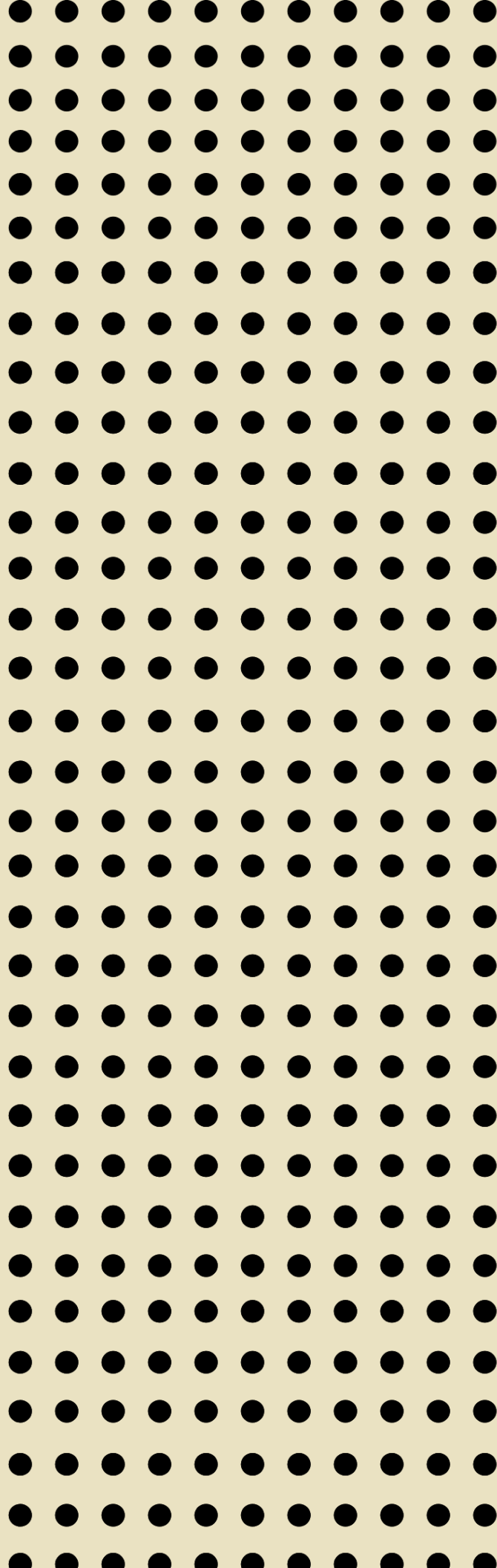


MORPHEUS LITERARY MAGAZINE

SPRING 2023



Morpheus Literary Magazine

Staff

Emma Wright, Editor-in-Chief & Layout Director
Lennon Amor, Social Media Manager & Prose Editor
Makenna Finnegan, Prose Editor
Rowan Gill, Prose Editor
Melissa Risser, Poetry Editor
Desirae Matherly, Faculty Advisor

Contact Us

Email: morpheus@heidelberg.edu
Instagram: [@morpheuslitmag](https://www.instagram.com/morpheuslitmag)
Twitter: [@MorpheusLitMag](https://twitter.com/MorpheusLitMag)

Cover By Emma Wright



Editor's Note

Dear Reader,

I am so thrilled to share the Spring 2023 issue of the *Morpheus Literary Magazine*. After a successful fall semester, the *Morpheus* team was so excited to tackle our second issue of the school year as we continue to revive the magazine and push it even further.

As we have developed the magazine and discerned what our presence on campus means, we have begun reaching outward to the Heidelberg community in other ways than through literature. We have put on Readathons, fundraisers, and two successful in-person writing competitions.

This semester, we are publishing a record amount of submissions. This issue has a very diverse collection of writing, ranging from scriptwriting to children's books to other languages; we have a little bit of everything for you to enjoy.

We thank you for your support throughout this school year as we've expanded the publication and the group's presence throughout campus, and we hope you enjoy the Spring 2023 Edition of the *Morpheus Literary Magazine*.

Sincerely,

Emma Wright
Editor-in-Chief

Table of Contents

| | |
|--|-----------|
| Fiction Writing Contest | 5 |
| Third Place Winner: Elliston Herner | 6 |
| Second Place Winner: Levi Ramirez | 8 |
| First Place Winner: Jenna Farr | 10 |
| | |
| Poetry Writing Contest | 11 |
| Third Place Winner: Cole Stoots | 12 |
| Second Place Winner: Danyelle Diamond | 13 |
| First Place Winner: Lily Roth | 15 |
| | |
| Poetry | 16 |
| <i>Refute</i> , Makenna Finnegan | 17 |
| <i>My Shadow</i> , Jenna Farr | 18 |
| <i>Change</i> , Rowan Gill | 19 |
| <i>The Feel of Baseball</i> , Memphis Cutshall | 21 |
| <i>Ode to My Cousin, May He Rest in Peace</i> , Emma Wright | 22 |
| <i>Heartbreak Extends Past What You Know</i> , Jocelyn Everett | 23 |
| <i>I'm an Insignificant Ant Atop my Pathetic Pyramid of Dirt</i> , Lily Roth | 24 |
| | |
| Creative Nonfiction | 25 |
| <i>Lake</i> , Rowan Gill | 26 |
| <i>Role Models</i> , Conor Sukel | 30 |
| <i>New Year's Eve</i> , Salvatore Rocco | 34 |
| <i>Open Up My Eager Eyes, 'Cause I'm Mr. Brightside</i> , Elliston Herner | 36 |
| <i>An Alien in My Own World</i> , Maxine Milazzo | 40 |
| <i>Small</i> , Kelsey Stanfield | 46 |

| | |
|--|-----------|
| Fiction | 51 |
| <i>Year Unknown, Entry 1</i> , Harrison Herreman | 52 |
| <i>My Friend Moo Always Makes Herself at Home</i> , Emileo Swain | 54 |
| <i>She Took Control of Her Life</i> , Amanda Scarbeary | 56 |
| | |
| Art | 62 |
| <i>In Memoriam</i> , Brett Reed | 63 |
| <i>People Die, Ideas Live On</i> , Brett Reed | 64 |
| <i>Bernard</i> , Makenna Finnegan | 65 |
| <i>God Give Me One More Chance</i> , Alyssa Kordish | 66 |
| <i>Exists for Love</i> , Alyssa Kordish | 67 |
| | |
| Author Biographies | 68 |
| | |
| Editor Biographies | 71 |

FICTION WRITING COMPETITION

Judges: Makenna Finnegan, Chayenne Powers, and Dr. Barry Devine

Writers were given 45 minutes to write a short story based on the provided prompt.

“Write a story that hinges on the outcome of a coin flip.”

The Coin

Third Place Winner: Elliston Herner

“Heads or tails?”

Jason looked across the table from his girlfriend, Sam. Her coffee was trembling in her hand, and if Jason hadn't grasped her hand, she would have spilled it everywhere.

“Sam, listen to me. We don't have to do this. We can make it work, I promise.”

Sam looked down at the table, and then right back at Jason. She stared him in the eyes for a solid 20 seconds before she looked back down at the table.

“No. Jason, I've given you a chance. I've given you so many chances. This is it. We're going to flip this coin, and it's going to decide the future of our relationship.”

Jason didn't know what to say. It took him years to realize his feelings for Sam, but he truly did love her. He knew that going to different universities would make things difficult, but the last thing he wanted was to leave the future of their relationship up to a coin toss.

“I can't do this,” Jason said, slamming his fist down on the table. Now, everyone in the coffee shop stopped their conversations and turned their attention to Jason and Sam.

“I'm not giving you a choice Jason. Heads or tails? I'm not going to ask again.”

Sam could see how nervous Jason was. She hated doing this, but Jason had been so distant lately. He'd been spending all his time with Gwen, and only texting her to let her know his decisions about the university he was attending. She missed all the time they spent together, doing the things that didn't matter. Hopefully, leaving it up to a fifty-fifty coin flip would force him to decide what he wants.

“Tails.” Jason glanced across the room. Everyone was sitting at their respective tables, waiting for an outcome. Jason glared back at Sam and could see the sweat dripping down her forehead. She was nervous, and he could tell.

“Alright,” Sam said, reaching in her pocket for a quarter. Sam knew that Jason would tell her he loved her, she just had to play her bluff a little bit longer.

“Heads, we break up. Tails, we stay together.”

Sam quickly took the quarter and placed it on the back of her palm. Jason peered across the table, and his soul nearly left his body.

“It's heads!” the onlookers shouted. Sam stared Jason straight in the eyes.

“Is there anything you want to say to me? Anything at all?”

Jason loved her. He knew she had been upset that he had been spending all his time with her sister, Gwen. He didn't know how to tell Sam how he felt. But sitting there, realizing that she had put their entire relationship up to a coin toss, he wasn't sure he could do it anymore.

“Sam,” Jason exclaimed, brushing his hand through his hair. “I don’t know how to say this. I have no idea. But, here it goes. I love you, and I have for a long time now.”

Sam couldn’t believe it. It worked, her plan had actually worked. She glanced around the room of the coffee shop and saw an old couple, perhaps late 50s, watching the event unfold, tearing up. It was at that moment she could finally see herself growing old with Jason.

“Jason,” she whispered softly. “I love you too.” Jason slowly put his hand up to stop her.

“But sorry, I can’t do this. You put our entire relationship up to a coin toss, so if the outcome was heads, then that’s that. We’re breaking up. We’re done.” Jason pushed back on his chair to get up and walked straight out the door, looking at nothing but his shoes.

“I’m so sorry,” the old couple came to say to Sam. But Sam was too upset. She sat there at the quaint little coffee shop and stared at the quarter. The quarter that determined the fight of her relationship. She picked it up and threw it across the room. Why, she thought, why did she do this? Her relationship shouldn’t have been a probability, but she made it one. And now, she was left with nothing but that quarter.

Untitled

Second Place Winner: Levi Ramirez

I was sitting with my roommate Fred. Everyone on the whole block called him “Heroin Fred” due to his love of that magical juice, the man all around was just a lovable card; I’d do anything to keep on keepin’ on with my good pal Fred.

“Hey cat,” said Fred as he leaned over to me on the couch. “Why don’t we turn the tube off and make this Sunday interesting, aye?” He muttered as he wafted the stench of morning breath under my nose between his yellow, crooked teeth. He grabbed the TV remote that was sitting in my lap and chucked it straight at the TV. The screen of the boob tube cracked and fissured and shortly after it emitted a soft smoke into the air.

“Let’s go down the road and steal some bleach bottles from the dollar store. Come on, let’s do it for old time’s sake?” I sighed and shook my head, giving him back a weak “Come on Freddy, we do that every Sunday... How’s about you and me hit up that new casino on the corner of Boher’s and Wallace?”

At that moment, Freddy’s eyes glittered like overpriced diamonds in a jewelry store show cabinet.

“Alright catty boy, how about we flip a coin?”

“See Fred, this is why I love ya, man!” With a big toothy grin, I reached into my pocket, but no coin was felt.

“Hey Freddy, you got a coin?” I asked, still feeling my inner thigh through the thin fabric.

“I just used my last coin to scrape me up some of that hoppy syrup!” Fred muttered.

“Well, I guess we’re shit outta luck... How about rock paper scissors?”

“You would say that!” Fred said with an offended tone. “You, outta all people, know that my R.P.S. days are over!” As he lifted his dead, necrotic, purple hand up to my gaze, he said, “We either find a coin to flip, or we can just lay here and stare at the ceiling mold again!”

We’ve been mold gazing for the past four days. If we did it a fifth, I’d surely go crazy...

So there we were, me and ol’ Freddy Boy scouring every square inch of our foreclosed abode. We lifted every floorboard, checked in every drawer, and searched the bathtub, sink, and oven three times out, but no coin was in sight. As a last-ditch effort, I stuck my hand in the hole in the wall right next to the entrance and found our last saving grace.

“Hey Freddy, I found exactly what we’re looking for!”

“Well, let’s see it!” He exclaimed. I reached my cupped hands out to reveal to him, a dead rat!

“It’s stiff as a board!” I explained. “His belly will be heads and his back will be tails, got it?”

“Yes, sir!” Freddy exclaimed, bones chattering with delight. I picked tails, and Freddy got heads, and with that, I tossed the rotten rodent into the air. Right then and there, the world slowed, as this vermin twirled in the air and I saw the look of happiness and excitement on Fred’s face. Through thick and thin, I knew that no matter what happens, a day I get to spend dickin’ around with my best pal is the best prize a man could win. Then with a weak thud, the rat hit the ground, square on its stomach. Freddy let out his raspy, old laugh and jumped around in glee.

“I won!” He shouted. “I win, I win!” Then we both were laughing, jumping around, happy as clams. As we settled down, we looked at each other, and the house fell silent.

“Wait, why’d we flip the rat again?” Fred asked. I stared back at him blankly and muttered, “Jeez Fred, I don’t remember...” Then we both just stood there.

“Hey, I think that’s a new patch of mold on the ceiling!” Fred said with his head and finger aimed at the growth.

“Neat,” I said, sharing the moment with him.

Flip a Coin

First Place Winner: Jenna Farr

He thought it was a simple enough proposal.

“Heads, I’ll go stand in front of the target, and tails, you go,”

Jason said this seriously, with almost no tone in his voice that Brian wondered if this was payback for what happened between him and Sophia.

“Look, if it makes you feel any better, then we can each be in charge of whichever weapon we’d like to be used on ourselves.”

This made Brian feel slightly better as he knew that this way at least Jason couldn’t tamper with anything.

So, Brian and Jason walked into the garage and they each picked an old revolver that Jason’s dad had in his collection. Jason’s dad was just as much of a drunk as Jason was, if not more, so Brian was hoping these would jam up somehow if his dad wasn’t taking great care of them.

“Let me go grab a quarter off my dad’s dresser, you wanna be heads or tails?”

“I don’t know, uh, that really matter? Tails, I guess.”

As Jason walked inside, Brian was starting to feel scared shitless. He didn’t know anything about guns. What if he missed and Jason didn’t? Worse, what if he hit Jason and then he got pissed and just shot him back? Jason came back outside with a coin.

“Ready? I’m obviously heads then, huh,” it came out as a laugh with something dark in his tone. Jason flipped the coin and caught it on the back of his hand.

“Tails, you lose. Put your gun down and go walk out there.”

Brian walked out and put himself level with the paper targets already on a post.

“Uh, just be careful, yeah?”

Jason didn’t respond. He held the gun with both hands and made himself steady. He took a breath and a shot rang out, birds flying out of the trees above at the sound. Brian’s body hit the ground, a bullet between his eyes. What Brian didn’t know was that the coin was a big deal. Jason’s dad went through a magic phase as a teen, his favorite trick? The double-sided coin. If Brian had checked or chosen his own coin or had taken a peek in Jason’s meat freezer when he went inside he would’ve known that this all really did matter. If Brian and Sophia wanted to be together, then Jason had no problem with that. They could die together on the same day and they could freeze together in his garage, but they could never live together.

POETRY WRITING COMPETITION

Judges: Lennon Amor and Chris Abrams, Dean of Student Affairs

Writers were given 30 minutes to write a poem based on the provided prompt.

“Write a poem about driving to or from a place you either love or hate. Mention at least two road signs—SLOW, STOP, MERGE, Sausalito Exit 2 Miles, etc....and one establishment—a cafe, a hotel, a gas station, etc. Try to see these signs as SIGNS, the establishments as SYMBOLIC. The poem must include a list of concrete objects. Somewhere in the poem, you might try recounting either your sins or failures. Begin or end the poem with a question.”

A Favorite Place

Third Place Winner: Cole Stoots

what is your favorite place?
when asked – i feel –
my first thoughts
should be of Home.
some say it is where the
heart is.
some say it is where
i choose.
to me, Home is a place
i have lost.
a house wedged between a stop sign
and more trees than i could count.
but i have lost that place
where i skinned my knees
and kissed my first boy by a creek.
i have a house now,
in a suburb outside of Cleveland.
it's not a Home – and it never will be –
because there are no memories.
When i leave my dorm to visit my mother
– it's never going Home now and i'm not sure when that started –
i get off 480 at Stearns and i seethe.
is that a failing of my personality?
do i have a right to this anger?
it's hot and dark and i hate it
with every fiber of my being.
i try to enjoy the little things
– my library and coffee shops –
but try as i might,
i can't help but think:
do i really hate it
or am i just
grieving?

Abandoned

Second Place Winner: Danyelle Diamond

Staring through the thick glass,
my eyes are overflowing as
the incoming headlights turn into
yellow and white comets in my
vision. My mind races the
speed limit –
a mile a minute.

I nearly miss the exit sign
as I blink my cloudy eyes
clear. Taking the off-ramp,
my heart lightens as relief
fills my lungs. I didn't
even notice I had stopped
breathing – that my lungs
had been screaming for
oxygen since I left.

There's an abandoned church
and graveyard around one
corner. Truly terrifying at
night, but, in this moment,
I find comfort in the
worn stones and broken
boards my brights illuminate.
The paint is faded, peeling
like the skin from my
raw fingertips, bleeding with
old memories.

Yet, it's stood strong against
the test of time. I stay at
the stop sign, staring
until I see lights behind

me. I make my turn and
watch the property fade
under the moonlight in
my rearview mirror.

As I get closer and closer
to home, I wonder how
long the church had been
there – how long the coffins
had been left in the
ground. Do the oak
boards and limestone yearn
for their former gatherings?

Will I, too, be able to
withstand the lonely elements?

It Takes 8 Minutes to Drive to the Office and It's Ironic That It's on the 11th Floor

First Place Winner: Lily Roth

Wind the key on my back to start my engine,
I sputter and stall in spiteful reluctance,
something must be wrong – the cogs and gears are stuck,
they grind,
making an awful noise that sounds a bit like
bones purposelessly rattling about a cage
crafted to imprison only the least deserving of rescue.
For this reason I am delivered to the shop.
Approaching, I can't help but be mindful of the vehicles
that surround me,
I wonder where they're being shipped to and if they
feel the same.
Additionally I am bitterly humored by the ONE WAY sign that
I have noted in my sleep.
As well as NO RIGHT TURN.
And YIELD.
NO ENTRY, TURN BACK, STOP, YOU WON'T MAKE IT,
EXIT NOW, YOU'VE BEEN WARNED, HAVE A NICE DEATH DUMBASS.
Despite my attempts to crash, I arrive.
The specialist clicks her pen and chews on her thin,
pale lips.
Clipboards, entry questionnaires, self-help books, worksheets,
all as familiar as the incessant ticking of a clock.
There's a gym across the street and I can hear them laughing
at me.
Cacophonous.

POETRY

Refute

Makenna Finnegan

Come find me,
I beg, misshaping into the
Hollow Trunk.

You whisper back,
Wanting to let this
Decay Silently.

Come find me,
I gasp, scratching at
Fungal Wood.

You lend your ear,
Whispering sweet nothings to
Suffocate the Pest.

Come find me,
I whisper, my skin dissolving
Within the Moss.

You cover your eye,
Smiling at the clay-ridden ground,
Refuse to Believe.

My Shadow

Jenna Farr

She has my name but hers is prettier.

She has my face but hers is skinnier.

She doesn't have my body, hers is better.

She likes all the things i like, but she likes them better.

She likes to do all the things i do, except she always does them better.

We don't have the same dislikes, she hardly dislikes anything ever.

She's better than me in that way

but sometimes i think she dislikes me.

She dislikes what i wear, she would have worn it better.

She dislikes what i eat, she'd eat healthier.

She dislikes the money i spend, she's a saver

and she dislikes that i dislike me, she would never.

No one sees her, not even me

but i feel her creeping up behind me, always following.

Change

Rowan Gill

“You know, it’s funny. Despite everything, I think my biggest fear is change.”

“What makes you say that?”

“I have lived a thousand lifetimes, each playing a new role, and yet... every time it ended. Every time, something changed in a way that could not be reversed. Always a word that couldn’t be taken back, an action that ruined everything. I think that is what life is.”

“Irreversible?”

“Changing.”

“Then why fear it?”

“Because I am happy. Change can sometimes lead to more happiness, but it often leads to more pain. If I allow change in my life, there is a great possibility that I will lose what makes me happy now.”

“What if you exchange it for happiness later?”

“How much later? I do not want happiness 50 years from now.”

“It is as you said, life changes. You can’t fix it.”

“I can still despair over it. And the worst part is, often you find it is the things you wish to change, that never do.”

“Such as?”

“The way people act. The way *I* act. There are certain aspects of people and things that cannot be changed. Those are usually the traits that most long to alter.”

“...”

“It doesn’t matter. I am tired and afraid. I cannot stop the change unless I die, which is the biggest change of all. I cannot accept it either. There is so much that I lose that I wish to keep. And yet, none understand. They do not reflect the way I do. They do not see the constant coincidences as the changes keep piling on.”

“You are broken.”

“I know.”

“You make little sense.”

“I know.”

“You fear the future, and what could happen. I fear those coincidences you speak of, those traits that cannot go away. I fear the past and its repeating. I yearn for change.”

“...”

“All I know is the hurt the past brings. When memories appear, they can be tainted with such pain that it keeps one up at night. It is hard to wish to stay in a moment that you know is not good.”

“I see.”

“The only reason I keep marching forward is because I am hopeful that your terrifying change will yield great results.”

“Do you not see how hard it is to continue? Not knowing if the pain will end up the same as yesterday’s?”

“I fight that urge to give up. The only other option is death, which allows no more change. If I die, I will be trapped forever knowing nothing else can be done.”

“...Is it not so strange how alike we are?”

“It makes sense, we are a part of a whole. Our death would be shared, as is our pain. The only difference is our fears.”

“I think you are wrong. Our fears are the same.”

“Oh?”

“We both are afraid of the pain never ending, and misery holding us close forever.”

“That we are.”

The Feel of Baseball

Memphis Cutshall

Smell of green grass is in the air,
Sunflower seeds going into people's hair
The feel of baseball is back.
Wooden bats making solid contact
Hitters lost in the count wondering where they are at,
Oh man, the feel of baseball is back.
Metal cleats banging off the concrete,
Sounds just like a choir team singing on beat,
And with baseballs flying everywhere
Off-track fielders making errors.
What's back?... Is the feel of baseball.

Ode to My Cousin, May He Rest in Peace

Emma Wright

A piece of construction paper lies on the hardwood floor,
and it's green. Or maybe it was red,

but at this point, it's been too long for me,
because memory is unreliable. I remember you, though,

and it's weird to write in the past tense,
and the past *was* tense. All you wanted was paper, yet

she said no, denied you simple pleasures,
because of herself. To her, perception mattered,

but no matter. I'll bring you all of the paper you want,
and if you want to, you can wave it in the air.

Denial is a dangerous thing, yet you lived so freely:
yet, you *lived*.

Beyond the living, there's a room full of paper,
construction and cardstock,

And it's all for you.

Heartbreak Extends Past What You Know

Jocelyn Everett

Lili 老师 says
男孩子容我哭.
That is how to say
boys make me cry

I mourned for months
in my own way
a relationship that in retrospect
wasn't worth the pain

The heartbreak was so bad
I needed to know
how to say it in another language
How beautifully pitiful

**i'm an
insignificant ant
atop my pathetic pyramid of dirt**

Lily Roth

What I resent most is
when Their eyes l i n g e r on yours for

a
 moment
 too
 long

and you know They see right through you.

It's when They station Their squinted gaze with Their head cocked to the side and you're being
peered at through a magnifying glass.
You're inches tall.
Your idiot breath hitches
and your idiot words falter, and

out in the open
you can't hide.

You'll probably be discussed when you leave Their presence,
or perhaps, if They're cruel,
in front of you,
in whispers
as They deliberate theories and explanations
for your essence,
 for your disposition,
 for your psyche.

The few extra milliseconds of eye contact.
They know.

You are examined as a wet-cheeked toddler punching pink fists.
Pitied.

This is a colossal and career-ending break in character, you're aware, but you find it hard to protest;

 you're just
 an insignificant ant
atop your pathetic pyramid of dirt.

**CREATIVE
NONFICTION**

Lake

Rowan Gill

It was January, and our breaths could be seen the moment we stepped through the library doors. Thus began our ritual. Once a month, my friends and I would go to our local library, attend one of their teen events, and leave early. The small, square building was surrounded by a plaza on one side, and Lake Erie on the other. Normally, the group would head off to Speedway, the grocery store, or the pizza place. We would buy food for all of us to share and sit under the lone windmill in the middle of the plaza's parking lot. Nobody ever knew why they put the contraption there, but it made a great base to sit and talk while fending off the seagulls that wanted our pizza or chips.

On rare occasions, we went in the opposite direction and headed to the lake. The beaches, frequently covered in trash, stunk of dead fish, but it didn't stop us from walking up and down the dock. The dock itself was small, with just enough room to put a small boat in the water. The 90-degree corner guided the boats where it was safest to enter the deeper waters. The large wall of rocks was meant to keep people from falling into the deeper areas when walking the dock, but that did not stop them from climbing all over to get splashed by oncoming waves. My friends and I did just that frequently, though I moved far more cautiously than they did as they clamored as high as they could go. We stayed out on the lake until it was dark and our parents came to pick us up.

This particular January night, we stepped out and opted for the lake. It was during a particularly cold freeze so we all were bundled from head to toe in warm materials. The sky had darkened to nearly pure black despite being no later than 8 pm. A lone streetlight stood,

illuminating the world behind the library. It was with this singular light that we saw it: Lake Erie, the massive expanse of water that controlled our weather and surrounded our world, was frozen. The waves that lazily crashed against the sand and bits of driftwood held still, driven back by the immovable ice. My closest friends throughout my childhood, our little group of seven, stood and stared. Not a single one of us had seen anything like it before. I personally didn't think it could freeze like this. When the weather truly picked up, the waves were ceaseless, and when the world calmed, so did the waves. Yet, they never stopped before. The glassy obscurity of the ice forced the water into submission. The eerie silence stood out, with the only perceivable sounds being the buzzing of the lamp and the reverberation of the wind, far off in the distance. I don't remember who thought of it first, but we collectively agreed on our adventure of the evening. The first step was to tap our feet on the edges of the ice, seeing if it would break instantly. It didn't. Then, our next step was to go out onto the dock and simply step off.

Maddie Mills went first. I went second. The cold sting of icy air hitting us, coming from far off the lake, was never to be forgotten. I slid myself off the dock, far more careful than my best friend before me who practically jumped, and stood with shaky legs on the surprisingly thick layer separating me from what most likely may have killed me. The shock of below-freezing water mixed with my being a poor swimmer would be the worst combination if the ice broke. I didn't think about that at the moment. All I thought was how amazing the feeling was. Every step was quicker than the first as I moved across the slippery surface. Maddie Mills waited for me on the edge of where the water met dry land, our safe zone. My heart raced as I worried about slipping and falling. I ended up practically running,

laughing wholeheartedly as everyone cheered and the next person followed behind me. The echoes of our chorus faded across the lake, strangely consumed by the hollow hushing of the breeze. We went several rounds, just seeing how long we could stay on the ice, ignoring the way our skin went numb and our faces ached as the wind tried to sweep us away.

I often think about that night whenever I now drive by the library. The experience itself was dangerous. So much could have gone wrong. Our parents had no idea that our adventures at the library usually didn't stay at the library, as we would all return before our parents showed up. Nobody knew we were out there, none of us had the muscle to drag anyone out of the water, and even the strongest swimmer could've frozen with how cold it was. I give myself slight anxiety as I think about what I would've done if the ice had splintered and cracked underneath our weight. We had no idea how thick the ice was, we just went for it. Almost all of us felt free from any burden that night, we talked about it for years afterward. Most of the group didn't have the best home lives, the best school lives, or the best situations in life. I can confidently say that January night was the first in a very long time when we escaped from any of our problems.

I only talk to two of the original group anymore. Maddie Mills and I no longer speak, still bitter from a falling out that spent years in the making. The other members of our little group- JC, Rayne, Maddie Fairweather, Makayla, and Kassie- split for various reasons. Most of our friendships ended senior year, about six years after that perfect night. It makes sense looking back. We all became different people long before our friendship ended. Even in middle school, during the year we literally walked on water, tension was gathering. That night was one of the few untainted nights we had. A night we all were truly friends again. Our

parents never found out, they would have killed us for being so risky. It is strange knowing that such a freeing moment for us happened with only a lone light as our witness.

Role Models

Conor Sukel

Icons, public figures, older friends, family members, and coaches all serve as role models for many people, often without knowing it. My biggest role model understood the position he held in my life as well as many others. Training and coaching basketball players to reach their potential was only the beginning of the impact that Daryl Thomas had on numerous kids from the Chicago suburbs including myself.

In late March of my eighth-grade year, a major decision was looming over my head; I needed to figure out which high school I would be attending come the fall. There were so many factors going into my decision I truly felt like I was making a decision that would ultimately be more important than choosing a college. To this day I still believe my high school decision was more difficult and important than my college decision. Little did I know that my decision would in part be made for me.

I was on spring break and in between basketball and volleyball seasons. I was just laying on the couch in the basement probably watching whichever show was on ESPN that morning. My mother yelled my name. I was caught off guard by her yelling. From the tone in the yell, I knew I wasn't in trouble and nothing was wrong in the house but she had some urgent message for me. Perplexed, I walked upstairs and saw a concerned look on her face. I don't remember her speaking before handing me her phone. I don't even remember who the conversation was with or the exact words of the messages. I remember learning that Daryl Thomas, a coach, mentor, and secondary father figure of mine for the past five-plus years, had died the day before.

I could remember the first time I met Daryl, he was trying to give third-grade me the

confidence to shoot the basketball with my left hand. I did not know it then but in the years after that, I found out that he saw a talent in me that I had not fully recognized at the time. He was a coach at one of the final schools I was choosing between. A lot of the factors were making me lean toward committing to go to the school he coached at. At the moment, I did not decide that I would not go to that school. But by the time a week had passed, I knew I could not fathom walking into the building without Daryl being there, let alone playing in the gym he coached in and being in the building five days a week for school.

Daryl was an unsung hero for most of his life. He was from the south side of Chicago and earned his way into playing in the prestigious McDonald's All-American game in 1983. Four years later he assisted on the game-winning basket of the 1987 Men's Basketball National Championship game for Indiana. As most people know, during the 1980s the legendary Bobby Knight was the head coach for Indiana University Men's Basketball team. Knight was famous for his aggressive coaching style, most noted by throwing a chair on the court during a game.

As my playing career progressed I learned which coaching styles I enjoyed playing for the most. I figured out that I never could have played for Coach Knight. This, among many other personal realizations, was a direct result of conversations with Daryl Thomas during private lessons. Today, I strive to be like Daryl. He was a one-of-a-kind man that positively impacted every person he met.

Attending his funeral was the most difficult thing I have ever had to do. Despite meeting other great basketball players and coaches and being surrounded by former teammates of mine, saying goodbye to Daryl hit me right in the heart. The whole time I felt as if my heart was not beating. Hundreds upon hundreds of memories ran through my

mind throughout the service. Walking up to give my condolences to his widowed wife I froze and looked to my mom to speak for me like I was a three-year-old unable to order my own meal at a restaurant. All I did was hug her and nod my head. Any words would have resulted in me crying and that would not have been helpful for anyone.

Almost five years since he passed away I still have his number in my phone. I am not quite sure why, as I know I can't text or call him and get a response. However, something about deleting his number seems inhumane. I still remember a few days before we set up a meeting to discuss my high school decision. I was supposed to meet with him on Friday. He died two days before and I found out less than twenty-four hours before our scheduled meeting.

Looking back on making my high school decision Daryl's death complicated my decision even further. I struggled with the idea of going to his school and playing to honor him and not being able to imagine myself ever stepping foot on campus again. I chose the latter and truly have not been to the school ever since I learned Daryl died. There have been times when I have been offered work as an umpire at the school and I religiously turn down working there.

Daryl had a difficult upbringing, played for arguably the toughest coach in basketball history, and played in several foreign countries but always kept a positive outlook on life. Each and every time I saw Daryl I could not help but smile. Little kids always saw him as a friendly giant since he was six feet eight inches tall and constantly made everyone laugh and smile.

Daryl made connections with people, especially his players that extended far beyond

the court. He made sure I understood the importance of being a good person, focusing on my grades, and avoiding pressures that would come between me and my aspirations.

I took for granted that Daryl would be there throughout my playing career. He didn't even get to see me graduate junior high. There's not a day that goes by that I am not reminded of Daryl's impact on me.

I often feel like I have not lived up to the expectations that he and I had for my future back in 2018. There is not much I wouldn't do to have him back as an active participant in my life. Though I only knew him from the time I was roughly eight or nine years old till I was about fourteen the impact he had on me both on and off the basketball court is invaluable.

Role models help steer people toward the proper direction in life. Daryl always went out of his way to make sure everyone he crossed paths with was doing well and doing the right thing. My life was forever changed when he entered my life and again when he left it. For those that are lucky enough to still have their biggest role model or hero, don't take them for granted as no one knows when the last conversation that takes place with a role model will actually be the last conversation.

New Year's Eve

Salvatore Rocco

It was New Year's Eve and I don't even remember what year. That was unimportant to me at the time of the incident. All the neighbors were celebrating together at a house down the street. The adults were drinking and playing pool in the basement while we kids were running wild around the house and the backyard. There were eight of us looking for a game to play. We finally decided on playing man-hunt, which is like hide and seek. One kid who was different from the rest suggested that we add what he thought was an exciting element to the game; whoever is the hunter gets an airsoft gun and must shoot and hit the hidiers in order to win the game. Everyone said no, that's a terrible idea. He grabbed his gun anyways, and everyone ran.

I hid in the bathroom and locked the door. I didn't hear anyone, so I peeked under the bottom of the door. As soon as I got a clear sight, I heard a huge "pop" sound and began feeling an unbearable pain and loss of vision in my left eye. The bullet had bounced off the floor and hit me directly in my open eye, penetrating my pupil. I screamed in pain and saw my blood-filled eye in the mirror. I opened the bathroom door to see all the kids laughing. They didn't know that the bullet hit me in the eye yet. I punched the kid who shot me in his stomach and everyone got quiet. I was furious. They looked at my eye and their jaws dropped in horror. They got my parents and I was taken to a hospital where they gave me an eyepatch. I specifically remember my dad calling me "patches" all night which made me laugh, though my mom did not find it funny.

I had to sleep sitting up for two months. I was not allowed to watch television or read. It sucked. The kid who shot me felt terrible and apologized every day for weeks. I assured him it was okay, and it was. Honestly, it was one hell of a shot. I mean one in a million. The kid's got a nice trigger finger, I can't deny that. After numerous trips to the eye doctor, my vision was fully restored, which the doctor couldn't believe. He said there was such a small possibility of me regaining my vision and that I was extremely lucky that I didn't go blind in that eye. It was a horrible experience, but it taught me to never take my health for granted and to be able to forgive.

Open Up My Eager Eyes, 'Cause I'm Mr. Brightside

Elliston Herner

“Oh yeah! I love that song!”

This is something people say all the time. I'll be standing in line for a doctor's appointment, at work, at school, and suddenly, a song that everyone knows will come on.

“This is such a great song! I love this song!” they will all say.

Music is an interesting concept. Musical techniques and styles mean different things to different people. However, I often wonder, what does it actually mean to say that you love a song? Is it just something you say to fit in at the moment? Is it something that you say if you've heard it once or twice? To me, if I say I love a song, there's always a story. Always.

I grew up in Monroeville, Ohio. A small, quiet little town about 30 minutes south of the world-renowned amusement park, Cedar Point. The current population of Monroeville sits at about 1,292 people. Therefore, I would say it's safe to assume that this town is not one that too many people are familiar with.

When I was growing up, I loved listening to music with my dad. It was one of the few interests that we had in common. While our music tastes have diverged greatly over the years, back then, it was quite similar. Because of its size, Monroeville didn't have a radio station, so my dad would always tune in to 95.3 WLKR from Norwalk, Ohio. This station was known to play classic rock songs, but also newer alternative rock selections as well. I discovered a lot of my favorite songs on this station, and *Mr. Brightside* by American rock band The Killers is no exception.

I don't remember exactly how old I was when I heard *Mr. Brightside* for the first time. If I had to guess, I would say around 9 or 10. All I remember is sitting in the car with my family, listening to 95.3 WLKR, and hearing this song that was just so mesmerizing. It was slightly different from the songs that I usually listened to with my dad, but there was just something about it that got me completely hooked. From the opening guitar riff to Brandon Flowers's lead vocal performance, there was something that immediately resonated with me. Little did I know, it was soon to become one of my favorite songs of all time.

As I got older, *Mr. Brightside* became a permanent staple of my junior high and high school careers. I remember the song playing at several of the cast parties that I attended for the several different musicals that I was in. As soon as it came on, everyone lost their mind. We all just sang along, and the best part was that it didn't matter what else was happening. All that mattered in those moments was that everyone was having a good time.

Once I entered my sophomore year of high school, I was able to get my driver's license. I was excited to start driving, but really, I was even more excited that I now had control over my car's stereo system. However, there was one issue. My car didn't have an auxiliary input, so what did I do? I burned CDs. Tons and tons of CDs, with all my favorite songs on them. And yeah, I put *Mr. Brightside* on almost every single one.

I drove a minivan in high school. Did I get made fun of for it? Absolutely. Was I able to fit way more people in my car than almost everyone else? Yes, yes I was. I have so many good memories of driving home from sporting events, school, the movies, whatever it may be, and just jamming out to this wonderful song. I memorized which track *Mr. Brightside* was

on almost all of the CDs that I made, and I would skip right to it. My friends and I would sing every single lyric at the top of our lungs, just for fun.

I didn't have a date for my junior prom, but I still went with all of my friends. I remember just sitting at a table with everyone towards the end of the night. We were having a good time, but we were exhausted and needed a break. My friend Wyatt and I had requested that *Mr. Brightside* be played, but we didn't actually think it would be. All of a sudden, we hear the DJ switch songs, and hear that infamous guitar riff start playing. All 7 of us immediately jumped out of our seats and sprinted towards the dance floor. We danced, we screamed, and we had fun because it was our song. It was our song. We didn't have senior prom due to the Covid-19 pandemic, but honestly, that moment would have been hard to beat.

Fast forward to my junior year of college, I was burnt out with music. I was burnt out with band and choir after being a music major for two years and honestly wanted very little to do with it moving forward. I was still in choir, but I didn't plan on doing marching band. It wasn't until very late in the game when several of my friends informed me that the band was performing *Mr. Brightside* that I decided to come back. I love that song and was hoping that it would give me another chance to love the band again, and I was absolutely right. I had a blast playing it with everyone, and am so glad that I decided to go back.

So, yeah. When someone says to me, "I love this song," I don't normally know what it is that they mean. However, when I say that I love *Mr. Brightside*, I absolutely, 100% mean it. Whenever I hear it, all of my memories associated with it come rushing back to me at exactly the same time. I think of the first time I heard it, sitting in the car with my family. I

think of getting my license for the first time, jamming out to it with my sister. I think of my mom singing it with me, even though I know she doesn't particularly like the lyrics. All of these good memories that I have are tied to this one song, and therefore, I love it.

I am so glad that I have so many songs that I truly *love*. As I stated earlier, there's a story for every single one of them.

So, next time you say to yourself "I love this song," I want you to think more about it. Is it a song you love? Or just a song that you like? Because to me, there's a clear difference.

An Alien In My Own World

Maxine Milazzo

I feel like an outsider on an alien planet, wholly separated from everyone wherever I go. The lights and colors around me are so bright, I feel like I might go blind from looking at them, even if I'm not looking directly at them. It feels like the volume is on full blast everywhere I go, even for small noises. The sounds are blaring, and every voice around me sounds like they're yelling at first. Every little thing around me feels like it is magnified, even the faint sound of the wind. Everywhere I go, it feels like a glass wall separates me from the people around me. I see them and acknowledge their existence, but I don't feel like I am one of them. Even if I did, I have no desire to interact with them because I know deep down that I prefer to be alone with just my own thoughts in my own head. After all, this makes me happiest.

But because I think and feel differently than others, they often cannot understand me. Some might even think something is wrong with me because of how I act or because the things I need to be happy and healthy are different from other people's needs. For example, growing up, I had no close friends my age. The closest I ever came to having friends in school were the lovely ladies who were part of my school's faculty. But I was always told that they didn't count as real friends because they were much older than me and my teachers or supervisors. Because of this, I thought I had no friends, and whenever people asked me if I had any friends, I would answer "no" without reservation because I wasn't embarrassed about this fact. After all, my situation didn't bother me because being alone most of the time was what I preferred, and being alone made me the happiest in life. But this was something

that the people around me couldn't understand. After I answered their questions by stating that I had no friends, people would often have concerned looks on their faces. These looks drove home the realization that I was not considered normal in other people's eyes. So as I got older, I couldn't help but wonder what was wrong with me. Let me ask you a question: what do you think looks like that could do to a young girl's self-esteem? Can you imagine what that must be like being looked at like you were some kind of weird creature with no feelings at all? Can you imagine how horrible and lonely that must be for a little girl, or for any little kid, really?

Imagine when you were young and just another carefree and happy kid. You had nothing to worry about except enjoying your life, having fun, and you didn't think you were any different from the people around you. Now imagine what it would be like coming to school for the first time and realizing that you are struggling and miserable there. You also discover that learning is much more challenging for you compared to your classmates. Because of that, you have to take extra or special classes. On top of struggling with your school work, you feel like you can't relate to your classmates and would rather be alone than spend time with them. This makes your parents and your teachers concerned, and you feel annoyed because they keep telling you to put yourself out there and make friends because they think that is best for you. In reality, you don't want to do those things and are miserable trying to force yourself to be something you are not to fulfill the adults' expectations. But you can't help yourself in these situations because you don't think anything is wrong with you. For you, this is just an everyday situation, and you feel like another ordinary person who is not different from anyone else. You think you are a kid who is stupid and unfriendly. I

didn't realize it then, but my troubles were not because I was unfriendly or stupid. I don't remember when or how, but when I was a child, I was diagnosed with autism, ADHD, and dyslexia.

My autism is characterized as Asperger's syndrome. The website titled Asperger's Syndrome in Children defined it in the following way: "Characterized as a type of autism, Asperger's syndrome is a condition that affects a person's ability to understand language, communication, and social cues." This explained my desire to be alone all the time and my difficulty interacting with people my age. The trouble I had focusing on my school work, homework assignments, and any other tasks I had to do was attributed to ADHD, described in the following way by the website What is ADHD?: "Many ADHD symptoms, such as high activity levels, difficulty remaining still for long periods, and limited attention spans, are common to young children. The difference in children with ADHD is that their hyperactivity and inattention are noticeably greater than expected for their age and cause distress and problems functioning at home, school, or with friends." To top it all off, I discovered I had dyslexia which was the root cause of my difficulties in school. The Mayo Clinic website described dyslexia as the following: "Dyslexia is a learning disorder that involves difficulty reading due to problems identifying speech sounds and learning how they relate to letters and words (decoding). Also called reading disability, dyslexia affects areas of the brain that process language."

Whenever I'm in a stressful situation, I feel like the gears in my head are snapping in every direction, and I can't focus on anything. For example, when I was still in school, one teacher always yelled my name loud whenever he saw me. This always scared me whenever

he did it, which made me automatically dislike him even though everyone said he always liked me. Another time I had to deal with something like this was when I was in a college class, and a crazy guy, who was the teacher, burst into the room and yelled “hello” at the top of his lungs. Everyone else laughed, but I felt scared, annoyed, and angry.

The one time I felt the most alone was when someone misunderstood me so severely that it led to me crying. I had never felt more oppressed and isolated than I did then; it felt like no one understood what I was going through, and no one ever would. I look at the people around me, and everything seems so easy to them. They are not bothered by loud noises, bright lights, and chaos. I don't want to change who I am; I like who I am. But sometimes, I wish things didn't have to be so much harder for me than others. So many people hear me talk and think I am angry or weird. At times I am jealous of how easy this world is for those around me. I wish they could understand how privileged they are to be at ease in their worlds when I sometimes feel like an outsider in mine. I worry that I will always feel like an alien here.

But that wasn't the end of my story. When I found out I had these three conditions, it was like I finally got back the clarity I had been missing for so long. For the first time in my life, I realized there was nothing wrong with me at all; I wasn't slow or stupid. My brain was just different from others, and I had different needs compared to other people. Now, I'm not saying everything was automatically fixed after that, because when you spend so much time thinking you are stupid or a terrible student who is broken because she doesn't want close friends like other people, these things take a toll on you mentally, leaving you with little self-esteem. Some days I still need to curl up in a ball and feel sorry for myself when it

becomes too much. But learning these things about myself was the start of my getting better and stronger and learning to love myself for who I am. Eventually, when I was older, thanks to the support of my family and the professional help of many extraordinary ladies who worked at my school, I could graduate high school in 2019. I was more emotional than most of my classmates because, unlike most kids, I had to fight that much harder for my spot on that graduation stage to get my diploma. I also made the dean's list in my first year of college, and I am an avid book lover, things I never thought possible when I was younger.

But, even though I managed to do something I never thought I would be able to do doesn't mean I'm out of the woods. My greatest fear now is what will happen to me after I graduate from college. All these thoughts run through my head. Will I be able to keep a job and support myself? Can I make it in the real world with all my unique needs? But I also know all I can do is take these things one step and one day at a time, try not to let these negative feelings overwhelm me, and pray that when the time comes, I'll have all the help and personal strength I need to face these challenges head-on. Because every day is a battle when you have mental disabilities, and sometimes the hard days win. But the most important thing that people must remember in those instances is that you cannot let the hard times win forever. One of the essential lessons that everyone should learn is the following. It's okay for people to have bad days and take a break to feel all the negative feelings they bury deep inside themselves, like hurt, anger, and injustice, as opposed to bottling everything up and trying to stay strong against the pain all the time, which I can tell from experience is terrible for someone in the long run. But as I said before, it's okay for people to have hard times, and it's okay to lie down and take a break to accept the fact that they are in pain. But the most

crucial thing people must remember is you can't lie down and never get up again. Eventually, you need to get back up again and move forward; you only lose the battle when you are knocked down and give up permanently.

The biggest thing I want people to learn from this story is that I learned to love myself even with all of this and everything I've been through. I accepted that I am who I am, and there's nothing wrong with me at all. I realized I don't want to change who I am just because people don't understand me. It is not my job to pretend to be something I am not to make others feel more comfortable. It's also not my job to fit myself into a mold that doesn't work just to make other people's lives or jobs easier. Above all else, I know these struggles I have gone through have made me strong and helped me to grow into the woman I am today. Because of that, when the time comes, I'll be able to face anything the world throws at me.

Small

Kelsey Stanfield

Women are often presumed to be lesser than men, their unfortunate counterparts in the current binary of the Western world. Traits that make women meek are valued, like being dainty enough to lift, soft enough to caress, and quiet enough to be spoken over. To be small is to be a woman, and to be a woman is to be small. We are small in how we dress, how we speak, and how we carry ourselves. Any woman who is too big is not only ostracized by her counterparts but also by her peers. Women will claim to love a strong woman and admire her prowess, but their stance quickly changes when it becomes apparent that being associated with women who are big in any way also makes them bigger. We must be small, small, small, in every way.

I sent my fifteen-year-old sister the performance of the poem “Shrinking Women,” knowing she carries the burden of living at home with my mother. My mother, a woman I cherish so infinitely deeply, despises herself. She self-flagellates with at-home workouts and protein shakes in lieu of meals, now projecting herself onto the one small girl left at home alone by proclaiming that she, at fifty years old, must split her own kid’s meal because it is far too much for her to eat herself. Though she inflicts herself onto the only daughter left at home now, it is clear that her self-image has affected us all in some way. Both of my sisters are tall and thin, naturally lean and slender. They are prone to splitting their meals and offering the remainder to others. I am my mother’s daughter separately but equally. Like her, I am short and stout. Unlike my sylphlike sisters, I bore the brunt of interventions about my weight and comments about my thunder thighs or how I would finish whole meals by myself, knowing that my mother was the most beautiful woman in the world in my eyes and I was the embodiment of her self-perceived shortcomings.

“I am the cracked mirror my mother checks her reflection in.” -Sumaya E.

I’ve written and re-written far too many poems about my mother’s self-projection and snide comments, like many women before me have and many will after. It is

generational to be small, small, small. Twenty-one years of never being thin enough have created deep scars; yet, with time, the skin grows back thicker. I no longer deprive myself of nutrition or force myself to move until what little food I did allow myself to consume resurfaced. Maturity and frontal lobe development persuaded me to understand that my practices would never be enough to fix my mom's self-image, and the damage to my own would have soon been irreparable, and God forbid I let the generational perpetuity of smallness continue. I look at the double digits in my jean size and I no longer feel shame, but rather a sense of ambivalence.

Whose love do I earn if not my own?

I suppose it will be much longer before I can say I love myself, but I no longer despise the lightning-striped thighs I see in the mirror, nor do I malevolently pinch the hanging skin of my stomach. I will never be small, small, small, and I no longer try to shrink. At least, physically. I am kind to the body I inhabit, the place that I find to be a sacred home. The woman who occupies my body, though, is a pest. She is not small. She is loud and boisterous at all the wrong times. Her laughter at the professor's half-hearted joke is always accompanied by a snort. Her face distorts itself unconsciously when she disagrees with someone, announcing her displeasure to the entire room. Her favorite joke ends with, "Your mom," and her crudeness would make even your uncle blush. I chide her whenever we leave a room, questioning her. *Why can't you just behave? Why can't you just be quiet? Why didn't you just stop?* I loathe her. I want to remove her from the depths of my being and cast her into the body of that twelve-year-old boy who openly vies for everyone's attention through his incessant screaming. That would suit her well, I think.

I despise how large she makes me feel. I want to sound small. I don't want to be noticed, and others don't want to notice her. Her interminable need to speak her mind always drives those closest away. Her presence was unbeknownst to me for the better part of seventeen years until I learned that I could actually use my voice. Though it took her much longer to raise her hand in class to speak, she thrived on laughter like it was an unshakable high. Of course, as all addicts know, there are consequences that come with those undeniable highs. Her first defiance of a man publicly arrived in the form of a joke involving

the word “nepotism,” which came to light to be beyond the vocabulary of a seventeen-year-old boy. The joke, made at his expense in a class group chat, was met with his retort of, “This is why I stopped seeing you.” (I know, not quite the flirty reply like she had hoped for). Her words had led to the knife that was lodged in my stomach. It left me with a palpable sense of irony that academics and wit, the sole source of my joy, made me unlovable. I had learned that the boy I had thought just simply slipped through my fingers actually just could not fathom being with a woman with a voice and a big brain. That voice made *me* unlovable. The brain that fueled her made *me* unlovable. I wanted the voice to be smaller. I hate myself for wanting it to be smaller.

I was once called aggressive, and the text has seared itself into the neurons of my far-too-big brain. I refused to shrink myself for a man who, in response to my admittance I was an English major, stated that he could write too. I found myself subjected to a description of every essay he had ever written, every writing test he had passed, and every writing compliment a kind-hearted teacher had thrown his way. Of course, he was met with an equally detailed description of my every writing accomplishment. I suppose, though, it was only okay for him to do it, as a brief conversation followed:

“You’re aggressive,” he said.

“Do you mean intimidating?” I asked.

“Aggressive.”

I am too big, all of the time.

Even for acquaintances, I am too big. It is ungenerous to say that at least two women have approached me about intimidating their boyfriends. I did not scare them through sharp words at their expense but through my sharp wit. “You just make him uncomfortable,” one professed. “He can’t tell when you’re kidding.” Though that voice inside me howled, I restrained myself from noting how a mutual friend had told me just weeks prior that my sense and style of humor rivaled said boyfriend’s. I bit down on my tongue that wanted so desperately to let it slip that she had always thought I was funny before her boyfriend

objected. She had once confessed that she actively sought my friendship for my sense of humor and my projection of an outspoken willingness to be myself. That little nugget of wisdom that had scarred me so deeply when I was first called aggressive for matching the behavior of a man replayed in my mind again. *I suppose it was only okay for him to do it.* And now I find myself not invited over to their home anymore. I am too big, at least, for a woman.

Though some men object to a woman who dares to take up space in a patriarchal world, it is with a gentle concession that I admit not all do. Mournfully, I think of the last man I loved and recall that he did love me. Unbeknownst to me, that is where the problem arose. He didn't mind that I was smart in an academic way because I am absurdly stupid when it comes to street smarts, where his expertise lay. He paid no attention to the fact that I indulged in my quirks because he did too. He was far louder than me, far more independent than me, and far more unshakably himself. Dare I say, he was even funnier. Yet, for a not-so-little, little lady like myself, I was still so, so big. "I got in too deep," he confessed months after leaving me behind with no note. He had fallen for me, and that scared him. My love is too big.

I am too big.

This undeniable piece of me has consumed my soul and rotted my sense of self. It brings me pain and makes me stand out in a world where I so desperately want to fit in. I want to be a small, small woman whom people define as kind and gentle. But I am not. That voice will not allow me to be. And in a sense, I have made my peace with that voice, in spite of her endless faux pas, because she does not only speak for me. When she witnesses injustice, her voice bubbles up like a boiling pot and the voice escapes like a kettle's scream. I cannot remain silent when I see something wrong. When she is pointedly calling out the use of a slur at a party, people will pull me aside and tell me I have ruined the affair. When she speaks against degrading commentary flung at my peers, people will tell me I should have let it go and insist that it is not my problem.

Yet, at times when the voice takes the reigns, she inspires others. Twice, I had observed an uncomfortable interaction in a social setting and felt myself possessed by her.

Both times, she inserted herself between the men and the clearly uneasy women. In one situation, she was told by the man there was no need for her involvement, but she remained anyways. The gratuity expressed by the woman afterward made the instinctual fear of conflict worth it. The other time she was convinced by the woman it was fine, and it had been, but her courage inspired others. I was whisked away by a friend afterward who confessed she admired my courage as she had witnessed the interaction but had been at a loss of what to do. My voice knew what to do, and she did it without hesitation. Perhaps, through her demonstration, she had awoken the voice of another.

Some call this voice of mine outspoken, but others call it abrasive. I flinch at both labels still, but I find peace in knowing that I will speak on behalf of the women who are told to be small and for the women who are told it is better to be unheard. I have felt so uncomfortable in this world and within myself that I no longer fear making others uncomfortable if it makes someone feel seen. I no longer fear being uncomfortable if it helps someone find their own voice, and I pray their voice also inspires others.

I am a woman; I am not small; I cannot be contained.

FICTION

Year Unknown, Entry 1

Harrison Herreman

I would never say that I was anything more than a regular person given the opportunities to do fun things like swordplay and housewifery. Not many people in these lands get to fancy themselves as hobbyists in either, let alone both. No man in any realm is like my father. I am not excessively good at words, but I would say that he taught me that everything I do can be an expression of love. If I make a bed, I express love for the person who will again sleep in it when night falls, and the better I do it, the more my expression reaches their heart. This is especially important because I have been raised to be the perfect prince to the princess and future queen of the kingdom, Princess Periwinkle.

I am writing in this journal because Perry, their preferred name, once said that any man she should love one day must be smart when it comes to feelings. I may not be a man by any measure, but maybe I could be something more if I keep learning. Anyway, the king's grand advisor said that the best way for a young mind to get acquainted with the emotional world is to write freely with the whim of a fairy in a favorable wind. That phrase made my heart sing, and so here I am writing. The honor-bound style of life over in the city, behind the castle walls, always makes me feel like a play actor. I like writing Perry because now it feels like there is a real space where Perry is just Perry and not the Princess of the realm. The older people, the ones with the power and money, don't take too kindly to the nontraditional ways of our princess.

It happened during our daily spar a few weeks past. As gifted as I am with a stove, Perry is twice that with the sword. Such pride and skill in each movement, and each day it feels as if my life is spared. She always prefers gowns that move and breathe, and if we are being totally honest here, she would prefer no gowns at all. She loves to feel free. She is also brilliant, and if you don't keep up, then she will run circles around you no matter the activity, a lesson I have learned time and time again. This day though, there was an extra confidence and it felt as though she had planned every movement perfectly. The spar began, I took a swing, and before I knew it, my sword was on the ground. She did this six times in a row before she finally said it: that anyone who knows her truly will know her simply as Perry. One day, everyone will know Perry.

Today, I will walk from my father's village to the castle to have our weekly update about the princess. I really don't know what my father did to get in the king's good graces, but the king really wants me to become the person who his daughter will marry. Everyone has told me that those particular words are the most important part. The grand advisor told me that this is all a practice of intentional love, which I understand, but I don't understand why Perry cannot know. I would consider myself to be Perry's one true friend, but the things that make a one true love are so much weirder. Basically, every time that Perry shows interest in something, I have to learn an entirely new hobby. Perry learned to hunt so I learned to skin and dry pelts. Perry was fascinated by bread so I learned to bake. Perry loves to get dirty so I learned how to wash gowns. I love doing what I do and I love love. I am going to do everything I can to be the person she wants to love, and I just hope she proposes one day. Oh no, and now I'm going to be late, until next time little journal.

My Friend Moo Always Makes Herself at Home

Emileo Swain

When my sister was little, my parents used to call her "Maddie-Moo." She's expecting her first baby soon, and I'm very excited. So I wrote this for baby Meadow about how my sister used to play when she was a kid.

When the sun is shining after it rains,

Moo likes to sit on a too-little log.

She squishes in mud. "It's fun!" she explains.

Moo stirs the puddles. She helps a small frog.

When the sun is set and the moon comes out,

Moo likes to find herself a big bear cave.

She'll teach her new friends how to dance about—

She pumps the music and makes it a rave

When winter's over, Moo hides in a tree

With chipmunks and bats and cheetahs around

Quietly, Moo tries to contain her glee,

But when she giggles, they join in her sound

When summer's ending, Moo finds a big place

With towers and books, fields and big battles—

She puts costumes on or make-up's her face.

Moo cheers friends wearing armor that rattles.

Water, caves, forests; through castles and fields—

Yes, my best friend Moo knows just how to roam.

Moo is herself, and that's all that she wields,

When my friend Moo makes herself right at home.



She Took Control of Her Life

Amanda Scarbeary

FADE IN.

INT. KITCHEN - EVENING

Opens with a shot of a woman chopping carrots. She is cooking dinner for her husband.

JESSICA (MID-30s) wearing an apron, her long hair pulled back into a low ponytail. She scoops up the freshly chopped vegetables and puts them into a pot. She hums softly to a song playing in the background.

The kitchen is an open concept. It is very large. A small table sits in the corner of the room with two chairs.

Jessica stirs the pot and turns it down to a lower heat. She hears keys jingle and the front door opens. Her body tenses up.

CHAD (MID-30s) is seen standing in the doorway of their home. Briefcase in hand. He has an angry expression on his face.

CHAD

Turn that shit off, Jessica.

Jessica walks away from the kitchen towards the living room where their stereo sits. She clicks a button and it turns off.

CHAD

I had a long day at work. The last thing I need is to hear your horrible music. Why isn't my dinner on the table?

JESSICA

It's almost done, dear. It took me a bit longer than expected. Also, I know you really wanted steak. I went down to see Marty at the butcher shop and he informed me that they wouldn't have steaks come in until this weekend. So I opted for pork chops and vegetables instead.

Chad is visibly irritated. He swiftly walks over to their dining room table and swipes his arm across it. All of the dishware flies off the table, the glass crashing into the floor.

CHAD

This is what happens when you don't do what I tell you. Jesus, Jessica, you know I wanted that fucking steak. You never listen. I wanted to come home after a long day to a nice dinner and you messed it up. You always manage to do that.

Jessica is on her knees. Picking up the shards of glass scattered around her kitchen. Tears are in her eyes. She wipes her face quickly, hoping he won't notice.

JESSICA

I'm sorry. The second the shop gets the steaks, I will run down there and get them. I promise it won't happen again.

Chad walks over to Jessica, who is still picking up pieces of glass. He grabs her by the back of her head. His grip is tight.

CHAD

It better not happen again.

He shoves her to the ground, her hands catching her fall. Shards of glass pierce her skin. But she doesn't dare make a sound. She knows it would set him off.

INT. LIVING ROOM - EVENING

Chad is sitting in a recliner in the living room. He is seen dialing a number on the house phone. His best friend DYLAN picks up on the other end.

CHAD

Dylan, you'll never believe it.

DYLAN

What's going on buddy?

CHAD

I get home after a stressful day and Jessica can't do the one thing I asked her to do. I wanted steaks for dinner. Guess what she makes me. Pork chops. How fucking stupid can she be?

DYLAN

Man, I get it. I got home the other day and I asked Lizzy to start me up a bath. I go into the bathroom and the water is ice cold. Best believe she got a piece of my mind.

Both Chad and Dylan let out a menacing laugh.

DYLAN

Women are put on this earth to serve and provide for us and they can't even do that. What are we gonna do?

CHAD

(He laughs)

I don't even know. But we have to figure out something because I don't know how much more I can take.

Camera cuts to the hallway. Jessica is standing up against the wall. She has been listening to their conversation. She can hear their laughter filling up the room. She hears him say his goodbyes and hangs up the phone. She scurries back to their bedroom and quietly shuts the door behind her.

INT. BATHROOM - MORNING

Camera cuts to Jessica. She is alone in their bathroom. Getting ready for the day. She stands still, looking down at her hands. She had multiple cuts from the glass that had been scattered around her kitchen the previous night.

She pulls a tube of concealer out of her makeup bag and applies it under her eyes. She dabs a bit of it on her neck. A bruise is visible.

JESSICA'S THOUGHTS

Should I do it? Should I not? Each day I wake up and dread what is to come. I turn over and look at the man I am supposed to love. But I don't love him. I hate him with every fiber in my body. I wish I didn't, but I do.

She stops what she's doing and just looks at herself in the mirror.

(THOUGHTS CONT.)

He isn't the man I married. It's like I barely even know him anymore. Any and everything sets him off. It's like I can't do anything right or to his liking. If his food is too cold he hits me. If it's too hot, he tells me I'm an unlovable whore. This isn't what a marriage should be. I could leave him, pack my bags, and leave in the middle of the night. He'd find me. That or something even worse. He'd find another wife to belittle and abuse, but I won't let that happen. Something needs to change.

She gives herself a reassuring smile and closes up her makeup bag. She opens a drawer and pulls out a pair of scissors. Brushing her long hair out of her face, she begins to chop it off. Pieces of her hair fall to the ground. She looks back into the mirror. Her hair now falls just barely past her chin. She smiles, exiting the bathroom. Tonight would be the night when everything changes.

INT. KITCHEN - EVENING

Jessica is seen setting the table. She places a single plate on the table. She walks over to the stove and grabs a pan, a steak sizzling in it. She places it on the plate along with a baked potato.

Chad is seen entering the home. A neutral expression on his face. He notices her hair immediately.

JESSICA

Hey honey. How was work?

CHAD

What the hell happened to your hair?

JESSICA

I decided I needed a change. Do you like it?

CHAD

No, I don't like it. You know I like your hair long. Now you just look ugly.

Jessica doesn't say anything. She walks over to the table and fills his cup with milk. Chad sits and is clearly agitated.

CHAD

I am starving. What's for dinner?

JESSICA

Your favorite – steak. I ran over to the shop today and had Marty set some aside for me. I know you've been working very hard lately so I thought I'd surprise you.

She smiles. But it isn't sincere. But Chad is too oblivious to notice. He has already begun digging in.

JESSICA

How does it taste? I decided to add my own little twist to it.

CHAD

It's delicious.

JESSICA

I'm glad. You know honey, I've been thinking. This clearly hasn't been working out between us. Nothing I do ever seems to satisfy you. I've had a lot of time to reflect on our relationship. And I am quite frankly put up with how you treat me.

Chad hasn't looked up from his plate. He mumbles between his bites.

JESSICA CONT.

I thought about leaving you. Packing my bags and slipping out the back door while you slept. But I knew you'd find me. That or you'd make someone else your little housewife slave. Unfortunately, I couldn't let that happen. While my method might not be the most ethical, it's the best way to ensure you don't ever treat a woman like this. Ever again.

Chad has finally looked up from his plate. His face filled with rage.

CHAD

What the hell are you talking about?

JESSICA

I'm teaching you a lesson, Chad. What's not clicking? You can't continue going around

thinking it's okay to treat women like this. We don't owe you anything. We weren't put on this earth to serve you. Women are not disposable or weak. We have feelings. We deserve respect. Love. Something I know you're not capable of giving. It must end.

CHAD

And what exactly are you gonna do about it?

Chad gets up from his seat and swiftly makes his way toward Jessica. He reaches his hand up to strike her but before he can he falls to his knees. He begins to cough. Clutching his chest.

CHAD

(Weakly)

What have you done?

JESSICA

Nothing you didn't deserve.

Chad is now on the kitchen floor, lying on his back. Coughing and spitting up remnants of his dinner.

Jessica walks over to the kitchen sink and pulls out a box from underneath the cabinet. The label reads 'RODENT REMOVAL'. It was rat poison. She throws it at him, and some of it seeps out of the sides of the box.

JESSICA

Women are not some objects for you to use and abuse when you feel fit. I'm making sure you can never hurt a woman ever again.

Chad is now unconscious. His lifeless body lays on the blue tiles of their brightly lit kitchen. Jessica walks toward her kitchen counter and grabs a pair of bright pink cleaning gloves. She slips them on and walks back over to her now-dead husband.

JESSICA

(whispers to herself)

Now, what am I gonna do with you?

She grabs him by his ankles and begins dragging him toward their garage.

THE END

ART

In Memoriam

Brett Reed



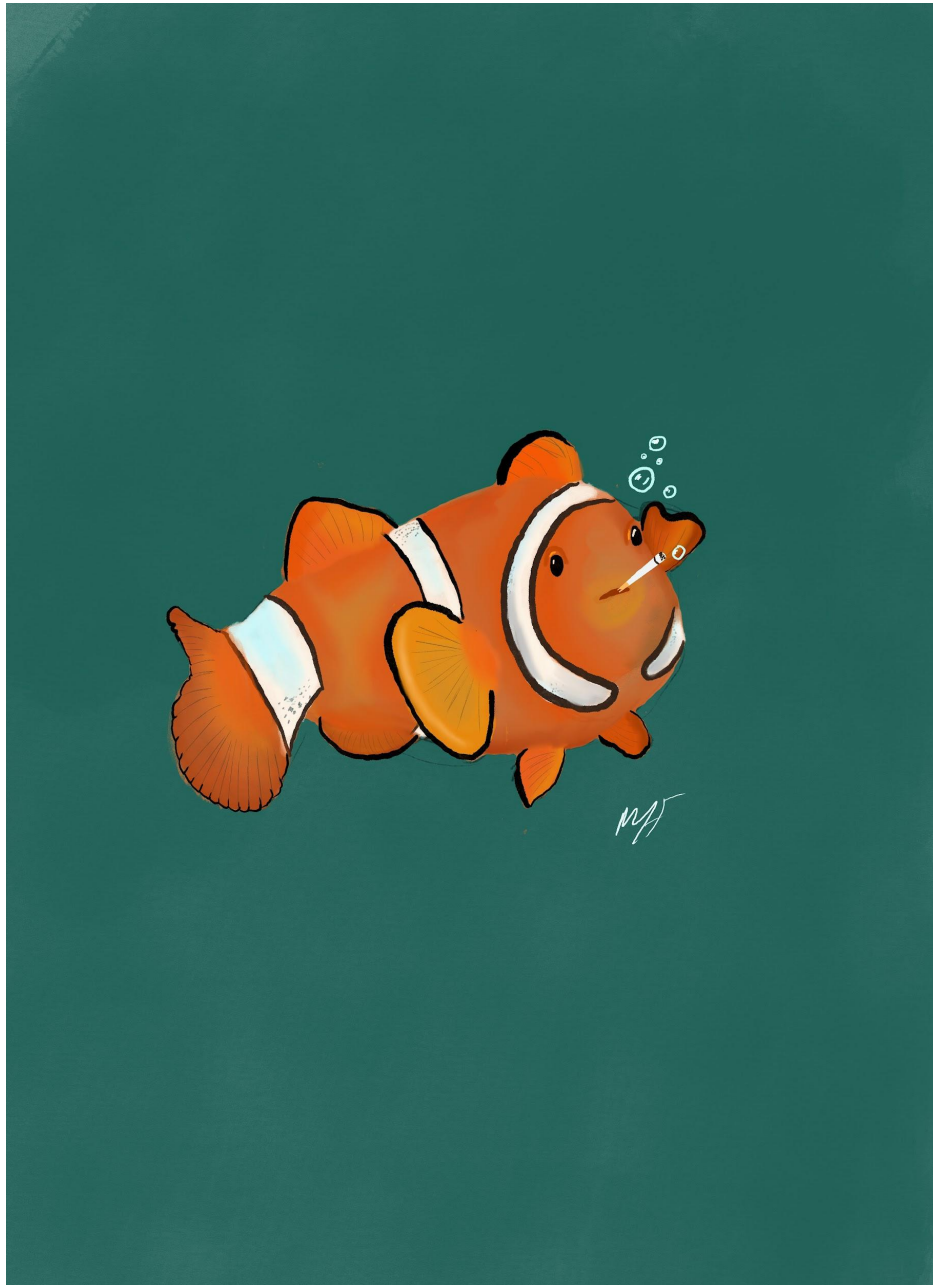
People Die, Ideas Live On

Brett Reed



Bernard

Makenna Finnegan



God Give Me One More Chance

Alyssa Kordish



Exists for Love

Alyssa Kordish



Author Biographies

Memphis Cutshall

Memphis is a senior majoring in criminology and minoring in psychology. He previously played baseball and enjoys watching the game. He loves the outdoors and spending time with his family and farm animals.

Danyelle Diamond

Danyelle is a senior Computer Science major who wants to work in software development. Beyond her passion for computing, she enjoys writing personal essays, flash fiction, and poetry. She hopes to continue writing after graduation.

Jocelyn Everett

Jocelyn Everett is a junior at Heidelberg University majoring in Business Administration. She has been writing fiction for over 7 years and poetry for over 5. One of Jocelyn's poems, "What Am I?" was published in the 2019 edition of the "Rising Stars" collection from Appelley Publishing. Her current project is an anthology of small stories based on a fictional world.

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 on the Kilikilik, as well as a tutor for both the writing center and PACE.

Rowan Gill

Rowan Gill is a freshman English and Media major with a minor in Video Game Production. They are a part of Berg Allies, DAD, Morpheus, the Kil, and Zeta Theta Psi.

Elliston Herner

Ellis Herner is a junior communication major with a double minor in writing and music. He is the current editor-in-chief of *The Kilikilik*, participates in marching and concert bands, and is a member of the Rho Eta Delta fraternity.

Harrison Herreman

Harrison is a first-year graduate student in the Master of Counseling program. He currently works as a barista at The Heidelbean! and is “just trying to spread that queer joy.”

Alyssa Kordish

Alyssa has been drawing since she was young and grew very passionate about it. Her fondest memories as a child were painting with her siblings and comparing their art together. Her skill grew, as did she, and it is one of her favorite things in life. The pieces she submitted to Morpheus were made for her AP Art Portfolio during her senior year of high school.

Maxine Milazzo

Maxine Milazzo, a college senior, and integrated media major is a young woman who, at a young age, was diagnosed with Autism, ADHD, and Dyslexia. Because of this, she had to work harder than any other child in her classroom to keep up in school, along with a downward spiral in mental health due to the changes caused by COVID-19. Despite many struggles, setbacks, and frustrations, this young woman persevered, graduating high school, making the Dean's list her freshman year, and becoming an avid book lover who rarely stops reading.

Levi Ramirez

In Ramirez's words, “Levi Ramirez is a completely unhinged game developer, artist, and writer I guess. Grown in a test tube and sun-dried for 20 years, he's your run-of-the-mill, midwestern, starving artist.”

Brett Reed

Brett Reed is from Sandusky, Ohio. He is pursuing a business administration major with minors in media and history. Reed created the Kobe Bryant stencil art in Bryant's memory and the JFK stencil to convey the powerful imagery of Kennedy's son at the former president's funeral.

Salvatore Rocco

Salvatore is a junior who is majoring in Integrated Media.

Lily Roth

Lily is a senior Integrated Media major who, for brevity's sake, likes to dabble in everything.

Amanda Scarbeary

Amanda is a senior criminology major from Orlando, Florida. She will be graduating in May 2023 with her bachelor of science degree. After she graduates, she plans on going back to Florida to begin her career.

Kelsey Stanfield

Kelsey is a third-year student at Heidelberg University studying English and Communication.

Cole Stoots

Cole is a graduating senior in the Honors program and an English major. After graduating, he plans to pursue his MA in English, and later, get his Ph.D. He is a member of Sigma Tau Nu and a corollary member of Delta Sigma Chi. His favorite literary periods are late Elizabethan, early Jacobean, and British Romanticism.

Conor Sukel

Conor is a freshman who is double-majoring in Exercise Science and Sport Management.

Leo Swain

Emileo Swain is a graduate student in Heidelberg's MBA program, set to graduate in August 2023. Emileo graduated with his bachelor's degree in 2022 with a major in philosophy and a minor in writing. Emileo was a proud editor of Morpheus and the Rock Creek Review during his undergraduate career, and he's very excited to feature some of his own creative writing in the magazine for the first time.

Emma Wright

Emma Wright is a junior English writing major, with minors in business and art. She is the Editor-in-Chief of Morpheus, the vice president of the 'Berg Allies, an active member of Zeta Theta Psi, and a barista at The Heidelbean! In her free time, she enjoys reading, writing, and spending time with her cats.

Editor Biographies

Lennon Amor

Lennon 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.

Makenna Finnegan

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

Rowan Gill

Rowan Gill is a freshman English and Media major with a minor in Video Game Production. They are a part of Berg Allies, DAD, Morpheus, the Kil, and Zeta Theta Psi.

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.

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 Wright is a junior English writing major with minors in business and art. She is the Editor-in-Chief of Morpheus, the vice president of the 'Berg Allies, an active member of Zeta Theta Psi, and a barista at The Heidelbean! In her free time, she enjoys reading, writing, and spending time with her cats.