



Morpheus

2013

Literary Magazine

2013 Morpheus Staff

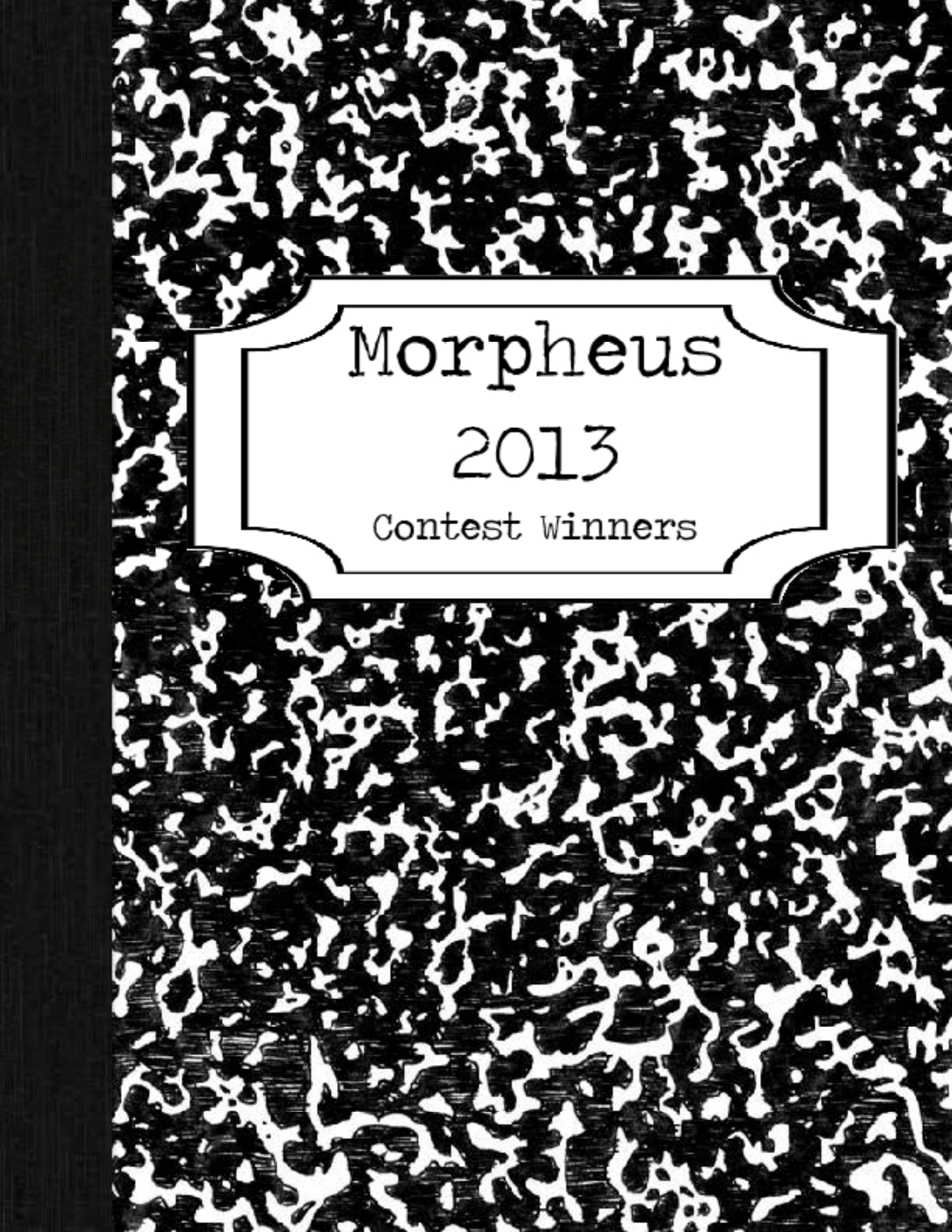
Editor-in-Chief.....Logan Burd

Contest Director.....Clayton Burke

Layout and Design Director.....Jackie Stanziano

Marketing Director.....Cole Randolph

Cover Design.....TJ Wasserman



Morpheus

2013

Contest Winners

Table of Contents

Morpheus Literary Competition

Author Biographies.....	5
Fiction Winners.....	7
Poetry Winners.....	18
Visual Arts Winners.....	22
Journalism Winners.....	26
Academic Winners.....	36

Senior Writing Projects

Author Biographies.....	68
Logan Burd.....	70
Calista Hall.....	76
Samantha Gosche.....	93
Kayla Graves.....	109
Cole Randolph.....	118
Jackie Stanziano.....	130
Clayton Burke.....	142
Annette Rogers	

Author Biographies

Logan Burd

Logan Burd is a senior English-Writing major and the Editor-in-Chief of this edition of The Morpheus. Logan is a member of Rho Eta Delta and works as the Editorial Director of The Kilikilik. After graduation, Logan plans on running around frantically until he hits the crystal-clear front door of his dream job.

Clayton Burke

Clayton Burke is a senior English major with a concentration in Writing. After college, Clayton plans on pursuing a career in advertising or technical writing. Clayton is a proud member of Rho Eta Delta men's fraternity and enjoys geeking out about fashion.

Erin Gorrell

Erin Gorrell is a junior biology major and chemistry minor at Heidelberg. She is involved in Greek life as a member of Zeta Theta Psi. She is also a member of Greenhouse Club, Tri-Beta, and athletic band, and works for the NCWQR. She enjoys watching Netflix with friends and reading in her spare time.

Claire Meneer

Claire Meneer is a proud native of Akron. She is a political science major and is also in the honors program. Claire is a sister of Kappa Psi Omega, and also enjoys being a Rhos Bud! In her spare time, Claire enjoys photography, drinking an abundance of coffee, and watching any Cleveland sporting event.

Bethany Pelzer

Bethany Pelzer is a senior international studies major with history and German minors. She is an alumna of Delta Sigma Chi and a member of Heidelberg University Concert Choir and Chamber Singers. After spending a semester in Glasgow, Scotland, she can't wait to travel and see more of the world.

Jenna Rhoades

Jenna Rhoades is a senior communication major. She is the entertainment editor for the Kilikilik and is heavily involved in theatre productions. Jenna is a proud member of the Euglossian Society and is also an Alpha Phi Tau Lil' Sis.

Amber Spiegel

Amber Spiegel is a senior English Literature major and the current Ohio Poetry Day clerical assistant. She recently ran a poetry workshop for the OPD event. Amber is very excited about being published in *The Morpheus*, and she wants to congratulate all of her fellow winners as well!

Jeffrey Stephens

Jeff Stephens is a 30 year old Early Childhood Education major from Atlanta, Georgia. He began attending Heidelberg University in the Spring of 2013 on scholarships for academic merit and is a recent addition to the Sigma Tau Nu fraternity. Look for Jeff's other work, *The Rise*, online at Authorstand.com.

Alicia Towe

Alicia Towe is a freshman at Heidelberg University. She is an Education AYA major with an English focus and an English major. Alicia has previously had artwork published in the literary/art magazine *Whimsical Ink*, however this is her first time having written work published.

Sebastian Williams

Sebastian Williams is a senior at Heidelberg, and is studying English literature and German. He plans to attend graduate school to continue studying literature, as well as compiling debt. He works as a pizza delivery boy, and was an understudy to the great Phillip J. Fry.

Fiction Writing

First Place - Amber Speigel

Fire's Burning.....8

Second Place - Sebastian Williams

Red Scarf.....12

Third Place - Jeffrey Stephens

Little Red and the Wolf.....15

Fire's Burning

By: Amber Spiegel

During balmy nights, when the world has gone silent and the watchers gather around in vigil of the ill or the dying, the call of the deathwatch beetle is the loudest, the most shrill. When Lucas McClarren died last spring, it was said by those who were with him, and by the doctor himself, that the old man was going to pull through the worst of it. Then, Mrs. McClarren heard the tones of the deathwatch beetle when she was laying out the sheets one Saturday morning. She, like all the other well-wishers of the town, ignored the omen of death, but, as her day drew to a close, the message only grew louder in her ears, echoing long into the night. For when you hear the sound of the deathwatch beetle, your loved one is doomed to die. Mrs. McClarren had awakened to silence; the rustling of her husband on the sick bed in the room above her had ceased long ago. But then Mr. McClarren was dead; so of course poor Mrs. McClarren wouldn't have heard her husband. It is foolish to ignore the death call that the beetle brings. For the results are always the same; only the details of the story change.

There it is. Clawing its way across the painted glass of the window. Inching along, oblivious of the outcome its presence brings. The room's occupant's ever watchful eyes, devoid of light or of darkness, following the creature creeping, creaking closer-- closer-- closer-- to her. Each prolonged step of her companion carries to the listener's ears a sound of dissonance to the air around it. The noise is constant, incessant really. Like the turning of gears in an overworked turbine. Click... Click... Click... Click... On and on it goes. Down the street from her home is a factory. It had employed

her father, her brothers, her father's father, and so on ever since her family had placed its roots in the town. Each mechanism of that billowing heaving industrial machine had sent forth groans that butted against the family home for decades. The workings of wood and nails have swayed with the intake and outtake of that factory's mechanical lungs since the home's beginning; it had never taken a breath of its own. Capitalism! How endless your depths are! Yet, even these noises of endless toil are a lullaby compared to the clicking of her ill begotten friend.

It has made progress now-- nearly to the window frame. She stood, meaning to go, to leave, to escape. There is nowhere left to go. She sits again, this time across the room, away from the window. From here, she can see the scope of the painted glass; her mother had done this work with shaky fingers and eyes like her daughter's. She follows the painter's stokes restlessly at first. The anxiousness that had built inside her subsided; looking at the glass, not at the intruder upon it, caused her body to ebb. She felt it relax; each tendon and joint giving to a superior force. Then everything shatters. All the calm leaves.

From the bowels of the house, she hears a slam, everything in her locks itself up again. She watches as the sound shifts the world around it to make room for its noise. It must be Nicky. She trains her hearing towards the door that has been firmly shut since she entered and listens with the same rapture that a sinner listens to the weekly sermon hoping for redemption, salvation. This time she does move, out of the room and on to the landing; she goes to listen.

“Sylvie! It’s me! Where ya at?”

She hears the sound of him rushing up the stairs before she sees his face greet her; he wears a half-grin firmly upon his visage. He tries to betray her with his youthfulness, but she knows that look. She sees the strain around his lips and the weariness in his eyes.

“You should stay out of that room, sis”

She is weary herself. This endless parlay between her brother and her father over her actions tires her. It always has. “I like to sit in there and think. No harm ever came in thinking or... in sitting in an empty room” She rubbed the area above her heart restlessly.

“But it’s not empty, is it? It’s like she’s still there. It’s creepy how nothing has changed in there since... ya kno’... sis.”

She loves Nicky. He is the youngest and the kindest of the family; therefore, she doesn’t respond to this potential bait. The battle waged years ago, over keeping their mother’s room untouched, was the sole achievement of her life. That was Sylvie’s last spark. Since then, all the embers of her inner fire were slowly being stomped out. Each day another one lost its heat and glow. Her mother was the one who built the fire within her daughter. She had tended it daily like a priest at his morning, afternoon, and evening prayers; safeguarded it from the wind and the rain and the intentions of others. In the end, the mother fed herself to that fire to insure its vitality. And the father did the stomping.

Click....Click....Click....Click—

“Sylvia! Did you hear me?”

“Yes...yes, of course.”

He leveled his best adult stare at her; it was somewhere between a glare and the mirth you see in someone’s eyes when they have a really good joke to tell. “I’m gonna go down with the boys. Don’t worry about

dinner ‘cause I’ll be stoppin’ by the diner on my way home.”

“What about—“

“Eh, don’t worry about him. I’ll stop by Tilly’s on my way out with the boys and tell him to grab his eats at Miller’s tonight.” This statement was followed by a wink; it was meant to assure her. But she knew what would really happen: Nicky would stop by the bar, give Dad his earnings, most of them anyway. Dad would drink even more than usual; then Nicky would return later and collect him. The point of the ploy was to ensure that their father was too intoxicated to toss her around like he usually does. Nicky had been running this routine for a while now.

Click....click....click.....

“Alright, I won’t worry about you two then.”

Nicky’s face lit up. Sylvia felt something warm inside her. Kissing her forehead, Nicky grabbed his hat from the table in the kitchen; it was faded and worn around the bill. Dad bought that for him at a baseball game—the last one they went to, I think. She watched him fit himself into his old varsity jacket. He used to look so silly in that thing. The sleeves were too long, and the shoulders too roomy. He’s grown. I can barely see the boy any more. Nicky—

He headed out the door with the same half-smile he had greeted her with. This one was genuine. Sylvia stood there in the kitchen staring after her brother for a long time before she realized her body had gone cold. Turning back to the center of the house, she became fully aware of her surroundings again. Did the fire go out? She could feel the pull of her mother’s room reaching out to her; an invisible entity grabbing hold of her and willing her body forward. The same familiar need to go, to run, to escape came welling up inside her.

Placing a hand over her chest, she ascended the stairs.

Click...Click...Click...

Time always seemed to cease when she stepped through the door to her mother's room. She often found herself counting and recounting her mother's things over and over again, partly to insure everything was still there and partly to maintain a solid grasp on herself. The blue dress she wore when she did laundry, the comb with the silver handle...her hair was so beautiful.. like liquid sunlight... She felt movement around her; her eyes caught something in the corner of the room. With a careful approach, she faced herself in the small hanging mirror on the alternate wall. At first, she saw nothing; then shapes began to morph together in the glass. Like the way she counted her mother's things, she began to catalogue her features. Nose same as her brother's. Hair dark like her father's. Too many freckles. Eyes like her mother's. The same shade of grey.

Click click click click click click...

"SYLVIA! Where's ma dinner!"

Panic rose with the bile in her throat; she turned like a frightened animal looking for a place to hide. No. no. no. A whimper escaped her tightened throat; saliva began to fill her mouth like cud. She could not speak. So she moved, quickly, down the stairs and into the kitchen. She went directly to the stove.

"There ya ar'." He didn't look up. Didn't move. He was sober.

She busied herself quickly by preparing supper. Anytime she had to walk near him, she skittered like a wounded animal, desperately trying not to make any sound or sudden movements. The hunter is watching. Placing the food in front of him, she moved back quickly to avoid the reach of his arm.

"Sit."

She obeyed.

He began to devour his meal viciously—the same way he approached everything in his life, with viciousness and brute force. His grease and dirt crusted hands wastes no time with silverware. She watches as every inch of dead meat gets torn between his canines. She swallows down bile again in reflex. A faint line of blood trickled from his mouth. She listens to the sounds of the factory; they comfort her in a way. Nightfall had descended. She had missed the natural passing of the day; now she was all too aware of the change. It must be third shift by now. She could smell iron in the air; it made her nauseous.

"You've bin in her room ag'in. I can smell that damn'd perfum' of hers."

"I-I—I just needed to open a window. The upstairs was stuffy this afternoon." She kept her eyes averted from his, knowing fully what one look from her would do to his demeanor.

Click....Click...Click.... Not now. Please, not now.

He moved violently, overturning his chair and tipping the table on its side. Sylvia didn't dare move. Every instinct in her told her to run, but she remained in her place. Her joints tightened with anticipation of flight. She clenched her fists as hard as she could to keep her body from moving. Little red crescents appeared on the tender flesh of her palms.

Clllllliiiccckkk...Clllllliiiccckk-kk....Click...

"D-Dad.....please c-calm d-down." She grasped at her heart.

"Do you hear that! That noise!" His eyes ran wild about the room like a beast that had spent too long in the sun.

Before she could answer him, he flew up the stairs in a rage. The first noise she

heard was the sound of her mother's mirror crashing against the hard wood floor. Now Sylvia ran, propelled forward by the same demanding force that had made her stay still before. She bounded up the stairs two at a time. The hunted becoming the hunter. The crashing continued. She could hear her father's curses echoing down the stairwell along with the sounds of glass and wood breaking. When she reached the room, her father flung himself at her like a man possessed. She barely dodged his lunge; he grabbed the angel statuette Sylvia had given her mother when she was five and hurled it at the painted window. The world erupted in sound, glass breaking, her father screaming, another voice hurling lacerations back—her voice. Then, the world grew silent.

The sun was barely peeking its nose out of the cover of darkness when Nicky made his way home. He stepped stealthily into the house, listening carefully for the sound of his father's snores. "That's strange...I don't hear anything," he murmured lightly under his breath. Taking the chance that his father had already gone to work, he called, "Sylvie?" No answer. A thin layer of sweat developed on his skin, and dread settled in his heart. This time he yelled, "Sylvia!" Again, no answer. He ran as fast as his feet would carry him through the house to the stairwell. He called again: nothing. He was already climbing. He reached his mother's room; his eyes surveyed first the door barely on its hinges, then the broken glass and the splintered wood scattered everywhere, even into the hallway, and last his sister. Sylvia sat coolly at the window; a strange expression of calm painted her face. She held something in her hands, but he couldn't see what.

Click, click, click, yes. Keep going, keep going. Click, click, click...

"God! Sylvie, what happened here." She had never appeared so tranquil in his presence before.

She looked at him, through him. Her cloudy eyes moved towards the bed. Nicky followed the stare; there on the floor, between the wall and the bed itself, he saw it: the dead booted feet of his father.

"My God! Sylvia! Sylvia, what happened? Sylvia...."

The entire world had faded before Sylvia's eyes. There, there little one. It's all alright now. I won't let them hurt you. Right mother, I won't let anyone hurt you. Shush now, little one. Shush. Nicky ran frantically about the room and then out of it, all the while calling to her. She heard nothing but the clicking. There you go. Round and round again.

Click. Click. Click. Click. Click.

The deathwatch beetle had carried out its message. Of course it hadn't come for Sylvia Smithson. Why ever would it do that? After all, Sylvia was dead already. She had died a long time ago, when her fire went out.

Red Scarf

By: Sebastian Williams

Red Scarf didn't come by today. Two consecutive weeks, the same time every day, she came right on by my window, three stories down. I wonder what happened to her. It's not like her to be so late; I really do hope she's alright. Maybe she wasn't wearing her red scarf today, which could also be it. I'm not sure I would recognize her without it. What a strange name Red Scarf would be if she didn't wear her red scarf. Absurd.

Two bike riders pedal as hard as they can and nearly fall down on the sidewalk outside. Serves them right, what were they thinking going so fast on such a wet day? Red Scarf probably wouldn't have gone so fast if she were on a bike. She's cautious like that. You can tell by the way she wraps her scarf so neatly around her neck, barely covering her pink lips. Instead of seeing her today, I instead get to watch two maniacs nearly cause an incident with their recklessness. I prefer the first scenario, the one I have every day.

Six books. Six books, by my count. Oliver across the street is either starting a black-market-book-selling-operation, or he is the most forgetful person in the entire world. He has gone into his apartment every day for the past week and slapped a book on his table that he took out of the library. The reason I say six is because I saw him take back one of them this morning. He is certainly a thief though, what could anyone want with six books all at the same time? You would think the librarian would notice this kind of unusual activity and suspend his privileges. I may apply for a job down at the local city library just so I can tell him "No."

"No more books you thief - I know what is

going on with these. You're planning on selling them, are you not?" And then Oliver cries in agony, "Yes! Yes! Take them; I can't go through with it." Teach him a lesson about what he's doing with those books. And my god, Evelyn...what is she doing to that poor plant outside her window. I can't open my window for a breath of fresh air without looking down at her wilted excuse for a balcony garden. It reeks. Next thing you know I'll be applying at the greenhouse. Awful, just awful.

What would this city do without me?

"Richard, hurry up!" Don hadn't been this late for work since he had gotten his job.

"Relax man, we'll be fine. You didn't have to wait for me, I know I was making a scene, you could've just left."

"Rich, I'm not going to leave a friend like that. If you need somewhere to crash tonight it's ok. I know you're having problems. It's not your fault they don't give us a raise. Some jerk behind a desk takes whatever new profits we make and pads his bonus with it. Don't worry about it man."

"Thanks Don. I mean it."

They sped up as fast as two out of shape men could go, nearly stumbling on the wet concrete. Their bikes cut streaks into the water on the pavement, and they would most likely be an entire hour late for work.

Ollie was the most delicate man in the world. Not "delicate" meaning he was unstable and crumbling like an old building, but delicate like a feather. He moved so gracefully - sometimes people didn't even know that he was in the room. He

floated by, beautifully.

Coincidentally, he was not the most assertive person in the world. He was always happy. Most people called him Oliver, mistaking that for his real name ever since one of his middle school teachers told him that “Ollie” was not a real name, and that it was certainly short for “Oliver.” To be fair, Ollie was an orphan, so “Oliver” really was a more suitable name for him.

He knew nothing of his parents, and didn’t mind his own ignorance. He assumed that he had landed square in the middle of life, neither having the opportunity for a great mother and father, nor the misfortune of having abusive parents. He was glad to be perfectly mediocre in this sense. He was also quite bright, and the fact that he had no biological parents around meant that his schooling was very cheap – nearly nothing. He was on his way to becoming a doctor of philosophy. While he knew this was not the most practical application of knowledge in the “real world,” he enjoyed the thought of reading other people’s thoughts from centuries ago. For a month or so now, he had been systematically buying a set of books from an old vendor in the area, paying him daily for the massive collection. The old man selling the books to him had informed him that “nothing brings unhappiness as much as knowledge and nothing brings displeasure as much as ignorance.” Ollie enjoyed being neither displeased nor happy.

In a stroke of luck, the old man had given Ollie two books for the price of one the second day Ollie had visited. However, when he came home, Ollie decided that he should rightly pay for his unhappiness, and let the old man have one more day with the most desirable and undesirable thing in the world: an old book.

A white cat pawed at the kitchen door expecting a cup of food anytime now. The cat hadn’t been fed in nearly a week and was beginning to get a bit thin. A diet of flies and other insects had been keeping it satisfied until now.

The cat belonged to an Evelyn Barker, an old photographer who never quite succeeded in her field. Until this week she had been photographing the river just at sunset, and was compiling a rather lovely collection of landscape shots. Until this week she had also been happily chatting with some fellow at the greenhouse nearly every day about the best plants for her balcony garden. Until this week she had been paying her bills regularly. Until this week she had been eating and drinking, and coincidentally using the bathroom, quite regularly. Until this week she had taken care of herself and her cat. Until this week she had been alive.

Poor white cat, poor garden. Poor landlord; by now the apartment must stink, and no one is going to want to rent it with all those bugs crawling about a puffy corpse. At least she had managed to go out with a bang.

Grace Zimmerman. That was the beautiful girl’s name. Zimmerman means “carpenter,” though it doesn’t really suit her; she’s not the handy type. She is beautiful though. For the past few weeks Grace had been suffering from a nasty pattern of bruises on her chest and throat. Also during the past few weeks, her ex-boyfriend had managed to get into her apartment for quite some time and beat her quite badly. Hence “ex-boyfriend.” He managed to get into her apartment every time because she let him in. You see, Grace was suffering from a disease known as “amphetamine addiction”. It is not the rarest disease; how-

ever, it strikes swiftly. Grace had managed to keep her disease under control until the last few months when she learned that her work-load would be doubled. She was also suffering from delusions that she would somehow make it back home and back to school – in reality she would never do either again.

So, after waking up one day with a puzzle-pattern of bruising lining her body, she decided to call the police. She had not considered the fact that she was very much under the influence, and her apartment was filled with illegal substances. She and her old boyfriend were immediately arrested on two different charges. As she stared into the black and blue pattern on her carpet, the police silently handcuffed her. On the way out of the door, she scrambled with the officer escorting her, screaming, “My scarf! Please my scarf! Just put it on me, please! Help me!” The officers refused to oblige her and dragged her out of the building. She was sobbing.

“Graham? You up here Graham?”

Graham didn’t respond. He knew that he could hide on the roof on a day like this without anyone noticing him. He liked to take his telescope and watch the people on the street. He hadn’t been to school in a week, and he was loving every minute of it. His mother had tried to convince him to go every night at dinner, but she didn’t persist. She knew her son was special; smart enough to miss some work without falling too far behind.

As he spied with his telescope from the roof top, Graham noticed an old man on the third floor of the building opposite his. The old man was just gazing out the window, muttering things as people walked by. Graham thought to himself that this was the saddest man he had ever

seen. Soon after, two cyclists in suits rode by, nearly falling. A white cat came to the window of another apartment on the floor below the old man. Oliver the grad student walked into his apartment, weighed down by an old book. And in the background of all the chaos, Graham could hear sirens – most likely police cars. Today is a little too warm to spend on the rooftop by himself, he thought.

Little Red and the Wolf

By: Jeffrey Stephens

Once upon a time, in a kingdom far-far away, there was a girl called Little Red Riding Hood. She was well known throughout the kingdom as “Little Red” and often visited her grandfather, who was once a wizard of great renown! Most people remember the story of Little Red Riding Hood quite differently from how events actually unfolded.

One morning, as Little Red was preparing to visit her grandfather’s home, a wolf came knocking at her door. He was a frequent visitor and Little Red considered the wolf her very dear friend, but Little Red’s parents did not like him, so she asked him to meet her in the woods instead. He ran off into the woods and she followed after him once she had finished packing up a picnic basket to share with her grandfather. Even though he was a wizard, he was never very good with a pot. It’s said that witches had more experience in that regard. She even packed extra for her friend, the wolf, whom she would meet along the way.

However, while Little Red had been getting ready to leave, she had not noticed that her parents had already awoken and saw Little Red and the wolf making plans to see each other later in the day. Her parents were not a normal set by any means, but they were not about to let their only daughter befriend a beast from the woods. Little Red’s parents, had met many years before, during winter, and after some testy weather conditions, they finally decided to get married and order their daughter (because, children were gotten through mail-order in their kingdom). Her mother was from a place called Oz and her father met her mother when it snowed one afternoon as the Good Witch of the North was passing

by overhead, but that is another story.

Little Red’s parents argued over what they should do about the wolf. How could they make their daughter understand that they just couldn’t have them being friends? They came to the conclusion that no matter what argument they made, their daughter would simply disobey them. So, they hatched a nefarious plan. They retrieved a messenger pelican from the mail rookery and had it carry a bag of gold to the hunter that lived in the woods along with a letter that asked the hunter to “take care of” the wolf.

Meanwhile, in the woods, Little Red and her friend the wolf had been talking and playing and generally messing about. Around noon, they realized that they had lost track of the time and that they needed to get on over to her grandfather’s house and set off on their picnic. However, Little Red saw a pretty little flower bed in the midst of the trees. She asked the wolf to go ahead of her and let her grandfather know that she was on her way, but that she wanted to bring him some flowers to spruce up his house. So, the wolf headed on down the path and when he arrived at Little Red’s grandfather’s house, he knocked on the door. When her grandfather opened the door the wolf told him what Little Red has asked him to and the old wizard invited him in for tea while they waited for her.

Around the same time, the hunter had received the letter that Little Red’s parents had sent and he set off on his task to “take care of” the wolf. The hunter was well known in the kingdom for always taking down his prey and he was no slouch. He had caught up to Little Red and the wolf when they were still playing in the woods,

but he didn't want to upset Little Red. He knew how nice she was to everyone and he didn't want to "do the deed" while she was still around. So he waited and watched, and when Little Red and the wolf parted ways, he followed the wolf. He watched as the wolf knocked on the old wizard's door and saw the wizard invite the wolf inside. He couldn't wait forever, he thought to himself, so he circled the house looking for an opening that he might spy the wolf through.

Being a wizard, the old man liked to keep his house dark and because of that, the windows were all tightly shut. He decided that he would have to try something a little different since the wolf was inside a house. He thought for a few moments and came up with a plan. Drawing a cloak up over his head he grabbed a bucket of water from the nearby well and dumped it over himself. Then he took another bucket of water and ran quickly back to the house. He knocked on the door and called out to the old wizard, asking him to let him inside because of the rain. He, then, took the bucket of water splashed it up onto the roof, allowing the water to rush down in front of the door.

The old wizard and the wolf thought it was strange that it was raining, considering how nice it had been just a few minutes before. However, they weren't about to make someone stand out in the rain. So, they opened the door. The hunter asked if he could come inside, and, as the wizard and the wolf looked out at the seeming downpour, he hurried inside. However, by the time the old wizard and the wolf had turned around, the hunter had dropped his cloak and drawn his bow. The old wizard threw himself in front of the wolf just as the hunter let his arrow loose. What horror! The hunter had killed Little Red's grandfather! The wolf was so enraged by the death

of the kind old wizard that he flew into a fit and ate the hunter in one (maybe two) big bites. He took the old wizard's body outside and buried it so that the sight of his wounds wouldn't upset Little Red. He, then, went inside and fell asleep in tears.

A short time later, Little Red came down the path and knocked on her grandfather's door. Since he didn't answer, she went on inside and called out to him. She heard a muffled snore come from the back of the house and went to wake her grandfather for their picnic. However, when she opened the door, she saw the wolf lying in his bed.

She went up to him and said, "What big arms you have; grandfather."

"All the better to comfort you with," he answered.

"What big ears you have; grandfather," she said.

"All the better to listen to you with," he replied.

"What a big mouth you have," she wavered.

"All the better to tell you that your grandfather is dead," he sighed.

Little Red Riding Hood broke down into tears and asked the wolf what had happened. The wolf told her how sudden it had been and how her grandfather had saved his life by jumping in front of the arrow that had been meant to kill the wolf. After she sobbed in his arms for a little while, they went to his grave and she said goodbye, then they went inside to gather her things so that she could head back home and tell everyone what had happened. While they were packing up their belongings, they found the letter that her parents had sent to the hunter. Little Red was enraged! How could her parents have done something so foolish! They ran all the way back into town and showed the letter to the

police, who fetched Little Red's parents and brought them before a judge.

The wolf told his story and pointed to his belly (still swollen from eating the hunter). They showed the judge and jury the letter as evidence that it had been a conspiracy by Little Red's parents to "take out" the wolf. Her parents were sentenced to a good soaking, which was the worst sentence possible for them, and they both returned to the earth as a puddle of water.

Little Red and the wolf decided to move away, and as things usually happen, their story was told and retold until it was pure fiction. However, the wolf and Little Red live happily, together, in a cottage for two just on the other side on that very same forest.

Poetry

First Place - Sebastian Williams

When the world collapsed in on itself.....19

Second Place - Amber Spiegel

Unity of Hands.....20

Third Place - Alicia Towe

A Modern Politically Correct Prayer.....21

When the world collapsed in on itself

By: Sebastian Williams

When the world collapsed in on itself,
Only about 3 billion people
Were sad to see it go.
The rest could all care less.

When the world collapsed in on itself,
2 billion people were already
Starving.
They wanted to end their suffering.

Most people were already dead inside
When the world collapsed.
They saw the bright flashes
And still managed to file their invoices.

When the world collapsed in on itself,
It was the most peaceful moment
In the history of the universe.
No one dared to lift a hand in violence.

I saw a poor sap at that moment,
Reading some sad, sad poem.
He thought to himself:
“I’m glad the world is ending...I don’t have to finish this sen...”

Unity of Hands

By: Amber Spiegel

Do you ever look at your hands? Study them like art?
Count the dips and curves of the muscles,
Bones, and veins? Do you trace over the scars
with your eyes remembering every cut, burn, and bruise?
Are your nails brittle like flakey dead leaves or
strong like mahogany? Do you keep them long because
you like the elegant look and feel,
or short because you need your hands
to work. Do you have soft hands like peach skin?
or are they rough from long days in the
sun? Do the freckles, wrinkles, and spots on your hands
paint a constellation for you?
The secret between you and them.
What have your hands done?
Have they held babies? Written poetry?
Linked themselves in prayer?
Look at them.
Kiss them. Press them
to your face. Know that your hands tie you to
the world, to life, to yourself and to me.

A Modern Politically Correct Prayer

By: Alicia Towe

Our Unisex Caregiver, who dwell in A Theoretical Afterlife,
Great is thy name
Thy Representative-Democratic Statehood come,
Thy will be done will enough votes,
On this planet as it is in your dwelling place.
Give us this day our vegan, protein-packed, raw, organic suste-
nance
And forgive us our unintentional mistakes (that were some-
one's else's fault)
As we accept the IOU's of others.
Lead us not into sin, but indulge us in our temptations,
But deliver us from evil even if we do "sin"
(Which is relative to a person's moral character)
Amen.

Visual Arts

First Place - Bethany Pelzer

Eileen Donan Castle, Scotland.....23

Second Place - Bethany Pelzer

City Hall, Stockholm, Sweden.....24

Third Place - Claire Meneer

Untitled.....25

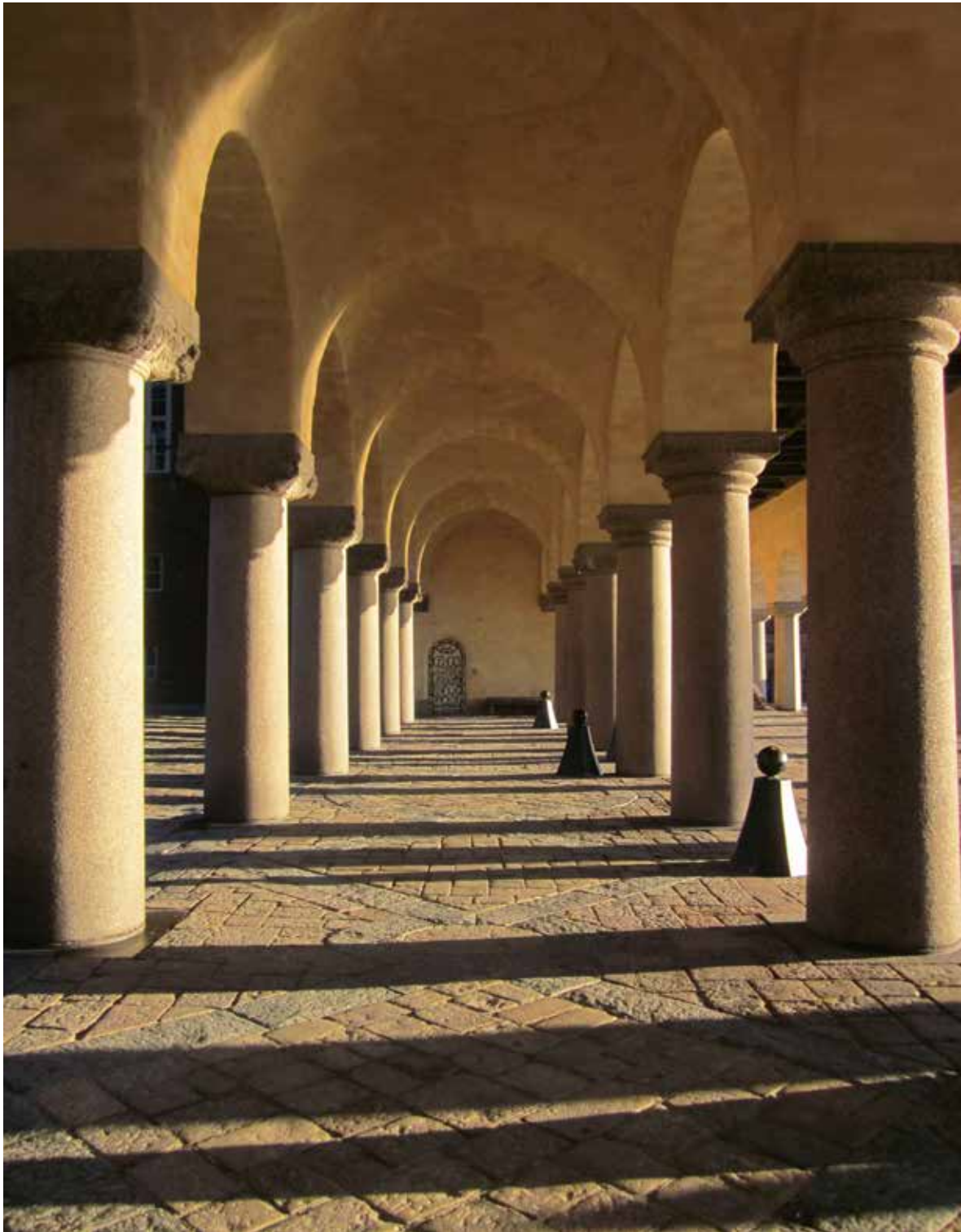
Eileen Donan Castle, Scotland

Bethany Pelzer



City Hall, Stockholm, Sweden

Bethany Pelzer



Untitled

Claire Meneer



Journalism

First Place - Logan Burd

A Friend Called Fire.....27

Second Place - Jenna Rhoades

Miley Cyrus Opinion Piece.....33

Third Place - Jenna Rhoades

New Stadium on Campus.....34



**THESE
GUYS
ARE ON
FIRE**

**A Friend Called Fire
proves that anyone can
live like a rock star**

By Logan Burd

» A FRIEND CALLED FIRE

◇ “Can you see us?” asks Jon Allegretto, singer/guitarist and charismatic leader of the Chicago-based rock trio A Friend Called Fire, via a faulty Skype connection. I can’t. Apparently, Allegretto’s webcam isn’t set up. “We can just be creepy and stare at you the whole time.”

Today, Allegretto and drummer Jonathan “JB” Schiller are showing just how Friend-ly they can be – they’re helping bassist Adam Powers move from the north end of Chicago to a cozy, empty apartment on the South side, with only Powers’ kitchen table and chairs, television and Xbox moved in so far. They sit at the table, with Allegretto’s laptop and their own whimsical quirks. Schiller, for instance, drums relentlessly on the tabletop, sounds that can be heard through the Skype connection. “I can’t stand it when drummers do that, but I always do it,” he admits when I ask about the sounds I am hearing.

Allegretto and Schiller give stellar Beavis and Butthead impressions. “Hey Butthead,” Allegretto probes in his best Beavis impression. “Shut up, I’m trying to do an interview,” Schiller retorts as Butthead. Much more frequently throughout the conversation, though, Schiller slips into a thick Cockney accent reminiscent of fictional rock star Aldous Snow (played by Russell Brand in both the 2008 comedy *Forgetting Sarah Marshall* and 2010’s *Get Him to the Greek*). “I sort of sound like Russell Brand, I guess,” Schiller says in the accent when I mention it. “It’s the go-to when I want to sound British.”

Allegretto feels the need to offer an apology: “I don’t know, we’re pretty stupid when we’re put in rooms together. Adam usually just kinda looks at us and shakes his head every once in a while, but then he’ll join us too.” There’s a short pause. “Depends on how drunk you get him,” Schiller decides to add.

A Friend Called Fire formed in 2008 when Allegretto and Powers decided to take their musical talents from other groups and form their own rock band - we’ll get to Schiller soon. Allegretto hails from Virginia, where his former band Luther’s Fall (like Lex Luther, Allegretto tells me) found success in the Virginia Beach area. The day after Powers graduated from Heidelberg University in 2005, he moved to Virginia Beach to play bass guitar in the rock group Red Metric, who were friendly competitors of Allegretto’s band.

When Allegretto and Powers met at a bonfire, they struck up an instant friendship. Soon, Luther’s Fall disintegrated, and Allegretto moved to Chicago. Powers followed when he received a much-desired transfer from his Williamsburg, Virginia Barnes & Noble to one in Chicago. Soon after, they combined their musical efforts and found a temporary drummer, and A Friend Called Fire was formed.

That’s where Schiller comes in. He was a drummer in another Chicago rock band called Along the Parallel (which is still in existence, unlike Powers’ and Allegretto’s former bands). He also happened to be dating Powers’ sister Erin – now they’re married and live in Chicago. By happenstance, Schiller performed back-up vocals on AFCF’s album “American Daydream,” and when AFCF’s drummer left in 2011, Schiller says, “it was kind of a no-brainer.” The rest, as they say, is history.

As it turns out, A Friend Called Fire’s unpredictable style of rock – softer, harder, faster, slower – stems from a variety of musical influences. From Powers’ love of Metallica and Alice in Chains to Allegretto’s 50’s and 80’s rock, Jimi Hendrix and folk rock to Schiller’s Foo Fighters, Dave Matthews Band and “old-timey Frank Sinatra,” AFCF has grown from the roots of over nine decades of American music. Allegretto describes their quick-change style: “We can be, like, rocking loud and all that, but then we do a lot of stuff where we, you know, strip down to our undies,” he explains.

“We can be, like, rocking loud and all that, but then we do a lot of stuff where we, you know, strip down to our undies”

- Jon Allegretto, singer/guitarist

“And then simplify the music, too,” Schiller jokes.

Besides the various styles of rock he’s used to now, Schiller also has a lot of background in jazz

» A FRIEND CALLED FIRE

music. Having come from a “very, very musical family,” he says he’s been interested in music since a very young age. “I didn’t get into really serious singing until I was in high school, but when I was probably, like, four, I used to pull the pots and pans and always wanna drum on them with wooden spoons. And then I got my first toy drum kit when I was four or five that had Animal [the maniacal drummer of Muppet fame] on it. It’s just ingrained in me,” he says.

Allegretto’s young start rivals that of Schiller. “I have pictures of me with a little guitar [he later clarifies that it featured Sesame Street characters] when I was probably about four,” he recalls.

Powers was late to realize his musical potential, saying, “I would say, like, fourteen or fifteen. I played the drums in high school, and eighth grade...so whatever age you’re at in eighth grade.” Later, when I ask Powers’ mom Pat, she contended that he was in fifth grade when he started playing drums. He only switched to bass when he and his friends wanted to start a band but none of them could play it, she told me.

When I asked Powers if his college career at Heidelberg University helped him in his musical endeavors, his response was to the point: “Nope.” Powers was a student-athlete, but never during his four years, did he

I participate in Heidelberg’s musical program.

hear drumming on the other end. In naturally assume Schiller, until he insists “That wasn’t me drumming that time.” Turns out it was Powers, likely recalling his old drumming days in high school.

With their hands in so many styles of rock, I was curious where their band’s unique name came from. It’s the obligatory question that just begs to be asked. Years before even conceiving of leading a rock band, Allegretto was listening to the 1996 compilation album “Songs in the Key of X: Music from and Inspired by The X-Files” when he heard “Down in the Park,” a Gary Numan song,

being covered by the Foo Fighters. In the song, the lyric “Down in the park with a friend called ‘Five’” sounded to Allegretto a bit like “a friend called fire,” and he thought, “Man, that’d be a cool-ass band name.”

Years later, when the rock trio was naming their new band – so often a grueling and painstaking process – Allegretto brought up the name and got unanimous support. “We were probably eating pizza or drinking and everyone was like, ‘yeah,’” Allegretto tries to recall. It was decided – A Friend Called Fire it would be. For fun, Allegretto tells me he frequently makes up stories of the name’s origin to throw people off. This version, he assures me, is the whole truth.

Shortly after, it strikes me as odd that Allegretto could ever be anything but truthful, as he confronts the inconveniences of North Chicago with brutal honesty. “It’s kind of disheartening,” Allegretto says before a brief hesitation. “When people read this, they might get upset, but I don’t care...when you go to Wrigleyville, it’s just a bunch of idiots everywhere,” he reveals.



Powers, Allegretto and Schiller (from left)

Powers and Schiller have both lived in the heart of the Chicago Cubs’ famous (and now, perhaps, infamous) stadium community, and Schiller adds his two cents. “It’s like [the fans] have free reign just because there’s a big, old, storied stadium in the middle of a neighborhood,” he says regretfully.

“Nobody pays attention, they cross the street whenever they feel like it, they act like a bunch of drunken fools,” he adds. “You’re just trying to live your life and it’s a huge, huge inconvenience.”

At this point, Schiller is curbing my dreams of living in Wrigleyville, a community that’s seemed to me the greatest real estate in the country since I first laid eyes on Wrigley Field almost a decade ago. He did have one positive nugget to note, though: “I do appreciate that the people aren’t fair-weather.”

The guys made it clear how they felt about Chicago baseball fans, but what about Chicagoans attracted to the band scene? “People tend to like to go out and see bands,” Allegretto happily reports. He admits that Chicago isn’t New York or L.A., but “you can play on a Wednesday night and people will still come out.”

As a Chicago-based group, Allegretto admits that there’s also a lot of competition. “You have to be careful not to play too often in one place,” he warned. “If you play all the time, you know, people aren’t going to come out.” Powers also notes, “There’s so many bands that come through Chicago. They’re like, ‘Oh, did you go see these guys’ and I’ll be like ‘Who?’ But they sell out places.”

Keeping up with the ever-changing Chicago band-scape is a key aspect of Powers’ job. When he’s not “playing bass like a madman,” as he describes it, Powers is a talent buyer and production manager at the Elbo Room, one of Chicago’s many musical venues. He scouts the city of over two-and-a-half million people for bands to book at the venue, then assures that the shows/gigs/sets/whatever-they’re-called-now go smoothly. He also works in a lesser, but similar, capacity at Chicago’s House of Blues venue (which has gotten AFCF, Powers happily tells me, into some good gigs there).

Lastly, his media production company AMP Booking is contracted by LiveNation to provide photos of bands and video of fans at all of LiveNation’s 100+ music venues around the nation (and Canada). Powers oversees 50 independently-contracted concert photographers (including Allegretto...we’ll get there) as they provide him with content. “It’s busy, but it’s fun,” he says, “I get to go see concerts for free.”

When I ask Allegretto what he does, he begins to tell me about his free-lance concert photography. That’s when Powers interjects: “He worked for me!” “Yes, I’ve worked for Powers,” Allegretto concedes. As a concert photographer, Allegretto has toured alongside the Zac Brown Band, archiving their tour as he worked for a marketing group. Alongside that, Allegretto also edits for another photographer in Chicago, and provides voice and guitar lessons in his free time. It seems, looking at the novel-length résumés of these rock stars, that it takes having four jobs to afford living in Chicago.

“Not me,” Schiller says. “I just work in a restaurant; wait tables, put up with really cool

people and really stupid people. It’s a job.” Schiller says that if he wasn’t “really, really lazy,” he would probably take on more jobs to make extra money. With his impressive Butthead impression and British accent, Schiller says he’s always being pushed to get into voiceover work. “Yeah, but it’s so highly

“There’s so many bands that come through Chicago. They’re like, ‘Oh, did you go see these guys’ and I’ll be like ‘Who?’ But they sell out places.”

- Adam Powers, bassist

competitive,” he groans. “I’m boring. These guys have big, fancy things that they do, and I’m just like, ‘d’oh.” Trying to talk him off a cliff, Allegretto tells Schiller, “You’re probably a hell of a lot less stressed out than we are, though.” Without hesitation, Schiller responds, “Ehh, you’d be surprised.”

Allegretto tells Schiller that his main source of stress is probably his cat, and the subject quickly changes. “Your cat is drunk all the time,” Allegretto complains. Schiller goes on the defensive: “My cat is awesome.” I hear Powers, so far the quietest of the three, laughing in the background: “Your cat is literally drunk.” Naturally, I ask what the cat does to deserve its description. “He walks like he’s drunk,” Schiller explains.

As it turns out, Schiller has been caring for a “neurotic” cat, found in a litter by his wife’s friend’s aunt (or is it his wife’s aunt’s friend? It’s hard to tell) and given to them when no other home could be found. “And now, I’m a cat person,” Schiller seems happy to tell me. He goes on to tell me that dogs are too much work, like children, and that he’s too lazy for either responsibility at this point in his life.

But with all this talk about other jobs (well, before we got off-track), how has the main gig, being in a rock band, treated them? As it turns out, the picture is only as pretty as you make it. “It’s a tough business. We’re the whole deal...with promotions, booking, getting the word out. After the stuff that we’ve done, any one of us can go out and do anything else with our lives that would be easier,” Allegretto suggests.

» A FRIEND CALLED FIRE

Powers agrees, adding, “It’s like trying to start a business, but [you] don’t know how to get to the place where you make the money.” Allegretto waxes poetic in summing up both his and Powers’ thoughts: “It’s a business based on dreams,” he says, hesitating, “and that can be really fucked-up.” And that, boys and girls, is the business of being an independent rock band.

One, for the record, that is proud to have avoided being on a record label for so long. “People think just because we’re not on a label that we’re not serious about it,” Allegretto acknowledges, “but it’s kind of the opposite.” AF CF is in it for the fun, not for the fame or money. And the band has tried to avoid cigar-smoking big wigs, cash-hungry music industries and “shitty contracts.”

Allegretto tells me a story he heard about Kurt Cobain, long-time Nirvana front man. As the story goes, Cobain and Nirvana were at their peak. They had just sold something like twenty million albums. When he went to a big-shot record producer complaining that Nirvana wasn’t seeing all the money that they deserved from those twenty million albums, the producer pointed at his car, parked outside, and told Cobain, “See that Cadillac? It’s yours.” And Cobain took the Cadillac.

It’s not all hard work and no reward, though. Once the behind-the-scenes business is through, Allegretto says, the gigs are all fun and games. “We joke a lot, play off each other, and we’ve gotten pretty damn good at that,” he laughs. “[Gigs are] always good, but sometimes they’re really great,” he adds.

AF CF has gotten upwards of a couple hundred fans at their shows, but sometimes it’s more low-key. “When we tour, we play to places that are packed and places that are not so packed.

Sometimes there’s just one guy in the corner,” Powers half-jokes. After Allegretto debates his claim, they all agree that they’ve experienced that situation, every rock band’s worst nightmare, only once.

Lately, AF CF hasn’t been touring. It just doesn’t make economic sense anymore, they tell me. They used to play 100 shows every year, both in Chicago and on tour. Now they’re at about 50. During their six or seven tours east of the Mississippi River (anything west of that and the cities and gigs are just too far apart, they say), they would play shows in New York, D.C., Atlanta and South Carolina, as well as shows closer to their hometowns in Ohio and Virginia (Schiller is from the Chicago area).

Now, they stick to Chicago, playing live at venues across the city and pushing out new music in-studio. AF CF released their first EP, “Stories of Tomorrow,” in 2008. Since then, they’ve released one LP called “An American Daydream,” two individually-released singles, and another EP, “Summer: Home, Love, and Confusion.”

When asked why they went from a full-length album to shorter releases, Allegretto replies, “People’s attention spans are like hamsters.” Schiller agrees, and adds deadpan, “Hamster’s have very, very short attention spans.” When critics doubt their legitimacy (EP’s have never been considered as legitimate as LP’s), AF CF goes old-school. “Back in the ‘50s, they just made singles,” Allegretto explains. And

he didn’t feel the need to say much more than that.

Their newest EP was released just a couple weeks ago, and I asked the guys to describe it. “It’s kind of a driving album...it sounds summery, you know, sounds like warm weather



An AF CF tour poster

And he didn't feel the need to say much more than that.

Their newest EP was released just a couple weeks ago, and I asked the guys to describe it. "It's kind of a driving album...it sounds summery, you know, sounds like warm weather and sticking your head out the window."

I knew that AFCF has been on Chicago radio stations (three or four, they say, including extensive play on Q101), so I should have expected the answer I received when I asked them how it felt to hear themselves for the first time. "Fucking great," Allegretto announces. Schiller, just as I would expect, adds "I messed my pants a little bit." "If at anytime ever, forever and ever, if there was a time that a song of ours came on the radio and we weren't, like, totally psyched about that," Allegretto adds, "that would be really weird." Allegretto goes on to talk about fans coming up to him and telling him that they learned his guitar part to one of AFCF's songs by hearing it on the radio or on YouTube, ReverbNation, BandCamp, MySpace, or any of the several music-sharing sites AFCF posts music on. "That's pretty awesome," he says.

With all three rockers holding other jobs, two in major career tracks, I wondered where they saw the future of the band. Will they rock into middle-age, like the Rolling Stones, or will they soon be a forgotten memory off doing their own things and finding success in the professional world? Quickly, the mood shifts from bouncy and care-free to serious. "The ultimate goal is to play music for the rest of our lives," Allegretto starts. He continues, saying, "If I had just played guitar and sang all the time, I would not be an unhappy person," but also admits, "We're all realistic about a lot of things."

Soon, Allegretto adds what I came away thinking was the best metaphor anyone could have used to describe a life in rock music: "It's like if you like pizza and you eat pizza everyday...after a while, as much as you like pizza, you gotta take a break from that shit, man. You need balance in your life."

As we near the end of our interview, Allegretto says his goodbyes, I hear Powers in the background complaining that "Moving sucks," and Schiller continues to drum on the table in front of him, as my flickering conversation with the band on fire is finally extinguished.



A Friend Called Fire

Summer: Home, Love, and Confusion

■■■□

Group's newest EP shows them still defining their rock voice

With only four songs, A Friend Called Fire's newest EP briefly displays the variety of rock music the group is known for. "Summer: Home, Love, and Confusion" is described by lead singer Jon Allegretto as a "driving album," but it leads off with "[Intro] City Lights," a slow, acoustic track more reminiscent of a Roy Orbison hit than a 2013 Chicago rock band release. Regardless of its confusing placement, it's a catchy tune with harmony and a folksy, likeable vibe.

"Show You Love" is only slightly faster and harder rock than the one before. It's catchy and sing-able, perfectly fit for Top 40 Radio. It sounds like something you'd hear from Neon Trees, Imagine Dragons, Capitol Cities or any of those other new one-hit-so-far wonders that get significant nationwide airtime. It showcases Allegretto's guitar abilities, but also has drum solos that you can't help but air-play along with.

The lyrics of "East Town" give you the false impression that this might be a bluesy type of rock. Nope. It gets boring quickly, with a fast guitar rhythm and crashing cymbals that would probably be even louder and more overshadowing live.

"Summer" ends with "Take You Back," another predictable, fast-paced rock track with typical lyrics regarding a failed relationship. It, too, relies on the cymbals, though we learned in the first two tracks that they're better-off without them. It seems that AFCF still has some learning to do, but with the unique potential shown in "Show You Love," I have faith in A Friend Called Fire.

Miley Cyrus Opinion Piece

By: Jenna Rhoades

Miley Cyrus has been getting a lot of flack for her now infamous MTV Video Music Awards (VMAs) performance. Everything from her outfit, her dance moves, and even her excessive use of tongue has come under fire.

I've taken my fair share of jabs at the girl myself, but re-watching her performance on MTV.com, I've found myself thinking that she is not that different from other women her (and my own) age. Anyone who has been to a bar or club has seen similar behavior.

The only reason they were sliding their own hands down the sides of their body instead of a foam finger was because they didn't have a foam finger. This new "twerking" fad is not that different than fad dances from when we were younger, only we "twerked" frontward, and it was called "party boy"-ing. And the tongue thing, while excessive, isn't revolutionary, a la Gene Simmons. There are thousands of other 20-year-olds doing the same thing every single weekend. Everyone thinks they look sexy, not stupid, between the ages of 12 and 20, depending on maturity.

Now as for the issue of her public image as a role model; back off. Yes, her dance was a little risky, but she appeared on MTV, not Disney. The target audience was other 20+ year olds who like to dance in clubs, not the preteens that fawn to Disney Channel.

Miley Cyrus is a young woman trying to set out on her own, away from Disney's influence, and begin a career of her own. Deidre McVay, a Heidelberg senior, explains, "She is a 20-year-old woman-I think she is trying to find herself...I don't blame her for trying to rebel." She is trying to gen-

erate publicity with these attention-seeking stunts. The only difference between every other girl Miley Cyrus' age and Miley Cyrus are that people are actually giving her the attention she wants.

Her video and live performance for "We Can't Stop" was her publically announcing that she no longer wants to be viewed as a "Disney Darling," but rather a rowdy party girl, and that's what has people talking. McVay states, "She is not a little kid anymore," and further explains, "She was loud and clear with her performance. I don't think anyone sees her as that little girl from Disney anymore."

Overall, her performance wasn't all that outrageous to me. I didn't dig the Scary Spice horns, but we've all made poor fashion choices. She wore some clothes that were too tiny on her and danced in a risky manner, but she provided the producers of the VMAs with the attention and energy the show is known for. A little dirty dancing never hurt anyone, except maybe the parents from "Dirty Dancing."

Keep in mind, this is the same program that introduced America to Madonna and Britney Spears' steamy kiss and Diana Ross fondling Lil' Kim's mostly bare breast on air. Miley Cyrus sticking her tongue out while grinding against an older man and rubbing her body while wearing a foam finger doesn't seem that outrageous by comparison.

New Stadium on Campus

By: Jenna Rhoades

Heidelberg's campus will soon be getting another new addition. Most recently, Saurwein Health & Wellness Center was added to our campus and the addition of this new stadium will continue the trend of campus rejuvenation.

The goal of the new Athletic Stadium and Alumni Center project is to provide a center for student athletes from all sports, not just football players, to practice. This new building will provide a boost, not only for the campus, but for the students and alumni as well.

According to information found on Heidelberg University's website, this new complex "will provide a permanent place for the entire campus community to gather and experience athletics and events together." A new stadium will help build a better sense of community for Heidelberg students at games. Instead of being spread out all around the field, this new stadium will "accommodate a crowd of 1,500 (seating for about 1,200) at Mayer Field," according to information from Heidelberg University's website.

The new stadium will be three levels high and it is going to be cut into the existing hillside by Mayer Field. Mike Hallett, Heidelberg's head football coach, explains that this new facility will "host football, soccer, and track home contests, provide wrestling with new space, and create training area for baseball and softball."

Hallett describes what all will be contained within this new stadium, saying, "The second level will house the 'Fox Den' and alumni reception area with a great view of the field...The third level will house game day operations, including press box, scorer's area, visiting coaches booths, and

radio/TV broadcast center. The roof level will be used for filming contests." As for the exterior, according to Hallett, there will be a "great plaza area for tailgate areas and receptions on the lawn in the area spanning the front lawn of the stadium to Greenfield Street. [It] could be a great area to tie [the] University Commons to the Stadium and Alumni Center for game day, graduation, and other campus events."

The attached alumni center will feature a private viewing deck and outdoor amenities that will house outdoor activities on game days. Hallett comments on the new possibilities the stadium presents to the Heidelberg community, saying, "We could see the rise of open air concerts, hosting more community events, and generally give the campus a more central location as a rallying point for multiple events."

There is no set date yet as to when this project will be underway; it is dependent on donations. President Huntington, on Heidelberg University's website, stated that gifts and donations have pushed the fund-raising endeavors into the "red zone."

Hallett explains that funding for this new project will be provided by, "The Institutional Advancement Team, lead by Jim Minehart and Lee Martin," and that they "have secured \$3.7 Million dollars in donations from Alumni and Friends of the University." Hallett says that the estimated cost of the project is roughly \$4.5 million and that the majority of the project's funding is complete.

Coach Hallett emphasizes that this new project will "enhance the campus experience for students, alumni, prospective students and the greater Tiffin community."

This new addition to Heidelberg's

campus seems to hold much promise. A new stadium with new facilities offer so much to this campus and the future is looking bright.

Academic Writing

First Place - Erin Gorrell

The Harry Potter Controversy.....37

Second Place - Logan Burd

Oh, Bother: Milne's Classic Children's Novels as
Case Studies in Adolescent
Development.....43

Third Place - Clayton Burke

Sula: A Connection to Lesbianism and Gender
Studies.....56

The Harry Potter Controversy

By: Erin Gorrell

Abstract

J.K. Rowling's Harry Potter series is one of the most famous and best-loved in fantasy history. It has gained popularity with children and is credited with encouraging early reading. However, many conservative Christians criticize the series for containing misleading morals and witchcraft and challenge the use of the books in classrooms. Protests against Harry Potter have gone as far as book burnings and bans in the past ten years. The extreme opposition to the series is often uninformed and biased. This essay will explain and refute the Christian argument against the Harry Potter series.

When the first copies of Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone hit the shelves of bookstores and libraries on June 30, 1997, the world was unaware of the forthcoming saga. Much to the surprise of publishers, editors and the author, J.K. Rowling, herself, the novel was an instant sensation. Rowling quickly published the sequel, Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets, which was received by fans even more fervently than the first. In 2001, just after the fourth novel was released, Rowling signed a highly anticipated movie deal with Warner Brothers Pictures. The novels continued to gain popularity until 2007, when the seventh and final installment, Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows, was released (Killinger, 2002, p. 1). By 2008, 300 million total copies of the series had been sold in over 60 different languages and 100 countries; J.K. Rowling became the world's best-selling author, her personal fortune topping that of the Queen of England ("Harry Potter Foe Loses Challenge," 2008).

Needless to say, the Potter series was and is a literary and cinematic phenomenon. Worldwide, children and adults remain captivated by the exciting, whimsical plot and charming characters. However,

a series so extensive was bound to bring about resistance and scrutiny. Indeed, many conservative Christians deplore its content; Linda Harvey (2007), the president of Mission America (a group which monitors paganism among American youth), asserts that, "[The books] dishonor God, they glamorize sorcery, and the spirit surrounding the series is dark and anti-Christian" (3). She also states, "The [characters] are real and seek to intrigue, deceive and side-track the children handed to them. And that's exactly what we're doing – handing them our precious children, believing there's no harm" (11).

Other conservative Christians share her condemning opinion. The Harry Potter opposition has grown in size and intensity within the past ten years; there have been reports of complaints from parents in schools across America. The first true banning of Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone occurred in 1999 in Zeeland, Michigan. Zeeland Public Schools' superintendent Gary Feenstra banned the reading of the novel in classes, removed it from the library and prohibited future purchases of more books (Cline, 2007).

Countless subsequent actions have been initiated by faculty and parents alike.

In July, 2002, parents in Cromwell, Connecticut, sought to have the Potter series removed from the local middle school because of its witchcraft and negative portrayal of Christianity (Cline, 2007). Some protests went as far as destroying the books; hundreds of members of the Christ Community Church in Alamogordo, New Mexico, participated in Pastor Jack Brock's "holy bonfire", at which novels, CDs and other Potter paraphernalia was burned. Brock gave a public statement, labeling the series "an abomination to God" (Cline, 2007; Killinger, 2002, p. 3). He later admitted that he had neither read the books nor seen the movies, a fact of which he was proud.

Attempts at censorship continually land the series on the American Library Association's list of most frequently challenged books ("Frequently Challenged Books," 2011). Why, though, do critics see the series in such a negative light? One of the staunchest opposers of Rowling's beloved books is conservative Christian author Richard Abanes. His articles have been featured in several prominent Christian magazines, and his book, *Harry Potter and the Bible*, is a popular source of argument. Abanes claims "Harry Potter contains elements of real magic..." It is this, he says, that makes the Potter stories "likely to induce impressionable children into seeking information about witchcraft and the world of the occult" (Ragle, 2006, p. 11). Incidentally, the "elements of real magic" in the series are what seem to scare Christian parents the most.

The use of witchcraft in the Potter series, referred to by Christians as "Wicca," is cited as many critics' main argument. In an attempt to ban the books at Eastern York School District in Pennsylvania, local

pastor Tony Leanza argued that they "promote Wicca" (Cline, 2007, 6). Deb DiEugenio, a parent also involved, claimed the books were "evil witchcraft". "I'm not paying taxes to teach my child witchcraft," she said (Cline, 2007, 6).

It is true that the Wiccan religion (referred to as "witchcraft") is directly admonished in the Bible: "Let no one be found among you who sacrifices their son or daughter in the fire, who practices divination or sorcery, interprets omens, engages in witchcraft, or casts spells, or who is a medium or spiritist or who consults the dead." (Deuteronomy 18:10-11 New International Version)

The witchcraft DiEugenio, Leanza and countless others oppose, however, is far different from that of the Wiccan religion. Understanding the differences between the magic in Harry Potter and "real magic" is crucial.

The methods employed by Harry and his friends to cast magic contrast those of the Wiccan religion. Unlike the witches and wizards in Harry Potter, Wiccans cast their spells by mental meditation; they rarely use wands or verbal incantations (Robinson, 2001, 4). According to Kathryn Elliott, a practicing Wiccan, the magic used in Harry Potter is neither real nor similar to that of her religion. Elliott explains, "real [Wiccan] spells and divinations take long periods of preparation and meditation and even then do not always work as intended" (Ragle, 2006, p. 11). Rowling's captivating fictional characters use short verbal charms such as "Lumos" (to turn on lights) and "Accio" (to summon objects); these invented Latin spells are the extent of witchcraft in the books.

There is an undeniable lack of Wiccan meditation and ritual in the Potter se-

ries. Never do the characters prepare their spells in order to worship greater beings. Parents who worry that the series teaches their children witchcraft need not be concerned. Young readers will not be trained to worship Wiccan deities or become skilled in “real” magic. At worst they may learn a bit of Latin etymology.

Accusations have also been made about the series’ ties to “satanic” Wiccan beliefs. However, many Christians share a flawed perception of the religion. Wiccans strongly protest assumptions that their religion is satanic or evil: “We do not accept the concept of evil, nor do we worship any entity known as ‘Satan’ or ‘the Devil’.... We do not seek power through the suffering of others....” (Robinson, 2001, 12).

Instead, Wiccans practice “magick rites” in order to become closer to the natural rhythm of life forces. These rites are performed as a form of prayer to a God and Goddess (Robinson, 2001, 14). The characters in Harry Potter do not use magic for prayer or cast spells for religious reasons. In fact, the novels don’t contain religious references at all. Those who seek to protect their children from exposure to Wicca can rest assured that the books are extremely secular. Neither the word “God” nor “Goddess” even appears in the series (Killinger, 2002, p. 6).

In an interview with Lev Grossman in 2005, J.K. Rowling addressed the accusations concerning religious content. Though she is a Christian and a member of the Church of Scotland, Rowling made clear that she purposefully omitted religion from her novels. “...I don’t think they’re spiritual,” she argued (Grossman, 2005, p. 3). When asked about the morals of her stories, she asserted that she does not want a role as a theological educator to the millions of children who read her books.

“I never think in terms of ‘What would be good for them to find out here?’” she explained (Grossman, 2005, p. 3). Harry Potter does not promote a religion, and children cannot learn Wicca by simply reading the series. It would be extremely unlikely for them to draw any religious conclusions from the books.

Some conservative Christians argue, still, that Rowling’s magical world contradicts their doctrines. According to Linda Harvey, “In biblical terms, all of it is sin and darkness, clearly outside the light of Christ” (2007, 5). Those who support this opinion should be reminded of the magical nature of the Bible itself.

J.K. Rowling did not invent magic; the mysteries of magic and miracle have been part of human culture literally since Genesis. Beginning with the well-known story of Adam and Eve, the Bible contains countless examples of miraculous events. The very creation of Eve, for example, from the rib of Adam is unexplainable by any means. Just a short time later, a talking serpent is introduced -- the very serpent who tricks Eve into eating a forbidden apple. Later in the Bible, we encounter the stories of Moses, the character who sees the miraculous burning bush which is never consumed by fire. And when God sends Moses to free the children of Israel from servitude in Egypt He plagues the people with frogs, flies, locusts, boils, water that turns to blood, and deaths of firstborn children. Ultimately, there were countless miracles which Jesus, the founder of Christianity, performed (Killinger, 2002, pp. 108-114). These stories are only a few of the most famous; the Bible consists of innumerable mysteries and miracles.

Christian critics never advise against the reading of the Bible or attempt to ban it from the lives of their children. The prob-

lem may simply be closed mindedness. “There are still people who baulk at being reminded of magic’s central place in the Christian tradition,” says Iver Neumann, a humanities expert and professor in Oslo, Norway (2006, p. 87). The truth is, Rowling’s magic is not far from that of the Bible stories which children are encouraged to read. As John Killinger states, “...[T]he only newness about Rowling’s fictional world is the freshness with which she treats old themes and invents new ones” (2002, p. 114).

J.K. Rowling is not the first modern author to create a magical fantasy world. She writes out of a long and respectable tradition of magical worlds. After the Bible itself, there are many other fantasy novels and series which Christians advocate. C.S. Lewis’ Narnia tales, for example, are actually considered “Christian books”; yet, they contain children who encounter extraordinary events, magical creatures and, of course, Jadis, the “White Witch”. Other favorites, such as J.R.R. Tolkien’s *The Hobbit* and *Lord of the Rings* trilogy, include settings which are not unlike anything described in the Potter series and wizards who yield wands and cast spells akin to those uttered by Harry, Ron and Hermione (Killinger, 2002, p. 107). Since these stories are so very similar in content to the Harry Potter saga, why do Christians accept them and reject the latter?

Skeptics argue that children can be easily confused when it comes to discerning the reality and fantasy in Harry Potter. They believe that its widespread popularity – presence as books, games, movies and products – gives it more influence on children (Cockrell, 2006). If this is true, though, Tolkien’s *Lord of the Rings* series or Lewis’ Narnia adventures should have had the same influence at the height of

their popularities. In fact, with two popular “Chronicles of Narnia” movies on DVD and a third on the way, they should be infecting young minds just as quickly as Harry Potter. However, there is no evidence that the popularity of the series has had a greater effect of children; if it had, they would be exploring their closets in search of Narnia instead of asking for the newest DVD. Richard Abanes makes another argument in favor of the Potter alternatives. According to Abanes, Tolkien and Lewis aren’t harmful because they create completely imaginary settings rather than mixing fantasy and real life the way Rowling does. He explains that this alteration confuses children. It is true that Rowling’s half-fantasy world is different than the contrived worlds of the former authors.

As Amanda Cockrell explains, “Rowling has abandoned the realm of high fantasy and laid her story in contemporary England...” (2006, p. 25). Harry Potter, his friends and foes live in our world rather than a fictional place (Tolkien’s “Middle Earth”, for example). Due to this, it is said that Harry Potter doesn’t emphasize the distance needed between the readers’ actual lives and the material they are reading (Cockrell, 2006, p. 24). The close mingling of life and fantasy may very well be confusing for some children. But how harmful can the confusion be?

Cockrell theorizes that when children think about topics from a book while they are not reading it, the world is no longer fantasy. Because Rowling’s series is so involved and “enchanted”, readers are completely absorbed in the stories much too easily. In this way the fantasy becomes deceit, which leads to “lying and other deceitful behavior” (2006, p. 26). Richard Abanes agrees, citing the number of times Potter characters break the rules and accus-

ing Rowling of extolling “deceitful behavior” as “a valuable tool for successful living” throughout the series (Killinger, 2002, p. 71). He claims the books send the wrong message to children.

Though Harry Potter and his friends do fudge the truth from time to time, Rowling ensures that it is always in good purpose. Their forbidden trips to the Hogwarts’ library past curfew and white lies to Professor Snape can be forgiven because they are in a constant struggle against the villains in the stories. It is this struggle that brings admiration for the books and “good” characters in them.

Over and over, Harry and his friends are offered choices and decide to “take the high road” (Killinger, 2002, p. 99). Sometimes the protagonists compromise their values and ignore the rules enforced by their superiors, but they never falter when faced with the most important decisions. “Harrys, Hermiones, and Rons are constantly weighing the consequences of their actions, deciding on how they will behave, and contemplating what the results of their decisions may be” (Killinger, 2002, p. 94). The lesson young readers can learn from the examples of Rowling’s honorable protagonists is positive.

Harry Potter also teaches young readers the important principle of self-sacrifice, a concept directly encouraged in the Bible. Jesus Christ teaches self-sacrifice in the book of John:

“My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends,” (John 15:12-13 New International Version).

If there were a Christ-likeness in the Potter stories, it would surely involve the theme of self-sacrifice. The characters in Harry Potter lay down their lives for each

other time after time. From the beginning of the series – when Harry and Ron rush to the girl’s restroom to save Hermione from a giant mountain troll – there are countless examples of self-sacrifice. Harry and his friends encounter problems on nearly all of their adventures; they risk their own lives for each other every time. And there is no nobler act than Harry’s in book seven. Not unlike Jesus’ ultimate sacrifice for humanity, Harry willingly gives his life for the good of the world.

Forces of good, often heroic and admirable characters constantly battle the “evils” in the series. As with any fictional plot, the books contain protagonists and antagonists and a conflict between them; they do not contain subversive morals or lessons in witchcraft. Rowling’s use of magic in a world similar to ours adds an innocent element of fiction to the action. The stories make reading exciting and enjoyable. For young readers, stepping into Rowling’s magical world is surreal. Harry Potter allows them to enter a wonderful world, where beasts of legends reside in forests, where simple knowledge gained from books and teachers can be put to practical use, and where ordinary children can overcome impossible tasks to become heroes and heroines.

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Oh, Bother: Milne's Classic Children's Novels as Case Studies in Adolescent Development

By: Logan Burd

When I was One,
I had just begun.
When I was Two,
I was nearly new.
When I was Three,
I was hardly Me.
When I was Four,
I was not much more.
When I was Five,
I was just alive.
But now I am Six, I'm as clever as clever.
So I think I'll be six now for ever and ever.
"The End" by A.A. Milne

In the 1996 obituary of Christopher Robin Milne, *The New York Times* described his father, author A.A. Milne, as a man who used Christopher's youth to hold off his own middle age. Christopher Milne told the *Times*, "When I was three, he was three. When I was six, he was six" ("Christopher Robin Milne"). When A.A. Milne published *Winnie-the-Pooh* (1926) and *The House at Pooh Corner* (1928)—children's novels about a willy, nilly, silly old plush bear and his animal friends—his son was 6 and 8 years of age, respectively. In spirit, so then was his father. Possessing the mind of a child may have allowed Milne to write from one's perspective, which might have explained his ability to capture the hearts of children around the world. Milne's classic novels will be eternally relevant due to their smart depictions of diverse characters, and a detailed knowledge of adolescent development may allow for an understanding about what the characters' actions suggest about their psychological (and for that matter, literary—since the two are often intri-

cately tied) significance.

In order to more closely examine the stages of adolescent psychological development that Milne's characters (for this study: Rabbit, Owl, Piglet, Eeyore, Tigger, and Pooh) may effectively represent, a brief introduction of each is necessary. Four theorists, from different regions of the world, different eras, and different disciplines, will be used intermittently as the focus of this analysis. The four—Sigmund Freud, Jean Piaget, Lawrence Kohlberg, and Erik Erikson—each have stages of adolescent development that speak to four different areas of psychology: psychosexuality, cognition, morality, and sociality. It is important here to note that, as Ronald Duska states, "Development is not governed by age...[but] there are certain ranges of ages that are good predictors of stages" (103). For these theories, characters may only represent the stages and may not necessarily display every trait. For example, while all of the characters in Milne's novels are skilled in verbal communication, some may be shown

to represent a stage typically below the age at which children learn to speak.

The father of psychoanalysis, Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) began the study of the unconscious as the underlying force that drives all human actions and emotions. His five stages focus on the psychosexuality of every person from infancy through adulthood (Felluga). In Freud's first stage of development, called the oral phase, infants 0-2 years of age are satisfied by oral pleasures (i.e. a bottle, food, or their mother's nipple) and harness affection for and dependence on their mother. In the sadistic anal phase (2-4 years), toddlers discover the joy of defecation and in creating and controlling (hence, "sadistic") something on their own (Felluga). As children begin to enter the school system, the phallic phase (4-7 years) begins and the genitalia become the object of desire. In the penultimate stage of psychosexuality, the latency stage (7-12 years), the child gains the ability to sacrifice his or her egoism—the inability to empathize—and is finally able to love. In the genital stage (13 years+), from puberty onward, children desire sexual intimacy of a non-incestuous manner and discover the ability and aspiration to procreate (Felluga).

Swiss psychologist Jean Piaget's (1896-1980) stages of cognitive development are broken up into sub-stages, making them somewhat more complex than Freud's. For simplicity, these sub-stages will be combined. During the sensorimotor period (0-2 years), children start as reflexive beings that over time begin to discover the ability to move and think at will. During the preoperational period (2-7 years), children begin to recognize and create symbols as their imagination grows. Over the next four years, children go through what Piaget calls a concrete operational period

(7-11 years). During these formative years, children gain logical reasoning skills that allow them to solve complex problems and think about multiple things at once. Finally, the cognitive structures reach maturity in Piaget's period of formal operations (11-15 years). After this time, children can theoretically solve most complex problems put before them (Wadsworth 65-109). As stated earlier, Piaget's theories can sometimes be difficult to delegate to the characters in the Winnie the Pooh books, due to their universal ability to speak even if they represent a stage of children who normally cannot.

Unlike Freud and Piaget before him, American Lawrence Kohlberg (1927-1987) discussed the moral (as opposed to sexual or cognitive) stages of adolescent development. He, too, broke his stages into subgroups (though much fewer), but shied away from giving his stages approximations of age. In Kohlberg's first stage, pre-conventional Stage 1, an infant determines if an action is right or wrong by the punishment that follows. In Stage 2, right action is anything that satisfies the needs of the doer and, occasionally, those of one other person (Duska 45). About his conventional Stage 3, Kohlberg said, "Maintaining the expectations of the individual's family, group, or nation is perceived as valuable in its own right, regardless of immediate and obvious consequences" (Duska 46). In Stage 4, children learn to maintain the law and social order put in place by the culture around them. Children in Kohlberg's post-conventional Stage 5 rely on their personal opinions to rule what is right and wrong. Finally, children in Stage 6 learn to follow an internal code of morals and ethics and disregard the reaction of their peers altogether (Duska 47).

Erik Erikson (1902-1994), the most contemporary and one of the most import-

ant developmental psychologists of the 20th century, was most well-known for his eight stages of psychosocial development. Erikson's stages, unlike those of some of his peers, are spaced over the entire lifespan and focus on the primary obstacles that children must overcome. About his first stage, basic trust versus basic mistrust (0-18 months), Erikson wrote, "the amount of trust derived from earliest infantile experience does not seem to depend on absolute quantities of food or demonstrations of love, but rather on the quality of the maternal relationship" (Atalay). In the stage of autonomy versus shame and doubt (18 months to 3 years), children begin to gain control of their anal zones (hinting back to Freud) which can lead to experiences of indignity if improperly handled. In the next three years, children battle initiative versus guilt (3-6 years) that may lead them to feel ashamed, especially due to the incestuous urges every child feels (again echoing Freud). In the stage of industry versus inferiority (6-12 years), children begin to rely more heavily on their teachers and mentors. According to Erikson, this is "socially a most decisive stage" where a lack of a good mentor may lead to actions such as daydreaming and thumb sucking (Atalay.) The fifth stage, identity versus identity confusion (12-18 years) is when Erikson believes children begin to find their identity. Mehmet Atalay defines a child's identity, at least in Erikson's sense, as a balance between "what he/she thinks he/she is and what others think he/she is" (Atalay). Erikson's first stage of adulthood, intimacy versus isolation (19-40 years), pins the hope for true love and intimacy against the improbability of finding it in any short matter of time. As adults enter middle-age, they begin to tackle generativity (a word Erikson describes as the desire

to provide for the next generation) versus stagnation (40-65 years). For women, this often includes children and grandchildren, and the desire (or lack thereof) to care for their futures. In Erikson's final stage, integrity versus despair (65 years to death), "the individual, hoping to have a sense of ego integrity and avoiding despair, is in fact faced with two probable features of old age: a peaceful, wise, and meaningful sense of saturation over the life span experienced; or a resentful, regretful, and depressing sense of emptiness toward the past experienced" (Atalay).

When applied to the characters in the novels, Winnie-the-Pooh and The House on Pooh Corner, and briefly to three film adaptations—2000's *The Tigger Movie*, 2003's *Piglet's Big Movie*, and 2011's *Winnie-the-Pooh*—these stages begin to shed light on more complex character personalities than what are explicitly revealed. Whichever way the character is portrayed, the complexities in their character allow them to categorically represent one of many developmental stages of adolescence. Knowing which stage each character might represent can help audiences relate these famous characters to our siblings, children, grandchildren, or ourselves.

Rabbit

Rabbit, the cleverly named hare and resident of The Hundred Acre Wood, is one of the most respected characters, but often lets his temper get in the way of successful communication. With his often "jumpy" and erratic behavior, Rabbit possesses many of the traits deemed by Freud to characterize the anal stage. According to Solomon, Eckstein, and Mullener, "If the parent is harsh and punishes the child for accidents, Freud believed it would result in an anal-retentive personality style that is characterized by rigidity, strict adherence

to rules, need for structure and order, and obsessive traits” (Solomon). These traits are shown in Rabbit’s defiance toward change, his attention to detail, and his logical understanding of right and wrong. In the time period covered by the books and films, three guests move into The Hundred Acre Wood: Kanga, Roo, and Tigger. At first, Rabbit opposes all three vehemently. In *The House on Pooh Corner*, in the chapter titled “Kanga and Baby Roo Come to the Forest,” Rabbit wastes no time in letting his feelings be known. “‘Here—we—are,’ said Rabbit very slowly, ‘all—of—us, and then, suddenly, we wake up one morning and, what do we find? We find a Strange Animal [Milne often capitalized unnecessary words for effect] among us. An animal of whom we have never even heard before!’” (92). His contempt for Tigger may be even harsher, given his attempt to “unbounce” him in order to teach him a lesson. “There’s too much of him,” Rabbit says as he thinks of a plan to lose him in the woods (House 109). His attention to detail is shown throughout the novels and films. For example, when each resident signs a “rissolution” for the soon-departing Christopher Robin, Rabbit can be seen in illustrations by Ernest H. Shepard signing his perfectly scripted, correctly spelled signature on Eeyore’s back (House 167). It is important to note that for Freud, traits of the oral stage can be seen throughout adulthood. For example, Rabbit’s concern for time aligns much more closely with an adult. Paul Mussen writes, “Although time concepts are of great importance to adults, they mean little to young children” (40). Characters like Pooh (who can be easily convinced it is 11 o’clock, lunch time) have little concern for time, but any character can represent any age, in theory.

In Kohlberg’s view, Rabbit easily

represents Stage 2 in the pre-conventional stage of development, where the child works only to benefit himself or perhaps one other character. In the case of Tigger’s “unbouncing,” for instance, Rabbit tries to make the desired outcome sound beneficial to everyone, but it is likely the case that he only has only his own interests in mind. In order to convince Piglet and Pooh to help him with his plan, he assures Pooh that Owl thought it to be an effective plan, and tells Piglet that it would be a plan that Christopher Robin (who he looks up to very dearly) would have done himself if only he had had the time (House 113).

Erikson’s stages lasted throughout the lifetime, with the last stage covering those aged 65 and older. Therefore, some of Milne’s characters (while they may seem younger to some audiences) can represent those in or past middle age. Rabbit, for example, possesses traits of Erikson’s term “generativity,” found mostly in those aged 40–65. While this often refers to caring for children, or those of the next generation, Erikson states, “There are people who, through misfortune or because of special and genuine gifts in other directions, do not apply this drive to offspring but to other forms of altruistic concern and of creativity, which may absorb their kind of parental responsibility” (Atalay). While Rabbit is known to have many “friends-and-relations” of all shapes and sizes, it is never implied that he has children, nieces/nephews, or grandchildren to look after (Winnie 33). However, Rabbit cares for his burrow home as many would care for a child. When Pooh finds himself stuck in Rabbit’s front door, Rabbit worries about how long he will be without just one of his multiple doors (Winnie 28). In the meantime, he uses Pooh’s legs for hanging towels, and is shown cleaning around his rear (Winnie 31). In the

films, Rabbit's garden plays a similar role, and he is shown tending to it meticulously and regularly. Rabbit, in terms of the stages he represents, should likely be seen by children as one of the older characters. His anal personality sometimes seems immature and unreliable, but at times he shows genuine care for his close group of friends.

Owl

Arguably the wisest and most respected resident of The Hundred Acre Wood, Owl can be seen to represent a variety of stages. For guidance and answers, many of the characters look up to Owl (and not just because he's the lone flying character). As Pooh puts it, "...if anyone knows anything about anything...it's Owl who knows something about something" (Winnie 48). Owl sometimes says things "wisely," "frankly," and "thoughtfully" (House 81), but would be particularly hard to categorize in Piaget's stages of cognitive development, due to his habit of lying about his intelligence—as Piglet puts it, "Owl hasn't exactly got a Brain, but he Knows Things" (Winnie 131). When Rabbit brings Owl a notice from Christopher Robin in order to have it read, Owl avoids translating it directly until Rabbit reads aloud what he believes it says (House 79). Owl does not show the imagination displayed by children in the preoperational period, but he also does not show the reading and writing skills that are most often learned by the end of the preoperational stage (Wadsworth 77, Singer 133). Owl's cognitive development, therefore, can be hard to translate into just one of Piaget's theories, but other theories may provide an easier placement.

In Erikson's model, Owl would find a spot alongside Rabbit in one of the upper age brackets. A frequent story teller who reflects on his fond memories a great deal, Owl represents a successful life span,

one remembered with integrity, in Stage 8 (65 years to death). Owl's stories abound in both the novels and films, and they are more than often said with a smile. Whether it's an unfinished story about his Uncle Robert (House 135) or a story about an aunt who accidentally laid a seagull's egg (Winnie 145), Owl's stories often lead his company to stop listening or fall asleep. However, he takes comfort in recalling these many stories from a life he seems very proud of, an almost perfect fit for the integrity found in Erikson's final stage.

In Kohlberg's eyes, however, Owl may not be as mature as he seems. While he knows his faults, Owl is sometimes portrayed as an arrogant, self-interested character. Trying to understand a question being asked of him by Rabbit, Owl wonders "whether to push him off the tree; but, feeling that he could always do it afterwards, he tried once more to find out what they were talking about" (House 80). In Winnie-the-Pooh, Owl evades danger by saying he is "far too important," and subsequently offers Kanga as a sacrifice for whatever dangerous task is at hand (Winnie-the-Pooh). For this reason, Owl represents Kohlberg's second stage, in which a person only takes into account his or her own needs or perhaps that of another (Duska). On the other hand, in the great flood, Owl (as the only flying character in the Wood) gives Piglet company after discovering he is trapped in his tree home. While it could just be seen as a selfless excuse to tell another story, this could be seen as a selfless act with good intentions. While he may at times show concern for his friends, Owl normally tends to remain cooped up in his coop, and generally comes out only when it is in his best interest to do so.

Incorporating some of the same ideas as Kohlberg's primary stage, Freud's

phallic character is described as “reckless, resolute, self-assured, and narcissistic—excessively vain and proud. The failure to resolve the conflict [within the time constraints of the phallic stage, 4-7 years] can also cause a person to be afraid or incapable of close love” (Stevenson). Owl shows this in excess when thinking of pushing Rabbit off the branch, described earlier. In the scene in which Owl must write “Happy Birthday” on an empty pot of honey as a gift for Eeyore, the vanity described by Stevenson is apparent. Owl says things “carelessly,” and at one point snatches the pot from Pooh’s paw in order to judge it. “Somebody has been keeping honey in it,” he says (Winnie 81). When naming his new home “The Wolery” (a misspelling of Owlery), Owl says two statements “importantly” and “crossly” in a matter of moments (House 157). Milne hints at Owl’s carelessness and pride even in the adverbs he uses to describe the character’s emotions when speaking and socializing with other characters. While he may be wise and thoughtful (or he may not be), Owl is shown to be vain, careless, and insulting, landing him in Freud’s phallic stage.

Piglet

Winnie the Pooh’s best friend, Piglet (a small, pink, aptly-named baby swine) displays a level of dependency unseen in the other primary characters. After getting lost with Rabbit and Pooh on an especially blustery day, Piglet calls out to Pooh, takes his paw, and explains “I just wanted to make sure of you” (House 120). This level of dependence shows that Piglet represents Freud’s oral stage, where children are almost always solely dependent on their mothers for food and health needs (Felluga). Without real maternal influence, Piglet must depend on his friends to get by. Piglet could be said to have an oral fixation,

which could result in nail biting or thumb sucking—neither of which we see in either the novels or film adaptations, but both of which we could easily expect to see (his extreme anxiety often leads to stuttering). In Winnie-the-Pooh, Piglet feels left out when the rest of the group falls helplessly and accidentally into a pit dug in order to catch the fierce (and, ultimately, imaginary) Backson. “We are stuck down here, and the Backson is still up there,” Rabbit exclaims to the group, while Piglet listens up above. “Oh d-d-dear, w-w-wait for me,” Piglet stutters fearfully as he begins to lower himself into the pit (Winnie the Pooh). Piglet’s lack of independence shows that he is representative of Freud’s most infantile phase.

In the same ways, Piglet represents Erikson’s first stage, where a lack of maternal relationship can lead to a general sense of mistrust and fear (Atalay). When Owl’s house is blown over by a gust of wind, Piglet is the only one small enough to get out and find help for Owl and Pooh. But when Pooh asks Owl if he could hold Piglet on his back to fly him to the letterbox in the ceiling, Piglet quickly replies first: “No...He couldn’t” (House 141). Thankfully for the panicked Piglet, he was right. When Piglet hears what he thinks is the Heffalump, his fear again almost gets the best of him—and when he hears that Kanga is one of the “Fiercer Animals,” he begins to reconsider meeting her at all (Winnie 68, 94). This stage also “depends on feeling hope for the future” which Piglet has been shown not to have, especially when confronted with the possibility of danger (Santrock 50). This general mistrust that overcomes Piglet likely shows that his placement in Erikson’s Stage 1 is fitting.

Unlike Owl and Rabbit before him, Piglet exhibits Kohlberg’s third stage of moral development. For Eeyore’s birthday,

Piglet sacrifices a red balloon (Winnie 79), and without reason offers to him a bouquet of violets (House 86). When he discovers that he will be “Useful” in the plan to capture baby Roo, he gets visibly eager. “Piglet was so excited at the idea of being Useful that he forgot to be frightened any more” (Winnie 94). Piglet wanted his chance to do something worthwhile for the good of the group, and Rabbit said this plan was just that time. Piglet, in the stages mentioned, is likely representative of a child under the age of 2. This can help parents understand which character their child can relate to in terms of adolescent development, and also gives the character implicit depth by adding to their list of moral and social characteristics.

Eeyore

Eeyore, the depressed and lonesome donkey, often finds shame a part of his everyday life. Erik Erikson would have likely had an easy time placing Eeyore in his Stage 2, which is described as a stage where the ratio of “love and hate...cooperation and willingness” find the desired balance (Erikson Childhood 254). In an attempt to gain control of the anal zone, Erikson said the child will go through “meaningless and arbitrary experiences of shame and early doubt” (Atalay). If this stage is not conquered effectively, the child may grow up with these senses of shame and doubt. Seeing Eeyore floating in the river, Piglet devises a plan to drop a rock beside him in hopes that Eeyore could ride a ripple to shore. Eeyore responds from the water with doubt, thinking instead of the possibilities of getting hit—unfortunately, he predicts his eventual fate (House 99). Eeyore’s shame is shown in his conversation with Christopher Robin upon discovering his house has gone missing. “After all, we can’t all have houses,” he says with his custom-

ary melancholia (House 12). Looking at his reflection in a stream on his birthday, Eeyore again shows this indignity. “Pathetic,” he said. “That’s what it is. Pathetic.”

He turned and walked slowly down the stream for twenty yards, splashed across it, and walked slowly back to the other side. Then he looked at himself in the water again.

“As I thought,” he said. “No better from this side. But nobody minds. Nobody cares. Pathetic, that’s what it is.” (Winnie 72) This and other shameful, humble moments like it from Eeyore show his deep-rooted doubts—he does, after all, live in “Eeyore’s Gloomy Place” that is described as “Rather boggy and sad” by Ernest Shepard’s illustrations (Winnie).

Like Piglet, Eeyore well represents Freud’s oral stage for a variety of reasons. “The oral character who is frustrated at this stage, whose mother refused to nurse him on demand or who truncated nursing sessions early, is characterized by pessimism, envy, suspicion and sarcasm” (Stevenson). Upon being told of his invitation to Christopher Robin’s party, Eeyore insists Owl could not be telling the truth. “All of them, except Eeyore?” he asked after insistence from Owl that everyone had been invited (Winnie 152). The statement shows envy and suspicion, but nearly every scene featuring Eeyore shows his trademark pessimism. During their “expedition” to the North Pole, Christopher Robin urged all of his followers to eat their provisions. Everyone had something: “All except me...As usual,” Eeyore said gloomily (Winnie 121). Eeyore’s pessimism is far too commonplace to cite every instance, but it also seems fitting for his introverted personality. Robert Singer explains, “The introverted child is quiet and reserved...[and] tends to be

pessimistic, reliable, and easily socialized” (Singer 170). While the last adjective would hardly be used to describe Eeyore, his reliability is to be discussed in the next section.

While Eeyore remains consistently miserable, his morals rarely seem to lack. On their “expotition,” the group tries to save Roo after he falls into the river. Eeyore quickly (or as quickly as Eeyore ever moves) turns around and hangs his tail into the river for Roo to grab on to. Without Eeyore seeing, Roo passes his tail and continues downstream. When the group returns (with Roo) to find Eeyore with his tail still in the river, he says, “As I expected...Lost all feeling. Numbed it. That’s what it’s done. Numbed it” (Winnie 127). According to Ronald Duska, children in Kohlberg’s Stage 3 have the mindset that “No pain [is] too great, no sacrifice too large to perform for the sake of the group” (62). Clearly, Eeyore showed great sacrifice and pain sticking his tail into the chilly water (even if his tail is only made of cloth and attached to the body only by a nail). However, in one instance, Eeyore shows a much more juvenile sense of morals when having a conversation with Piglet. Asserting Piglet’s inferiority and not allowing him to play with the sticks lying in front of him that formed the letter ‘A,’ Eeyore shows very little compassion. After Piglet shows his unawareness of the letter, Eeyore irritably replies, “It means Learning, it means Education, it means all the things that you and Pooh haven’t got. That’s what A means” (House 88). Eeyore’s response is not altogether uncommon for a character of his social standing, however. In *The Moral Child*, William Damon states, “Children’s sharing, as we have seen, arises as a natural response to common social experiences. The social experiences can be found anywhere that children have friends and play-

things” (49)—neither of which Eeyore has much experience with. Eeyore’s place in adolescent development seems to most closely represent a child around the age of 2, due to his constant shame and pessimism.

Tigger

The wonderful thing about Tiggers is Tigger is the only one. With such confidence in his originality, is Tigger really that much different than the other characters examined thus far? In short, somewhat. Tigger represents the confused identity of children in Erikson’s fifth stage, a stage in which no other character has yet to fall. His lack of identity, or at least confusion of it, is shown throughout *The House on Pooh Corner*, the first novel in which Tigger appears. When taking a walk with Roo, an endeared friend and younger brother-figure, Tigger explains what Tiggers can do. “Yes...they’re very good flyers, Tiggers are,” he says (House 62). When asked if Tiggers can swim, Tigger replies “Of course they can. Tiggers can do anything” (House 63). But soon, after insisting that “Climbing trees is what they do best,” Tigger and Roo find themselves helplessly stuck on a branch atop a large tree, unable to get down (House 63). These statements show Tigger’s naivety of his own abilities, and also his desire to please. Regardless, Tigger’s identity is constantly in question. When he first meets Pooh, the pair tries to find Tigger breakfast. After promising that Tiggers love honey, haycorns (what Piglet and Pooh call acorns), and thistles, Tigger tries each one to find that none of them appealed to him (House 23-33). Throughout the novel and the films, Tigger’s confidence fools the audience into thinking he knows perfectly his identity. Upon further examining, this is shown to be far from true. We do see, at some points, an identity epiphany from Tigger. After discovering distaste for the

foods, Tigger tries Roo's malt extract to find "So that's what Tiggers like!" (House 37). And at the end of his tree-climbing dilemma, Tigger admits that Tiggers cannot, in fact, climb trees very well (House 65). Little by little, Tigger's identity begins to unveil itself, but by the end of the novel Tigger is still mostly confused.

Unlike Eeyore's "frustrated" oral character, Tigger displays Freud's "overindulged" oral character. Described as "optimistic, gullible," and "full of admiration for others," this character is one whose nursing and/or feeding needs were always satisfied by his/her mother – though we never actually see either of Tigger's parents (Stevenson). In *The House on Pooh Corner*, Tigger is always full of admiration and the yearning to be around friends, but sometimes to a fault—harkening back to Rabbit's "There's too much of him...that's what it comes to" (House 111). Tigger's optimism is shown in his particular confusion of identity. Instead of downplaying what Tiggers could do, Tigger confidently states that Tiggers can do anything, and that they like to eat everything. This is proven to be untrue, but Tigger's contagious positivity shows his affirmative nature. During his first encounter with a looking-glass, Tigger proclaims "I found somebody like me. I thought I was the only one of them" (House 23). This moment of gullibility may be due to Tigger's infantile cognitive skills, but it is followed shortly thereafter by another moment of innocence. "Excuse me a moment, but there's something climbing up your table," Tigger tells Pooh as he pounces on a table cloth as if it were prey. "That's my table cloth," Pooh responds as he lifts the cloth from Tigger (House 24). This gullible nature may add to the humor of the novel, but it also shows the complex character behind the one and only Tigger.

Winnie the Pooh

Everyone's favorite "tubby little cubby all stuffed with fluff" (from Robert B. Sherman's classic theme song), Winnie the Pooh rounds out our list. As a bear with very little brain—or no brain, depending on whom you believe—Pooh is a very interesting case to look at cognitively. On the one hand, Pooh shows definite signs of Piaget's concrete operational stage. For example, before the age of 10, most children play games by themselves. When they do play together, the games often have different rules—a sense of competition has yet to take form (Ginsburg 101). Poohsticks, a game created by Pooh and played by much of the gang, breaks this trend. The game, while rather elementary, consists of throwing easily identifiable sticks off a bridge into the river on one side and crossing over to see which stick comes across to the other side first (House 95). Soon, Piglet, Rabbit, Roo, Christopher Robin, Eeyore, and Tigger all join in, using the same rules and light competition while playing the game (House 95). According to Barry Wadsworth, "The preoperational child does not reflect on his own thoughts. As a result, he is never motivated to question his own thinking, even when he is confronted with evidence that is contradictory to his thoughts" (77). After his failed attempt to collect honey from a buzzing hive of bees, Pooh does in fact admit his mistake by saying "These are the wrong sort of bees" (Winnie 18). His previous experiences tell him that these bees will make and dispense honey, but Pooh is able to collect his thoughts, change his mind, and abort his mission, showing the ability to question his prior thoughts about the situation.

On the other hand, Pooh uses infantile reasoning skills more indicative of a child in Piaget's preoperational stage.

Pooh uses his memory of past experiences to assume things in the present, a tool many children aged 2-4 are quite used to (Ginsburg 83). When Pooh hears a buzzing sound overhead, his brain runs through the only possible cause: “If there’s a buzzing-noise, somebody’s making a buzzing-noise, and the only reason for making a buzzing-noise that I know of is because you’re a bee” (Winnie 6). This is shown commonly throughout the novels, including the time when Eeyore misplaced his tail. “You must have left it somewhere,” Pooh assumes, likely because of his experiences with his own weak memory. Eeyore, on the other hand, uses his past experiences (and pessimism) to assume it was taken (Winnie 47). Pooh, the primary character and namesake of the original novel, is the most well-rounded and complex character, and this cognitive confusion helps to illustrate that.

Morally, Pooh seems to fall right alongside most of his friends in representing Kohlberg’s third stage. With a general concern for each and every member of The Hundred Acre Wood, Pooh shows that everyone should be treated with general kindness—even if sometimes you forget to. As Eeyore’s tail bobs uselessly in the water and Roo finds himself floating further downstream, Pooh devises a plan of his own. Down the river, Pooh holds a long pole across the length of the water, eventually saving Roo from not-so-imminent danger (Winnie 125). When Eeyore’s birthday comes around, Pooh needs a reminder—but immediately insists on procuring a gift as soon as possible (Winnie 77). And though some in the Wood dislike Tigger’s bouncy nature, and some see it a small threat, Pooh welcomes him immediately into his home and makes sure that he finds a desirable food for breakfast (House 26). Like many

of his friends, Pooh shows care and concern for all members of The Hundred Acre Wood, despite their size, gloominess, or jumpiness.

For Erikson’s stages of psychosocial development, Pooh’s placement ultimately boils down to one feature – poo. According to Erikson himself, the retention of feces as an infant can lead to controlling tendencies as an adult, but the child who freely releases it may grow up with the ability to “let go,” both physically and emotionally (Erikson Identity 72). Pooh shows his carelessness at times throughout the novel. When Pooh discovers that the bees will make the wrong kind of honey, he immediately lets go. Not of the balloon, but of the wish to find a “little something” (Winnie 80). When bringing Eeyore’s birthday present—a jar of honey—to him, he tires and wishes for something to eat. Without realizing it, he then goes on to eat Eeyore’s present. Once he realizes his mistake, he quickly imagines a new use for the now-empty pot, and quickly “lets go” of any embarrassment or guilt that might commonly come from such a mistake (Winnie 80). Throughout the stories, Pooh is shown to be able to free himself of feelings of embarrassment or guilt, and is able to let go of grudges that other characters may cling to.

Reading the novels or seeing the films, one might notice an obsession (one might call it a fixation) Pooh has with “hunny.” To Freud, this may indicate an over-indulged oral character, which can possess traits such as “chain smoking, overeating, or excessive talking” (Solomon). When Pooh discovers he may be stuck in Rabbit’s front door (which he was too plump to exit), his first question was “What about meals?” (Winnie 30). In another instance, deciding who to visit amongst his peers, Pooh considers Rabbit highly respectable

because he uses dignified phrases like “What about lunch” and “Help yourself, Pooh,” instead of using long, difficult words like Owl (House 58). Then, upon seeing Tigger and Roo stuck atop a tall tree, the useless Pooh decides to help himself to the pair’s sandwiches, which they left conveniently on the ground near the tree’s trunk (House 68). Before correcting himself, Pooh initially greets Owl with “I hope we’re not too late for—” but stops himself before continuing (House 133). Finally, when Rabbit tells Pooh “It’s your honey or your life!” Pooh does not immediately react, but slowly contemplates, paw to chin (Piglet’s Big Movie). These instances show that while Pooh is generally a kind, caring sort of bear, when his tummy rumbles there’s no stopping his insatiable cravings for food. Overall, Pooh is likely the roundest character (both in terms of personality and shape), due to the abundance of times he is featured throughout his novels and film adaptations.

Conclusion

In order to truly appreciate the characters in these classic pieces of literature and their much more recent film adaptations, it is helpful to see where they come from. With a knowledge of their adolescent (and, in particular, psychological) development, their significance as characters is greatly heightened. The audience is able, then, to relate the characters to their children, siblings, or themselves. Readers can look beyond what is written in the novels to see a character not unlike human adolescents. In this way, the novels and films can be much more meaningful to the audience, since the ability to relate to popular characters is regarded so highly amongst fans of literature and other media. With this knowledge, a fan can come away with a truer connection to the characters in A.A.

Milne’s classic works, allowing them to join in the adventures of Winnie the Pooh.

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Sula: A Connection to Lesbiansim and Gender Studies

By: Clayton Burke

Tony Morrison's novel, *Sula*, is placed in a town called "The Bottom". The townsfolk of "The Bottom" are all represented differently, specifically, when the male and female genders clash. *Sula* is able to be opened up to an adaptation of lesbian criticism, meaning, the women are able to be engaged in a lesbian relationship that is not erotic or physical. Nel and Sula, the two main protagonists, are involved in a non-physical or erotic relationship, while they grow by going through major differences throughout the story, just as a heterosexual couple would endure. Nel and Sula are able to form an intense bond in the story as they meet the challenges that await them. Also, Ajax and Jude Greene, men who are involved with Nel and Sula, are vital to these women's development throughout *Sula*. Their masculinity comes into question throughout the novel because of the actions that take place in regards to their family and relationships with others. Masculinity can be loosely defined as a set of rules that a culture sets for what it is to be a male. Nel and Sula are able to form a bond deep enough to be classified as a non-sexual lesbian relationship and Ajax and Jude Greene allow for the progression of this relationship, while the two men try to find what completes them as a person to make them whole.

The relationship between Nel and Sula begins when they are children. The two endure hardships when they are both young and when they get older. Sula and Nel are involved in a lesbian relationship, but not a typical lesbian relationship; one without any erotic feelings toward one another. To further the point of view of being a lesbian without the eroticism of

a relationship, Tommasina Gabriele, an Italian writer who explains lesbian criticism in great detail, says, "Certainly one of the interpretations that have emerged from Adrienne Rich's seminal 1980 article 'Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence,' is that lesbianism can be used as a...metaphor for female bonding; for forms of sisterhood..." (260). This quote is the basis for the bonds between Nel and Sula because they form such a tight bond throughout the novel. Lesbian criticism started in the 1980s when feminist and gay movements expanded the knowledge of literary criticism and it opened up a gap to critics that needed to be filled (Gabriele 254). Lesbian criticism is considered a criticism that is connected to gender studies.

Expanding on lesbian criticism and the point that Gabriele made in the previous paragraph, lesbians are looking to fill the "missing" part of their life. Lesbians are looking for an identity that they can relate to and another woman helps fill that role in their life. To clarify, Gabriele writes, "One woman calls to lesbians 'to identify our specific needs' in order to begin 'a search for our collective identity' and the only way to resist [is] being 'invisible' by patriarchy" (256). What Gabriele means when she says "invisible" is heterosexuals often have a hard time trying to see lesbians and their purpose in life. Heterosexuals automatically judge lesbians because they have an erotic relationship, when in reality, they can be good friends that act as a support role in the other's life. Gabriele expands on this point by writing, "When it comes to lesbians...many people have trouble seeing what's in front of them. Why is it so difficult to see the lesbian...even when

she is there quite plainly in from of us?” (257). Gabriele gives an insight into the eyes of a lesbian, specifically in Sula and Nel’s case. Gabriele is arguing in favor of a lesbian relationship without the eroticism because there are so many preconceived notions on lesbians; the general public is unable to shift their views regarding what makes a lesbian, a lesbian. Also, the general public is hooked on the idea that lesbians must be engaged in some sort of physical and erotic relationship, when in reality, they can simply be looking for someone to fill in a missing hole in their life. Gabriele adds to this point by writing, “The price of such inclusion here is that this bond of sisterhood makes it possible for women to identify as lesbians without the regards to the object of their desires, and this usage thereby strips the sexual desire from the connotation if the lesbian in feminist studies” (260). What Gabriele is trying to say is lesbians are able to forego a physical relationship and to proceed with an emotional relationship with another woman. “Without the regards to the object of their desires” says that lesbians can come together, as a collective, and have a sisterhood, which may consist of support for one another, as well as acting as a sister would toward one another.

The lesbian, as previously noted, is able to control their individual selves through their sexual desires, unlike males because they are able to be an individual. Gabriele adds to the previous statement, “The seduction of the homosexual-maternal metaphor derives from the erotic charge of a desire for women which, unlike the masculine desire, affirms and enhances the female-sexed subject and represents her possibility of access to a sexuality autonomous from the male” (264). Gabriele agrees that a female is able to be herself through

her sexual desires unlike males, who need some sort of backbone or a crutch. But according to the public opinion, based on the quote from Gabriele, males are able to be independent in their sexuality and females need someone to complete their individual selves. Lesbianism enters the argument here because females search for that other half, through their experiences in life, and realize they are able to maintain a non-erotic relationship with someone with similar ideals. Gabriele concludes the argument by stating, “De Lauretis, [a lesbian and gender critic], underlines this comment by Lina Burgh, ‘It is by now a commonplace among us that sexuality is the heart of lesbian identity; that the lesbian is by [excellence] the lover...that lesbian identity depends very much the crossing of the lover’s body and thus on the recognition, which follows from this of a change in perception with regard to the heterosexual schema’ (Notes: 4). Gabriele acknowledges this comment made by De Lauretis because they both want to connect to the general public about their connotations about what a lesbian relationship entails. If the general public is able to look past the sexuality of a lesbian relationship, they will be able to see that lesbians (speaking non-sexually) are able to have a lesbian relationship, just as Sula and Nel have in the novel *Sula*. To follow up with Sula and Nel’s relationship, Toni Morrison, the author of *Sula*, writes: “Their friendship was as intense as it was sudden. They found relief in each other’s personality. Although both were unshaped, formless things, Nel seemed stronger and more consistent than Sula, who could hardly be counted on to sustain any emotion for more than three minutes. Yet there was one time when that was not true when she held on to a mood for weeks, but even that was in defense for Nel,”(53).

The description fits into the argument because Morrison makes it a point to describe how intense and passionate the two girls were towards each other. This passage from Morrison is a description of a friendship, but one can look further into the description of the two girls. Morrison uses the word “intense” to describe their relationship. The intensity of their relationship warrants discussion of them engaging in a lesbian, nonsexual, relationship. To expand on this thought further, Claude Pruitt, a writer on *Sula*, adds, “The girls form an intense relationship in response to the pressures exerted by them by community and family” (118). What Pruitt is trying to get across is he wants it to be known that Sula and Nel become friends and get along well because their community and families are going up against them. Nel and Sula form this lesbian bond in order to combat these groups of people and to lean on one another when something goes wrong. In the journal of women’s history, the authors, who remain unknown, state, “[Lesbians] have undertaken it even though few women have been in...position to resist marriage” (95). This is appropriate because the reader will see later in the novel that both of the women resist their urges to marry and one girl finds the trouble in marriage. The two girls are forming a collective whole, or a single entity, by entering a lesbian relationship, even if they didn’t know it throughout the story that it was, in fact, a lesbian relationship. As Gabriele wrote previously, Sula and Nel are searching for their collective identity through each other.

Sula and Nel go through numerous experiences that define their relationship, both as a friendship and as a lesbian relationship. The first experience is when Sula and Nel were interacting with four Irish boys that would harass black students after

school (53). This experience is their first encounter with adversity and it also sets the tone for their friendship and lesbian relationship as the novel continues. One day, when Sula and Nel were walking down the road, trying to avoid the four boys, they came upon the boys standing there looking to harass them. Nel was scared because she had no idea what she was going to do, but Sula had other plans. As Morrison writes: “Holding the knife in her right hand, she pulled the slate towards her and pressed her left forefinger down hard on its edge. Her aim was determined but inaccurate. She slashed off only the tip of her finger. The four boys stared open-mouthed at the wound and the scrap of flesh, like button mushroom, curling in the cherry blood that ran into the corners of the slate,” (54). After the slashing of the tip of her finger, the relationship between Nel and Sula changed. Nel knew that Sula was real; she wasn’t afraid to be who she was. Maggie Galehouse, a writer on *Sula*, says, “[Sula] cuts off her fingertip in front of a group of boys who are terrorizing Nel to show them that if she could do such a thing to herself, she could easily do something equally terrifying to them” (342). Sula is showing Nel that she is able to stand up for herself and Nel if she ever needs it. Sula is giving Nel the courage and trust to continue their relationship as they grow older. The reader will find that this isn’t true in the middle of the story, but at the end, the reader will be able to see the true purpose behind Sula’s actions. The intimacy behind Sula’s action here is strong enough for Nel to be able to have comfort around her friend and partner.

Another action that strengthened Sula and Nel’s relationship as a lesbian entity was when Sula accidentally killed a boy named Chicken Little. Morrison

writes about Chicken Little's death by saying, "When he slipped from her hands and sailed away out over the water they could still hear his bubbly laughter" (61). Sula was swinging Chicken Little around because Sula and Nel saw Chicken Little as an outcast and someone who was weird. Perhaps they also thought since they were picked on at school by boys, they were allowed to pick on boys to get back at the male gender. Sula didn't mean to kill Chicken Little. All she was aiming to do was to swing him around and bully him, but instead, she took his life. But when Sula killed Chicken Little, something miraculous happened to the relationship between Sula and Nel; they ran, keeping an extreme secret between the two. Nel didn't plan on telling someone that Chicken Little had died, because she respected Sula enough not to tell on her. The intimacy of the situation can be summed up by Pruitt, stating, "Nel and Sula share an experience which closely mirrors a sexual awakening, but which ends in the accidental death of a young boy, Chicken Little" (117). The experience that Pruitt is speaking of is when Nel and Sula were laying in the grass by the river and sharing an experience that borders what a heterosexual couple would experience. There is a non-sexual awakening here between Nel and Sula when Chicken Little dies because they both trust each other enough to not tell on anyone. Their trust is deeper than the river that Chicken Little was thrown into. Nel is also displaying factors of being in a relationship when she is consoling Sula after Chicken Little's death and Nel says, "Sh, Sh. Don't, don't. You didn't mean it. It ain't your fault. Sh. Sh. Come on, le's go Sula. Come on, now" (62-63). The lesbian relationship between Sula and Nel is beginning to shows that Nel is able to be there for Sula when she needs

it the most. This also goes for Nel when she needs it the most because Sula was able to stick up for her when the boys were going to harass the young girls.

Masculinity in the novel *Sula* plays a huge role because it connects to the women of Sula and ultimately affects the future of the relationship between Nel and Sula. Masculinity is typically associated with the male gender and it is to describe the toughness of the male gender. New masculinity studies have given rise to examining and to debunk myths commonly associated with the male gender. Josep Armengol, who wrote an article entitled "Gendering Men: Re-Visions Of Violence As A Test Of Manhood In American Literature", states, "Masculinity studies thus aim to provide new perspectives on men's lives and personal dilemmas as gendered beings, transforming supposedly universal human experiences into ones that are specifically masculine" (77). Armengol is trying to say that things we have normally taken for granted as universally "human" are often really "male". Furthering this comment, some of the stereotypes associated with the male gender are discussed and some of the myths associated with the male gender are put to rest. Armengol describes this in further detail by stating, "Thus, a men's studies approach to American literature shifts the focus of criticism from the manner in which men's lives reflect abstract, universal issues to a more intimate, personal concern with how cultural values, particularly those related to the ideals of masculinity affect men's lives on a personal level" (79). Armengol is trying to say that with men's studies, the reader is able to dig deeper into what the man has to say and allow the culture to see the male point of view in the actions that the male is taking part of.

In Armengol's writings, he describes

that the reader is rarely able to see into a male's life with a positive outlook because they are often associated with violence (81). The reader, through American stories, is unable to see a male portrayed in a particular light that gives them praise and awards them with the same praise that is given to women; such is the case with *Sula*. Kahn et al., writers on masculinity, say, "Although a universal definition of masculinity does not exist, these variations in meaning are generally associated with the views a dominant social group uses to refer to the values, beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors...associated with 'maleness'" (30-31). Kahn et al. is connecting to the argument by stating that the culture defines what masculinity is and at the Bottom, where *Sula* takes place, loosely defines masculinity as someone who is to look after their significant other. There is never a strong male role in the novel, but the two characters, Ajax and Jude Greene, both share relationships with the primary women of the story, Nel and Sula.

Susan Neal Mayberry, a writer on the men of *Sula*, says, "Along with Plum and Tar Baby, [characters in *Sula*], Jude is one of the most passive male figures in *Sula*, and, true to form, he allows Sula to use him merely to fill up some space" (526-527). Jude Greene begins as Nel's wife. Morrison writes regarding Nel and Jude's marriage, "He wasn't really aiming to get married. He was twenty then, and although his job as a waiter at the Hotel Medallion was a blessing to his parents and their seven other children, it wasn't merely enough to support a wife" (80-81). Jude was simply going through the motions as a man, and as Morrison wrote, he wasn't ready to get married. Jude was looking for another half to complete himself, similar to the way Nel and Sula needed to complete each other. Nel was Jude's other half, but

only temporarily. To expand on this argument, Morrison writes, "Jude Greene, barred from the white economy, 'needs' a second childhood, and marries Nel because he 'needed some of his appetite filled [and] wanted someone to care about his hurt... And if he were to be a man, that someone could no longer be his mother" (82). Pruitt is trying to explain that Jude Greene is unable to cope with missing the mother figure in his life. Greene is looking for that mother figure, and therefore, settles for Nel in his search for someone who will take care of him. Morrison also writes, "The two of them together would make one Jude" (83). Morrison is writing this because she wants to express that Jude is unable to be himself alone; he needs someone else to complete him to make him whole.

Jude Greene is a man who is unable to become fully a man through his experiences, but could also be due to his young age. Jude is particularly emasculated when he is unable to work on the road, which is an emasculating event, and also he is able to undergo self-pity with a wife that is accommodating of these feelings (117). The road was something that Jude was looking forward to be building, but the white folks in "The Bottom" wouldn't allow an African American to work on the road. This was particularly weakening because he wanted to prove to his family and friends that he built the road, but more importantly, that he is a man. As they would drive along the road, Jude would have said, "I built that road" (82). The constant refusal of not being allowed to build the road made him pressure Nel into settling down. Jude wanted to take on a masculine role and he was tired of being powerless by the builders of the road (82). To support this, Mayberry adds, "When his hurt at having his labor rejected in favor of 'thin-armed white boys'

turns into shame and rage, he turns to marriage with a plaint and nurturing Nel as a means of proving his manhood” (526). Because of Nel’s nurturing and Jude’s emasculated spirit, Jude goes to Sula to try and fill in the void that Nel couldn’t fill for Jude. Jude has sex with Sula because she is able to get into the male mind, according to Nel, as she tells the reader about the experience between Sula and Jude (105-106). Mayberry writes about Jude being still a boy by stating, “He has not integrated the masculine and feminine parts of himself and so remains a boy” (527). He is remaining a boy because he is unable to commit to one woman and settle down with her. Jude goes to Sula, Nel’s best friend, and engages in numerous, animalistic, sexual acts. Mayberry also writes in regards to the betrayal of Nel by writing, “True to his name, twenty-year-old Jude is betrayed by his ‘craving to do the white man’s work’ and, in turn, betrays his wife and children” (526). Jude can’t face the fact that his life isn’t being fulfilled to what he wants it to be, so he looks for other sources of happiness that ends up hurting his wife and children. Jude is going against two of Mayberry’s four elements on manhood because he is not responsible and he does not have honor in what he does (527). Jude dishonors his family and he also dishonors the friendship that Nel and Sula have had over the years. Jude not being able to control himself is showing that he also doesn’t have any responsibility in his actions. Speaking from a moral point of view, Jude should have been able to resist his feelings towards Sula because of the past that Nel and Sula had. He also should have been thinking about his kids and the way they would have reacted to what Jude did to the family. Armengol reinforces this by stating, “Seldom are we provided with positive images of men who

represent alternatives to those traditional ideas” (80). Armengol is trying to say men are rarely portrayed in a positive image. This reinforces what Jude has done because he is viewed by Nel and her family as someone who has betrayed the family and Nel will never be able to forgive him.

The other male figure in *Sula*, Ajax (short for A. Jacks), is seen at the beginning of the novel as well as when Sula starts a sexual relationship with him. Unlike Jude, Ajax is already a completed person and is looking for someone to have as an extension on his personal wholesomeness. Mayberry writes to expand on the argument by stating, “Like Sula, [Ajax] is curious. And fearless, and adventuresome, and in the process of finding and knowing, he is also making himself” (527). Ajax is able to use his experiences in life to complete his whole, which Jude struggled with. The comparison can be furthered to say that Jude never actually completed his whole self because he was still a boy at heart for his actions. Ajax is unlike Jude in this aspect because he takes his experiences and learns what he has to do to improve on them to make himself a complete whole. An example of this is when Armengol writes, “Because men often associate emotions and ‘softness’ with women...if he shows compassion, he will be feminized, [and] he will not be a ‘real man’” (89). Ajax has learned that throughout his life, he has to be a prime example of a male, and if he doesn’t, women will see him as someone who is weak. This is specifically relevant when Ajax delivers Sula milk at her front step. Morrison writes, “Ajax came in and headed straight for the kitchen. Sula followed slowly. By the time she got to the door he had undone the complicated wire cap and was letting the cold milk run into his mouth” (124). Ajax is drinking the milk

because Sula said she doesn't like milk, but Ajax insists that she likes the bottles that are carrying the milk. Ajax proceeds to drink the milk in order to give the gift of the bottles to Sula (124). Ajax learned quickly that Sula would be difficult to deal with and he adapted to her personality type. Mayberry sums up the reasoning of Ajax's actions by stating, "Integrating the feminine with the masculine, able to connect yet be separate, his complex wholeness draws Sula's attraction and respect" (529).

Ajax is able to incorporate elements for the feminine into his daily life. Jude Green was unable to see beyond the male figure because he was so wrapped up in his masculinity. Jude was also trying to find himself or another person to complete himself and Jude had difficulty relating to the feminine mindset. Mayberry writes in regards to his feminine said by stating, "Anticipating his *Song of Solomon* successor Milkman, the gift also indicates Ajax's connect with the feminine" (527). *Song of Solomon* is used as a reference here because the character, "Milkman", used as a feminine figure because he was breastfed by his mother. Milk, a symbol of nourishment and femininity, is used by Ajax to encourage and persuade Sula into seeing that he has qualities of a man that not every other man, such as Jude, have. Pruitt adds to the masculinity point of view that "Economically, socially, and politically powerless, the men are grotesque embodiments of masculinity waiting to be distracted by the only group for whom they are not completely emasculated...the women of ['The Bottom']" (118). Pruitt is getting across that the men, specifically Ajax, were never emasculated by Sula because he was already his whole. Ajax also understands more about women than anyone else in the novel (528). This is expressed through his

kindness towards Sula by giving her gifts and also by Ajax's mother, who inspired the thoughtfulness in the family (528). The way Jude had treated Sula was something that Ajax would have never done. Ajax is his complete self and therefore, he treats Sula as a whole person, instead of the way Jude treats her as a link to try to find himself (528).

Ajax being a whole results in him running away from Sula without her even finding out his true name (with names being significantly important to an individual), Albert Jacks. In the culture, this is prevalent to males because they often leave without a trace in order for their spouse to take care of the household. This is what masculinity studies are trying to prove wrong because this is not true of Ajax. Ajax left Sula because "Sula has upset the balance of self and other in their relationship", as Mayberry writes (528). Because both of their characters were whole and they did not need anyone to complete their whole. Mayberry concludes this thought of Ajax by stating, "Ajax...the figure of the male motion, the travelling man seeking not to obtain the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow but simply to know what is at the end of the rainbow" (527). Ajax knows that Sula was there for him in the end, but because Ajax was already his whole, he could not follow through with being with his pot of gold, Sula.

The gender roles of the males, however, are based on the societal views, especially in *Sula*, where it is rare to find a man faithful to their significant other. Wester et al.' writers on the male gender roles, add, "One of the more prominent examples of this is a 'ritualized form of masculinity that entails behaviors, scripts, physical posturing...suppressing intense feelings of confusion and frustration that stem from

the effect of gender role...” (420). Jude, the character who battles with his masculinity, is confused throughout *Sula* about what he should do with his life; specifically because he is unable to showcase his talents of building roads. Jude never met the masculine role because he was always looking for a woman to lean on. When he was without a wife, Jude realized he was getting too old to lean on his mother, so he looked out for a wife and so he can lean on someone else. According to Katherine Blee and Ann Tickamyre, researchers on African American gender roles, they say that “Research has been found that White men are more likely than African American men to see marriage as a necessary component of an adult masculine role...” (22). While the White male perspective is irrelevant here Blee and Tickamyre still are noting that the African American role in a family isn’t that important to them.

Comparing and contrasting these gender roles in *Sula* calls into questions the actual roles of their genders. Melissa Littlefield, the author of the article “Gender Role Identity And Stress In African American Women”, states, “Gender role identity is often operationalized as the degree to which individuals possess personality traits that are stereotypically associated with being male (e.g. strong, independent, aggressive) and traits that are stereotypically associated with being female (e.g. warm nurturing expressive)” (95). These stereotypes that Littlefield writes about are all present in *Sula*. Starting with the women of the novel, Nel is specifically nurturing. As previously quoted, Morrison writes, “Deep enough to hold him, deep enough to rock him” (82). This is showing the nurturing a mothering nature that Nel exudes on the people around her and Jude takes that for granted throughout the story. Carol J.

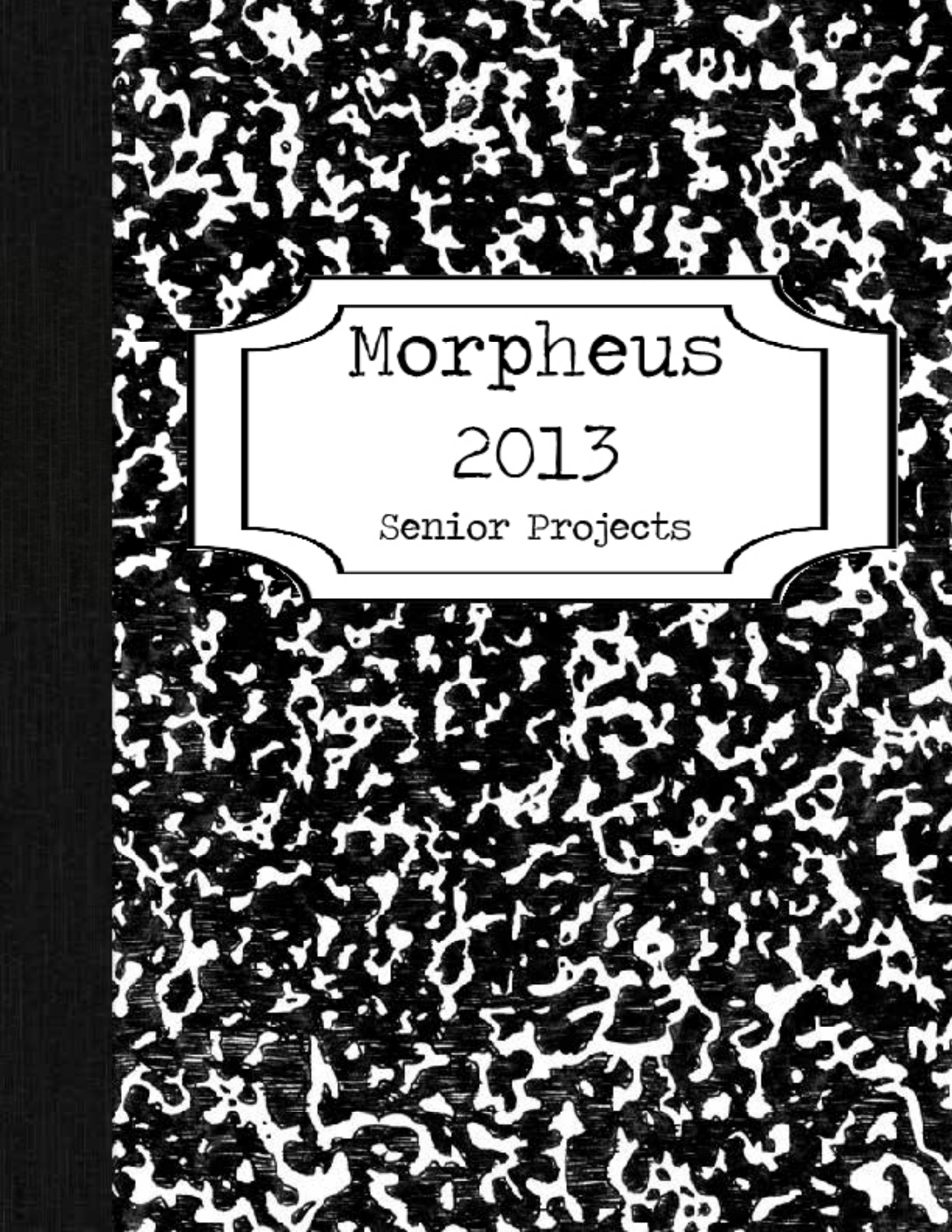
Singley and Susan Elizabeth Sweeny, authors of the book *Anxious Power: Reading, Writing, and Ambivalence in Narrative by Women*, add, “To ‘father’ a text connotes active creation, to ‘mother’ connotes merely nurturance or maintenance...” (7). What Singley and Sweeny are saying is that the mother is there to develop the families lives and to keep the household in order, similar to the way that Nel looked after her family, as well as her ex-husband, Jude. Nel was also subjugated into thinking that Jude wouldn’t cheat on her with Sula, but Jude went behind her back and did it. Singley and Sweeny also add to this argument by stating, “Wives occupy [common] roles rather than primary positions... all women who [are subordinated to give up] their own talents and aspirations to serve as men’s amanuenses...” (7). Singley and Sweeny sum this up nicely because Nel is treated as she is the person who just sits back and take notes on what Jude is doing and Jude is out in the world doing what makes him happy. Sula is the opposite of Nel because she isn’t a stereotypical woman. She isn’t nurturing because she already has made herself as a whole. As Littlefield states, “African American women’s archetypal role emphasizes strength, economic independence, self-reliance and autonomy and nurturance” (96). Littlefield now includes that some women can have strength and independence from their male counterpart, just as Sula had throughout the novel.

The male and female gender in the novel *Sula* both exhibit stereotypical roles in the society as well as non-stereotypical roles in society. Sula and Nel show the reader that they are able to have a relationship that is non-sexual. Their passion and intensity towards each other leads the reader to believe that their friendship is more than just a friendship. The way that

Nel and Sula experienced the killing of Chicken Little broadened their relationship to another level because they were able to trust one another with anything. The males of the story both show men being whole and looking for their whole. Jude still remains a boy because he will always need a woman to take care of him. Ajax, the completed whole, will be able to live a fulfilling life, but he will regret the fact that Sula's relationship with him fell apart because Sula threw off the balance of Ajax's life. *Sula* has proven that there can, in fact, be a relationship in which two beings exist as one and the relationship is non-sexual. The novel has also proven that sometimes people need someone to help them find their other half and sometimes people already have their whole and don't need anyone to help them. The gender roles between these characters in the story all tie together as one single entity that makes up the novel *Sula*.

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Morpheus

2013

Senior Projects

Table of Contents

Author Biographies.....	68
Logan Burd.....	70
Calista Hall.....	76
Samantha Gosche.....	93
Kayla Graves.....	109
Cole Randolph.....	118
Jackie Stanziano.....	130
Clayton Burke.....	142
Annette Rogers.....	156

Author Biographies

Logan Burd

Logan Burd is a senior English-Writing major and the Editor-in-Chief of this edition of The Morpheus. Logan is a member of Rho Eta Delta and also works as the Editorial Director of The Kilikilik. After graduation, Logan plans on running around frantically until he hits the crystal-clear front door of his dream job.

Calista Hall

Calista Hall is an English-Writing and Education double-major. She likes reading, writing, cats, and narwhals. She is currently a Olympic dishwasher, milk pourer, grilled cheese maker, and bedtime story reader, but after graduation she hopes to find a job teaching in her hometown and continue to read bedtime stories.

Samantha Gosche

Samantha Gosche is a senior majoring in English-Writing and minoring in Political Science. At Heidelberg she is a member of Berg Events Council, a mentor in Heidelberg Leadership Experience, and an Orientation Leader.

Kayla Graves

Kayla Graves is a double major in English (concentration in writing) and psychology. Hobbies include: people-watching, drinking coffee, showering, and walking quickly to class (or anywhere, really). She doesn't like ladybugs, but she does like the Seattle Seahawks. After graduation, she plans on going to graduate school for clinical psychology.

Cole Randolph

Cole is an AYA English Education major from Marengo, Ohio. He hopes to obtain a job as an English teacher upon graduation, while working on his masters degree in education administration. He ultimately, wants to become a high school principal.

Jackie Stanziano

Jackie Stanziano is a senior writing major from Spencer, Ohio. One day she hopes to pursue a degree in anything that doesn't include washing dishes or scrubbing toilets. She enjoys writing, white teeth, and cats. She especially enjoys cats that can write and have white teeth. She doesn't know how to formally end this mini-autobiography because she is terrible at conclusions. The end.

Clayton Burke

Clayton Burke is a senior English major with a concentration in Writing. After college, Clayton plans on pursuing a career in advertising or technical writing. Clayton is a proud member of Rho Eta Delta men's fraternity and enjoys geeking out about fashion.

Annette Rogers

Annette Roberts is a 2013 December graduate. She came back to Heidelberg to finish her degree because of her love for writing, especially for children. Her awesome son, Josh, is attending Bowling Green State University. She would like to thank Dr. Wahlstrom for her guidance and support, as well as the other English professors who have taught her so much.

THESE GUYS ARE ON FIRE

**A Friend Called Fire
proves that anyone can
live like a rock star**

By Logan Burd

Bassist Adam
Powers, drummer
JB Schiller, and
singer/guitarist Jon
Allegretto (from left)

» A FRIEND CALLED FIRE

◇ “Can you see us?” asks Jon Allegretto, singer/guitarist and charismatic leader of the Chicago-based rock trio A Friend Called Fire, via a faulty Skype connection. I can’t. Apparently, Allegretto’s webcam isn’t set up. “We can just be creepy and stare at you the whole time.”

Today, Allegretto and drummer Jonathan “JB” Schiller are showing just how Friend-ly they can be – they’re helping bassist Adam Powers move from the north end of Chicago to a cozy, empty apartment on the South side, with only Powers’ kitchen table and chairs, television and Xbox moved in so far. They sit at the table, with Allegretto’s laptop and their own whimsical quirks. Schiller, for instance, drums relentlessly on the tabletop, sounds that can be heard through the Skype connection. “I can’t stand it when drummers do that, but I always do it,” he admits when I ask about the sounds I am hearing.

Allegretto and Schiller give stellar Beavis and Butthead impressions. “Hey Butthead,” Allegretto probes in his best Beavis impression. “Shut up, I’m trying to do an interview,” Schiller retorts as Butthead. Much more frequently throughout the conversation, though, Schiller slips into a thick Cockney accent that reminds me of fictional rock star Aldous Snow (played by Russell Brand in both the 2008 comedy “Forgetting Sarah Marshall” and 2010’s “Get Him to the Greek”). “I sort of sound like Russell Brand, I guess,” Schiller says in the accent when I mention it. “It’s the go-to when I want to sound British.”

Allegretto feels the need to offer an apology: “I don’t know, we’re pretty stupid when we’re put in rooms together. Adam usually just kinda looks at us and shakes his head every once in a while, but then he’ll join us too.” There’s a short pause. “Depends on how drunk you get him,” Schiller decides to add, and he gets some laughs.

A Friend Called Fire formed in 2008 when Allegretto and Powers decided to take their musical talents from other groups and form their own rock band - we’ll get to Schiller soon. Allegretto hails from Virginia, where his former band Luther’s Fall (like Lex Luther, Allegretto tells me) found success in the Virginia Beach area. The day after Powers graduated from Heidelberg University in 2005, he moved to Virginia Beach to play bass guitar in the rock group Red Metric, who were

already friendly competitors of Allegretto’s band.

When Allegretto and Powers met at a bonfire one night, they struck up an instant friendship. Soon, Luther’s Fall disintegrated, and Allegretto moved to Chicago. Powers followed when he received a much-desired transfer from his Williamsburg, Virginia Barnes & Noble to one in Chicago. Soon after, they combined their musical efforts and found a temporary drummer, and A Friend Called Fire was formed.

That’s where Schiller comes in. He was a drummer in another Chicago rock band called Along the Parallel (which is still in existence, unlike Powers’ and Allegretto’s former bands). He also happened to be dating Powers’ sister Erin – now they’re married and living in Chicago. By happenstance, Schiller performed back-up vocals on AFCF’s debut album, “American Daydream,” and when AFCF’s drummer left in 2011, Schiller says, “it was kind of a no-brainer.” The rest, as they say, is history.

As it turns out, A Friend Called Fire’s unpredictable style of rock – softer, harder, faster, slower – stems from a variety of musical influences. From Powers’ love of Metallica and Alice in Chains to Allegretto’s 50’s and 80’s rock, Jimi Hendrix and folk rock to Schiller’s Foo Fighters, Dave Matthews Band and “old-timey Frank Sinatra,” AFCF has grown from the roots of over nine decades of American music. Allegretto describes their

“We can be, like, rocking loud and all that, but then we do a lot of stuff where we, you know, strip down to our undies”

- Jon Allegretto, singer/guitarist

quick-change style: “We can be, like, rocking loud and all that, but then we do a lot of stuff where we, you know, strip down to our undies,” he explains. “And then simplify the music, too,” Schiller jokes.

» A FRIEND CALLED FIRE

Besides the various styles of rock he's used to now, Schiller also has a lot of background in jazz music. Having come from a "very, very musical family," he says he's been interested in music since a very young age. "I didn't get into really serious singing until I was in high school, but when I was probably, like, four, I used to pull the pots and pans and always wanna drum on them with wooden spoons. And then I got my first toy drum kit when I was four or five that had Animal [the maniacal drummer of Muppet fame] on it. It's just ingrained in me," he says.

Allegretto's young start rivals that of Schiller. "I have pictures of me with a little guitar [he later clarifies that it was covered in Sesame Street characters] when I was probably about four," he recalls.

Powers was late to realize his musical potential, saying, "I would say, like, fourteen or fifteen. I played the drums in high school, and eighth grade...so whatever age you're at in eighth grade." Later, when I ask Powers' mom Pat, she contended that he was in fifth grade when he started playing drums. He only switched to bass when he and his friends wanted to start a band but none of them could play it, she told me.

When I asked Powers if his college career at Heidelberg helped him in his musical endeavors,

his response was to the point: "Nope." Powers was a student-athlete, but never during his four years, did he participate in Heidelberg's music program.

I hear drumming on the other end. I naturally assume it's Schiller, until he insists "That wasn't me drumming that time." Turns out it was Powers, likely recalling his old drumming days in high school.

Out of my own curiosities, I asked the guys where

their band's unique name came from. Years before even conceiving of leading a rock band, Allegretto was listening to the 1996 compilation album "Songs in the Key of X: Music from and Inspired by The X-Files" when he heard "Down in the Park," a Gary Numan song, being covered by the Foo Fighters. In the song, the lyric "Down in the park with a friend called 'Five'" sounded to Allegretto a bit like "a friend called fire," and he thought, "Man, that'd be a cool-ass band name."

Years later, when the rock trio was naming their new band – so often a grueling and painstaking process – Allegretto brought up the name and got unanimous support. "We were probably eating pizza or drinking and everyone was like, 'yeah,'" Allegretto tries to recall. It was decided – A Friend Called Fire it would be. For fun, Allegretto tells me he frequently makes up stories of the name's origin to throw people off. This version, he assures me, is the whole truth.

Soon, the conversation moves to the Windy City, and I see Allegretto again being wholly truthful.



Powers, Allegretto and Schiller (from left)

"It's kind of disheartening," Allegretto says before a brief hesitation. "When people read this, they might get upset, but I don't care... when you go to Wrigleyville, it's just a bunch of idiots everywhere," he reveals.

Powers and Schiller

have both lived in the heart of the Chicago Cubs' famous (and now, perhaps, infamous) stadium community, and Schiller adds his two cents. "It's like [the fans] have free reign just because there's a big, old, storied stadium in the middle of a neighborhood," he says regretfully. "Nobody pays attention, they cross the street whenever they feel like it, they act like a bunch of drunken fools," he adds. "You're just trying to live your life and it's a huge, huge inconvenience."

At this point, Schiller is curbing-stomping my

dreams of living in Wrigleyville, a community that's seemed to me the greatest real estate in the country since I first laid eyes on Wrigley Field almost a decade ago. He did have one positive nugget to note, though: "I do appreciate that the people aren't fair-weather."

The guys made it clear how they felt about Chicago baseball fans, but what about Chicagoans attracted to the band scene? "People tend to like to go out and see bands," Allegretto happily reports. He admits that Chicago isn't New York or L.A., but "you can play on a Wednesday night and people will still come out."

As a Chicago-based group, Allegretto admits that there's also a lot of competition. "You have to be careful not to play too often in one place," he warned. "If you play all the time, you know, people aren't going to come out." Powers also notes, "There's so many bands that come through Chicago. They're like, 'Oh, did you go see these guys?' and I'll be like 'Who?' But they sell out places."

Keeping up with the ever-changing Chicago band-scape is a key aspect of Powers' job. When he's not "playing bass like a madman," as he describes it, Powers is a talent buyer and production manager at the Elbo Room, one of Chicago's many musical venues. He scouts the city of over two-and-a-half million people for bands to book at the venue, then assures that the shows/gigs/sets/whatever-they're-called-now go smoothly. He also works in a lesser, but similar, capacity at Chicago's House of Blues venue (which has gotten AFCF, Powers happily tells me, into some good gigs there).

Lastly, his media production company AMP Booking is contracted by LiveNation to provide photos of bands and video of fans at all of LiveNation's 100+ music venues around the nation (and Canada). Powers oversees 50 independently-contracted concert photographers (including Allegretto...we'll get there) as they provide him with content. "It's busy, but it's fun," he says, "I get to go see concerts for free."

When I ask Allegretto what he does, he begins to tell me about his free-lance concert photography. That's when Powers interjects: "He worked for me!" "Yes, I've worked for Powers," Allegretto concedes. As a concert photographer, Allegretto has toured alongside the Zac Brown Band, archiving their tour as he worked for a marketing group. Alongside that, Allegretto also edits for another

photographer in Chicago, and provides voice and guitar lessons in his free time. It seems, looking at the novel-length résumés of these rock stars, that it takes having four jobs to afford living in Chicago.

"Not me," Schiller says. "I just work in a

"There's so many bands that come through Chicago. They're like, 'Oh, did you go see these guys' and I'll be like 'Who?' But they sell out places."

- Adam Powers, bassist

restaurant; wait tables, put up with really cool people and really stupid people. It's a job." Schiller says that if he wasn't "really, really lazy," he would probably take on more jobs to make extra money. With his entertaining Butthead impression and British accent, Schiller says he's always being pushed to get into voiceover work. "Yeah, but it's so highly competitive," he groans. "I'm boring. These guys have big, fancy things that they do, and I'm just like, 'd'oh.'" Trying to talk him off a cliff, Allegretto tells Schiller, "You're probably a hell of a lot less stressed out than we are, though." Without hesitation, Schiller responds, "Ehh, you'd be surprised."

Allegretto tells Schiller that his main source of stress is probably his cat, and the subject quickly changes. "Your cat is drunk all the time," Allegretto complains. Schiller goes on the defensive: "My cat is awesome." I hear Powers, so far the quietest of the three, laughing in the background: "Your cat is literally drunk." Naturally, I ask what the cat does to deserve its description. "He walks like he's drunk," Schiller explains.

As it turns out, Schiller has been caring for a "neurotic" cat, found in a litter by his wife's friend's aunt (or is it his wife's aunt's friend? It's hard to tell) and given to them when no other home could be found. "And now, I'm a cat person," Schiller seems happy to tell me. He goes on to tell me that dogs are too much work, like children, and that he's too lazy for either responsibility at this point in his life.

But with all this talk about other jobs (well, before we got sidetracked), how has the main gig, being in a rock band,

treated them? As it turns out, the picture is only as pretty as you make it. “It’s a tough business. We’re the whole deal...with promotions, booking, getting the word out. After the stuff that we’ve done, any one of us can go out and do anything else with our lives that would be easier,” Allegretto suggests. Powers agrees, adding, “It’s like trying to start a business, but [you] don’t know how to get to the place where you make the money.” Allegretto waxes poetic in summing up both his and Powers’ thoughts: “It’s a business based on dreams,” he says, hesitating, “and that can be really fucked-up.” And that, boys and girls, is the business of being an independent rock band.

One, for the record, that is proud to have avoided being on a record label for so long. “People think just because we’re not on a label that we’re not serious about it,” Allegretto acknowledges, “but it’s kind of the opposite.” AFCF is in it for the fun, not for the fame or money. And the band has tried to avoid cigar-smoking big wigs, cash-hungry music industries and “shitty contracts.”

To demonstrate the corruption of a music industry AFCF wants no part of, Allegretto tells me a story he heard about Kurt Cobain, long-time Nirvana front man. As the story goes, Cobain and Nirvana were at their peak. They had just sold something like twenty million albums. When he went to a big-shot record producer complaining that Nirvana wasn’t seeing all the money that they deserved from those twenty million albums, the producer pointed at his car, parked outside, and told Cobain, “See that Cadillac? It’s yours.” And Cobain took the Cadillac.

It’s not all hard work and no reward, though. Once the behind-the-scenes business is through, Allegretto says, the gigs are all fun and games. “We joke a lot, play off each other, and we’ve gotten

pretty damn good at that,” he laughs. “[Gigs are] always good, but sometimes they’re really great,” he adds.

AFCF has gotten upwards of a couple hundred fans at their shows, but sometimes it’s more low-key. “When we tour, we play to places that are packed and places that are not so packed. Sometimes there’s just one guy in the corner,” Powers half-jokes. After Allegretto debates his claim, they all agree that they’ve experienced that situation, every rock band’s worst nightmare, only once.

Lately, AFCF hasn’t been touring. It just doesn’t make economic sense anymore, they tell me. They used to play 100 shows every year, both in Chicago and on tour. Now they’re at about 50. During their six or seven tours east of the Mississippi River (anything west of

that and the cities and gigs are just too far apart, they say), they would play shows in New York, D.C., Atlanta and South Carolina, as well as shows closer to their hometowns in Ohio and Virginia (Schiller is from the Chicago area).

Now, they stick to Chicago, playing live at venues across the city and pushing out new music in-studio. AFCF released their first EP, “Stories of Tomorrow,” in 2008. Since then, they’ve released one LP called “An American Daydream,” two individually-released singles, and another EP, “Summer: Home, Love, and Confusion.”

When asked why they went from a full-length album to shorter releases, Allegretto replies, “People’s attention spans are like

hamsters.” Schiller agrees, and adds deadpan, “Hamster’s have very, very short attention spans.” When critics doubt their legitimacy (EP’s have never been considered as legitimate as LP’s), AFCF goes old-school. “Back in the ‘50s, they just made singles,” Allegretto explains.



An AFCF tour poster

And he didn't feel the need to say much more than that.

Their newest EP was released just a couple weeks ago, and I asked the guys to describe it. "It's kind of a driving album...it sounds summery, you know, sounds like warm weather and sticking your head out the window."

I knew that AFCF has been on Chicago radio stations (three or four, they say, including extensive play on Q101), so I should have expected the answer I received when I asked them how it felt to hear themselves for the first time. "Fucking great," Allegretto announces. Schiller, just as I would expect, adds "I messed my pants a little bit." "If at anytime ever, forever and ever, if there was a time that a song of ours came on the radio and we weren't, like, totally psyched about that," Allegretto adds, "that would be really weird." Allegretto goes on to talk about fans coming up to him and telling him that they learned his guitar part to one of AFCF's songs by hearing it on the radio or on YouTube, ReverbNation, BandCamp, MySpace, or any of the several music-sharing sites AFCF posts music on. "That's pretty awesome," he says.

With all three rockers holding other jobs, two in major career tracks, I wondered where they saw the future of the band. Will they rock into middle-age, like the Rolling Stones, or will they soon be a forgotten memory off doing their own things and finding success in the professional world? Quickly, the mood shifts from bouncy and care-free to serious. "The ultimate goal is to play music for the rest of our lives," Allegretto starts. He continues, saying, "If I had just played guitar and sang all the time, I would not be an unhappy person," but also admits, "We're all realistic about a lot of things."

Soon, Allegretto adds what I came away thinking was the best metaphor anyone could have used to describe a life in rock music: "It's like if you like pizza and you eat pizza everyday...after a while, as much as you like pizza, you gotta take a break from that shit, man. You need balance in your life."

As we near the end of our interview, Allegretto says his goodbyes, I hear Powers in the background complaining that "Moving sucks," and Schiller continues to drum on the table in front of him, as my flickering conversation with the band on fire is finally extinguished.



A Friend Called Fire

Summer: Home, Love, and Confusion

■■■□

Group's newest EP shows them still defining their rock voice

With only four songs, A Friend Called Fire's newest EP briefly displays the variety of rock music the group is known for. "Summer: Home, Love, and Confusion" is described by lead singer Jon Allegretto as a "driving album," but it leads off with "[Intro] City Lights," a slow, acoustic track more reminiscent of a Roy Orbison hit than a 2013 Chicago rock band release. Regardless of its confusing placement, it's a catchy tune with harmony and a folksy, likeable vibe.

"Show You Love" is only slightly faster and harder rock than the one before. It's catchy and sing-able, perfectly fit for Top 40 Radio. It sounds like something you'd hear from Neon Trees, Imagine Dragons, Capitol Cities or any of those other new one-hit-so-far wonders that get significant nationwide airtime. It showcases Allegretto's guitar abilities, but also has drum solos that you can't help but air-play along with.

The lyrics of "East Town" give you the false impression that this might be a bluesy type of rock. Nope. It gets boring quickly, with a fast guitar rhythm and crashing cymbals that would probably be even louder and more overshadowing live.

"Summer" ends with "Take You Back," another predictable, fast-paced rock track with typical lyrics regarding a failed relationship. It, too, relies on the cymbals, though we learned in the first two tracks that they're better-off without them. It seems that AFCF still has some learning to do, but with the unique potential shown in "Show You Love," I have faith in A Friend Called Fire.

Kiss and Tell

By: Calista Hall

First Kiss

At three years old we kissed behind your house.
I don't remember the first one,
or how we ever started,
but every day, without fail
we kissed behind your house.

I do remember the day I stopped kissing you.
I was still three and you were four.
You asked me to kiss you,
behind your house—
As always,
but I said no.
You asked me for a hug,
and I said no.

The day before my sister gave me my first lesson about boys—
Cooties.

-August 1995

Brandon

I kissed you in play boat.
You told me you were going to marry me.
and I ran through the gym screaming, “chase me”

We played every day.
No conditions, no expectations,
just a friendly game of dinosaurs,
and a race to finish our Goldfish and milk.

My preschool best friend,
the Little Foot to my Cera—
Brandon.

-December 1995

Truth or Dare

Believe me, I wish it were different.
I wish I had courage.
I wish I would have just kissed you
when they dared me to.

It would have beat the chanting,
“Kiss him, kiss him, kiss him.”
Over and over and over.
Ringing in my ears.

The trampoline was hot on my legs
Your glasses were dirty,
and your face was screaming
that you were just as nervous as me.

Five minutes of chanting
for a two second kiss.
It was short, it was awkward,
And I was grinning from ear to ear the rest of the night.

-July 2004

I Guess You Could Call it Homewrecking

I shouldn't have let you kiss me the last time you did.
You weren't mine, you were hers.
My best friend,
and the kiss wasn't even worth it.

My back was against your garage.
The bricks were cold and rough against my shoulders.
Your lips were on mine,
and for the first time it felt wrong.

You were mine first.
My only justification,
and it didn't make me feel better.
It only made me bitter.

I told her
hoping she would leave you,
and you could be mine again.
Instead, I lost her,
then I lost you,
and headed down a long road of being somebody's somebody
else.

-June 2005

The First Time

The first time I drove myself to a basketball game
you sat next to me, your hand kept creeping closer.
Every attempted shot brought your fingers closer.
By the end our fingers were entwined—
Dropped with the final buzzer.

You walked me to my car,
opened the door for me.
I don't know why,
but I kissed you
Kissed you hard—
Too Hard.
My hands were on your neck,
Yours circled my waist.

You asked me to be your girlfriend.
I said no,
for the first time.
Mostly because you were short,
but also because we could pass for twins.

You said, "that's cool,"
but I knew it wasn't,
and I drove myself home from a basketball game,
for the first time.

-January 25th, 2008

The First Boy with a Car.

The second time I ever saw you,
you picked me up to drive me to your house.
The car was silent.

At the first stop sign,
put the car in park.
You stared at me.
I could feel your eyes on my face.
I turned towards you.

Lips were against mine before I could focus.
They were soft
and more sure than mine.
My hands were shaking,
still knotted in my lap.

Lips on lips—
It felt like an eternity.
Six seconds of eternity.

You pulled away,
Put the car in drive,
Pulled away.
The car was silent.

-April 18th, 2008

Almost Kissed

There was a black spot on your tooth—
I couldn't stop looking at it.
It was very distracting.
I think you thought I wanted you to kiss me
by the way I was staring.
When your mouth came towards mine—
Open wide,
I started coughing, maybe a little too much.
You asked me if I was okay.
I nodded, mid-cough.
When I finally stopped,
you tried again—
You never were very good at taking hints.
I stood up, wiped the grass from my legs—
"I'll see you in English tomorrow."

-September 2008

Dillon

I skipped your funeral.
I didn't think I should go.
I regret it.
I should have said goodbye.

You played Call of Duty.
I sat at your desk and picked music.
I can't listen to Faber Drive anymore,
and I still hate the rap CD you made me.

We kissed once in my kitchen,
after one of our walks around town.
It was weird,
and we swore it would never happen again.

I remember when you asked me to prom.
You worked for your uncle every weekend,
to save up for a tux and our tickets,
and you helped me shove my dress in your tiny car.

When I heard about the accident I didn't cry.
I just thought about all the times I was in that car.
I remember all the times I yelled at you to slow down.
I remember when you got pulled over for your music being
too loud.

I hope it was fast.
I hope you didn't feel a thing.
I hope you still remembered me,
And I hope you still listened to Faber Drive.

-March 2009

On My Front Porch, May 18th, 2009.

I didn't really know you.
Your friends were questionable.
You were missing a tooth.
Your car didn't have a back window.
All you talked about was wrestling.
You didn't live with your parents.
You were on probation.
There was a can of Grizzly in your back pocket.
I just broke up with my boyfriend.

There were a million reasons I shouldn't,
but I did.
You made me laugh and it was something I hadn't done in
awhile
I let you kiss me.
I forgot about the Grizzly,
and I couldn't even tell you were missing a tooth.

-May 18th, 2009

The Night You Told Me the Truth

On the anniversary, you told me about your mom,
and the night she died,
with her head in your lap.

You told me how young you were,
and how fast your dad met Mary,
and that you've hated her since.

You told me about the drugs,
and how you became addicted,
then started to sell them too.

You told me about the four wheeler,
how you stole it,
and how you got caught.

Your face was red,
your eyes were puffy,
with drops falling endlessly.

Your mouth was salty,
And your face was wet.
I tried to kiss every tear before it fell.

-July 4th, 2009

The First of Many Forbidden Encounters

I never would have acted on it.
I knew it would get me in trouble.
I knew we could both lose our jobs,
and I heard about how crazy she was.

It didn't stop you.
The day I came back to work,
You made sure I was on your shifts.
Five days a week.

You would brush up against me
while you counted my drawer.
Intentional, unintentional touches,
left me breathless.

In the back of the store,
in the cooler,
during inventory.

My back against the door.
Your hand on the door knob.
My eyes on yours.
Your body against mine.
Your lips on mine.

Five words—
“Is that what you wanted?”
Then you were gone.
Three words—
“Not nearly enough.”

-May 26th, 2010

The Last of Many Forbidden Encounters

A shift without you.
I was coming.
You were going.
Not nearly enough time.

In the freezer.
Stocking my station.
You followed me.
The door wasn't even closed yet.
Your hand grabbed the back of my head,
Pulling me closer.

Your mouth was hot,
compared to the freezer air.
Your lips were desperate,
to hold you over.
A weekend without me.
A lifetime without me.

One phone call.
"She knows."
It was over.

You told her it was a lie,
then married her,
and went to law school.
I can only imagine your set of moral now.

-August 27th, 2010

Infidelity Part III

You told me it was okay.
You didn't really love her.
You would rather be with me.
You told me you were going to leave.

I hated kissing you.
I don't know why I did.
I hated your beard.
I never enjoyed it.

I always felt awful afterwards.
I always got in your car.
I always listened to your awful music.
I always wanted to jump out of your car.

I never did.
I didn't want you to hate me.
I was afraid you would tell people.
I was ashamed.

So I kept kissing you.
I kept hiding it from everyone.
I kept driving to your house in the middle of the night,
And I kept hating myself.

Then you stopped—
Suddenly,
and I felt abandoned,
until I realized that it was what I wanted anyway.

-September 2010

Hard as Diamonds

I barely knew you.
Two years later,
I still don't think I do.
We went out to eat,
It was Chinese
And you ordered my food—
Which I hated.

You talked about your kids—
The entire time.
You said you thought your son might be gay.
I just stared at you.
What do you even say to that?
Dinner ended quietly.
You took the long way home—
I still don't know why.
It's not like it was a great date.
All I wanted was to be in my bed, alone.

You parked your car,
in a little, empty parking lot.
I stared hard out the windshield.
You turned my head with your hand—
A little too hard.
Just like your mouth felt—
Hard and thin.
I didn't say a word the rest of the way home.
We did this for six months,
Until you bought a ring,
and I finally got the nerve to say no.

-July 25th, 2011

May 27th, 2013, 1:28 AM

One drunken night in a hotel
gave me you.
Five too many Smirnoffs
and three too many shots of Southern Comfort.

Four elevator rides,
Six wobbly stair trips
to watch you smoke and admire your car,
and I hate the smell of cigarettes.

You told me about your addictions
and your relationship with your sister,
your Mom's MS.
I told you my aunt did too.

I told you about my Grandpa's suicide,
and my four trips to therapy before it wasn't worth the time,
where the scars came from,
and why I did it.

Somehow I ended up in your arms on the twin-sized bunk-bed.
Your mouth tasted of cigarettes,
and by the way you were smiling
I knew you were drunker than me.

Everyone was sleeping.
We kept talking and kissing
until the alcohol wore off
and the sun was too bright to walk outside.

May 27th, 2013

Kissing in Cars

You picked me up and let me drive your car,
even after everyone told you what a bad driver I am—
Your fists were clenched the entire ride.

We went to a restaurant that was way too expensive.
I looked for the most inexpensive thing on the menu—
You ordered lobster and a ten dollar drink.

You insisted on paying for everything.
I snuck in front of you and paid for the movie ticket—
You bought popcorn I was too full to eat.

You grabbed my hand during the previews.
My hand went numb five minutes in—
I didn't let go until the credits.

You drove me home and parked outside my house.
I talked about how tired I would be for work in the morning—
You grabbed my face and gave me our first sober kiss.

We stayed in the car for two hours.
We kissed until your stubble rubbed my chin raw—
I swear, I've never loved four in the morning so much.

-June 1st, 2013

The Melting Pot

By: Samantha Gosche

Introduction

My family is a mixture of different cultures, languages, professions, and beliefs. Until I was six I live in Lady Lake, Florida. Even though I was fairly young I still remember vivid details. Such as meeting my best friend Sidney by the fence that separated our houses, or riding with my dad to deliver tomatoes and drinking my favorite chocolate milk on the way. These vivid memories are what I wanted to transform into poems. Many of these poems describe a happy moment in my life, however few describe a tragic moment. Such as the mental illness my brother struggled with for years. Each of these memories impacted my life in either a positive or negative way, and through these moments I discovered the diversity within my family. The poems together tell a story about my life. Every single person in my family has a different background. However, in times of need and in times of joy we have all come together as one. We do not look at each other differently because we have different skin colors, or because some of us our first language was something other than English; we look at each other as the Gosche/Ledwedge/Vasquez family.

Where It All Began

Oversized brass buttons
line the back of my green fitted dress.
The shiny red Pontiac Bonneville
slowing creeps down the gravel driveway.

One last check in the mirror—
slicking on my pale pink lipstick.
A quick spray of White Rain on my dark hair.
Grabbing my beige clutch before walking out the door.

He steps out of the ruby Pontiac,
while the other couple awaits.
He looks back in the car and whispers, “she is out of my
league, Chris.”
But, as I approach he says “Hi, my name is Jeff.”

We all went to eat at Coasters—
you know, that one restaurant on the water.
We ate slimy oysters and drank Bahamas Mommas,
thinking, why am I eating oysters?

April 27th was only the beginning
Little did we know then—
15 years down the road,
we would be bringing our kids back to this very place.



The Sister I Never Had

Uncontrollable laughter burst out of our mouths.
Holding hands while we skip past strangers.
Leaving everyone behind, only caring about us.
Dad and Uncle Chris yell, “Girls, Iron Dragon is that way!”

We run through the maze of metal bars and shiny chains.
Finally reaching the top we buckle ourselves into the green
cart.
Pulling the lap bar down, pushing it against our boney thighs,
grabbing each other’s hands, holding on tight.

The conductor yells, “Ladies and Gentlemen, are you ready?!”
Adrenaline rushing through my veins,
I can feel my heart pounding in my fragile chest.
Click, click, click, click...

Lifting out of our seats, all we can see is the blue pond under
us.
Moments feel like years, we finally lift up before we hit the
water.
Turning left sharply, our heads fling to the side and hit the
hard padding.

Blonde hair frantically whips in all directions.
Mac’s screams are terrifying yet filled with happiness.
Before we know it,
the ride comes to an abrupt halt.

“Wanna ride it one more time, Sammie?”
Jumping out of the cart quickly,
racing back to the waiting line.
“HA! Beat you again, Mac!”



Farewell, Childhood

Farewell, lollipop song—
Daddy and I singing till our throats were sore.
But I begged him to keep singing—
just one more time, I pinky promised.

Farewell, Sidney—
Meeting at our secret hide out by the fence
that separated our back yards.
This is where we talked about Codey,
my kindergarten crush.

Farewell, purple Nike sneakers—
running around Daddy's greenhouse,
picking all the green tomatoes,
and playing hide and go seek
till my shoes were full of dust and dirt.

Farewell, Yoohoo—
stopping at the BP gas station,
just for a bottle of rich chocolate milk,
but in three gulps it disappears.

Farewell, Lady Lake, Florida—
bright, humid air surrounding me,
playing in Mr. Markey's watermelon garden,
and picking at the orange tree in our the front yard.

Hello,
Tiffin, Ohio.



Dear Daddy

Papa J,
You are my toughest volleyball coach.
You are my biggest cheerleader.
You are my worst critic.
You are the voice in my head saying, just one more.

You are my first love.
You are my sassy Italian half.
You are my Grease singing partner.
You are my very best friend.

You are the reason for my passion.
You are the reason I have separating anxiety.
You are the person I always want to impress.
You are the best father a girl could ask for.



Te Quiero Mama

You have taught me
how to be a strong woman—
In the mind and soul.
To use my mind to succeed,
and to not hide my morals and values
only because someone disagrees

You have taught me
how to be an independent woman—
To have confidence and to
take pride in all my actions,
even if it doesn't appear to be
the popular choice at the moment.

You have taught me
how to be an educated woman—
To strive for my full potential,
and that no matter what others say,
realize my intelligence and
my quest for unlimited knowledge.

Most of all you have taught me
how a mother should love a daughter—
And for that, te quiero Mama.



You're Stupid

Dirt under my hot pink fingernails.
My foot keeps sliding on the rough bark.
Jesse and Mikey are already at the top—
Of course they leave me behind!

My blonde waves keep catching onto the branches.
Tugging at my hair, trying to untangle the knots,
strands of delicate hair are freed into the wind—
I have to keep up with the boys!

Scrapes on my fragile hands,
and dried blood on my knees.
I finally reach the top of the tree—
I finally caught my big brothers!

Jesse yells, “Go away, Stupid!”
Tears surround my round hazel eyes.
All I wanted to do was play—
Typical, they never want me around!

Climbing down the old walnut tree,
wishing I could go back up there
so I could throw a nut at Jesse's head—
I don't like my brothers!



Farmer's Daughter

Hot august days that seem to never end.
In the corn and bean fields is where he lives.
Dad repeatedly sprays the bug-eaten crops.

I watch from the blue swings in the back yard.
As the hot sun beats on my fair face.
Just waiting for dad to come back around,
on his vivid green Oliver tractor.

As I pump my legs and extend my arms,
I let my head fall back and relax.
The light warm breeze flows through my blonde locks.
My hair entangles with the whispers of the wind.

Dust and dirt consumes the thick air,
from the tractor circling the dry cracked fields.
Stepping off the beautiful Oliver,
dad takes his 10 minute break for a ham sandwich.

My body becomes filled with happiness.
I jump off the swing without fear.
Sprinting to Daddy, anticipating his hug.
Not caring about him being icky from sweat and dirt.

Before I know it, 10 minutes have come and gone.
Dad checks his Wal-Mart brand watch and says,
"Well, Honey time to go back to work."
Back to the blue swings I go.



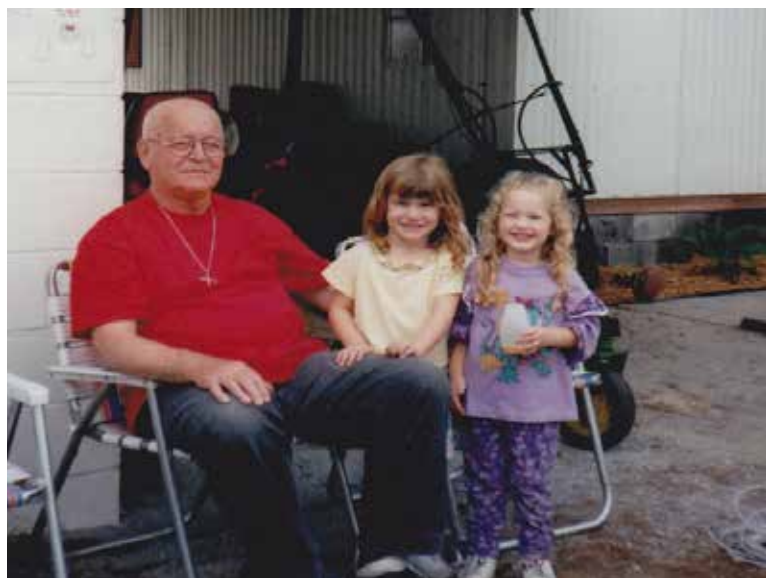
Grandpa Leddy

You would always tell your war stories so calmly.
All the cousins sat Indian style and listened to you for hours.
You would tell us about your friends,
and how great grandma worked in the factory while you were
gone,
but you never talked about the gory stuff.
Dad always warned me to never ask you.

You inspired Mikey to join the army.
I bet you wouldn't have even guessed that!
You completely changed his life.
He even started going to church with us every Sunday morn-
ing,
and he wears a silver cross necklace, just like you did.

On the bookshelf in grandma's room, is your burial flag.
I know you're still Grandma's sweetheart.
I know because she still wears her wedding ring.
Now she's losing her memory, I have to remind her who I am
every time I see her.
But she can talk about you for hours, as if you're still here.
She starts out almost every sentence with,

“Now let me tell you about this one time Bob and I...”



If I Could Change the Past

If only I had been there for him.
Stood up for him, just one more time.
This situation would never exist.
I could've made the difference.

Mikey, I am sorry.

I wish I could take back all the fights we had—
Like who got to control the remote.
I wish I could yell at Robbie
for making fun of you, again.
I wish I could sit by you on the bus,
instead of ignoring you, and sitting by Alex.

If only I could change the past,
This day would have never happened.

I could hear my Mother crying—
my Father telling her everything will be alright.
But nothing was alright.
How could this ever be alright?

On that cold January night,
while we all slept,
My brother wanted to end his life.
But in my eyes, he wanted to leave me.

All I could think was—
How could Michael keep this from me?
Did he even think about me?
Thank God my mother went to check up on him.

At this point,
I just stared at him.
I didn't know who he was.
This was not my brother.



The Life Of A Farmer

It's a sea of lettuce, spinach, and kale.
90 degrees of blazing heat.
Slaving away to finish the order.
Mom and Dad are picking the greens,
while I put the Hydro Fresh labels on the boxes.
Sweat drips slowing down my rosy cheeks.

The air could be cut with a blade.
My body aches—
the heat has absorbed my energy.
All I can think about is 5 AM tomorrow morning.
Dragging myself out of my comforting bed,
just to help Dad at the Toledo farmers market.

Finally dad yells,
“Alright, let's get these boxes into the cooler.”
The cooler feels like Antarctica,
compared to the suffocating greenhouse.
The sweat in my matted hair cools instantly—
giving me chills down my spine.

Mom picks a few more clippings of kale and spinach,
to cook with the black beans and rice tonight.
Walking down the long gravel lane,
back to the farm house
we watch the sun fall into the horizon—
another day has passed.



Un Abuelo Ama A Su Nieta

I never really got to know you.
Ma told me some cool things though.
She said you loved to cook tostones,
and you taught her how to drive—
in that shiny red Chevy Nova.
I still remember your scent.
It was like black beans,
And the powder foundation Abuela always used—
it smelled wonderful.
Another thing I do remember vividly,
is that dreadful day.
Mi familia gathered—
I cried, and mourned, and prayed.
But as I said my final goodbye I felt something—
I felt your presence, I felt you by me.
At that moment I understood what my mother meant
when she talked about you,
you loved her with all your heart.
And, as un padre ama a su hija,
un abuelo ama a su nieta.



Tradicional Comida de Navidad

Finely chopping the crisp red peppers.
The pot boils yellow rice seasoned with sofrito.
Simmering ribs are glazed with Abuela's secret sauce.
The scent consumes the large kitchen.

Cutting off the hard peel of the plantains.
The frying pan bubbles hot oil.
Thick slices of plantains turn into crispy tostones.
Smashed and grazed with salt.

Mi familia gathers around the old oak table.
We emerge into the delicious home cooked meal.
Dad picks at his food, "Uh, what is this again?"
For dessert is mi Abuela's Christmas bread pudding.

Mi familia's tradition.



JakeyPoo

You've always been my little man.
You would blame everything on me.
And I would get yelled at but I didn't mind—
I just always wanted you to be happy.

When mom and dad got frustrated with your grades,
I would help you with math, science, and English.
Step, by step I would show you—
I just wanted you to be successful.

When you would stutter no matter what you tried to say,
especially when you were excited or upset,
I would tell you to calm down and focus—
I just wanted you to overcome your obstacles.

Now you're 13 years old.
I grown man in your eyes.
But to me, you're still innocent JakeyPoo—
I just want you to always be my little man.



A Woman of Diversity

I believe my father knows best.
I will never disrespect my great grandparents.
I will always embrace my Puerto Rican heritage.
I believe in the Republican Party.
I believe farmers work the hardest.

I believe every girl needs a brother.
I will never judge someone by the color of their skin.
I will never use a racial slur.
I will always want to move back to Florida.
I believe family always comes first.

I believe in interracial relationships.
I believe in the Catholic Church.
I will always listen to Gloria Estefan.
I believe tragedies are just a test from God.
I will always be a daddy's girl.



Picking Up The Pieces

By: Kayla Graves

Life has a funny way of damaging you. It doesn't always happen all at once, but one day life will destroy your happiness. And it's up to you to pick up the pieces and carry on. Or not.

My name is Casey Porter and I am a licensed psychoanalyst in the state of Montana. I have 25 years of experience, and I have yet to come across a client that I couldn't help. The awards along my office walls prove this. I have devoted my life to this line of work and I take it very seriously. I have had many clients with different stories, and they all hold equal value.

This is the story of Emily Fuller. Emily came to me in the summer of 1996, because she was feeling "different." As her therapist, it was my job to uncover why she felt this way. It wasn't easy. Many clients are difficult to talk to because they don't want to pour their heart out to a stranger, which is understandable.

I have chosen to tell you this story because I know how difficult it may be to keep moving forward in life. We each have different pasts and we don't always know how to deal with them. Like many others, Emily liked to keep a journal. I suggested that she keep doing this throughout therapy sessions. I also had her write letters to people in her life. These letters did not have to be sent to the people that they were addressed to. My primary goal was for them to be used to deal with her pain. During each session, we talked about how she felt before, during, and after writing each letter. I provided my own thoughts about the contents of each letter and this usually guided us through the session.

When I first met Emily, I felt like we had a strong connection – different from friends – but something I couldn't quite place. She didn't appear to feel the same way at first, but by the end of the first ses-

sion, she seemed to come around.

"Emily, so nice to meet you," I said as I extended my arm to shake her hand.

"Hi," she said, keeping her arms crossed.

At this point, I could tell that she was going to be a difficult client.

"I'm glad you came today. Please, come in."

I followed her into my office and pointed out the many places that were available for her to sit – a red couch with two beige pillows, a brown armchair with a footrest, and a simple, wooden rocking chair. She chose the couch and took one of the pillows into her lap, clutching it. I chose to sit in the brown armchair, opposite her, and reached for my pen and notepad.

I took in every little detail about Emily. She was wearing khaki capris with a light blue button-up blouse. Hints of red were peeking through her dark brown hair, which made her green eyes stand out even more. She had light colored freckles sprinkled across her cheeks and nose. She sat Indian style on the couch, almost as if she were a little girl. As she was gripping the pillow, I noticed her pale arms had freckles scattered on them, as well.

"So, Emily, what brings you in today?"

"I don't know."

"Well you must have some idea."

"I just feel different."

"How do you feel different?"

"I don't know."

She wasn't making any sort of eye contact with me. I could tell that she was nervous.

"Then let's take a step back. How long have you felt different?"

"I've always felt a little different from other people."

"So this has been going on your whole life?"

"Since I was about eight."

"And how old are you now?"

"38. But sometimes I still feel like that eight year old."

Now we're getting somewhere.

"How do you still feel like that?"

"I don't know."

Maybe we're not getting anywhere...

"What happened when you were ei--"

"Nothing," she snapped back before I could ask the question.

Emotion. I wrote a note to myself: Come back to what happened when she was eight.

"Okay, we don't have to talk about it right now."

She readjusted the pillow, clutching it even tighter now. Her eyes were moving around my office. I could tell she was trying to keep from making eye contact with me. I needed to get her attention back on our conversation.

"Emily, what do you like to do for fun?"

"I like to write in my journal, play with my dog, and watch movies."

"What kind of dog do you have?"

"A golden retriever."

"How cute! I'm more of a cat person, but dogs are great pets, too."

"Yeah," she smiled at me.

"Emily, you mentioned you like to keep journals. Am I right in guessing you like to write, in general?"

"Uh huh."

"Do you think you could do two things for me?"

"What?"

"First, when you're writing in your journal, do you think you could write about our time together?"

"I guess," she shrugged.

"Good. Also, I want you to write letters. I'm going to assign different letters for you to write, and I'd like you to bring them in to the next session each time you write one."

"Why?"

"Because I think it will be good for you to address certain things in your life so that we can talk about them. You don't have to send them to the recipients if you don't want to. That's not a requirement of this. I want you to be as personal or as private as you'd like. I'm not here to judge you. I'm here to help you."

"Okay."

"Perfect! Do you have anything you'd like to ask me?"

"Not really."

"Okay, then. How about for your first letter, you write to your husband?"

"Okay."

"I look forward to reading it."

Emily released the pillow and took a deep breath. She stood up, gave me a quick hug, and turned to go out the door. I must have gotten to her somehow, but only time will tell.

Dear Journal,

June 16, 1996

I had my first therapy session yesterday. There's something about Dr. Porter that I like. I don't know what it is. She's really pretty, though. She has really light blonde hair and blue eyes. She's nice, too.

She let me sit wherever I want. She asked me about Oscar, too. He's so cute. But she said she likes cats. EW! I don't know what to talk about in therapy. There are things I could talk about, but I don't want her to judge me. But she said she wouldn't! Maybe I should just tell her everything...

She wants me to write stupid letters. My first one has to be to Isaac. I guess that one will be easy. I don't know why she thinks I have all of this free time to write letters. I guess it's my fault because I told her I would do it, but what else was I supposed to say? I couldn't say no. I'm in therapy for a reason. I'm there to get better. I want to get better. I HAVE to get better. She said she would help me. Maybe I can trust her. She can't tell anyone what I say to her. So I should trust her. Right?

Emily

Isaac,

Thank you for everything that you've done for me. You've put up with my temper tantrums and you've dealt with my difficulty in raising Gabby. You were the only parent to her, because I couldn't be. You practically raised her by yourself, because I was too weak to do it. When you asked for help, I couldn't give it. I understand why you finally gave up asking for help. You are so strong for being there for her. For taking care of someone that wasn't even yours. You made sure she felt like she was yours. I still remember when you built that two story tree house for her. I told you it was a stupid idea. That she didn't need it. That you were just going to waste money on the supplies, because she wasn't going to play in it. But you didn't listen to me. I was so mad at you for that. But then I saw how happy she was when it was finished. You

knew what was better for her. And I think you've always known what was better for me, too. You've never let me down. You've always been a shoulder to cry on. And I've cried a lot. I know the beginning of our relationship was tough. I was pregnant at 17, the baby wasn't yours, and we were seniors in high school. But you stuck with me. You've always stuck with me no matter how hard life got. And now that I'm in therapy, I need you to continue to stick with me. I know you will.

Love,
Em

As Emily finished reading her letter to me, she put it on the pillow in her lap and gave me a small smile. I didn't expect her to be this open so quick. I wondered if she felt the same kind of connection that I did during our first session.

"How did you feel while you were writing this letter, Emily?"

"Relieved."

"Why?"

"Because I brought up things we never talked about."

"Like what?"

"Like the fact that Gabby isn't his daughter."

"Who is her father?"

"An ex-boyfriend."

At this moment, she avoided eye contact again and clutched the same beige pillow from the previous session.

"Is he still in the picture?"

"No."

"Why not?"

"Because he took advantage of me."

"How did he take advantage of you, Emily?"

She looked straight into my eyes, and I could see her eyes start to tear up.

"He made me do it."

"What did he make you do?"

“Have sex.”

“Did you try and tell him no?”

“Yes,” she said, looking down at the pillow in her lap.

I felt my hands start to tremble. I felt that lump in my throat that you get right before you start to cry. I’ve handled rape before, but this one is hitting me harder than it should. Why?

“That’s terrible, Emily,” I said. As I finished this statement, the time that she snapped at me popped into my head. She’s opening up. I might as well take a shot. “Was this the first time something like this had happened to you?”

“No,” she said as she looked down and started to play with her fingers.

“What else happened, Emily?”

“I can’t say.”

“Why can’t you say?”

“Because he said I can’t.”

“Who said you can’t?”

“Daddy,” she said in a low voice.

Daddy? What is this voice? I made another note: Sudden change in voice and mannerisms when talking about father. Playing with fingers, sitting Indian style.

“What did he tell you to keep a secret, Emily?”

“Who’s Emily?”

“You’re Emily...”

“No, my name is Josie,” she said with a look of disgust on her face.

“Josie?” I asked. Am I dealing with multiple personalities? “How old are you Josie?”

“Eight,” she said smiling.

“Well you’re a very cute eight year old, Josie.”

“Thank you,” she said, blushing.

I remembered the note that I wrote to myself. I wonder how I can bring this up without making things worse for her.

“What do you like to do when you’re

at home, Josie?”

“Oh, I like to play outside and ride my bike and play dolls.”

“Who do you play with?”

“Sometimes Mommy, sometimes Daddy.”

“Who’s better at playing dolls with you?”

“Mommy. Daddy scares me sometimes.”

“Why does he scare you?”

“He makes the dolls do things.”

“Like what?”

“Nothing, really. He just makes them touch each other.”

I stood up and went to the wooden chest I keep in front of my desk. I came back with a doll and handed it to her.

“Do your dolls look like this?”

“Yeah, kind of!” She smiled and reached for the doll.

“Can you show me where Daddy makes the dolls touch each other at?”

She looked up at me with a look of confusion on her face. Then she pointed to the doll’s breasts.

“Did he ever touch you, Josie?”

She looked down at the doll and slowly nodded.

I sat back down in the chair across from her. “You never told anyone?”

“No, Daddy said they would take me away. He said I would never see Mommy again. I love my Mommy.”

“I know, Sweetie. What he did to you wasn’t your fault.”

She shrugged her shoulders and gave me back the doll. I got up to put it back in the chest and said, “I used to like playing with dolls, too, Josie.”

“Who’s Josie?”

I turned around to see a confused look from – who I’m guessing – must be Emily.

“Nothing, just ignore me. Have you ever told anyone about what happened to you, Emily?”

“No.”

“Not even Isaac?”

“No.”

“Why not?”

“Because I don’t want him to know.”

“Why not?”

“Because I don’t want him to think I’m weak.”

“Why would he think you’re weak?”

“Because I let it happen,” she said through tears.

“Emily, do you think what happened to you was your fault?”

“Yes.”

“Why?”

“I don’t know.”

“Well can I tell you what I think?”

“Sure...”

“I don’t think anything was your fault. And I don’t think you should blame yourself.”

“Maybe not...”

“Do you think that, maybe, since Gabby was the result of a rape, that’s why it was difficult for you to raise her?”

“That’s always been in the back of my mind.”

“What do you think about it?”

“I don’t think it’s an excuse. I should have taken care of her like a real mother. I should have been there for her. It was just so hard,” she said as she wiped away her tears.

“That’s understandable, Emily.”

“I do love my daughter. It was just hard for me to show that love.”

“I know you love her, Emily. That’s why I want your next letter to be to Gabby. Do you think you can do that?”

“Yes.”

“Do you think you’ll be able to be as

open as you were in your letter to Isaac?”

“Yes. There are things that I need to tell her.”

“Good. I’ll see you next time, Emily.”

Dear Journal

June 23, 1996

Yesterday in therapy we talked about the letter that I wrote to Isaac. I think I did a good job. I was really open in the letter and I think Dr. Porter liked that. I feel like I’m becoming closer with her. At first, I wasn’t sure what to think of her. But now I think we have a connection, and I think she feels it too. It’s not like I’m in love with her or anything. I just think there’s something connecting us. It’s easy for me to feel comfortable with her.

She asked me to write my second letter to Gabby. I know I wasn’t the greatest mom to her, and there are things that I’ve never told her before. I think this letter would be a good way to get things off my shoulders. I know Dr. Porter said I don’t have to send any of the letters to people, but I think I might send this letter to Gabby. I think it’s important for her to hear the things that I have to say. I need to explain to her why I was never there for her.

I think therapy might be working. It kind of feels like I’m finding a piece of myself that was missing. I like it. I’m slowly becoming whole again. I never thought this would happen. I thought I was stuck being the way I was. I guess things can change. Hopefully I can pick up the pieces of the rest of my life.

Emily

My dearest Gabby,

Please forgive me for not being the type of mom that you deserved. For all of the 21 years of your life, I was not able to raise you the way that you should have been raised. I was only 17 when I gave birth to you. It was one of the hardest times of my life. Not because I had you. When I saw you for the first time, I thought you were the most beautiful creature on the Earth. You already had a head full of brown hair, and you were so tiny. Things were hard for me, because of why I had you. I was only a senior in high school. I wasn't ready for children at that time. Someone in my life took advantage of me, and even though I hate him for it, he gave me you. I was so confused. I knew you were the most beautiful child, but it was so hard for me to even look at you. You already looked so much like him, but I knew you were going to be nothing like him. I was torn between what I wanted to do and what I was actually doing. I wanted to raise you with the right values, but how could I do that when I couldn't even look at you? I don't know how you did it, but you never left me. You never got mad at me for not being a mom to you. You're still in my life, and there's nothing I wanted more than that. I was so afraid I would lose you. But now that I'm in therapy, I'm getting better. I'm going to become the mom that I should have been to you. Our relationship will become even stronger, and I will be proud to call myself your mother.

Love,
Mom

She finished reading the letter and looked at me with tears in her eyes.

"Was this letter hard for you to write, Emily?"

She nodded. "It was harder to write this one than it was to write the one to Isaac."

"Why do you think that is?"

"Because I knew I wanted to send this letter to Gabby. It was in the back of my mind the entire time I was writing it."

"Wow. What made you want to give it to her?"

"There are things in the letter that I never told her. I think it's important that she knows."

"I agree. I'm glad you decided to give her the letter. What was the hardest part of writing this letter other than that?"

"The fact that I admitted that I wasn't a good mother to her," she said as she looked down at the pillow in her lap.

"Yes, I can imagine. That must have been really hard for you. In your letter, you told her that you are going to become a better mom to her. Do you think you can really do that?"

"Yes. At least... I hope so. She deserves a better mom. I want to give that to her. I know I can. It might take more work, but I know I can do it."

"I know you can, too. I'm glad you see that. This is a major improvement, Emily."

She smiled at me, then hid it underneath the pillow.

I smiled back. "I think that's all the time we have for today, Emily. I'm going to give you a break from writing letters. Next week when we meet, I'll have another one for you to write."

"Okay."

As I stood up to walk her to the door, she lunged off the couch and gave me a hug, almost knocking me to the ground.

"Thank you so much for helping me, Dr. Porter."

"You're welcome, Emily."

“Hi, Gabby. Nice to see you again,” Eleanor, the front desk receptionist, smiled as she greeted me.

“Hi Eleanor,” I said as I signed in, returning a smile.

It’s only been a week since my last visit at Stonycreek Hospital, which isn’t saying much since I come here every week. I planned on coming in today anyways, but when I got this letter from my mother yesterday, I knew it was important that I come today. I made it to the elevator and hit the button for the fourth floor. I’m so used to this routine. I come in to greet Eleanor, and make my way to the fourth floor of the building where my mother lives. The floor always smells the same – body odor that someone tried to cover up with lavender air freshener.

I get off the elevator to see the familiar wood paneled hallway, and make my way to my mother’s room: Room 407. I open the door and see her watching television.

“Gabby,” she said as she smiled.

“Hi, Mom. How are you doing today?”

“I’m okay. Did you get my letter?”

“Yes, I did. It was a very nice letter, Mom. Are you ready to see Dr. Hemlick today?”

“I guess,” she said as she started to get out of her chair.

Dr. David Hemlick is my mother’s therapist. He occasionally asks me to come to therapy sessions with her. I think she enjoys our time in therapy together. At least, the times she remembers.

We made our way to Dr. Hemlick’s office on the second floor. When we reached the lobby, his secretary told us that we could go ahead and go in. Mom entered the room first, and I followed behind her.

“Hello, ladies! It’s so nice you see

you two again. How are you doing today?”

“We’re okay,” I said. “Mom sent me a letter.”

“Oh, really?!” He said as he looked at her. She smiled. “What made you do that, Emily?”

“Dr. Porter told me to do it.”

“Did she? How is our dear friend Casey doing?”

“She’s fine, I think. She thinks therapy is going really well.”

“What makes her think that?”

“Emily is progressing really well, David. I don’t think you need to question my thoughts.”

I looked at my mother. I could tell it wasn’t her again.

“I didn’t mean any disrespect, Casey. I was just wondering why you think she’s progressing so well,” Dr. Hemlick said to her.

“She’s starting to accept her past, which is a huge step for her. She believes her relationship with Gabby is moving in the right direction, as well.” She looked at me. “Do you think she’s right, Gabby?”

“My relationship with my mother has never been terrible.”

“I know it wasn’t, Gabby,” she said with a smile. “She had Isaac to help her.”

“She was Isaac,” I said adamantly.

Dr. Hemlick stepped in, “Casey, Emily didn’t know that she had Isaac to help her.”

“I know. But she thought she did, and that’s what matters.”

“No, it’s not. Emily needs to realize that none of this is real, Casey. She needs to know about you, Josie, and Isaac,” Dr. Hemlick said to her with a look of concern on his face.

“And she will, when the time is right,” she replied.

After this, my mother was herself

again. For the rest of the session, we just talked about how my mother is doing and where she wants to go from here. As she left Dr. Hemlick's office, I stayed behind to talk to him.

"I don't know if I can keep doing this," I said.

"We're almost there, Gabby. Your mother is doing great. She just needs to find that moment of clarity. We'll get there together," he reassured me as he put his hand on my shoulder.

I left his office and walked my mom back to her room. I said my goodbyes and as I got into the car, I pulled out the note that Dr. Hemlick gave me months ago.

Gabby, your mother has given me permission to tell you anything that I think you need to know, which is why I am allowed to do this. Your mother is very ill. Throughout several therapy sessions, I have noticed that she has multiple personalities. All of them are ways of coping with the things that she has gone through. As you suspected, Isaac is one of them. I believe that she created Isaac to deal with the pain that Brady put her through. She didn't have the strength to raise you herself, so Isaac was created to help her with that. Another personality that I have noticed is Josie, who is an eight year old girl. From the conversations that I have had with her, I believe that she was created to cope with what your grandfather did to her as a child. The third personality that I have noticed is a therapist, Casey Porter. I believe that Casey was created to help her become a better mother to you. This is not the end of the world, Gabby. With help, your mother can learn to cope in an appropriate way. I would like you to start coming to the sessions with her. I think that this will help her progress even better than how she is now. Dr. H.

I sat in my car, clutching the note to my chest, and let everything sink in. I just have to remember that this isn't the end. She will get better. I know it.

3 Months Later

My mother passed away in her sleep two months after our session with Dr. Hemlick. Her personalities never left her side, and neither did I or Dr. Hemlick. We were all there for her every step of the way. She never realized that she had multiple personalities. But she died in peace.

My mother was the most amazing person on the planet. She raised me the best way she knew how, and I always remembered that. She went through things that I could never even imagine going through. In the end, she came out on top, whether she believed it or not. I'm a better mother to my own daughter because of my mother. She taught me how to be strong. She taught me how to live. Life was difficult for her, just as it is for a lot of people. But she picked up the pieces of her life, and put them back together as best as she could.

Blending In

By: Cole Randolph

I

The first day of school always seem impossible to get through. Teachers all around the building are being unnecessarily nice, trying to build a false sense of rapport with students that undoubtedly disgust them. Students are all wearing their new school clothes that they got just to compare how wealthy their parents are. To me, this is all a waste of time. Why do my classmates care about material things such as clothes and cars? Do they not know that in a couple years there will be none of that? That they will be in college or working, and that then, we will all be in the same financial class? That class is called “broke as shit”. These are the things that I think about on the first days of school.

I find the first day of school to be a day to get ahead of everybody else. It’s like a zombie apocalypse in this place. No one got sleep last night; a result of their rebellion against changing their summer sleeping schedules. However, I’m trying to get out of this small town, at least for four years. Don’t get me wrong, I love the place I was raised. It’s a miniscule town along the Ohio River, the former foremost producer of Iron in the United States. The view from the river is amazing, and I will never grow tired of it, but I have to see what else is out there. The first day of school is my first chance to separate myself from the others, from here on out it’s a competition.

As I get to the first period of my final year at Adams High, my determination and disgust towards my other classmates and their shenanigans shifts to pure pleasure. I’ve heard rumors about the school hiring a new government teacher, but what I saw before me at seven-thirty in the morning in early September was definitely not what I expected. There in front of the whiteboard stood the new girl in school, Miss Hartley.

Now, I don’t know if any of you are seventeen year old boys, or ever were, or ever will be. But, when you are and you see a woman like Miss Hartley, you want to know everything about her. You want to know how a woman like her ended up being a high school government teacher, instead of being on the cover of Playboy something more logical like that.

She wore a black transparent blouse that surely couldn’t have fallen within the dress code guidelines. The collar frantically plunged downward to reveal her cleavage. It was like her breasts were trying to take over one another by pushing each other back and forth, ultimately resulting in them busting outward for faculty and students to see. Her jet black hair contrasted emphatically with her bright blue eyes. My eyes, however, didn’t know where to look, because there were too many beautiful things about her. She would automatically be the babe of the school. Despite it being the first day, you could see the senior girls (even the best looking ones) sneer with jealousy.

I force myself to sit in front of the classroom in all of my classes in order to pay attention the best that I can. Today, that routine paid off. I was front and center at the most exciting show I’ve ever seen as Miss Hartley passed out the syllabi. My eyes are locked on her every movement, I’m in a trance. While she goes behind me and passes out the syllabi to the other unfortunate students all the way in the back, I peer to the left corner of the room to check out her desk. Behind it, were a plethora of pictures from her sorority days in college, and in most of them she appeared to be trashed. I bet she broke more than few hearts back in her day. Which, come to think of it, was probably just a year or two ago from right now. She looks to be only twenty-four or twenty-five at the most.

As she made her return to the front of the room, she reached up above her head and wrote her name on the whiteboard in all capitals. As she was writing with her back side turned to the classroom, the boys behind me snickered, and groaned. If this was an indicator of how the rest of the year was going to go, then I was worried for her. High school boys, in general, can be ruthless when there is a majestic woman like Miss Hartley around. I hope she has some sort of classroom management tricks up her sleeve. I told myself that there is no way that she didn't notice these less than polite sound effects. Although, she turned around to face the class with a smile that probably would have persuaded Hitler to halt the Holocaust.

The class went by way too fast. Miss Hartley concluded class by telling us that we would be going on a trip in January if we raised enough money. The trip would be to Washington D.C. for the presidential inauguration. She said it would be an amazing experience that would be special, and should be special to us. She reminded us that not everybody would be able to get this sort of opportunity in their lifetime, and that she expected us to give full attention and effort to the fundraising.

"Can you all do that for me? It will be something that you will never forget." said Miss Hartley.

This resulted in a simultaneous "Yes, Miss Hartley" that was mostly occupied by the guys of the class, including me. The lack of the girls that responded to the new teacher's simple question made me laugh in my head. They hated her already.

The bell rang so I got up out of my seat, turn around and start stuffing my book bag with my notebook, and three-ring binder. Then I hear Miss Hartley's voice. "Jackson, is it? Can you stay for a minute

please?"

Everyone in the class, guys and girls, are surprised by this demand. I'm not the most popular kid when it comes to the social standards set by the kids of Adams High. I merely blend in, and that is the way I prefer it, especially on the first day of school. I would rather not be in the gossip, or the drama that comes with high school at all. I play baseball, and I do well in school, and that's that. I have had the same two best friends for the duration of my junior high and high school career, Jake and Justin. I tend to stay away from everybody else.

Nervously I respond, "Yeah, no problem."

I have no idea what this could be about. It's the first day of school! I've never been in trouble for anything in my life. I wasn't one of those assholes that were groaning at her butt as she wrote her name on the board. These sort of situations always get me riled up, I don't like surprises. I like schedules and organization. A sense of knowing what is going on in my life is something that I have never taken for granted, and when something shakes that up a bit, I cannot handle it. The hottest woman that I've ever seen, being my teacher, and asking me to stay after class on the first day of school constitutes as one of those things that shake my routine.

I approach her desk, and she is sitting there looking over some of her papers, probably figuring out what she is going to do for her next class period when all of the guys have the same reaction as they did in our class.

"Miss Hartley, what did you need?" I ask. Halfway through my response there is a choke in my voice that I wish wouldn't have been there. Controlling it would have required all my might though, as I stand

at her desk and have a perfect view of why that black blouse should be outlawed in not only public schools, but in the continental forty-eight states.

“Jackson, hello. Nice to meet you, officially. Do you have study hall this period?” This was the first time that I made direct eye-contact with her, I think I shivered a bit.

“Yes, I do. Second period, all year long.” I try to act as cool as possible as if I was attempting to pick up a girl at a party.

She giggled a little at my failed attempt of suaveness before asking, “Good, it’s my conference period too. Well, since I didn’t assign you any homework today, I assume that you have nothing to do. And, Jackson, will you help me get some boxes out of my car? I just moved here a couple of weeks ago and haven’t had time to put the finishing touches on the room. There are some decorations and supplies that are boxed in my car, and they are pretty heavy. I was told from some of the other teachers here that you are a very respectable student and person, and I would like to see if you would prove them right by helping me this one time.”

Holy shit. Someone can come kill me now. There are about two hundred other guys in this school that would jump at this chance without hesitation and show off their strength by lifting Miss Hartley’s boxes for her. I, on the other hand, would rather jump off a building onto a bed of nails.

I say yes anyway. I couldn’t blemish the reputation that she already had pinned to me. So, we walked together in the hallway, and all I could think about were the boxes being a hundred pounds each, and me not being able to lift them. My first encounter with Miss Hartley could be a failure, and that scared the shit out of me.

To my surprise, she drove a car that seemed not to fit her at all. A cream-colored Chrysler Aspen. This is a car that you’d suspect a soccer mom to drive, not a young single woman like her. She opened the hatch of the Chrysler and inside there were two small boxes. I picked them up and stacked them on top of each other. They couldn’t have weighed forty pounds combined. I was beyond excited that these boxes were not heavy, but I was suspicious why she needed me to carry them for her. Undoubtedly, she could have made a couple of trips and not have been fatigued at all from carrying these boxes.

As we walk back to her room in the hallway of Adams High, I notice that she walks modestly, I envision her walking elegantly and almost arrogantly, but that’s far from reality. She walks as if she is almost afraid of the world ahead of her. I decide she might be nervous for the upcoming school days, being a new teacher in a new town and so forth.

“Jackson, just throw those boxes in the corner back by my desk if you don’t mind.” Miss Hartley asks.

I set them down with ease and turn back around to face her.

Miss Hartley continues talking, “Jackson, I hope you are excited as I am about going to Washington D.C. as I am. It will be a once-in-a-lifetime experience for the whole class, and hopefully a very big deal for Adams High and our social studies department. Having said that, I want you to be in charge of the fundraising events. Next week, we have the week off for the county fair, and we will be working the gates and assisting the fair board with anything that they will need. Any hour that is worked will be money towards our trip. In class tomorrow, I will go over the job assignment of each person in the class. Will you accept

this job?”

Being in charge of things other than my own self is something that I really have no experience in at all. I am not the most confident person in the world when it comes to telling other people what to do. This is all too much. Again my nerves are being shaken by Miss Hartley, the beautiful government teacher.

There is something about her that makes me feel different about things though, even in the short time that I've spent with her on the first day of school. The way that she asked a question was something that she must have learned in college in her education classes. She almost asks with the expectancy that you will agree to whatever she is saying, and that trick worked on me.

I accept her proposal. “I think I should be able to do that, Miss Hartley. What will I be doing?”

“All you will be doing is overseeing that everyone is where they need to be, and doing what they should be doing. I have been told that the county fair is a pretty big deal around these parts, so I know some of the class would rather be going to have a good time, instead of working it, but we need to keep everyone on task. You and I, together. I will be there most of the time to help you out. You will be my right hand man. How's that sound?”

Once again, Miss Hartley uses her persuasiveness to lure me in. She's a smart lady. What seventeen year old high school boy would say no to spending the week with her? She knows that is what is going through my head, she has to know.

“Sounds great!” I respond to her a little too enthusiastically. Hopefully she thinks my enthusiasm is about the job at hand, and not the excitement of me wanting to be close to her for the duration of the Ore

County Fair.

Miss Hartley smiles her killer smile, and thanks me for being so cooperative. She says that she will see me tomorrow and sits down at her desk.

II

A few days rolled by at Adams High without anything exciting happening. The usual adjustment period was still in full swing. The funny thing about that period is that it happens twice in our county. The fair is next week and everyone is excited about finishing one week of school, and not having to go back for a whole week afterwards. Friday came along, and in Miss Hartley's class nothing has changed when it comes to the students. Guys are still drooling over her, and actually completing their assignments because they think that might impress her. Girls are still being jealous and asking her questions that might lead us to believe that Miss Hartley has some major flaws.

Anyway, Miss Hartley was preparing us for the week to come. She assigned jobs to all of the students. They were short shifts so that we could all go hang out at the fair before or after we work. The students seemed happy about it. And when she reminded us that we were doing this for a reason, all of my classmates got more excited because they realized we will be missing school to watch the inauguration.

“Before we leave today, I want you all to know that I appreciate the support that you have given so far in this fundraising event. Not that I think any of you will have a problem, but if you do, know that Jackson and I are overseeing everything that is going on. If you need something you call Jackson, got it?”

The entire class looked at me with a mixture of shock and jealousy. They knew

that this meant that I got to spend the week with Miss Hartley, and also I didn't have to work the stupid jobs that they were all week. They were pissed. I felt a faint smile flash across my face as I turned my head back to look at them. Man, they hated me. I liked it.

For the second time in a week, Miss Hartley had me stay after class. Throughout the whole week I had grown fond of her. Not the same way as I was fond of her on the first day of class. I loved her personality, her humanity, and above all her wittiness. She is a real woman, not some high school ditz that crawl through the halls of Adams every day.

"Jackson, here's my phone number. Now, don't start trouble by going around telling everybody I gave this to you. I just think that we might need to get a hold each other in case the walkie-talkies aren't working well this week. You're my partner, and I'm going to need a lot of your help. I think it will be a fun time for the both of us, we get to hang outside of the classroom. I really don't have any friends yet, being new to this place. It's funny but you're about the closest friend I've got so far. Okay, see you Monday, Jackson. And you know the rules, no phones in school, so you can text me your number when you get home." She giggled at her rare moment of being an authority figure.

I turned around and walked out the door. In my hand was Miss Hartley's cell phone number. I felt like skipping the rest of the day and running home, before anyone could steal it, as if I was Charlie holding the golden ticket to Willy Wonka's factory.

III

The Ore County Fair is a crazy time of year for everyone that lives here. Stu-

dents show animals, parents meet up with their long lost high school friends and get trashed at their campsites for a whole week. The kids that never made it out of Ore County who just have graduated high school either walk around aimlessly or they enter in the demolition derby to prove that they are still as tough as they once were, or thought they were.

No matter how great all that sounds, it only enhances the fact that I want to leave this place. I would classify my life as a failure if the biggest thing in it each year was the Ore County Fair. I think it is a tell-tale sign that you haven't made anything of yourself if you are still hanging around this town, which may be true, but I'm not sure. People in this place seem to be happy. All I'm saying is that if I were them, I wouldn't be.

I waited until the drive to the fair on Monday morning to text Miss Hartley my number. I'd like to think I've matured over the years. My dad always told me that one decision can affect you for the rest of your life, and I truly believe that. I was skeptical about receiving her number after the initial excitement of it dwindled away. I don't want her to lose her job, what if I text her my number and she is with a coworker? That's all it takes in a small town like ours to get a teacher fired. Shit gets around, and it gets around quick. All of this worried me.

These feelings were counterattacked by the anticipation of hanging around Miss Hartley all week long. My mind was still hanging onto what she said about me being the closest thing she had to a friend in this town. Why did she move here then? Was it just the job that pulled her in to Ore County? I refuse to think that she hasn't already been to the local bars and been hit on by many lonely men who are waiting for someone like that to walk in to their lives.

On the other hand, I also refuse to think that she would fall victim to the poor pick-up attempts that I can imagine have been thrown her way in those bars.

I pull in to a parking spot on the big hill behind the grandstands of the fairgrounds. I see a group of my classmates across the main entrance way. The gates of the fair haven't opened yet, so no one is inside, it's very dead.

I met up with Justin and Jake who were standing on the outskirts of the group of our classmates. They were joking around about all of the washed up carnies they had been watching for the past fifteen minutes. Justin was looking around and laughing I heard him say, "This is exactly why I'm going to college next fall, I don't want to end up like Dreadlock Holmes over there working on that ride. He's going to spend the next week cleaning up the vomit of little kids and wishing he was high instead of having to make a couple of bucks."

Justin and Jake thrived on making fun of other people, they had the same goals as I did but they sure had different ways of showing it. I would never blatantly make fun of somebody like that, but I don't mind that they do it because, well, they've never done it to me. My two best friends were school celebrities. Both of them were on the football, basketball, and baseball teams. I don't see as much of them as I would like to because they are always so busy. That's why I love baseball season. I have nothing to worry about besides playing my favorite sport with my favorite two people.

As Jake was laughing at what Justin had said about the mangy carnie, he spotted me approaching them. "There he is, the man of the week! Tell me Jackson, how does it feel knowing that you will be accompanying the majestic Miss Hartley through

this enchanted fairground all week?" As he asked this he pushed his cell phone in my face like it was a microphone, acting as if he was a reporter interviewing a quarterback after a big game.

I found this to be annoyingly flattering, if there's such a thing. "Stop dude, it's not a big deal. I'd rather be hanging out with you guys all week anyway instead of having to keep track of you heathens, making sure you're not trying to hook up with random girls rather than doing your jobs."

"Jackie boy," Justin said, "don't worry we are going to keep you on your toes. But you're not going to notice what's going on with that piece of ass asking you to do chores all day for her. You're in heaven." He's right. This week should be an experience. I'm ready to get it started. The weekend gave me a chance to cool off. I know longer feel nervous about helping out Miss Hartley with anything she needs. She is the nicest lady I've ever met, and the nicest looking. So yeah, I am in heaven.

Out of nowhere, Justin interjects my thought process on "Holy fuckin' shit." I look over at him, and he is staring directly over my left shoulder with his jaw to the ground. I make a one hundred eighty degree turn to see what he is staring at. There is a cliché in just about every romantic comedy film in the world where the main girl of the story walks out in slow motion. Whether the scene is her pushing herself out of a pool in a bikini top, or walking down a staircase in a prom dress. This is one of those moments. Witnessing this is better than a stupid movie that no one can relate to, this is real life.

Miss Hartley approached us through the grassy hill where my car was parked. There was a shine of the sun through the grandstands that acted as a slowed down strobe light. As we squinted to look through

it, we could see the brown of her cowboy boots matching the tan of her legs that were exposed in cut-off jeans. She was wearing a tight baby blue and navy flannel shirt with the sleeves rolled up and the top two buttons undone. Her dark hair bounced as she glided closer to us. Her eyes popped at us, because they matched the shirt that she was wearing perfectly. It didn't seem real. I felt like there should be some kind of background music or something to partner with his spectacle.

Her presence was instantly known from her entrance and the students all turned to be told what to do.

“Hey gang, is everybody here?”

The group of students that were scheduled to work this morning's shift all mumbled “yeah” and “I think so”. In response to this, Miss Hartley went over again in detail what everyone was supposed to be doing. There were people assigned to work the ticket booth, work the parking pass station, and work a dunk booth on the midway. Once everybody knew what they were doing, they dispersed to their assigned destination.

After a couple seconds, I spot Miss Hartley. She was talking to someone on the fair board, as I was waiting on my instructions. I decided to walk over to Miss Hartley as she was talking. Out of the corner of her eye she must have seen me.

“Hey buddy, good morning! See that golf cart over there?” She pointed to a golf cart that read Ore County Fair on the back of it. “That's ours for the week, I'll be right there. Thanks Jackson.” She flashed a smile at me. I walked to the golf cart and sat down in the passenger seat.

I guess I didn't think about what this job entailed. I knew I would be keeping track of workers and their shifts, but not this. I should have figured it out, how else

would I get around to seeing how the workers were doing without some sort of transportation across the fairgrounds. However, the thought of riding around in a golf cart with Miss Hartley all day never came to mind.

Miss Hartley appeared right next to me, suddenly. “Scoot over, Jackson. You're driving. I'm going to be on the walkie-talkie with everybody making sure they are okay. The ticket, and parking pass booths are going to need more change eventually and the fair is about to open soon. We are going to be relieving people if they need to go to the bathroom or get food, or whatever they need. It should be a good time, so get excited!”

I took the wheel, and felt as if I was driving into a different world with a beautiful woman sitting shotgun. It felt glorious, even if it was on the world's slowest golf cart.

Before the fair gates opened, Miss Hartley said that she wanted to get some coffee to start this long day. As we sat down on a bench in front of the coffee stand, I found myself becoming desperately attracted to her. She was perfect in every way. The nervousness that I felt the first day of school had completely subsided, and I started playing out little scenarios in my head of us together.

We could just leave this place and walk on a coastline somewhere. Walk all night in the dark holding hands, and not caring where we were walking. We would just be following the shore until the sun rose, which we could watch and then as the sun lit our side of the world, we could see where we ended up. We could get coffee together at a twenty four hour coffee shop in New York City, and eat pie at 3:00 AM with our coffee like they do in the movies. I could drive her up to my grandparents'

house in the country, where she could meet them. My grandmother would cook dinner for the two of us, and we'd end the night walking in the wheat fields catching fireflies and finally laying down a blanket in the field and sleeping together. I could take her to the finest restaurant in the world, and we wouldn't need reservations because all she had to do was smile at the host of the restaurant and we'd get the best table in the place. All of my wildest dreams would come true if I got to be with her.

"Jackson, you're quiet. Are you not a morning person?" Miss Hartley asked.

"I'm okay, so Miss Hartley, is it true what you said about me being the closest thing that you have to a friend in this town? I've been thinking about that, and it surprised me." I immediately regretted asking that question. It was off-topic, ill-advised, out-of-nowhere, and probably inappropriate. But the thoughts that had just ran through my mind never had before, and I wanted to know if it's possible that she maybe had thoughts even remotely similar to that. I had to know, what was there to lose? It seemed improbable, but it was definitely not impossible. I was probably only six or seven years younger than she was. She seemed to enjoy my company. Who cares if she's my teacher.

The pause that Miss Hartley took to answer my obscure question seemed like an eternity. She sort of smiled, looked around at all of the people in the area and finally faced me.

"Of course it's true, Jackson. You are the sweetest young man I've ever been around. A lot nicer than most people around this town. The other teachers in the school seem to dislike me, and my students are the only other people I know in this whole county. I know no one at all, and I don't seem to get along with anyone except

for you. I know it isn't typical for a teacher to say that kind of thing to a student, but I really did mean it. You are going to do big things in your life, Jackson. I hope that you don't want to stay in this town forever. You're better than that. You should broaden your horizons. Listen to me, I'm your teacher." She winked at me after that last remark.

I laughed a little at that, and I felt at that moment that I should tell her everything that came to my mind just a minute ago. How I can see us, spending time together and laughing together. I know that is a ridiculous thing to do, so I settle with, "I'd like to think of you as my friend too. My only two legitimate friends in the world are Jake and Justin. I think it would be great to have a friend like you in this town. You're an interesting person, and I am enjoying this week already."

Miss Hartley looked surprised, as if I had been too bold. Imagine what her reaction would have been if I told her what I had running in my head. She probably would have called my mom, a priest, and the principal and had me sent off to the psych ward. Shit, I'm an idiot.

After the surprised look that worried me, she showed her agreement that surprised me this time. "I am too, Jackson. It's exactly how I thought it would be. Thank you for helping me out. Now let's go see if anyone needs our help. Okay?"

By the time we got to the golf cart again, and finished our coffee, the Ore County Fair was in full swing. The paths were filled with people which caused me to have to drive carefully, weaving in and out of moms pushing strollers, and groups of middle school jerks who like to form groups right in the middle of the path where people walk.

The day went on and we talked

about everything that was on our minds. She asked what schools I wanted to go to after I graduate, if my parents are going to throw me a big party, or are they just going to throw me out of the house on my own. I asked her where she was from and what she did in school. She told me she's from Chicago. She wanted to go to law school after she got out of college but didn't have the money and decided to be a teacher instead.

She told me how she ended up in Ore County. "I love politics, and the government. I am hoping to maybe go into a law program sometime after I teach for a couple of years. I was lucky enough to have a great core of professors in college that made me consider teaching as a profession. I just sort of went for it. I do that a lot. I let people talk me into things very easily. Sometimes it's not a bad thing. I ended up here and I met a nice guy like you. So it's fine by me. My dad's best friend in college tried to restore the iron industry here. We used to come down here all the time in our family's cabin for mini-vacations. So when I knew I was going to be teaching for at least a couple years, I looked around here. And here I am."

Her story was pretty interesting, but I'll admit I sort of stopped listening after she said she'd met a nice guy like me. She involved me in her story of how she got here. It made me feel special. The day overall has been special, and luckily enough I have four more days just like it. I don't know how long it takes for someone to fall in love, because I never have been in love before. But I felt like I loved her. That must mean something.

IV

It was around nine o'clock at night when the perfect day was ruined. Miss Hartley had gone home, and told me to text or

call if I needed her for anything. She was just going to her apartment to grade some papers and sleep. I had to return the golf cart to the fair board center at ten o'clock and I was just making rounds until then. I stopped over at the ticket office where Jake and Justin were cleaning up, and talking about all of the "broads" they saw throughout the day and how they planned on sifting through the campsites trying to find a party. I waited on them to clean up, and told them they could roll around on the golf cart with me until ten if they wanted. I was driving all day, so I let Justin take the wheel for a bit warning him not to run anybody over. I know how he drives, and it doesn't match the definition of safe by any means. I wasn't worried too bad with the golf cart being so slow.

We picked up a couple of girls and drove them up and down the hill behind the grandstands where my car was. The hill is very steep, and we flew down it just because of gravity. The girls seemed to love it, and I decided that's who Jake and Justin would end up with tonight. I told them we had to go over to the dunk booth to see how they were doing on money, so we dropped the girls off. Jake lit up a cigarette as they were walking away. Jake has smoked since he was fifteen but he never let any female see it, because females, in general, find that unattractive, he thought.

At this moment, I wanted to tell them about the talks I had been having with Miss Hartley. Partly because I just wanted to tell someone, and partly because I was annoyed that neither of them had asked about it. They were all excited about giving me shit this morning, but now they were caught up in their own world of random girls now. I decided not to mention anything it all.

Justin, all of a sudden, slams on the

gas pedal of the golf cart. And we are out of control, I didn't think that this thing could move this fast. I hear Justin curse out loud saying that the gas pedal is stuck. I am sitting on the back seat of the golf cart, facing backwards and I fly off of it into the gravel. I look up, and see that the golf cart is heading right toward the Fun Slide. I glance at the top and notice that no burlap sack-equipped kids are at the top. Thank God. The golf cart slams into one of the support beams of the Fun Slide and crashes loudly. Kids in line are screaming and parents are gasping as Jake and Justin climb out of the golf cart.

I get up, and dust myself off. I have a small gash on my knee. It stings a little bit. After I conclude that no one got hurt, I find Justin.

"What the fuck happened, Justin?" I yell. I'm beyond pissed off. What am I going to tell Miss Hartley? She's been gone for forty-five minutes and this happens.

"Dude, I swear the gas pedal stuck on me. It just kept going." Justin pleaded.

I call bullshit. I've been driving that thing all day, and nothing like that happened to me at all. I run up to the golf cart, apologizing to everyone that I see whom has been a witness to this catastrophe. Justin was right the tires were still spinning on this thing and the gas pedal is to the floor. Shit.

Through the commotion of people yelling at us, and the children crying I dial Miss Hartley's number. I tell her that something went wrong with the golf cart, and explain what had happened. She sounds worried, and says she will be there in ten minutes. I'm so fucked.

V

"I can't believe that this happened. Jackson, who is supposed to be driving

the golf cart? You are, not Justin. I trusted you with this job, and I don't know that I can anymore. Thank God that no little kids were on top of the slide when you guys hit it. I'm going to go meet with the fair board now. I'll talk to you in a minute."

I felt so horrible. I let her down. Just as I thought I would on the first day of school with the boxes. This was a much bigger deal. I spent the whole day with the perfect woman, bonding with her. She was going to be my best friend, and I turn out to be another unreliable high school kid that can't handle anything.

The fair board office is located right in the center of the fairgrounds and I walk that way, as Miss Hartley gets in another golf cart with a police officer that has come to the scene. The entire walk to the fair board office I curse myself. When I approach the office, I see Miss Hartley talking with the cop and the fair board director about the incident, Justin is beside her. She looks like she is defending him.

Miss Hartley finished with the men, and approached me.

"Walk with me, Jackson. Let's talk." she sternly demanded.

I was scared out of my mind, this was not supposed to be how this wonderful day ends. I walked with her for some three hundred feet, into the now vacant horse barn and she began.

"I'm sorry that I yelled like that. It wasn't your fault. You were probably tired of driving since I didn't drive all day. Please accept my apology. This is my first week being a teacher and I just wanted everything to run smoothly. The truth is I yelled because after today, I found you to be the perfect boy. You are smart, responsible, and handsome. I guess what I'm saying is that I'm sad we might not get to do this again for the next four days, depending on

what is decided. Jackson, you didn't take advantage of any of the opportunities I gave you. You did exactly what I asked of you, and I thank you for that. This trip means a lot to me and we need this money to go on it. So I'm a little on edge."

"No, I should have realized Justin and Jake might get a little crazy on the golf cart. I shouldn't have let them drive. I'm just a little upset with myself for letting you down. I'm sorry." She could see in my face that I meant every word. My face was red, and I was embarrassed. I really wanted to impress her, and now I've let her down. As if this day wasn't already full of surprises, Miss Hartley smiles at me and gives me a hug. "It's okay Jackson, really. Thank you for being concerned. This might be inappropriate for me to say, but I like you Jackson, you've got your head on straight. Even though I told you that you're too good for this town, I would be sad if I only got to be around you for a year. You need to know that. So if you do want to stick around here after graduation, I wouldn't be disappointed."

Years of blending in suddenly made me feel like I was missing out on events like this all my life. I didn't blend in to Miss Hartley, she thought I was different. She liked who I was, and thought me to be superior to everyone else in this town. At the same time, she wanted me to stay. All of the feelings of wanting out of this town were gone because, now, there is something in this town that is worth staying for.

When you go through a day like I did, your brain is fried. You don't think about what you will do next, you just do it. I'm done blending in. I'm going to do what I want to do. I decided that I will change my life tonight. I am going to add some excitement to it. That's what Miss Hartley taught me in one week of school. Hearing those

words come from her soft lips, made me think about how soft they really might be. So I found out. I grabbed her by the hand and kissed her. What happened tomorrow, I didn't care. I'm going to do whatever I want tonight. And tonight, I wanted Miss Hartley.

It's The Little-Big Moments

By: Jackie Stanziano

Dear Reader,

I must admit I was totally baffled when it was announced that I had total freedom in choosing my seminar project. I went through a list of options: academic papers, marketing campaign, maybe even a short piece of fiction, but I couldn't find any ideas I was truly excited about. It was only when I saw the many poems written about a love gone sour that gave me the idea to make my project personal.

These letters are a piece of me. It was utterly terrifying to write about such personal experiences, to let an audience of people learn things about me that I haven't shared before, but I truly think that to be a good writer, one must be true to their readers. While discussing these with a friend, he explained it best when he said, "I'm not sure I was close to you until your letters uncovered the other half of you, the part that has a beating, unfrozen heart." The letters reflect lessons I have learned on love, on friendship, and on life. They are written to various people in my life, some I see daily and some I haven't seen in years. These moments – tiny, simple, and sometimes quick – have made the biggest impact in my life. Each one has inevitably changed how I see the world and has helped me grow as a person.

The purpose of this assignment was twofold. First, two of my biggest obstacles in writing are the prewriting and revision processes. In order to provide the best letters possible, I was forced to work on both of my weaknesses by planning and rewriting almost every letter multiple times. I would really like to send these letters to those who have changed my life, so I want every sentence, every word, to count. Second, I really wanted to do a project that meant something not only to me, but to those who impacted my life. Some of these moments were big, some little, yet they were all inescapably significant.

So thank you, reader, for sitting back and reading my little-big lessons through letters. Maybe you could learn a thing or two as well.

Sincerely,

Jackie Stanziano

Oh Karen,

You, my mother, are one hell of a woman. Where can I even begin? You birthed me, sat in pain for hours before you pushed me from your womb to bring my frail body into this world. What a bunch of bull, right? We both know you landed yourself in a C-section and had the benefit of foregoing childbirth for the third time. You've always been sneaky like that, Karen.

Growing up you were always the best kind of mom: generous, selfless, funny, smart. You were a member of the PTA, attended every school function, and packed a lunch until I was in the fifth grade. Even then I still received the little notes you used to sneak into my lunchbox sometime in the night. We had a little bit of a rough patch in high school. Do you remember? I'm not sure if it was my quasi-rebellious nature or just the stages a mother and daughter go through, but I do know that I'm glad those days are over.

The first month of college was really hard for me. I spent the first weekend in my room without Internet or friends, crying and calling you for advice. You told me that I had to stick it out and even though I knew you were right I still was angry with you. It took me a little over a week to get comfortable. I found a few friends and the frequency of my calls began to drop off. College slowly became bearable.

It was a mid-September day when I received your letter. I was walking to my room in King when I opened the letter, eager to see what was in the white envelope with nothing but my name and mailbox number on it. It didn't take more than two lines before the tears slid down my face. You wrote:

Dear Jack,

Love you & miss you – I know by now you have settled in some, met some new friends, and thrown up a few times. I know you will do well here as you have done well in every other aspect of your life. You have made us so proud, and I know you will continue to make us proud no matter what you do. You know I'm crying over this letter, and I know you'll cry to, even though you'll deny it. Enjoy and take every advantage of this time in your life before you have to settle down and start being a "responsible contributing member of society." See you soon – Call me – All my love, Mom.

This letter, so simple, yet so powerful overwhelmed me with a warmth I can only describe as love incarnate. Your letter, without your intentions, taught me something that I can never forget: what a mother's love should be. You push me to my limits, forcing me to face my fears so that I do things you are sure I will achieve. I know this doesn't seem like a big moment, Mom, but to me it was almost like an epiphany. I had always known you were a great person, but to know that your love and support will follow me no matter where I go is something I can never be grateful enough for. I can only hope to be half the woman and mother that you so effortlessly were for me.

All my love,
Jack

Dear Corey,

You have given me things in life that I had never expected in the first place. It's so funny to think we met at Wendy's. It was my first job and I knew from the moment I met you that I loved you. How corny does that sound? But to a sixteen year old girl who never had interest from any of the male gender, any crush who gave me attention was a big deal. We hung out a little bit, mostly with friends from work, and it killed me when you started dating our friend, Andrea. I hated that you didn't notice me enough to ask me out, but we both know she was what you needed at that time.

When you finally asked me out, almost two years after first meeting, I was more than ecstatic. After three long dates, a few awkward hugs, and a lot of fumbled conversations we started officially dating, and I was infatuated for a good eight months. By month four we had already exchanged "I love you" and I truly think that I did, in some naïve way. It wasn't until August of the following year when I knew for sure that I was in love with you.

It was a Wednesday during the first week of my sophomore year in college. I had just gotten out of my last class when I noticed that I had three texts, two missed calls, and a voicemail. I thought to myself, "Wow, I'm pretty popular today." The first text I received was from your dad. He told me to call him right away, but I decided to listen to the voicemail first. It sounded something like, "Corey was in a car accident. We don't know much, but he has a breathing tube in and was life-flighted to Akron. Let us know when you get this message." My heart started racing and my breathing almost stopped. The drive to the hospital was by far the longest three hours of my life.

We sat in the waiting room for you. Your parents, my mom. The doctors didn't tell us much: punctured diaphragm, collapsed lung, broken ribs, fractured heel. They were unclear about head trauma because you hadn't been lucid since the bystanders pulled you from your crumpled car. We waited for hours, waited to be called into the single-bed ICU room filled with monitors and scanners and a smell that sickens the stomach. We weren't allowed to stay with you.

Two days later I stood in my recently designated space next to your hospital bed. I held your bloodied hand until the metallic smell wouldn't wash off of my hands. The nurse came in to check your vitals; it had become our routine. She told me I could say your name, maybe you would answer back. I was too afraid to wake you, but your mom was more than eager. She, grasping your other hand tightly, called to you and your eyelids fluttered just for a second. She asked you to squeeze her hand: "Squeeze mom's hand, Corey." And you know what you did? You squeezed it. Her excitement spread quickly throughout the room and we knew that you were going to be all right.

Pumpkin head, you taught me to hope. In those moments of panic and overwhelming sadness, when we weren't sure if you would wake up the same, you surprised us with a simple hand squeeze. But this experience is too big to take away only one lesson. You really taught me that I was capable of loving somebody more than myself. Waiting in that hospital was one of the most excruciatingly terrifying experiences I have ever been through, yet in those moments I knew that I couldn't be without you. A life without you was unimaginable. I knew at that moment that your life was more

important than my own and I can't thank you enough for what you've given me. Those unpredictable, rather awful moments showed me a part of myself that I never really expected to see: a girl who could love.

I love you more than anything,
Jack

Dear Addy,

I can remember the day we became friends. We lived in the same area and one day while I was on a walk you tagged along. We started making jokes and realized that it was too easy being friends. It almost baffled me that we had never hung out before. You were funny and we both liked doing childish things like crafts and coloring. We could talk for hours on end until sleep pulled at our eyelids and dawn threatened the safety of the dark room we would sleep in. It wasn't more than a month before we started calling each other best friends.

Life went on like this for three years. Like all real friends, we had fights now and again. We wouldn't talk for a few days, but something pressing like a cute boy or school drama would always bring us back together. I thought you would be the one person who I would stay in contact with after graduation forced us to part ways, but I guess things are different now.

We had just started our senior year when rumors started flying about you and Vickie's recently ex-boyfriend. I asked you once if anything had happened and I was relieved to hear your denial. I knew you would never do anything like that, especially because you and Tom had been happily dating for almost a year. I told Vickie that you would never do something so selfish, so shady, especially to a friend. I knew everything about you; cheating isn't something you weren't capable of. I just knew it.

One day you stopped talking to me. I wasn't sure why, but I figured you were mad about something. That's when I got a tear-filled call from Vickie, asking if she could talk to me, a request I, as a friend, couldn't turn down. "Everything's going to change," she said. "I don't want you to know because it's all going to change." I told Vickie that whatever it was we could work it out, but in the pit of my stomach I knew. You had cheated on Tom with Vickie's ex, a boy she still was so desperately in love with.

I was angry. You texted me soon after and told me that you knew you were wrong. You apologized to me and I told you I needed space to think. After about a week I gathered the strength I had to text you. I was still mad, but I still wanted to work on our friendship. I decided that I didn't want to let the three years of friendship we had created to crumble for one mistake you made. I asked you if you wanted to go on a walk, like we used to, and talk about things. Your reply was short: "I'm really busy with homework. Sorry." Those six words brought tears to my eyes. Was I not worth the effort of working on our friendship?

Addy, you taught me that the people I love are the ones that can hurt me the most. Our friendship meant the world to me, but you let me down. I extended an olive branch and you sent me back nothing. You helped me learn that no matter how much work I put into something it always has the chance of failure. I don't regret the three years that we spent making memories, because you taught me a hard lesson in life. Thank you for that.

Jackie

Dear Meredith,

I've never been the type of person to have a lot of friends. Let me rephrase that, I've never been the type of person to have a best friend. Please don't think that I'm tooting my own horn when I say that I was pretty popular in high school. I never really fit into a clique, so I floated between all of them. I had always thought that I had best friends, but I walked into a rude awakening the day I left for college.

I didn't meet you until sophomore year. We joined the same group together and by chance we started to hang out. I was looking for a fourth roommate and you were available. About a month after we started living together you asked me one of the most important questions I had never asked myself.

My friend, as I'm sure you remember, had ditched me for her new boyfriend for the umpteenth time. We had been living together for three years already, and I was accustomed to the routine: we spend all of our time together, she finds a boyfriend, we spend no time together, she and her boyfriend break up, we spend all of our time together. You so generously listened as I complained about how she never took the time to see me unless she had some type of problem. I was tired of feeling used.

You turned to me. We were sitting side by side on your bed, watching Netflix like always when you turned to me and asked the simplest question: Are you sure you're getting as much out of your friendships as your friends are? I just stared at you for a few seconds until I could collect myself. The question really had stopped me in my tracks. I felt like punching myself for never realizing that I was allowing myself to be used.

See, from that day on I told myself that I would not put effort into friendships that weren't worth it. Instead, I began focusing on deeper relationships, with people who cared about me just as I had cared about them. You taught me what being a friend really means, Mer. It doesn't mean sticking my neck out for everybody, giving and giving, yet at the end of the day sitting back and having nobody to converse with, to ask me how I'm feeling. No, being a friend means finding those people who care just as much, who allow themselves to be just as vulnerable as you. You've given me that, Mer.

Besties fo life,

Jackie

Dear Tim,

I haven't seen you since graduation. It's crazy to think that it's been four years since I've talked to you. I've heard you've been having problems lately. I know that life doesn't always go the way we planned and that people disappoint you in ways you would never expect. I also know that as disappointing as some may be, others are going to surprise you when you least expect it. You did that for me, you know.

Tim, do you remember that time in eighth grade when you told me I looked beautiful? We were sitting in Mr. O'Cull's algebra class during eighth period. You walked up to my desk and you just stared at me for a handful of seconds. I could feel myself cowering because I had no clue why you were looking at me. I had just started wearing makeup again and I was lacking the confidence other girls my age possessed. The first time I tried to wear makeup Jake Wright told me that I looked like a raccoon. I couldn't wear makeup for a year after that.

When the words left your mouth I just stared at you. Part of me wanted to perk up, but the other part told me that you were just playing a joke on me. You were the guy that so many girls wanted to date, in the eighth grade sense of course: supervised trip to the movies, a little hand holding, maybe a peck on the cheek between classes. I was intimidated by your popularity.

You just stared for a few seconds longer and, as if you could read my mind, you told me that you really meant it. I stuttered out a thank you and you smiled and walked away. That was it, yet this moment has been one of the most impactful in my life. For a while after that, I had a new air of confidence about me. I would proudly sport my makeup and was able to talk to more people comfortably. You helped me with that.

Tim, you taught me that people will surprise you when you least expect it. I never in a million years would have thought that you would ever give me a second look. I think that was the first time someone besides my mother had called me beautiful. With such a small act of sincere kindness, you had really changed a piece of me. That is something I can never fully thank you for.

With honest appreciation and an indebted boost of confidence,

Jackie Stanziano

Dear Joe,

From the start we always had a bit of sibling rivalry. With just two short years between us we constantly tried one-upping each other as kids. While you were always the handy one, fixing things whenever needed and building creations out of wood, I excelled at academics. We used to fight like cats and dogs: using each other's insecurities as a way to make ourselves feel good. I'm not saying it was always bad; we had our moments of friendship. Remember that one time you locked me out of my room so I ran into the door and broke the new door frame? We hadn't lived in the new house for over a year and Dad was going to kill me. I cried as you pieced together the splintered wood and told me he would never know. That's always going to be our little secret.

There are things I never told you about that night you called to tell me about the accident. Even though I was only fourteen I can remember every moment, every feeling that hit me. I was staying with Aunt Terri, celebrating my spring break with Law and Order marathons and a lot of DQ. She was teaching that night so I was alone. You called and told me you had killed a man. It was one of those cliché moments when time seemed to stand still; I could feel my heart beating faster in my chest and for a second I forgot to breathe. When I didn't reply you asked me if I was still on the line. I wanted to answer you, but I couldn't process. You told me again and I knew from the sound of your choked back tears that you weren't playing a joke. Mom told me later that she was going to tell me, but you insisted you had to be the one. I think that took a lot of courage.

I sat on the floor and cried. I'm not sure how many hours I sat there until Aunt Terri arrived. She drove me the two hours it took to get home the next morning. Your name was in the paper and I know that must have terrified you, to have your business where everybody could see. At sixteen you already think the world revolves around you, that everybody is paying attention to your every move. In this case, people were paying attention. The press was making a spectacle out of your tragedy.

I sat in the living room with mom and dad for a while. You were in your room and mom said you hadn't left since the night before. She asked me to go to your room, to say anything. Truth is I didn't know what to say. I knocked on your door and sat on your bed. You had been crying. I knew because your eyes were swollen and your cheeks were flushed. I never thought less of you for that. I hugged you for a long time and we sat there and cried together. This was the moment I knew life wouldn't be easy for you anymore. Life would be different for all of us.

Your accident showed me that bad things happen to good people, Joe. This incident was the first taste of hard reality for me and it wasn't something I was necessarily ready for. But your slow healing and the strength I knew you had to muster every day to get out of bed astounds me, and you've always been an inspiration to me in that light. I know now that bad things are inevitable, but that courage and strength and the love from family will make the uphill battle a bit more manageable. You demonstrated the bravery I one day hope to possess and I am more than proud to call you my brother.

I love you,
Jack

Dear Grandpa,

First, I would like to start off by saying that you've always intimidated me a little bit. Your stern face and dry humor is hardly readable and rather confusing at times, but I respect it. Sometimes I think there's the tiniest little hint of you in me. I can't help but to remember the story of when the telemarketer called and asked for you, pronouncing your name entirely wrong. You told him that Bob Shive had passed away, and when he apologized you told him not to worry about it because he was an asshole anyway. Stories like that make me love you.

Do you remember that day when I had strep? Mom dropped me off at your house because she knew Grandma would cater to me. I was fifteen and going through a lot of inner turmoil. It had only been a week since I told Mom I didn't believe in God anymore. It was hard to let her know because I knew that she would be upset. I had been struggling with my faith for over a year, but I reached a point where I was certain of my decision.

I had been sleeping in the guest bedroom where I used to stay as a child. I had been awake for a short amount of time when I heard a soft knock on the door. You poked your head around the cracked door and asked to come in. I hadn't seen Grandma for a while and you told me that she had run to the store in order to get me some more soup. You asked if you could talk to me, and for a second I was worried. What could you possibly need to talk to me about? It's not like we had been close, and it struck me as weird because you didn't bring it up when Grandma was home. I waited for you to speak, but I never expected to hear what left your lips.

You told me that Mom had told you that I no longer believed in God. I didn't know what you wanted from me. Mom was already upset with me and I didn't want to disappoint you, too. As I stuttered over my reply you stared at me and I didn't want to answer. I remember looking down and telling you it was complicated, but in the end a simple no was all I could say. When I finally got the courage to look you in the eyes again you smiled and told me that you didn't either. I've never told anybody about that moment.

You showed me that it's okay to make my own decisions and to be my own person. You didn't cast judgment on me based on a preconceived notion of what it meant not to believe. I know that it must have helped that you were already on my side, but it was still nice to feel that connection with somebody. You showed me that I was not alone.

Love you always,

Jackie

Dear Dad,

I honestly don't even know how to start this letter. You are one of the best people I have ever had the privilege of knowing. Your commitment to hard work, to bettering yourself, and to our family makes me admire you in ways I'm not so sure I've been great at showing. Growing up you were always like a hero – so loyal, so dedicated, so strong. I loved to brag about you, to say, "Yeah? Well my dad can do this." You've always been a part of my life I could be extremely proud of.

Do you remember the day you told me about Troy? Troy's severe cerebral palsy prohibited him from typical physical activities, but left his brain unaffected. We had known him for only a couple of short years, but it was obvious that he loved you. He didn't have a father figure growing up and I'm sure that was hard on a nineteen year old kid. You used to make him laugh and you never made him feel weird or out of place. Most people couldn't make small talk, you could converse for hours.

When you told me that Troy was in the hospital I couldn't believe it. At first I thought maybe he had fallen or was sick, but you proceeded to tell me the horrific details that I still can't wrap my head around. Somebody set Troy on fire. He was out in his back yard when neighbors saw flames engulfing his body. They put the fire out and called 911, but it was too late. Troy died two days later. I couldn't tell if it was my own tearing eyes or just my complete shock that prevented me from seeing your face. When I blinked my tears away I saw something that I'd only seen once before in my life: you were crying, too.

Dad, in that moment you showed me that everybody is human. As a kid I always had an ideal built up that nothing could hurt you, that you weren't susceptible to pain. I'd seen you go through knee surgery, split fingers, and even tear your shoulder up, but never had you cried because of it. Your tears made me love you more, made me realize the true strength you must have had in that moment. I thank my lucky stars every day to have been raised by a man like you. You're still my hero, Dad.

I love you more than more,

Jack

Dear Reader,

Here we are, at the end of my letters. I hope that you were able to take away more than just my own story. From the good to the bad, I truly think it's important to know that everybody goes through hardships; it's just the little lessons you can learn through every situation that shape who we are as individuals.

I would like to leave you with one of my favorite quotes. It was written by C. Joybell C., an author known for her words of wisdom. She wrote that, "The only way that we can live, is if we grow. The only way that we can grow is if we change. The only way that we can change is if we learn. The only way we can learn is if we are exposed. And the only way that we can become exposed is if we throw ourselves into the open. Do it. Throw yourself."

Stay cool, reader.

Jackie

Dave Kimmel
Morpheus Literary Magazine
Tiffin, OH

Dear Dr. Kimmel,

A trend is occurring in retail where companies are switching to “fast fashion.” These stores produce garments that are made to wear down in only a year, making customers run back to the stores to find replacements. A select few stores have controlled the market of fast fashion, up until a few years ago when a company began to produce quality basics on a budget.

Uniqlo, LCC., a fast fashion clothing company originating in Japan, is changing the way America views fast fashion. By producing affordable basic clothing, such as button-up shirts, sweaters, and denim, Uniqlo is able to reach a wide range of customers. I am querying you about my advertising pieces because of the Morpheus’ ability to refine advertising pieces and apply them to my job search.

In the arrangement of advertising pieces for Uniqlo, prices are one of the main selling points. Because Uniqlo is remembered for their affordable clothing, prices are written across most of the advertisements. I am attempting to reach the untapped markets I believe Uniqlo is neglecting based on some research on their advertising. Likewise, I offer an alternative view of an advertising piece and recognize certain aspects of the piece that I believe should be improved on. Through my discoveries, I have found that Uniqlo should be focusing their “clothing made for all” on models with different ethnicities.

I am a senior at Heidelberg University in Tiffin, Ohio, majoring in English with a concentration in writing. I have experienced writing in many genres, ranging from technical writing to creative writing, and I am currently looking for employment in advertising. I am active on numerous fashion forums and I consider clothing to be my passion outside of writing.

Thank you for your time in considering my advertising pieces. I look forward to your response.

Best,

Clayton Burke

Uniqlo Launches Latest Line of Fall Button-Ups

Uniqlo, the global clothing retailer, is proud to announce their highly anticipated fall/winter 2013 button-up collection for men. The collection features our softest cotton flannel, durable corduroy, and our traditional oxford cloth. Men's items will be available in over 20 patterns and approximately 70 colors for each shirt, priced at only \$29.99. The collection will be available at all Uniqlo locations around the world and at www.uniqlo.com.

Uniqlo, renowned for their high quality basics, is making a statement this year with their button-up shirts by capturing the quality that is sought after in garments. Menswear designer Patrik Ervell said, "Uniqlo is consistently producing well-made products that make people like myself question the difference between a \$30 shirt and a \$300 shirt. Even though I am known for my high quality products, I have three Uniqlo oxfords that have become some of my favorite shirts."

Uniqlo's Flannel Collection

Raw Materials: Uniqlo is using high quality extra-long staple cotton from Pima. Extra-long staple cotton is the highest grade of cotton ordered specially from Pima to ensure the quality our customers deserve.

Processing: Uniqlo's flannels are brushed to create extra softness from the moment you put it on to the moment you pass it down.

Design: Uniqlo wanted to produce a flannel that is as soft as your dad's, but one that fits close to your body. Each flannel is designed to last, allowing it to become your favorite shirt.

Uniqlo's Corduroy Collection

Raw Materials: Uniqlo's corduroy is produced from cotton at 11 wales/inch. Known as the standard in its industry, the cotton used comes directly from Brazil giving each shirt a unique texture.

Processing: Uniqlo uses a pincord style of corduroy, maximizing the cotton in each cord.

Design: Uniqlo wanted to offer an alternative to traditional shirts with their corduroy shirt. Durable enough to endure the harshest of environments, each shirt is expertly designed to withstand rough conditions, while retaining the modern fit sought after in a shirt.

Uniqlo's Oxford Collection

Raw Materials: Uniqlo's designers traveled hundreds of miles to search for the perfect sample of cotton. Our cotton was hand selected from the Caribbean to be featured in our oxford shirts.

Processing: Uniqlo uses a tight basketweave to ensure quality and retention of the shirt's shape.

Design: We've updated the traditional oxford by precisely crafting the shoulders and arm holes, traditionally known as trouble areas in men's clothing. The back yoke provides enough room for easy

movement, with an added hanger loop for the shirt to retain its shape. Slim arm holes and a tailored waist round off a shirt that will last a lifetime.

About UNIQLO and Fast Retailing

UNIQLO is a brand of Fast Retailing Co., Ltd., a leading global Japanese retail holding company that designs, manufactures and sells clothing under seven main brands: Comptoir des Cottonniers, GU, Helmut Lang, J Brand, Princesse tam.tam, Theory, and UNIQLO. With global sales of approximately 928 billion yen for the 2012 fiscal year ending August 31, 2012, Fast Retailing is currently the world's fourth largest apparel retail company, and UNIQLO is Japan's leading specialty retailer.

UNIQLO continues to open large-scale stores in some of the world's most important cities and locations, as part of its ongoing efforts to solidify its status as a truly global brand. Today the company has a total of more than 1,200 stores in 14 markets worldwide including Japan, China, France, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Russia, Singapore, South Korea, Taiwan, Thailand, U.K. and U.S. In addition, Grameen UNIQLO, a social business established in Bangladesh in September 2010, opened its two first stores in Dhaka in July 2013. UNIQLO operates an integrated business model under which it designs, manufactures, markets and sells high-quality, casual apparel. The company believes that truly great clothes should be supremely comfortable, feature universal designs, are of high quality and offer a superb fit to everyone who wears them.

With a corporate statement committed to changing clothes, changing conventional wisdom and change the world, Fast Retailing is dedicated to creating great clothing with new and unique value to enrich the lives of people everywhere. For more information about UNIQLO and Fast Retailing, please visit www.uniqlo.com and www.fastretailing.com.

For more information or photos please contact:

Uniqlo USA | Clayton Burke | cburke@heidelberg.edu

ABOUT US

It doesn't matter who you are or where you live, UNIQLO makes clothes that transcend all categories and social groups. Our clothes are made for all, going beyond age, gender, occupation, ethnicity, and all other ways that define people. Our clothes are simple and essential yet universal, so people can freely combine them in their own unique style.

As our founder says, "UNIQLO clothes are MADE FOR ALL—highly finished elements of style in clothes that suit your values wherever you live. This unique concept of clothes sets us apart from apparel companies whose sole purpose is the pursuit of fashion trends."

Can clothing change the world? UNIQLO not only believes it can. We're already doing it.

Don't like Shopping Online?

Lucky for you, Uniqlo is opening 10 new stores on the east and west coast. What was once a small Japanese brand is no more. We are expanding quickly and want to welcome you to join us for the grand opening at each store between October 4th and November 1st. To celebrate, we are offering you a chance to win a \$500 shopping spree at each location.

- EAST COAST**
 10/04 BRIDGEWATER COMMONS, NJ
 10/10 STATEN ISLAND MALL, NY
 10/25 ATLANTIC TERMINAL, NY
 11/01 MENLO PARK MALL, NJ
 11/06 SMITH HAVEN MALL, NY
 11/06 WESTFIELD TRUMBULL MALL, CT
- WEST COAST**
 10/11 HILLSDALE SHOPPING CENTER, CA
 10/18 STONESTOWN GALLERIA, CA
 10/25 WESTFIELD VALLEY FAIR MALL, CA
 11/01 BAY STREET, CA

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Offer valid between 10/1/13-12/31/13
 Must present coupon at time of purchase



**Clothing Made
for All
Walks of Life**



Perfecting the Basics

For 29 years, Uniqlo has provided customers with tailored clothing, cozy loungewear, and an array of colors for all walks of life. Our clothing is expertly tailored to give you the

best value no matter what style you are seeking. We started from the basics to give you the perfect



fit you look for in your style. We provide one of the largest variety of colors to reach YOU as an individual, whether you love clothes or just need a shirt to do yard work.



Our Signature **S**hirt

That's right. We took the shirt that's sitting in your dad's closet and modified it for a slimmer, modern look. An Oxford shirt is as basic and versatile as you can get. This shirt fits close to your body, allowing it to be layered or able to stand on its own. Made from 100% cotton, this garment breathes in the warm weather and keeps you warm when layered.

Chinos: A Style for Everyone

Cut for all shapes and sizes. Our chinos, commonly known as khakis, are offered in three cuts: skinny, slim, and regular. Each cut flattering for a variety of body types, giving a sleek, versatile pant that is as comfortable as your favorite pair of sweatpants.

Cozy **K**nitwear

Our knitwear feels like something your grandma made for you. Styled for warm weather, our knitwear provides a perfect silhouette and ease of mobility, all while keeping away from the cold. Casual and stylish, our knitwear is a must need for cold seasons.





Introducing: Flannel Shirts

Men's Checked Flannels



Our flannel shirts are made with the softest cotton, keeping you stylish and toasty. Playfully checked for a casual appeal and available in a variety of patterns.

\$29.99

Shop Styles Now

It doesn't matter who you are or where you live, UNIQLO makes clothes that transcend all categories and social groups. Our clothes are made for all, going beyond age, gender, occupation, ethnicity, and all other ways that define people. Our clothes are simple and essential yet universal, so people can freely combine them in their own unique style.

As our founder says, "UNIQLO clothes are MADE FOR ALL—highly finished elements of style in clothes that suit your values wherever you live. This unique concept of clothes sets us apart from apparel companies whose sole purpose is the pursuit of fashion trends."

To remove your name from our mailing list, please [click here](#)

Have questions? Send us an email at wecare@mail.uniqlo-usa.com or call at 1-855-488-4758

M-F: 9am - 9pm/EST, Sat: 10am - 7pm/EST.

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Men's Mountain Parka

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Find Us On:



Clothing Made for All

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Slim Straight Jeans
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Pick Any
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Pick Any
Out-
\$39.99



Regular \$59.99



31 West 34th Street
New York, New York

www.uniqlo.com

Uniqlo LLC

:30

Announcer: For 29 years, Uniqlo has produced quality clothing for all walks of life. Every garment is perfectly tailored for a modern fit, allowing you to focus on your style. Each piece is available in a variety of colors, providing unlimited options to mix and match. We at Uniqlo focus on you as an individual no matter what your background is. Each individual is unique and deserves to have clothing that reflects a style important to them. Visit uniqlo.com to begin.

:30

Announcer: Are you looking for a sleek flannel without paying an arm and a leg? Look no further because Uniqlo would like to present our flannel shirts for men. Our button-down shirts have been a favorite for over 29 years because of the tailored design, quality material, and low cost. You won't find these shirts in your dad's closet. The shirts are designed to fit close to your body, providing a perfect silhouette. Made out of our softest cotton, our flannels are as versatile as it gets. Layer the flannel underneath a sweater or wear it alone; either way you'll stay warm. Visit uniqlo.com to start shopping.

:30

Announcer: Elegance. The first word you think of when you hear cashmere. Uniqlo proudly introduces our cashmere collection. Made of 100% cashmere, our collection brings back memories of sitting around a fireplace in the dead of winter. Fitting slim to the body and at a price affordable for all walks of life, our cashmere is a must for winter. Visit uniqlo.com to start browsing the array of colors available for any style. Be elegant this winter. Be unique. Be you.

:30

Guy 1: Hey, I'm cold can I borrow your Uniqlo sweater?

Guy 2 (astonished): Are you seriously asking to borrow a sweater?

Guy 1 (dejected): Yea?...My hoodie from high school is bulky and the weight makes me drip sweat. Yours looks soft and the perfect weight to keep me warm.

Guy 2 (nonchalant): I'm not letting you borrow my sweater. Why don't you just go over to the new Uniqlo store in Bridgewater Commons?

Guy 1: Wait, Uniqlo isn't just online shopping now?

Guy 2: Nope. All of your shopping insecurities can be put to rest. We know you have plenty of those.

Guy 1 (shivering): They're real concerns! Now give me your sweater!

Guy 2: No! The sweaters are starting at \$39.90. Even you can afford them. They have colors for all walks of life, which includes you.

Guy 1 (dejected): Fine. Can I at least feel the sweater then?

Guy 2 (angered): I said no! Pick them up at a Uniqlo store or if you're lazy, shop at www.uniqlo.com.

Uniqlo Ad Analysis

The ad that I am reviewing is a web promotion for Uniqlo's new line of Ultra Light Down, a series of vests and jackets that use down material to insulate them. The ad is only done for web promotion and viewers have to scroll down the page to read the whole ad. The ad, in my opinion, is trying to market the Ultra Light Down jacket. Uniqlo uses a series of examples to persuade the reader to think they have the best down jacket anyone can buy. Uniqlo uses many of their tradition advertising techniques, including their own font, use of thin, attractive models, and a discount to start the ad.

The first aspect I noticed of the ad was the use of the two letters "U" and "L" in conjunction to form their logo for the product. Uniqlo is trying to make the logo for this product recognizable when the customer browses their website and I believe they achieve this. Next to the logo for their line is a blurb about what the Ultra Light Down collection is and how they have updated it throughout the years. Directly underneath the blurb is a "shop now" icon, which lures the customer to shop their collection after reading about how revolutionary the product is. I believe this is where Uniqlo uses impulse buying to their advantage because they tell the customer how special their product is, which plays off of their excitement for the product.

There is a sale within the first glance of the ad. Sales are always an easy way to lure customers into buying the product, especially when the customer just heard how the product will function. Uniqlo uses the word "online exclusive" to promote their web store, providing more page views to their web site. Uniqlo is promoting \$10 off purchases of \$100 or more. From a

business standpoint, this sale is a goldmine. Customers are willing to spend the extra money to get \$10 off and they might buy something else in the store because of the \$10 off.

The ad continues to show pictures of a young Asian man and a young Caucasian woman. Their ethnicities play an important role because Uniqlo's motto is "Clothing Made for All." So far, Uniqlo has shown that their clothing can be worn by two ethnicities, but as we will see later, these ethnicities remain a constant in the ad. The pictures show the man and woman wearing the collection in front of what looks like a futuristic background. Looking at past ads, this seems to be something Uniqlo does in many pictures, and I think it works because customers can identify the background. The models are standing in ways that promote the product and on their wrist is a compact bag that holds the jackets.

The next part of the ad is my favorite because they answer questions and show pictures of the material close up. The first question is "How thin is Ultra Light Down nylon thread?" To accompany the paragraph of information to answer the question, Uniqlo provides a visual that details the thin thread. In the paragraph of information, the use of words and phrases like *durable* and *fine to the touch* make the product more appealing. The next question is "What does having 'no down pack' mean?" Again, Uniqlo shows a picture to illustrate what their down looks like and why it is different. The description sells the product because Uniqlo tells the customer that they are doing something that no other company is doing. Their jackets are lighter, thinner, and holds in feathers, unlike other company's jackets.

The final parts of the ad consist of a customer review, pictures of models wearing the product, and the variety that Uniqlo offers. The customer review is somewhat out of place because it is only used once. I like the use of customer reviews in ads because it adds a human

element to the ad and can be used as filler when there is too much white space. The customer review did all of this, but I think one review is too few. There were a few areas at the end of the ad that would have been used to place one small quote from a customer.

The pictures of the models are signature for Uniqlo. They are all fit and are standing to promote the product. My issue with the models is they are either Caucasian or Asian. There is no picture of someone who is African-American, Middle Eastern, etc. The slogan "Clothing Made for All" doesn't apply to this ad and it has the possibility to outcast others from buying their products. I am not mentioning how the models are skinny because Uniqlo is known for their slim fitting clothing and target that market, so I believe that argument is invalid. The models continue to display the Ultra Light Down well, while showing off different ways to wear the jacket. Uniqlo uses all of their own products for the models, so if someone likes the whole outfit, the customer may be more inclined to buy more product.

Under each type of Ultra Light Down, Uniqlo provides a color scale, showing the variety of colors. In this aspect, Uniqlo does achieve their goal to reach everyone because the majority of the Ultra Down Light has at least 15 color options. The price is listed under the colors, which is late in the ad. I believe Uniqlo did this on purpose because customers are more willing to look at something that they don't know the price of, compared to a product they know costs \$69.90. The price is also significant because they don't use .99, rather, .90 is used. I think that this works and is deliberate because .99 is used so often that customers get used to it. The .90 is alluring and it is still close enough to the next dollar amount that puts Uniqlo ahead of the retailing market.

Overall, the ad was able to depict their product and convey the message to buy the product. Everything on the ad is properly arranged to where no white space is wasted and each space counts. The ad is neatly put together, allowing each section of the ad to flow into the next. The wording for each description is unique to Uniqlo and it fits into the advertising markets. The problem with the ad is that the diversity they seek is not there. There is a huge market that Uniqlo seems to be straying away from. In other ads produced by Uniqlo, they used other races and ethnicities, but in this one, they missed the mark.

