



TRILLIUM

TRILLIUM 2021

Trillium

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The *Trillium* is the literary and visual arts publication of the Glenville State College Department of Language and Literature.

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The *Trillium* welcomes submissions and correspondence from Glenville State College students, faculty, and staff, and our extended creative community.

Trillium

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Marjorie Stewart
West Virginia Traffic Laws

On the Interstate,
the 70 miles per hour speed limit
means 80 minimum,
someone will be on your tail
pushing you to 90
to infinity
and beyond

On a country road, two choices:
20 miles per hour
70 miles per hour
Pass wherever you want,
the double lines
don't mean a thing:
make straight the way

If you use your turn signal
turning is forbidden
unless you turn the opposite way.

But why use it?
ain't nobody's business
which way you're going

Making a right turn?
Be sure to stop dead
and think about it

For a left,
start half a mile early
and drift slowly
across the road

If you get pulled over
and the cop asks where you're going,
say Gilmer County.
If you have a slight twang,
he might think you're local
and let you go.

Matthew Thiele

Give the Boy the Burnt Piece of Toast

“Give the boy the burnt piece of toast,”
I almost hear,
Some fiendish impulse I must acknowledge as my own.
“Take the good piece.”
“You deserve it.”
“Who’s the boss around here, after all?”
“He’s tiny. Helpless. Just take it.”
“He may like it.” A blatant lie.
I hesitate.
“Okay, then, throw it away.”
But I was just contemplating feeding it to my son.
If it’s good enough for him, it’s good enough for me.
“Don’t eat that burnt piece of toast!”
I eat the burnt piece of toast.
I give the boy the golden piece.

Jonathan Minton

from **LETTERS**

I've written this letter before. But nothing would keep.
You were waiting in another house. The yard was dark.

I tried circling every word for home, even *habroneme*,
thinking of slender strings leading from a maze.

There were only imaginary circles of wire and swirling ash,
as if this were the bottom of a river,

where brown outlines of plants wave back and forth.
The next one will be like a ship carrying a cargo of air like a bubble.

Your hands will never trace its wreck. You will think
of what to say, but will never need to say it. You will shrink

into a sentence. This will mean something,
like sunlight, or moths flickering.

Kendall Bowen

Eye-Witness

I was there for my birth,
the clamor,
women dressed for battle,
like toy army-men around my bed.

I saw the eternal creativeness
of my generation destroyed.
Are you upset by how endless it is?
All of their battles unceasing?

I cannot help but cease too.
The taste felt putrid inside,
like dandelion greens.

Anna Childers

Smells when I make the bed on a Friday morning

These soft blankets
Are still warm when I move them.
They smell like our skin.

You sit at the kitchen table with my father
Grating smoked gouda for fancy ravioli
None of us have eaten before, out in the woods.
My brother tastes a bite, and you cook it early
So my father has a good lunch to take to work
Three hours away in a city we hardly know.
You talk together about hunting bear next week
And I, in the bedroom am folding our blankets,
Dragging strayed corners flat to four directions.
I bury my nose in familiar perfume
Of drowsy warmth and tender bodies snuggled close.
I hear you boiling pasta at the kitchen stove,
Beating cabinets and stirring pots and hot pans.
I smell espresso coffee strained through the French press
You brought so I could have a strong cup of coffee
When my entire existence was crammed in a dorm.
I smell ravioli waft from the plates you set
And the perfume you wear every day drifts up
From warm blankets where we nestled to hug and love,
To express in soft sighs and whispers what love brought
To the many precious seconds of our long lives—
Too short, always, when love is so sweet and happy.
To say good morning to my father over full mugs
And come back to bed to lay my cheek on your chest,
Warm and happily safe from all unhappy things...
That is the fragrance of a morning lived with love,
The perfume of an hour when mist blankets our beds
And all is full of the promise of a day unspent.

Anna Childers

She came like the coolness of rain

Her hair on the sheet
The cooing yawn of a dove
Eyes closed sweet, asleep.

In the night of flashing fireflies her heartbeat bursts
Loudly: the rapt of guns she shoots in the field.
She cradles my awakened soul in her fingers,
A treasured turtle salvaged home from the back roads.
She lives in a home of drooping potato plants,
An overgrown paradise of green blackberries,
Raspberries, apples, and pear trees in an orchard.
She welcomes me into her world of wild hollows—
The soft bends of her knees, the crooks of her elbows.
I sleep soundly in our nest feathered with cat hairs,
With her head snuggled on my chest and her soft voice
Saying: “Good night,” sweetly from the soft mouth I kiss
Ten, twenty, a hundred times all the days I live.
She shivers in the nighttime dew so easily.
I swaddle her cool freckled skin in plush blankets
And she buries her strong body in close to mine
For the comfort and warmth she knows always lives there—
For her, my love, who is the promise of new days,
The restful touch of rain on a cool windowpane.

Anna Childers

Rage at an unkept home

I loved this house once—
Its wavy lines, crooked floors
It is ugly mud now.

It is a blue planet of nails and broken glass.
Baby's mislaid tools are staked by the chicken coop
Where a pullet drowned and cracked corn rots in the damp.
Short tin tacks lay buried there; tacks, nails, always nails
And baby's loved tools lay in the mud and dog shit.
The shit sucks your feet, pulls your boots, sinks in your toes.
Flip-flops it drags back and jerks you down in wet grass.
Wet grass seeds cling to your feet, itch your once-clean skin.
This house was crooked but we prided in its small space;
Made nests of nooks and organized favorite books
And cooked! We cooked near every day, and ate
Like queens by a candle at a modest table
Or honeymooners at an Italian place
With shrimp alfredo by that stout lit candle, sweet
That smelled of lavender fields and pure honeycombs.
We brought our friends into his mess to breathe, to trip
On new empty cases of beer bottles each night
Where dishes live in greasy piles dredged in fat flies,
Breeding on the filth of the swamp man incarnate
Where they feast emptily on table scraps of life.

Kylie Davis

Dad

My protective dad, you inspire me to write.
How I love the way you talk to me, being silly and serious.
Invading my mind day and through the night,
Always dreaming about the overlook.

Let me compare you to a sanctuary?
You are caring, passionate and strong.
Snow chills the berries of January,
And wintertime has the clear black elderberry.

How do I love you? Let me count the ways.
I love your thrilling personality.
Thinking of your sheer laughter fills my days.
My love for you is the confidentiality.

Now I must away with a daring heart,
Remember my cherished words whilst we're apart.

Cali Hayes

Sonnet

Sitting above our heads so bright,
helping everyone to see.
Shinning, giving off light.
What you see is not up to me.

I do not always shine at night.
When it's dark, I go to bed.
For many, this can be a delight.
Movies begin to play in your head.

I will be back in the morning,
do not worry, I will be with you all day.
Your mind will be soaring, but
I can not stay.

Your life would be hard to see,
and extremely gloomy.

Max Anderson-Lake

Heavy Handed

Pulled from a harsh, red world.
White with privilege.
Only to exist,
In a battered society

The screams that filled the air,
Were not from my lungs.
But rather,
From the lungs of those facing injustice.

For the longest time,
I did not face this injustice.
Until I grew
And became my own person.

Now, my screams join the others.
For the insurrection against us
Greatly outweighs
Our lives.

Nostalgia

Take me down the dusty,
country road,
where in my mind still grows
the innocence of yesteryear
and Granny's pink, piney rose.

Hearty homemade breakfasts,
but we liked the coffee best,
always mixed with milk and sugar
to pass Granny's kindly test.

Recruited for picking blackberries,
we filled our pails with vigor,
and also picked a bumper crop
of nasty, biting chiggers.

And, oh, what fun to scout
the woods,
and shinny up a tree,
eating our fill of mulberries,
masters of all we could see.

The persimmon tree was "home"
for a game of hide and seek,
and I will swear, to this day,
brother sneaked a peak.

Following the winding, muddy
creek,
the turtle as it waddled,
we turned over rocks here
and there
to catch the wily crawdad.

Brown corn silk was made
for smoking
and corn cob pipes did the trick,
although it did not take so very long
to feel lightheaded and sick.

We recuperated on the swing,
every porch had one,

relaxing in the afternoon shade
after a full day of good fun.

Take me down the dusty,
country road,
where in my mind still grows
the innocence of yesteryear
and Granny's pink, piney rose.

Autumn Norman

Delta; October, 2020

We know the hurricane is coming
because the spider lilies
pushed through the dark soil at dawn
and exploded in a spindly web
of monochromatic fireworks.

We can feel it in our bones.
We say this to each other and only nod--
we have the weight of a thousand winds
pressing into our lungs.

We dismantle ourselves and bury
our bones under the oak
where the lilies bloom, layering leaves
on alabaster—blankets pulled to chins.

When it starts to rain we finally sigh,
waiting to be wrapped in this
ferocious embrace.
We lay in the grass as water overcomes us.
We rise up and dance in the rain.

Autumn Norman

Unveiling the Thin

You are the process of transparency.
To make holy the crashing sound of hush,
which cannot be omitted from the manifest.
In the table of contents
you are listed under April 7th, 1928,
which falls just before The Hurricane,
just after The Strange Quieting of Birds.
Quiet falls before sound
but after fury. Less than three pages
devoted to its beginning.
A misunderstood thing,
as you are mistakenly thin to the eye.
She contrived the umbrella
to fit the scandal of you—
violent but intermittent,
something like the afterward,
which is not –they endured–

Autumn Norman

Propensity to Dream

The letter arrived in the post from Whitman
on a late, orangey afternoon.
A frenetic hum stirred the swampy layer
of air beneath the clouds.

He had invited us to go walking
through leaves of grass—had promised
we would weave crowns of clover
and baskets of long stems—
and you always had such an affinity for those things.

We penned a quick reply, swatting
as insects began orbiting the space around us. It didn't
take long after to agree to run to the stream.
Dashing our bare feet to the river stones,

sinking toes into the silky silt, we lay our
heads back, dreaming of clouds and spiraling falcons,
a moon falling graciously into the purpling sky,
and finally sunk into sleep.

S. Dot
Untitled

My love... days traveling leave roads less traveled... We've created them and God has guided...
We have trodden bravely... searching for what was here all along...
New roads chiseled by curiosity... longing for a simple soft touch...
longing for a simple soft touch...
complicating simplicity with questions to answers already assured...
The lure of safety and longevity while we forget to live for the moment...
The past berates us as we struggle towards joy... envious... unable to stagnate our steps...
there was joy during the dark days... subdued and clouded... judgement altered...
we are who we've become...
Sit with me, my love.
Sip tea with me, my love,
in some small Italian town making small talk with locals in a different language...
Swim with me, my love.
Sip rum with me, my love,
in some small Jamaican town making small talk with locals in our native tongue...
Swim to the sun while the fish nibble your toes... no worries... no worries...
draped in each other draped with the warmth of the sun(sun)
Walk with me, my love...
Sip wine with me, my love,
in some small town in the heart of the south,
where our offspring gather as eager as we were ... wanting to know that what they imagined,
they would experience...
let's make small talk with locals with a country twang...
Kiss me my love... Be with me my love.

Michael Lee Johnson

Silent Moonlight

Record, she's a creeping spider.
Hurt love dangles net
from a silent moonlight hanger,
tortures this damaged heart
daggers twist in hints of the rising sun.
Silence snores. Sometimes she's a bitch.
Sunlight scatters these shadows
across my bare feet in
this spotty rain.
Sometimes we rewind,
sometimes no recourse,
numbness, no feeling at al

Michael Lee Johnson

Fall Thunder

There is power in the thunder tonight, kettledrums.
There is thunder in this power,
the powder blends white lightening
flour sifters in masks toss it around.
Rain plunges October night; dancers
crisscross night sky in white gowns.
Tumble, turning, swirl the night away, around,
leaves tape-record over, over, then, pound,
pound repeat falling to the ground.
Halloween falls to the children's
knees and imaginations.
Kettledrums.

Brandy Acord

Wind

it moves on
up the valley
talking trees as it goes
brushing lightly
limbs and leaves
with soothing lips
stirring without words
arousing only with
its presence,
then begins the dance
of billowing canopies
free to move in place,
and once stared
keep this fluid motion
leaning, touching,
in their elegant sways
until it passes,
searching for higher
greener trees
seeking more flirtations
more of the cowboy
kinda feeling
the one of always
leaving

Brandy Acord

The Porch I Knew

was concrete,
still, we swept the dust away
it being the hand we were dealt,
when my feet were still small enough to be cute,
and barefoot, I roamed
a rocky, muddy side road
hayfields, thick with the scent of summer,
and evening grass in search
of lightning bugs
still, water is what called me, a
small creek's never ending song
out my window leads to
Anglin's Creek, Hominy, Summersville Lake, Kanawha, Ohio, and Mississippi Rivers to the ocean,
so my journey of water continues, and the Elk cuts my path

Brandy Acord

Consolation Prize Ribbon

hoarder of broken things
mirrors, hearts, dreams,
keeper of a lost cause
that's nothing but wrong
for me,
betting on a losing hand
ready to take it all
sucker for a sad song
and down on hard luck
holding out hope for too long
on being done with
seeing messed up,
an underdog poor kid story
who was gonna make it to California from back east
and finally set the
world on fire,
an almost had it before
it slipped right through
sonofabitch this time
hoping this heartache
won't last for years
that the memory of
dreams like mine
doesn't haunt me

John O'Hara
Lub-dub

I can feel your heart beating
Lub-dub, lub-dub

As I place my unbelieving hands into your side
And realize: You are not a ghost
Lub-dub, lub-dub

But have a body just like mine
One that can sympathize
One that both felt and feels my pain
Lub-dub, lub-dub

I wonder why you would grant me this honor
That is experienced by very few
Yet you bid me "Come...
Hold the heart that beats for you."
Lub-dub, lub-dub

So I place my hands into your side
Faithless though they be
They return afresh and beaming
As I become a believer
Having felt the heartbeat of God.

Lub-dub, lub-dub.

Brooke Storm

Eve eats Adam's Adam's-apple

Professor, you tell me

this is what it takes to be a biologist-

as if, being human requires digesting forbidden fruit,
as if, you can't know how to conserve life
without a bilateral slice
through the statoliths of squids
so stiff that they are froze with no ice.

Professor, I ask you

"do these specimen ever have the chance to be free-"

as if, I don't eat the breast off cage-grown meat,
as if, the fact that I love excavating
dinosaur chicken nuggets
is only sickening when
I call myself an archeologist.

Professor, you tell me

I never order specimens whose populations decrease-

as if, our morals are dictated by supply and demand,
as if, only the species level can be endangered
that individuals cannot be in danger
that the knowledge between good and evil
comes in theories, not a hypothesis

Professor, I've always said

"You try something once to see if you like and twice to make sure you don't-"

as if, I could bring myself to pull bodies off the shelf
as if, I could open the bags without crying chemical preservatives
as if, I could dissect Adam's Adam's-apple
without wondering
whether he had a chance
to truly live.

Emelia Dawe

Untitled

Innocently, like a kid at the sophomore science fair, you reassembled my skeleton. Picking up all of my pieces, restoring my body from the condition he left me. My bones were so cold, but you held them unconditionally. Soft shivers and unwarranted hesitation were encouraging to you. I am your project, and this progress impresses me. This is unexplainably easy, my trust exploding like the soda stream out of a paper mâché volcano. I can feel the subtle erosion running down my neck, kissing my hips, caressing my thighs. I am every stone in the Smith River, the cold water rushing over me exposes my smoothest features. It's so very rare to see me like this, I guess you must be special.

Emelia Dawe

Untitled

You play the pioneer, gathering each and every one of my ribs like kindling for a campfire.

The warmth is so healing for me, burning in the pit my stomach like that first shot of Jack Daniels.

Your love is so intoxicating, the head change was immediate. I can feel myself magnetically swaying,
stumbling towards you.

Your arms hang over me like a blanket of safety. When I'm with you I know I'm sheltered from the nightly
creatures that once terrorized me.

Like a baby bird being engulfed with winter's first frost, this is so unfamiliar to me. You've introduced me
to myself.

What an adventure this has been. The map is buried in my skin, my veins guide you to secret hideouts
within myself.

While you navigate, I blindly follow you; losing myself with every other step.

Strangely enough, I feel like I've been here before. This comfort was stripped from me so long ago. I'm
starting to realize now; this is home.

Emelia Dawe

Untitled

I'm a magician.

I disintegrate my feelings for you and dress them in tall, dreamy lust.

Sometimes I think you're a magician, too. Except you make yourself disappear when I realize I want you.

Disguise me as the assistant, trap me in your box, saw me into two pieces. Before reassembling my torn self, please realize that both halves are yours.

Tristan Harper
Solstice

Summer will be better.
I know it.

The smell of sunscreen and the drops of water
clinging to your skin
circles, divine in their shine and reflection.
Holding on for dear life, distorting into
perfection the world.

The smell of Banana Boat or at least its generic variant
I'm not paying *that* much for sunscreen after all.
I learned how to mix margaritas and portion my
tequila. Now maybe my Sunrises won't lead straight into
a sunset anymore. I feel better about my body now,
maybe I'll get some decent sun for the first time since high-school.

Winter will be better.
I know it.

The smell of cinnamon and cloves
from my tea to the plastic tree
stagnant like an obelisk in the living room.
Small yule lights, twinkling and reflecting
how I feel inside. So perfect, like the stars
on a clear night.

The thick deep taste of eggnog, I always buy the
premium kind. The kind in the glass bottle,
it isn't *that* much more expensive after all.
I finally learned to wrap presents.
Maybe this year they won't be such a mess. I'm
so done with shorts and short sleeves. I hate
showing this much of myself. I've not hated myself
this much since high-school.

Last year should have gone better.
I never said what I meant. I never led with what I felt.
All buildup and no action. No reaction, just plans
it always hurts when it never pans out.
Next year will be better. I already have some thoughts
as to what I will do.

Howard Hoke
Ode to Killer

When Killer sings his song of death, the buck will run no more.
When Killer sings his song of death, the Lord is keeping score.
When Killer sings his song of death, the meat is on the table.
Killer wants to sing once more but his master is hardly able.

Note: *"Ode to Killer" is about a .270 Remington pump-action rifle, purchased in 1968 and used thereafter, nicknamed "Killer."*

Sam Edsall
The Monoliths

Just five minutes.
That is all it took.
The monoliths appeared
just after the whole earth shook.
Black monoliths
no one could explain.
Once seen with human eyes,
a monolith they became.
Just five minutes.
Animals vanished.
Humans stared at the ground
with no choice or they would turn
after five minutes.
Cherish these moments...

Note: *"The Monoliths" is written in Edsall's own meter, "TNT Meter."*

Don Narkevic

Irene

for Irene McKinney

Ella Rose, lives up the shale road from Irene.
Together they can green beans,
tomatoes, peppers, beets.
Over coffee they both confess,
as children, they complained,
'Beets taste like dirt.'

Their heads covered in green hats
bought at the General Store in Belington,
they forage blackberry thickets
along the roadside,
discovering the occasional nest
of Yellow-breasted Chats.

When Ella Rose hears distant thunder,
she hands over her half-full pail
and points toward home like a weather vane.
Irene asks if her husband works tonight.
Over her shoulder, Ella says she doesn't know,
has to listen to the radio,
the six-o'clock mine report.

Removing her gloves,
Irene leans against the fence,
the berries black as bituminous coal.
Approaching clouds, bellies dark with rain,
convince her to head indoors,
to sit at her desk,
maybe spend a little time writing.

Don Narkevic

I Come to Visit Your Stone

Spring grass overreaches,
so, I yank clumps, dirt
clinging to roots, the smell
of earth, a Memorare
for the prayerless.

On knees, I plant Mosaic Violets,
light purple blooms speckled
with dark shades of fuchsia.
I hear your laughter tinged
with a wail for all you did not do.

To sit next to you again
at the kitchen table,
the simple pleasure of eating
the smells of blessed food,
how I never noticed the impermanence.

Standing alone on the grounds
where so many wait for family,
I notice the shifting clouds,
the wind stirring the smell of pine,
the lack of help to roll away the stone.

Don Narkevic

Empty Nest

for Chelsea

Fallen from an elm, she rescues it,
whirling in an eddy at creek's edge.
No hatchlings remain.

In the cup of her wing-hands,
my daughter presents the find
like an offering to the god of flight.

With her fingers, thin as twigs,
she traces the intricate weave
as I explain the creation of nature's art.

After inspection, she saddens,
wanting to return it to a place
where it will abide forever.

To provide shelter and protection
for jays or wrens, she chooses
a thorny thicket of raspberries.

When my daughter pricks a thumb,
she rejects consolation, and I marvel
with regret at her tearless eyes.

Tobias C. Bone

Spooktober

The time is near
For all to hear
The sounds of spook and fright,
The skeletons leer
The Ghouls fear
of the one dreaded night,
Men will quiver
boys will shiver
of that night that is,
Spooktober.

Christopher Michael Chambers
The Apple Tree Suite

Movement I: The Monotone

In the Spring of life tolls the bells...
Solemn swelter,
Tolling somber,
The e'er graying somber of the bells-
life pervaded the air like a stinging rain
Shocking -unpleasantly- the soul awake;
Boundless graying sky that no strand of twine -no rope could tie.

Needless to say,
life did not live here
Not 'neath my weepy boughs
Not 'neath the cursed fruit I bring
Let life -the stinging rain, surcease.

In the Spring, oh glorious, gaunt, insufferable trial!
Why must you make the winds dance deliriously?
All the while, the bell tolls,
E'er graying sound
I march in place.
Rooted to a cadence
Within the somber toll.

O' heaven sings a wretched song,
For I hear hope.
She rustles through the thickets
The sound of nature quickens
A maiden- little- indeed
Spring has brought a seed.
The bells, bells, bells
Bells white as snow...
Where did the gray go?

Picking through the leaves,
My ancient limbs are sore
There is nothing more than life
That I do abhor.

The constant toll has become a melody
Grating in my soul
There is nothing in these roots

That an apple-picker could cajole.

Spring has brought a seed
To water with its rain.
Years 'pon years do fly
She cleanses the gray again.

Movement II: The Dance-Song

She, o' she
Has brought me here
Beyond radiance
In summer years

She is a dance
More beautiful than leaves
An infectious disease is She,
She outshines the light, yet She is...

Always lonely
One
Only

She cries and brings the summer rain
The tears have fallen
My oak -stained

Always lonely
One
Only

She o' she
Has brought me here
To the highs and lows
Of the Life I feared

She is a dance
A push and pull
An apple picker
With my blossom in full.

Movement III: Divorce of the Bough

Weep and scream.
She does none else-
She is bound to man,
And man is hell.

he stalks her daily to my base
to defile the blossom and defile face
the Bells gray...
Again gray.

Swelter,
Somber,
A tone I hear
Longer and longer...
The grating bother-
Dissonances clash pon' my oak.
Rooted in its cadence-
A master of none I am.

he o' he leaves her wrought
Her screaming bells never stop.
O' where is Her dance through the thickets
To move these boughs and make *all* quicken?!
O' where has life gone?

Days go by
A rope is tied,
And just as She wants to fall.
he o' he
Takes a hold of She,
And She never takes the fall.
Struggle, struggle
Anguished rebuttal
All to no effect...
his hands are cruel and deft.
She becomes a tool
I bystand- a fool.

She is lifted away
A band forced on Her finger.

Dull tears and a sea of fear-
Somber swelter...

Lost in the final toll
The tone –its own- takes its hold...
life left the air like stinging rain
life doesn't live here.
Spring had left a seed...
To bury the life it carried.

Note: *"The Apple Tree Suite was the winner of GSC's Hermitage Literary Society Halloween Writing Contest for Poetry*

Liza Brenner
Cookie in a Jar



Liza Brenner
Fountain of Youth



Liza Brenner
Unplugged



Matthew Welch
Life Finds a Way



Whitney Stalaker
Untitled



Whitney Stalaker
Untitled



Whitney Stalaker
Untitled



Marjorie Stewart
The Capitol in Chaos



Marjorie Stewart
Fleshtone



Marjorie Stewart
Cityscape with Fantastical Sky



Jesse Kargol
Scrap Bot







Brianna Deel
Lonely Heart



Brianna Deel
High



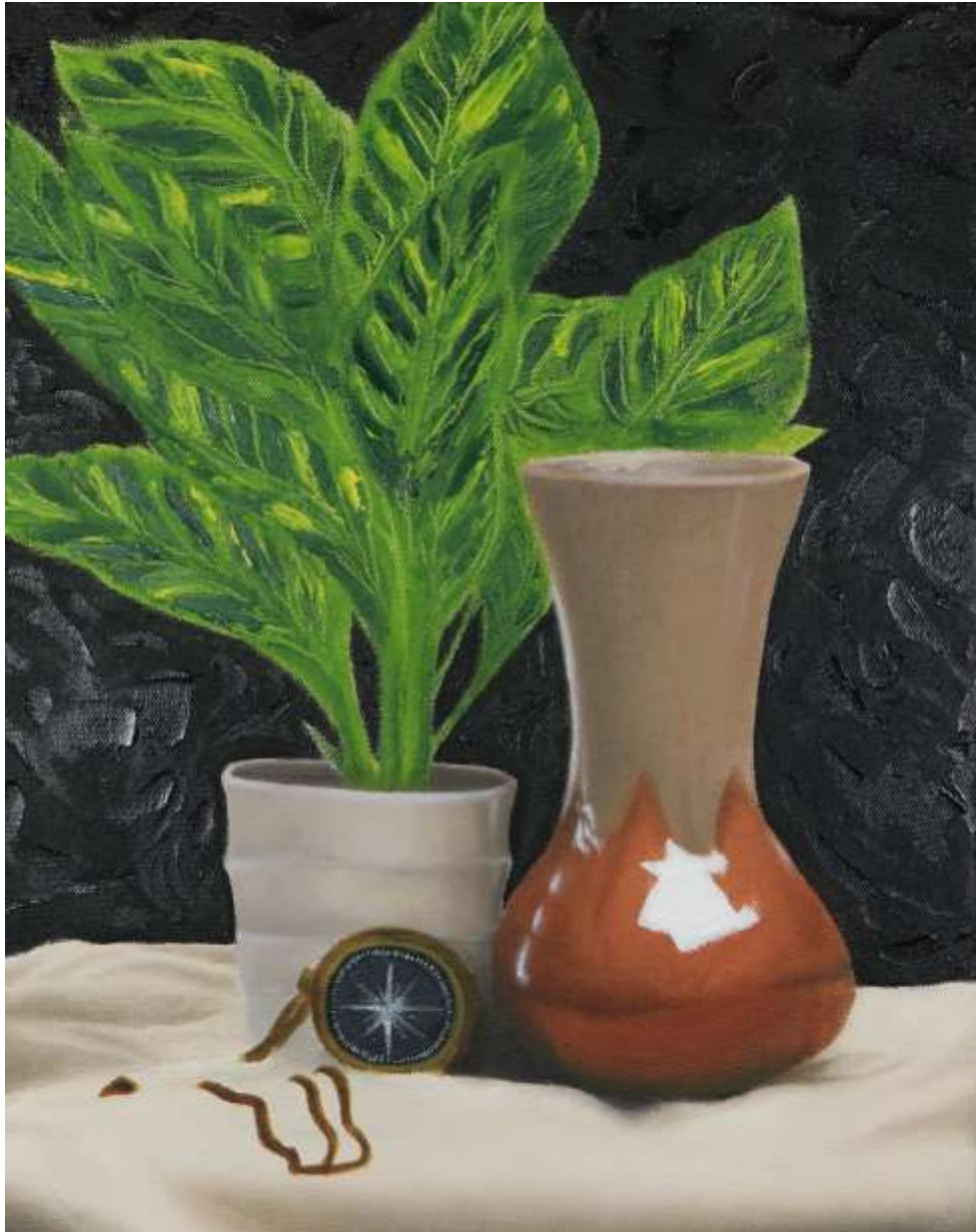
Brianna Deel
Citrus Fruit



Camryn Tyree
Poised



Camryn Tyree
Collections



Camryn Tyree
Not Interested



Christopher Cosner
Serenity



Gordon West
Dragonflies



Gordon West
Rhino of a Different Color



Gordon West
Serenity



Melissa Gish

Black and White and Cute All Over



Jeff Bryson
Floyd's Plugs



Jeff Bryson
Cowboy



Will Vann
Untitled





Kylie Cosner
Summer



Kylie Cosner
Red



Kylie Cosner
Yellow



Brittany Koutsunis
Sentimental Journey



Carla Bowman
Prism



Carla Bowman
Phobias



Carla Bowman
Puppeteer



Kateland Clark
Blue Girl



Jazzmin White
Man of Many Colors



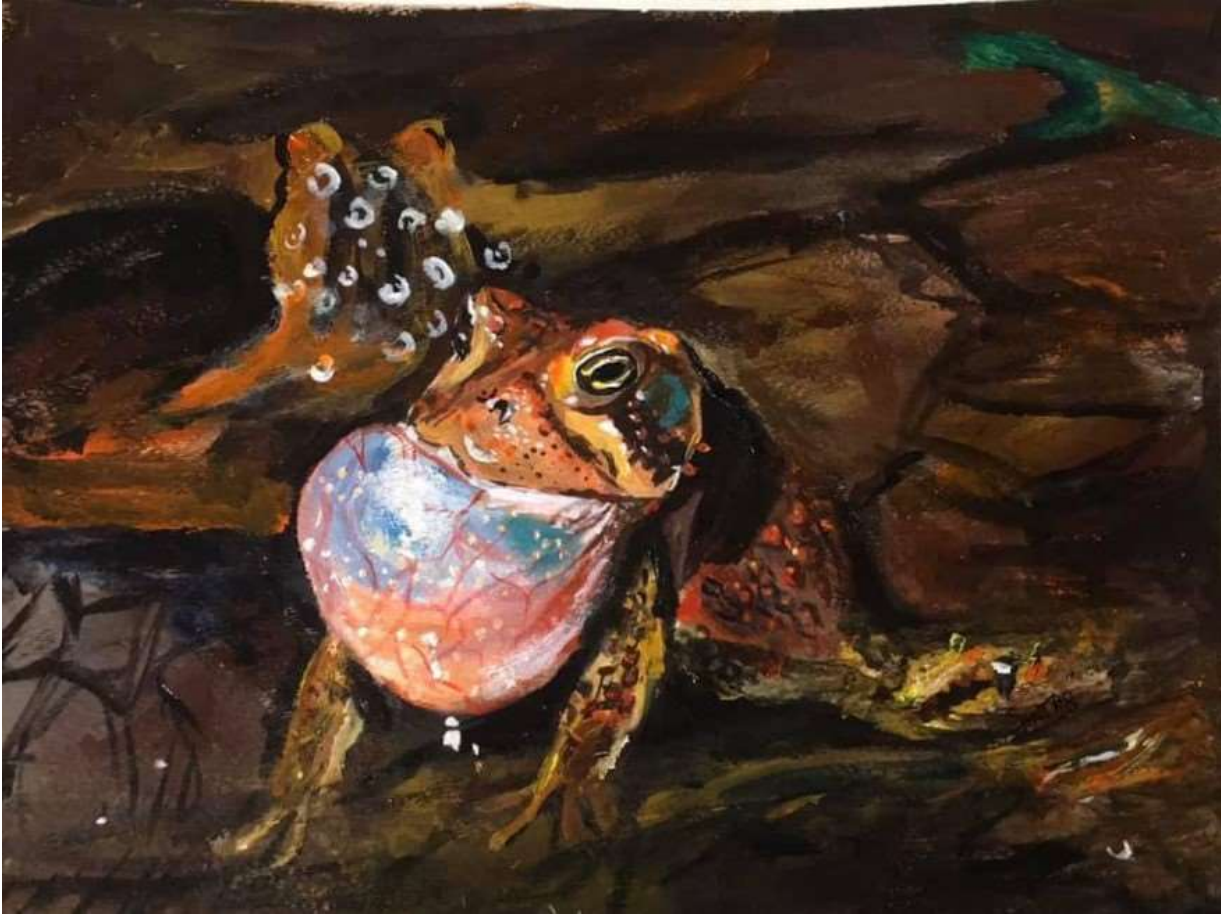
Sarah Normant West
Making a Splash



Sarah Normant West
Rusted Bicycle



Sarah Normant West
Bull Frog with Inflated Vocal Sac



Nora Taylor
Beneath the Surface



Zoe Yates
Lamia Retold



Zoe Yates
Medussa Retold



Zoe Yates
Arachne Retold



Abigail Mayle
Dinner Date

It was another late night, and I was home alone, again. Although, this time I had the bright idea to make my wife's favorite food for dinner. She'd been working late almost every night this week and she always came home so exhausted. I thought it was the least I could do.

I was busy scuttling around our kitchen doing my best. I'm not a chef or anything though so I was just trying to make it, bottom line, edible. I had already put the fettuccine noodles in a pot to boil while I sautéed the shrimp and scallops. I didn't think I was doing a particularly great job, but I hadn't burned myself or dropped anything yet, so I was on a roll.

"Next sauté the shallots," I read the recipe aloud, "wait, shallots? I don't remember buying shallots? What even are shallots?" I took the pan with all the sautéed ingredients off of the stove and went to search my kitchen for shallots. I didn't even really know what I was looking for.

"I hope I don't really need the shallots," I complained to myself as I searched for a bit. Eventually, I got tired of searching and returned to the stove. "I guess this recipe isn't going to have shallots in it. What's next?"

The next thing it instructed me to do was make the sauce, so I poured in the broth and wine. The recipe was a little strange about what to do with it. It said to boil it then let it simmer for 6 or 8 minutes or until most of the liquid was gone. I needed something more concrete than that. What was it supposed to look like? How much is good enough? This is exactly why I don't cook. I made my best guess and poured in the whipping cream.

After a few minutes of stirring that I drained the fettucine and added that to the sauce if that's what you could call it. It looked more like soup. Maybe I should've waited a bit longer. It was too late now. I scooped in the shrimps and scallops and stirred them in. I put a couple of servings onto each of the plates I set on the table for us and garnished it with parsley.

I sat down in my spot at the table and stared at my creation. It didn't look anything like the seafood alfredo they served at that Italian restaurant she liked so much. I must have done something wrong. It was basically a soup. My plate could barely contain it. I was lucky it didn't leak all over the table. Though, there was nothing I could do at this point, so I just sat there and stared at it.

I had used the fancy plates tonight. I hoped she would be ok with that. I thought this would be a special enough reason. I even had some candles burning and the lights turned way down low. Besides, I was going to wash the dishes and I would be super careful. It should be fine.

"Well," I sighed, looking over at the clock, "It's about that time." I stood up from the table and walked over to our mantle. We had dozens of pictures together. My personal favorite was the one at that amusement park we went to a year or so ago. I proposed there; we had our first date there. I walked past all of them to the picture we took on our wedding day. We both had the biggest smiles on our faces as I held her close. I passed that one to the one where she was walking down the aisle in that gorgeous white dress.

"Welcome home, honey," I said, grabbing the picture, "I just finished making dinner. It's your favorite and don't worry about the dishes. I'll wash them and I'll be super careful, ok?" I walked back over to the table and placed the picture in front of the plate. I went back over to my own seat and sighed.

"I know it doesn't look that great, but I really tried," I explained, "The directions weren't very clear and I'm not the best chef, you know. I mean, you're the one who 'banned' me from the stove." I gave a bleak smile before drinking some of the wine from my glass.

"I really miss you," I said aloud to the emptiness, "I'm sorry I wasn't there."

Leslee Coffman

Halloween Gone Wrong

No one believed me. Not even after I had proof of what happened. My best friend, who was there and experienced everything just as I had, played it off as if the entire event was pretend.

“She cut herself on the gate,” Baylor playfully laughed it off with his friends. “We went into the old churchyard to check it out and she heard a creak and ran out screaming. Chicks, man.”

“Baylor, I have photos— “

“No, you don’t. You’re lying, *Gwendolyn*.”

I was so angry, so upset that he was doing this to me. I had to figure out what happened to him. But before that, let me rewind to give you the entire story — not just Baylor’s side of it.

I wanted to go take photos of an old abandoned church and the cemetery behind it. And seeing that it’s on our way to school, I had Baylor, my neighbor and childhood best friend, tag along.

“The foggy mist will look perfect for that Halloween feel, don’t you think?” I asked Baylor as we pushed open the squeaky iron gates. They were beginning to rust, the paint so crackled you could barely tell they used to be black.

Baylor carefully pulled the gate closed behind us before shoving his hands into the pockets of his denim jacket. “I think so! What are you getting photos for anyways, Gwin?”

“For my Instagram! I only need a few more followers to reach 1,000. I want this picture to count.”

He rolled his eyes but put his arm around me. “Whatever you need to do. Where to first?”

Adjusting the camera strap around my neck, I nodded in the direction of the cemetery. “Back there first, the fog is perfect right now.”

“Alright, lead the way,” he gestured with his hands.

We went around the perimeter of the church building, scoping out perfect angles to get the fog and the vibrant fall leaves in the same photo. They turned out very nice and I was happy with what I had. I even took a few photos of Baylor by some of the tombstones. He posed in many ways, giving the camera a new goofy face in each shot. “We can go now; I don’t think I need any photos from inside. Besides, you took up most of my space with those photos!”

He laughed. “Delete them then, Gwin.”

“No, they are too good! And I can use this for blackmail later...possibly. I have a lot of followers you know.”

Baylor seemed to be in a trance when I looked up at him. His eyes were glued on the church building, obviously very interested in something.

“Baylor? Did you want to go in?”

He didn’t answer me. He only nodded before slowly beginning to make his way to the front doors. His eyes were unmoving, refusing to take them off of what was ahead of us. He opened the old, wooden church door just enough for him to walk in, leaving me outside.

“Baylor? What are you doing?” I said. I opened the door wider and went in, not wanting to be in the cold autumn weather any longer. As soon as I stepped inside, the sanctuary sat before us. The pews were falling apart, the paint peeling off the walls, and the floor warped in odd patterns from years of churchgoers walking across them. It was silent, so silent that it made me feel empty inside. “Baylor,” I tried again. “What are we doing in here? It’s too creepy in here. Let’s get going to school, okay?”

I tugged on his sleeve, but he yanked his arm away from me. “In a minute,” he murmured.

I stand still in the middle of the aisle, clutching my camera. My fingers were beginning to stiffen from the cold air. Even inside the building it was freezing. I began to shiver as I watched Baylor continue to walk down the aisle until he reached the pulpit. His hands skimmed over what looked like a Bible and he grinned. “At last,” he whispered.

He ripped the book open, scrolling through the pages before finally stopping. He began to chant something in a different language — it almost sounded satanic. So the book up there wasn’t a Bible after all. His eyes began to glow red and dust was swirling around him as he rose higher in the air.

“Baylor? Get away from there, it’s dangerous!” I said with a shaky voice. *Was he possessed?*

He only looked at me with a sly grin, continuing to chant. I didn’t know what else to do, but I held my camera close to my chest and accidentally held the shutter button down, taking a few photos. I felt something cut my arm — it must have been debris from Baylor’s summoned whirlwind. I ran out of the church building so fast that when I arrived at school, I didn’t remember the trip.

I went to class without Baylor and when I saw him again, he was standing in the hallway with his friends, all turned around and laughing at me. They said I was lying about the whole thing, but I had photos! The ones I took by accident.

“Do you all want to see proof? I have it right here! Baylor is possessed!” I could hear them all laughing but I still wanted to show proof. I took one strap of my bookbag off my shoulder and dug around for my camera. As I pulled it out, Baylor ripped it out of my hands and dropped it on the ground. I screamed.

“Oops, my bad,” he said with no remorse in his voice. Tears streamed down my face. No one would believe me now. My friend wasn’t himself. I had a feeling he was possessed for real and there was no proof.

The school nurse emerged from her office — she must have been disturbed from my screams earlier. “Are you okay, young lady?” she rushed over to my side and helped me off the ground, taking me outside for a moment to cool off. The nurse sat with me on a bench outside the entrance of the school.

“It’s my friend. I think... I think he was possessed.” I gave her the entire run down of what the last few hours looked like, but I could tell she didn’t believe me. Especially since I didn’t have proof.

She talked to me until a van arrived with the words “Blue Spruce Mental Institution” written on the side of it. Lucky for me, it came as soon as school let out for the day. So, everyone got to see me be dragged away while I attempted to resist. I wasn’t crazy. I knew I wasn’t! I got one last glimpse of my friend, the person I have known the longest, and his eyes began to turn a fiery red color before the van doors closed behind me.

Note: *“Halloween Gone Wrong”* was the winner of GSC’s Hermitage Literary Society Halloween Writing Contest for Fiction.

Cassie Hyre
In Your Head

Stuck. The third time this week the boss had you stay over for work. Tonight, feels off, however, with a tension in the air that sets in your bones with the coolness of the crisp night breeze. Your walk home starts off normal, yet you cannot seem to get the feeling of apprehension off your shoulders. The chill runs down your spine as you turn your body to see shadows that are not your own. Someone, or something, is really behind you. Try and brush it off as they may live the same way as you or are going towards their car. Subconsciously your pace quickens with anxiety to get home in the safeness of locked doors and sturdy walls. You make the turn for your street, and so do they, faster yet your pace quickens as the echo from your inconvenient shoe choice gets louder still. You can hear their footsteps, as they walk out of sync with you seemingly on purpose. You are in eyesight of your house now, 200 feet become 100, then 50, you are at your doorway now. Don't fumble with those keys too long, you soon can feel the breath of someone down your neck.

BAM.

You are in your bed submerged in a pool of your own sweat. It is barely dawn. You can finally breathe again; you are alone and safe.

Wait. Who is that outside the window?

Note: "In Your Head" was a runner-up in GSC's Hermitage Literary Society Halloween Writing Contest.

Ryan Belmont
The Incident

Rob Opperson slowly creeps through the forest with his .22 slung across his back. This early morning in early December, he is hunting whitetail deer. As he walks, he takes heed not to make noise on the fallen leaves. He thinks back to his home situation. His wife, slowly dying of breast cancer, doesn't have too much longer to live. He has never been someone to disregard reality. He knows much of the pain of others. He accepts it and moves forward. The operations never helped though they had the money as he was a professor at Miskatonic University and she a Chief Accounting Officer. However, they both knew when to accept the cold logic of reality. Thus, they went to the furthest northeast of Maine to get away. He just wonders what he's going to do with the little remaining time and then what? The cold air and bird songs help him when things are serious and the joy of killing a deer helps ease his mind.

At this point in the season, the leaves have all fallen, leaving the naked branches out in the cold with nothing to wear. The snowfall a few days ago has not yet melted entirely, leaving a thin layer of white but just enough. It reminds Rob of the times his own father had left him out in the cold whenever he pissed him off with typical childhood nonsense as befits children. He really hated his father. He was quite glad when he finally died in a fit of bingeing, though he does feel a little guilty about those feelings to this day.

The area he was in, a large twenty-mile section of considerably ancient virgin forest near the little village of Haven, a village built by colonial settlers on the ruins of an abandoned Indian town of the Passamaquoddy, abandoned for what reason, he didn't know. It was just what he read at the town library once. The forest has, for some reason, never truly been conquered by man, no logging operations or mining to speak of, but mostly cordoned off by trespassing signs. He didn't care, however, he needed to be alone and this place seemed especially quiet.

The sound resonates through the air, the unmistakable call of a deer, surely male and trying to attract females to his location.

Finally. Rob thinks.

The call came from northwest and within at least 1,000 or less yards. He keeps moving steadily, making sure he doesn't trip himself up or crush any sticks or fallen branches in his way. As he goes onward, he realizes the birdsongs have stopped. It was quiet in a strange way he didn't think he'd ever felt before.

He looked at the ground and saw fresh deer droppings along with hoof prints, a good sign. He moves further and further in the snow. He looks up and, in the distance, he swears he sees something, not sure what it is but then quickly dismisses it.

He keeps moving up past the naked, skeletal trees and suddenly in front of him...

Blood. There was blood on the snowy ground, like velvet on white, at least a good bit but not too much. Fur as well. Deer fur by the looks of it.

What the heck? Rob thinks to himself.

Obviously, a deer was killed and from the disturbance of the snow, it was dragged away though he couldn't tell what killed it due to the dragging, destroying all evidence. It must've been quick about it too. It had only taken about 5 minutes to get up here from where he'd heard the deer call.

Probably a bear in the area. I don't want any part of that. He thought. *Then again... maybe, maybe I could.* He touched the rifle slung behind him. He knew that was illegal but no one would likely come out here...and he needed at least a little action for the blood.

Curiosity eating at him at the possibility of killing a bear, he begins slowly following the trail that the dragging had left behind. He proceeds, never taking his eyes off it and he's not exactly sure why.

Sometime later, a cave appears in front of him. An opening enough for a man to squat and make his way in, welcomes him inside.

How long did I follow that trail? He wondered.

Bits of fur on the rock surface, the deer was certainly dragged into there. The bear must've woke up from hibernation early. Rob took his rifle off his shoulder and reached into his pack and got out his gas lantern. As he moved into it, he stepped and hit something with his foot. A small candle. There were many small candles actually. He was so focused on the actual entrance; he had failed to observe everything else. Old candle holders, looking almost ancient, rusted and worn. On the ground of the cave was also a symbol, it looked old, though what it was he couldn't say. Etched in by some kind of paint, he touched it with his shoe a little and thus rubbed a bit off.

I don't even know what to think of this. He thinks at this random weirdness.

He pushes that thought from his mind and takes out the gas lantern from his pack. He steps inside the cave mouth and lights it.

Deep. The only word that came to his mind.

This cave just went down almost at a 180-degree angle, almost like a slide but you could climb up by the looks of it. The width was quite narrow, about 6 feet across and the length well, only what was down there knew that.

Okay, if I go down there with my lantern and rifle, I could probably startle it and kill it. It's probably deep down there and I have my skinning kit with me, I'll skin it and take some meat and leave the rest to rot, since I'll never be able to bring it up with me. Rob surmises.

Rob begins his descent. Step after cautious step he moves down into the bowels of this rock-covered throat. After a few minutes he makes it to where it flattens out. Probably a good couple hundred feet down. Another open crag leading to another area is to the left of him. He sees a small light glittering in the darkness. A candle it seemed. Rob moved closer, moving through the crag and beside the candle hunched over and squatting, was a man.

He was completely naked and from what Rob could tell of him, his skin was near white as snow and he was drinking from a bowl. The liquid could be seen on the corners from his mouth, dark and soupy, and the bear and deer lying not far. A blood drinker. He was drinking deer blood. And beyond him, he could see bones, so many bones. Obviously from many different creatures.

What? The only word Rob could get to come to his head with the strange sight in front of him. *Some kind of crazy man.*

The pale man stops drinking from his bowl and quickly turns his head towards Rob who is still about halfway through the crag. Rob can't breathe or even think now.

He moves backward to where he came from, slowly shimmying his way. The pale man must see him. Rob can see one of his eyes and some of his mouth though with the help of the candle beside the man, he sees the mouth is wide, so wide, like the way it would be if a child saw some kind of amusement he liked and his mouth was wide open with sharp teeth, way too sharp.

"Hey." The pale man says with a clear and soothingly gentle voice.

Rob goes dead still and just stares at the pale man beside the candle with the dark warm deer blood on the corners of his mouth. Sweat pours from his face and he's breathing extremely heavily.

"It's been a long time since anyone's come. Are you a sacrifice? Have my worshippers survived and come back to me? I could make you like me; I never did that for anyone but a few and I've become so lonely." Paleface says almost giddily.

Rob breathes heavier, quicker and doesn't even respond but rushes to get out.

"Don't go, please! I'll make it quick; I can make you like me even, if you partake of my blood, I swear! I'm so tired of the animals, I need the sweet red nectar like when the tribes would bring their young and after that the new arrivals who wanted my power!" He begins sobbing and gets up and then sprints towards Rob on all four limbs, moving quicker than he should.

Rob moves back even quicker and he falls back into the flat section at the bottom of the cave with his rifle at the ready. The pale man, in a rage of sorts, flies through the crag as if it's nothing and Rob fires his rifle at the pale man's head.

The bullet instead strikes him in the chest, and he screams and falls back, clutching at the wound. He's hairless and his canines are more like fangs. His fingernails are more like claws. His face almost shrunken.

Rob drops his rifle and moves up the cave's throat towards the light that seems to reach towards Heaven, it basically is Heaven in a sense and he's in Hell, like Dante but with no Virgil to guide him.

"Please! Come back!" Paleface screams at Rob.

Rob climbs and climbs and then, the cold air hits him. He's out of breath but the adrenaline keeps him moving.

A scream from the depths behind him erupts, a pained howl of an animal but somehow still human.

Rob runs and keeps running. He runs for over a mile back to his truck. He gets his keys out of his pocket, unlocks it and gets in. He turns the ignition; the truck comes to life and he pulls out and drives away.

As he drives, he looks into the rearview mirror and for a second, he thought he saw a shape but quickly dismissed it, just sheer stress, anxiety, paranoia, among other things at work in his fried brain. He drives back to their rental house at Eastport and gets there by nightfall. He parks in the driveway, sits in the truck and screams, at least he was in his vehicle. He could've woken up the whole town and they would think there'd been a murder.

Vampire. Nosferatu. The only words that came to his mind now that he had time to analyze. His colleagues at Miskatonic would snicker at him or maybe be bewildered at this story if he ever has the heart to tell it. He had never rejected cold logic and reality and that's what it seemed to him despite all evidence saying that such things can't exist. From the evidence scattered around the cave, he was an ancient being but knew English, but it was an almost old-timey way of speech, colonial even. The first word he'd said, *Qey*, that was "Hello" in Passamaquoddy, the language of the tribe that inhabited the area before the new arrivals, the colonials, in fact. This spoke volumes.

Rob realized he was still sitting in the truck with the engine running. *I'll just go to bed and spend the rest of our time together out by the bay. No more hunting.*

Rob got out and in the corner of his eye, he thought he saw something pale in the dark. He spun around and about fell and smashed his head on the concrete. Nothing. Of course there was nothing, the creature couldn't follow him, nothing was fast enough to be able to outperform man's finest machinery. Anyway, he'd shot it through the chest and such a wound will almost certainly be lethal to any living mammal. But then again, that wasn't an ordinary mammal, now was it?

Rob quickly walks up to the front door of his two-story house on the bay, it was a calming light blue color and the sight of it helped ease him a bit, reminding him of the peaceful bay and ocean, not too far from here. He enters slowly, making sure not to awaken his wife. She didn't need to see the state he was in, he didn't know how he'd explain. He just wanted to go to sleep, so instead of going to the bed they shared, he undressed himself down to his underwear and laid down on the couch in front of the 50-inch plasma screen. He got the remote and switched on to the Adult Swim channel. He needed something funny to at least try to take his mind off the strange experience. It was South Park, that was S-tier for funny.

He watched and it helped ease him enough to get tired and go off to his dreams, but he was rather hoping for none at all. He didn't want the possibility of that creature invading his mind.

"Found you." The familiar voice said.

Rob opened his eyes and in disbelief mixed with terror. The creature standing perpendicular to him. Standing up and looking down with seemingly glowing eyes like that of a cat. Rob moved his eyes to his chest and saw that the bullet wound had disappeared!

It regenerated! He screamed in his head.

“Yes, I can regenerate. I can induce from your eyes that you are surprised to see me, well see me alive that is.” It says politely. “I apologize. For earlier, I mean. It had been so long since I had seen another and I was maddened by the sight of you, ever since my worshippers were put to death by their kinsmen, so long ago, emotion got the better of me. The enchantment on the front of the cave prevented me from leaving. It was so hard to find nourishment and I usually needed to wait for something to come in. You were after the bear, I believe, and surely weren’t expecting something like me.” It explained.

“What are you?” The only sentence Rob could think of, being a professor and all, knowledge was always paramount, even subconsciously in the face of terror.

“That doesn’t matter. Even I can’t really remember how I came to be anymore; the days go by like wind. I think there was a woman, maybe, in the woods and she did something...” It seemed to lose itself in thought for a second but its eyes quickly came back to him. “I thank you, for destroying the enchantment placed by my jailers.”

“Enchantment?” Rob asked dumbly.

“Yes, the symbol in old paint, my jailers made it, the white men from the Massachusetts colony I think, some kind of ward to keep me locked inside. I believe it was the Passamaquoddy who helped them. They grew tired of my demanding of sacrifices. I suppose I was getting gluttonous, and some of the Puritans, I think they were called, helped them contain me. Some of the Puritans’ kin had begun worship of me and my power and they found about the ‘devil spawn’, I think is what they called me.” It said. “Oh, and I don’t really blame you for shooting me. I mean it did hurt horribly but not much can really kill me, at least I don’t think.”

Rob’s eyes glanced upward as he randomly thought of his wife upstairs asleep.

“She was sick.” It said. “So I did her a kindness.”

Rob got a lump in his throat at what it just said. *Was.*

Leaning in the doorway, he saw. Her. Her eyes were wide, and her mouth was open showing sharp ivory teeth, sharper and longer than they should.

I said I forgave you but not that I wouldn’t punish you.” It declared. “Now she’s better or soon will be.”

“No.” Rob said sadly and near silently.

“He’s yours.”

The last thing Rob saw was her coming at him, skin pale and nothing but gnashing teeth.

Note: *“The Incident”* was a runner-up in GSC’s Hermitage Literary Society Halloween Writing Contest.

The Fox

Summer

Makiah awoke to the sound of gunshots and whoops. Groaning, she pulled a pillow over head and tried to go back to sleep. Louis Heckler and his friends were at it again, hunting out of the season and at night, probably drunk, and giving all hunters a bad name.

It was irritating, for sure, but the cops never wanted to hear about it unless it included trespass on your own property. "It's nobody's business," they would say. Makiah knew where they got their venison.

She heard a scream, followed by triumphant yell. It didn't sound human, exactly, but it was enough to get her flying out of the bed, not bothering to put on pants as she rushed out of the door, fumbling with her flashlight and slippers and racing out to the barn, thinking "Did they hit Teague?"

Chincoteague was her 7-months pregnant mare who like to graze at night, her pregnancy making the summer heat abhorrent. Teague could be mistaken for a doe if there wasn't a lot of light. She wasn't a very big pony.

Makiah ran through the barn to get to the back field, omnipresent summer humidity making her racing body feel gross and uncomfortable. The goats were pressed up against the front wall, obviously nervous.

Oh thank God. Despite the lack of moon, she could see that Teague was inside, pacing nervously and snorting but fine.

"We got her, boys, look she's over there, by the fence post!" The shot sounded like it hit the post and there was a yelp. Something ran off towards the trees. Another shot followed, missing the creature. They started stumbling towards it.

Shit. I shouldn't do this. Makiah walked out. "Louis, what the hell are you doing on my property at three o'clock in the morning?" she hollered. The men stopped.

Apparently not knowing how to whisper, a voice she thought was Ray O'Donnell's slurred, "Shit, it's that bitch Mak. What she doing out here?"

"Dumbass, we're on her property. Shit. She going to call the cops." Giggles. "Good thing most of them are already here!"

Makiah's frayed patience is wearing thin. "I am not going to repeat myself."

Louis slunk towards her, eyes fixed on the hole in her ratty old sleep shirt, located close to her breasts, before answering. "We're only a fox. Hit her probably twice. I think she was the one who done eat three of my chickens last week."

“Louis, we all know that was an escaped dog who did that. You just wanted a pelt.” She took his silence as agreement. Annoyed but not wanting to start something she may not be able to finish, she breathed a heavy sigh and tried to choose her words carefully. “Listen, she’s based on my property. Probably has kits or something, this time of year. I won’t tell officers *on duty*,” here she cast a hard look at who she was pretty sure was Deputy Mason, which caused the man to pull the cap lower on his face, “That you spooked my animals, trespassed on my property and shot my fence post - if y’all never come back here without invitation and leave my fox *alone*. Deal?” She stuck out her hand.

Louis squinted and spat at her feet. “We’ll get going.” He turned, yelling, “Come on, boys! It’s time to hit the hay anyway.” He strutted away like he had dignity. They all trudged away, leering and sneering at her, save John Forrester. She’d been thinking about asking him out sometime, and she had caught him checking her out a couple times, but if he did shit like this, she was glad he hadn’t.

Despite her flashlight telling her that she had a low battery, Makiah decided to follow the blood trail after the fox. If there was a fox living on her property, she should probably figure out where, so she wouldn’t move her trailer full of chickens right next to it.

There was a den in a large hollow tree where the trail ended, pretty near to her house. For a moment, Makiah wished she can turn herself small to see it, and then she shook her head and laughed. *Time to sleep again before I have to wake up at 5:30*. She glanced at her phone clock and groaned. It was 3:45. *I don’t really have time to go back to sleep*. Resigned, she found a stick to push into the ground next to the den, and followed the blood trail back to her house.

I think the poor thing’s okay. I think the bullet just hit the tip of her tail. Looking up wildlife recovery centers on her phone, Makiah found that the closest was 50 miles away. She didn’t have the time or money to take the fox and her kits to it. Still, she should probably do something. She grabbed two cans of tuna and eventually refound the den, the blood had already dried in the hazy darkness, and set them out for the vixen. *Hopefully she’ll eat them. I’ll have to bring her more tomorrow. ‘Cept I’ll get her cat food. It’s cheaper. I hope it doesn’t attract any predators*.

Trudging inside, she sighed and started getting ready for the day. At least when she got home her dinner would be prepped. It was going to be another busy day at work and she was *not* looking forward to coming home and doing the evening chores either.

Makiah laid out two cat food cans each day for about a week, taking the used ones with her, and by Sunday, it looked like the tail had scabbed over, and the smoky colored vixen didn’t seem sick at all. No infection visible when the creature peeped out. Once, she heard the screeches of fox kits.

Using night vision binoculars that she’d gotten from winning a contest a year ago, she observed the fox’s healthy-looking gait exit for the first time Monday night, presumably to look for more food on her own.

She knew from surfing the internet that if the fox hadn’t shown any signs of infection by then, she’s probably going to be okay. Thankful, Makiah turned to put her binoculars away, when the fox seemed to look back at her, green light somehow shining from the animal’s eyes.

A strange kind of knowing pulsed between them. Makiah shivered.

This isn't over yet. I have to thank her.

Fall

Makiah was literally screaming. It was 4:30 in the morning and she had to be at work at 5. It was a battle to keep her eyes open. It was freight day at the store, and she had to *move* it.

Unfortunately, Teague had given birth last night, and she had to help the little filly get through. She had got in about an hour's nap, but that was it. Now she was miles from home with miles to go before she slept. And since it was such short notice and she needed to save her sick days, Makiah couldn't call out. *Thank goodness Bianca was able to come in and watch them today*, she thought as she screamed along to the lame song on the radio. There was nothing good on, nothing to pump her up, so she had to pump herself up to avoid that darkness seeping into the edges of her vision. She rolled to a stop stuff at the intersection, where unfortunately it was curved just enough that you had to pull in a bit to see what was going on to your sides.

She'd only been there for a moment when something caught her eye at the top of the hill she was about to drive up. The sun was rising, dawn stretching across the sky with rosy-fingered clouds chasing shadows and the half-moon away. A very small part of her was swed and thankful that she got to experience such beauty. More of her was feeling like sunset was way better, because you got to sleep right after. But what she really was focusing on was a dark silhouette.

When she first glanced at it, the shadow seemed small, and barely touched the asphalt of the road. But as the momenta flowed past her, it grew larger. At first she thought it was a shadow of a fox, growing larger as the sun rose higher behind it. But soon it got too big, the whole of its body stretched from edge to edge of the road, from the tip of its ear to the bottle brush of its tail. And it was facing her.

Its phantasmic eyes glowed as they locked with hers. Fear skittered down her spine, pooling low in her stomach. Its whole presence seemed to tell her 'Something is wrong.'

Unconsciously, Makiah's foot eased off the break. Her car eased back a foot or two before she noticed. It was *just* enough for the truck that came flying by to just miss her car, its side mirror scraping along the hood of her car. A loud SCREEECH grated on her senses, waking her up.

She caught the eye of the driver, who happened to be Louis, an intense look of disappointment and fury turning his face in awful shape of crimson. He threw a bottle out the window as he careened around the corner. There was a tinkle of glass, and the crisp, fiery leaves all over the ground swirled up in his wake, scritchng pitifully across the asphalt.

Wondering what that was about, Makiah checked around the curves one more time and sped up the hill. A banger came onto the radio, finally, and she was able to stay up long enough to grab a coffee before shaking her heavy muscles into wakefulness.

It wasn't until later that day she realized that, in the few moments the near-car crash had occurred, she hadn't seen the creature leave.

It still isn't safe. He's serious now.

Winter

"Guys, guys, I love you but I've got to go. The vet's coming at noon tomorrow to give my filly Puck her shots, and if I drink I won't be able to drive home!" Makiah shouted over the din.

Bianca tugged on her arm insistently. She also hadn't drunk, but unlike Makiah she often got swept up in the excitement, drink or no. "Come on Makiah, stay a little while longer, the night's barely started!"

They got in there about three hours ago and honestly Makiah was quite tired of the loud music. "No, and remember, we have a game tomorrow night, remember?"

Jalissa, who was sloshed, wiped her mouth and said, "Shit." The other people at the bar laughed. They weren't on the university's basketball team.

After figuring out who was driving home, Makiah and Bianca walked out to their car, Makiah immediately getting into Bianca's (which was right next to the door) so the woman could drive her to the banged up farm truck. Staying safe in dark parking lots was important, and all that jazz.

Exhaustion from both the long day and all the people hit her like a brick, and she *really* didn't want to drive all the way from the city to the farm this late at night. It was almost an hour's travel, not counting city traffic, but she couldn't ask anyone to drive her. It would be an imposition, even for Bianca, who only lived about twenty minutes away. *I sure wish I could just stay here though. I am going to be back here tomorrow anyway*, she mused as she put her elbow up on the windowsill.

When they pulled up to her truck, the bed sticking out into the lane (there really weren't any good spots for a truck here), she bid Bianca goodbye and pulled down the door handle, sticking a leg out. The cold January rain soaked quickly to the dark wool of her leggings. She needed to get out and then in, fast, if she didn't want to be wet and miserable on the way home. But out of the corner of her eye she saw a faint glow emanating from the bed of her truck.

Two ghostly green eyes were looking into hers. Makiah shivered slightly, some manifestation of fear licking a stripe up the back of her neck. No shape surrounded them, exactly, just a dissipating trail leading out of the sliding door of the rearview window, wisping away in the steadily growing downpour. Slowly, the eyes began circling each other, drunkenly, as if losing focus. It was almost entrancing. But it shed light on something even more startling.

She hadn't left your windows down. Her windows weren't made out of jagged glass. Someone was in there.

"Ah! You're letting the heat out!" Bianca admonished. Her tone quickly changed, though. "Makiah? What's going on? Are you okay?"

"Huh?" She shook herself and turned to her friend, the girl's hazel eyes, so familiar and earthly, caught hers for a moment, and then Bianca flickered hers away, blushing. Makiah was confused but ignored the thought. *Nah*. "Yeah, I'm okay." She took a deep breath. "Listen, can you drive me home?"

Bianca's eyes widened for a moment in shocked understanding. Her gaze peaked over Makiah's shoulder, probably noticing the jagged glass. She put on a casual voice, eyes shifting around warily. "Yeah, totally dude! Did you throw my toothbrush away? I might as well stay over." Hidden meaning: We'll stick together until you feel safe.

"Yep, still got it." They smiled at each other.

They cursed a lot at the busy and inconsiderate cityfolk, the rain, and then the splashes from the busy and inconsiderate cityfolk that covered the whole windshield. One particular asshole managed to get the only mud on High Street to slap onto their windshield, which really brought out their *best* curses.

"Motherfucker!" bellowed Bianca.

"Floober doober!" screamed Makiah.

That got them in stitches. "I can't believe you still say that!" snorted Bianca indelicately.

Makiah crossed her arms, huffing half-heartedly. "I - oh - just shut up."

Eventually, they got onto the country roads and out of the rainstorm.

The worst is yet to come. One more time. It has to end.

Spring

Paranoia had set in. Once was a sleep-deprived hallucination, but twice? Both times when she'd been in danger? It couldn't have been a coincidence. So Bianca had stayed in with her. They drove to school and practiced together (she had retrieved her car after the game that Saturday) and drove behind Bianca, bringing it back home with a broken window) and calling each other when walking to their cars from work. Bianca said she didn't mind. "I get to hang out with Puck and the goats and get to drive a little less far? I might as well stay here with you from now on."

Still Makiah kind of felt a little guilty. She didn't feel safe yet, but it felt weird to ask so much from her friend. Finishing up at feeding Teague and frustrated with trying to get the little filly to eat - Puck wasn't willing to try much solids yet, preferring her mother's milk - Bianca came back from work and fed the goats. They chatted for a while, filling up their feeders and setting up the milk stands. It was Bianca's favorite part of farm chores, and Makiah liked watching her with them. The stinkers honestly seemed to like the woman, though it might have been because she let them use her legs like a head-scratching post and a salt lick. Generally, though, they were good judges of people.

Speaking of the goats, they didn't settle down at night, as if something was watching them. All the kids, despite being Nigerian dwarves, were too big and old to be carried off by any predators that she knew were in the area, and no one's dog had escaped for a while. The horses seem to sleep more during the day; it was like they were kept up at night. The chickens were eating eggs again, a clear sign of stress. As far as she knew, no birds of prey had been spotted nearby since that debacle with the falcon nest last year. Additionally, Makiah knew that the fox had been hunting the rats in the barn, because her peanut butter

traps have been catching less and less, and there was more grain left for the goats in the morning. The rats hadn't changed their behavior in the years she had lived on this farm, and there were lots of little bone splinters outside of the fox den. In short, everyone had their hackles up on the farm. Even Bianca, who was new on the scene.

It came to a head when they found out that the power lines had been knocked out all over the county during a particularly vicious April storm. They had to keep plugging in their devices to the cars, and the county said with all the bad weather, it might be a couple weeks before everything was up and running again. They had to sleep in the kitchen, the wood stove heat permeating the room in order not to freeze to death at night.

It made Makiah feel a little better about the whole situation; the door outside was right next to the kitchen. If whatever was stalking her animals made too much noise, she'd be able to hear it and rush out the door as soon as possible.

So when she heard her animals scream all at once, she was ready to go. She shook off Bianca's arms and legs that have been wrapped around her, the woman's eyes barely fluttering during Makiah's rushed explanation and when she murmured an already half-forgotten assent. But they both needed to go *now*, so as she was pulling on her coat she kicked Bianca's butt and hollered "I'll be in the barn!" as the girl shrieked awake.

Sloshing across her muddy yard, Makiah soon was in the barn. To her abject horror, there was blood splattered across the walls, glistening in the light of the full moon. Her youngest goat, Lizzie, lay gasping for breath, her neck slashed open, her mother was screaming the loudest among the herd of goats and the two ponies, but they were all pressed tight against the wall, eyes fixed on something behind Makiah.

Panic seized her heart, *should I stay should I run* repeating over and over in her mind but she knew that she had to do *something*. Reaching into her coat pocket, she found a nail and tucked in between her knuckles.

"Hey, bitch." A familiar voice said as she whirled around. Louis was standing in her goat stall, where he would've been hidden by the opening door, clutching a large knife. It was bloody and he was smiling. "I hope you said good-bye to your little girlfriend, cause I'm going to be the last thing you ever see!" He grabbed her arm.

"Fuck off, you shitfucking bastard!" Makiah roared as she kneed him in the nuts, only to find a hard resistance. He must have been anticipating the move and wore a cup. So she ducked down, throwing him off balance and onto the ground, and tried to stumble towards the door. Bringing a rusty nail to a knife fight wasn't ideal, and she had to get out.

But Louis grabbed the edge of her coat and pulled her back down, butt crashing next to the still gurgling kid. She grabbed the hand that was trying to hold her down and bit into it, harder than she ever been bitten before. He wailed in pain as her teeth hit bone and blood filled her mouth. But it only seemed to make him angrier.

He still held the knife, why *isn't this working* and was bringing it down at her chest and *Oh God I can't do anything* and it looked so sharp and she was struggling but *so sharp I'll hardly feel a thing Oh God Oh Please I'm so scared Oh God Oh God Oh God-*

An inhuman scream filled her brain.

It stopped her, and Louis stilled too. He was then knocked off her with a pounce from a snarling monster with gray fur and green fire. It growled as it looked down upon the pale, whimpering man. "Oh God! Please don't hurt me!" he yelped.

The Beast opened its maw and ripped into his chest, paws holding down his attempts at flailing. A pallid liquid began to rise out of his eyes as the creature mauled him, somehow without actually tearing clothing.

Makiah could only sit there and watch.

The Beast began to wind down. Somehow, after a minute, she could tell that the body laying on the floor was empty. A glowing, mucousy man clutched itself next to the corpse, trembling. "What have you done?" said the gross thing. Although Makiah could definitely hear in the words, they did not seem to pass through her ears.

The Beast - no, the Fox, merely said, "**Finished you**." Its jaws expanded and it ate the disgusting creature.

Then it turned towards Makiah and they locked eyes. It faded away until the glint of its teeth and viridescent eyes were left, and then, they were just tricks of the moonlight. "What the fuck was that?" Bianca said eventually, making Makiah jump in renewed fright. "That, that, slimy body, and that goddamn - oh God - was that a fucking fox?" She pulled out her phone. "We have to call the cops. Are you hurt? C'mere, let me look you over.

Still surprised, Makiah let the woman check her over for any issues. All that was there were some nasty bruises, especially near her tailbone.

Bianca took Makiah's hand. The police and an ambulance were sent out. Bianca took her hand and squeezed. "Listen, you go inside and get cleaned up. We both know how this could go. You didn't kill him, we both know that. But it'll be easier for me. I'll," the woman cast her eyes around the bloody room. "Yeah, I can definitely make it look like I was in the fight. Once they rule it -" she looked at the body for a second. "Once they figure out this wasn't a homicide or murder, it will all be okay. You go inside and call 911 and wash up. Okay?"

Makiah just nodded, and did exactly that.

It is done

Epilogue

The cause of death was ruled a heart attack. As he was dead, Louis was not posthumously charged with trespassing and attempted murder. Makiah knew the local cops liked the man better than her. She knew if it had been the other way around, they would've smeared her name in a heartbeat.

After a ton of questioning and a bunch of county cops coming in to question the two further, Makiah and Bianca were let go. Bianca gave them all a stink eye as they left the police station, and in the early morning light, they moved the goats to the horse stall while the crime scene investigators messed around her barn.

“Why don't I just move in.” Asked Bianca a couple days later, as she turned off the light and crawled into bed. They just had a long discussion about the supernatural shit that happened, eating chocolates and drinking some cheap wine Bianca picked up the day before. It was pretty nice.

“Yeah.” Makiah grinned. “Why don't you?”

They checked the fox den the next day. It was empty.

Note: *“The Fox”* was a runner-up in GSC's Hermitage Literary Society Halloween Writing Contest.

Fade Berry
Shadows

Running. Breathless, thoughtless.

Shoes pounding on the pavement and breath rushing from his lungs as laughter rings from around him, echoing against the steel and concrete. The sky is dark and has been for a while, lit only by the three moons circling above.

The spiraling Shadows behind him are nothing new but everything to be worried about. The city dims as they pass, sucking all the warmth and light away and leaving the already frigid air colder.

They'll do the same to him when they catch him.

Night after night they wait for him. And he runs. He tries to hide. He calls for help, pleads for it with the rest of the air left in his lungs. No help ever comes.

Tonight is just like all the rest. The biting numbness nips at his heels as the Shadows' laughter and taunts grow, catching up to him as his legs stall and his chest heaves.

His whole body is shaking, drawn close in an attempt to preserve heat even while moving. He can't keep it up for much longer, he knows. The thought of what will happen when he gets caught- what he's seen happen to the others they have attached to- spurs him on.

He's able to dash into the safe zone, away from the freedom of the sprawling city and back into the safety of the laboratories that he's been calling home ever since the incidents. The Shadows don't like the labs. They don't like the wards set up to keep things like them out; they don't like the materials the laboratories had been constructed in. He's been told that it burns them.

Collapsing onto his knees just inside the gates, he sucks in deep breaths and tries to regulate himself, warmth flooding through him as one of the guards drop a blanket around him. It's the same one that has been here week after week, month after month. He's come to appreciate him now.

"It's okay, Asher. Dr. Herring is working on how to separate the Shadows from chosen targets. He should have results soon." His voice is rough and brings even more warmth curling into Asher's gut. They'd gotten to know each other. Asher is the lab's longest standing Target. Micah and Cameron have been the ones to greet him at the gates, night after night. Micah follows him into the infirmary usually, and they talk.

A water bottle gets shoved towards him, slightly dripping. It takes him a second to recognize the dark hand holding the bottle isn't the Shadows, just Cameron.

"Drink this before he gets you inside. It'll help."

Note: "Shadows" was a runner-up in GSC's Hermitage Literary Society Halloween Writing Contest.

Samantha Lamb

Leukemia

When I was thirteen years old, my mother was diagnosed with cancer. When she told me, I didn't really care. I mean, we didn't get along anyways; all we ever did was fight. I thought maybe things would be better if the cancer just—

I wasn't really ready for what actually happened. My mother had always been a strong, healthy woman, even if she was a bit overwhelming. But when she started treatment, she began to fall apart. She lost weight and started bruising more easily. Her skin became paper thin, and she spent days in bed. Her dark hair lost its luster and volume and eventually began falling out in patches.

I was so used to my mother taking care of me, making breakfast and making sure I got my homework done, that I never appreciated what she did for me. I resented her for our arguments and the things she said about my weight or my grades, but I never cared about the things she did until she couldn't do them anymore. It was so strange to see these everyday things not getting done, like the dishes or the laundry

I started trying to take care of her instead. I cooked dinner and tried to make her eat. I cleaned the house and made sure she had her medicine. I spent time with her. We would watch movies and sometimes bake cookies together, when she was feeling well enough. I practically dropped out of school to help out around the house and try to help her feel better.

She still said hurtful things to me, but at least now I had something to blame it on. She was sick; it's hard to be upset with someone that has cancer and could die at any time. Sometimes I broke down in the shower, finally letting out all my anger and sadness. Eventually all my internal pain started showing on the outside. By the time I was fourteen, my body was covered in scars. An old razor blade became my best friend, the thing I turned to when I had no one to talk to and no other way to let out my emotions.

For a while, when I was fourteen, the chemo seemed to be working. My mother didn't seem to be so frail and broken. She was still sick, but at least she had the strength to go to the grocery store. She was getting better. It seemed like she was going to be able to beat this terrible thing that had taken over our lives and threatened the stability of my entire world.

Later that year, the doctor told her she was in remission. She wasn't completely cured, but the cancer was gone for the time being. She started gaining weight, her hair was growing back, and her skin didn't seem so thin. She was starting to resemble a normal person again. That's when it was easiest to be angry with her. I couldn't blame her mood swings on an illness or a drug.

Little did I know, she still had to take medicine every day. Her bedroom was practically a pharmacy; pill bottles were perfectly arranged on her dresser. She knew exactly what pills to take at what time, what pills had to be taken with food, and what pills had to be taken with lots of water. Most of these pills were natural supplements that were supposed to keep her healthy while fighting the cancer. And for a while, it actually worked.

Unfortunately, it didn't last very long. It was just four months before the cancer came back, this time with a fury like never before. The call from her doctor came on my fifteenth

birthday. Her white cell count was higher than ever, and a cat scan revealed a massive tumor in her abdomen. She would need emergency surgery if she had any hope of surviving; they scheduled it for three days later.

When they removed the tumor, they had to remove a piece of her stomach too. The tumor had grown attached to her stomach, and the only way to save her was to remove the damaged tissue. When they finally got it all, they just sewed up her stomach and put a mesh patch over the incision. After surgery, she had a hard time eating properly; sometimes she would cough up blood. Most of the time I could find rust-colored stains when I washed her otherwise pristinely white sheets and pillowcases.

She was falling apart again. There was nothing I could do this time, no way I could help my mother. The chemo and supplements that she spent so much money on didn't even seem to be helping this time. If anything, it just made her worse. She couldn't eat; the drugs made it impossible for her to keep anything down. Most nights, I would lay awake, listening to my mother puke her guts up and flush bits of herself down the toilet. I dreamed about the fragments of bloody tissue from her esophagus working their way down the system of pipes within our walls.

Two days ago, my mother passed away in a hospital bed; she had been in the hospital for over a month. I spent my sixteenth birthday at her bedside, spooning chicken broth into her mouth and hoping she wouldn't retch it up. I watched her fight for her life, even as the drugs weakened her immune system and the cancer took over her body. I watched her cry herself to sleep because the pain was so intense. I saw her slowly giving up on life and letting herself give in to the pain.

About a week before she died, the doctors finally put her on some hardcore pain meds. Everyone knew there was no way she was going to survive; we might as well make her last days bearable. Even though the medicine helped, I could tell she was still in pain. She hurt anytime anyone would touch her, or anytime she had to move. Tears welled up in her eyes anytime she sat up to eat. She knew she was going to throw up within fifteen minutes, and that there would be blood and flesh mixed in with the stomach acid.

When my mother's heartbeat started fading, I knew it was time. She was ready to go, and I had mentally prepared myself for this moment for two years. I didn't even cry as much as I thought I would. I just held her hand and listened to her shallow breathing become less frequent. When her heart monitor let out the final long note, a single tear rolled down my cheek

Contributors' Notes

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Max Anderson-Lake has had poems published in *Dragon Speak* and *The Trillium*. He lives in Glenville, WV with his spouse Eli Anderson-Lake, along with their cats and hermit crabs

Fade Berry is a freshman Behavioral Science Major, and a member of GSC's Hermitage Literary Society.

Tobias C. Bone is fourteen years old, and from Glenville, WV. He is homeschooled and in the 8th grade. Currently, his favorite subject is Italian. When not doing schoolwork, he likes to play video games, learn to program, read, and learn Italian.

Liza Brenner grew up in western New York. She has an MFA in painting from Edinboro University. She is a former art professor at Glenville State College. She is now living and teaching on the west coast.

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Anna Childers is an English major from Clay, West Virginia. She spends most of her free hours either writing or procrastinating about writing, and is constantly surrounded by stunted tidbits of ideas she definitely means to get to tomorrow. She has several barn cats, a dog who steals her best writing chair, and a huge family who endlessly supports her, for which is always grateful.

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Sam Edsall is a multi-instrumentalist, singer-songwriter, and poet. He graduated from Glenville State College with a B.A. in English and a minor in Psychology in the spring 2019. His music can be found pretty much anywhere digitally. Just look up The Noir Troubadour.

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Howard Hoke has 36 credit hours from Glenville State College, so he's basically an alumnus of sorts. He served in the United States Army from 1962 to 1982. He served in the United States Secret Service from 1988 to 1994. The rest of the time, he was working and taking care of his family. Sam Edsall is his grandson.

Michael Lee Johnson lived ten years in Canada, Vietnam era. Today he is a poet in Itasca, DuPage County, Illinois. He has published in 2,015 small press magazines in 40 countries, and 224 YouTube poetry videos. He has been nominated for 2 Pushcart Prize awards poetry 2015, 1 Best of the Net 2016, 2 Best of the Net 2017, 2 Best of the Net 2018.

Abigail Mayle is the literary editor of the *Trillium*, and a founding member of GSC's Hermitage Literary Society.

Jonathan Minton is an English Professor at Glenville State College. He is the author of *Technical Notes for Bird Government* (Telemetry Press, 2018), *In Gesture* (Dyad Press, 2009) *Lost Languages* (Long Leaf Press, 1999). He edits the literary journal *Word For/Word* (www.wordforword.info), and is the faculty advisor for the *Trillium*. He spends his summers relaxing at the bottom of the Marianas Trench.

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Sarah Normant-West is a GSC Alumni that earned her Bachelor of Arts Degree in Studio Art in December 2013. She enjoys painting, drawing, collecting oddities, and volunteering on community projects. You can find more of her artwork on her webpage at www.sarahnormant.com.

John Charles (Chuck) Priestley II was born and resides in South Charleston, WV where he is an avid reader, Oriental food aficionado, oenophile, gardener, and Tai Chi novice. He began writing poetry as off-duty entertainment while stationed on Hawaii. He has experimented in various forms of both rhymed and prose poetry, drawn from 24 years of experience in the U.S. Navy and associated travels. He is published in *O-Dark-Thirty*, *Pennsylvania Review* and others. Nature, Asian culture, and human relationships are recurring themes for his poetry. He holds a Master of Arts, English degree from Marshall University.

Whitney Stalnaker is a GSC alumna who earned her Bachelor of Science in Behavioral Science in 2011. She received her Master of Arts in Public History from Kent State University in 2016 and now works at the Cleveland History Center in Cleveland, OH. During her time at GSC, she was active in GSC Theater and regularly contributed to the *Trillium*.

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Nora Taylor is sixteen years old, and lives in Winston-Salem, North Carolina. She has been painting for four years, and finds inspiration in Bob Ross and local artists. She usually paints landscapes, but has recently started experimenting with portraits. Her other hobbies include dancing, acting, playing the violin, and hiking.

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MUJERES