Editor-in-Chief
Brandie McAllister

Editor
Chandler White

Cover Design
Onnika Hanson

Sigma Tau Delta Advisors
Dr. Terry Phelps  Dr. Karen Schiller
DEAR READER:

In this edition of The Scarab, OCU’s annual journal of creative writing, we’ve filled its pages with both the familiar and the peculiar. You’ll find an ode to a mother’s wardrobe in “La Ropa de Maria” and a homage to our own beautiful university in “Hail Alma Mater.” Delve inside the inner workings of an android’s mind in “Robotics” or follow along a day in the life of a vampire in two stories about the undead—one grotesque, one comedic—from two Buffy the Vampire Slayer fanatics. We have even pushed our boundaries this time around with a manic dip into cerebral mayhem in “The Nightmare.”

So, on behalf of my co-editor and VP of Sigma Tau Delta, whose work you will find in this issue under C. S. W., we invite you to pull up a chair and immerse yourself in some of the best work from OCU’s most creative minds. As this is my final year at this university and thus my last time as editor, I’ll end with the simple words of Sylvia Plath: “Let me live, love, and say it well in good sentences.”

Happy reading,

Brandie McAllister
Editor-in-Chief
Sigma Tau Delta, President
# Contents

## POETRY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A SALMON AT SUNRISE</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bond, Cedric</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EVERYMAN</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JAN 25</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MOMENT AFTER MIDNIGHT</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LINE</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REGULUS</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dewees, Callie</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ROBOTICS</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frost, Danielle</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EMPTY WORDS AND PHRASES</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JACOB</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THE NIGHT OF OUR LIVES</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goetzinger, Jessica</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EVOLUTION, INC</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TRUST NO B-----</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LITERATI</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NOVEMBER 22, 2015</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hightower, K. E.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MATISSE WINGS</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keegan, Abigail, PhD</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I AM SO TIRED</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kidder, Grace</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CYBER FRUIT</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FOR SYLVIA</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McaAllister, Brandie</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LADY OF FROST</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LOVE ME LIKE</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SHADES OF MOONLIGHT</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ISLANDS</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MIDNIGHT CITY</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McaAllister, Nathaniel</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HAIL ALMA MATER</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parker, Madelyn</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BLUE</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peters, Kayleigh</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAFFEINE</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LA ROPA DE MARIA</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TO THE POTUS</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sanchez, Carlos</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ETERNAL GAZE</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SEMIQUAVER</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wakeham, Matthew</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BEING IN LOVE</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Williams, Patience</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## FICTION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>THE PATH</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bowlan, Cherlynn</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VAMPIRES NEED COFFEE TOO</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hightower, K. E.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONSTANT CONSCIOUSNESS</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hoch, Joanna</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MOTHER SAYS</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FAITH, HOPE, AND LABRADORs</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McaAllister, Brandie</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TO-GO</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sanchez, Carlos</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DUST OFF YOUR FEET</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THE NIGHTMARE</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. S. W.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HOT CHRISTMAS DAY</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Williams, Patience</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## ARTWORK

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A ROSE FOR A ROSE</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THE DOCK</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BLUE WATERS</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WORKING MIND</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Onnika Hanson</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THE BIRD</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MIDAS</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BOCA HOUSE</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WINTER CHICAGO STREET, 1945</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BOCA DE TOMATLAN, CASA DE LOS ARTISTAS, PLAY</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patricia Smith</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

8
Poetry
How would you describe being in love?

The windows are open when the sky’s clear but
the wind makes the plants bend over and shiver,
the plants that are propped
in the kitchen in the windowsill.

There is nothing to everything;
it completes the whole,
it gives it depth, a place to run the faucet water: cold,
when something’s unclean, hot:
when his hands are chapped.

Nothing accompanies everything at the piano, he plays and she sings and
they don’t make eye contact but the room is full of light until a bird flies by
and its shadow clouds the moment quickly and they both look up but he
doesn’t stop playing and she doesn’t stop singing

One, in the form
of many

— Patience Williams
The shadow inches closer, closer, wait—
A flash! A strike! The salmon took my bait,
And with a tugging, shaking, ripping fight
It runs and jumps and wars with all its might.
Then down the river flies the desperate fish
Toward the rising sun against my wish
For there my blinded eyes can’t see the tree
That snags my line and breaks my salmon free.
But oh, it truly was a glorious fight,
And still the sunrise is a brilliant sight.
But when I think how splendid earth can be,
It opens up my mind this truth to see:
If fallen Earth can be as grand as this,
Then how much more the new creation’s bliss.

— Cedric C. M. Bond
If you scour the Earth long enough
You will find a man who will complain
That Aphrodite’s nose is too big
Or her breasts are too small
Or her brain is too active.

— Callie Dewees
Shades of Moonlight

Let me hold you like it’s the end of the world
Wrapped in bedroom candlelight; a boy and a girl
I see the traces of what could be in every movement of your nightgown
You shine silver next to the golden flicker above the icy streets of this small town.

My love for you is dormant, but will erupt at your command
Leave second guesses to the wind; Carpe Diem and take my hand
The effervescence of your eyes and the luminescence of every look…
If you are meant to be my forever then I would say that the future never looked so good.

We lay in this bed as if in a field of silken flowers
The wind howls outside the thin window as the flickering flame leaves a whisper of smoke; a sign of the late hour
I know the sound of your heart like the rhythm of my favorite band
My fingertips race across your sun-kissed skin like the Khan’s mighty horde across the starlit desert sand.

I kiss the roses on your cheeks in hopes that your snow-soft smile will continue to linger
This moment warms my heart more than a newborn babe’s tiny palm wrapping around my index finger
Like a voice gliding down from a marbled balcony,
You sing sweetly into my soul until it turns to treasure; symphonic alchemy.

The pale ghostly gown slowly sheds from your skin
Our eyes like dewdrops stuck together with an almost daylight glisten
We are baptized in our love as lips dance like waves in a glowing tide
Our hearts stripped bare to bathe in the rippling shades of moonlight.

— Nathaniel Moelling
Empty Words and Phrases

Empty words and phrases
float in the empty space
between our souls
as I stare into your hollow void.

I’d ask the why and how,
the reasons for your blank pages,
but, as the idea forms
on the back of my tongue,
I realize it doesn’t matter
because I honestly don’t care.

I realize more about myself,
looking into your space,
than I ever could see in you.

Which, ultimately,
says something about us both.

Doesn’t it?

— Jessica Goetzinger
On the weary surface are rusted cracks
sharp, jagged, slain they’ve laid
this thin promise, lies yet to be made.
The forgotten face of the mountain attracts
dedicated enthusiastic attacks.
Faceless heart’s come bearing their blades
she stands-stiff, still, unwilling to fade-

An uncertain hand reaches for the summit.
Indestructible shoulders built to bear scars
carry pressing weight up to the frozen slopes.
A fire, unyielding and steadfast burns
melt, mold--this is evolution supersonic.
All things new, blamed on the spark
struck from the match, lost in her pocket bright life returns.

— K. E. Hightower
I Am So Tired

Of reading yet another headline and seeing yet another name added to the seemingly endless list of those who have been put into the earth too soon.

Of the media trying to breathe life into the cold pages of their news by showing lifeless black bodies on newspaper covers and website pages, when no one would dare to even dream of doing the same with those of white men.

Of the idea that this is simply a matter of black and white, when in fact it’s black and blue – the colors of the bruises that cover these men’s bodies. It’s red, the color of the blood that has bathed the ground.

Of the notion that standing up for my black brothers and sisters cannot be done while also respecting the officers that put their lives at risk every day they put on a uniform; that supporting #blacklivesmatter and supporting law enforcement are two mutually exclusive ideas.

Of the fact that other cops will not put a stop to these acts of brutality by condemning the actions of those who have failed to uphold the law.

Of living in two Americas. One where families post of happiness and joy, the other where families post of grief, horror, and fear.

Of blatant prejudice being swept under the rug as black men are dismissed as gangsters or thugs. When these men are just like the rest of us – citizens, with a life, a purpose, and a family.
Of society listening to my shouts of protests above the screams of those being slaughtered because my skin happens to be lighter than theirs.

Of seeing a murdered man’s mugshot while seeing a murderer’s selfie.

Of the fact that it is safer in America to be a white rapist than it is to be a black man.

Of the senseless and endless acts of violence being met by most with only silence.

Of feeling helpless because I don’t know how to help. I don’t know what I can possibly do to fix this broken world. Because even though I never pulled the trigger, the blood of the innocent covers all of our hands.

Of hearing people say, “White lives matter too.”
Well if All Lives Matter, shouldn’t this matter to you?

— Grace Kidder
Humans.
They are soft.
Light and dark.
Many colors in between.
Eyes circular, oval, big or small.
Wide, tall, short, saggy, muscular, lanky or lithe.
With red and blue underneath.
White bone and shape around the organs.
A few sharp edges.
Imperfections ranging from model to model.
Humans are all these things.
I am hard.
Not soft.
Hard.
With gray underneath and black.
Oil and gasoline. (Circuits and electricity)
In and out of the valves of my mechanical heart.
My brainwaves are calculated.
My edges are smooth.
I appear perfect.
Consciousness is replaced by the directive.
Suggestions.
But not always answers.
*Abort line of thought.*
I watch my master, the way he moves from room to room.
He talks with his hands.
The Creator does too.
(But not everyone follows her design).
*Abort line of thought.*
Riley.
Master.
Friend.
Love?
(Unclear definition.)
*Abort.*
Riley.
Animated.
Bright some days, droopy and ashen on others.
His mind works like...
A corkscrew,
Constantly turning and twisting a new thought to shape.
I can crush him.
Beneath my boot.
Like a leaf in the autumn.
But I don’t.
I like him.
I think.
If I could think.
I think I’d like him if I could think.
Logically.
Theoretically speaking.
Abort.
I can reason—within parameters.
And learn—if I watch.
I asked him once why he created me.
He said, “I didn’t, my sister did.”
I asked him why again.
He said, with a shrug and an absentminded smile,
“Because she could, I suppose.”
He said some humans possess the delusion of grandeur.
In the kitchen, he appears to contemplate this, scooping pastel cream that is frozen into a mug.
It’s tri-colored. And cold.
Odd.
“We like to feel important. We like to create things. It makes us feel good.”
I asked him why.
He laughed, deep and hearty. His smile touching the amber in his eyes.
“Wouldn’t you like feeling good?”
I told him I supposed.
He asked me once if I dream.
If I feel.
If I can understand emotion.
I stopped and tried to think about it.
The directive suggests: *Abort.*
But I don’t.
Instead I think.
Think, think, think.
I can do that.
I can think.
*Abort.* The directive urges, politely.
Thinking is hard.
Very hard.
Harder than steel and titanium and all of the things I am made of.
*Abort.*
How do humans make themselves think?
*Abort.*
How do they think when their mind doesn’t want to?
**Critical suggestion: Abort.**
What does that feel like?
*Silence.*
Riley asked me once to describe how I felt.
I told him I felt gray.
Unfinished.
As if I have no edges,
No humanity.
No life.
I asked him once if I was really alive.
He looked up from the bound block of paper in his lap and said,
“That depends on your definition of living.”
The directive doesn’t speak again.

― Danielle Frost
The moment after midnight
The second between when our chances are renewed and when they’re just running out
When you have the freedom to claim that it is Sunday night
Or, if you prefer, Monday morning
The moment after midnight
When the world gets quiet, if only for a minute
The time when we can decide if we will fulfill the day’s goals after all
Or leave them for tomorrow, since we’ve already (technically) missed them
The moment after midnight
Where kisses are the sweetest,
Longing the most painful,
And chocolate tastes the best

— Callie Dewees
Cyber Fruit

They say in the beginning, it was an apple that ruined mankind
The sin of greater knowledge that made the whole world blind
But the apple has turned silver, and every year it changes
Once free-thinking minds now locked in handheld cages
Consuming, consuming, like a hungry black hole
The vanity alone will swallow us whole
The real trouble comes in keeping them fed
A new kind of hunger from which the first apple has led

Tap the screen like a glass syringe
All you need is one good binge
Take it away and the world grows sable
You’d give your life for a charging cable
Underfoot it twists, like a snake or a root
Hungry hands reach to pluck the cyber fruit

— Brandie McAllister
Lady of Frost

Oh mysterious woman whose skin is wrapped in white
I wish to see what is beneath the cold, a mystery’s delight
Your nightgown is starless like a cold winter’s night sky
While light shines beneath, open for lonely eyes to attempt to pry.

Your body is like the arctic: frozen, white, and lifeless
And when gazed upon it inflicts a curse much worse than snow blindness
Your demeanor isn’t much warmer, a tundra barren of all but simple life
The mist surrounding your persona leaves dull the sharpest knife.

You shut me out and shut me up; your breath on my skin gives me frostbite
The northern wind matches your movements leaving the feeble to flee with fright
I try to pick away at your frozen shell with my ice pick heart
But striking icy stone with a fractured tool causes the tool to break apart.

You rule my world with twin scepters known as bleak and harsh
My snow white queen leaves the river frozen leaving my soul raspy and parched
If I am in a position of Rome you are surely that of Parthia
You tempt me with sweets while I am trapped in your endless winter of Narnia.

But ice must melt eventually and the arctic will thaw
So I will be your global warming until I find that your icy stone shell has a flaw
Then I will light a spark that gives warmth to your hidden flora
While I watch your eyes change from colorless gray to rainbow aurora.

All along I’ve known that deep beneath the ices reign
Your heart is a volcano pumping lava through your veins
I will not stop until the winter in you is a dystopia lost
So shiver while you can my darling lady of frost.

— Nathaniel Moelling
Dumpsters shout like a child, “Close Doors,” “Close Doors,”
The golden tower overshadows God’s spire.
Ann Lacy and Wanda, lovely buildings.
Both’ve had “work done”, but they’d never tell.
The back of Wanda looks like a loading dock.
Tiny pink flowers are prettier by Ann Lacy.
Two lovers there laugh at the trap of marriage,
and the chapel hums through small, soft, glowing squares.

The oldest building is caressed by quiet greens.
Perhaps the woman doesn’t lean on him too much.
his arm hovers, does not touch her back at all.
It begins to sprinkle, spots bloom at my feet.
The library glows like a warm holiday.
I’ve never seen such collegiate looking lamps.

— Madelyn Parker
Sometimes I believe that you built the sky for me
Placing each piece carefully because if you moved too quickly it would collapse
And again
I'd be left with nothing but darkness where blue should be

But how can I be so helpless
So dependent

There are children living through bombs that rip their families to shreds
Their fingers clasped and knees bent on dirt
Eyes praying to the sky
To God. To Allah. To gods.
Asking for peace.
Asking for strength to keep hoping
Asking for these days to fade
Into nothing more than memories
Into crumpled pages in history
Into nothing more than an ache in the knee
when the rain falls onto quiet homes

Their skies are filled with so much more than blue
They are filled with dust and tears and prayers for a world where peace
comes before greed and hate and anger
Their skies are filled with hopes so full they're spilling onto the ground
onto their battered feet

Their skies are filled with so much more than blue

And they are crumbling
But these people
These strong glorious warriors of hope
Hold what they can on their shaking shoulders
Lungs heavy with prayers that someone will come
And save them
Simply by taking their hand and telling them their fight is not for
nothing
That peace is on its way
And it's bringing thousands of shoulders
Who will help them put the sky back where it belongs
And make sure it stays

— Kayleigh Peters
Caffeine

Caffeine
More so coffee
That loving lifeblood
running through my veins
The very bane of my existence
A gift and a curse from God on high

Coffee
My addiction
That bitter black ichor
which boils in my blood
I sip it silently and find solace
as it simmers somberly somewhere

Coffee
The very smell
is enough to wake me
The endless craving for it
is what takes me through my day

Dripping
Dropping
Drip drop
Drip
Drop
The melody of my mornings

— Carlos Sanchez
There in the distance
Apart from loose chatter,
Lies an edifice, a house
A nice home,
Surrounded by trees
And tall grass -

I try to see
Whether the door is locked;
And if as
Many would have you believe,
A presence nearby

Sterile white walls,
A swollen wood floor,
And a deadbolt -
All of which were revealed

Like Ehud, I
Pull a short knife
From my thigh -

Hearing a faint click -
I find my
Way to the den
Empty and solemn

Light -
Small deficits;
A window -
Details before that
Went unnoticed

But “what was the journey”?
A turn, a glance,

No forethought to my hindsight.

— Matthew Wakeham
Islands

Tell me all about your woes dear lady
Marked fragile, with delicate fingers I handle your frailty
Open up to me in due time like the bloom of a rose
See the sincerity in my iris and take care to breathe slow.

You are a tropical paradise caught in a decaying demise
I washed ashore and was led inland by the sound of your heart-wrenching cries
Tears turned to rivers and rivers to waves
Waves to oceans, and oceans to hurricanes.

I’m an adept swimmer and with my hair drenched
A Notebook moment unfolds as my lips to yours taste heaven-sent
Though the storm subsides the clouds remain black
The salty shine in your eyes touches my soul like first extraterrestrial contact.

I am your castaway please allow me a life here
Untrusting, you stand and palm trees shut me out like the embodiment of fear
I am the foreigner and you are the homeward bound
I am exotic because you have never felt this feeling you are feeling now.

Shipwrecked with disaster, you are the ghost ship of the Santa Maria
Your smile has been conquered and your heart is Indonesia
Let me stay and the wings of war will have no chance to fly in
As I put your heart back together, piece by piece, island by island.

— Nathaniel Moelling
A love scene you thought only existed in the movies
A girl, alternative styled, sitting at a piano
Playing a romantic song that reminds her of him
While he sits and watches, staring at her
Watching her hands as they flit from key to key
Excitedly flattening the pages of the sheet music,
As soon as she turns them, because he is eager to be a part of her world.
To watch his eyes glow as they absorb her form, creating art
And to feel her spirit send all its energy to the space he occupies,
Longing to express her thoughts and emotions through the music
As her fingers dance for him like a gypsy on the street
Creating music
Just for him
That he will use as an excuse
To fall deeper in love with her

— Callie Dewees
Jacob

I said it was okay
You said you hadn’t lost interest
I guess that makes us both liars
At least my lie was born from logic
Yours was misplaced pity
An easy out laid before you
On a platinum platter

You kept the storybook open just long enough
For the sharp-edged pages to sink into my chest
You cultivated hope just long enough
For the thorns to mature
Only to rip them from my fingers
Leaving nothing behind but torn skin

I really do wish you the best
It would appear I can’t help myself
I can only wonder if you meant it
When you said, “And I for you”
Because it really doesn’t seem like you do

It would be best
For me, I know
To cut you out of the magazine
Take you down from my childhood walls
But, when push comes to shove
The posters stay up, the pages intact

I really wish we could go back
Back to the days of thumb wrestling and two steps
But, I think you held the wedge
As I drove it between our unspoken understanding
And now my missing is two fold
The friend and the friend+
All because I should’ve had more sense
We can blame it all on me, if you want
Though we both played our parts
Brad Pitt and Anna Kendrick
Co-starring in Not the Best Idea We’ve Ever Had
Critics called it a flop; they said the headliners were mismatched
The chemistry was there, but the actors weren’t in the same league
So, although the guilt is shared
I’ll breathe it all in
That way you can continue to move on without me

If you ever wanted to look back
I’ll be here, technically speaking
Though I won’t be the girl you met
On a breezy August moon
Like the others, you’ve changed me
Who can say if for better or for worse

If I could sort it all out
Paper, plastic, glass, and aluminum
The recycling from the trash
If I could get you out of my head for the breath of a moment
I could let you go

But, as it stands now
I always come back to you
Looping back and back again to a record never pressed
And, just when I rend my way up to the surface
You drag me back down into you
And, again, I fall down to you

— Jessica Goetzinger
I thought you were a rose bush. 
full. bright. pink. brilliant. silken.
You'd be the kind of rose bush that stops passersby.
with the gravitational pull of its beauty.
This rose bush, with its lush green stems
and velveteen petals, will enchant any eye–
–it will draw any hand–
even its thorns look soft.

But you? You are not a rose bush.
You have no flowers to call your own.
You have no stems, no thorns.
You are the green vines that snake
untamed from the shady dirt,
errant emerald chutes without ladders.
–twist–wrap–climb–choke–

No rose is safe from your ambition.
No stem is enough for your hunger.
–but–
green vines can never blossom.
And you? You are a jealous green vine.

— K. E. Hightower
After Matisse's Jazz Icarus

I have loved as long
as love could
the sky of
paper stars
cut
just
before my birth
red
heart
of the black body
set free
in waves
of blues
in eternal flights of stars
swirling
stardust,
source
and incubator to the black
unknowns of being.
This,
the way I like to think
of us,
wending our way around
and about
constellations
Icarus elbows
bent
no, not bent, but
winging
winging and falling, forever,
forever the weight
of our angling dance of legs
pulling us
down
until an artist,
lifts us
aloft
onto the wings
of darkness
into the mind of stars
improvising
something of infinity
something seen
in the third eye
for the first time,
again
and then, again.

— Dr. Abigail Keegan
Flowers and lace
Pearls and bows
Feminine
Beautiful

Flowers and lace
Pearls and bows
Babies
Kitchen utensils

Flowers and silence
Bows tied in knots
Small wrists
Bent into submission

Misplaced anger
The unknowing victim
Manipulated by an entire world
One she trusted

Corrective rape
Mental abuse
Murder

All verdicts we might face for the crime of stepping out of line

A line we never drew
A line we never consented to follow
A line we are bullied into
A line we do not see the end of.

— Callie Dewees
Love me like a dream prepared in advance,
For the shooting stars and sunsets over a silhouetted romance.

Love me like a rose with all of its silly clichés,
Pathway petals, passion plumes, perfect pleasures, pleasing parades.

Love me like a second glance worthy of an extra attempt,
To glimpse proof that your heartstrings have a desirous intent.

Love me like the fountain of youth, keep me going and always searching,
For betterment, conclusion, inspiration and Cupid-kissed yearning.

Love me like a Fitzgerald novel, an adrenaline rush for open eyes,
Tender nights, sides of paradise, green lights, and damnation beautified.

Love me like you used to, an Angel Falls that didn’t evaporate before it hit the ground.
Love me like I love you now,
My heart an empty church pew with a spot reserved for you
Bring back the rain and the sun, the roses red and violets blue.

— Nathaniel Moelling
For Sylvia

One of the many things I learned from Plath is that nobody ever suffered the wrath of an unsure woman so I confess all the things I am

I am

I am

I am

As surely as spring sizzles into summer like the last bit of fire on a spent cigarette no regret shall hang on me

— Brandie McAllister
La Ropa de Maria
Para Mami - Maria Sanchez

Looking back, what I recall most of all
Is her Blues; her Air Force uniform
Brave Malu of the Puerto Rican Air National Guard
I was so proud to call her Mi Mama

Loca - Crazy - I'll always call her
In her earth-tone "hippy dresses"
Is how I most remember her on lazy weekends
Always smiling and inspiring

Barefooted
I get it from her
Zapatos are not our friends
We barely wear them

Recently she's taken to
Taking my hand-me-downs
My siblings son muy pequeños
On her, they fit her perfect

I haven't seen her lately
But I know she is still
Mami
Boricua
Proud, happy, and free

— Carlos Sanchez
Keep - bang away on those keys,
Not a sound heard from down the hallway.

Left alone to the sounds,
Nothing left to hear, crackling heat.

Never come to fear, let us hear,
The hollow laughter when we say goodbye.

There is a place where sound is not dense,
Watch the water move, our feet shuffling.

“What a lovely face.”
Lines buzzing,
Picked apart.

Reheat that tea – still only warm,
Touch left on me.

One, three, T.V.
Can we watch at all?
Five fingers in the sand,
A cottonwood, five finger man.

“I can’t get mad”.

— Matthew Wakeham
Let’s talk about pretention—
Invention of the intelligent.
read rights to those who need saving
from their commonality.

Common hopes, common folk,
common talk, common trope.

Because their who/what/when/where/why
Find the definition of good enough—
not quite.

the monster inside gnashes and growls
biting words right out of their mouths.
whispers of justified judgement
slither and slink through oil heavy air
Ascend to a higher plane of sophistication!
saturated slimy with endless quotation
a dab (a dash!) of self-flagellation
all while you stare you stare at your own reflection
pleasing yourself to your own end, with your own means.

Tearing, breaking, judging their loves
and passions and drives
you need to consume, so you can survive.

For the love of this life,
I cannot understand.
How a book poem(a painting)
can come to be panned.
Rules rules rules rules rules
all fall into line,
march hear the beat
feet fall right in time.
Casual lemmings, keep tight to the path
Young girls, keep away from the bad girls of Bath.

— K. E. Hightower
Oh that I could wring my tears from the earth
    Like a sponge
And watch them drip from her figure and land
    Amongst the stars
As they fall and form new constellations that will last
    For a century
In this way I would immortalize my pain
Never to be forgotten
In the hopes that a decade or two from now
I can look at the sky
And watch my sorrows twinkle in the night,
Creating sparkling pictures

If misfortune were an artist, she would paint
    And her art would move you
She would smile at you as gently as a mother
    As she dipped her brush in your tears
Before dragging the bristles across the once empty canvas
Only to reveal a stunning image you helped create

But misfortune is not an artist
And the earth will not forfeit my tears
So I’m stuck wishing these non-sentient beings
Could somehow rationalize the anguish I feel
But they can’t

— Callie Dewees
They come in pairs, two by two,
through the curtain of crepe paper and balloons,
and immerse themselves in cardboard cutout comrades,
colored lights, disco balls.

Hot, steamy air packs the bodies closer,
and the girls realize exactly how tight their dresses are,
how the hairspray clings to their scalps,
and just how bad Joe Dirt really smells.

Whispered gossip and backhanded comments are covered
by loud conversations of no importance,
droning underneath coursing rivers
of sound and rhythm.

“This is it!” they think,
the best night of their lives,
the height of their existence.
But, shouldn’t they be thinking,
“This is it?”

— Jessica Goetzinger
Midnight City

Dusk eats away at leftover sunlight
The moon takes reign over fields of starlight
The world embraces sleep but we are newly awakened
Filled with an energy poised for a bedroom vacation.

Lay beside me, every evening a honeymoon
We are tourists, every sight and sound from us made new
Above the covers we sway like a landscape riddled with flowers and obelisks
But under the sheets we are the motors of a bustling metropolis.

Kiss me my love, tire skids on pavement
Like telephone wires we loop and coil in passionate entanglement
The concrete jungle is hidden under neon lights
That wash over me from your moonlight-to-water sparkling eyes.

Our hands race over the other’s skin as if it were sidewalk sleet
Or the many souls speeding home on unforgiving icy streets
Skyscrapers and tunnels make up the city grid
Your lips on my neck like breath to a woodwind.

We move in time with society’s sundial
The clock strikes twelve and we’re off like Nissan through a coastline mile
This is how I say I love you without words polished pretty
So take my hand and let me take you on a ride through midnight city.

— Nathaniel Moelling
To the PotUS

Ladies and Gentlemen,
the President of the United States:
a boisterous hobgoblin
making a rabble of this
once great nation of states

Not yet even at
his State of the Nation address
and We
are already falling apart

Riots against him
Bigots by his side
We shout "Not My President"
they spill their "Alternative Facts"
(read: bull---- and lies)

It is now up to We
the People of the United States
to make right
What he has already made
and whatever else he may make
wrong.

— Carlos Sanchez
November 22, 2015

four years long game
d--- girl, d---.
summer sun, freckled kiss
shuttin’ me right down.

three years long gone
tried another road.
crisp spring wind gusts,
broken heart, meet broken leg.

two years long lost
seven leveled hell.
pumpkin spice pigskin,
empty monogamy trap.

one year long live
bonded fingertips.
snow falls on soccer balls-
puzzle piece friends, forevermore.

four year long game,
kitchen counter kiss.
cranberry, coffee, cloudy skies
finally, finally, half is whole.

— K. E. Hightower
The Path
By Cherlynn Bowlan

I stood before a vast field, tall with grass, with no path clear before me to show me which direction to head.
I wondered aloud which way to go.
I heard a voice, gentle, but sure in his words, saying,
“Trust me and come this way, for I know this direction will lead you to great rewards. And do not fear, for I will protect you along the way; I will provide for you when you need, and I will carry you when you are tired.”
So I started my journey with a single step. A step heavy with faith that I was creating a path in the right direction.
Come six years of journey, the voice of wisdom did not let me down; the path had led me to great joy. I had found what I was seeking in the village of elite society.
In five years more, a young woman came upon that very same field where many years ago, I once stood. There was now a path amongst the tall grass, showing the direction for her to travel.
She wondered aloud if this was the direction to go.
Then she heard a voice, gentle but sure,
“Trust me and come this way, for I know this direction will lead you to great rewards. And do not fear, for I have been this way. I have traveled this path; I have found the obstacles and can guide you through them. I will help you along the way, I will walk beside you when you feel alone, and I will hold your hand when you are scared. You will get tired, but rest assured, this path is shorter than you think.”
So start your journey with a single step. A step that is light, knowing you are indeed on the right path. You too, will find what you are seeking in the elite village.
Faith, Hope, and Labradors

By Brandie McAllister

There is a black dog buried in the backyard of each house I’ve lived in. Our Holy Trinity should be Faith, Hope, and Labradors. The first house was mine for seven years and was where I pressed a Big Red Button and spent an afternoon in outer space. It was a solo flight; I don’t think Mom or Dad even knew I was gone. The backyard was where I got the triangular scar on my thumb one Fourth of July (I’ve never lit a Sparkler since) and where Curly Sue died under the swing set, a black shadow against the uncut summer grass. It may have been fleas, like leeches come to eat her alive, or maybe the heartbreak of bearing eight healthy pups only to lose them.

Our second house was where we played with baby snakes and a littler of rabbits and six calico kittens and chicks like balls of yellow-colored cotton. But none of them we loved so much as a mutt. It’s been said that the Good Lord, in his infinite wisdom, gave us three things to make life bearable—hope, jokes, and dogs. But the greatest of these is dogs. The new tenants will never know what feeds the dandelions that cluster in the back corner of the garden. But I do. It’s not the rain or strong roots, but the alabaster bones of the dogs we’ve laid to rest there, once-living mulch that wagged its tail not so long ago.

We move onto a third house now, but my ears still know the sound of puppy whimpers bleating from the back door, my eyes the specks of light like glitter reflecting off dander floating in the golden air in front of a sunlit window, my nose the scent of wet fur that’s baked under the summer sun, my palms the hackles on the back of Bella’s neck, raised when she senses danger afoot, my little fingers still frozen in the cement step that leads to the porch. And right alongside them are paw prints.
Florence woke up to a battered sun suspended in the middle of the sky, drenched in blending pinks and oranges. The light filtered through the room from the window in her bedroom. Fluttering her eyes open, she stared into it without flinching, golden specks spraying graffiti into her vision until she blinked and saw shapes in neon colors. Birds chirped outside, she heard them without noticing; the room was too bright, her head hurt, something bothered her that she couldn’t remember. Her eyes focused onto the crimson red bedsheets draped sparsely over her legs, but exposing her thighs and socked feet.

Laying down next to her with his cheek nestled against the edge of a pillow, Troy opened his eyes, breaking the drowsiness from them. His eyes concluded focus on Florence’s waist before meeting her gaze. He nudged her gently and tugged the sheets above his exposed torso.

“Just stared into the sun for too long,” she answered. He rotated towards her and draped his arm over her legs. His hand landed upon a saucer on the floor, stained with pizza sauce; it flexed open and then relaxed, the fingers crumbling. She remembered a conversation she had last night through text message and rummaged underneath the sheets for her phone. Her fingers grazed his side, he grunted a disapproval. She found it and her screen lit up. A message was waiting for her. Her face softened and she smiled, typing a reply and then losing focus of the world around her as she sunk within a daydream.

Troy opened his eyes again and faced her. Her eyes didn’t break from their dream. “You’ve left me.”

“If you’re back now.”

“No, you’re still in your mind. You wish you were, at least. Where were you?”

The brightness of the sun lost its color and became a blinding paleness, now stranded higher in the sky. “I don’t know, Troy. Why do you ask it that way? It’s strange.”

“It isn’t strange.” He sat up. The light caught his face. “It’s like you dive into some pool of thought and when you resurface you’re surprised I’m here. I looked at you and you looked surprised. Like I caught you. Like I’m not the one you expected to be here.”

“You make it sound like I was thinking of someone else.”

“I don’t wanna throw you off-guard. I mean, I feel your touch and it’s because you’re looking for your phone.” He rose out of bed and bent down to grab his jeans. He shrugged them on as Florence watched, his defensiveness composed within a body articulated with muscular strength. He looked at her and she swept her gaze away. She looked at her phone and saw nothing was there, the sun or the heat or the tension filled the room and made it warmer, she didn’t know; maybe it was her body growing warm, she couldn’t remember her daydream but now Troy has left the room and he’s talking to her older brother, he
slaps hands with him and she hears car keys and gets ready while he’s away so that he can come back and see she’s not looking at her phone anymore but reading a book, so he can’t see anything that she’s tried to conceal but if she’s ready he’ll forget about the way she looked when he saw her: daydreaming of no one in particular and yet of someone else.

He came back into the room but Florence moved her eyes across the page, blending the words with her gaze. Her eyebrows crinkled as though she’d just read something fairly disturbing—and she looked up in time to watch Troy collapse onto the bed and place his hand over his flat stomach. Suddenly uninterested in appearing interested, she placed the book down on the floor and swung her legs on the bed. All of the doors to her room were open; the main bedroom door creaks as it closes in the view of the living room, and her closet and bathroom doors are slanted open. The lazy, jagged openness accentuated the strong sunlight pouring in from Florence’s window, offering transparency to the space. The reality fluctuated between setting and emotion, between action and desire to act. She got out of bed and stepped into the cone of light; floating bits of dust turn sharp and silver. She opened the window and warm air exhaled upon her face and her arms, the little hairs waved back and forth, the way flowers bend in the wind. With her face lifted to the sun, she sighed quietly and hunched her shoulders forward. “Merry Christmas,” she said, turning around to face Troy with a half-smile on her face.

There were a few things scattered on the floor of the apartment that reminded Florence of things that needed to get done: the novel that she’d been holding, and four painting by Troy that were propped up against the walls. Two were unfinished. A trashcan in the corner overflowed with tissues, a Tropicana orange juice bottle, and three receipts that didn’t look crumpled at all— one from a donut shop, another from a department store, and another an expired coupon. A pair of tennis shoes, one of them near the bed and positioned on its side, the other one against the wall. Headphones, a bundled-up lavender scarf. Florence’s eyes landed upon each of these items and scrutinized them until she felt compelled to do something; so she picked up the headphones and placed them on the bedside table and pressed her palms down on top of the overflowing trash to condense its contents. She walked over to the other edge of the bed where Troy was now facing the wall, and patted his cheek. “When are you leaving?”

“I don’t know. Do you need to get going?”

“I don’t know.”

He closed his eyes and she walked back over and picked up the book, looked at it, and then laid back down on top of the messed-up sheets. The sun was out, he was lying next to her with his back facing her, if she wanted to touch him she could, if she wanted to remember his warmth she could remember by touching him. This was a lazy day in December and a hot Christmas day and she wanted to talk to him but this was how she remembered she was happy, by not remembering anything and focusing on remembering to remember that not thinking equates living life, this was her life right now and she enjoyed it and she could plunge into darkness right now if she wanted to, even in a brightly lit, warm room, but she treaded above water. It didn’t much matter why she would want to or not;
what mattered was that she could, her thoughts have sharp nails that can drag across and break the tender skin of any pleasant thought; she could make them cry, make them bleed. She had a full day to do whatever she wanted, but here he was and she treaded above water, she should be grateful for everything she had.

“I’m gonna visit my family soon,” she said to him. He didn’t budge. She couldn’t tell if he was sleeping or not, and although she couldn’t see his face, she assumed his eyes were still closed. Additionally, sprouting from the floor was a studio lamp whose lampshade was shaped like a tulip. If she peered into the cup-like shade she could see the bulb, but if she peered at it from her bed she couldn’t. When it burned brightly it looked like a glowing cup, if she could drink the light she would, what would it taste like? Turpentine and sin, a violent white eruption ripping across the sky during a winter storm, the way romance brews in the red solo cups of teenagers at late-night parties in the suburbs, the way one feels when a lover arrives, the way a lover leaves. Burning light. Burning light that hurts to look at, that hurts to taste. Her eyes returned to the image of the cup, fading away her dream.

Florence stared out of the window and envisioned someone looking inside. It was Christmas Day, after all; they should be happy, entangled in love. Her head dunked underwater and she thrashed down below. She wanted to bother Troy; she wanted him to love her and never leave but she dreamt of leaving him and being the greatest thing that ever happened to him. It was bound to happen; something demeaning that caused them to drift and remember.

As though he could sense her dreaming of him, Troy reached over and patted her thigh. She sat still, waiting for something else. He sat up and faced her, took her face in his hands and kissed her until the sun faded and the holiday ended. Then he shifted in his sleep, Florence returned to herself and watched him. There was no hand on her thigh; his were tucked underneath his pillow and imitated Christ hands. Instead she closed her eyes, he said to her, “I don’t like your strongest memories of me being so negative, so needy. You multiply those memories and stack them ahead of each other, you make them grow and lay them ahead of any future I have like two mirrors facing each other. You extract the effort I make with you. You wonder what you mean to me, you’re afraid I don’t care as much as you’d like but baby, you don’t let me know what I am to you either. This day has almost been wasted by us. Not me, not just you. We wasted it together, separately. You don’t want me here do you? Tell me. Tell me you want me to leave. Tell me that you aren’t unhappy—that you’re just afraid.”

“Florence?”

Her eyes fluttered open and Troy was dressed, standing in front of her. Her gaze fell on his torso but trailed upwards to his face. He looked concerned and open, mirroring her quiet ambience as she lifted herself and rose up on her knees. He slipped his arms around her waist and she hugged his neck.

“Merry Christmas, sweetheart,” he said. “I’m gonna go get some food and hang out with my family for a bit. Hopefully everyone’s drunk and the tension’s thawed out. You want me to bring you anything?”

“Yeah, bring me what you can. I’ll go over to my parents’ place for a little while.”

Both of them stood still and coated in bluish gray light. Night had come and laid the day down to rest, but when the next day comes, they will have forgotten this one. Troy turned on one of the lamp lights and hugged Florence warmer, something
happened in the both of them that caused them to slow in desire and doubt, here they were entangled and content but no one was peering through the window to witness this, not even themselves. Florence tried to stop thinking of Troy because he was in her arms and succeeded for a few brief moments, and these moments felt like living; she held him instead of wishing him away, no matter how gratefully she did so. For now, they went away before they separated. The day embodied them into past, solidified them in shadow and thinly in fear for becoming without expecting to become, becoming without warning, shaping an otherwise unshapeable thing—life itself—but they continued to hold each other in one another’s arms, believing in whatever they believed could be rightly lived. He kissed her cheek and slid his hands down the sides of her hips and left without closing the door. She watched him leave—the front door creaked open, but she closed it once she heard an engine rumble. The headlights flooded light into the living room. She heard him drive further and further away until she couldn’t hear him anymore and then she sat with her hands folded in her lap, biting her lip with a small smile on her face, similar to when she wished Troy a Merry Christmas after opening the window. She got up to close it and thought of him again but the night grew darker and the darkness was plentiful. She couldn’t prevent it from slipping into her mind; it began to darken. Moon spilled in and stained the carpet with milky white light. Her mind returned to the frustrations that plagued her throughout the day and made her feel guilty about the way it was spent. She turned on loud jazz music and got ready to leave before her head dunked underwater and she began to thrash again.
In the early morning hours, sometime between the moment when night slips into day, Jamie enters the quiet coffee shop on the corner of 89th and Park. The floor is freshly mopped, so her shoes squeak obnoxiously on the red checked tiles. As a vampire, she doesn’t need much sleep, just a few minutes here and there. And despite popular opinion, she isn’t a blood thirsty monster. (Sure, sometimes she drinks blood and gets a little carried away but so do the Smorshnogg demons and no one judges their ugly mugs.) It has been a long night of brooding, floor pacing and internal debate. And also stalking, don’t forget the stalking. The brooding comes naturally to her. What doesn’t come naturally, is being in love. Resulting in, you guessed it, more brooding.

“Hey Blanco, hit me with a quad shot. I need to taste my soul.” Jamie says to the man behind the bar. He doesn’t look like a Blanco, with a scruffy red beard and unkempt strawberry blonde hair, but he owns his name with the pride of a Viking.

“You have no soul. Vampire.” He speaks with a Nordic accent. Because he’s actually a Viking.

“You have no soul. Vampire.” He speaks with a Nordic accent. Because he’s actually a Viking.

“How was your night?”

“I watched Bring It On.”

“I watched Bring It On.”

“Again? Don’t you ever get tired of Big Red and T-T-T-Torrance?”

Blanco sighs and rolls his eyes, he’s not impressed with her. But he’s hardly ever impressed with anyone. That doesn’t mean he’s rude though. So while the espresso streams from the machine and into the cup, he makes polite conversation.

“How was your night?” He pauses to pull the cup away from the machine. “Kill anyone?”

Jamie gasps, placing a hand on her chest like a southern belle. “Blanco! A lady doesn’t kill and tell.”

The espresso is steaming in the cup now, and Blanco busies himself with pouring the milk into the steaming pitcher. He inserts the steam wand into the pitcher and turns the machine on. It whirs to life with a groan, clicking loudly like a gas grill trying to start with no flame. Finally, the steam pushes itself through the ancient bowels of the machine and begins to heat the milk.

“I didn’t kill anyone.” Jamie says, looking more tired than before. “I was just up all night, trying to get Oriel to notice me.”

“The elf from 65th?” Blanco asks, shutting the steam off.

“You know her?” She places her fingers on the counter, pressing so hard that the tips of them turn white. “God, she’s an angel sent from heaven. You know how I feel about coffee, right Blanco? Of course you do, you see me every day. This doesn’t even compare. It’s crazy. She makes me feel even better than coffee. She’s like, a perfectly pulled espresso shot poured over sweet cream served with a side of crystal blue-eyed redhead perfection.”
Blanco nods respectfully. He has no idea what she’s talking about. He isn’t the kind of Viking who compares women to coffee, but he wants Jamie to take her drink (which is now finished with a swan poured delicately into the mug just the way she likes it) and leave.

“She comes in from time to time.” He tells Jamie, sliding her latte to her carefully. “Usually early in the mornings. You know elves. They like to be productive. Get all their elf tasks done.”

Jamie ponders this, growing more excited with each passing second. “This is like Romeo and Juliet, only more romantic. Blanco! She’s going to come in here and fall in love with me, and we’ll live happily ever after and you’ll give the toast at our wedding telling everyone that you’re the reason we ended up together and how you’re so happy for us that you’re giving us the coffee shop to run and then you’ll move away and we’ll have so many kids and everything will just be great.”

Blanco stares at her blankly. The bell chimes at the front door and he swings his head around to greet his new customer. He’s recently been scolded by his boss for intimidating customers and talking loudly about pillaging their apartments. Being a Viking in present day America is hard.

“Morning. What can I get started for you?” He asks. He’s lost a lot of his street cred with the other Vikings for taking this job. It must be the constant politeness the position demands. Vikings do not do polite. They just don’t.

“Quad shot. If you don’t mind. It was a long night.”

Her voice is magical and lilting, not unlike a fairy but she’s much larger and far more beautiful than any fairy he’s ever seen. Blanco watches as the elf turns to Jamie and smiles warmly, lighting up her pointed features with unusual glow.

Jamie takes that moment to drop her coffee, the mug shattering on the floor and sending shards of ceramic clay in every direction. Jamie’s eyes grow wide and she shifts on either foot.

“Hi,” Jamie says to Oriel, waving her hand awkwardly, ignoring the spilled drink. “Sorry about eating your cat.”
I have a theory that my NyQuil was radioactive or some sort of reverse pricking of a spinning wheel situation happened. Either way, I haven’t slept in eight months. I do not feel tired, nor has my body experienced the side effects of sleep deprivation. It’s the ideal insomnia. I have been gifted with 24 hours a day completely available to me with no direct effect on my body.

So I watch a lot of Netflix.

It was hard at first, determining how to divide everything I wanted to do. With a full 24 hours a day, I felt a sense of freedom no one else ever has. I laughed in the face of time. I would call people at 2 am on a Tuesday without a second thought. I would shower in the middle of the day and go grocery shopping at the break of dawn.

The fake invincibility I felt from this power was exactly that: fake. Just because I don’t have to sleep doesn’t mean that I’m immune from all other bare necessities of life. Like food, thought the issue wasn’t a sense of immunity from hunger but the opposite; I could spend so much more time eating. I was a regular at the closest diner to my apartment and pancakes were my booty call.

Symptoms include: boredom eating.

When I wasn’t keeping a booth occupied at my diner, I would go to parties. I could drink and dance all night. But as my night turned into my morning, eventually I had to come down from that high. Before my cure I would just sleep it off, but now I have to feel the intoxication slip off of me. Everyone else would pass out and I would sit alone in a dark room feeling like the soggy bread of a cold sandwich.

Symptoms include: alcohol dependency.

That’s why it’s easier to get brunch with your party pals the morning after and be able to laugh at their ridiculousness without feeling the post-drunk blues. The world wasn’t made for constant consciousness. There are right and wrong times for everything. So during the day the I do the things the world expects me to do during daytime. I go to meetings and I shave my legs and I buy donuts and protein shakes. All social outings should happen during the day, the night time is for me. I do all of the things nobody else has time for because they have to revolve around a 5-9 hour block of unconsciousness. I change into PJs, curl up and watch twelve episodes of whatever is new on Netflix. Or I read a whole book, or the newspaper. Sometimes I try to learn a skill like cake decorating or whittling.

But something not even I have time for is the 1 a.m. thoughts. After midnight passes, the existential thoughts are inevitable. That’s why I plug up my ears.
with reruns of 90s TV shows and Netflix Originals. Because once there’s silence, there are questions. I have (on average) six extra hours to question my existence.

Symptoms include: depression.
I tried to keep myself busy, but unfortunately all of my activities began to clash because they all happened during the day.
So I started a blog, a memoir, an expansive social media Choose Your Own Adventure maze. Not sleeping is not a cure for lack of motivation. And it definitely doesn’t mean that anyone will give a s---.

Symptoms include: lack of purpose.
But my mind still spun all the time, and it was essential that I kept it busy with something.
“Hello? Are you still with me?” A hand waves in my face.
“You lost me again.” A confused expression.
“Hey watch where you’re going.” A blur of a figure.

See, the sleepers of this world get to dream and let their minds have full control. That nonsense generator that kicks in as you’re dozing off in class has become my shadow. It paints the path I follow. I don’t hallucinate, I travel through the day by hopping from dream to dream.

Symptoms include: excessive day-dreaming.
I don’t live in increments of hours or days, I simply live. It’s like when you’re dreaming and you notice that it’s a dream, but you just keep on going, uninterrupted. I remember occasionally that I’m still a human, that I’m still breathing and functioning. And I just keep going. I’ll endlessly be conscious until I’m endlessly unconscious.
The Nightmare
By C. S. W.


Always tucked in up to the chin; brother always made fun. Feel that way now; awaiting bedtime story. Aeeeeeeh, sore legs stretchy tight. Yesterday leg day at gym; still feel the taut. Make for better rest. Did I set? Yes…yeah, yes, memory fallible. Must be medication – no, it’s set. Remember cause thought of vivid green light in numbers. 8:00. Aye, for what.

Need all can get. All get is what? Streeetch; a lime green 11:00. What, 9, total? Aye, 12 not ten…was never good at – 9 hours, it’ll be, if I fall at this very second. Not likely. Wishful thinking. Sleep hard these days.

Why, wonder? Why, wonder, rather, perhaps some layer spirit from a different. Demon? Religious, I don’t know. Really doubt. Ghost not likely; built house myself. Ah, snapwhip of rational, not likely any of it. Just the medication, temperature, restlessnessless. Why always wait for unwanted spirit answer? What wrong with me wrong with thinking something more of reality?

Not real, doggone it!

Best push self into black. Strange, is, let self die slowly, miniature version of death, sleep is. Like rolling down a hill. Hill of sheets. Pile of gold. Tumblebleweed down the hill into…

…laaaannggouuurrhgggggggggghhwhatthimeediilset the…

…knewthatididn’timust remember to buy blue Windex tomorrow don’t forget forgetforgetforgetfofgg…

…wasn’tuntillididn’tthinkIwhatareemy thoughtsIcan’tthinkstraightanymore…

Tickity tickity tiiiiick


Wish I was. How much cost? Many maybe, don’t know. Cost not issue, but doctor to operate. Don’t want overdo it; die, or worse. Worse? What is worse?

Something, for sure.

Morbid. Get back; how? The mind not a zipper. Can’t slide back to tiredness. Come ooooon back back back backbackbackba…

Slide into…beforeyounowit…

…afraid to mare the night…maim me might…

…what if scary dream? notincontrol just shhhhhhh…

…need get before work…need rest…

…rest forever…

…voice not mine. Divine or? What was…

…on my way, my merry way…

…what is happen…what am I-

BAMP!

SYIKE! Whip up wind! What was? Loud, loud. No mouse no more. Hulking giant maybe. TreEeEeEmble. Cool wet on face.
Was door? Did I lock the? Swear I did…but you no trust. Should check, really, should check.

Up and out of comf. Little hand flashlight; brighty bright. Scare away the spookies. Or attract. Eyes getting used to; step carefully, carpet turn tile, kitchen, ghost eating my krispies! Heehee. Make funny in mind conquer fear. All one needs. Man by self invincible; mind over matter.


What difference? What difference between what hands touch and mind touch? Or does one become other? Sculpture, suppose. Mind touches then hands. Comf! Sheets not as cool, warmer from body. Or someone been inside it – d--- Penelope! Heeheehee.

Back to sculpt. Make sure sculpt right thing; careful to create carefully. If wrong, creation may haunt or destroy you. Frankenstein. Ah, yes, this. But in its nature; sympathize with monster, why book so. But reality, is? Perhaps. Art imitates life imitates art. Nah. Former. Latter would be unfortunate if the wrong mind or idea were to...

Pulsing veins, widemouth, fishhead. Fishhead want meat. Fishhead want me. Pale clammy. Me or it? Both how? Is it me? Wish was…

Butnot. Is…gaaoouugggggghh sharp bites, runnyrunnyrun away!

Can’t; thrish thrash, wigglewrestle can’tmove!

Thu! Thu! Can’tbreathe-!
Taking me, aaaaouuuuuuhhh! AIE! Get me out of bed, out of grave, wrestle against – ???

Don’t know?

Can’t make sound; throat closed or rock in it…voice a wall of crag…khhhhhhhh…

None shall hear the last sound I make. If a soul is eaten and no one is around to hear it…kickykick can’t! Can’tkick!

Ah!

**BAMP! BAMP! BAMP!**


Howwwww.

Peel sweaty sheets. Step out; more so fall. Keep track of head, carry carefully, if drop might fall forever. Flitty flashlight; almost drop slippery sweat. No – fine, we’re fine.


Tile colder than before. Sign of demon, used to say. Chill in the air. Stop! Don’t think that. Neverever and not now. Sudden weight to idle fancies, might turn to terrors by accident. Strange gravity of fear. Pull as all into hell by our brains. Hell hot or cold? Feels both. Combination of all things is the heart of nothingness.


What is?

Don’t look

Heehee

do not turn head, if turn head, then

Heeheehee

dark there full of

Heeheeheeheehee

teeceaaaaaarrrrrrrr out my head!


Aiiiiiee, regretting leg day. Worse when shaking, greasy rods jangling. Surmount; atop stairmountain. Now?

Now. Attic.

Door was never used, to my memory. Though memory eludes me…no sign of entry, how could? If got in, was through here. Can’t go else from here; save garage. Would’ve heard. Thinky thoughts keep me from.


…sacks…luggage…cardboardboxes…nothing out of attic ordinary. Wonder if spirit slink out of bag like sand, black sand, hope not. Could slip through cracks then? Could find me in bed. Sigh…seem can’t rid self of thoughts. What of me, then?

Well, nothing. Call it – nothing. Called it, I did, din’t I? Back down stepbystep–

Kreenky kreenky kreenk. Kreeeeeekenk.

It’s in–?!

SHLUTCH!

Door!

Scramblebleforth! Need knob, needknob needknob! Wood, wood splintery wood, not doorframaamamame-

It’s in! It’s in! Aeeegghhhhhback, behind my back?

Swerve aroundround, where is? Came from right, back, left,

Kreenk kreenk kreenk

floorboard kreenks are traveling, can hear

Kreenky kreenk

Closer!

Can’t be real, cannot be, cannot be, in head, all in head

Heehee

It’s all illusion in head, silly head of mine, Penelope, can’t get sleep, the medication make me weak, can’t fix my brainybrain

Heeheehee

Stay sane, boy, c’mom, all in head

Heeheeheehee

All in head
Heeheeheeheeheeheeheeheehee 

It’s in—?

IT’S IN MY HEAD

Heeheeheeheeheeheeheeheehee

Cold flesh…scaly scales…rubber gut…open bassmouth…

Heeheehee…eeeeeheeheeheehee

Feel clammy lips…raw sardine breath…in the pit of its throat a giggle

Heeheehee! Heeheehee! Heeheeheehee!

Fishykiss…dead gray eyes rolling ‘round at me, goggling…

Goggle…goggle…

Fishhead cometh.

Staggerback, stumbleslip, falllyfall down the—

Ooohhhff! Doorknob into back and hand and sliip – out door. Fell on back, nearly downstairs, careful, careful, scramble up, closeitcloseitcloseit—

Done.

Whathowwaswhat?

Pant. Alone now. Surely was alone whole time…? Couldn’t be other…there is no other, live alone, nothing more, nevermore. Poe. Poor poe. Poe poe. Heehee.

Face meet palms, dark relief. Upanddown lungs, heavegasp – let tears bleed. Too hard these days…sleep an elusive thing, sanity all the more so. Thought could fix with pills – but couldnotcannnot be helping. Sigh…what do? What left for me? What can be if not sane? How live through night with fishheaded mind? Need out…out of what? Own house? Own self? Own mind?

Clearly out of my own mind already.

Mother said…guhuhuhuuhuhuhuh…said I needed the treatment…guhuhuhu…no more faith in…guhuh, guhuh… Just want live, but cursed by the gods, the God, the cod, the god. What wrong with…can’t keep thought together, a house caving in on itself…guh…huh…

Need sleep. Have almost none past four months. Downstairs. Go. Go, now. guhuhuuhhuu-enough that, go. Down. Go. Sleep. First step now—

Stair wet.

………W-w-w-w-whyyyy?

Fishhead wet.


Twitchy eyebrows. Lose feel in toes and fingers and ears…can’t…can’t can. No longer can can. Can-can? Dance?

Heehee?

Ktchunk!


Tile shimmery slippery wet. Headed right to throne room…of what king? Poseidon, king of sea. Hated Odysseus and all his wandery wandering. Nipnapping away from the truth, he was. His avoidance mistaken for exploration. Want to come home? He didn’t want to come home. He knew Penelope was snuggling suitors. Heeheehee. Penelope, I’m home! Heeheeheehee. Poor welcome, but surely the truth. Heehee…heeheeheeheehee…hee swam about for seas and eons, running from the ugly fishheaded truth. What a foolyoof Odysseus indeed…

…hee swam about for seas and eons, running from the ugly fishheaded truth. What a foolyoof Odysseus indeed…

eeheeheehee…heeheeheeheeheeheeheeheehee…keep think heehees, keep think heehees. Who needs pills when you have heehees?
Heehee.
Heehee.
Keep think heehees.
Open door…flashlight inside–
Mother Says
By Brandie McAllister

Yesterday, my name was Connell. Tomorrow it might be Emily or Steven. I take their names in place of mine. I have no name tonight, but my luck might change, should our hunt prove fruitful.

Mother brings me to the main breeding grounds, where the humans are gathered so thickly it’s a roiling cesspool of booze and bodily fluid. Strange sounds thump from a clapboard house across the street from the university, bass heavy and jarring.

What is it, I ask.

Mother turns toward me. Moonlight paints half her face white.

Music, she says. But this kind comes from machines, not instruments.

Keeping to the shadows, I move closer, along the brick cobble avenue. Mother follows. I stop at the edge of the dark copse of trees lining the small yard of the fraternity house. A black rectangle stands out against the orange glow leaking through thin curtains from the front window where a JUSTICE FOR KELSEY flier has been taped to the corner of the glass.

Kelsey. I roll the word over on my dry tongue. I was Kelsey once.

Blonde. Blue eyes. Big smile. Kelsey. The last real taste of summer. The bottom of the paper reads REWARD $100,000. Big money. Even in the twenty-first century. We must take our time with the next one and let it survive, Mother had said. Easy money.

I scan the nameless faces of the bodies coming and going. It is a constant stream, like the ocean’s tide. Tonight, it’s my turn. But there are too many, the scents layering over each other. And so many of them travel in packs on their way back to the dormitories it’s like they know.

I take my time. Mother says I must take care in choosing, as one takes care in choosing an *eau de parfum*. There are top notes and base notes. What at first smells sweetly may in fact be decay and putrefaction underneath. She’s always warning me against the Lily of the Valley. Beautiful and pure on the outside, but poisonous. You must never pluck a Lily, she’ll say.

This is when I spot her, stumbling down the steps of the vibrating house. I can see no razor’s edge has touched her hair in years and her skin emits a musk that reminds me of vanilla or some other mild spice, like cloves or cinnamon. She’s a pure one. I can smell it. I need to know her name.

Her, I whisper like a secret.

Yes, Mother approves. There is purity in this one.

I can sense what mother is talking about, pick up the waves of energy radiating out of her. Her aura, as Mother calls it.

Whenever you’re ready, she says.
I look up at her, the moon of her face latticed by a shadow of leaves. Her eyes tell me I must learn.

Eat or starve, she says. Her mantra.

The girl makes it to the street, the iron gate of her dormitory less than a hundred steps away.

It’s this or Sunday Mass, Mother warns. I deliberate for a moment, not sure if she means she’ll force me to go as punishment or to do my hunting there. But I know which. Even as a creature who predates Christ, Mother still has moral standards.

I fill my lungs with the girl’s scent and allow my instincts to take over. She knows I love the choir, for there is no other sound from which one can experience God in aural form, but I hate the hymnals. They are too much a reminder of what I’ve lost.

The liquor leaches out of the girl’s skin through pearls of sweat that glisten in the light of the Hunters Moon, the same moon under which ancient peoples tracked summer-fattened antelope that were unable to hide in the naked fields of autumn. Secondhand sunlight gives her skin a silver-colored scent as she shuffles back to her dorm. She never looks back.

The closer I get the quicker Connell’s blood pumps through my veins. I can still taste the salt in it, like salt from the sea. I can taste the hops of good Irish ale, hear the racket of his ancestors building warships in Dublin Bay, feel the weight of a rubber mallet in a thick fist, feel the flex of strong, freckled forearms, hear men calling to one another on the rigging…

I’m close enough now to be the girl’s shadow, close enough to reach out and touch her, when I realize I don’t know her name. And I need her name. Need it like a woman ripe with child needs to push. But my drive to drink from her fades with this revelation. My pace slows and before I understand what I’ve done, the girl has disappeared behind the glass doors of her dormitory. I inhale the faint traces of her scent that hang in the air, but it’s no stronger than the white spot left by the sun on closed eyes.

I’m far enough away from the fraternity house to hear the sounds of the night: the wind whistling softly as it whips between buildings, dry leaves fluttering like leathery wings, crickets scratching their legs, and the creak of a metal side door as two girls emerge from the dorm, talking to one another animatedly, too loud for the dark. The first, the taller of the two, steps off the curb and their paths diverge. She calls to the other, who can’t be more than ninety pounds beneath her cutoff jeans and wool cardigan, and I catch her name.

_Lilah._

I know what comes next, though the thought does not solidify. From behind a tall hedgerow, I watch her hair lift and fall against her shoulders, its color bleached in the moonlight. Each step that takes me closer to the girl, she takes a step away. When I stop, she stops. When I move, she moves. This is the dance. Humans call it a gut feeling. They don’t have the proper vocabulary.

Lilah slides one of the light-up machines out of her pocket, the baby nickelodeons every human reaches for that sends some kind of signal for help. A signal that always comes too late. The screen illuminates Lilah’s face in a blue-white glow. She looks around, but sees
only shadows.

The memories flash by in a blur of zest and heat. Citrus reflections. A red sunset cutting through a canyon; torn fabric on a cactus; blood on desert sand; petals plucked off a yellow flower; the heady taste of marijuana and chocolate. My memories now.

Mother finds me in the narrow alley behind the girls’ dormitory on my hands and knees, sucking platelets out of marrow, tawny fluid leaking out of the top of the body’s spinal column and onto the night-cooled grass. The body that used to be called Lilah lies flat on its back, the head turned backwards, dark hair forming a mesh over the face I never saw.

In the dark, Mother’s eyes glitter, black and reproachful.

You drank from this one? she asks, her lithe frame sinking into a crouch at the other end of Lilah’s body.

I look up and wipe my mouth with the back of my hand, licking the smeared blood clean.

Scrambling for the body’s feet, Mother removes their socks and white canvas sneakers, checking the bare soles, then moves up, flipping the palms moonward, inspecting the delicate pink skin there.

What are you looking for?

Mother swipes a finger where the neck is severed, tasting a drop of the blood, then spits.

Syphilis, she hisses.

I swish around what’s in my mouth and swallow. I was too preoccupied with the memories before, too hungry to even taste disease. But the flavor sits on my tongue now, tingles as it absorbs into the sides of my mouth, my throat, my heart. Almost metallic, like a mouthful of pennies. She’d warned me about blood diseases, one of the reasons it was so important to take care in our choosing.

What will happen?

You’ll rot, Mother says. From the inside.

How long?

Mother looks down at the body, placing a hand on the chest, right over the heart.

She’s not cold yet, Mother says. Perhaps until sunrise.

A soft pat, pat, pat of blood on my lips wakes me. I open my mouth to receive it. In the tree above me, I hear a nest of baby birds doing the same, little beaks wide, ready for a worm. Mother’s punctured wrist floats in the air above me and, to the east, a faint flush of violet colors the horizon. I want to ask how long, but my throat has closed.

Don’t speak, Mother whispers.

And I don’t need to, for the answer is in her eyes, the truth of it in her blood. The answer is, Not long.

There is a heaviness in my limbs, weighed down so by this debilitating sickness. The metallic tang hasn’t left my tongue. If anything, it’s become more pronounced, the polluted blood sapping the energy out of me. Like being wrung dry or slowly squeezed like fruit in a juice press.

There have been hangings here, Mother muses, distracting me, one palm flat against the velvet earth.

I smell it too, the scent of iron where the blood seeped into the gnarled roots many moons ago. I wish she would say my name. I wish she would say Lilah. My tongue wet with blood, I try to tell her this, but the words won’t come. With what little strength is left in this body, I reach up for Mother’s face, placing a hand, crippled as if from rigor mortis, at the back of her
neck. I move my mouth close as if to place a bloody kiss on her cheek but instead sink my teeth into her smooth flesh, deep enough to pierce her left carotid artery.

My eyes roll back in my head and it’s a symphony, the blood, hot and anonymous, blaring in my head, the song of life and death, the sound the universe made when it exploded into existence, the cry of distant stars as they streak across the endless black expanse, blazing fire that breathes warmth into dead rocks that will become life-breeding planets long after this one is sucked dry. I drink and swallow, drink and swallow, taking deep, yawning mouthfuls.

Waste nothing. Another one of Mother’s lessons.

Behind my eyelids, a flock of gypsies dance, a skirt belted with gold coins jingling around Mother’s gyrating waist; a caravan of camels lapping at the edge of a turquoise sea; and the holy rivers of blood... so much blood, enough to flood a small city or drown a dry valley.

When I open my eyes, my vision is red. I wipe away the blood tears and lick my fingertips. Mother’s skin is white as bone and thin as the onion pages of a bible. I focus my mind on the task of hiding the body, if only to divert myself from what I’ve done. I don’t feel like I’m rotting, rather I feel very much alive as I get to my feet. The dawn is rising, coloring the sky the same blush pink as my cheeks, the backs of my hands, my heart. And if it could beat again, just once, it would beat for my mother.

Tomorrow morning, a hungover medical student will find her body in one of the refrigerated chambers in the cadaver room of the science laboratory and pump her full of embalming fluid and idly wonder what her name was. Mother. It’s what I called her. This is the burden she has passed down to me. The burden of blood. It is blood to which everything returns, she would say. It was her blood she was always willing to share.
I’d not once, in my entire career as a to-go cook, received a tip larger than a dollar, at least not until that tiny Subaru overflowing with eight strippers showed up. When the call came in, I picked up the phone in my trained, robotic response, “Thank you for calling Cimarron Steakhouse. How can I help you?”

After a short pause, a raspy, genderless voice, chimed in, “I’d like to place an order.”

And so, it begins, “Alright. What are you having?”

“This is gonna be a long order. You ready, hun? I’m gonna need eight Cowboys. Two medium-rare, one with rice, the other with a loaded baked potato; one rare, with green beans; two medium-well, one with another potato, the other with fries; one well-done, with fries; and two medium, one with green beans, the other with rice. You get all that?”

I regurgitated the order back, and took down a name for the order – Jordan. That didn’t help me figure out whether it was a man or a woman I was talking to. Guess it didn’t really matter, so long as they paid. I made sure I’d gotten everything, hung up, and punched it into the system. It turned out to be a whopping hundred and twenty dollars. This was the largest order I had ever taken on, but you know what? Orders like this always tended to piss me off; they never tipped enough, and I could never get one done in the thirty minutes before a manager walked into the kitchen to yell at me for taking too long.

For that very reason, I got right to work. After setting eight of our largest T-bones on the mesquite grill, I told Martin to watch them for me while I prepped the sides. I got out the eight boxes and loaded them up in the order that they’d finish cooking.

First came the rare steak accompanied by a fine scoop of reheated, canned green beans. After five minutes per side, the steak came off the grill; the low cook time means that the center stays red, soft, and cool. I didn’t hate rare steaks, but more often than not, they turn out to be too gory for me.

After that steak was in its box, my manager walked in. When she saw all the boxes I had to get done, she gave me her usual lecture about how important it was to finish on time and blah, blah, blah. Would it kill her to cut me some slack?

Crap, I’d nearly forgotten about the steaks. Who would’ve thought that focusing on ignoring your boss could make you come out of the auto-pilot you get into when you do the same thing every day for eight hours. Next, came the two medium-rares, one with a shoveling of rice and the other with a fully loaded baked potato. Thankfully, these two weren’t bleeding all over the Styrofoam box like the last one. Just looking at it made me hungry; this was how I preferred my
steaks. Sadly, I was still a few hours from getting off work and enjoying one of my own.

Had to stay focused. After thirteen minutes on the grill, the medium steaks were ready for boxing. When cooked properly, these were always a nice pink color. This was how my mom ordered them for me when I was little. I packed them up, one with green beans, the other with a big scoop of rice. You know, I could seriously go for some of that rice right about now; since I started working here, it had become my favorite side.

I was getting off topic again. Next off the grill were the two medium-wells. They took fifteen minutes on the grill, eight on one side and seven on the other. One went with a baked potato, the other with fries. I was never a fan of anything over medium, so I packed them up quickly and got back to work.

Funny, this seemed to be going by pretty fast. The last steak was the single well-done. Those took a while to cook, so Martin and I took some time to discuss our plans after work from opposite ends of the searing grill. He was headed to the strip club after work; it was his Friday tradition. Maybe I'd join him for once. I mean, I was single, so there weren't going to be any real consequences. We ended up talking almost a bit too long, and when I finally got to the steak, it might've been closer to burned than well-done. Oh well, I can't stand well-done steaks worth a d---, anyway; they're literally rubber. Hopefully, the person eating it wouldn't mind. After putting it in its box alongside an order of French fries, I was pretty much done.

Once all the steaks were in their boxes, I had to pack the side salad that came with every steak. I never really understood why to-go orders still got the salad; that crappy lettuce turns brown after a few minutes on a table, imagine what it must look like after a drive back home. But regardless of what I thought, I needed to pack them up.

I started gathering all the boxes of food and putting them into plastic bags, two steak boxes and two salad boxes per bag. I had four in total. With a smile, I looked at my watch; I'd never gotten an order over eighty dollars done before the customer showed up. I felt like freaking Superman. I should've guessed that I had forgotten something right then, but hindsight is twenty-twenty.

Getting from the kitchen to the bar was a walk that took you from one end of the wild west themed restaurant to the other, past about twenty animal heads mounted on the wall and under half a dozen wagons that hung from the ceiling. As soon as I set the bags on top of the brass-topped bar and set the order out for the customer, a damaged-looking woman walked in. You could tell she was at least a heavy smoker, if not something more severe. She walked up to the host stand and after an exchange with the hostess, I got a nod, telling me that this was my customer.

Grabbing the bags, I walked over, “Hi, Jordan?”

With a smile attached, I heard the same voice from over the phone, “You’re looking at her.”

“Here’s your order, ma’am. That’ll be one twenty-two, seventy-seven.”

“Mind if I check them first; it’s a big order, and I’d hate for anything to be missing, hun.”

With a forced smile, I responded, “Yeah. No problem.”
The woman literally looked through everything. Once she was done, she looked at me, “I did ask for extra Heinz 57, right?”

Crap. I really should’ve looked everything over before bringing it up, “Oh, yeah. Sorry about that. Let me get it for you.” With that, I ran back to the kitchen and packed as many sauce packets as I could into another Styrofoam box, and then I returned and fit it into one of the bags. “Sorry again.”

With a kind, but yellowed smile, she took two of the bags and started walking out, “Glad we noticed that before we took it back to work –” She started handing the bags into a Subaru packed to the brim with scantily clad women, “Trust me, you wouldn’t want all these strippers barging into the restaurant all worked up because forgot their 57.” Once all the bags were inside, she turned and handed me one hundred and fifty dollars. The rest of the girls, all pulled out a few bills from under what little clothes they had on and handed them to Jordan, who gave those to me as well. “You can keep the change, hun.”

They all waved at me as they drove off, blowing kisses at me. After a few stunned seconds, I headed inside and discovered, hidden inside my tip, a business card for a strip club not too far from here. On the back, the girls had all written their names and numbers. With that, I decided that I would be joining Martin for his Friday night tradition – and it became mine too.
Boone Deacon, wide and massive, barely fit on the couch, squeezed in between the armrest and Fowler Tankerson on his right. Further down the line of congregators was Ed Granville, whose drawl marked out slow time of the Bible study in Sherman Hewitt’s living room.

“Y’know, Ephesians tells us that Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever,” he said lowly, a muted version of his usual pulpit-beating volume. “And Christ himself said we are a vapor, here one second, gone the next. He’ll keep on being perfect, while we keep on makin’ the same mistakes. What do y’all think? What’s one mistake you think we’re prone to just keep on makin’ no matter what?”

A silence passed like the thoughtful shadow of a cloud. Reticent beneath his straw cowboy hat, Boone’s brain brewed, pulling facts and words and images from the memorized pages of his mental archives. A hesitant voice piped up.

“I think maybe pride,” Stuart Jarvis bleated, his black sheepish curls hiding his face from Boone’s perspective. “Y’know, it all comes from the same source, that same old fool, and pride was what landed him where he hails from now. The original sin, it was.”

Humming heads nodded in agreement. Boone’s eyes shifted, helpless to nod as well, until a page was torn out and brought to the forefront of his mind.

“That’s true,” he concurred, arresting the attention of every bobbling head. “That’s right true, and what’s more is that pride, or as the Greeks called it, hubris, meaning contempt for the gods and thinkin’ of oneself as higher than Heaven, was the beginnin’ of all sins, that all other sins come from it. I mean. Think about it: Pride is, as many scholars define it, the perversion of the qualities that make us like God, like holiness, dignity, and it requires quite a bit of selfishness. But in’t sinning before God at all a prideful act in itself? And of course, there’s what Alexander Pope said about it: What the weak head with strongest bias rules, is pride, the never-failing vice of fools.”

The circle of nods continued, eyeing Boone with vacant attention, what might have been the faces of the impressed. A brief unit of time passed.

“What else do we think?” Ed pressed onward. “Lust certainly has to be on that list, I reckon. It goes as far back as we do, if we’re lookin’ at Scripture. There’s a whole list’a biblical examples of lust, way back into the Old Testament. David and Bathsheba, a course, along with Sampson and Delilah. Goes all the way back to the original man and woman; we got tempted by the snake, we lusted after the fruit, and to this day, we’re still dealin’ with the consequences.”

“Well, that much ain’t completely certain,” Boone said, leaping. “I mean. Dependin’ on whether you read the Bible interpretively or literally, the concept of Adam n’ Eve could be any number a things.
Lotta scientists think that just meant the collision of galaxies, or the merging of continents. Poetic language, if you will.”

“Right, right,” Ed unconvincingly conceded, his eyes locked on Boone from below frayed brunette hair. “But as you know, Boone, we, as a Church of Christ, we try to follow Scripture right down to the very words on that page. And the book of Genesis reads Adam-and-Eve, two individual people; we don’t wanna stray too far from that definition.”

“Of course, definitely wouldn’t want to do that. But, Ed, if you actually take a look at the e-tim-ol-o-gy, you’ll see that Genesis, in original Greek, is written in plurals, not singulars. So. When it says ‘Adam’ and ‘Eve,’ it’s possible that what it actually means is two different villages, or civilizations, two different peoples. So I’m not certain if pride quite goes down to the very original man.”

“Well, I certainly see where you’re comin’ from, Boone, and I haven’t read all them brainy theology books I know you read.”

Laughter peppered from the circle.

“But honest, I just don’t know if I agree with that. That ain’t what we teach our kids in Sunday school, and, in any case, it don’t mean we don’t all struggle with lust, does it?”

“Well, that’s just against my beliefs. But hey, I understand, if you want to take a more surface look at things, then that fairs just fine, Ed. I ain’t gonna try to make you accept my belief if you jus won’t. Like the Lord himself said, if someone won’t listen to your words, you just dust off your feet. Nothin’ more to it, friend.” A clenched smile.

“Right.” Ed’s nods were uncertain. “A course, that’s the way it is, you know.” Boone’s nods were firm. “I know.”

As his car treated flat land like gravel, bumping and wavering up and down, its tailpipe wheezing and its wheels grinding to attempt movement, Boone firmly reckoned he wouldn’t attend the Bible study again. His mind was firm and made up in this matter, as unwavering as his flight from the Hewitt house in which he kept a steady fifty miles per hour, mushing his old 1990 Mustang eastward along Carl Hubbell Boulevard. Vacantly he checked the clock on his dashboard: 8:52. He would be just in time.

Boone clicked his right blinker, as if there was anyone around him to take notice, and turned onto McBride Street, turning left just a moment afterward to pull into the parking lot of PJ’s Liquor Store, a glorified space of concrete able to hold two or three cars at most.

One clandestine exchange later, he exited the store through the glass door, a 750-milliliter bottle of Jack Daniels under his arm, and sat back in the snug driver’s seat of his car. He started the ignition and began to pull out of the lot, but immediately ceased at the shrill, unearthly screech emitting from under his car. He backed an inch, another inch, and one inch further before stopping the car and stepping back out.

He knew the sound had originated beneath the tail of the car, and he stooped down to inspect what he could, but, his enormous gut threatening to tip him over should he bend too far, Big Boone Deacon inevitably rose, unable to perceive the flaw in his machine, and hefted himself up to sit on the trunk. Eyeing the empty streets back and forth, he withdrew the bottle from its brown paper sack and twisted open the bottle.
As though attracted by the wayward scent, the golden blonde sheen of Amy Granville’s head revealed itself from behind a neighboring building.

“That you, Boone?” she called with no restraint of volume.

“What in the—?” Boone flopped around spastically, finding her on his far right, timidly approaching. He stuffed the whisky back in the bag and slipped it under his opposite arm. “What in the hell are you doin’ out here? You know what time it is?”

“Course I do, that’s why I’m out here.” She rested an arm on the trunk. “What’s your excuse? Reckon you’re tryin’ not to be seen ‘round this place.”

“You could call a mechanic maybe?” Amy shrugged, though her tone contained no hint of uncertainty. “Surely you know someone at church who’s savvy with that kind of stuff.”

“There’s no reason I should have to do that,” Boone muttered. “What’s a mechanic gonna tell me I don’t know already?”

“You could push it?”

“I shouldn’t have to push it, not my fault it’s all busted up.”

“How long you been drivin’ this?”

“Good twenty-somethin’ years now. Good as gold, she is. Course, she’s got a few beauty marks. Couple idjits hit her in that right headlight when I ran a red light by accident.”

“That sounds like your fault.”

“I don’t see how. You know, Amy. Scripture says we’re all our brother’s keepers, even if he stumbles, don’t justify nothin’ like hittin’ a man’s car.

You know, Donald Miller wrote about Heaven bein’ a beggar’s kingdom, and he—”

“Yeah, yeah, you can save me the sermon, Boone.” Amy hopped onto the trunk beside him.

“Well, I understand Miller’s a little too high-flyin’ for you, miss…”

“You even remember my name?” Her response was telepathically quick.

“…I seen you around church, I know.”

“You been around here for what, over three years now, and don’t even know the name of the preacher’s daughter?”

“You’re Ed’s kid?”

“My name is Amy. And I ain’t nobody’s kid, thank you.”

“I just got done seein’ your papa at Bible study. I reckon you should be gettin’ home around now.”

“He’ll be out a little while longer. Always stays for a while after to have a good talk with Sherman about business.”

Boone huffed. “He ought to talk to Sherman about his theology, that’s what I say.”

“Wait, you are Boone, right? Boone Deacon?”

“Course I am. Why?”

“I forget who it is…but Papa’s always goin’ on about some guy whose always talkin’ fancy in some way or other, and whose theology is all off. ‘Backwards,’ Papa says, ‘d----- backwards.’ I just can’t remember the name now.”

Boone’s eyes were overshadowed by the downed brim of his hat, but could have been seen gleaming across the road like coals left still burning in black soot. The face of Ed Granville slid through Boone’s mind, every look he had ever given Boone, those two wary beads erect atop the gruff goatee.
“Here, lemme see if I can fix it.” Amy descended from the car.

Innumerable pages flipped all at once, pages Boone knew the old fool of a preacher had never read, and the long lists of theological and philosophical wisdom formed an iron wall around Boone’s mind. The galaxies of Adam and Eve separated, and both civilizations were wiped as though by genocide down to two, simple individuals, unthinking as the thin pages of Scripture, untouchable as the almighty mind of Ed Granville.

“Oh, this is the problem…”

There was a harsh grinding, and Amy stood back up from her bend under the tail, her black-stained hands clutching a long flap of rubber.

“This here was fallin’ out your car, you big dope. Wasn’t holdin’ anything in place or nothin’, so I just pulled it out. You really oughta get a new ride, this one won’t last much longer.

“Drink whisky?”

Blond ears perked. “Scuse me?”

Boone unveiled the brown sack and withdrew the grail.

“Whisky. You drink it?”

“Well looks like car troubles wun’t all that called y’here, was it?” She squealed a laugh. “I’ll take some.”

“Good.” He passed the bottle to her, and she took an unhesitating swig, exhaling the burn afterward.

“Ah, nothin’ goes down quite like Tennessee honey.”

Boone was quiet.

“Well, the Hindus had this beverage called soma. Made from all kinds of herbs and plants, most notable of which is Sarcostemma acidum.”

“Sar-cuh-stem-uh ass-it-dum, got it.”

“They believed that drinkin’ this stuff, heavy as it was, was what got them closer to the gods. Was a divine ritual, made them feel more at one with the universe. Could say that maybe the drink just made ‘em feel real good, but where’s the line, you think? John Locke and David Hume certainly woulda thought those two things are one and the same.” He took the bottle in one hand. “So, really, you could say I’m ministerin’ to you right now, couldn’t you?”

Boone took a deep, victory swig while Amy tittered like the scatter of confetti.

“Well I’m impressed, Boone, truly impressed.”

“Nothin’ but the truth, little lady. Nothin’ but the truth.”

They sat upon the trunk for another half hour until Boone, satisfied in all senses, left the remainder of the whisky with Amy.

“I don’t think my Papa would much approve of this…”

“I’m well aware.” Boone started the ignition.

“What if he finds this? Where am I s’posed to say it came from?”

“Tell him it came from Boone Deacon, and that it seems I’m doin’ his job better than he is.”

He stepped on the gas, and the choked roar of the engine followed Boone with giggles floating on its exhalation. Boone pulled back onto McBride, then back onto Carl Hubbell, his mustang wavering back and forth, over and back across the yellow line. But he knew he had control, and he knew exactly why he had control, and if
an officer pulled him over, thoughtless and insipid with their task-and-command existence, Boone Deacon would have a very good explanation, detailed in its analysis and unsparing in its logic, that would send that petty officer right on his way.

Furious sunlight rained in on Boone’s eyes through the hole in the wall of the boarding house that contained his little wooden bedroom. A strangled groan escaped him, and his flabby hands rose to cover his eyes. His still whisky-laden mind fumbled with consciousness, with the sweat soaking every roll of his piled body, and, with especial annoyance and dread, with the persistent and metronomic pounding on his door.

He rose and staggered to the door, opening it to find an equally broiled and outstandingly furious Ed Granville.

“Howdy,” Boone croaked. “How can I help you?”

“Just what in the hell do you think you’re doing?” Ed shouted, refusing, just as he did every Sunday morning, to acknowledge any ghost of pretense to his urgent, unyielding mission. “Sellin’ booze to my little teenage daughter? I oughta report you is what I oughta, you’re d--- lucky you’re a brother in Christ, but boy, that nonsense you been talkin’ make me think you ain’t even that anymore!”

Boone brought his palm to his face. Leaving the door open, he turned back around and sat in the single wooden chair the house allotted him.

“Well.” Boone’s voice was a miniscule crack preceding Ed’s thunder. “I don’t see how what I done is wrong, my friend.”

“Don’t see how it’s wrong? She’s a little girl, you seen her grow up. How long you been here, three, four years? You saw her as a little fourteen-year-old, how could you think of givin’ swill to that innocent soul? It’s against the law!”

“Well. Ed. You know Roman laws were awful oppressive to our Savior…He even told us not to honor any law above His own, and to render unto Caesar what is Caesar’s, and unto God what is God’s. I don’t see how no law holds me accountable.”

“And just how do you think what you done is godly?”

“Ed. You yourself said we oughta do whatever we can to minister to folks and to bring them the good news…I was just tryin’ to bond with your daughter who I’ve missed so dearly over the years.”

“And Tennessee Honey was the answer?”

“With all due respect, Ed, I’m not sure the girl cares about much else…”

Ed’s face quivered with sunburnt rage. “You are the Devil, Boone Deacon, I tell you what. Bible study couldn’t a been timed better, you really are full of that original sin of pride. Too d--- proud to ever admit to nothin’! Can’t even own up to corruptin’ a little girl. I don’t care what theological spin you put on it, that’s just plain sin.”

“Well, Ed, that’s very much against my beliefs.”

“Right, a course, your beliefs, excuse me!”

“In fact,” Boone said at higher volume, standing up and finally raising his eyes to Ed’s, “I think maybe that church a yours and my own beliefs just don’t line up no more. And I follow Scripture, and Scripture says if no one’s gonna listen to you, you up and walk away and shake the dust off your feet.”
“Just what are you saying?”
“I’m saying I think it’s high time I shook your church off my feet and said goodbye for good. Consider this my departure.”
Ed stared in incredulous wonder, unable to comprehend the iniquitous genius of Boone Deacon.
“By all means, Boone.” Ed turned back toward the open door. “By all means.”
Ed slammed the door behind him, and Boone retired back into the relief of his bed.

Yellow sunlight gave way to orange, then to red, counteracted by a misty green twilight that hung placid outside the hole in the wall when the door was knocked once again, gentler and timider than before.
Boone rose, brisker and more awake, and numbly pulled the door open. In the doorway was his landlady, bone thin and disheveled with her black hair in a mat.
“Have you paid your rent yet, Mr. Deacon?”
“Not yet, miss,” he vacantly replied. “Wasn’t sure it was quite due yet.”
“Not this month’s rent, last month’s. It’s been d--- near four weeks now.”
Boone ran fingers over his face. “Well, I told you I was a strugglin’ man, didn’t I, miss?”
“Don’t excuse you from payin’ rent, mister. Come on, now, I’m trying to make my way just the same.”
“Well. Miss, you ever read any parables in your day?”
“I read my share.”
“Ever read the parable of the good Samaritan? Goes that Jesus is talkin’ to an expert in the law, told him about a poor man lyin’ on the side of the road who got beat up by bandits. Ain’t nobody would help him that passed by, until a

Samaritan, a good one, that is, picked the man off the ground, fixed him up, then gave him to an innkeeper. That man didn’t ask no pay in return…now, I don’t know about your beliefs, miss, but I’m a firm believer in what Scripture says, and I think if Christ were here right now he woulda taken pity on me. Don’t you think?”
“You know what else is written in that parable?”
“What’s that?”
“That the Samaritan reimbursed the innkeeper for all of his expenses.”
“…Well, that’s very much against my beli—”
The landlady slammed the door behind her.
Boone turned his tired eyes about the room. What little lay in the room was either not his or not worthy of regard. It was all against him, it was, all the world an uphill slope up which Big Boone Deacon could not quite walk. The only objects in the room worthy of any attention, he found, sat stacked on his ramshackle dresser, those many collected tomes from which he drew the blade of his sharp-edged intellect. He grasped them with outstretched, sausage-like fingers.

His books piled high in the backseat, Boone brought a firm foot down on the gas pedal, speeding westward on Carl Hubbell as it turned into the US-62. There was no reason on God’s green earth Boone should have to pay so d--- much for rent, he decided, and the car, busted and wheezing though it was, would be his new home, all set with nothing but himself and his books and his knowledge—everything that made up
Boone Deacon. Everything else he had left in the boarding house; the landlady could sell it all if she wanted her money so d----much.

Light died in the windshield of Boone’s vehicle. The further the sun committed its daily suicide, shadows began to muddle everything more and more, covering the landscape like dust shaken from above. Boone kept a steady sixty-five miles per hour, unyielding and changing, as his white knuckles strangled the wheel. Face by face spun through his mind, Ed Granville, Stuart Jarvis, his long-gone landlady, the bright, overly knowledgeable Amy Granville. Their heads spun before his vision, swirling around and around like a circle of cackling tormentors, and, his body seized by electric rage, Boone threw his car back and forth across the road as though to strike each one with his ardent and perfect will. But the car could not shatter them from view, wobbling back and forth over the yellow line, helpless and unmanned, ammunition out of control, until—

Boone’s mustang crashed directly into the corner of an oncoming car, far inferior in design, and fishtailed into a sideways position on the road. His other headlight was smashed in, and the oncoming car, having already thrown on its brakes, spun in a full circle until retiring onto the roadside.

Boone stepped out, dizzy and bewildered, but still firm in mind, and the oncoming driver scrambled immediately from the car, wrestling with the airbag until he could stumble out the door, scraggly hair and beard wild upon his scrawny self.

“G’d----t, what is wrong with you?” he roared. “Swervin’ back n’ forth on the god---- road for what? For fun, was it? What in the h--- do you think you’re doin’?”

Boone’s eyes slugged from the driver to the ground, to the sky, to his own car, piles of books still visible from the window.

“I’m not… not sure what you’re referring to…”

“What I’m referrin’ to? Just what do you think, ----head? You crashed right into the corner a my god---- car!”

Boone’s feet began to wobble.

“That’s very… very much… against my beliefs…”

Boone turned away as the driver continued to howl incredulous obscenities, muddled in the back of Boone’s ears. He didn’t need to hear what the driver was saying – what could he tell Boone that he didn’t know already? Sweeping his hat up off ground, he resumed his journey along the US-62, relieved of his car and of his books. He didn’t need either, for he was all there was, Big Boone Deacon, wielding nothing but his wit, ready to take on anything and anyone with the iron logic of theology, and the genius, composing hand of his mind, a mind in which was encapsulated the geography of Heaven and the strategies of Hell.
I have been doodling since as far back as I can remember. *A Rose for a Rose* came from just that. I was sitting in class one day with graph paper and a pen and realized that triangles and parallelograms can come together to create a beautiful work of art. This painting was created using acrylic paint and a sharpie. It was very simple, yet created a beautiful work of art. Never again will I underestimate a sketch in a class notebook.

*The Dock* and *Blue Waters* were both completed with acrylic paint. “Blue Waters” was done because I decided it might be fun to try and mix colors in order to create a sunset over the ocean. “The Dock” was created for my friend for her birthday when she said she wanted “a sunset on the beach, but not a boring one. Something cool.” I always find that color can truly take a simple sketch and turn it into that “something cool.”

*Working Mind* was an inspiration I got from someone’s MacBook case. I have always loved the idea of the left and right brain working completely different ways, but working together to create amazing things. You can’t have one without the other.
"A Rose for a Rose"
Acrylic + Sharpie
“The Dock”
Acrylic
“Blue Waters”
Acrylic
“Working Mind”
Acrylic + Sharpie
My great fortune is obtaining Sterling Edwards’ book on watercolor and taking a few of his workshops. *Bird* evolved from an abstract study and an accidental dropping of black paint that became one eye. I use Italian Maimeri Blu transparent watercolor on 140 or 300 lb. Fabriano Artistico paper. *Boca de Tomatlan, Casa de los Artistas Play* is my first attempt at an abstract done at Casa de los Artistas in Boca de Tomatlan, a small fishing village, ten miles south of Puerto Vallarta. Using various types of lines and shapes, I often like to paint with blues and greens that remind me of water. The thin playful black lines are called scraffiti. *Boca House on the Hill* is an early semi-abstract painting inspired by looking at the houses across the Tomatlan River from the fourth floor of the open air studio in Casa de los Artistas. An early experience with negative painting; see the trees made by painting strokes around the shapes. *Midas* is my cousins’ Denny and Debby’s sweet thirteen-year-old German short-haired Pointer. When my uncle asked if I knew how to paint a dog I said I didn’t know, but we’ll find out. I studied many photos I had taken and some my cousins sent me. *Winter Chicago Street, 1945* was inspired by my friend’s dad, who was looking for a painting like this, so I painted it for him. He recalls walking in the evening on the snowy street to visit his high school girlfriend. The amount of detail reminds me that it is a pre-Edwards painting. It’s a combined semi-abstract and realistic piece.
“Bird” | Watercolor | Abstract
21.5” x 14” | $249
“Midas” | Watercolor | Semi-abstract
22” x 15”
Sold
“Boca House”
Watercolor
Semi-abstract
8” x 10”
Sold
“Winter Chicago Street, 1945”
Watercolor
Semi-abstract
8” x 12”
Sold
“Boca de Tomatlan, Casa de los Artistas Play”

Watercolor

Abstract

10.25” x 14.25”

$100
Cedric C. M. Bond grew up fly fishing and kayaking in the beautiful Pacific Northwest. He came to Oklahoma City University on a kayak scholarship in 2010 and continued his education at OCU School of Law. He is the 2016–2017 Editor-in-Chief of the Oklahoma City University Law Review. After law school, he will serve as a term staff attorney for the United States Court of Appeals for the Eighth Circuit. He hopes to wade back into a salmon river someday soon.

Cherlynn Bowlan is a registered nurse and fulltime graduate student at OCU. She graduates with a Master of Science in Nursing, with a focus in education, in July 2017 and begins study for the Doctor of Philosophy in Nursing at OCU this fall. Cherlynn is a member of Phi Theta Kappa, Sigma Theta Tau International Honor Society of Nursing, Sigma Alpha Pi-The National Society of Leadership and Success, and Blue Key Honor Society. She currently serves as an OCU Student Conduct Board member, OCU Learning Technology Committee SGA Representative, and Oklahoma Medical Reserve Corp and Stress Response Team volunteer.

Callie Dewees is a sophomore BFA Acting major at OCU. She’s been writing short poems since she could pick up a pen, and her poems are part of a year long ‘Poem a Day’ project she began at the beginning of the year. Her current projects consist mostly of stage plays, screenplays, and songs. Her biggest inspiration for her work is the desire to express the feelings and emotions people like to express the least, and her experiences and friendships encourage her to continue creating pieces like this.

Danielle Frost Senior. English Major. Self proclaimed bagel enthusiast and collector of comics and movies. Has a large obsession with metaphors and vague themes.

Jessica Goetzinger is a law student in her third and final year. It is a little known fact that she actually died her first year of law school, but all the coffee in her system keeps her body moving. In her free time… just kidding. She doesn’t have free time.

Onnika Hanson is a sophomore Acting major at OCU. She has been painting for two years and she hopes to continue for years to come.

K. E. Hightower hails from the arid and unforgiving West Texas desert town of Midland. She has long been involved with creative writing, first building an interest and a fanbase in the respectable world of fan fiction. She currently resides in Oklahoma City, where her life consists of chasing around two disobedient dogs, selling her soul daily to the OCU Rowing team and pursuing a degree in English Literature. She plans to work in the editing and publishing field, as well as continue to write creatively for her own enjoyment.

Joanna Hoch is a junior BFA Acting major with a minor in Costuming. She was recently seen in House of Atreus and OCU Improv shows and her bed, asleep with a donut still in her hand.

Dr. Abigail Keegan teaches British and Women’s Literature at Oklahoma City University. She has served as an editor for a women’s poetry journal, published a critical essay and a book on the British Romantic poet, George Byron. Her poems have appeared in many journals and anthologies, and she has
authored three books of poetry. The poem included here is an ekphrastic poem, a reflection on a Matisse work from his Jazz series which Keegan viewed in the Oklahoma City Museum of Art with her poetry class in the Fall, 2016. The poem is dedicated to her class.

Grace Kidder is a junior Dance Performance major from Fargo, North Dakota. She wrote her entry in response to the series of police brutality incidents committed against black individuals. Her hope is that this poem inspires discussion to provoke change in the world and that people stay aware, stay positive, and stay loving.

Brandie McAllister is a senior English major and president of the Omega Phi chapter of Sigma Tau Delta, the International English Honor Society. Her hobbies include watching movies, reading books (she recommends 1984 by Orwell, On the Road by Kerouac, and The Bell Jar by Plath—in that order) as well as writing book reviews for her WordPress.

Nathan Moelling is just a senior history major dabbling in written romance as he waits for the day of reckoning. He writes for himself, simultaneously hoping that others can get a glimpse into the wondrously frightening fabric of his heart-mind continuum. He feels as if every piece of writing is a piece of the human condition as a whole. We are every story written and every story written is us.

Madelyn Parker is a writer, artist, liberally raised Methodist and intersectional feminist. She is a sophomore who studies her passions: English, Art, and Spanish. She loves Star Trek, NPR, Full Circle Bookstore and it’s poetry section.

Kayleigh Peters is a freshman Cellular Molecular Biology major. She is an Irish dancer and a gymnastics coach. She loves writing and hopes to reach out to others through her work.

Carlos Sanchez is a sophomore English major. All of his work is short fiction and poetry, but he hopes to someday try his hand at writing a novel. He enjoys fantasy and science fiction works the most, but has yet to find a genre that he does not like. He looks forward to spending the next few years mastering his craft and getting better at what he loves to do.

Patricia Smith is a “retiree” post-graduate student. Writing and painting are almost her fulltime work now. Her pastimes are having fun with family and friends, listening to Audible books, traveling, and gardening. She is addicted to Swiss cheese and recommends reading Merle’s Door by Ted Kerasote and The Boys in the Boat by Daniel James Brown.

Matthew Wakeham grew up in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. He studies Art and Philosophy with an emphasis in Mathematics. Matthew is interested in the overlay of memory and the real; memory distorts over time.

Chandler White (pen name C. S. W.) is a sophomore English/Writing major and Mass Communications minor. He has been a writer since middle school, but first became serious his senior year of high school, at which point he drafted the first of two novels he has drafted so far. He plans to draft a third novel next summer, and then to apply for OCU’s Red Earth MFA program for Creative Writing. He is vice president of Sigma Tau Delta and assistant editor of The Scarab.

Patience Williams was born in OKC to a schoolteacher and a business manager at Tinker Air Force Base. She enjoys writing about suburbia and 90s aesthetic, and is currently working on a collection of short stories titled “Melancholic Celebrations of Midwestern Youth.” Although she was accepted into three MFA programs, she’s decided to take a year off to realign her intentions and also to write while saving money.