sense of excitement and adrenaline coursing through my veins, but that was suddenly ripped from me when I heard their voice again, with a slight edge.

"Now, Aspen. We have to go now." I didn't think; I just grabbed their hand and walked in the opposite direction from which we came, returning to our shared apartment. Cyrus looked at me, I could still see the fury in their eyes, but there was also a hint of adoration twinkling in those beautiful grey eyes. Cyrus had never wanted me to see that side of them, but little did they know the secrets I was hiding from them. Little did they know that they were sleeping next to the Angel of Death.

Hannah & Georgia

Jenna Farr

It was early Sunday morning when Nancy put another Cherry Cheryl Pie into the oven. She could already hear the noise across the street as the day started.

“Oh god, here we go again. I swear I should just set that goddamn school on fire,” She said while wiping down the counter, the towel covered in red. Bob walked into the kitchen at the sound of this.

“I agree. We could have a buffet. I mean we’d be set for a while on meat, although I’d probably have to go out and buy another freezer to store ‘em all”.

“Oh, you agree with me? Correct me if I’m wrong, but you’re the reason we’re stuck next to these wild animals. ‘Cause you just had to have that man cave.” Nancy quipped. Annoyed with her husband as usual. Annoyed with him and impatient with her pie. She thought, *maybe I’ll just eat you one day. Lazy. No-good. Needy. Selfish. Fat. Son of a B-*

“Oh, hey honey I can see ‘em moving in through the kitchen window!”

Oh, wom. It’s not like we haven’t always been able to see out that window. Oh, what joyous news. Dumb. Fat. Idiot. “Oh, that’s nice honey.”

Hannah and Georgia had noticed their first night that they could see straight into their neighbors' kitchen. A few months into school, both girls had started to notice the weird hours their neighbors kept.

“You know, Bob & Nancy keep super weird hours. Like, I always see their lights on at night and I only ever see her moving around in the kitchen at night. I don’t think I’ve ever seen their bedroom or living room lights go on. Last night I saw Bob leave before 8 a.m., and I’ve been doing homework all day, and I just now saw him come back. Dude, it’s like midnight.”

Laughing, Georgia said, “I mean maybe he’s out at the strip club. Wait, how do you know their names?”

“I asked our RA and she told me. Apparently, they’ve lived there for a while. Everyone she talked to says they’ve been there as long as anyone can remember.”

Hannah had spent her free day doing homework, eating snacks, and spying on her neighbors. Hannah had started to notice kids she recognized going over to help Bob mow the lawn, water the garden for Nancy, and do other various chores. The weird thing, though, was that Hannah realized she never saw any of them leave.

One day she saw a boy from her math class go over, and she thought to herself, “Well, that’s weird. I swear that kid has been over there all day. Maybe I’m just not paying attention though. Whatever.”

Over the next few days, Hannah realized the boy she saw never showed back up to classes. A week later he was officially “missing.” She started Googling and figured out that all five kids she saw go over to Bob & Nancy’s house were officially “missing” too. She even found a couple of news articles going back a few years. Turns out quite a few students had gone missing.

On Friday, Hannah and Georgia planned on staying the weekend anyway, so after expressing her concerns to Georgia, they came up with a plan.

“Alright, as soon as we see them leave for the day, we’ll wait like 15 minutes so that they’re far away and we’ll sneak in to take a look around.”

The next morning, the girls woke up early to watch the house and wait for their moment. They watched their neighbors pull out of the driveway around noon, waited 10 minutes to make sure they weren’t turning around, and then headed downstairs and across the street. From their side of the building, they could pass the side fence and walk straight into their neighbors' backyard. The girls were able to push up a window screen, and then the window, on what appeared to be a bedroom at the back of the house. They climbed in and were bombarded by pink floral patterns from carpet to ceiling.

“Oh wow, Hannah you were right. This lady must be a psychopath. I mean who else would willingly pick this pattern out? I say we turn back now. I’m like, terrified.”

“Ha. Ha. Don’t be a bitch, Georgia. Can we please just start looking into drawers and stuff? I was serious, this lady gives me a bad feeling.”

“Oh yeah, I can see why for sure.”

“No, listen. Last night after you fell asleep, I got up to get a bottle of water from the fridge, and when I went to sit back down, I saw her in the kitchen staring at me from the window. We made eye contact, and she just kept staring. It freaked me the fuck out.”

“Oh, okay, ew.”

The girls went through the bedroom, eventually moving into the hall and into what appeared to be a craft room, then the extra bedroom, and finally into the kitchen. Georgia spotted what looked like an attic entrance and split off to check it out, leaving Hannah in the kitchen.

“Oh, I can’t believe you, Bob. Took us 30 minutes to get here – which is 10 minutes longer than my drive time by the way – only for you to forget my coupons. Unbelievable.”

“Well, Nancy, maybe you should have grabbed your coupons.”

“Oh, wow.” Bob turned around and headed back to the house so as not to test his luck with Nancy.

Hannah opened the cabinet above the stove and only saw recipe binders.

“Great, just another old lady who likes to cook,” she thought as she picked up the binder. As she was flipping through the pages, she noticed weird recipe names, and that each name had a polaroid taped next to it. She couldn’t quite make out the picture, though.

“Cherry Cheryl Pie, Spicy Sean Steak, Chicken for Alfred, Phillip’s Cheese Steak, Brittany’s best BBQ, Hanna Smoked Ham, Lobster and Biscuits for Larr-”

In the kitchen, there was a side door leading straight out into the garage. Naturally, when Hannah heard the garage door open, she was filled with panic. She bolted up the attic stairs, pulled up the stairs by its rope, and closed the attic door.

“They’re back!” Hannah told Georgia, aggressively whispering. The girls ducked down behind some boxes in the back of the attic trying to be quiet, listening.

“Yes, I get it, I just don’t see why we had to turn all the way around,” a voice said.

“I am not paying full price for marinara sauce. If you had just grabbed them in the first place we wouldn’t be having this conversation.”

“Conversation? You have been passive-aggressive all the way back just because I didn’t grab your coupons and you know what else-”

“Shut up,” Nancy said, interrupting him.

“Oh, okay, shut up. Sure, why don’t I just-”.

“No. Shut up. Someone’s in the house. I never leave my recipe binders out on the counter, or my cabinets open, but look. There it is just sitting.”

“Oh, shit,” Hannah whispered.

“You dropped it!?”

“I didn’t mean to. Obviously, I was in a rush to hide.”

The voices downstairs began again. “Go check the doors and windows.”

“For?” Bob asked.

“For!? For open doors, broken locks, broken windows, or footprints. What do you mean ‘for?’” *God have mercy I should just stab you, you dumbass. My mother was right.*

“I’m simply asking for a little direction. No need to get snappy.”

“Well, the window in our bedroom is open. Looks like they pushed the screen up from the outside. I don’t see anyone in the bedrooms though. Maybe they left.”

As Bob and Nancy looked around, Hannah grabbed Georgia’s arm.

“We need to find a way out of here,” She said.

“We could jump through the window? I mean we can only go one at a time, so, you know, they might like, hear us and we might break our ankles but at least we won’t be eaten, so I can call that a success. Besides, unless we go down and say hi, it’s only a matter of time before they come up here and kill us.”

“Okay, but we need to go slow and quiet.” Despite their best efforts, the floorboards creaked every time they moved to take a step.

Nancy could hear her ceiling creaking and immediately knew the intruders were in the attic. Bob heard it too and ran to pull down the attic stairs. Georgia had been crawling right above the door and fell, her head hitting the small hallway table. Bob looked up, saw

Hannah, and yanked her down with him. She didn't even have a chance to run as Bob was much bigger than her. He used all his force to push her head into the wall and she immediately lost consciousness.

Bob made quick work of grabbing rope from the attic to tie them up so he could get them down to the basement without any hassle. Nancy laid out plastic tarps on the floor and taped the edges down to the walls. Bob set the girls down and Nancy slowly slit their throats. Bob added more plastic to the walls and grabbed a ladder to do the ceiling as well to avoid any splatter.

Nancy brought down the kitchen radio to set the mood.

*God rest ye merry gentlemen
Let nothing you dismay
Remember Christ our Savior
Was born on Christmas Day
To save us all from Satan's pow'r
When we were gone astray*

Nancy started on Hannah's chest. With one quick slice, she began to carve her open before moving on to her arms.

*Oh, tidings of comfort and joy
Comfort and joy
Oh tidings of comfort and joy*

She worked with the masterful skill of a head chef with steady hands and peeled her like a potato.

*God rest ye merry gentlemen
Let nothing you dismay
Remember Christ our Savior
Was born on Christmas Day
To save us all from Satan's pow'r*

When we were gone astray

With the skin shucked off, Nancy carved and sorted every appendage and limb into her Tupperware. Pairing parts together like the feet and hands, she threw out the bits she wouldn't even feed to a dog.

Oh tidings of comfort and joy

Comfort and joy

Oh tidings of comfort and joy

Left with only the torso, she cracked open the ribs like a branch – Bob's favorite part.

In Bethlehem, in Israel

This blessed Babe was born

And laid within a manger

Upon this blessed morn

The which His Mother Mary

Did nothing take in scorn

She began to pull and pluck every organ, separating them from their casing.

Oh, tidings of comfort and joy

Comfort and joy

Oh tidings of comfort and joy

The body oozed out like a Cadbury egg. She began sorting once again.

Fear not then, said the Angel

Let nothing you affright

This day is born a Savior

Of a pure Virgin bright

To free all those who trust in Him

From Satan's pow'r and might

She snapped the neck like a pheasant.

Oh, tidings of comfort and joy

Comfort and joy

Oh, tidings of comfort and joy

She peeled away the skin, to reveal a brain, a shock to her that one of these girls actually had one. She placed it in a ziplock baggie for the stray cats later.

God rest ye merry gentlemen

Let nothing you dismay

Remember Christ our Savior

Was born on Christmas Day

To save us all from Satan's pow'r

When we were gone astray

Bob put all the body parts into their porcelain bathtub and filled it with lye to dissolve before washing the blood down the drain.

Oh, tidings of comfort and joy

Comfort and joy

Oh, tidings of comfort and joy!

Code Black

Julia Schaefer

Janice from the wardrobe department is my number one secret weapon. I swear, she's harder to crack than any code. During my first week in the office, I was sent to her department to get measurements and update her on the next assignment.

"Do you have anything for a trip to San Antonio?"

"San Antonio! I did four years of fashion school to outfit you fools in cowboy boots?"

I was struck dumb by her, as usual. Her dark hair was catching the reflection of the window, and it was blinding. I tried to say something helpful, while also lifting myself up subtly as she took my height. I'm sure I sounded constipated as I said:

"Boots seem like a good place to hide a—"

"Knife, I know. I've done Texas before. Twice." Janice writes a note, and there's a brief silence while I think of something more impressive to say. Janice swats me, chides "Relax!" and then mutters, "Long arms."

Janice has been in the business longer than I have. She says it's because I spent too long fooling around in training. I've stopped trying to explain how long it takes to become a spy.

"Thanks. Uh, can I do anything else for you, Janice?"

"If you see Mickey, tell him that next time he's in Ukraine, run around the fountain to stop the bad guy. Water does terrible things to my fabric. Better yet, don't go to Ukraine at all! Go to Miami. It's much easier to fit you all in Hawaiian shirts."

"I'll let you know the next time an international security threat happens in Miami."

"Everything that happens in Miami is an international threat."

I left Janice that day wondering if I actually could switch my next assignment to Miami. What's the point of hacking skills if you don't use them for your own benefit? When I sat down at my desk, I considered it, but the new open-office floor plan leaves my screen open to wandering eyes, and all spies are snitches. (I'm looking at you, Mickey.)

My desktop is still decrypting a message, so I scroll through FaceBook and let my mind wander. My daughter would love Miami. One time Emma asked me to give her a tour of Chicago, which I'd just been to on an assignment. (You're welcome for stopping the Bean Bomber, everyone). I was only able to get off for one day. We got lost on the subway, I pointed out all of the buildings with weak security systems, and then I bought her a sweatshirt. I felt like a terrible father, but she thought it was awesome.

I was about to make up an excuse to slip out of the office early when I remembered it. Not a nuclear launch to stop, no, something much more high-stakes: Emma's mom is dropping her off at work today. A quick surveillance of the clock told me I had about thirty seconds before chaos erupted.

I swept the top of my desk into a drawer just in time to see Emma running towards me. She had the Chicago sweatshirt on, which made me smile. I showed her my desk, with its thumb drive case and "#1 Dad" mug full of pens. (Real pens with visible ink, not mini tasers, unfortunately).

Emma was six then and was enjoying doodling around the "confidential" stamp on the back of an old file folder when disaster struck. Code Black, everyone stay clear of the target: my six-year-old is covered in Pen Ink.

Now I'm freaking out because Cathy's going to think I can't watch our kid for even fifteen minutes on my own. Emma starts crying because her sweatshirt sleeves are stained, and every time she wipes a tear the ink spreads. She looks like an adorably terrifying NFL player.

I'm about to call for backup when I see her in the doorway: Janice, needle between her lips and tape measure swinging from her neck. She swoops Emma up before I can get a word in and whisks her away to the wardrobe department. It took me several minutes just to thaw out from the dumbstruck pose she left me in.

When I crack open the door, the sound of Emma laughing hits my ears first. The target is in an amiable mood. I open the door the rest of the way, in time to see Emma give Janice a high five. My eyes follow the line of her arm, and I realize Janice has added fringe to Emma's sleeves over the ink stains. Like magic, she upgraded the cheap Chicago sweatshirt

into a rodeo-worthy getup. I scan the room for any remaining signs of disaster and notice something else: The target is wearing hot pink cowboy boots.

Janice caught my eye in the doorway and simply said, “I needed to practice children’s sizes. And her sleeves were too short before. Long arms.” Blunt as always, but she had that smile.

That one, see? Beautiful.

It’s one of the many reasons why I’m here marrying her. That little smile, and the thousands of times she’s saved my ass. That’s why I’m thrilled now to swear, before God and everybody (at least, everybody with the clearance to be here), that I’ll try my hardest to make her smile every day until I die.

My secret weapon, the love of my life.

How I Realized Just What Dogs Are to Me

Maxine Milazzo

I am a self-proclaimed hot mess. I can never stay organized, I stay up too late, and can never seem to keep on top of my work despite my best efforts. I also have ADHD, Autism, and Dyslexia, which do nothing to help me in my lifelong quest to keep on top of myself. But somehow, despite all of this, I always pull through whatever situation I find myself in. No matter how bruised or banged up, I am in the aftermath. A big reason for this is when I come home and receive a warm welcome from a goofy dog who has a face like Eeyore and is always hanging the front half of his body off the back of our living room couch. Whenever he does that, he looks like a sea lion hanging himself off the top of a glass tank wall at SeaWorld.

No matter how miserable or stressed out I feel, all those bad feelings are taken away whenever I see that goofy sight. It's like a dark starless night changes into a bright warm day whenever I come home to that sweet, lovable dope. But it's not just him that has a positive effect on me. Animals, in general, always make me feel better when I am down. I could be having the worst day imaginable and be miserable. But I would feel better instantly when I spend time with a fuzzy face who gives me unconditional love and doesn't talk my ear off. But the funny thing is I never realized this surprising fact about myself until recently. It took losing my first dog during the first few weeks of the COVID-19 lockdown, living without animals in my life for the first time in years, and going through a downward mental health spiral. Then my mom brought home our current dog, Rocky. All these things made me realize how much I needed animals in my life. They have played a more significant role in my mental health than I could have ever imagined. But I am getting ahead of myself; for this story to make sense, I need to go back to the beginning of my time as a dog owner.

When I was five or six years old, my parents moved my younger brother and me into a new larger house in the countryside. When my mom and dad got married, they lived in this little sidewalk corner house in a town in Tiffin. I will never forget that small house. Even though some of my memories have become blurry after all this time, I will never forget that

place as our house in town. Above all else, it will always be my first home. My parents had only been living there for a year after they were married when they had me. Three years later, just a month before my third birthday, they had my younger brother Marco. For the next five or six years, the four of us lived together in that small house in town. With Marco and me around, there were times when it could feel a little cramped, but since we were still small at the time and for other reasons I don't remember. We stayed there even though, at times, it could feel cramped, but we made living there work because we were happy despite the house being small. Then one day, I don't remember when or how it started, but My brother and I told our parents we wanted a puppy.

I know it doesn't seem like a big thing, but in a way, this represented a big change for our family. Fortunately, unlike some kids whose parents probably would have immediately said no if they asked their parents for a big responsibility like that, our parents seriously considered our request to have a pet. Also, we didn't need to twist someone's arm to get what we wanted in that case. Our dad has always been a dog lover and grew up with many family pets. My mom was also the daughter of a retired dog warden, so like dad, she was also an experienced dog owner since my grandpa occasionally brought stray dogs home. He found them because of his job and kept the ones he liked. Plus, my dad wished to have a springer spaniel and that made him more than happy to give us our request. He promised that once he found us a bigger place to live with a larger yard we would be able to get a puppy. The reason was, for us to have the breed he wanted, we needed a larger yard with more space to run around. Our parents had been planning to move us out of our tiny house in town for a while because Marco and I were getting bigger. Of course, that was something I obviously wouldn't think of at the time since I was five but looking back now, it made sense. Even though I will always have a special place in my heart for that little house in town where I spent the first five or six years of my life, it was a very cramped place to live with all four of us, and it was just two adults and two little kids.

To make a long story a little shorter, my mom and dad finally felt it was time to move us out of that house and into a bigger place. It was a good little house that had served us well. It made us happy for many years, but my parents wanted to take the next step in their

lives. The timing was also perfect for us to move to a new place. It was around that time that I was finally old enough to start going to school full-time. Fortunately, we didn't have to look too hard at the time to find a good new place to live. We also didn't need to worry about finding a house we would all like. It turns out my parents had a decent amount of money at the time; we were able to build our own house. Thanks to my mother's side of the family, we also happened to be the owners of a decent plot of land in the countryside. The countryside was where my parents wanted to move because spaniels are good country dogs.

Another good thing about this place was that it was right next door to my maternal grandparent's house. I was old enough to go to school full time, but my parents also worked full time, so they couldn't be home when I returned from school. Almost every time the final bell at school rang and it was time to go home, my parents still had to be at work. So they had to tell my school to have my bus driver drop me off at my grandparents when she took me home. Not that I minded. I was happy to spend time at their place. I always loved it there. It made adjusting to school and living in a new place easy for me instead of being scary like it can be for most kids.

Soon enough, our house was almost done with construction. During that time, my dad fulfilled our wish of having a dog by getting us our first family pet. That puppy he brought home at the time was the dog I would spend the next fourteen years of my life growing up with. As I got older, she would be there with my family for almost every stage of my life. From the time we got her when I was a toddler to when I became an adult. She passed away at fourteen years old, at the end of my first year of college. I suspect that no matter how many dogs I may have in the future, she will always have a special place in my heart. Not just because she was the first dog I ever had, but because she was the dog who was there with me through it all. Because she was one of the few constants in my young life that were always there no matter how my life changed. I never knew how much she meant to me or everything she brought into my life just by being there until she was gone. She was our English springer spaniel named Daisy, and she was a great dog.

Not long after my parents brought her home to live with us, we were almost ready to move. The construction of our new house was almost complete, and sure, there were still

some minor things that needed to be taken care of, but the place was livable. I think the time we finally officially moved into the new place was when I was six. At the time, I think Daisy was almost a year old when we all moved into our newly built country house. I think almost sixteen years have passed since then. My family is still living in that house, this time with my mom's new puppy, who will be a year old very soon. He is a very naughty but very lovable basset hound named Rocky.

This brings us to another part of the story. Losing the dog I grew up with and loved like a pesky little sister during my first year of college and the first few months after the pandemic lockdown was hard and more painful than I thought it would ever be. Not because I didn't love Daisy but because I always thought we weren't close enough to warrant my being truly heartbroken by her death. As heartless as that sounds, I have my reasons for this. By then, Daisy was already fourteen years old and still happy-go-lucky, but she was always tired, and most days, she barely moved around. I didn't know it at the time, probably because I was away at school before then, but she had cancer. Even so, I wasn't surprised when she passed away from old age. What did surprise me was how much I cried when I heard she was gone. When her time came, I was much more emotional than I thought. It was no secret that, family pet or not, dad was her person, the one she loved the most, and everyone in our family came second. My relationship with her was that of a sibling I was not overly close to, no more, no less. But I guess no matter what relationship we had when she was alive, she was still our family dog who had always been a part of my life, and I missed her when she was gone.

It wasn't until I was back in school that I realized how much having her in my life had done for me. I didn't realize it at the time because I was so busy with everything else, but her death and everything else took a heavy toll on me. Without her unconditional love helping me mentally, I felt worse than usual. To be more accurate, I felt like I was drowning in a heavy sea from which I could not escape on my own. During those first seven weeks of school in my junior year, I was struggling. I felt even more overwhelmed than usual. I was super stressed out. I could not seem to keep on top of myself no matter how hard I tried and for whatever reason. I kept making simple mistakes that I would never have made before. I

think the stress over COVID-19 and trying to roll with the punches and adapt to my changing circumstances for so long finally caught up to me.

I didn't realize how bad it was until things came to a head for me one week. I had a bunch of awful days in a row where I repeatedly got bad news. Between almost catching a cold because of getting caught out in the rain and having a whole plethora of bad news thrown at me over those two days, everything I was dealing with came to a head, and I broke down crying. The icing on the cake of that whole mess was getting a call early in the morning of my second horrible day in a row from my mom telling me that my uncle had passed away from COVID-19. Long story short, I decided it was high time I took advantage of the therapy my university provides. That did help me, but I found what helped me the most in many ways was when my mom got our current dog, Rocky (who we have called the brown menace, among other things. He is so naughty, but we love him so much).

Rocky always makes me feel better, if only because his crazy and stupid antics give me something else to focus on. In many ways, for me, he's the perfect company. He's there for me when I need him, and he doesn't care if I talk to him or not. He accepts me and loves me for who I am. I never have to apologize or worry about what I do when he's with me. Compared to all the relationships he has had with my family members, I have always felt like his relationship with me is more gentle, maybe because he knows that I need his emotional support more than anything else.

So there you have it; dogs have always been a great source of comfort for me. But I didn't realize this until I didn't have them in my life anymore, which I feel guilty about. I will always feel grateful for everything my furry friends have done for me. I once heard a saying that fellow woman and dog lover Tia Torres said, "When a dog is your other half, you can't go wrong; they're loyal unconditionally, they're devoted unconditionally, and they love you unconditionally." I could not agree with that statement more. One of the biggest things I hope for is that one day I will have a close relationship with a dog of my very own. Not one I have to share with anyone, but one that is just mine alone.

A Portrait of My Library, and Me

Cameron Spraggins

In a class discussion with one of my history professors, he shared an African proverb that read, “when an old man dies, a library is burned to the ground.” The years of knowledge and wisdom he has collected in his lifetime disintegrate from the world. An individual exhibit of humanity, uniquely original to our world, is stolen from the earth. If he does not share his wealth of knowledge with the world, it will accompany him eternally to his grave. A man has died, and a lifetime of learning has died with him.

I cannot let this happen. I can’t imagine a world as miserably misguided as one without my two cents. The intellectual void that would envelop the world in the wake of *my* library eternally burning would bring apocalyptic catastrophe on par with the burning of the Library of Alexandria. It would truly be a dark scene. The years of my irreplaceable wisdom enkindle the apocalyptic fire, and the world is burning without me. The townspeople are frantically collecting the charred scraps of my consciousness to salvage some semblance of guidance. If I was alive, I could tell them it is no use. I could barely put the scraps of my mind together to form coherent thoughts; how should these distressed townsfolk be expected to do so amongst the ashes?

In order to preserve my lifetime of learning, I must build a physical library, contrary to the figurative one that will burn when I die. This is merely a precautionary measure against the potential apocalyptic dilemma mentioned above. I will selflessly dedicate my library to “all the lives this library has saved” and celebrate them with a large, gold plaque with my name on it. Truthfully, the reason I want to build a library is not to save the world from potential catastrophe; that is inevitable, regardless of what I have to say about it. I do, however, want to create a library of my own, and not for egotistical reasons. I would love to have an archive of my academic pursuits and personal interests to reminisce upon in my later years and to share with my friends and family. A library, or at least a nifty home office with a ton of my books, included with all of my personal furnishings and delights. It will be a portrait of myself, and as such, it will always remain a

bit unorganized; and I prefer to keep it that way. What good will my older years be without a messy office – just as weathered as I – to read, write, and live in?

The prospect of an office of my own is one I have given much thought to as of recently. Right now, I struggle to find spaces that maximize my productivity. The desks are too small in my apartment, the people too loud in the coffee shop, and the library too far of a walk. Can you fathom my struggle? My mind can never settle in a place to indulge in whatever I am reading or writing without an onslaught of distractions and discomfort. I have always loved to read, and I have recently started to intentionally collect books, and things are starting to get out of hand. I love the smell of a new book, but I have found that I appreciate the look and smell of a slightly tattered book much more, so I tend to shop pre-owned – annotations and all. Writers are oftentimes the reclusive type, and I typically need to be alone, (or, at least, in a quiet room), when I read, so reading has long been an isolated activity for me. As I have grown older, I understand that reading is largely a social function, and to know that my pre-owned books were appreciated by another reader before that book found itself on my shelf makes the world feel a bit smaller. I annotate the pages of my books and encourage those who borrow my books to do the same, just in a different color of ink. Some of my books will look like the back of my elementary school yearbooks, covered in colorful chicken scratch unique to my peers. The pages of my books are a forum for conversation, and I want it no other way. The margins of these pages are reserved for the interpretations of me and my reading friends. My pen pals.

I yearn for a space to make my own, and the stack of books forming the walls of my apartment is forcing me to consider my future library – and it is a lovely exercise. So join me, reader, on an imaginative tour of my future home office. For the purpose of the tour, the year is around 2052, making me around fifty years old. If by age fifty I don't have my own library, kill me if you consider us friends.

First of all, I'm going to cut to the chase and let you know I will be referring to my library as my *study*. I believe any academic with an interest in romanticizing their work must immediately start referring to their home offices as their *study*. It is a much more

distinguished term, perhaps a little pretentious, but it tricks us into thinking we are much more important than we really are. Frankly, characterizing my space as my *study* simply matches the vibes better. The pretentious nature of the word implies there is important business happening behind closed doors. And there always is. Mark Twain penned his famous novels in an octagonal shack with a brick fireplace on a farm in New York. He referred to it as his *study*. Roald Dahl wrote all of his children's stories from a little hut with a cute yellow door. It reeked of tobacco and the floor was coated with pencil shavings and cigarette ashes. He would close the curtains and blackout the room while he wrote. He referred to it as his *study*. That is the type of chaotic comfort that I'm after.

I really enjoy the octagonal shape, and I commend Mr. Twain for writing such fantastic novels in such an unconventionally shaped building. He was quite the revolutionary. My study is similarly shaped with eight interior walls, most of which are stacked to the ceiling with bookshelves. By now, in the year 2052, I live in a beautiful historical home, but not a very large one. It is colorful and oddly shaped from the outside, but some of the children of the neighborhood actually think it's quite ugly. Better to be an ugly house than an ugly child. I can't give you a tour of the rest of the house because we are doing some renovating upstairs, but also because the rest of the home has not developed in my imagination yet. If you follow me through the front door, my study is on the left.

Upon entry, you'll notice that it's a bit messy, and I'll apologize for it, but I'll let you know I don't really mean it. It's not the kind of messy that makes you feel anxious or like you need to wash your hands, but the kind of messy that lets you know you can put your feet up on the furniture and you don't have to worry about swearing. My college history professor, Dr. David Hogan, had stacks of books in each corner and on top of his desk in his office. It looked as if he had just moved all of his belongings the day prior, yet he was one of the longest-tenured professors on campus. He had to store other books of his in empty or unused offices in order to have enough space in his office. There was stuff everywhere, just random shit, but it was always shit worth having a conversation about. And I had a lot of great conversations, especially academic conversations, in that messy office. It's the comfortable kind of messy, and that is exactly where I prefer to operate.

In my study, unshelved books are stacked on the Persian rugs stretched across the hardwood floors, binders are stacked up on the coffee table, there are boxes in the corner that need to be recycled, and the unfinished afternoon cup of coffee on my desk has now chilled to room temperature. Contrary to Mr. Dahl's methodology, I have plenty of windows and plenty of natural light. I enjoy the breeze from outside and the dust floating in the sunbeams shows just how old everything in this room is; it's perfect that way. A world map is draped across the wall behind my desk. The room always exudes a comforting aroma of old wood and whatever seasonal candle is burning from the clearance aisle in TJ Maxx.

The walls are almost entirely made up of bookshelves, not all of which are actually filled with books. Decades of collecting unnecessary trinkets have to culminate into *something*, and my collection is displayed throughout my study. You can find old Cuban cigar boxes filled with old coins or trading cards, and perhaps an old lighter. Some of the shelves are bookended by Lego sets that were put together in one sitting on Christmas morning with my (future) kids. I was never happier as a child than I was after finishing a Lego set first thing in the morning on Christmas, and I plan on sharing that joy with my children. Miniature replicas of the old Detroit Tigers Stadium and other Michigan sports memorabilia can be found on my desk and in between my bookshelves, and pictures and t-shirts from old concerts and vacations are framed as exhibits of my youth. I have a huge desk that is framed by my beloved chair, which of course spins and changes height. The amusement of a spinning chair is a token of childhood innocence that slipped through the filter of adulthood, through the cracks of maturity, and I relish this mishap. Of course, my chair spins.

On the windowsill, there is a ceramic ashtray in the shape of a frog's head. When you need to ash whatever you are smoking, you place it in the mouth of the frog and it appears he is smoking it himself. He has this pleasant look on his face, and it's quite a neat image. Whenever I am struggling as a writer, this surreal display of ingenuity tends to get my creative wheels turning. Outside my window, my children have done me the service of building a birdhouse for my entertainment while I work. They evidently did a wonderful job, as the feeder gets plenty of traffic, and it makes for great sightseeing for me and the

frog. Our birdhouse inspired me to get a copy of the *Native Birds of Michigan Field Guide* to identify our neighbors, which has in turn inspired my wife and kids to think I am a loser.

Old *National Geographic* picture books are used as coasters on my coffee table, on which I have staged an unfinished game of *Risk* with my kids as the centerpiece. There's a candle on the table and a copy of whatever book I am reading at that point in time; it is probably something written by one of my friends, many of whom are esteemed writers. There's a couch next to the coffee table that was too tattered to fit in anywhere else in the house, and I have a TV with my old gaming consoles set up as well. I don't play video games as much as I used to, though I still like to play the *PGA TOUR Golf* games on the Xbox with my son. Some of my most vivid childhood memories are getting my ass kicked by my Dad in Tiger Woods *PGA TOUR 2004* on the original Xbox, and it is my due diligence as a father to extend this humbling-ass-kicking to my own kids.

There is a dog bed next to my desk that doubles as a graveyard for plush animals. That belongs to Mustard, who is my esteemed colleague and dog. Mustard has accompanied me on my journey as an academic for the last ten years and he is my best friend. He likes to sit with me while I read, and he does not go to sleep until I am done writing, even into the early hours of the morning. He likes to chase the birds outside, put his snout up to our cat's anus, and he is a big fan of literary non-fiction and 19th-century women's literature. In the conditions of my contract with the university I am currently tenured with, it was required that they honor Mustard with an honorary doctorate in history for his years of dedication to the field. As I am still employed there, they granted Mustard with his honorary doctorate. He insists that you refer to him as Dr. Mustard or Professor Mustard, but he is also deaf so he will not know the difference.

My vast collection of books was at one point organized by category, but as I tend to do, I have shifted from that traditional system of organization to something a little more individualized. I have a few columns of fiction books, but the majority of my collection is non-fiction. My books are split up sort of by author and sort of by topic and that is as far as I can tell you. No, these aren't all of the books I have, no I haven't read all of them, and yes I still plan to buy more. It is messy, and it is not pretty, but it works perfectly for me. If you

ask me where a specific book is, I promise you I know exactly which shelf.

What matters most is that all of the books I have read, magazines I have collected, movies I watched, cartoons I enjoyed, video games I played, posters I purchased, newspapers I kept, and whatever other stupid things I love are in one place, ready to showcase as an exhibit of myself and all that I have learned and all that I have loved. It is not my resume, nor a portfolio of my work, as it is not just my academic or professional pursuits. It is rather a portrait of myself, highlighting the creative and beautiful, and unorthodox aspects of my life. My greatest love is that of learning, and there is nothing I am more excited about the oncoming freight train of adulthood than a workspace designed to accommodate my unique ways of living and learning. To leave a detailed portrait of myself in my study as a legacy for my children and grandchildren is among my greatest dreams. I yearn for a space that enables me to indulge in my work and unwind when I am finished. I have a lifetime of learning behind me, and another one ahead of me, and it is only fitting that I provide myself with the proper headquarters for my pursuits. My library will not burn.

Map of Lunavera

Eric Kosky & Emma Wright



This map was created as a part of a creative project in a writing course about the publishing industry. For this project, we came up with a book proposal, which included an in-depth plot summary of a fantasy and horror novel. As you can see above, we decided to do some worldbuilding and create the very realm that our heroes travel through in the story.

Some of the more notable locations include the Mirror Forest, where the forest is filled with mirrors of all shapes and sizes and your reflections are not exactly “you”, as well as the Nightingale Meadow, where giant venus fly traps stand in place of flowers.

The story follows five friends as they are transported to the land of Lunavera through an old well. As they journey to the Queen’s castle in hopes of returning home through the royal portal room, they face unimaginable dangers, betrayal, romance, and loss. Will they make it back? At what cost?

Open Eye

Makenna Finnegan



Seasons of My Mind

Emma Wright



Author Biographies

Alyssa Amor

Alyssa is a junior English major with a writing concentration and a double minor in psychology and literature. They are an editor for *Morpheus* and hope to one day become a teacher or work as an editor in the publishing industry.

Jenna Farr

Jenna is a senior English major with a concentration in writing, and she works for the Phonathon team under the alumni department.

Makenna Finnegan

Makenna Finnegan is a sophomore majoring in AYA English Education. She is an editor for *The Kilikilik*, as well as a tutor for both the writing center and PACE.

Eric Kosky

Eric Kosky is a junior majoring in Sports Management. He is on the *Kilikilik* staff and enjoys writing about sports in his free time.

Maxine Milazzo

Maxine is a senior majoring in Integrated Media. She is an avid book lover who enjoys spending time with her dog Rocky.

Lily Roth

Lily is a senior Integrated Media major who is unsure of their path following graduation. For now, they involve themselves in marching band, video production, scriptwriting, and whatever clubs and organizations they have time for.

Julia Schaefer

Julia is a junior Writing and Media major with a minor in theatre. Her writing can be found in *The Kilikilik* and on the Speech Team. Her optimistic works often focus on culture, human interest, and environmentalism. Follow her on Instagram at [julialayne._](#) or visit her website: thejuliaschaefer.com.

Carolyn Schutte

Carolyn is a Senior majoring in English Writing and Spanish. She is a member of Zeta Theta Psi and a part of the Alliance for Sustainability and Berg Body Positivity Association on campus. She is passionate about linguistics and loves her cat, Phoebe.

Cameron Spraggins

Cameron is a Junior History Major with a Writing Minor, Captain of the Men's Golf Team, writes for *The Kilikilik*, a Zeta Ember, and a member of the Heidelberg Historians.

Kelsey Stanfield

Kelsey is a third-year student studying English and Communication. She enjoys creating found poetry, cento poetry, and collages.

Emma Wright

Emma is a junior English writing major with minors in business and art. She is the managing editor for *Morpheus*, the vice president and secretary for the 'Berg Allies, and a barista at "The Heidelbean!" In her free time, she enjoys reading, writing, and spending time with her cats.

Anna Zeller

Anna is currently in her final semester at Heidelberg University before she graduates with both a degree in music and a degree in early childhood education. She plans on using her passion for helping others and learning to become an elementary teacher. On the side, "Ms. Zeller" likes to sing, draw and write.

Editor Biographies

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Alyssa is a junior English major with a writing concentration and a double minor in psychology and literature. They are an editor for *Morpheus* and hope to one day become a teacher or work as an editor in the publishing industry.

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Desire Matherly

Desi is in her first year at Heidelberg where she teaches writing. Her essays and fiction appear in several literary magazines and she is the author of *Echo's Fugue*, a collection of personal essays published in 2019.

Chayenne Powers

Chayenne Powers is a senior Honors Philosophy and English (Writing) student, with minors in Literature and Art. She placed in the Echo Student Literary Competition during the year 2022. She has been the Managing Editor for The Rock Creek Review in 2022 and an Editor for Morpheus Literary Magazine in 2022. Chayenne was awarded the Elizabeth Conrad Zartman Prize in Philosophy in 2021 and 2022. She's currently in three honors societies: Alpha Alpha Alpha, Alpha Lambda Delta, and Sigma Tau Delta. She is a barista at Bailiwicks coffee company and unashamedly likes the Twilight Saga.

Melissa Risser

Melissa is a senior English Literature major. In addition to serving as a poetry editor for the *Morpheus Literary Magazine*, she is an active member of the Euglossian Society, the Deutschklub, and the Anime Club, and works at Beeghly Library. She is pursuing a career as a librarian.

Emma Wright

Emma is a junior English writing major with minors in business and art. She is the managing editor for *Morpheus*, the vice president and secretary for the 'Berg Allies, and a barista at The Heidelberg! In her free time, she enjoys reading, writing, and spending time with her cats.