

IMPRESSIONS

Literary and Art Magazine

Maryville College

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ABOUT IMPRESSIONS

In print since 1974, *Impressions* is an annual publication created by and for the students of Maryville College and members of the surrounding eastern Tennessee community. *Impressions* aims to present the best of art, poetry, fiction, creative nonfiction, and other creative works submitted by the Maryville College community and the Appalachian region. Online editions of *Impressions* can be viewed at impressionsmc.org.

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EDITOR'S NOTE

Sarah Smith, Editor-in-Chief

In this magazine you will find a unique array of prose, poetry, and art from across the Maryville College campus. This edition of *Impressions* truly shows the talent that can be found in our community. Our differences are showcased, but so are our similarities and shared experiences.

In a time of such division it is important to be able to find a common place in art and literature and I hope that *Impressions* is one such place to find common ground.

COVER ARTISTS' NOTE

“Pretend You’re a Whisper”

The *Impressions* staff came together on a snowy day in mid-March to eat banana bread and paint the images that comprise the cover of Issue 44.

Led by Liz Lane and painted in the style of Bob Ross, the resulting collage represents a sampling of the various artistic stylings that are present among the staff, and the Maryville College community at large.



Albrianna Jenkins and Claudia Briro-Pires paint the *Impressions* cover.

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Part I

Prose

Megan Wright
NEVER PUT OFF UNTIL TOMORR

Misty rain dotted the pavement, edging down the street. It wetted a row of five white mailboxes, which guarded five white fences. Enclosed by the calm white sameness of the fences were five yards, with gardens sprouting pansies and petunias and pink primroses, each groomed in an orderly manner and kept tamely within the boundaries of the gardens. Looming over the gardens stood five white houses. Rain-washed siding gleamed around the straight blue window shutters and doors. A white poodle sniffed primly at a petunia in front of the third house.

The rain continued on its path down the street, blind to the five white houses. As the droplets splattered onto the sixth mailbox, the tempo of the shower increased to an allegro, pounding on the gunmetal grey mailbox of the sixth house. The faded red plastic flag screwed to the side of the box stood at an angled salute, parallel to nothing. Once-white paint peeled from the greenish wood of the fence posts surrounding the yard; the gate stood ajar, creaking in the breeze. Untrimmed grasses, quivering beneath the weight of the rain, poked up their uncertain heads; flowers spilled wildly from the garden box, encroaching upon the frazzled green carpet of grass. The shutters, once blue, were now a dull grey. The front door was dingy, unwashed. A stray cat lounging in the reckless flowerbed bristled as the rain dampened his tangerine fur.

Inside the sixth house, the rain could be heard drumming away at the roof. In the back bedroom of the house, the occupant of an old wooden bedstead stirred at the sound, sighing in her sleep and tossing about under the motheaten coverlet. The rain crescendoed. The girl in the bed groaned and pressed a pillow over her frizz of orange-red hair. The rain

would not be ignored. With a huff, the girl sat up and slung her legs over the edge of the bed. She shoved her feet into matted house-slippers before trudging along the corridor toward the kitchen.

Through the speckled glass of the dirty kitchen window, the girl watched the rain sluicing down across her overgrown yard. The cat had meandered in through the cat-door and stood dripping at her feet, spitting out his frustrations with the weather. She leaned down to ruffle his fur, but he prissed away before her hand reached him. Slowly, as if rheumatic, she straightened, scratching her rump and sighing. “Something to eat, I suppose,” she muttered to no one as she began sifting through the pantry. She grasped about until her hands touched the cotton sack, the glass container. Then on to the refrigerator: the carton, the tub. Firing up the stove and retrieving a pan from the rack above her head, she began to cook.

“Wally,” her voice echoed down the corridor, “you want a pancake?” The cat’s face reappeared in the doorway of the kitchen only momentarily before he disappeared again through the cat door, deciding he’d face the rain and the wildflowers before he’d eat another of her meals. She shrugged, plopped a blob of butter into the pan, and began mixing the batter in a chipped ceramic bowl. Flour, one and one half cups. Sugar, one third... or was it two thirds? No matter, that seemed like enough. Swirl in the milk, sniff it to make sure it hasn’t soured. What else? Oh, yes, eggs. Eggs. She stuck the orange globe of her hair into the refrigerator, rummaging through Chinese takeout containers and molding oranges. No eggs. No matter. Stir the batter together, flump a spoonful into the hissing pan. The batter ran thin like water, coating the bottom of the pan. The girl turned her attention to finding her spatula. She was not an ugly girl, perhaps, but she wasn’t pretty, either. A shock of hair falling over muddy green-brown eyes, a mouth

ith a bottom lip full to the point of drooping. Pointy chin, long neck. Slender torso, probably a shapely figure hiding somewhere under the ill-fitting t-shirt and wide-legged cotton pajama trousers. Her arms were long and freckled as they fingered through the utensils drawer. No spatula. No matter. She selected a wooden spoon instead.

Above the stove, singed by smoke, hung the needlepoint she had started last summer. In wide red stitches, it read “NEVER PUT OFF UNTIL TOMORR”. Sure, she had never finished it, but it looked alright to her. The pancake hissed in the skillet. Wielding her spoon, she poked and prodded. The pancake tore in several places, and a handful of jagged-edged pancake pieces lay in the pan after she had flipped them all with the spoon. Syrup. She would need syrup. She knew this, but remained rooted to her spot, her eyes glazed as she stared out the window at the sheets of rain. She was still staring when the smell of thick black smoke recalled her to her task. The pancake pieces were shrivelled, sizzling furiously. She took a dirty plate from the sink and slid the pancakes onto it, clicking the stove off and plodding to the table. The pancakes rattled against the plate as she set it down, remembering her need for syrup. Syrup. Check the upper cabinets, no syrup. Check the lower cabinets, no syrup. No matter.

She fell into a wobbly chair at the table, tapped a pancake with an unpolished fingernail. Solid as a rock. No matter. She lifted the cake to her mouth, bit into it with a crunch like concrete between her teeth. And the dishes sat filthy in the sink. The needlepoint hung unfinished on the wall, “NEVER PUT OFF UNTIL TOMORR.” The old bed and the moth-eaten covers stood unmade in the back bedroom. The cat rolled outside in a bed of wet violets.

The rain slacked off in the yards of the five white houses. It drummed lightly on the white mailboxes, dripping

from the primroses. Slowly, the rain stopped, and the five white houses stood drying beneath a feeble ray of sunlight. But the rain had not stopped over the sixth house. It poured contentedly down, and the cat's tail flicked in the flowerbed.

Nate Kiernan

PDA

He was 18 when we met. His birthday, September 1st. A Virgo. Comfortable with himself. At least, more so than I was with me. He wrote poetry and liked sports, sometimes. He dressed formally, but wore his clothes with an ease that never demanded attention, though he received it. He inhabited the sort of popular where everyone knew him but he rarely hung around to be known. But that wasn't unusual. Nobody wanted to become too well known here, because once you're known there's no going back to being just another face.

This was the first of many lessons I learned too late. He was 18, I was 20. A few years spent skipping class left me with less time to grow up, and when I finally arrived at Lakeview – a small, semi-selective, semi-progressive liberal arts school notable only to the thousand or so people clustered inside it – I was hungrier and stupider than even my youngest classmate. He became my guide. My lover. My obsession. He would show me how to live, and then, just as effortlessly, he would break my heart.

Before he was him, he was Bret. We shared a table in English 120, a course designed to teach you how to write and talk and present yourself with the unflinching detachment of an academic, and before I even knew his name I knew I wanted him. They say relationships based on adoration never work out, that you wind up falling in love with the idea of a person rather than who they really are, but nobody believes what they read until they get hurt. I didn't care that he was younger. That his relaxed charisma disarmed me like a deflated balloon, and only he could fill me up again. We became friends the way most people in college do. We had the same classes, we found each other in the library and during dinner. Sometimes I'd text him about grabbing coffee and working on homework, but he was always busy. At least, he was for me.

I pretended not to notice when he would flirt with the girl behind me. It wasn't healthy to pine and if he didn't want me then I couldn't change that. But I noticed. During the evenings, my mind would drift off my homework and onto her Facebook page. Sarah Page. Her birthday, August 31st. She liked swimming and Fall Out Boy, and she liked Bret. They were dating by Christmas break.

Bret and I stayed friends, officially, but I wasn't good at hiding my sadness at his choice. I told myself he had to know how I felt, but that only made it worse to think he knew and he still chose her. I knew I shouldn't hate her, but I did. I could feel my pulse race when she entered the room with Bret, her hand in his, their hips so close I couldn't stop myself picturing them closer. She was pretty. She made people smile and she laughed a lot. She was perfect for Bret and I hated her. I hated her face and her voice and the image I couldn't erase of them fucking each other while I laid in bed, alone, thinking of all the ways I would never be enough, and even if I could be it was too late. He'd chosen her and left me to watch.

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I reached out to Bret over summer break and received fragmented responses which amounted to little more than pity texts. He was gone. This was over. Whatever we might have had disappeared when Sarah sat down behind us and I had to accept it. I needed to go out. Meet someone new. Find a cheap date and fuck him until all that was left of Bret was a name I didn't want to remember.

When I met Mark in the corner of Lakeview's only bar I didn't wait to see him leave with someone else. We drank and we talked and we drank more until he led me outside and invited himself in. I woke up in the back of his car with my hair smelling of beer and mistakes I didn't care to take back. He dropped me off at my dorm and left without any theatrics. I let the water run too hot while I rinsed the alcohol off my chest, the steam curling around my breasts and into my eyes as it moved upward and away like people so often did. I watched my

skin turn red and felt the sting of the jets, the pain scattering over my body, clawing and scratching at my naked form like so many hands. I opened myself to them. I begged them to take these feelings away.

When I left the shower, my skin was raw. I wrapped a towel around me and felt its modest comfort mix with a burn of charred flesh and embarrassment. There was no helping me, no escaping this hell I'd built for my own self-torture. The only thing worse than feeling alone was feeling nothing at all. I existed as a shell to be inhabited. By boys and unlived fantasies of being more than another fool who couldn't accept that they weren't wanted. I looked for my phone amid the piles of laundry and found it tucked under a photo I'd taken of me and Bret. I started to laugh and then I cried.

It was a harsh, ugly cry. I doubled over and felt last year come up and out of me in thick, heavy barks. I fell over and couldn't lift myself again. I forgot where I was and how long I was laying there, naked, bleeding emotion. My phone vibrated and I felt something in me crack and fall, hope mixed with grief and not knowing as I felt around for the device. I knew it wasn't Bret before I picked up the phone but that didn't stop me from longing for it to be him. Inexplicably, beautifully him. I was a mess. I knew I couldn't live like this, but there seemed no way out. Bret had found his way into my heart and even as I couldn't have him he refused to leave and let her move on. I felt something inside me I didn't recognize. Resentment. Hate. A burning frustration and disdain for this man who had charmed me and then left me to resolve those feelings alone. But as soon as I had felt them, the feelings left were gone. I hated Sarah and Mark and all the other people who had used me and hurt me and left me alone, but I couldn't hate Bret. Even at my worst, I was still in love with him.

I reached for my phone again, not knowing what I was going to say but knowing I had to say something. I checked the date on our last message. September 1st. I'd wished him a happy 19th, but he never replied. That was last week. The semester

started on the 15th and I wouldn't let myself repeat last year's mistakes. We were still friends. He owed me this much.

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My hand moved slowly over the chipped wood. I felt the places where pieces had been broken off, the areas where names had been carved and then carved away again, and wondered how many people had sat here before me. Our hands connected, awkwardly, a mess of fingers as they found their pairs. I studied my dangling feet, the scuffed gravel where I had slipped and the marks it had left on my bare legs, tracing the red lines with my other hand. "Hey." His voice broke the silence and would have sent me back onto the ground had he not reached out to steady me. "Maybe it's a map." I chuckled and began tracing the scratches again, this time with a new appreciation for their existence.

Bret was good at comforting me. That's why I'd fallen for him. He made me feel safe the way muscles and money couldn't. The way other people never had. I'd forgotten what it was like to be next to him, to feel the warmth of his smile when he looked at me. I was reminded of all the tiny things that made Bret so charming. The way he always cried when he laughed as if you had just said the funniest thing anyone had ever heard. How he looked at you when you spoke, like he was taking in each word and filing it for posterity because he cared enough to listen. He had a way of remembering small things, things that only mattered to the person they were about and which were routinely forgotten by everyone else. Bret made you feel important and valued. I realized that I didn't know nearly as much about Bret as he knew about me. Had I neglected to ask, or simply forgotten amid my self-pity? I felt a sudden disconnection from the man sitting beside me. I wanted to cry but couldn't. Something inside me knew it was wrong, to take advantage of him like that. He'd given me so much already. I untangled my fingers from his and slid off the fence. "Let's go somewhere else," I said. "This fence always makes me sad."

We walked into the open field just beyond the now forgotten fence. I hadn't noticed it getting dark and suddenly

felt the day's fatigue compelling me to sit down. Bret followed me onto the grass and we looked up into the empty sky. I wondered if he was thinking about me. About how things could have been different. I didn't reach out to him this time, but neither did he. We lay in silence, together but apart, each watching the sky from our own point. He didn't love me and I wanted to say I felt the same. I hadn't had a plan when I asked him out here. I had needed to see him, and he had humored me the way he always did. But now that he was here I couldn't find the words to make him stay. "I should be getting back." He was already standing up as he said this and I found I couldn't raise myself to meet him. "It was good seeing you again..." he trailed off as if he'd forgotten his words. He hesitated for a minute. "Take care of that cut when you get back."

As he walked away I counted each footstep. A minute, a day, a year. I didn't know how long it had been or how long it would be again, but I knew it was over. Actually and fully over. I laid back down and put my hand on my leg. The cuts hadn't hurt but now I felt the sting of each line moving its way over my body, leaving its mark as part of me slowly dripped away each moment I continued to lay there. When I finally left the field, my cheeks were wet. But he wasn't there to see.

Nate Kiernan
Elizabeth Brooks

This is Elizabeth Brooks. She was born in Modesto, and she died in L.A.

Elizabeth met a boy – the same boy who took this photo – when she was 22. He was in her poetry class, but he lacked the sensitivity for it. His work was blunt and dry, like a wall that's been left half-painted by hands who didn't know how to hold a brush. She liked this about him. He was imperfect, broken, unable to hide his flaws despite an awareness of them. He had room to grow, spaces to fill, and Elizabeth found she fit them well.

He didn't kill her. He lacked the capacity for violence, though there were times when he wished for it. Grotesque thoughts would wander through his brain, but with no means of escape or resolution they would simply fizzle out, leaving him drained and confused. And he liked Elizabeth, though he was unsure if he loved her. He loved many things about her, but the idea of loving her was somehow more difficult. It conveyed too much, got caught in his throat and turned sour before it could leave his mouth. He watched it grow, ripening into something beautiful, before he let it die, a feast for maggots.

They were together when she died. Not physically, but socially. A pair. A couple. They were known together, expected together, seen as a collective. She wasn't her, she was his, and he was hers, except when he wasn't. Elizabeth didn't talk about the other women. They were just another flaw, something she could fix. She knew he loved her, though he couldn't say it. She knew he thought of her, when he was inside them. Said her name when he came. They didn't mean what she meant to him. She felt sorry for these women. Did they know he didn't love them?

He did think of her, sometimes. When he was drunk. When he decided he wanted someone but couldn't let her go. So he drank and he fucked and he told her it didn't mean anything, and she let him stay. It was comfortable here. She was understanding. She cared for him in ways he knew he didn't deserve. When she cried he would hold her, and somehow this made it all ok. He was making amends, being there for her when he hadn't before. And if it happened again, forgiveness came easy.

It wasn't hard. Thinking of ways. Searching online. Looking at the results. There were risks. The possibility of failure was the biggest and most unacceptable. Or that it would be misconstrued. She needed him to understand, or why go through the effort at all? It wasn't easy. The doing. The planning and staging. She wouldn't know how he'd react, if he would understand, so she would have to spell it out. Put it in writing. Tell him what he couldn't know himself. He couldn't possibly know.

But it wouldn't be him. Or anyone who knew her. Housekeeping would enter the room she had rented, the one she had invited him to with the expectation of sex and alcohol. The one he would never arrive at because he had decided he couldn't do this to her anymore. She wouldn't see the text he sent to end things. The half-formed apology he couldn't give her himself. The pills worked too fast, too well. She would remember thinking he wasn't worth it, but maybe that's why she had done it. Because his faults were where she belonged, her mistakes the only possible outcome of a failed attempt to change a man who made her feel so small. She wondered if he would miss her.

He wondered if he should have called.

Jay Wilson
Drowning

You know, one thing I never understood about when we broke up is how you got over it so fast. I just think it seems a little unfair that I was lying awake, aching, praying that the rules would change and putting on my brave face, faking for years. You had a boyfriend within the month. I'm just saying. I broke up with you. We're raised on stories, shows, and movies where the dumpee is the one crying, eating ice cream, zoning out and reliving, wishing that it had gone differently. But nobody made a movie for me to learn how to cope when the dumpee is happy and the dumper is sat flat on a couch with a bottle of rum and a mind full of the "what ifs."

I want to tell you this to your face. So badly. I've set the scene many times in my mind when there's nowhere left for my thoughts to go and I can't rest my eyes. I want to know if you know that I've been dying off and on since we parted ways, but I also know that it was I who brought about my own demise. I have no right to unearth what's in that grave.

Did you know that I loved you? I know I said it all the time, but so did you and you see where that took us. No, but did you know that I really, truly loved you? I've wondered about that when I ponder those "what ifs" and I probably didn't realize it myself at the time, but when you're young there's a lot of things your mind is blind to. But I think I did. I don't think I ever fully told you that you were what kept me going most days when my stress was overflowing and I needed an escape. Your smile was contagious, your laugh my favorite song, and every word that dripped from your lips filled the ocean that I wanted to sail away on and explore forever more. You were my captain and I was your loyal, loving first mate, content to follow you wherever you guided us.

Until I wasn't. Until we hit those stormy seas and I let my fears blind me. I grabbed the wheel when it wasn't mine to grab and I steered us off course and I drowned in the process. You were never to blame, I always thought, and as I sunk lower and you sailed away on the only life raft, I believed, truly, that I deserved it. You found yourself a new first mate and I found myself under the service of Captain Morgan. I take another drink.

The thing is, I don't want to go back to you. Not now, not after we've spent so long drifting on different wavelengths. I know you aren't the same, or at least I'd hope, and I know I've been eroded to the point where I'm unrecognizable. Some days I think it's exposed the good under the hurt, washed away the impurities to leave some gold shining through, but it's left me more fragile than before and now when I think back to you I feel it deeper than I ever had. And I see clearer than I did before, but now I'm angry where I was just sad and supportive. It's just now washing over me that it was less than a month. In the grand scheme of things, when the world changes face and shape, as the winds of destiny blow away the old dust and alters perspectives, a month is barely a breeze. I've felt the pain of crashing waves knocking me down for days when I'd think of you as you sailed away. I wished you'd circle back for the longest time, and my love wouldn't die but I wished that I might if only just to alleviate the hurt I felt for the longest time. But you were fine.

Did you ever love me in the first place?

I lay here, watching the fan blades circle slowly, floating lonely, the bottle in my hand my only company, and I wonder where you've floated off to. I hope you're doing well, but I also sort of wonder if you ever do this too. Are you still with him? Is he treating you right? Ultimately, I know it's not my place. There's no point in reminiscing, yet here I stay, stuck in this current, fallen from your grace.

Allison Franklin
Scents and Scent's Ability

Every spring since I can remember, my mother has shown off her green thumb by transforming the front yard into a colorful oasis. When the newly-planted flowers opened in full bloom, she would excitedly urge each passerby to smell them. Each time I would lean over a flower to enjoy the aroma, I remember wondering--just for a flickering moment--why she thought smelling the flowers was supposed to be so intriguing. As I sniffed for the pleasant smell that she assured me was hiding within the flower, I was never engulfed in any obvious cloud of scent. I remember peering directly into brightly colored petals that reminded me of my mother and so diligently trying to find the pleasant smell that eventually I convinced myself I could smell it. I wanted so badly to share my mother's excitement, so I always told her that I enjoyed the smell. The strange mixture of confusion and uneasiness that I felt when my head was buried in silky flower petals had a way of lingering even when the flowers were no longer in bloom and snow fell on our East Tennessee farm.

I have always been convinced that my mother was somehow part bloodhound, as she is always seemingly able to identify the source of any scent floating within what seems like a 50-mile radius of her nose. Many times, when my family of four was packed into our gold Subaru Forester for a road trip, I was awakened from a nap in my booster seat by a shrill, "Sheeew!"

"Do you all smell that skunk?" my mother would ask as her face contorted into a grimace.

It was not unusual for the rest of us to turn and look at each other in confusion as we sniffed for the elusive stench. Within the next few moments, though, my father and

sister would grimace in agreement as their noses detected the skunk. Almost as if in a moment of *déjà vu*, my nose never burned with a force that produced a grimace, and no cartoonish light bulb appeared above my head. Instead, my eyes closed, and I willed my nose to become a radar, sending out radio waves sure to detect any smell within its path. After seeing the rest of my family experience such outward reactions to the skunk's odor, my subconscious mind began to play tricks on me.

"I think I feel something," I thought to myself. "That faint itching sensation in your nose is probably the skunk's smell."

Though the anal glands of a rabbit-sized creature were able to somehow evoke my hidden memories of flower sniffing, it had not occurred to me at the time that I might not be experiencing smell the same way that the rest of my family did. Looking back, it seems strange that I did not pick up on my differences earlier. Little did I know, my mother had begun to catch on to my dilemma before I was even aware that I had a dilemma.

Every day on the ride home from elementary school, I sat in the back of the trusty gold Subaru and gave my mother an exhaustive account of the day's happenings as Paul Harvey's "The Rest of the Story" played in the background.

"What did you do at school today?" my mother asked each day with the same tone of genuine interest in her voice. Her nurturing spirit fostered this kind of relationship from the time that I was old enough to communicate. As the car wove through the historic district of Rogersville towards home, she looked at me in the rearview mirror with eyes that seemed to beckon me to say more. The perils of gym class, the square-shaped pizza served in the cafeteria, and my spelling words for the day—my mother heard it all. She always made sure to ask questions, and she somehow remembered the stories from day

to day.

I now know that she had begun to notice a pattern when her bionic nose went on high alert and she repeated her coin phrase, “Do you smell that?” Though I usually claimed to smell the scent when asked, she noticed from my facial expressions that I did not seem to be experiencing the same thing that she was. She also realized that I never claimed to notice the presence of a scent unless someone else mentioned it. My mother, the picture of a Southern lady, has always been a woman of great tactfulness. As was the case with any topic, she chose her words carefully when inquiring about my sense of smell. She disguised her motive carefully, in much the same way as a pet owner administers a pill to a skeptical animal. The occasional quizzing was wrapped in a piece of Kraft cheese like a heartworm pill. Instead of pressing the issue further, my mother simply began to do some research.

My maternal grandmother, though, wanted answers.

“Wait! See if you can tell what I’m cooking!” she blurted as I stepped through her front door. Though she was visibly excited, her tone carried a hint of inquisition. The half-smile on her face made me feel like she expected me to guess incorrectly. My sister and I camped out at her house every Wednesday and Thursday after school while our parents worked. Thus, mid-week had become synonymous with fresh, country-style cooking and funny stories. My grandmother had worked as a nurse since the 1960s and wasted no time in declaring to anyone she met that she had “seen it all.” By adulthood, most Southern women seem to develop a small screen between the brain and the mouth that ensures no improper speech comes from a Southern lady. My grandmother, however, had skipped that stage of development.

“Can you tell?” she prodded with the same half smile on her face. “See if you can smell what’s cooking.”

“Umm...” I started as I sniffed the air for a clue. “I...

Um...I don't know."

"You can't smell that turkey?" she asked as she cocked her head in confusion. "I can smell it all the way in the bedroom!"

Just as the how-to manual for Southern mothers and daughters seems to dictate, my mother and grandmother were often chatting and conspiring. Though my grandmother lived in the subdivision that joined my family's farm, the two kept the local cell phone towers busy, transmitting multiple calls a day. My grandmother knew the most intimate details of my life practically before I did. Thus, in the following weeks, my grandmother repeated the same dialogue before I had even closed the front door or taken off my backpack.

"See if you can tell what I'm cooking," she asked, watching me intently.

Again, I inhaled deeply and desperately searched for some sensation in my nostrils. I finally gave up.

"I really... don't know," I answered. She seemed to be connecting the dots in her head. Though I was not yet aware, she and my mother had already been plotting ways to find out whether or not I could smell.

"I don't think you can smell," my grandmother then said as simply and matter-of-factly as if she had just said, "I don't think these potatoes have enough salt." Though my mother had encouraged her to wait for the right time to mention the topic to me, she hadn't heeded the advice.

I look back and think this moment should have felt more significant at the time—it should have felt like it was a turning point in my life. Instead, I didn't fully believe my grandmother, nor did I immediately accept that a part of me might somehow be faulty.

"Really?" I asked her. I listened as she explained her reasoning. My grandmother explained that she and my mother had asked my pediatrician about the possibility that I was truly without a sense of smell. They had mentioned nothing about this secret conversation to me because they "didn't want to

scare me.”

“Your mama didn’t want me to tell you,” my grandmother revealed with a half whisper as if she were telling me some juicy gossip. “It’s nothing to worry about, though. She said that something in your brain probably just didn’t develop when you were a baby.” The pediatrician’s blasé reaction had appeased my family. Ironically, this interaction would nearly halt their inquiry for years to come.

“She said it’s actually not uncommon,” my grandmother continued as if this were supposed to be a consolation. Keeping in usual character, my grandmother dropped a bomb on my shoulders and then seamlessly moved on to a new topic. The train of conversation kept moving down the tracks, but I had fallen out of the train car onto a rocky embankment.

I felt my cheeks flush with embarrassment and frustration. “I can smell,” I thought to myself. I sat for the rest of the evening in a bubble of introspection. I couldn’t let anyone at school find out about this.

I continued for the rest of the school year to deny any possibility that something could be wrong with my sense of smell—the one sense that everyone was supposed to have.

.....

“They’ve been like that since I was born,” explained my sixth-grade friend, Anna as she looked down at her feet one day in class. I had always wondered why her middle two toes were connected to one another, but I had never had the audacity to ask. Lucky for me, a classmate had done the dirty work.

“Yeah, my toes look like that because they’re webbed.”

I was shocked by Anna’s lack of embarrassment! Not only did she wear sandals that proudly displayed her webbed toes, but she also had shamelessly acknowledged

that she was not a perfect being—a concept previously unknownst to middle school man.

“Whoa! Cool,” said our classmate with a nod.

The gears began turning within my sixth-grade mind. Anna had openly discussed her unusual trait and was met with positive feedback!

“I...actually...uh...can’t smell,” I muttered half-heartedly after much pondering.

“Cool!” said Anna and the pre-pubescent voices of my male classmates standing near.

This was music to my ears.

As years passed, I became comfortable admitting that I did, in fact, lack a sense of smell. Though some of the reactions I have received through the years were less than comical at the time, I began to discover the plethora of humor that flowed forth as listening ears reacted to my admission.

“No. That’s just not possible,” stated Amber’s mother confidently. Her hands were placed on her hips, and she appeared to be testifying in court rather than discussing whether or not I could smell the food that she had prepared.

“Ladies and gentlemen of the jury,” her face seemed to be saying. “As you can see from the evidence I have presented to you tonight, the defendant is, in fact, able to smell!”

I stood in Amber’s living room, staring up into the critical eyes of her mother. I had just explained to her that I could differentiate between different tastes, yet could not identify specific smells.

“No. If you can taste, then you can smell,” Amber’s mother had said. “You see, they go hand in hand. That’s how it works.”

I suddenly felt like a foreign object in that room, though I had visited Amber’s house many times before. Her mother peered down at me as if I were a disoriented traveler to whom she had just given brilliant direction.

“Well...I...Uh...I actually,” I stammered. I could feel my face turning red with embarrassment as I racked my brain

for a response. At thirteen years old, correcting an adult—especially one who was already intimidating by nature—was a daunting task.

“Yeah, that makes sense,” I eventually responded as I escaped the situation to resume playing board games in Amber’s room. Naturally, this woman I had met a handful of times knew more about the functions of my body than I ever could.

As I entered high school and became interested in wearing perfumes, I enlisted the help of my family members in choosing a scent that they felt would complement my style and personality. I stood in the kitchen and listened to my mother and sister describe each perfume as “sweet” or “like flowers.” I noticed that my father, though he too was listening, had not yet attempted to describe the perfumes that were now beading on the countertops from being sprayed into the air so many times. A carpenter by trade, my father viewed the entire world as one complex math equation. For him, all of life’s questions could be answered with a formula. As I looked at him, I could almost see the protractors at work within his brain.

“A strawberry,” he finally said, still deep in thought. “This perfume smells like a strawberry candy tastes.”

I nodded, as the concept began to make sense in my brain.

“Most things smell just like they taste.”

.....

Through the years, I have also found that smell is not the only sense that is heavily connected to memory. As I was growing up, my mother always told us stories about the smell of her own grandmother’s basement.

“Any time I smell that familiar musty scent, it reminds me of being a little girl playing in my grandmother’s basement,” she always told my sister and me.

It was not until I was a hungry high school student rummaging through the refrigerator one day that I truly

understood the feeling she described through that story. From the refrigerator door, I took a jar of pickle slices that were different from the Vlasic brand “Sweet Baby Midgets” my mother usually bought. This particular jar had no label and had obviously been homemade. When I began to chew on one of the pickle slices, an odd feeling came over me, but, at first, I was not quite able to put my finger on it.

“Have you bought these pickles before,” I asked my mother in a state of confusion. She studied the ceiling as she tried to recall.

“Oh, those are ‘Bread and Butter’ pickles,” she said. “I don’t think I’ve bought those in a long time.” She hesitated a moment, seemingly continuing to think. “Your grandmother used to make them all the time, though.”

When she mentioned this, my brain connected the dots. Eating one of those pickle slices had transported me back to my grandmother’s old house in Dandridge, Tennessee and back to my five-year-old self. I didn’t recall a specific instance in which I had eaten these pickles, but the taste brought back the warm feeling of standing inside the Dandridge house in springtime, the sight of wood paneling all along the walls, and the intrigue of exploring the home where my mother had grown up.

Though no other foods have ever evoked this depth of emotion, music is often able to do so. Aside from “Classical Child” cassette tapes and the sing-alongs found in episodes of “Barney & Friends,” much of my introduction to music came from my parents. Neither of them seemed to be ready to say goodbye to their own respective childhoods, and this was reflected in the music that wafted from through the house in which I grew up. Even during our family road trips made in the trusty, gold Subaru Forester, we kept a shoebox filled with CD’s from artists such as Elton John, Little River Band, Lobo and Bread

in the floorboard.

One of my parent's friends had burned a '70s mixtape for them that included songs such as "Afternoon Delight" by Starland Vocal Band, "You Are the Woman" by Firefall, and "Desparado" by the Eagles. This particular CD was played on repeat so many times that I had the entire lineup memorized. While most '90s children played music from The Backstreet Boys on repeat, I, like my parents, was stuck in the '70s.

On the night of my very first sleepover, my friends and I had agreed to each bring our favorite CD to play before bed. I received many confused glances from fellow fourth-graders as I carried a '70s mixtape from that very shoe-box into the sleepover. That night, instead of playing "You Are the Woman" by Firefall for the umpteenth time, I reluctantly listened as Gwen Stefani re-taught us how to spell the word bananas.

My love for 'classic music' has followed me into adulthood, but any of the songs found on that mixtape instantly transport me back into the cramped backseat of the trusty Forester.

.....

Ironically, I have now come to love the very aspect of myself that, for so long, was the subject of my embarrassment. Though I have yet to receive a formal diagnosis or undergo any invasive testing, the ever-credible Wikipedia has assured me that my condition affects around two percent of North Americans. I enjoy the imaginative challenge that is presented as I try to understand something's scent by a blend of textures and tastes with which I am familiar. In my experience, seeing the roses planted in my mother's flower beds, leaning my face towards the silky petals, and peering at the tiny details has proven to be better than smelling them.

Coleman Bomar
A Holy Bullet

My classroom was on the first floor, next to the nun's lounge. Next door we could hear the rap of a yard stick as it came upon buttocks with swift impartiality. Each of us prayed, hoping to never face similar punishment. Mother Brag was momentarily out of the room and as such, we could rest easy for the time being. This "school" was authoritarian indoctrination disguised as religious purity. Here, they were promoting servile behavior and beating down any thought or belief that was not par with classical Catholic tradition. They despised leadership and taught children to be sheep. It took the best we had not to get shorn.

When Mother Brag begrudgingly entered, a feeling came over the room that resembled her old habit. Everyone became eerily stiff, fearfully ordered and utterly devoid of emotion. "Children why do you continue to sin and commit mischief," said the old crone, "must we beat it out of you?" She slumped down in her armchair with a sigh and looked gravely at each one of us with a stare that could burn oil. I realized sitting in the front of the class was a bad idea and I regretted my decision once I was called up to recite. "Recall for me Matthew twenty-three verses three and four," said Mother Brag. I knew this verse. I fantasized yelling it at these old ordered hags for three years now, so I spoke: "Do not do what the Pharisees do, for they do not practice what they preach. They tie up heavy, cumbersome loads and put them on other people's shoulders, but they themselves are not willing to lift a finger to move them." I then proceeded to sit down when my ear was suddenly seized by a pale bony hand. "Did I sense a hint of rebellion in your tone unrighteous child," she scowled. As beads of sweat streamed down my cheek I contemplated the consequences of what I was about to do. I thought on the verse I had just read,

asked for forgiveness and spat on her. Yes, I spat on a nun. Saliva shot out of my mouth like a holy bullet and landed on her furiously wound unibrow. The aim was impeccable. My class was shocked but soon began to chuckle at the “heresy” while Mother Brag sported a face that not only could curdle new milk, but would likely kill all cows within a thirty-mile radius as well. I was paddled bloody that day, but righteous pain never felt so good.

Eliza Komisar
Mind Over Matter

Daniel died at age fifty-five. He had a bad heart. Everyone knew it. At his funeral his wife, Dinah, seventeen years his junior, sat in the front pew with their three-year old daughter on her lap. She didn't hear a single word anyone said, not even the words that came out of her own mouth. After they had buried him, she wanted to leave, quickly. Maria needed a nap, and she wanted to be alone. As she was trying to make it to her car, she felt someone tug at her sleeve. She could feel her before she had even turned around. It was Caroline. Of course, it was. She thought about ignoring her; walking forward like she only felt the breeze, but she turned around.

"What do you want?" she was exhausted and looking into the big round eyes of Daniel's ex-wife only made her more so.

"I loved him for twenty-five years. I gave him my whole youth. What do I have now? Nothing. Not even pity. That's all yours too. The house, the baby, the last name, the pity. All I have is a hole in my heart that is going to suck me in." She spat the word 'pity' in Dinah's face.

"I am not going to stand here and fight over who loved him more, Caroline." She would've cried if she had a tear left. She wasn't even surprised to see her here, or that this was how she was acting.

"I did! There is no fight. You didn't know him like I did. You couldn't possibly have. But you get to sit right in the front pew with his baby and play the grieving widow and."

"I am the grieving widow. I was his wife. He died in our bed, and now I have to raise our baby alone. So, just tell me what you want from me and leave," she could feel all the anger she'd been holding back at Caroline bubbling up. She had met

Daniel after they'd divorced, but that didn't matter to Caroline.

"That little homewrecker. I was married to him for twenty years! And we were together for five before that! I gave him my whole youth and he just trades me in like it's nothing," that's what she would always say. She had the speech rehearsed. She'd tell it any chance she could to anyone who would listen.

"Don't worry about her," Daniel would tell Dinah and he'd crinkle his nose, push up his glasses, and go back to working on a case like he always did in the afternoons. Dinah would sit in the chair in his home office and read while he worked. She liked to keep him company, and he would look up and smile every now and again. That was all Dinah needed. She was never a talker. She didn't need grand displays of affection. She didn't think she would get married at all, and once they got married neither of them thought they would have any children. They had a way of surprising each other, but she guessed that was what happened if you said you loved someone and meant it.

But, here Dinah was. Right in front of Caroline without Daniel in between them. She was still holding Maria even though her arms were growing tired. She didn't ever want to put her down.

"I want his shoes."

"His shoes?"

"Yes. I bought them for him. Every pair."

"Caroline, he's bought new shoes since then," Dinah couldn't believe how ridiculous she could be. Then, Caroline started to wail. People turned around to see who was causing such a fit, and Maria began to cry in response. Dinah had just buried the love of her life, and now she was fighting with his ex-wife about shoes in the cemetery.

"Okay, okay. You can have his shoes. All of them," she just wanted her to stop, "Why don't you come by next week and you can pick them up?" Caroline agreed to this and let

her go. Dinah immediately packed up his shoes when she got home and went to sleep.

The next week, Caroline came by the house. Dinah wanted to give her the bag and that be it, but it wasn't.

"Can't we have a cup of coffee?" she asked.

"You want to have coffee? We have never had a civil conversation, and you want to sit in my living room and have coffee?" Dinah was again blown away by Caroline's brazenness.

"I think Daniel would've wanted us to support each other," she looked at Dinah with those big eyes that made her look younger than she was.

"Fine, come in," she replied with reluctance.

"You know, if you painted the living room a shade or two brighter blue, it would bring more light into the house," she craned her neck up at the window and twisted it to look around the room. She loved acting like she knew things.

"Thanks. I'll consider it," she turned on the coffee maker and stared at Caroline on her couch.

"It was a heart attack?" Caroline was perched at the edge of the couch.

"You know it was a heart attack." Dinah's voice came out soft.

"Right, of course," Caroline stared at the floor as Dinah brought in two cups.

"I don't have any milk. I haven't been to the store."

"You don't want to show your face, do you?"

"Excuse me?" she almost choked on her words.

"I just meant, you don't want to be around people yet. Have them come up to you and tell you 'I'm so sorry for your loss,'" she took a sip, "They don't understand. They didn't know him. Not like we did." Dinah snapped her head around at 'we.'

"We are not friends. We loved a man and now he's dead and one of us has been trying to bring the other down for ten years."

"And I feel awful about that, Dinah, really, I do," she reached for Dinah's hand, but she pulled back, "We are con-

nected in a way that neither of us wanted, but there isn't a thing we can do about it. I am never going to judge your grief. Don't you see that? I know I've been hateful, and I am ashamed of how I acted at Daniel's funeral, but I want to help you."

Dinah didn't know what to say. She felt like she was being tricked. She had spent all this time hating Caroline, being afraid of her, but she was right. They had a bond that was strong whether they liked it or not. Caroline started coming over every week for coffee. Sometimes, they didn't say anything at all. Dinah found it oddly comforting.

"How did you and Daniel meet?" Caroline hadn't spoken at all that afternoon. She had been staring out the window sipping her coffee while Dinah worked on crocheting a blanket.

"Caroline, I don't know if we should--"

"Oh, enough with the 'we should' 'we shouldn't'; I want to know. I never did pay attention to the story when it got brought up," she crossed her legs and sat back on the couch.

"Alright, we met at the bar that use to be down the street from here."

"What was Daniel doing at a bar?" Caroline scoffed.

"He looked exhausted," Dinah continued., "He was still wearing his suit, so he looked a bit ridiculous. I went out with some girls from work and everyone was jumping around and there he was in a three-piece suit with his glasses all foggy," she fiddled with her hook and closed her eyes. She was pretty sure she was still talking.

She asked him if he danced and he laughed. She wasn't in the habit of asking strangers to dance, but she thought he was handsome and then she panicked. He remembered it was rude to laugh in someone's face right when she turned around to walk away.

"I'm sorry," he stood up and Dinah walked back over to him.

"You don't dance then?" she pushed her hair behind her ears. He never stopped making her nervous.

"Not even a little bit, but I can talk- I mean obviously

I talk- do you want to sit?" he stammered. They talked for a while and eventually she got him to agree to one dance. It was awful, but he would've done it all night if she asked again. He told her that four days later when he found her number that she'd stuck in his coat pocket. She thought it would be cute, but he never checked his coat pockets.

"That's sweet." Caroline looked down at her legs, "He seemed like he was in better health these past few years." she changed the topic, clearly upset. Dinah knew she should try to mention only certain things about Daniel.

"He did, didn't he," Dinah could feel her eyes welling up. Caroline reached for her hand. She almost jerked back from instinct, but instead she laid her head on Caroline's shoulder and they cried. She could feel Caroline's tears hitting her head, but she didn't dare move.

A few weeks later, Dinah found Caroline in Daniel's office.

"I'm sorry. I was just looking at his things," she sounded small and her eyes looked up at Dinah like a child's.

"It's alright. I don't think I've been in here since the funeral," she walked to his desk and picked up the picture of the two of them smiling outside the Washington Monument.

"It's a nice picture," Caroline moved to the bookshelves and ran her hand along the spines almost in a trance.

"You can talk about what's bothering you," Dinah moved closer to her.

"No, I don't want to upset you."

"My husband's dead. This is about as upset as I can get."

"I guess, I am just having a hard time letting go and I thought, maybe if you could just walk me through what happened. We weren't speaking at all when he died; I just don't know how this could happen," she sat down in his chair and pressed her hands to her temples.

"He was eating right, exercising, but the doctor said

sometimes this just happens. One day they're fine, and the next morning they're gone. Nothing anyone could've done," Dinah put the picture back on the desk. She didn't want to mess it up.

"He wouldn't have cared," she told herself, but she straightened it out the way he had it anyways.

A few months passed and Caroline and Dinah could talk about more than Daniel. It started slowly, with a copy of *Til We Have Faces* that Dinah lent Caroline.

"I don't get it and I did not like it," Caroline put the book down with her usual haughtiness. Dinah couldn't help but laugh and soon the two couldn't stop, like they had been holding all their joy in until this moment. They were wiping tears off their eyes and their bellies ached. They shared stories from their childhood, and Caroline taught Dinah how to bake pecan pie.

"It was Daniel's favorite."

"Really?" Dinah knew it wasn't, but she knew it helped Caroline to act like she knew him better. Dinah didn't mind so much now. She knew she wasn't doing it to hurt her.

"Mhm. Probably why he got so fat in his forties," she cackled.

"He was handsome," Dinah would always defend him.

"You should have seen him before he hit forty-five."

They tried to go out once. It was Caroline's idea.

"I have got to get you out of this house. You cannot just mope around all the time," she was standing with her hands on her hips in front of Dinah.

"I don't want to go out. I want to stay right here," she had Maria curled up next to her on the couch.

"Dinah, will you at least think about it?"

"Sure, I will think about the possibility of eventually going out," she ran her hand through Maria's hair which was

thick and curly, not like Dinah's in the slightest.

"Please, Dinah. It's an art show! You'll love it!"

Dinah agreed and she was enjoying herself at first, but it wasn't long before a group of Caroline's friends came in with their hair in buns and long skirts. Dinah wasn't young anymore, but they still intimidated her. Some of them were married to Daniel's friends and they were close with Caroline.

"Caroline, it has been too long," Michelle, put one of her long slender hands on Caroline's shoulder and urged her closer, "How are you doing?"

"I am fine. You remember Dinah, don't you?"

"How could I forget? I am so sorry about Daniel," her voice was sweet, and she laid her smile on thick, but Dinah was still uneasy.

The women walked together with Dinah following closely behind. Michelle pulled Caroline aside, but not out of Dinah's earshot

"Now you're befriending Daniel's little girlfriend? I mean I feel awful for her, really. Left with that baby, but no one would've thought less of you if you still kept your distance."

"They were married," Caroline sounded somber, not defensive.

"Yes, well, second wives are much different than first," Michelle was divorced and wore her bitterness like a badge of honor.

"She's hurting more than anyone else," Caroline spoke softly. She turned to see Dinah standing behind her, listening.

"Maria is probably missing you. Let's go," Caroline smiled and walked out with Dinah. She had never seen this kindness from Caroline. Even when she comforted Dinah, it was always in relation to her own pain. It seemed like all the hatred and bitterness had left Caroline completely.

"Let's never go out again," Caroline laughed once she got in the car, "I never realized how awful those women are."

"That's a good thing to know about them, I guess." she

looked at Caroline with fondness. She remembered when they had first met. Caroline came to Dinah's store and walked right up to her while she was shelving granola.

"Can I help you find something?" Dinah had just begun seeing Daniel and was beaming constantly. Every stranger was a welcome presence.

"No. I'm Daniel's wife."

"Daniel isn't married," her heart sunk and she wasn't sure how to respond. He told her he was divorced on their second date, and she did not want to believe he had lied to her. Caroline sighed and rolled her eyes before she started in on Dinah.

"Legally, no he isn't, but I am his wife. I always will be. Twenty years! That's how long we were married. And we were together for five before that! Do you think he is going to throw all of that away? He's in crisis. He's losing his hair and he obviously thinks leaving me to run off with a-

"He did not run off with me. We met after you two-

"I am not finished. Do not interrupt me. I am not here to listen to you. Where was I? Oh, right Daniel thinks he can reclaim whatever he has lost by taking up with a pretty, young, woman who sells apple cider vinegar and hemp bracelets. What exactly do you think you two have in common? We have a whole life in common! Don't kid yourself," then she walked out, gone as quickly as she had entered. Dinah called Daniel, crying, and he rushed to the store.

"I should have warned you. I didn't think she would show up here. I'll talk to her. You won't have to deal with this again," he tried to comfort her. Dinah didn't say anything. She kept thinking about what Caroline said, how they had nothing in common.

"She's wrong, you know," Daniel put his arm on her shoulder, "I'm not losing my hair."

She looked at the same woman, whose car she was sitting in the passenger seat. The woman she had come to trust

with all her pain, secrets, and small joys. She had become the closest friend she had, but she wondered if Caroline could ever accept her as someone Daniel loved.

Almost a full year later, Dinah got a call from the police station.

“Hello?”

“Hello, is this Dinah Haze?” a voice she recognized asked.

“Yes.”

“Hey, Dinah, it’s Markus from the sheriff’s department?”

“Of course, how are you?” Dinah had gone to school with Markus.

“I’m fine. Listen, I won’t keep you long, but I am calling out of courtesy. Caroline Haze came in to my office yesterday and told a wild tale of how you killed your husband. Now, we don’t believe a single word she said, but I wanted you to know. I think it might be a good idea to file a restraining order because she had some things of your husband’s as ‘evidence,’” Dinah nearly dropped her phone.

“Thank you for calling me. Can I come by the station tomorrow to talk about a restraining order?”

“I will be expecting you. And I am so sorry for bringing all this up again. I know it’s been hard enough on you.”

“Yes, thank you. I’ll see you soon,” she hung up and sank down onto the floor. How could she?

“How could she?” Dinah said out loud as she drove to Caroline’s house. She had to confront her. She wanted Caroline to tell her to her face how she thought she killed Daniel. She wanted to know how she thought she did it. Why she did it. What evidence did Caroline find in their home? How she could betray her trust, her love, the way she did?

“Don’t worry about her,” that’s what Daniel would tell her. She could see him now, wrinkling his nose, pushing up his glasses. She could hear him telling her that he loved her. She could hear his terrible singing. She could hear the noise

he made when he read something he didn't agree with, and the scoff when he had thought of something clever before he shared it with her. She smelled the cologne he wore, like sea salt and Sunday mornings. When they got in their one big fight, when she told him that she thought he was embarrassed to be seen with her, he cried all night. He told her he loved her, and that he would scream it from the rooftops even if it gave him heart palpitations. This made her laugh and she caught herself laughing again in the car.

She parked across the street and walked across, without looking, and pounded on the door holding a box of Daniel's clothes and books against her hip.

"Dinah, what a surprise," Caroline smiled and Dinah wanted to slap her across her smug face.

"Did you tell the police I killed Daniel?" she could feel her face burning.

"Dinah, where would you get an idea like that?"

"Don't lie to me, Caroline, did you tell the police that I killed him?"

"Didn't you?" and with that Dinah could see the delusion. She could see the madness in her eyes. She wasn't sad, she was insane. She had been driven crazy by love or jealousy. She had been planning this the whole time, since the funeral. She didn't care about Dinah. She couldn't have ever really cared about Daniel.

"You can have everything that he owned, Caroline, all of it. You can live in our house for all I care. I'm leaving. I'm going to go live with my sister. I am going to raise Maria. I am going to tell her all about her father, but you, you can keep all the stuff," she started tossing things at her doorstep and Caroline had to dodge a hard-back copy of *Dracula*.

"Dinah! My neighbors are going to see you causing a scene! Now I don't need your charity, and I don't need anyone's permission to be Daniel's wife I always was. And I know that he was in perfectly fine health until you got your hands on him, so yes, I marched down to that police station once I had

all my evidence and-

Dinah slapped her. Right across the face. She shocked herself by it and Caroline's eyes widened, taking up the part of her face that wasn't her gaping mouth.

"Don't say another word. I don't ever want to hear you speak again," Dinah walked backwards to the sidewalk, looking Caroline in the eyes until she reached her car.

She drove back home and picked up Maria from the neighbors.

"Do you want to go see a movie tonight, sweetheart?" she cooed as she carried Maria inside. Maria shook her head and buried it into her mother's arm. "Okay, we will see a movie tonight, and tomorrow we will call your Aunt Katherine," she knew she was talking to herself. She turned on the light and the living room and looked at the remnants of her life. She started putting pictures in boxes. She would keep those. She would keep his favorite tie and his encyclopedias. She found his glasses in a drawer and cried for forty-five minutes straight.

"It's just a thing," she told herself. But she slept with the glasses pressed against her chest.

She would keep those too.

John Smith
EZ Stop

When he walks in with a six pack of Yuengling, he tells me of an interesting episode that occurred at the EZ Stop where he purchased the beer. An old man is outside smoking a cigarette and drinking a beer. The man finished his cigarette and goes inside to tell the clerk to call an ambulance and the police for an unknown reason. My suitemate says that nothing looked off about the man and he was unsure why he requested emergency services to come.

I sit in my suite, writing an essay for Literature and The American Experience the night before it's due. It isn't my best work. The essay is poorly written and lacks a cohesive theme, but it'll net me at least a B, if not an A. The professor of that class likes my work for some hitherto unknown reason, and I'm not inclined to question why.

About three-quarters of the way through the essay, I decide it's time to complete my nightly ritual. I've drank three beers, and have two cigarettes to smoke. I descend the stairs of my dorm, a cigarette in my mouth and a lighter in my pocket. When I step outside to the cold air, the briskness immediately washes over me. It's cold out, but nothing that my jacket and flannel won't fix. I light the first cigarette and look out over downtown Maryville.

The city is oddly beautiful at night, and my perspective gives me a prime view of the lights that illuminate the streets and alleyways of Maryville. I look to a traffic light that's green, perhaps on Court Street or Washington Avenue. I watch the light change from green to yellow, and finally to red. I imagine myself as a character from Twin Peaks, peering at the traffic light to find some special revelation or guidance in its changing.

Guidance, however, does not come. I keep peering into the night and into the city when a siren breaks the relative

Impressions

silence I had found myself in up to that point. A fire truck rolls past the street adjacent to the college. It's heading towards the EZ Stop. A few drags later, another siren pierces the night. An ambulance passes my vision and is heading towards the EZ Stop.

Michael Westerfield
*Eat Small Get Small : A Weight Loss
Travel Guide*

I scooted the scales a few inches away from the wall and weighed again. Between my feet was a horrible glowing red number.

Leeroy the cat meowed impatiently as I tried to see around my belly. He'd only get fed after my morning ritual. It was his job to speed up the weigh-in ceremony by pestering me. Soon as I'd write my weight on the calendar, he'd raise his tail and lead me to the kitchen where I'd heat his fish flavored feline paté. The microwave "ding" fired him up like a starter's gun. He'd dance back and forth triumphantly, strutting tall in figure eights and meowing loudly and frequently until I set the steaming bowl before him to inspect and eat. It has been this way every single day ever since he was weaned.

My brother gave me Leeroy after my skydiving accident. I was stuck in the wheelchair for unknown weeks or months and the prognosis was not good. I've heard about therapy dogs but I felt that the wheelchair would make it difficult to be a good dog owner. Leeroy turned out to be a good therapy pet that purrs.

When we met, he wasn't weaned. He was smaller than the palm of my hand. I'd warm milk in his bottle and he'd fall asleep half finished. I'd put the bottle on the coffee table, and then I'd fall asleep. This is bonding at its very best. We were soon friends. We both got stronger. I graduated to a walker, then crutches, then a cane and eventually I could walk on my own two legs. He was the classic playful, clumsy kitten who grew into a perfect killing machine. Red dots beware.

Waiting for my weigh-in ceremony always irritated him. On January 1st, 2017 we were both irritated. I was irritated by the number. He was hungry. I removed the dry erase marker from its cradle as I looked for today's square on the calendar.

"269.8! Damn!" I muttered. "It's your fault, cat." It was my fault and my shame and I felt it deep that morning. It was my responsibility.

Leeroy meowed and jumped up, excited about breakfast. When he saw me back on the scales, he gave me a look and flopped back down on his pillow. I was tiptoeing on the scales. Right then, right there, I made a decision was going to weigh less than 200 pounds this year.

That morning's 269.8 marked the beginning of a 15-month marathon. Unlike millions of other weight loss resolutions made all over the world on Jan. 1st, this one stuck. This resolution wasn't a nice something I thought up to accomplish. It was more like it walked up and slapped me in the face. The idea said, "Do this or die - 199!"

I knew I would do it. I didn't care how. Just thinking about how 199 would feel made me smile. I grabbed the red pen again and wrote "199 by Dec. 31" at the top of the whiteboard.

"What do you think, partner?" I asked Leeroy. He stood up and said, "Meow."

"That's what you always say," I chuckled. "When will you learn English?" "Meow."

He starts dancing the tango around my ankles. "You want a snack?" "Meow."

I toss a few kitty nibbles to Leeroy and head to the kitchen.

I kept seeing the finish line - 199. I thought how much more I'd enjoy things when I didn't have 70 pounds of Jell-O strapped to my belly. I thought of long mountain hikes with plenty of energy for the next hill. I thought of hunting and fishing, lots of fishing. I love the idea of kayak trolling for giant striped bass or hauling in double digit catfish out of the churning water of a spillway. All sorts of fun, active, energetic activities danced through my head. The extra weight was preventing me from having the adventurous lifestyle that I dreamt of. I could be living that life right now if it weren't for the weight. It

was a dream killer. The weight was in my way.

It was more than that. I weighed 269.8 pounds. My cholesterol and blood pressure were beginning to worry my doctor. The weight had to go. I win or I die. I was at what some call a decision point. Getting fatter was easy and delicious. Like any trap, it's easy in but hard to get out. It led to daily misery and an early death. Losing weight forever was harder, sure. Anything worth having is worth working for. I want a long, active, exciting life. I want to live beyond my 111-teenth birthday. At that birthday party, I'll be strong, healthy, agile and energetic. I'll dance with my lady, my daughter and whoever else thinks they can keep up.

None of this will happen if I die first. I've allowed fat, the enemy, to infiltrate my body. I got to do what I got to do to get my health back. I see many people get caught in the tar-baby trap called heart disease. It's what took both my grandpas, my dad and several aunts and uncles. Recently my plumber canceled his appointment because of chest pains. He's recovering from triple bypass surgery. I've got to take my life away from these bad numbers before the trap gets sprung. I'm in a bad place and I have lots of company.

Obesity can affect pets too. I used to give Leeroy a full can of paté every morning and dry food all day. He ate! Eating became his number two activity, right behind napping. Before long I had a pot-bellied cat. The poor fur-ball had a bald spot on his belly from dragging it on the carpet.

I couldn't tell when Leeroy was hungry, but I could tell how much he ate. If there was food in his bowl in the morning, I knew I had fed him too much. I started by cutting his canned food in half. I measured his dry food. He voiced his opinion, but I want us both to live happy, healthy, long lives.

I still might die tomorrow even if I get in shape. A baby grand piano might fall from the sky and kill me with incredible sound effects. The sooner I get in shape the more good life I can enjoy between now and then and the better I can dodge those falling pianos.

This was war. I don't know how to surrender. In Army basic training, I got in trouble for tearing out the section of my "Soldiers' Guide" about being a prisoner of war. Not knowing when or how to quit is sometimes a curse, but more often a blessing.

The first challenge is getting started. If you want to see a big number of search results, try typing "diet" in your search engine - analysis paralysis. I decided to use simple logic instead. Did I say simple? Simplistic might be a better adjective.

I look for simple solutions to complex problems. If ever there has been a subject overly 'complexicated', it's weight loss. It's simple, really. There are only one or two things you have to do. Eat less and/or exercise more. That's it! It really is that ridiculously simple. I wanted to see immediate results. I don't like exercising so I did the next best thing.

I quit eating!

Immediately I was losing weight. I was actually a little proud of myself. Genius is the ability to make the complicated simple. Look at all those doctors with their PhDs! They spend millions of dollars annually for decades and generations trying to figure it out. After pondering weight loss for less than a minute, I started losing weight. All I had to do now is figure out how long I wanted to starve.

Triumphantly, I said out loud, "eat small, get small! I'm a genius!"

Leeroy heard that and meowed. "Hush fur-ball. You're not helping."

Now I needed a plan.

I like to nibble when I think. Now I have to think without nibbling. Right away I could tell this diet thing was going to be tough. How I eat is a big part of who I am. I have to change that. I don't want to be a fat man. I don't want squishy, gelatinous yuck in my body to define who I am. I don't want to wake up in a hospital racked with guilt for not taking care of the body God gave me. To stay out of that cardio care unit I need to change.

I'm used to eating three big meals a day with snacks and whiskey too. When I was a soldier, I didn't gain a pound. I was burning calories so fast they didn't have time to turn into fat. Those days are over.

It was time for me to take command. My friend, Bhavin, took command of his eating. He eats five times a day: five little snacks. He has a protein bar for one meal, a shake (not the delicious kind) for another. He throws kale, celery and other greens into a blender with protein powder and calls it yummy. He is lying. It's awful. If I wanted blended greens, I could scrape it out from under my lawnmower.

He makes a detailed meal plan for every day. We'll be right in the middle of a conversation and his Dick Tracy fitness watch reminds him it's time to eat. Then he pulls out a bag of fruit chips and chews dried apricots. He measures his body fat and lean muscle mass daily and posts pictures on Facebook where friends praise him for his well-defined trapezoids.

I can't diet like Bhavin. I don't want to plug numbers into an algorithm on my smart phone. I had to find my own way.

Simple and flexible sounds good. The only number I want to watch is that scale. I remembered a book about eating only when very hungry and then only eating a very small meal, a fistful of food. That diet plan allowed me to eat any food I want.

I got my tactical plan. Next I prepared the battlefield, my kitchen. My goal was to get rid of the chemical shit-storm of processed foods. I threw away the sugar frosted carb flakes and other ridiculously bad food. I kept some semi-bad foods. Thankfully my hobbies fill my freezer with organic meats: trout, bass, catfish and venison.

This plan puts my body in charge of my body. I decided I'd start with two simple rules: Eat only when I'm really hungry; Eat only a fistful of food. I had no idea that such simple ideas would work so well.

If an idea works it's not so bad. I had to be careful to

include good vitamins. I got whole food vitamins. I'm not sure how "good" they are but so far, no scurvy. Starting right meant allowing myself to get hungry, very hungry. I needed to know that my stomach was actually empty. Hunger is something Leeroy and I are not accustomed to. His meals are definitely determined by me and the clock. Of course, if I'm even a few minutes late he will pester me, so he never goes hungry and I'm a pushover for his snacks.

The first day, I didn't eat at lunch or dinner time. I drank water and waited for hunger to arrive. Leeroy, however, decided to torment me. He'd high tail it to his dry food bowl, crunch some kitty chow, then beg then crunch more. Eventually I banished him to the bathroom, locking him in there with his food, water, bed, and box. It only worked for a few minutes. Once he realized he was trapped, he started singing opera. He stopped messing with me for a while.

The next morning, Leeroy was doing his feed-me-now dance during my weigh in ceremony. I stepped on the scales and waited for the lights to stop flashing. When it stopped, the numbers on the scale were a little smaller.

"Hey buddy, guess what?" I asked. "Meow?" I swear, it sounded like a question. "I lost two pounds."

"Meow." Cats have such poker faces.

Then I changed the pitch in my voice. "Breakfast?"

"Mee-yow!" Off he trotted, tail held high, leading me to the kitchen.

My hunger didn't return until late that afternoon. Interesting. I didn't have a nibble for about 24 hours and didn't feel bad. I drank water and waited for hunger. When I finally got hungry, there was no question; this was it. I was far from my kitchen. I had packed a protein bar in my bag. I wolfed it down, barely chewing. "That's it?" The protein bar was about the size of my fist, so that's all I allowed myself to eat. I stuck to the rule to see how it worked. In about a minute, the hunger was gone. It stayed gone all evening. I wasn't even hungry standing on the scales again the next morning. I'd lost

a couple more pounds. My diet plan was working. I impressed myself with my “genius”.

Leeroy was not impressed or even interested. He gobbled his chicken parts paté and licked his bowl clean, then he munched some dry food. It was like he was rubbing it in that he could eat as much as he liked. He kept returning to the bowl so I could hear the crunch. Satisfied he had tormented me long enough, he dragged his bed to a sunny spot and settled down for a nap.

This was a workable plan. I could lose 70 pounds in 2017 and be free of their burden forever. All I had to do now is stay on track. I did not.

Through the 260s and 250s I was off track most of the time. However, my favorite Winston Churchill quote kept repeating in my mind: “We will never surrender.” This battle was willpower vs. temptation. Time to kick temptation’s ass.

The first 20 pounds came off fast. I celebrated with each 10 pounds lost. When I weighed less than 260 pounds, I rented a DVD and popped popcorn. Leeroy claimed his throne by my hip. As long as I’m warm and can make kitty nibble magically appear - he’s good. I think he likes action hero movies best.

At 250 I didn’t include food in my reward. My love of the outdoors sent me to buy better binoculars. This encouraged me to get on the hiking trails. I knew better than to take Leeroy. His Kitty Yoga is quite impressive but walking on a leash ... Nope! I tried to leash train him. He would lie down and imitate a penguin sliding on ice. I carried him back to the car - victorious.

I drove through Townsend and into the Great Smoky Mountains National Park. Armed with new binoculars, a walking stick and boots from the bargain rack, I took the first hiking trail I found. It was fairly level, about two miles, and didn’t have a name. I was huffing and puffing but I did it.

It was the beauty more than the exercise I became addicted to. Hiking became a semiregular activity. The plants,

the streams, even the rocks seem prettier in the park. The first time I hiked at Cade's Cove, I saw more deer in one day than in five years of hunting. One afternoon I came upon a blooming bush covered with lightning bugs. The park is a magical place.

As the weeks and pounds fell off, I didn't have to catch my breath as often. I found steeper hikes. After a while I almost started believing I was no longer handicapped. What a liberating idea.

My primary care doctor was proud of my progress. She wanted me away from the bad numbers too. She focused on blood pressure, cholesterol and other numbers. She sent pills and I returned them.

I found out what foods were loaded with cholesterol and made a "no-go" list for the fridge. That was a lot of food. I guess I like cholesterol.

I decided to eat the bad stuff and not replace it. Throwing it all away would have worked better, but my plan tasted better. That was such a delicious week. Leeroy liked it too. He got little samples dropped in his bowl. Soon the high cholesterol food was gone forever or strictly restricted. Butter, for example, was limited to cooking only and halved for recipes. I can't tell the difference.

I still bring butter on fishing trips. There's nothing like campfire trout.

Velveeta has staying power. Leeroy and I both love it. The day we shared our last slice he mourned. I felt bad for him. Some Sundays, He finds a slice of Velveeta next to his stinky steaming lump of fish paté. I'm such a good pet owner.

Tracking my weight loss wasn't a pretty mathematic curve. It's more like the zigzag line of a seismic recorder during an earthquake. Some days I'd gain three pounds for no reason; other days I'd drop four. I slipped, tripped, stumbled and fell in the general direction of my goal. I did my part: be stubborn and focus on 199. God did the rest.

Every morning at 5 I'd wake, push Leeroy off the bed, shuffle to the bathroom to weigh in and record my weight. I

almost always weigh twice because often the numbers did not match. If you got a cheap scale like me, you know what I'm talking about.

Leeroy is never amused when I reweigh. He'd push against my shins or step on the scales with me to hurry me up. Through this entire weight loss odyssey his impatience has been a constant source of amusement. He was there every weigh in, doing his part.

My weight zigzagged through good and bad days. I had to lose the same pounds over and over. I'd retreat, advance, retreat and advance. Over and over I'd lose the same pounds.

It was discouraging sometimes. For motivation, dancing as a 111-year-old teenager was often on my mind.

Sometimes that wasn't enough. The mile marker awards worked well. I kept earning rewards for moving down the scales. I kept the reward under \$100.00 until I weighed less than 220. Then I earned a change of clothes.

Success feels good. My pants started falling off without a belt. "Check it out, bud," I'd say as I let go of my zipped and buttoned pants to see them drop around my ankles. He was never excited by this because to him it was simply a delay for his breakfast. However, it was very exciting to me.

When I'm cutting inches off my belt, I know the fat is melting. I got new pants and shirts and finally replaced the extra-large t-shirts with my new size: "large". 2017 was ridiculously amazing. I bought a home, got engaged, enrolled in a tough college and dumped pounds forever. I spend more time in the great outdoors than ever.

It worked. Not by my birthday, as I had hoped, but I didn't allow myself to quit. I got there in March.

Leeroy was there the morning the scales declared my victory. He was preoccupied with eating. He paid attention enough to stay out of the way when I broke into my victory dance.

The diet plan was childishly simple and flexible. Weight was the only number I tracked. Did I break my own

rules? You bet! I had to forgive myself and get back on track at least a hundred times. That's why it took 15 months. Was it easy? Yes, compared to recovering from triple bypass surgery.

My blood pressure is under control. My jeans went from size 44 to 36. Even my shoes fit better. I got lots more energy and shortness of breath is a thing of the past. My quality of life is better and it's likely to be longer. I'm looking forward to dancing with my great grand-daughter at my 111-teenth birthday.

This happened without meds, yucky shakes, harsh workouts, dangerous pills or complicated rules. I had one inflexible rule: "Never, never, never quit." I'm not bragging but I am satisfied. Diet is the eating part of lifestyle. It's our choice.

My next health goal is ambitious but my confidence is high. I explained it to Leeroy over breakfast. He stopped eating long enough to give me that look. You can guess what he said.

Part II

Art

Impressions



All is Wells by The Liizard King

Art



Bell(e) by The Liizard King

Impressions



Fargo by The Lizard King

Art

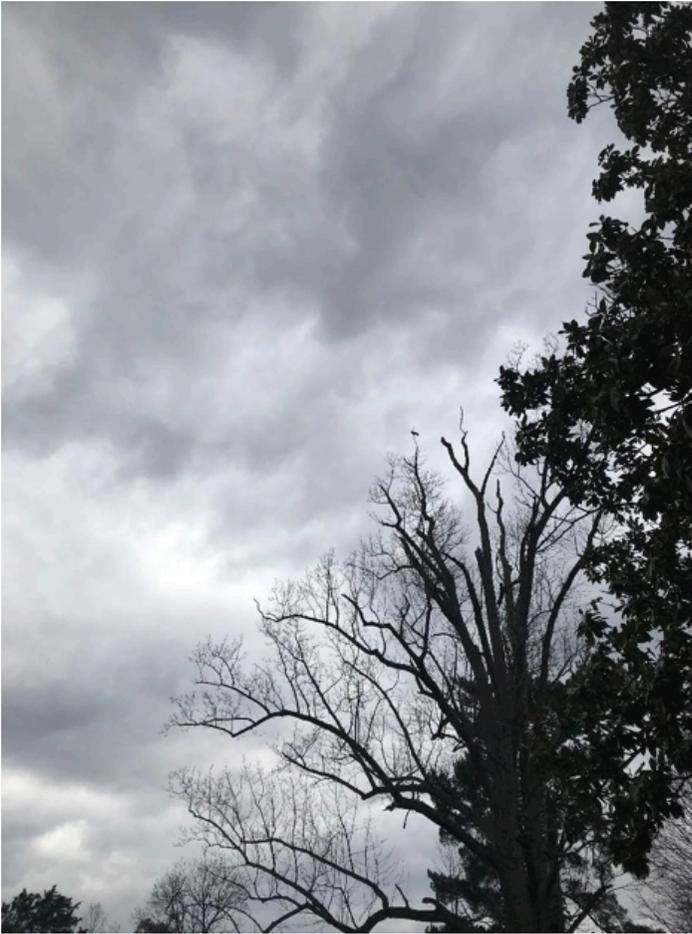


On Leave by The Liizard King



Leaf Scorpionfish by Hannah Wilson

Art



Gathering the Murder by Hannah Wilson



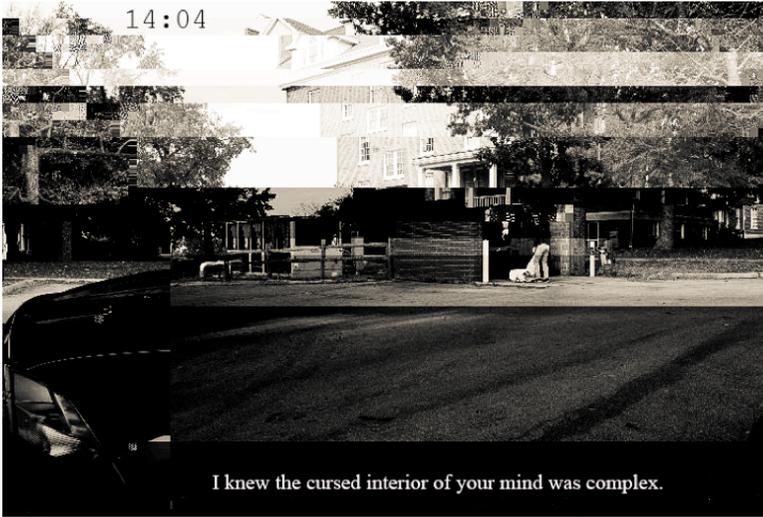
Sanity Comes in Waves by Hannah Wilson



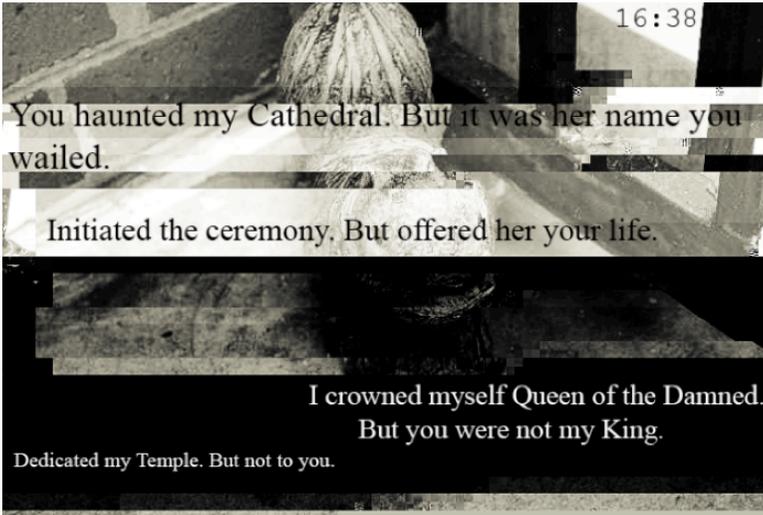
Crescent Moon by Jordan Ward



Untitled by Jordan Ward

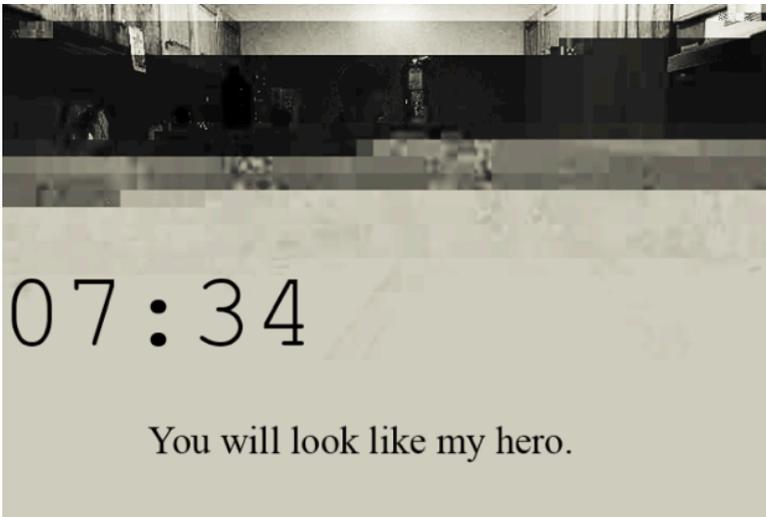


Gothic 8 by Sherilyn Smith



Gothic 4 by Sherilyn Smith

Art



Gothic 3 by Sherilyn Smith



Daily Struggle by Destiny Ditmore



Coke or Pepsi? by Destiny Ditmore



Got Me Sucked Right In by David Peters



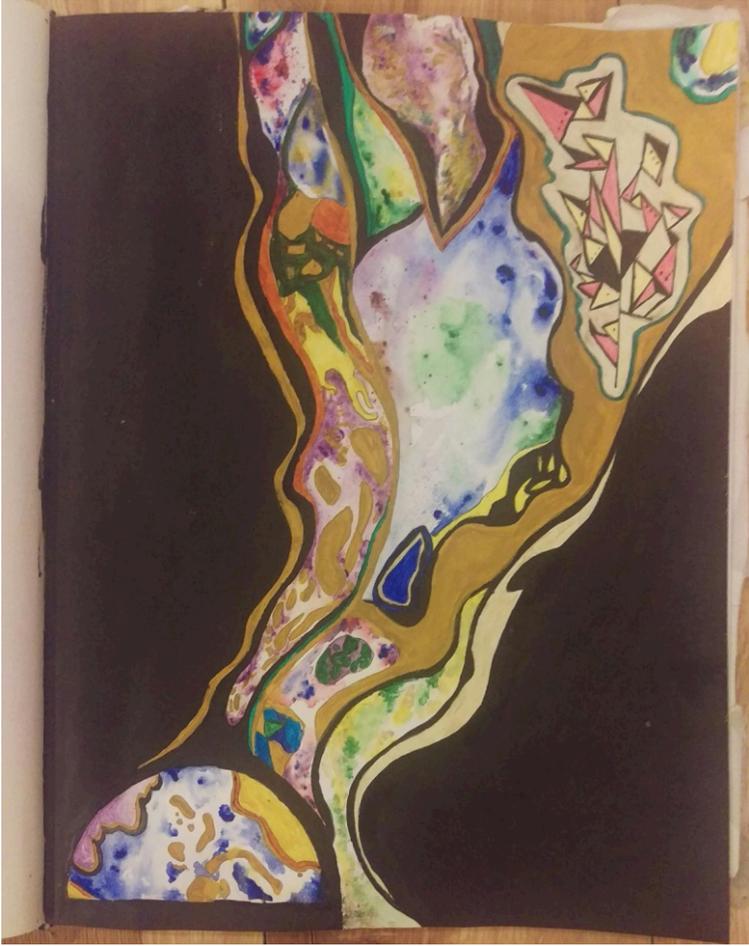
Eat Small, Get Small by Michael Westerfield



Midnight in Paris by Albrianna Jenkins



Untitled by Ana Luna-Gutierrez



Untitled by Ana Luna-Gutierrez

Art



Mud and History by Brinley Knowles



Pacific Bubble Bath by Brinley Knowles

Art



Untitled by Lilly Nixon-Perkins

Impressions



Untitled by Lilly Nixon-Perkins

Art



Untitled by Lilly Nixon-Perkins

Impressions



Wonder by Megan Wright

Art



Day House by Megan Wright

Impressions



Casco Bay, MA, 06/05/2016 by Megan Wright

Part III

Poetry

Laura Ankebrant
One Last Time

In front of me, I see cheering fans
Alongside them is the proud band parents
Cheering as hard as they possibly can
10 yards away from me is my co-captain
As we perform our duet
In the breeze, my flag blows carelessly
I smell funnel cakes in the distance,
But it doesn't distract me from my sadness
This is my last band competition.
I feel anxious for what is to come
I see fellow band members feeling the same as I
We don't want this to end
Beads of sweat drip down my forehead
But yet I still smile through the pain.
I smile because this is not the end.
Not for me, I have a wonderful future ahead of me.

Laura Ankebrant
Who She Once Was

Who she once was,
Everyone loved.
She knew what she wanted out of her life.
She knew love would come one day.
When she began to change,
So did everyone's opinion of her.
When she would come to school with cuts on her
arms,
She was weak.
When she ended up in the hospital again for attempt-
ing an overdose,
She just wanted attention.
But when she finally died,
Everyone cried.
No one knew what she was going through.
No one knew why she hated herself.
They just assumed their own opinions.
No one admitted what they did.
Justice was never found for her.
But she,
She was happy to be away from the hell she once knew.

Dat Boi
The Cigar

I smoked the cigar I got for you-
For Father's Day last year.
It was old, dried out. Cracked in many places.
Much like you are, if not in person
In mind.
You left it in a cabinet,
After you left.
I am unsure if
You ever planned to smoke it-
-But I did.
All in all,
It was alright. Not as good as I had had hoped-
But then again,
Neither were you.
So it's gone now.
Burnt up in a fury of ash and smoke.
Gone.

Impressions

As to know what I would want.

I admire that.

But now, when I sit at Vienna's front window alone, avoid-
ing the plush leather booths

Where we sat

on the same side,

When even I don't know what to order for myself,

I wish that someone understood me well enough to know
what I want, and

I wish that, just once, you had known me well enough to
order my coffee.

Amy Mann
*Ars Poetica: Angiospermae or
Magnoliophyta*

On the first day, they couldn't pronounce my name, pRose.
Their eyes drifted from the chalkboard
and gazed through the windows
(or, a square cut in the wall)
to topiary and tumbleweeds.

As their bright eyes stared for introduction,
I told them to call me magnolia.

But I was there
and they were there
and we were there

I understood
and they understood
and we understood.

Bai Chen squinted, perplexed with his translator.
"Flower?"

He entered our world.

Amy Mann
soft calls

it's not//i barely
hear you say my name--it's just
the fact **you say it.**

Amy Mann
loss of all the possibilities

your shy eyes glittered
with hope from my far away smile.
yeah. i missed the glance.

Charles Bishop

Black Widow

Your tempting, bold black widow's kiss
Will draw from my lips life's last breath
As I transpire from bliss to bliss
And leave to you new life, in death.

With cautious footsteps entered I
Fearing your sure but unsure charms
Yet sweetness stuck me as a fly
Tucked tightly by your ubiquitous arms.

I lay upon your silken web
Spun with your un-procured debt
You've laid me here my life to ebb;
My procurance, your appetite to whet.

So sure of my future succulence
You desire to plant me in your lair;
Biding time till my vine's poor pence
Have ripened with no more to bear.

Charles Bishop
Guns for Hire

The dust had barely settled
In that forgotten Western town
You could smell the scent of cattle on the wind.
Two strangers stood there silently
As people gathered round
To see, between the two of them, who'd win.
One a bold vaquero who was riding for the gold,
A fading cigar clenched inside his grin.
He faced the other stranger with a star upon his chest
And a sly but knowing smile above his chin

Guns for hire
Living frozen in a moment
Where the clocks are always stuck at 12 PM
They are guns for hire
Thinking only of the next day
And of fighting for their next pay
Spending everything while they have life to spend
For the gunman every night could be the last that he will
end
With the warmth and touch of a young and loving hand.

Ana Luna-Gutierrez

Pull Me Closer

Your essence fills me up with content
You're a comforter, wrapping me up inside your warmth
Hold me again to reassure our love
You're a soft kiss on Sunday morning
Blurry eyes but sure of it all
In remembrance that everything will somehow be all right
You're a blooming flower in my hands
Your gentle petals are safe with me
I'll take care of you as long as you take care of me
And our garden will be a fruitful joy
I am your guitar strings next to an amber fire,
I trust you to strum and vocalize my love for you
While the warmth encaptures ourselves while others
watch
Pull me closer to you
Until our hearts are one
Coil me around your love
And call it ours
Our strength will be ourselves
Whether individually or together, we stand tall
Hold my hand while we drive to the sunset
And marinate on how we became
Each other's sunset

Ana Luna-Gutierrez
Crazy

This goes out to Jose. I never really knew you, but
I hope you're in a better place now.
Rest in peace pops.

It's crazy
I can stare at a blank wall for hours
And still paint every curve on your face
I never thought silence would befall my lips like this
How do you continue when the one you loved is gone
Everyone keeps saying it will pass
And compliments me on my strength as if comfort
But crying everyday for 3 months don't feel too strong
Often ... I wonder why they give me advice on something
They've never experienced
I've been filling pages of what to say to him
But honestly
I ain't written anything good since he left
It's hard to make honey out of lemons
Though I roll and squeeze and pray for my sweetness
All that runs in my hands are bitter memories of what
once was
I took so long to mold you into something you'll never be
Leaving myself without growth
I began to be frail
Turned sickly
I begged for inner peace
And the strength to hold myself together
For the sake of being together
The bags under my eyes sag low on my face
They surpass where my laugh lines go
And where my glow from the Almighty is supposed to be

They cover up my true self
I lost count how many times I cried over you
Wishing it would've ended on a sweeter note
Our note caressing in milk and honey
Our note endowed in love without fail
Our pain was still pain as pain would be
But we didn't care because our love triumphed over pain
And me?
I find myself looking blankly at a wall for hours on end
Wishing this pain would cease to end.

Albrianna Jenkins

La Sirène

La sirène-me dit-elle,
Elle supplie avec ses lèvres enchanteresses
« Viens, viens »
Dit-elle à moi.
« Suis-moi à ma chambre »
Elle crie fort
« Viens embrasser mes lèvres seules »
Les vagues percutent et le ciel crie à moi aussi.
Je suis debout dans le bateau.
Mon amour crie pour moi
et mon cœur se meurt avec chaque mot.
Je plonge dans l'océan et les mains froid tenir moi
« Non, non, arrêt » dis-je
Mais c'est trop tard
Elle m'embrasse
Le baiser de mort.

Albrianna Jenkins

The Siren

The siren-she calls to me
She begs with her enchanting lips
“Come, come”
She says to me
“Follow me to my chamber”
She calls loudly
“Come and kiss my lonely lips”
The waves crash and the sky screams at me too.
I am standing in the boat
My love calls for me
And my heart dies with each word
I jump in the ocean and cold hands hold onto me
“No, no, stop,” I say
But it is too late
She kisses me
The kiss of death.

Brinley Knowles

An Ode to Fall II

Here's a question...
You may not know the answer
How many poems can I write about you?
Praising your hair and eyes
Writing about you like I've never seen another person
Like you were the first person my eyes saw
I could dedicate an epic to your eyes and smile
I could write an epic waxing poetic about the way your
hair stays on your head
I wonder if you've ever looked at yourself in the mirror
Have you seen your eyes?
I thought I lost my angst with my twentieth birthday
But the world inside your smile brings it back

Your eyes remind me of fall
The way they're deep with comfort and wonder
How simply their color could warm the coldest heart
Your hair is warmth too and smile
Home
Nature rewarded you for worshipping her
For hoping one day she'd be restored
Someday when you're old you'll return her beauty to her
Someone, a relative, a friend, a lover, will lay you down
under her skin and you will become fall
I don't know if I'd want to see a world without you
Kind no more
Emotionless under the blankets of the forest
Gone

Could you ever love me?
I know I'm not.
I know nature didn't bless me the way she blessed you
She gave me a foolish heart
Optimism and
Hope
I think of this more of a curse than blessing
Someday I too will return her gift
Most likely alone
Without you

After all,
who could love a fool?
Probably not you

Michael Westerfield
Boot Prints in the Mud

I walked here a moment ago.
I left an artifact, a boot print in the mud.
Our boot prints make trails for others to follow.
Together we build artifacts for fellow explorers
so they can see what we have seen
and add their boot prints in the mud.
It's the same mud where I will be buried someday.
In time, it's the same mud I will become.
I will be of little value to people then.
But to a seed I will be life.

My boot print,
the artifact I left here today,
will be buried under other boot prints
it will soon be as forgotten as I am
but the trail, the artifact we made together
It will live on.

I walked here a moment ago.
No one will know I was ever here.
But they can follow me.

Mike Layland
A Tribute to Six Syllables

Scoo Bee Doo Bee, Scoo Bee Doo Doo,
CIR-CUM-NAV-I-GA-TION

Lah Dee Dah Dee, Lah Dee Dah Dah,
PREST-I-DIG-I-TA-TION

Doo Wah Doo Wah, Doo Wah Ditty,
AN-THRO-PO-MOR-PHI-SM

Fa La La La, Tra La La La,
TRAN-CEN-DEN-TAL-I-SM

Tweedle Dee Dee, Tweedle Dum Dum,
ON-O-MAT-O-POEI-A

A-B-C, D-E-F, GEE-IT'S-GOOD-TO-SEE-YA!

Before you bash my brain for abnormalities detected
I'm merely praising words that are poetically neglected

Mike Layland
Approaching Venus

Thine eyes are limpid pools of warmth
That swiftly draw me in
I marvel at the softness of
Your alabaster skin
Your lips are scarlet pillows
That bewitch your very speech
And your silken hair resembles
Zephyrs wafting on the beach
With Venus departed, your beauty must reign
But before I can bequeath
There's a big old stringy purple thingy
Stuck between your teeth

Mike Layland
The Smell of Fear

The sun burst forth on that bright autumn day
As I'd planned several hours to while away
With a book and some beer to the backyard I went
Since buzzed reading leads to a nap; time well spent

Frantically, birds gorged and nearly collided
For suet and cheap low-grade seeds I'd provided
Oak leaves were wafting through crispy, fresh air
As my buns settled into a comfy lawn chair

The voice I awoke to was foreign to me
A bit reminiscent of *Godfather Three*
"Hey Buddy! Wake up! I'm talkin' to yooz!
I'll now make an offer that yooz can't refuse!"

His fur was jet black with a wide streak of white
A bushy tail twitched like it wanted to fight
His jaws buzzed at dried corn and seeds with persistence
While a voice in my head said to keep a safe distance

"I'm not a bad polecat, just hungry and miffed
The lid on your trashcan's too heavy to lift
With all of these sunflower seeds on the ground
Hands down, your joint has the best eats in town!"
He noshed for a while, and I stayed alert
"Don't make a move and no one gets hurt!"
He turned 'round to leave and his tail gave a fidget
Then I spied his right paw and outstretched middle digit

I trembled in awe over what had occurred

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A skunk from the Bronx had just flipped me the bird!
As I gathered my wits on that day in September
The air sure smelled sweeter than I could remember

Sherilyn Smith
Song of South Korea

We meet at a school
You seem to be cool
Snapback freckled skin 2000's era emo hair so jet black
it's almost cruel

Yeah

The sight of you kind of makes me drool
Sitting in a bar talking to you like every fool
Who thinks they've got a chance sipping on this liquid
courage fuel

Yeah

Your girlfriend's in America so she basically doesn't exist
she's a myth a memory a ghost a ghoul
Sure, you love her very much you both went to the same
high school
Someday you want to take her on a honeymoon to Istanbul

Yeah

But in the pictures you show me I look at her ring finger
and don't see no jewel
And when I put my hand on your knee sitting bar stool by
bar stool
You don't tell me to stop and in my head that's consent –
but don't quote me I didn't go to law school

Yeah

Just one more Moscow Mule
Promise never to tell anyone about this - new rule
But I mean this game we're playing now is pretty old
school

Yeah

Your apartment doesn't have a pool
But it's not like I'm a queen who needs something to rule
I want this too you're not going to get any sort of ridicule

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Yeah

Our clothes slip off like an unwinding spool
Yes kiss me there I'll give you the keys that you'll
Need to save yourself from being very uncool

Yeah

Then he asks me if I want him to go harder
And I say

Yeah

Then he asks me if I want him to go faster
And I say

Yeah

Then he asks me if this means we're, like, together now
And I'm like

What.

Asks me if he's the only boy I'll have sex with for the rest
of my study abroad
And I'm like

What.

Asks me if I came yet
And I'm like

What.

Then he's finished – we must've started all this, maybe,
three minutes ago?
He commends me, says he's never done something like
this before and that I really know how to blow
And maybe we could do this again sometime, go to a
countryside chateau

I say, *yeah...*

He says the sex was amazing, absolute dynamo
But his bangs are pushed back now and he's not as cute
without his hair making him all emo
I say I gotta leave, and he says really do you have class
tomorrow, and in an unfamiliar falsetto

I say...*yeah...*

And as I'm about to go
He says I'm glad you're not some hoe
And asks if he's the first and only guy I've slept with during
my study abroad, you know?
And I say, *yeeaaahhhh*. No. Bye.

Catherine Wilkinson

Tip Toe

You get angry, scream and shout
I know what it's really all about
I tip toe like a little mouse
In my house
Crack!
Oh no what's that
You're home
I was happier alone
I'll pretend to be on the phone
Avoiding your presence
Avoiding your harsh tones
Until you've escaped
Back to where you prefer to call 'home'
A poisoned fairy world
Where you're all alone

Catherine Wilkinson

Coco

Soft and furry
Never mean
You were so precious to me

I thought cats had nine lives
I guess you used up your other eight in other lives
This is your last try
To get it right
To out show Time

Time is always right

Catherine Wilkinson

Iron Man

Big Brother Big Brother, you mean so much to me
Big Brother Big Brother, you've helped me to see
Who I am
Who I want to be

You see me for me
You know what I'm thinking
You know how to brighten me up when I'm sinking
You always come to my rescue
You drop your whole wide world for me
I would do the same for you
In less than a heart beat

Big Brother Big Brother, don't you see
I would be nothing without you
You are Father
And Mother
And Santa Claus, too
You are my Protection
And Savior
And my Iron Man, too

Cass Bradley

Places

I would like to live away from the city
for moments like today.

I sat outside, on a bench in front of the admissions office,
just waiting for the next big thing to happen.

I listened to nothing and let the morning fog embrace me,
and the birds sang and did not mind my presence,
as if I was meant to be there.

The Lizard King
Bisque-y Rusiness

The voices resonating in my skull are to the left
And I've learned how to pop the joints in my thumbs and
my spine
And I know I don't look fine
But I only turn red once I've already dyed
And can't you see I'm trying to emerge this husk back into
the ground where it belongs
Where it can fertilize crops, and wishes long gone
And washed away by the floods before a potential harvest
And I am done being modest, and if we're all being hon-
est-
I wouldn't try to swim away when the pot ascends
and the pot lid descends and
when the pot finally grants me ascension
And the sea hates a coward
And the sea hates a coward
And the sea hates a cow herd
And what have you heard
Because I don't remember what I told you
I need a SparkNotes to pass along to the next person
who has to try and salvage the meat from my bones for a
bisque
And it's an old twist
On a classic dish
Of equal parts heartbreak and sadness
To the profile that you can't taste anything of anymore
What was
A little heat on some nice spice
becomes nothing
What was

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a cool glaze of orange zest and mayonnaise
becomes nothing
Just a husk that the crabs will never touch
And it'll never be enough
And you wouldn't even consider it at a truck bed or a rest
stop
And I don't even feel full enough for hors d'oeuvres
And I don't feel full enough to know what I deserve
And I don't feel enough to know the next word

The Lizard King
Honey Heart

I'd be a beekeeper if women didn't have so much in common with bees
Thought provoking from a distance but up close I flee
Every chance I pass of cupping one in my hand
For I fear that faithful sting
Akin to a bat swing
Going through my skin, deep
Enough to come out the other side
But you see, the problem with bees is that they die
And the amazing thing about women is that they stay alive
Long after their organs have been ripped from them when they defend
Their hive, and whatever golden life source they keep inside.

You see, I've got a honey heart
And I believe that to save the bees
We need to cure colony collapse disorder
And find the film for the family camcorder
To capture every flower-flung moment when
The bees descend
And make life from an allergen
And I may not be allergic but I've learned to keep my distance
Because honey can survive for thousands of years with no bacteria inside
And I'm well aware that some people just die
When their throat closes and their lungs tremble and rebel
From when the bees chose to come close and break through their outer shell.

The Liizard King
The futility of Painting a burning house

I am painting the shutters on the house that I built,
the shutters pulled tight so I don't notice the ash creeping
out
I prune the garden and check the mail and sweep piles
under the rug,
throwing the broom over the fence when I notice the
bristles are still on fire
The fire place had a leak, and the kitchen sink wouldn't
quite drain,
oh well, I've been sweeping my hand through piles of ash
and rubbing it all over my face anyways
I have to decide what to keep and to choose what's collat-
eral
and what I can just keep not dusting on the mantle

I paint and I dab and I scumble but I can't scrape away
The blistering and bumble bees that are bubbling up under
the paint

The logs are in the woodshed and smoking away almost
cheerfully
Along with my volumes of fables and most that I held dear
to me

I'm not bothered by the fact that I might have left the
candles to fry
It's a warm breeze to step past as I slip away to let the paint
dry.

Claudia Brito Pires
The Unknown Paradise

I lived in a bubble
I Lived in a dreamhouse where I could be anything I
wanted to be.
I lived on an island with a barrier protected by my many
knights, Queens and Kings.
I was living in a perfect world
I was the Princess of The Unknown Paradise.
I was a dreamer and a leader
And just like many before me, I wanted to change the
world.

But...
My bubble got popped.
The barriers broken down
My army killed.
Now I live in this prison where my voice is not heard.
I live in a street of voiceless screams
With a garden of dead souls and lifeless hues.
I Live in a world where the Orange Fox is the leader
And racism's cheerleader
My colour seems to be a problem
And my gender a distraction.
I live in a world ruled by the 1% of the 1%
That steals my every cent

But I still have my dreams.
The same dreams as the Princess
I still want to free my people from this world
Be the voice that leads the crowd,
And like many before me

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I want to break the invisible shackles put on my Kingdom
I want to be the one that brings back the sunshine
I want to be the one defeating the Fox
I know I can do it,
Because the Queen and King told me I could be whatever
I wanted to be.

I lived in a bubble, protected by the Queen and King
Now, I am lost in the lifeless hues of the world.
I still have my crown
But, my army is asleep
In the lifeless corners of the streets.
Will they wake before the Fox takes us down?

The Girl from the Unknown Paradise

Shadow
Experiences

I love experiences the good and the bad
But the bad are my favorite
They are why I am who I am
They taught me to be strong in the face of adversity
They taught me that everyone will go through things in
their life but its up to them to keep pushing
They taught me to think more in depth
They taught me life is more valuable than anything the
world can offer
Those experiences taught me, what will you let them teach
you?

Shadow
Who Am I?

I'm the big headed black kid they use to call names in
elementary class

I'm the kid who didn't have the cool shoes and name
brand clothes

I'm the kid that they beat up in the bayou next to the
school

Who am I?

I'm the guy who was "too nice" when I tried to talk to girls

I'm the guy who was lame because I didn't smoke weed or
drink alcohol

I'm the guy who was a geek because I answered questions
in class all the time

Who Am I?

I'm the man that is a leader

I'm the man that is built to endure adversity

I'm the man that is a voice for the few

I'm the man with a strong mind

Who Am I?

I'm the man they said I would never be

I'm the man that they made me!

Harley White
Home Turf War Zone

I was in high school
before I could
grow my hair out

when I was young,
if it got too long,
my dad would bring
me out on the porch

he'd hold me there
with his presence,
a grip without hands

and buzzz it all off

I would look at the
fallen hair, like trimmed
leaves from a plant

and I wouldn't cry,
wouldn't dare

//

my friends once
painted my nails

I kept the polish on
an entire two days
before I was caught

Why are your nails painted?
like I was wearing an insult

My friends wanted to

my answer did
not satisfy

it appeared most
confusing that I was
okay with it, that I
had allowed it

I rubbed the polish
off like bathing
with steel wool

//

I came home one
night from a band
competition, I was
in the color guard

What have you
got on your face?

I'd say, Makeup

Why? was makeup
really that abnormal

I had a competition

Is it required?

again, meaning to
say, you didn't
want this, right

No, but why wouldn't
I want to match?

//

when I played
soccer in middle
school, the boys
would make jokes

about what they
would do to a
pretty girl

who they thought
of as pretty

in those moments,
I was glad to be
left unmentioned

//

I still see it
when in public

I see a pretty girl

she sees me and
tenses up

she reads, I'm scared

I wish I could tell
her, Don't you see?

I'm scared just like you

//

being mistaken as
a man feels like
friendly-fire

being likened to
men feels like
a betrayal

//

I used to desire
death for not
wanting to live

dishonestly of
self is a volatile,
horrendous pain

now, I only want
to kill the person
people think I am

//

I wish I could just go
somewhere else

to some land and
language that
would love me

a home turf war
zone is worse when
you're the enemy

Impressions

Part IV

*Community
Spotlight*

Impressions

Community Spotlight

Community Spotlight
Vienna Open Mic Night
March 8, 2018

Introduction

Content.

This section will differ based on what the project is.

CONTRIBUTORS' NOTES

Contributors Without Notes

This issue of Impressions is overflowing with works of art created by an incredibly talented group of artists. In an effort to include as many quality works as possible in Volume 44, the editorial staff regrets our lack of time and resources to gather notes from every author.

Laura Ankebrant

I am a freshman at Maryville College majoring in Nursing. I'm from South Pittsburg, Tennessee. I began writing poems as a hobby to deal with personal issues and it just took off from there.

Charles Bishop

Charles Bishop is the pseudonym of a localish poet and songwriter who is timid about sharing his work publicly, and therefore uses a pseudonym (plus he just thinks pseudonyms are cool). *Guns For Hire* was inspired by his love of the Wild West and songs like *Big Iron*, *Pancho and Lefty*, and *Doolin' Dalton*, and was written as an homage to the romanticization of Western outlaws. *Black Widow* was inspired by a conversation with his girlfriend, during which he jokingly suggested that she would someday do him harm in order to obtain whatever wealth she hopes he will acquire. No poets were harmed in the making of these poems.

Coleman Bomar

Coleman Bomar is an aspiring writer planing to graduate from Maryville College in 2021. He enjoys reading, napping, eating marshmallows and singing badly.

Destiny Ditmore

Destiny Ditmore is a sophomore who is studying nursing. She loves photography, painting, and enjoying nature in her

free time. Her goal is to incorporate art into her life in any way possible.

Ana Luna-Gutierrez

Ana Luna-Gutierrez is a junior at Maryville College studying Child Development and Writing Communications. Has hopes and plans to be an educator, a mentor, and counselor using art in some shape or form. Art has always been my nirvana, just now simply experimenting and challenging myself to see how far my mind can take me.

Albrianna Jenkins

Albrianna Jenkins is a passionate writer who brings curiosity and creativity to every situation and appreciates and advocates for diversity, individuality, and equal opportunity for all. With an international perspective gained from a semester in France, she motivates herself to “Vivre Libre” (live free), a state she feels is achieved through seeking truth and striving for happiness.

Nate Kiernan

Nate Kiernan is a member of the class of 2019.
Be good to your barista.

The Liizard King

I bequeath myself to the carpet to grow from the living room that I love, if you want me again look for me under the cushions. You will hardly know who I am or what I mean, and that's okay. Poetry isn't for everyone.

Eliza Komisar

I am an English Lit and Sociology double major (hopefully) graduating with the class of 2021. I am from White Bluff, Tennessee, and I love Prince.

Brinley Knowles

Brinley Knowles is a sophomore History and Writing Communications double major with a minor in Gender and Women's Studies. She enjoys hanging out with her friends,

studying in her Eno, reading books, driving the Great Smoky Mountain Parkway, and attending campus activities. Follow her on twitter: @brinlliance1

Mike Layland

Dubbed by an esteemed (snicker) colleague as THE DYS-FUNCTIONAL SHAKESPEARE, Mike Layland has been writing bad poetry ever since he was potty trained about eleven years ago. A retired band director and teaching assistant, Mr. Layland's greatest wish is to return in his next life as tooth decay or appendicitis in order to share the pain that thousands of young scholars inflicted upon him over his more than 35-year teaching career. When not entertaining its students with poetry, Mr. Layland interacts with the Maryville College student body through his participation in the MC3 Community Band.

Amy Mann

Amy Mann is a senior at Maryville College, majoring in English literature. She graduated from Pellissippi State in Spring 2016 with an Associate of Arts degree; she also received the nomination for the English Outstanding Graduate Award and was a member of Phi Theta Kappa. She has two daughters and has resided in Lenoir City, TN since 2012.

David Peters

David Peters is a Writing Communications and Design major graduating in 2019. He is a non-traditional student who loves exploring artist expression through photography.

Lilly Nixon-Perkins

Lilly Nixon-Perkins is a sophomore Psych major graduating in 2020.

Claudia Brito Pires

Claudia Brito Pires is The Girl from the Unknown Paradise. She loves turtles, books, Ukuleles and annoying her brothers. You will usually find her at the Inter-

national House drinking coffee or volunteering somewhere. She dreams of being the pride of her country (Cabo Verde) and family, but also own a turtle sanctuary (not sure how that one works). She is a Junior, majoring in Neuroscience, with Biology, and Writing and Communication as minors. And she is a proud African who loves breaking stereotypes.

Sarah Smith

Sarah Smith is a senior writing communication and English lit major. She would like to be a novelist.

Sherilyn Smith

Sheri's the kind of person who relates very hard to Lana Del Rey. Her godparents are alumni of Maryville College and encouraged her to transfer here from her former university, New Mexico State. At Maryville College, she met the love of her life, Nathaniel Kiernan, who is largely responsible for convincing her not to drop out of school to focus on art and instead just finish her Writing Communication major because she's too close to quit. Sheri conceded. She works at Starbucks and hopes you stop in to say hi, talk about art stuff, and have a coffee with her.

Jordan Ward

Jordan Ward is a political science major graduating in 2021. "Art is something that makes you breathe with a different kind of happiness." – Anna Albers

Michael Westerfield

Michael Westerfield is a Mississippi native with a Bachelor's degree in marketing from Mississippi State University. He served 20 years in the U.S. Army as a photojournalist and public affairs specialist. He is a junior at Maryville College working on a writing and communications degree. His ambitions include being a great husband and father while working as a Christian personal development author and

speaker.

Catherine Wilkinson

I am a senior, writing/communications major who enjoys writing about life events, feelings, and people close to my heart.

Jay Wilson

Jay Wilson is a junior majoring in Writing Communication who enjoys reading and writing stories and just having a good time doing it.

Megan Wright

Megan Wright is a junior English Literature major, double-minoring in History and Appalachian Studies (aka the trifecta of things to study if you want people to ask you "How do you expect to get a job?"). She enjoys caring for her houseplant menagerie, snobbily correcting others' grammar, and winged eyeliner. This is Megan's first year submitting to Impressions, and her first year as a member of the editorial staff.

–Psalm 121:1-2

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Insert poem