INSTRESS

Journal of the Arts

2023

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Instress has been published by the students of Misericordia since December 1966. The word *instress* was coined by Jesuit priest and poet Gerard Manley Hopkins. Bernadette Waterman Ward describes instress thus: “Instress is an action of the will — a moral action, for good or evil. Instress is assent, to use Newman’s term, to an inscape. To call out an inscape is a pleasure, though not one necessarily leading to God; … But the ability to see and instress inscapes is the imaginative faculty that makes love possible.” *Instress* at Misericordia is therefore an opportunity of the artistic and literary imagination to make possible something — call it *love* or even *grandeur* — like the following, from Gerard Manley Hobkins’ “God’s Grandeur”:

…
And for all this, nature spent;
There lives the dearest freshness deep down things;
And though the last lights off the black West went
Oh, morning, at the brown brink eastward, springs-
Because the Holy Ghost over the bent
World broods with warm breast and with ah! bright wings.

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SPECIAL THANKS

We would like to acknowledge all those who contributed to the creation of this year's issue. We extend a special thanks to Dean John Woznicki and the College of Arts and Sciences, Michelle Donato, Jim Sabulski, Heather Outwater, Eleanor Pitcher and Cougar Prints, the English Department, the editorial board, and the judges.

POETRY

Everything Has Changed
Emma Blakiewicz 2
Man
Chase Ross 5
Women
Vivian Wright 6
Winter Roses
Aubree Zimmerman 9
Arctic Wolves
Chase Ross 11
Bacon
Jason Miller 19
Curse
Aubree Zimmerman 27
Saint Catherine
Emma Blakiewicz 29
Authenticity
Daniel Chlebove 38
Lamoree Lane
Eleanor Pitcher 39
My Saving Grace
Makenzi Walsh 41
Reaper's Limerick
Daniel Chlebove 55
Ugly Truth
Makenzi Walsh 56

Untitled
Matthew McCaffery 57
Careful Who You Sharpen
Eleanor Pitcher 62
Pandora
Vivian Wright 70
Daybreak
Chase Ross 71
Implications
Vivian Wright 80
Memory Never Dies
Makenzi Walsh 81
The Screw in the Hinge of Your Glasses-
John Marianacci 87
The Underclass
Vivian Wright 88
Unpolished
Aubree Zimmerman 102
What I'm Trying to Say
Emma Blakiewicz 104
Samsara
Makenzi Walsh 107

PROSE

Lauren
Lauren DeRemer 3
Best Paw Forward and Up
Paul Schields 13
Demons (Part One)
Daniel Chlebove 20
Demone (Part Two)
Daniel Chlebove 42
Number
Gina Svoboda 59
Eye of the Beholden
Gina Svoboda 64
The Ruler of Everything
Emma Blakiewicz 109

ARTWORK AND PHOTOGRAPHY

Foggy Day In the City
Nicole Zurawski 1
Night Flight
Joseph Padovano 4
Mom
Samantha Romero 7
After the Storm
Joseph Padovano 8
Blackbirds
Patrick Hamilton 9
Morning Cone
Samantha Romero 10
Peaceful Winter
Nicole Zurawski 12
Beach Bum
Paul Schields 17
Sunkissed Cow
Nicole Zurawski 18
Violet Galaxy
Joseph Padovano 28
Oblivion
Samantha Romero 41
Serenity
Samantha Romero 48

A Dog's Point of View
Madelyn Swarthout 49
New Hampshire Skies
Samantha Lorito 54
Come Home
Samantha Romero 55
Hopeful Prayers
Samantha Romero 56
St. Lucia Pitons
Nicole Zurawski 57
Diana
Avery Fortuner 58
Buddy's Day Off
John Marianacci 69
Unspoiled Iceland
Paul Schields 72
Urban Daydream
Rebecca Steinberger 82
Gohan's Rage – The Day of Fate
John Marianacci 86
Daily Doodles
John Marianacci 87
Beautiful Day on the Boat
Nicole Zurawski 89
Two Trains
John Marianacci 101
Fall at Misericordia
Matthias Claflin 103
Lake Drive
Isabella Fredo 106
Virginia Sunset
Joseph Padovano 108

ONE-ACT PLAYS

The Fourth Seal
Lauren DeRemer 30
Gary, a very short one-act play
Jason Miller 50
911
Maddelynn Griscavage 73
Pans Out
Aubree Zimmerman 83
Off the Rails
John Marianacci 90

Foggy Day in the City

1st Place

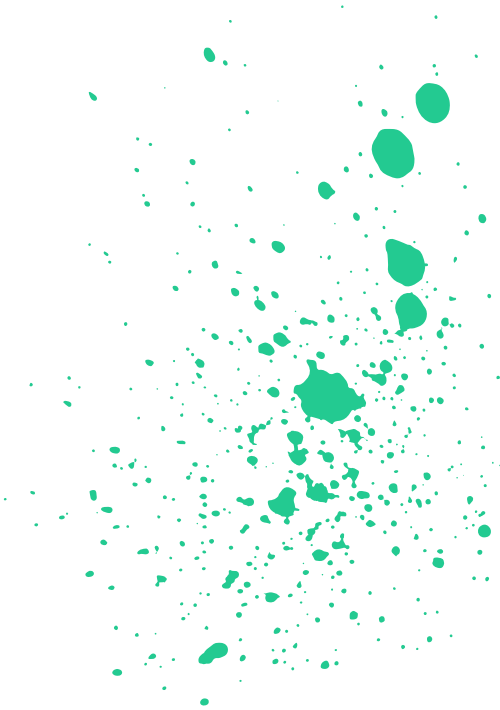


Nicole Zurawski

EVERYTHING HAS CHANGED

By: Emma Blakiewicz

Never in my life would I have imagined myself saying,
Taylor and Ed were right.
Everything has changed.
But we are still the same.
In that at some point we stop going south
And start going north despite the fact,
That it's the same direction
In that the world is rotating unconsciously.
Hurtling towards blackness
At speeds past our comprehension.
But we don't feel ourselves spin,
Until we're hungover,
In that we have become
The dying gods of a seminal age.
Powerful and proven otherwise only
In the gravity of one another.
Bound to an eternal teenage dream
As our physics, rules we follow,
But never really knew.
All the same, but this time,
The world is ours.



LAUREN

By: Lauren DeRemer

Boots. Leather. Fights. Dents in the metal. Running. Pop punk music. Red hair. Black ripped jeans. Campfires. Lauren. A paradox of a woman. Kind and cruel. Soft and hard. Leather and cable knit. Painted nails and torn cuticles. Eloquent and stutters. Loving and vengeful. A dove and a viper. Smiling and crying. All these things, and more at the same time. Racing thoughts and bouncing legs. Sarcasm and snark. Caffeine and waffles. Heartbroken and loving. Chocolate and spice. Freckles and glasses. Green eyes and pale skin. Netflix and blankets. Marvel and Harry Potter. Stickers on her laptop and her water bottle. Criminal Minds and NCIS. She's a nerd. A dork. She loves her d20 and her Players Handbook. Her hands are calloused, and her mind is dark. Strong arms and a strong heart. Bracelets. Rings. Necklaces. She prefers peppermint to spearmint but prefers both over wintergreen. She prefers fiction to fact and fantasy to reality. Silver looks better than gold. Black better than pink. Her go to drink is white can of monster. Or coffee. Or both on the bad days. She loves food. Chicken and broccoli with fried rice. Number 4 medium meal with a diet coke. Garlic parmesan crusted chicken with a side of broccoli. Potato soup. Soup in general. She doesn't have many friends, but the ones she has are good. Very good. She doubts herself sometimes. Most of the time. She loathes herself sometimes. Most of the time. She's trying sometimes. All of the time. She wants to do better. Be better. But she is her. She is trying. She is strong. She is healing. She is Lauren Marie. She is me.

NIGHT FLIGHT



Joseph Padovano

MAN

By: Chase Ross

You called me cold-blooded,
an apathetic, stone-skinned creature
with cloudy, dead eyes
and an unbreakable, leaden heart.

When I leave my burrow,
seeking solace and companions,
you claim I am weak, a waste,
unfit for this unsightly physique,
unworthy of the label you gave,
and yet when I remain in my cavern,
closed off from the world around,
you say I'm just like all the rest,
afraid to be vulnerable,
afraid to seem human.

Maybe I am some monster,
hiding away within my fortress,
concealing all that may be seen
as unsettling, unsightly, unwanted
from the spotlight of the sun,
all while I feel my mild blood
begin to cool.

I beg of you, abandon these beliefs,
as your thoughts create my fangs,
and your words become my scales.

WOMEN

By: Vivian Wright

Who am I but a woman?

I am the hurricane, wrecking the coasts,
And the calm in the eye of the storm,
I am the bridges toppled by wind,
And the pillars holding the ones that stand.
I am the devil who tempted Eve
And the god who cast her out.
I am the razor cuts in a cold shower,
And the soft bandages wrapped around them.
I am the last breath of a weeping mother, and the first breath the new child takes.

I am the unfathomable force that holds this earth together.
I am the insurmountable vastness of space,
I am the unattainable depths of the ocean.

Who am I?
I am woman.

MOM



Samantha Romero

AFTER THE STORM



Joseph Padovano

WINTER ROSES

By: Aubree Zimmerman

Every word that ever burned me
will bloom like dandelions
from the cracks in my mouth
stubborn and floral sweet from
scars of thorns under my tongue-
but the blood is gone,
and there are no roses here.

BLACKBIRDS



Patrick Hamilton

Morning Cone



Samantha Romero

ARCTIC WOLVES

By: Chase Ross

I begin to feel numb
as all around me snow falls,
blanketing the nighttime forest
with its serene, untouched shawls,
hiding along with it
my long frostbitten paws.

The pack gathers ‘round,
shivering through the extreme freeze,
a mass of dark gray fur
huddling among pure white trees,
hiding from the unseen beast,

The ice claims another,
I notice as we approach our den.
The husk of a foregone friend lays
somewhere, never to be seen again.

I think of days gone away,
friends that I used to know,
family that I could not save.

I begin to feel numb
as all around me wolves fall,

and I fail to answer their call.

PEACEFUL WINTER



Nicole Zurawski

BEST PAW FORWARD AND UP

By: Paul Schields

Jodie Foster once said, “there is nothing more beautiful than finding your course as you believe you bob aimlessly in the current.” Unlike many others, I can state with confidence that I have found my place in this world and life for me is truly a joy. My name is Tucson, but they call me Tooey, Two, or Boo. I am the oldest pup of the Schields family. To outsiders, I appear as your average overweight or chubby beagle but to my humans and other members of my pack I am so much more. I am a couch potato, the one outsider’s flock to, the most social of my pack, and most importantly the light of my family’s day. It beats me as to why I have truly earned this distinction. However, I think it might have something to do with how I demand attention and treats (aka chewies). Or the fact that I walk on my terms only, and can be found in the same place where you leave me when walking out the door. If you have not figured it out yet, that is the couch. It is a mission of mine to be the first one and the loudest to greet you when returning home.

My life as a puppy was pretty difficult. I was born with a hernia and therefore, managing my weight was always difficult. I further struggled with car rides, going to the vet, and being alone. I had severe anxiety and would often shake or hide when I was uncomfortable. Fortunately, all these difficulties and/or challenges besides the vet would subside with the introduction of a new member of my pack a year later. The vet has always been an adversary of mine. He has given me stitches, placed me in a cone, and messed around with my backside many times.

I am sorry to get off topic, but I am easily distracted by food and the idea of the vet as you can tell.

Where was I again? Oh yes, his name was Duke, and he shared a similar hard luck story as me. He had been purchased and returned one week later to the same store. My humans decided to surf the internet one morning and came across him. Duke had been listed at a deep discount. As a result, my humans called the store to see if it was a mistake. They would soon find themselves in the car with me. Before Duke became an official member of my pack, I had a chance to meet him. He had been playing with one of my humans' shoelaces when I first entered the pen. As soon as we locked paths and greeted each other, I knew we would be best pals. Duke and I quickly received the name the "beagle boys." Duke further introduced me and him to the entire neighborhood on our walks. I have never been used to drawing that much attention. Duke would bark his head off at other dogs and vehicles (particularly jeeps). He was a master of escape as well. If the door was left open, he was quick to jump and bolt. Even to this day, the little guy can still scamper and continues to be my sidekick.

There is also one more member of my pack. She was added roughly two years or so after Duke came along, and her name is Derby. My humans somehow found her on their way back from a college pickup in Kentucky. She was just weeks old at the time she reached my castle. I was not too fond of her initially as she climbed all over me, would not stop playing, and try to take charge. To this day, she needs to run and play ball at least twice in a single afternoon. After several weeks, Derby became a significant part of the trio. She acts as a mother figure towards Duke and me. Derby must often walk us and never lets us stray too far. The "beagle boys" are also notoriously known for ganging up on her in our tug of war battles. However, she wins pretty easily as she is sizably bigger and more athletic than us. Derby is further a princess since her balls and toys are scattered around the house. She has grown to have a temper as well. I would like to think I am the one that rubbed off on her.

Every morning she joins my side in efforts to receive more than one chewy. That reminds me, I did receive only one today, but I enjoyed bacon too. My humans can be stingy at times with food but after I show them my series of tricks or how emotional I can get; I often receive more. I even have a routine that my humans have not caught onto. It consists of barking really loud three or four times, little bunny hops, me giving one high-five, and repeating that over again. I must say it works and my humans are too unintelligent to realize it.

It appears I've gotten off track, once again. My pact and I have traveled all over. We have been to Gettysburg and been on the hunt for ghosts as well as human remains. It is suspected that we may have found the place where a soldier can be found lying at rest. We have also been up to doggy college or good ole Dallas, PA to support one of my humans on multiple occasions. Although I love the attention and affection, I receive from college students, the beach is my favorite place on this earth.

Here, I am truly reinvigorated along with the rest of my family. Our beach days are often very consistent. I am escorted down a long and winding path through a nature reserve in my newly acquired chariot as the other two are forced to walk. At the end of the journey, is the prettiest sight. That is the sun shining just above the turquoise water. I spend the first couple of minutes determined to dig a hole for myself to sit or lay in. Once that is complete, I rest and watch the waves crash in. I hear the seagulls chirp and let the breeze blow my brown floppy ears back. Duke is often fascinated with the idea of drowning himself while I only prefer to dip my paws in the water. Derby is occupied chasing a ball or trying to catch a frisbee. After some time has passed, my humans decide that it is time to go for a walk down what seems to be an endless coastline. Sometimes I prefer to be ushered by one of my humans and others I like to wobble my way towards the gleaming ball of light.

With that being said, my humans like to investigate little pools by the inlet for conch shells. Instead of this, I rather relax on the sand bar or pretend the pools are small hot tubs. I stand and watch as they tip-toe in to grab the shells prior to they are swept away by the tides. In some instances, they snatch one that has a little critter still inside and give a big yelp. I quickly stumble over as the humble protector I am and bark. Following the completion of the walk, I scurry over to the blankets and bags. I generally pry my head into the bags which house the keys, sun-tan lotion, and more importantly the chewies. I devour two or three and soon after collapse from exhaustion. The Wendy's meal that I had parts of on the way down last time was very tasty. It was a chicken sandwich and left my mouth watering.

Oh no! I lost my place once more. After the chewies on the beach, I like to fall asleep. In the background, I hear the rumble of the surf and my humans further discussing my well-being. At the age of eleven, I feel as though I am on top of the world. Life seems simple and remains to be very enjoyable. I have a loving family, get to lay on the couch as much as I want, and continue to travel. Not to mention, I have a lady friend. Her name is Ginger and she's very petite. She actually digs my set of road wheels and comes to the window every time I walk or roll by. Spring is upon on us, and I am excited to go back to beach along with everywhere else. I am further thrilled that one of my humans is set to graduate in May and ready for the photoshoot. Last time, I had a blast being glammed up with the pharmacist and first doctor in the family. That reminds me, a couple of nights ago, I accompanied and consoled her when she was crying. I thought it was work-related but overheard her mention my name. In the same sentence, she said tumor. I am not sure what that exactly means but will admit that my nose has bled a couple of times in recent weeks. Breathing has become a little more difficult for me as well. Despite this, I continue to put my best paw forward and up to receive more chewies.

I am a significant part of the Schields family and will continue to be. It should be recognized by my humans that I will always be there as fast and as loud I can be in some way or fashion when they either return home or need me. To the rest of my pack, I am forever your pal and want to thank you for helping me stay healthy along with overcoming my struggles. For now, I promise to remain to be the light of my entire family's day and continue to shine as bright as I can. I must go now. I am sorry it is time for my chewy and morning nap.

BEACH BUM



Paul Schields

SUNKISSED COW



Nicole Zurawski

BACON

By: Jason Miller

You are more to me than a breakfast treat,
In the morning, I wake to your aroma.
You are the epitome of cured meat,
I would follow you to Oklahoma.
There we would have a Western omelet brunch,
Hand in hand, we would amble to Texas.
I love the way, when crispy, that you crunch-
Shit, baby, I would buy you a Lexus.
We could cruise further to the West coast.
I miss you most when you are not around,
I so want to eat you with my rye toast,
No turkey substitute can hold your ground.
You are my light, my world, my everything,
It is of you, dear bacon, that I sing.



DEMONS (PART ONE)

By: Daniel Chlebove

As I kicked my car door open, a cool gust of wind from outside rushed over my skin and finally persuaded me up the driveway I've been sitting in for the last several minutes. Despite the blow from an abrupt dip in temperature, the steadily sinking sun reminded me how much harsher the weather could be in mid-March. As I approached the closed door to the ranch's snug two car garage, I shook my head and smirked as I took note of my roommate's car in the driveway, and of the remote door opener clipped to the driver's side visor.

After punching in the previous year into the keypad, the ugly rumble of the opening garage door began with the touch of the enter key and continued until the door stood completely agape. As I begin to step forward, I take cold comfort in this stale air of the musty garage. Despite being the same temperature as outside, the garage air had none of the same freedom or freshness as the breeze outside. The further into the garage I walked, the more the musky smell of the black mildew on the old cement floor became present in my nostrils. This smell however, lasted only until I opened the door into the house from the empty garage.

"Hey Buddy," Steve said with a smile as I walked into the kitchen, he has a nice smile as long as you didn't notice the two crooked teeth on his bottom jaw, which most people didn't. His green eyes were framed by the ends of his blond hair falling around his head from the single part running right down the center, which was accompanied by a strong angular jaw. "Want some dinner, I'm already cooking?"

I glanced quickly at the pan in his hand and upon seeing several well season chicken thighs I was happy to accept his offer. Not having to cook for myself would be reason enough but Steve can turn just about anything into a half decent meal. When I glance at the sink, I see a mountain of dishes that must have been slowly piling up over the last day or two, so I decide to pull out two paper plates so as to not contribute any more to the pile.

“Hey buddy, do I have a minute to slip into the garage before we eat?” I asked Steve as I finished setting the table.

He nodded, “Yep, I’ll just let you know when it’s ready.”

I flashed him a smile and told him, “Sounds good buddy.” Then, as my hand swings back on the handle of the door to the garage Steve looked over at me.

“After dinner I’ll come out and join ya by the way,” he said with a stupid looking half grin on his face. I laughed at him and told him that sounded good before slipping into the garage and turning on the LED strip lights that lined the ceiling.

Green lights are standard mostly because pressing the button to change the color is just a lot of work. I looked at for a second as if I was going to press the button but instead, I turned around and walked to my lawn chair set up next to the table at the back of the musty garage. I took a sip of my water and sat down, letting out a long-drawn breath. I feel a slight twinge in my throat and let out two coughs in quick succession and as I sat back in my chair, I suddenly felt a presence to my left.

“Hello *William*,” Addison said as her warm purple eyes met mine, “I missed you,” she said with wide eyes and a wider smile. Addison is no taller than five-three but don’t let the short stature trick you, her attitude can make up for her size at times.

“You’d think I’d eventually get used to you showing up out of nowhere,” I teased which she took as her que to punch my shoulder. “Ouch! Oh my God I’m dying!” I cried in feigned agony as I writhe in my seat.

“Oh, stop being so dramatic,” she said with a slight eye roll and a flash of a smile. “How are you though?” she asks as she closes some of the gap between us.

“I’m good, I just want to relax,” I said with a sigh. “I had a busy day. I had three classes, and I went to the gym.”

“Well, you’re here now!” Addison said with a grin, “Stay a while and relax with me.”

“Urhh…” I stammered, “Well uhh I’m here now, yes, but Steve is inside cooking dinner and he’s gonna be calling me any minute.”

“Well don’t be a stranger William!” she blubbered in feigned grief as she crossed her arms and made a sour face. The purple highlights on the underside of her hair flashed as she turned her head to turn her nose up at me and time seemed to slow down as I watched her.

“Well, I’m not leav…” The door quickly opens behind me, and I catch myself turning to see who it is before I even registered the door opening.

My temporary panic subsides when I see its just Steve. ““Hey Will, food’s ready come in any minute,” he says with a smile before closing the door as he went back to the kitchen.

“Well… I guess I am leaving soon, but spare me the dramatics please, I’ll be back.” I said with an eye roll. Addison just giggled and I stood up to go inside.

As I walk back inside, Steve is at the table finishing plating his masterpiece of chicken, broccoli, and rice. I thank him for cooking and take a minute to refill the cup of water I have been drinking before sitting at the table. Using an outstretched arm, he offers me a bottle of hot sauce that he had just used to give some flavor to the plain white rice on his plate, and I quickly followed suit before eating.

Each bite I take feels like that first bite of food when you’re starving, almost like I’m not sure if it’s melting in my mouth or if it even got there in the first place. Just as the thought crept into my mind to slow down and enjoy what I was eating I notice Steve across the table laughing.

“You with me there, buddy?” Steve asked as the corners of his mouth began to turn upward contorting his face into a sarcastic grin.

“Uh yeah sorry,” I managed, “I just kinda checked out for a second there.” I laughed at myself momentarily but stopped when I saw my plate, which had approximately a quarter of the food Steve had put on it remaining. “You really need to get better at cooking,” I said to Steve who rolled his eyes in response.

“Yeah, I must be really bad at it if you’re eating so fast,” he teased, gesturing towards my mostly empty plate. I just laughed and changed the subject as we finished our dinner. Once we had finished, Steve took our plates to the trash and threw them away while I cleaned the dishes left from cooking. With the kitchen back in order both Steve and I slipped into the garage where the green glow of the LED’s remained from before.

***

Headlights shine through the windows of the closed garage door forming rectangles of light that dance across the walls as car making them pulled into the driveway. After a brief moment spent consumed in panic about who could possibly be arriving to the house, I remembered that there were only two cars in driveway when I got home. What I had forgotten was that I have two roommates. “Matt must be back from the library then,” I said as I turned my head towards Steve, who made a face that made me question if some of the mold on the floor had physically wound up in his nose.

“If he was even there in the first place,” Steve said with a resonance of judgement, “not that I care…”

Steve’s voice was cut off by the loud metallic screeching of the door to the garage as it began to open. As the groaning continues, the hazy air within begins to circulate as it finally has somewhere to escape, and the garage drops a degree or two. Once the door finally reaches a halt, the beam of light hanging underneath the old bulbs outside the garage illuminated two figures as they walked towards us.

Matt was the first and taller of the two, his eyes looked like he was almost in a daze and the bags underneath them were less than positive contributions to any effort to make him look even the slightest bit alive. “Hey guys,” he started with a wave, “mind if I come join you?”

I beamed a smile back at him but before I could get a word of a response out, his girlfriend Mia took to the garage in a whirlwind behind him. “Matthew you were practically falling asleep in the car!” she scolded him, “I think we should just get you to bed for the night.”

Without giving him much time to even think about the suggestion, Mia had taken Matt's arm and begin towards the door back into the house. Even more quickly than they had arrived, the two were gone, with the thud of the door closing the garage off from the rest of the house, the loud mechanical whirring of the garage door starts again.

A few minutes later, only after I began to notice my breath was becoming visible, did I notice how cold it had gotten. Addison, who was now leaning on a lone structural pole in the center of the garage, suggested we watch something on Netflix in the living room where it's warmer. I saw no reason to argue, and Steve was happy to get up from the chair opposite mine where he sat shivering. So as the green glow died in the garage, the three of us returned to the comfort of the indoor electric heat.

In the kitchen, I stopped to peruse the well-kept supply of snacks and eventually decided on popcorn, however while that was in the microwave, I grew impatient waiting and opened a family sized bag of Cool Ranch Doritos. By the point the timer on the microwave began going off, I managed to forget completely about the popcorn I had placed there a mere 90 seconds before. In a miraculous whirlwind with a distinct lack of coordination, I managed to wash the Dorito dust from my fingers, take the popcorn out of the microwave, and bring both to the living room.

I then sat on the couch and placed both bags on the coffee table as Steve started looking through Netflix. Not much time had passed before we both had sunk several inches into the couch upon which we sat.

“Hey, would you wanna go for a hike tomorrow?” I asked somewhat out of the blue as I turned my head towards Steve. It took a second for my eyes to adjust to dark room, but it didn’t take long to discover I wasn’t going to get an answer to my question.

Steve had drifted to sleep for the night, the soothing voice of David Attenborough lulled him to sleep a mere thirty feet from his bed. I laughed quietly, then turned off the TV and went into the kitchen for my nightly glass of water.

As I rounded the corner, I heard a voice I’d never mistake, call out to me. “Oh William!” Addison beamed, “I didn’t know you were still awake,” she said clearly feigning surprise. “I don’t suppose you’d like any company until you go to bed?” she suggested with a smile from atop her countertop throne.

“Well, I was just grabbing a glass of water… but uh, yeah I can hang out for a little bit,” I stammered while reaching for a cup from the cabinet. Before I could even set it down on the counter however, I felt her arms wrap excitedly around me and almost knocked the glass from my grasp.

CURSE

By: Aubree Zimmerman

To every god of earth and hell,
beseech thee, hear my witch's spell:

Let selfish heart turn dark with rot
and every spark of joy forgot;
let rats and worms eat living bones,
let monsoon rains take up thy home,
let mantles quake and peace be broke,
hear every pain I never spoke-
let it whisper in thine ears
and drive thee mad with hopeless tears.

Let ruination consume thy lips
'til only Death remains to kiss.

VIOLET GALAXY

2ND PLACE



Joseph Padovano

SAINT CATHERINE

By: Emma Blakiewicz



If we are walking temples
I am tangled in the coral and kelp
Of living waters made by holy hands
Unable to breathe when you look at me
Baptized in the blue hues of the deep end
With blurry words of a nearby bishop
To the point of no return,
And if we are walking temples
I wouldn't be surprised that
On an unsuspecting rainy Tuesday night
It wasn't the cathedral
That I called beautiful.

THE FOURTH SEAL

By: Lauren DeRemer

Characters:
Cassian: 20's male. Wearing business casual, but still out in the field.
Maeve: 20's female. Wearing business casual, but still out in the field.
Nikklaus: Male of any age wearing a white suit.
Kyval: Female of any age wearing a red suit.
Juelian: Female of any age wearing a black suit.
Samial: Male of any age wearing a tan/brown suit.

Act I
Scene I
Seal I
Setting: *An abandoned city slightly covered with sand. Rubble and Ruins lay everywhere. There is a large archway on top of one of the piles of rubble. There is an inscription on it.*
At Rise: Two figures, a man and a woman, are standing outside the gate that opens up to the ruined city.

Cassian: You ready to go in? This place looks like it hasn't been touched in centuries.
Maeve: Maybe we shouldn't be here. It feels wrong.
Cassian: I'm sure it's fine. Besides, what are you afraid of? It's just an old city.
Maeve: It's less what I'm afraid of, more what I'm unsure of. I mean, what if thousands of people died here? This city is more than 40,000 years old.

Cassian: I'm sure it's fine. Let's just get the pictures they want us to get and get out of here.

Maeve: What's this? *(Moves over to a fallen rock that looks like it used to be a part of the arch entering the city).*

Cassian: What does it say?

Maeve: "Lasciate ogni speranza, voi ch'entrate." It's from Dante's inferno. It's the inscription at the Gate of Hell. It translates to "abandon all hope, all ye who enter here." That can't be good.

Cassian: Maybe it was just a way to ward off foreign people from their city?

Maeve: I doubt that. *(Stands up from the rock and looks in the distance.)* Especially considering what that is *(points to a structure in the distance that looks like a dome).*

Cassian: What is that?

Maeve: It's a stupa. It was uncovered in the ruins of this city in 1922.

Cassian: I'm stupid, so what's a stupa?

Maeve: It's a structure that is used in the Buddhist religion for a sacred prayer ground or as a shrine. Even though it's used in the Buddhist faith, the structure itself actually predates the religion. It was first built around the third century B.C. and was believed to house the ashes of the Buddha.

Cassian: That's *(pause)* incredibly specific and odd that you know that.

Maeve: I was an art history major, remember? With a minor in world religions and world literature?

Cassian: Oh, yeah, forgot that you got the culmination of the most useless majors to exist.

Maeve: Not fair. It's useful. Just in a select few jobs. Anyway, what did they say we needed again? Pictures, descriptions, and sand samples for the lab?

Cassian: Yeah. We need to get *(air quotes)* 'anything that looks interesting.'

Maeve: Okay, well, let's get going. Let's go get the stuff from the Jeep.

(Cassian and Maeve exit the stage and return with cameras and notebooks. Maeve begins taking pictures and when she takes a picture of the archway with the inscription, thunder rumbles.)

Cassian: That was weird. Thunder out of nowhere? Was there a chance of rain today?

Maeve: No. I don't think so. I mean, it is storm weather, but the temperature usually drops before a storm and it's still hotter than Hell out here.

Cassian: I'm starting to get scared. Random thunder, an inscription from Dante, maybe we really shouldn't be here. The energy here is all messed up and I'm getting really weird vibes from everything here. I swear I'm about to turn into *Cole Sear from The Sixth Sense*.

Maeve: Just because you get *(air quotes)* 'bad vibes' from something, doesn't mean it's inherently bad, you just have a strange intuition.

Cassian: You're supposed to listen to your gut.

Maeve: Yeah, and my gut is telling me to move this archway. So, get your ass over here and help me move it. Grab an end.

(They walk over to the fallen arch and grunt when the move it. They set it down next to the pile of rubble and there is a box sitting in the pile.)

Cassian: What is that?

Maeve: I don't know. Should we open it?

Cassian: It's locked.

Maeve: I know that smartass, but I can read Latin, remember? 'Chaos egredietur, septem sigillis fractis, libertas.' It translates to 'Chaos unleashed, the seven seals broken, freedom.' The seven seals is a reference to revelation. The lamb of God, or Jesus, breaks all seven seals and begins the apocalypse.

Cassian: We really shouldn't open that box, Maeve.

Maeve: Maybe we should.

Cassian: Maeve, no. Does it tell you how to unlock it?

Maeve: It does. In pretty simple language too.

Cassian: That's Hebrew. Don't tell me you're fluent in that too?

Maeve: I am actually. And this is closer to a combination of Aramaic and Hebrew as they are both considered to be part of the Northwest Semitic Languages.

Cassian: Was that the art or the literature degree?

Maeve: Years of singleness, boredom, and the desire to learn new things.

Cassian: What are the instructions?

Maeve: I open at the close. A drop of blood on the sigil and all shall be released. *(Pause)* Do we have a pin in the Jeep?

Cassian: Better. I have one right here. *(Pulls necklace out from under his shirt. It's a black cord with a safety pin on it. Maeve gives him a confusing look.)*

Cassian: The pin symbolizes safety to anyone who has been the victim of a sexual assault. Do you want me to prick my finger? *(She shakes her head and holds out her hand. He hands her the necklace, and she takes it.)*

(Maeve opens the safety pin and pricks her finger. She squeezes it so a drop of blood appears. She presses the tip of her finger against the sigil on the box. When she removes her hand, she hands the necklace back to Cassian. There is a brief pause before anything happens. Thunder cracks and both Cassian and Maeve jump back.)

Cassian: What the hell? Did we just unleash the apocalypse?

Maeve: I'm sure it's fine. We should be able to open the box now.

Cassian: Is that a good idea?

Maeve: Probably not, but I mean, hey, if it means a raise because we went above and beyond *(Shrugs and moves toward the box.)*

Cassian: Hey, let me do it. I've barely done anything, and I don't want you to be solely responsible for the end of the World.

(Cassian walks over to the box and opens it. Inside is a scroll. He picks up the scroll and opens it.)

Cassian: Oh great. Another dead language that only you will be able to read.

(Cassian hands her the scroll and she looks at it. Her eyes widen as she skims the page.)

Maeve: *(Shaking her head)* I'm not, I'm not going to read this. I can't.

Cassian: Like, you physically can't read it?

Maeve: I can read it, but I am not reading a single word of this out loud. I'm 99.9% certain that this is the literal key to the end of the world.

Maeve: This is the seven scrolls that Jesus reads in Revelation. *(Puts the scroll back in the box and slams the lid.)* Let's just go. I want to get out of here.

(Maeve exits the stage. Cassian leans down to the box and opens the lid. He lifts the scroll out of the box and holds it up to the light.)

Cassian *(mumbling)*: What language is this? I barely recognize it, although that's not saying much. It's not like I studied this shit in school.

Maeve: What are you doing, you idiot? Put the scroll back in the box and let's go.

Cassian: What language is this?

Maeve: If I tell you, can we go?

Cassian *(shrugging)*: sure.

Maeve *(sighs)*: It's technically Latin. Just older. Not the Latin the Google Translate would tell you, but the one before translation became a thing. *(pause)* now, let's go.

(Maeve reaches for Cassian's hand and accidentally grabs the scroll with the fingertip that still had a drop of blood on it. The scroll began to glow, and Cassian dropped it.)

Maeve: What did I just do? Oh shit.

Cassian: I think we may have just started the apocalypse. What do we do? Should we just leave?

Maeve: I mean, it's already starting. Maybe I should just read it and maybe we can put a good word in with the right people and live? Maybe even help karma hurt some people?

Cassian: Is that a good idea?

(Loud thunder crack and 'lightning' across the sky. Maeve bends down and picks up the scroll.)

(Loud thunder. Lightning. The stage goes dark except for the flashing lights of lightning. A loud voice comes over before a figure enters the stage.)

VOICE OF NIKKLAUS

The first seal has been broken. *(Nikklaus enters the stage)*

NIKKLAUS (PESTILENCE)

Now I watched when the Lamb opened one of the seven seals, and I heard one of the four living creatures say with a voice like thunder, "Come!" And I looked, and behold, a white horse! And its rider had a bow, and a crown was given to him, and he came out conquering, and to conquer.

VOICE OF KYVAL

The second seal! *(Kyval enters the stage)*

KYVAL (WAR)

When he opened the second seal, I heard the second living creature say, "Come!" And out came another horse, bright red. Its rider was permitted to take peace from the earth, so that people should slay one another, and he was given a great sword.

VOICE OF JUELIAN

The third seal has been broken! *(Juelian enters the stage)*

JUELIAN (FAMINE)

When he opened the third seal, I heard the third living creature say, "Come!" And I looked, and behold, a black horse! And its rider had a pair of scales in his hand. And I heard what seemed to be a voice in the midst of the four living creatures, saying, "A quart of wheat for a denarius, and three quarts of barley for a denarius, and do not harm the oil and wine!"

VOICE OF SAMIAL

The fourth seal has been broken. *(Samial enters the stage)*

SAMIAL (DEATH)

When he opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature say, “Come!” And I looked, and behold, a pale horse! And its rider’s name was Death, and Hades followed him. And they were given authority over a fourth of the earth, to kill with sword and with famine and with pestilence and by wild beasts of the earth.

Maeve: Okay, what the...?

Kyval: We are the four horsemen of the apocalypse.

Nikklaus: I’m pestilence.

Kyval: I’m war.

Juelian: I’m famine.

Samial: And I’m death. For your role in freeing us you will be granted immunity from us and the destruction that we may cause. *(Looking at Maeve)* As you were able to read every word you were presented with, no matter the language, we would like to invite you and your friend to join us on our rampage. Is there any house you would like to stop at first?

(Cassian and Maeve look at each other and pause before responding. They clasp hands and look back at Samial.)

Maeve: We have a list.

Cassian: When do we start?

(Curtain)

AUTHENTICITY

By: Daniel Chlebove

I awoke in a daze,
immediately, I reach for my lover lying next to me,
once in my reach, my lover's face lights up brightly.
She whispers sweet nothings, gently in my ear,
sweet nothings warning of my expiring car warranty.
She shows me pictures of people I used to know,
pictures with a guy that I no longer recognize.
As if from a dream I wake up again,
upon my second waking I find myself in my bathroom,
squeezing toothpaste on the end of a well-loved brush.
Into the sink basin falls the well-coated brush,
what lied in the mirror, drained the blood from my face,
where my face should have been, stared just a dark haze,
with sweat beads on my forehead, I awoke in a daze.

LAMOREE LANE

By: Eleanor Pitcher

A smell like the inverse of home
Something new, something cold
Homemade crêpes and
Cinnamon candles help

I remember the unease at night.
The way I hated being talked of.
The way I loved being mentioned.

Old promises under the rug
Potions of pine and pool water
Bees buzzing in the walls
The birds flutter in, out the attic

Melancholy clung under desks
Newts hid within rotting logs
A suitcase packed for dolls

I remember the mountains
I pretended to climb
The swamps we pushed through
Our tadpoles the cat drank

Old furniture blended with trees
A pile of treasure discovered
Do wolf spiders bite?

The landlord mended the fence
I cried for my destroyed secret portal
The stumps in the yard used for heat
I mourned my steps to the stars

I remember my first sadness,
throwing rocks down the hill,
watching my mountain grow.

You two never let me
Worry over more than
Portals and magic while
You discussed bills and moves

MY SAVING GRACE

By: Makenzi Walsh

I read and read and read in order to escape,
to live as someone else, in a faraway place.

Between the pages I am whom I decide,
pushing all mundane responsibilities to the side.

There I am free, and beautifully thriving,
until life finds me in ink, where I've been hiding.
I read because it keeps me surviving.

OBLIVION



Samantha Romero

DEMONS (PART TWO)

By: Daniel Chlebove

The air in the garage is cold and stale causing the hair to stand up on my arms as I step inside to turn the lights on. As I turn around towards my chair, I see Addison is already sitting on the table next to my foldable throne.

“Green William... How would I have guessed?” she asked enthusiastically and full of sarcasm. I might have even thought she was annoyed if I didn’t see the smile on her face as she said it.

“Oh boo, it’s what was on last,” I snipped at her, “I didn’t feel any need to change them but whatever,” I said plainly as I set the LEDs to purple. When I sat down, she put her feet on the armrest of the chair so that her legs were going across my lap. “Hey, hey, relax,” I teased as I pushed her legs away from me and grabbed my water bottle off the floor.

“Oh, yes, of course, my bad,” she said in that same sarcastic tone she uses regularly. She smiled at me again, and when our eyes met, we kissed. When I open my eyes, everything seemed to be more vibrant, and the world felt lighter. Addison even looked more real as if before she had been fading into the world and now seems to have grown even more solid than reality itself. “What’s on your mind William?” she asks, her words pulling my mind into fucus.

“Oh, well uhh *cough cough* I uhh *cough cough* sorry, I got lost there for a second. *cough cough*” I stammered, catching my breath.

“Woah there, are you okay?” Addison asks, her face clearly showing concern.

“Yeah, I’m fine,” I reply, “just a tickle in my throat, I think I’ll make it, sorry what did you just ask me before that?”

“I asked you what’s on your mind,” Addison repeated

“Food,” I said before Addison had even finished closing her mouth,

“I’m thinking of what food I have inside that I can make.”

“Food is always a great idea,” replied Addison,” what do you want to make?”

“Hmm. well, I have some Kraft singles so I’m thinking grilled cheese, since that’s the perfect cheese to make one with.” Addison looked ready to vomit but I stopped her before she could voice her disagreement.

“Then there’s always soup, I suppose, I know I have tomato and chicken noodle inside, but I also have hot pockets, Doritos, ice cream, and hey I’m sure I can find some other random things in there that can qualify as snacks.”

“Why not all of the above,” she laughed, “or as many as you want?”

“Well now that would not do any favors for my waistline, and besides I still have to go to bed soon,” I huffed wistfully as my mind began to wander again. After about a minute of silence my head turns toward Addison who kissed me again and time almost seemed to slow down when I looked at her.

“Hey why don’t we head inside soon,” suggested Addison, “it feels like the longer we’re out here the worse this smell gets anyway,” she giggled. Without much thought I agreed and stood up, with the sound of a few more coughs, the purple hue of the room disappears, and I stepped through the door, back into the kitchen.

“So have you decided what you’re going to cook yet?” Addison asks as I pull a pot out of the cabinet.

“Yeah, I think I decided I’m going with soup tonight,” I said as I quietly put the pot on the counter. After taking a brief pause to decide whether to grab the tomato or chicken noodle from the fridge, I separated the two pack of tomato soup and poured one of the containers into the pot.

“That smells amazing!” Addison beamed once the pot began to simmer on the stove, “is it going to be ready soon?”

“Yeah, just give it a minute, I don’t even have a bowl out yet,” I laughed as I sprinkled in a bit of dried basil. I began to reach for a bowl, but before I could even touch it my stomach let out a low rumble.

“Well, it sounds to me like your own stomach doesn’t want to give you a minute,” Addison said with a chuckle. Quickly after, I put the bowl down and poured the soup into it, having all the while being very careful to not overfill the bowl or spill it as I carried it to the kitchen table where I sat down to eat.

Addison was right, it was very good soup. So good in fact, that my body went into autopilot after the first spoonful. I ate spoon after spoon until I caught myself scraping the last of the soup out of the bottom of the bowl and I looked up wondering where all my soup had gone and why my stomach began to ache.

After washing the bowl and pot in the sink I picked up the empty soup container to throw it away, but I froze before turning away from the trash can. My eyes widened as if they’d been clamped open when I accidentally saw the nutrition label for the soup I had just eaten. “Six servings per container?!” I whispered in disbelief.

The wind made a sharp whistling sound as it blew through the barren tree branches outside as I turned around to tell Addison of the mistake I had made, but she wasn’t there. Instead, I saw another figure moving out of the bathroom in the unlit hallway behind me. Almost as if my eyes were coming into focus, the figure that materialized from the doorway, I could now tell was Shane who was beckoning me towards the bathroom.

As I stepped in to join him, I turned to face the mirror and only when I saw the reflection of my bloodshot eyes, did they begin to feel dry or itchy. As I stood at the sink taking out my contacts, I told Shane about my blunder in the kitchen as he closely examined himself in the mirror. Shane has pale blue eyes which sit just above the bags that seem to always linger on his face as if he never sleeps. His dark messy hair, which combined with his short stature and pale skin gives him an almost sickly look.

"So how much did you actually wind-up eating?" Shane asked, "you know, not that you really need the extra calories."

"Yeah geez, thanks so much, I know," I said hollowly, and after a pause I continue "but if you really must know I ate six servings of tomato soup."

"You had six servings," he said slowly as if needing extra time to be able to process each word. "You know I don't feel bad for you," he said as my face began to grow to match the red color of the soup occupying my guts. "You're getting fat and I don't feel bad for you, Will. Especially when you were just going to go to bed, and then Addison asks you to hang out for a while and the next thing you know, you're eating enough food to feed a family of six."

"Hey, don't bring her into this, it's not like she made me do anything," I snapped. Even as I said it, I knew he wasn't entirely wrong, and almost as if queued by the doubt in my mind, I heard another familiar voice behind me.

“Hey, don’t bring her into this, it’s not like she made me do anything,” I snapped. Even as I said it, I knew he wasn’t entirely wrong, and almost as if queued by the doubt in my mind, I heard another familiar voice behind me.

“Obviously I didn’t,” snapped Addison who was now standing in the doorway to the bathroom. “I just asked if he was going to bed yet, everything after that was completely his own free will starting when he said yes.”

“Oh yeah, like there aren’t any conceivable ways you could be influencing him,” replied Shane with a rather exaggerated eye roll.

“Oh please, why are you on him over this anyway?” Addison asked with some attitude. “He liked the soup, and besides if he really regrets eating it that much, he can undo it, the toilet is right there.”

“What?” said Shane somewhat stunned. “Are you suggesting…”

“Or he could just pay for it in cardio tomorrow,” She offered with a devious smile before Shane could even finish his sentence.

“Or how about he just doesn’t eat until dinner tomorrow?” Shane said hopefully after a pause.
“Enough! Both of you!” I shouted. Unfortunately, it seemed as though neither wanted to, or cared to listen as they both went on bickering as I began to brush my teeth.

The sound of their back and forth made me wish my ears could just be ripped from my head so I no longer had to listen to it as I made my way to my bedroom. As I climbed into bed, Addison and Shane stood bickering still at the other end. Out of sheer frustration I throw the covers over my face and the sounds of their voices began to fade out until eventually they were gone, and I closed my eyes and fell asleep.

SERENITY



Samantha Romero

A Dog's Point of View



Madelyn Swarthout

GARY

By: Jason Miller

Notes:

Characters can be played by actors of any gender or gender-expression.

A "//" signifies an overlap in lines.

Setting: *A psychiatry office*

At rise: Dr. Milne waits for a response from Aiden, a new patient. Doctor and patient are silent for a moment. Dr. Milne looks back at their notes, adjusts their glasses, waits. Aiden stares at them, face blank. Another moment passes and Dr. Milne searches their notes and then clears their throat before starting another line of questioning.

Dr. Milne: Let's maybe forget that for a moment. Tell me instead about your living arrangement.

Aiden: The house is a mess.

Dr. Milne: Why is that?

Aiden: ....

Dr. Milne: A lot of times, people who are in crisis find it hard //

Aiden: I'm not "in crisis."

Dr. Milne: I apologize. You said...well, the nature of your problem //

Aiden: Problem. You said it. Problem, not crisis.

Dr. Milne: Well, what you've described to me, the words you used, indicate a serious issue.

Aiden: It's not a serious issue.

(Dr. Milne looks back at their notes.)

Dr. Milne: You claim that your //

Aiden: My bear talks to me. SO what? Plenty of people have //

Dr. Milne: Typically, when we progress out of childhood //

Aiden: You don't understand.

Dr. Milne: Okay. Maybe I've missed something.

(Dr, Milne looks down at their notes again.)

Aiden: It's not the talking that's the problem. It's his yelling. It's his tone.

Dr. Milne: His tone.

Aiden: YES, HIS TONE! *(Collects themselves.)* I'm sorry. See, though. This is what he's doing to me. He yells at me; I yell at you. *(Thinks about it.)* It's making it hard for me to have other relationships.

Dr. Milne: So, you do want to have other relationships?

Aiden: I know you want me to say "yes." But, honestly, I'm not sure. I mean people can be so… difficult. Sure, he yells, but he's grumpy. When you're grumpy, you yell. Grumpy I can deal with. It's all the other B.S. that makes me want to hide under a rock. He doesn't try to tell me about his day. He knows I couldn't care less, and neither does he, and that works.

(Dr. Milne sits quietly for a moment, taking it all in, and then scribbles a few notes.)

Aiden: I think maybe I just needed to get that out.

Dr. Milne *(scribbling notes and then stops):* Excuse me?

Aiden: Yeah, I think I'm good.

Dr. Milne: You're good?

Aiden: Yup.

Dr. Milne: I think perhaps we should discuss the … reality of the situation.

Aiden: I don't think that would help much.

Dr. Milne: You don't? Why not?

Aiden: Reality is malleable, isn't it? I mean, our lives, mine and yours, are very different. We live in different houses, we have different jobs, we think differently about talking to bears //

Dr. Milne: Wait, wait, wait.

Aiden: What?

Dr. Milne: I'm not concerned about you talking to the bear. I talk to my plants. People sing in the car, the shower. Being vocal is a very normal thing, even if there is no-one there to hear it. It's the fact that the bear talks to you. That's where my concern lies.

Aiden: But you're not concerned about his tone?

Dr. Milne: Well, yes, that too. What kind of self-care do you practice?

Aiden: I'm not sure I understand.

Dr. Milne: Have you ever been prescribed any medications?

Aiden: Oh. Um. Amoxicillin once. I had this rash, it's still kind of…

(Aiden moves to lift their shirt to show Dr. Milne their rash.)

Dr. Milne *(gesturing for Aiden to lower their shirt)*: I mean an anti-depressant, or an anti-anxiety agent.

Aiden: How would that help a rash?

Dr. Milne: Have you ever been hospitalized?

Aiden: Tonsillectomy, third grade.

Dr. Milne: Okay. I'm going to put another appointment in the books for us.

Aiden: Thanks, but I'm good.

Dr. Milne: I beg your pardon?

Aiden: I think I figured out what I needed to figure out.

Dr. Milne: All right. Uhm. If you have any //

(A loud, sudden noise off stage, like a bookshelf falling over, interrupts Dr. Milne. It is followed by a quick shuffling.)

(A black bear, Gary, appears. He enters on all fours but then rears up on his hind legs.)

Gary: GET A MOVE ON! Let's go! I'm doubled parked.

(Gary retreats, growling.)

(Dr. Milne stares after him, speechless.)

Aiden: I've just … I've just got to say something to him about it. Thanks, doc.

(Aiden rises and turns, quickly leaving the office after Gary.)

Aiden *(shouting):* GARY! Gary! We need to talk about your tone. Hey! HEY! Don't you growl at me.

(Lights fades on Dr. Milne.)

(CURTAIN.)

NEW HAMPSHIRE SKIES



Samantha Lorito

Reaper's Limerick

By: Daniel Chlebove

I watched as you walked through the park,
silently I wait, lurking in the dark.
And just as I grin,
my knife breaks your skin,
a death with no scream – my hallmark.

Come Home



Samantha Romero

UGLY TRUTH

By Makenzi Walsh

Denying what happened protects me from the pain.
Anger holds me hostage, I lie awake in restrain.
Guilt invokes tears without my permission.
Depression takes aim lighting my ammunition.
Accepting my new reality, I'll never be the same.

HOPEFUL PRAYERS



Samantha Romero

UNTITLED

By: Matthew McCaffery

Positivity and happiness is a choice,
As is what you do with your voice,
Why complain about your obligations,
When you can make the best of your situation,
Looking forward at the unknown and exciting possibilities,
Rather than wallowing in your past liabilities,
No matter your current conundrum,
Remember that its more fun to have fun.

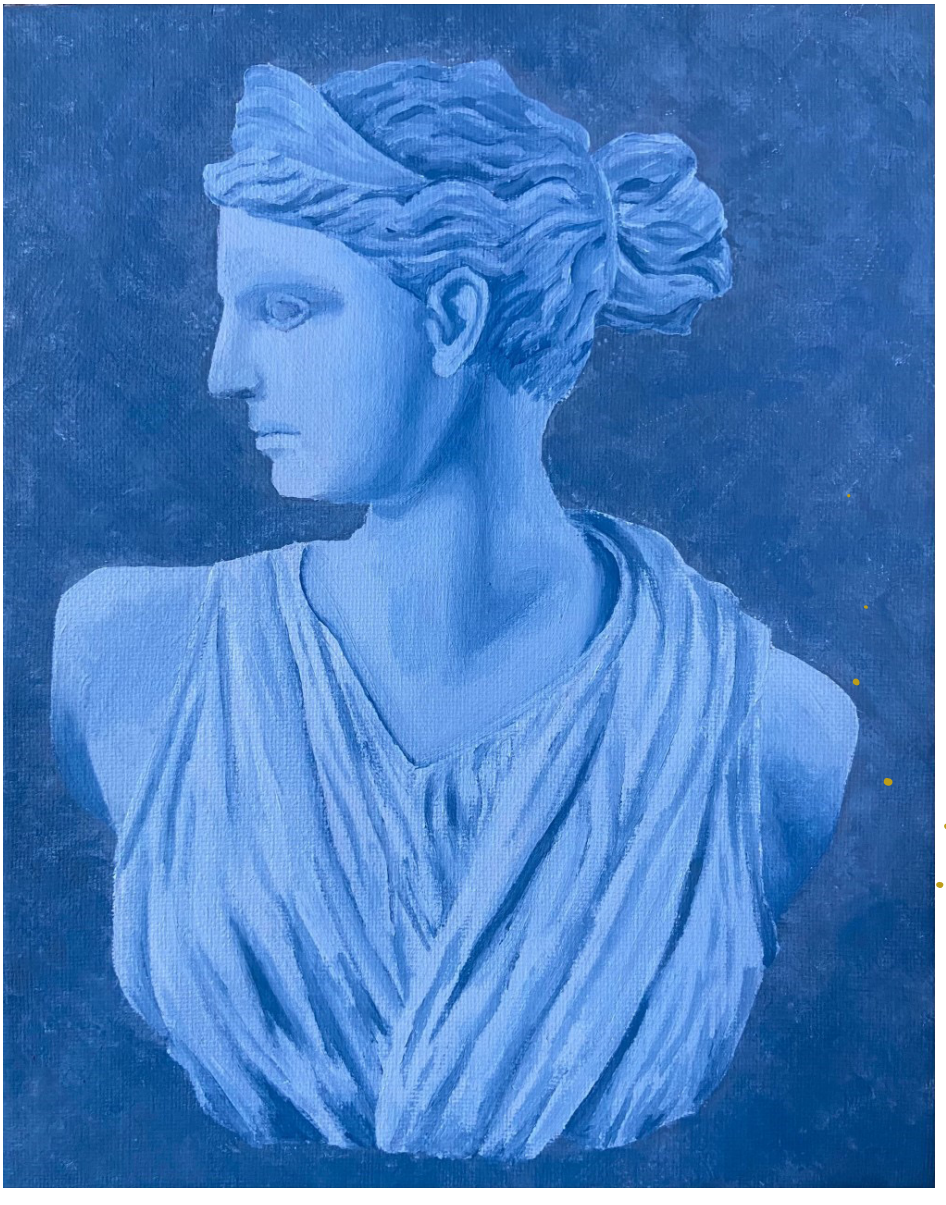
ST. LUCIA PITONS



Nicole Zurawski

DIANA

1ST PLACE



Avery Fortuner

NUMBER

By: Gina Svoboda

From the second we're born (literally) numbers work their way into our world. At our launch into life, the time of birth is announced followed by a slew of numbers thrown at our unprocessing little brains; weight, length, ten fingers, ten toes, two eyes and one nose. From the moment we become a part of the human race until our last breath, numbers hurl themselves at us (sometimes in some sneaky ways!) whether or not we want them in our life.

Growing up, Saturday mornings were jam packed with a variety of cartoons; *Pink Panther, Bugs Bunny/Road Runner, Speed Racer, The Smurfs*; it was animated bliss. Sandwiched between the episodes was *Schoolhouse Rock,* and while best known for *Conjunction Junction*, my personal favorite has always been *Three is a Magic Number*. While the tune is quite catchy, there is something so cool about the number three. It has moxie and power. It's a beginning, middle and end. Three is morning, noon and night and breakfast lunch and dinner. In doing a Google search under "number three in math" a whole lot of stuff comes up, giving a little relief to the fact that I'm not the only three enthusiasts out there.

When learning multiplication, nines blew my mind. Holding both hands in front of you, you could work the nines, digit by digit, 9x1 (put down one finger) = 9! I guess my excitement over this might seem a little odd, but this was in pre-tech times. However, several decades later I still remember it. And, best of all, nine breaks down to...three!

Numbers being simple and uncomplicated, started showing glimpses of another, dark and sinister side. Three can be a triangle, or various lines. It could be multiplied but not always divided. It's in theories, formulas, measurements. It's even in recipes! This took something away from the simplicity of the numbers I loved. And then, letters became involved in math and the days of gleefully working multipliers of nines on my ten fingers were a long-lost memory.

When I was in the Army, one of my jobs was to drive the payroll ledgers from each Company in our Battalion to the Brigade. The payroll duty was known as Sergeant Death, fitting for a Vietnam Ranger who was 6'7" and had a deep, deep, baritone voice that was made to intimidate an Army Private, like me. His ledgers were works of art. Rows upon rows of mostly black numbers, with some red and an occasional green marking. Every number in a perfect line with the one above it. His books were meticulous. Sgt. Death loved numbers and the reason he was known as Sgt. Death is because, as he said, "death and numbers were the only truths in life." From the second we are born until our last breath, numbers, and all their many faces, are an integral part of our functioning lives.

I've appreciated the order of a perfectly balanced checkbook. I danced for years using different forms of math without even realizing it. I've read maps and used a compass, fired guns, baked cakes, cut grass, and made and mounted shelves. I've suffered the agony of processing a weekly payroll (for hundreds of employees) and being off by a fraction of an amount... all are forms of math, and the accompanying numbers are always there, proudly showing their importance in the manipulation that provides the all-important answer.

Manipulations aside, the numbers are always true and, in the end, one plus one will always equal two. There is an interesting flow in formulas and theories, and I can see how the order to the problems and solutions can really trip someone's trigger. However, my desire for the simplicity of 3 and showing how it's a magic number (without any letters!) seems to far outweigh my ability (and desire!) to conquer a mathematical formula.

Careful Who You Sharpen

By: Eleanor Pitcher

In a swarming sea
I sought to build
From a body and bones
To a girl of worth

So gentle my words
So faint my heart
So thick the fog
Bathing my brain

I was too busy knitting a scarf of
benefit of the doubt yarn
To see the iron daggers
forged in kind words

Intent so simple
Betrayal so complex
Daggers so sharp
Innocence so thick

How gradual it had to be
For me to wake up one day
With a sworn enemy
And a lifelong battle

Advances in weaponry
And medicine while
I fought, bleed, and screamed
For the truth

But it dangled
like a child's tooth
too stubborn
to come forward

The broken pieces
You never saw
A cracked wooden table
sealed with gold

EYE OF THE BEHOLDEN



By: Gina Svoboda

Cecilia heard the chimes ringing, muffled by distance but detectable to her sensitive ears. She tried to stretch the sleep away but the meager heat from the low fire barely touched her body, leaving her tensed up from the cold. She quickly curled up and pressed next to Laz, hoping for a little body heat, and possibly some more sleep, before her daily hunt began. It was not so unappealing on the other side of the gate anymore; the air did not hurt when it moved, the ground felt nicer on her feet. But mostly, she could smell in the air the new blood that the light and warmth brought.

The chimes stopped and she heard slight movement from the Otherone above. They lived together in the same unit. They looked completely different and spoke different languages. The Otherone was something of a slave in the Safespace. While not always to her liking, the substantial bits and gruel, provided by the Otherone, were a comfort on days when the hunt went poorly.

Laz's deep breathing made Cecilia think he was still asleep, but with a groan and a yawn he rolled away from her and stood up, blinking his eye awake in the dim light. After a little shake and stretch, he sat down beside the sleeping mat, and seemed to contemplate laying back down.

As he was getting older, it seemed to take him more time to decide on things. Laz was at the unit when she arrived and seemed to be the Master and seemed to be able to control the Otherone.

He was solid, jovial, kind, and caring but in his younger days, he was wicked tough, leading the hunt and fighting many battles with Out-There creatures. His missing right eye was a relic to emphasize this fact. While he enjoyed the hunt, his pleasure seemed to come from the aggravation factor; the antagonizing moments dragging on as he teased with the hunted, smacking them about, letting them run just so far be-fore trapping them, staring them down, licking his lips in anticipation. Cecilia did not have the patience to deal with his games and usually snatched the hunted from him to appease her need for fresh flesh.

With the second set of chimes, Cecilia recognized the sounds of the Otherone arising. She could smell the substantial bits and gruel. Laz's stomach rumbles made the decision for him to awaken. He made his way above to feed. She heard the Otherone make start-sounds to Laz. She also heard the footsteps of the young one, another Fe, and a hin-derance to Cecilia. She saw the young one as a non-hunter and there-fore, had little purpose in Cecilia's ways.

Curled up and finally warm on the mat, the pulse of hunger pulled her body out of the half-asleep state she was in and sent her above to wait for the opening of the gate. Still a bit angry that the gate was closed early from the be-fore, she announced her displeasure to the Otherone in her native tongue and ordered the gate open. The squeaking of metal on metal announced the opening and she was now free to roam. She hoped for a successful hunt. The Otherone was strange but protected Cecilia. When she could, and when it felt right, Cecilia liked to share her hunt…

***

Nadine gently awoke to the chimes of “Slow-Rise” on her iPhone. Reaching over she hit the snooze and, with most of her still under the down comforter, she stretched in the early spring morning. She left the window wide open last night, and the furnace pilot-light barely took the chill off the air. “Oops, my bad” she thought as she reached up and closed the window. She pulled her arm back under the covers and around her kitten, Josie. Looking out the window she thought about the winter that had just passed. It wasn’t too snowy, but it was extremely windy with lots of freezing rain and sleet. Her cat, Cecilia, who could be a pest with going outside in all kinds of weather, had her ginger fur wind-blown and tangled with ice bits, and cinders stuck in her paws for most of the past few months. As the sun came up, the birds of spring sang their songs of the morning.

The chimes of the snooze alarm got her out of bed to start the day, getting a meow of annoyance from the kitten she recently found herself with. Nadine gave her a pat and put the blanket back over little Josie. Usually, Laz was also somewhere in the blankets, “he must be down by the furnace with Cecilia” she thought as she walked to her kitchen to get them fed. It was chilly in the house. As she peeked down the steps to the basement, she saw Laz and Cecilia snuggled next to each other on the cushions and blankets that were fashioned into a cushy little place for them to sleep in the warmth from the furnace.

The two cats looked so sweet cuddled up together and Nadine thought about how they wound up becoming her pets. Laz had been in residence the longest and showed up missing an eye.

Most of his teeth had to be pulled but he still had one snaggle tooth that gave him a comical edge. Thinking it was because he was grateful for the save, he was a dedicated pet and pleasant to have around.

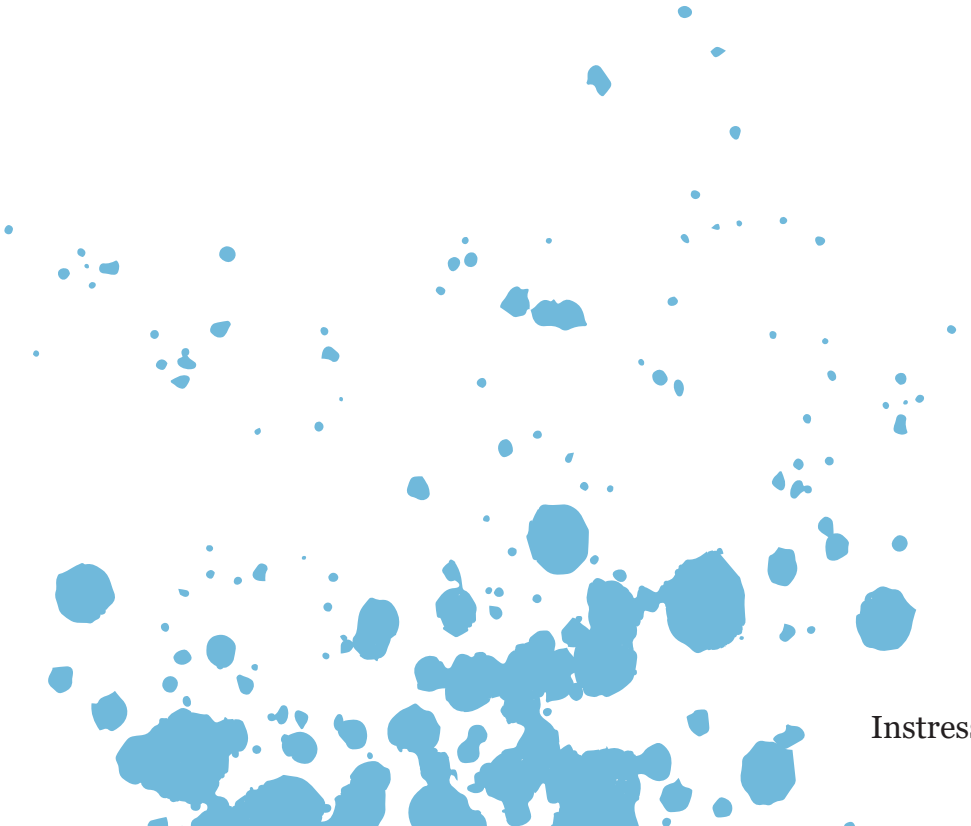
She noticed him slowing down a bit, but that was ok, he was still a sweet, charming, and now slightly chubby, happy cat. Cecilia lived in the wild for 4 months and was a bit feral. She never lost her fondness for prey and often decorated the front walk with the fruits of her labor. Josie was found on the front porch and was still figuring her place in the house. She wished Cecilia would be a little nicer to the kitten. She seemed to find extreme pleasure in tormenting the little one. While Nadine was concerned for the kitten, she also thought that one day Josie could turn around, return the favor and beat the kaboodles out of the older, ginger-colored, girl cat.

Nadine opened cans of cat food and put some on a little plate for each cat. As she did every morning, she wished them a good morning and asked if they were ready for breakfast, finishing the cat-chat with a “yay!” Cecilia was always fussy and often the baby food that was placed out for her was left behind in favor of a mouse, chipmunk, bird, or some other critter that she had hunted. As if she could read her thoughts, Nadine heard Cecilia meowing by the front door, one of many times she would go in and out during the day. Spying a critter of some sort in the yard the night before, at one o’clock in the morning, she was howling to be let out. Nadine chose to ignore her cat sounds in favor of sleep, knowing she’d face serious cattitude from Cecilia in the morning. As she turned the inside lock and slowly opened the heavy, metal door, it let out a grating squeak, seeming to scream out for a shot of WD40.

Cecilia quickly returned with a “gift” in her mouth. Laz ran to the door to go out and share the excitement.

His lack of teeth prevented him from doing any damage, but Nadine thought of her sweet boy as almost sadistic as he teased and antagonized the captured critter in his incarnate, cat way.

As she watched Cecilia snatch the rodent from Laz and run under the pine tree, Nadine let out a little breath of relief. As much as the efforts were appreciated, she really was not fond of cleaning up the dead rodents brought as a gift from her cat.



Buddy's Day Off



John Marianacci

PANDORA

By: Vivian Wright

I neatly fold and tuck it all away
into a porcelain box made long ago.

Unsavory tastes, unsettling dismay
delicately placed so they will not break.

Then I don my siren display,
a facade that tricks the mirror too.

Temptation, nay, thirst, leads them astray
to that porcelain box I've so neatly tucked away.

Fleas garnish their hands from garments
unwashed, uncleansed like all that lay
dormant, waiting to rot. Out spills
the dredges not meant for mortal
eyes. Horrors so wretched,
so grotesque,
never could they be
made by a siren as wicked as me.

Soon does the pity turn to disgust.
Soon does the love turn to dust.

I collect the tears they shed
over who they once knew
and neatly add it to my porcelain box.

DAYBREAK

By: Chase Ross

Although me hands are bound,
I can see the water withheld that I desire so,
spilling as I lay, forever tethered
to this god forsaken stone.
drip
drip
drip
Although my hands are bound,
I can hear venom dripping from a serpent's scythes,
sliding through the stale air
and finding a target within my eyes.
drip
drip
drip
Although my hands are bound,
I am not aware of what I've done.
I only wish, for one more time,
I could see your golden chariot pull the sun.
drip
drip
drip

UNSPOILED ICELAND



Paul Schields

911

By: Maddelynn Griscavage



Characters:
Dad: 40-year-old (Male)
Abby: 5-year-old (Daughter to Mom and Dad)
Mom: 38-year-old (Female)
Operator 1: 38-year-old (Female Mom)
Operator 2: 30-year-old (Male)

Scene I

(We open in a small suburban household in a small town in the middle of farmland. 5-year-old Abby is super excited to start her first day of kindergarten in the morning.)

Dad: Abby, Come say goodbye to your mom.

Mom: Honey, she doesn't need to say goodbye to me. I'll be back in the morning.

Dad: Yeah, but you know how she is. She would want to see you before you leave.

(Abby enters the room holding a doll and runs over to her dad as he picks her up.)

Dad: Say goodbye to your mom before she leaves.

Abby: Dad, she leaves every night *(Abby pauses and looks down at her doll.)* Jill and I need to finish playing.

Dad: I know but hun you never know what could happen just go give her a hug and say bye for me.

Mom: You know if she doesn't want to say goodbye, she doesn't have to…you shouldn't have to coax her to talk to her mother.

Dad: Calm down she's still young she doesn't understand.

Mom: Sure, she doesn't.

(Abby runs up to her mom gives her a quick hug and scurries back off to her toys.)

Mom: See she doesn't even care about me.

Dad: Honey that's not true, she's young she doesn't understand.

Mom: Well, she has no problems showing that she loves you.

Dad: It's not my fault I spend all day with her.

Mom: Actually, it kinda is cause ya know, someone around here needs to work so we can…*(says sarcastically)* I don't know survive?

Dad: You know I got laid off my job, right? Like I didn't choose to not work I didn't really have a choice in the matter. Plus, someone has to parent Abby because we all know it's not gonna be you.

Mom *(walking into the kitchen):* What the hell is that supposed to mean, I don't parent my only child? Because that's a bunch of shit and you know it!

Dad: All I'm saying is, it probably confuses her, you sleep all day and then leave all night for work.

Mom: You know when we only have one income because one of us can't keep a job you tend to take what you can get.

(Mom returns from the kitchen.)

Mom: I can't fight about this anymore because if I'm late to work we could end up being a zero-income family.

Dad: Whatever just make sure you get back because Abby starts kindergarten tomorrow and she doesn't want you to miss it.

Mom: I'm sure she really cares.

(Mom exits the house.)

(Dad goes into the playroom and sits next to his daughter. He grabs a doll and begins playing with her.)

Abby: Daddy, why does Mommy always leave at night.

Dad: Well, your mother has a very important job helping people.

Abby: I know dad but how?

Dad: Well do you know the number we call when we need help?

Abby: 911?

Dad: Very good. Your mom answers all those calls and sends people the help they need

Abby: So, kinda like a superhero?

Dad: Kind of, but your mom she doesn't go and help the people she just talks to them until someone else gets there.

Abby: So, if she helps people all the time why is she never in a happy mood?

Dad: I wouldn't say she is never in a happy mood, but her job is very hard.

Abby: I just wish she was around more.

Dad: I know squirt, but your mom loves you very much I promise.

(Abby and Dad exit.)

Scene II

(Abby and Dad are sitting in the kitchen. Abby is at the kitchen table playing with her doll as Dad cleans up the kitchen from dinner.)

Dad: Are you excited for school tomorrow peanut?

Abby (not looking up from her doll): Eh… Daddy can I take Jill with me to school.

Dad: Hun you don't want to take your doll to school.

Abby: But Dad, Jill is my only friend.

Dad: Trust me you will meet so many friends tomorrow.

Abby: You think?

Dad: I know.

(Dad gets up and grabs his phone not before grabbing his chest and taking a second to start walking. Abby continues playing with her dolls but notices her dad dialing the phone.)

Abby: Who is you calling?

(Dad doesn't answer. He looks over at his daughter, grabs his chest and collapses on the kitchen floor. Abby walks over to her dad, doll in hand and hears a noise coming from the phone. She looks at the phone and sees 911 on the screen as a voice is speaking.)

Abby *(Abby picks up the phone.)*: Hello?

Operator: Hello, can you hear me?

Abby: Hi, my daddy can't talk right now he is taking a nap.

Operator: Hi sweetie can you tell me where your dad is taking a nap at?

Abby: On the kitchen floor.

Operator: Can you try to wake your dad up for me?

Abby *(Tapping her dad on the shoulder):* Daddy…DADDY! He's not answering.

Operator: Ok honey do you know your address?

Abby: What is an address?

Operator: Like where do you live sweetie? Do you know? Or do you live by a specific store or something, anything that you can remember?

Abby: I uhhhh, I live in a big white house with a cornfield in the back yard.

Operator: Anything else you can remember? (*Noises of operator typing on the computer.)*

Abby *(Abby begins to cry.)*: Are you going to help my Daddy?

Operator: I am working on it right now sweetheart.

(The operator yells for one of their co-workers.)

Operator 2: What's up?

Operator *(Mutes the call)*: I have this little girl on the phone and her Dad collapsed but I can't freaking track the call.

Operator 2: Let me take a look.

Operator *(Unmutes the call)*: How old are you honey?

Abby: I am five years old.

Operator: Well since you're such a big girl do you think you can help me with something important?

Abby: I uhh, I can try.

Operator: Can you go over to your Dad for me and see if you can feel him breathing.

Abby: I don't know how to do that.

Operator: Just put your hand in front of his nose and see if you feel any air.

Abby: OK. I.. I can feel it.

Operator: That's good sweetie.

Abby: I'm scared, are you gonna help my Daddy?

Operator: I'm gonna try honey *(operator mutes the call, looks to co-worker.)* how are we coming with that location?

Operator 2: Just one more sec… and I got it. I'll send the location to the paramedics. Stay on the phone with the little girl.

Operator *(unmutes the phone):* Sweetheart are you still there?

Abby: I'm here.

Operator: Ok honey the people that can help your Dad are on the way. Can you tell me if your front door is locked.

Abby: Ummm… I don't know I can check.

Operator: Can you go do that for me? Take the phone with you I'll be on the phone the entire time.

Abby: Ok.

(Abby picks up the cell phone and walks over to the door, reaches above her head, and feels the doorknob.)

Abby: Its locked.

Operator: Ok, do you know how to unlock it?

Abby: Yes, but my Daddy says that I'm not supposed to touch the lock or open the door because I can get hurt.

Operator: Ok, but just this one time can you please unlock the door so the people can come help your Dad?

Abby: Uhhhh… I guess so.

(Abby unlocks the door opens it and looks outside.)

Operator: Ok great now can you please go back over to your Daddy?

Abby *(runs back over to her dad and sits on the floor next to him.)*: Excuse me?

Operator: Yes hun?

Abby: Can you please hurry up, I'm scared my Dad is not going to wake up… and I need him to take me to my first day of school tomorrow.

Operator: I promise help is on the way. Now I want you to know a lot of people are going to come into your house to help your Dad. I need you to stay out of their way so they can help.

Abby: Can you stay on the phone with me when they get here?

Operator: I sure can.

Abby *(The girl can begin to hear sirens in the distance.):* I think I can hear the cops… did I do something wrong?

Operator: No don't worry hun that's the help coming.

Abby: It's getting louder.

Operator: Ok sweetie, can you do me a favor?

Abby: I can try.

Operator: Can you please step away from your dad so the nice people can help?

Abby: Yeah, uhhh just let me grab Jill.

Operator: Who's Jill?

Abby: My doll she's my very best friend.

Operator *(gasps)*: Abby?

Abby: How do you know my name?

Operator *(operator begins to cry)*: Abby honey, It's mommy…

(Curtain closes)

IMPLICATIONS

By Vivian Wright



Age ten: I bought a bra.
A training bra, white and double-lined.
Made to conceal the lumps my mother called breasts.
It was starkly clean against the rusted yellow lockers
and carried the stench of disgust home.

Age twelve: I bought their skirts.
Pencil khaki skirts with shorts sewn in.
Made to reveal their long model legs,
it revealed my thighs melting onto metal chairs,
and the dirty calves my mother forbade me to shave.

Age fourteen: I bought a dress.
Knee-length, striped, and tight all over.
Made to hug each curve, each fold of skin.
It called the cars of cigarette-tinged men to slow,
and gave them my mother-given hips.

Age 19: I bought a sweatshirt.
Orange with butterflies, and oversized.
Made to be comfortable. Made for me.
Its soft fleece soothes the tightness of the past
and lets me them forget what is underneath.

MEMORY NEVER DIES

By: Makenzi Walsh

You walked inside and already felt comfort,
the scent of vanilla is inviting.
The tears still come despite your best effort
as memories return, your loved ones once smiling.
Nostalgia takes root pulling at the heartstrings,
because you once again want to feel at home.
Her quilt, her house shoes, it's the little things
you hold dear to keep you from feeling alone.
The photos on the walls speak as you pass
into the kitchen where you used to find her.
Now her presence you only see framed in glass,
one whole year, the pain will soon settle, I'm sure.
Continue to heal it will get better,
I do promise, you will not forget her.

URBAN DAYDREAM



Rebecca Steinberger

PANS OUT

By: Aubree Zimmerman

Characters:
Ramsay: male, late 20's
Paula: female, just turned 21
Dawn: female, late 30's

Setting: *a small house in a small town*
(Open on the inside of a small, messy house, PUALA, a young woman, wearing yesterday's clothes. She reaches into her fridge for a can of beer, taking a second one out of habit before pausing. One she opens. Fiddles with the can tab until it comes off. The doorbell rings suddenly, startling her. She goes to open the door. Standing is RAMSAY, a well-groomed man in his late twenties, wearing a polo shirt.)

Ramsay: Hello. You're new to the neighborhood, aren't you?

Paula: Unfortunately.

Ramsay: My name is Ramsay; I live a few streets down on Cairo Street. It's good to meet you.

(He notices the can.)

Ramsay: I won't keep you too long, but if you have a few minutes today, I'd love to introduce you to PanOut, our local kitchenware and appliances provider. We help you make the best of you kitchen space, cooking time, and money.

Paula: Thanks but cooking for one's not too hard.

Ramsay: Maybe not. But cooking is good for the heart, especially with other people. It could get you started around here.

Paula: Very kind of you, but I don't think that can help me. You can find better business elsewhere. Good luck.

(She puts a hand on the door to close it. Ramsay notices she's wearing a ring.)

Ramsay: Cooking for one?

(Beat.)

Paula *(quieter):* I am now.

Ramsay: I'm sorry. I didn't mean to pry. You just seem…awfully lonely here.

Paula: It is. Cooking is lonely. Drinking is lonely.

Ramsay: I know. I'm sorry, Ignore my speech, from one neighbor to another, would you mind some company? Just to talk to, if it helps.

Paula: …I wouldn't mind. I'm Paula, by the way.

(She opens the door. They go inside. He watches her almost stumble.)

Paula: What was the name of the business? PanOut? I like it.

Ramsay: It definitely panned out as well as I hoped.

Paula: You came up with it yourself?

Ramsay: You butter believe it.

(Paula laughs. He doesn't. they come to the kitchen. She sits at the table, a little out of it. Ramsay picks up a pan on the stove.)

Ramsay: A paella pan?

Paula: Mhm. Wedding gift from my dad. You seriously do all the kitchen stuff for a living?

Ramsay: Of course. I've been told my cooking is to die for. I could tell you the best way to use any tool you have.

Paula: Try then.

(Ramsay looks over her kitchen. He picks up a heavy cast-iron frying pan.)

Ramsay: This would be excellent for pan-seared lamb. There's no shortage of them around here, it's very popular at family dinners and gatherings.

Paula *(hopeful):* You think I can make friends around here?

Ramsay: Of course, you can.

Paula: I could set up a cookout with the neighbors? Get to know people?

(Ramsay turns, seeing she's gazing out the window at the next house.)

Ramsay: Sounds like a good plan. You'd make an excellent host.

(Without warning, Ramsay hits Paula in the back of the head with the heavy pan. On impact, the lights snap out. Darkness.)

Ramsay (in silence, mocking): Seems your goose is cooked.

(Sun rises the next morning; stage lights fade on. The cleaner Dawn walks in, sees Ramsay cooking on the stove.)

Dawn: Oh, hello. Haven't seen you around. Oh, and it smells lovely in here! Say, has Paula finally started getting out? Having someone in her life should do her good.

Ramsay: I hope it will lift her spirits. The least I can do is make her a nice meal.

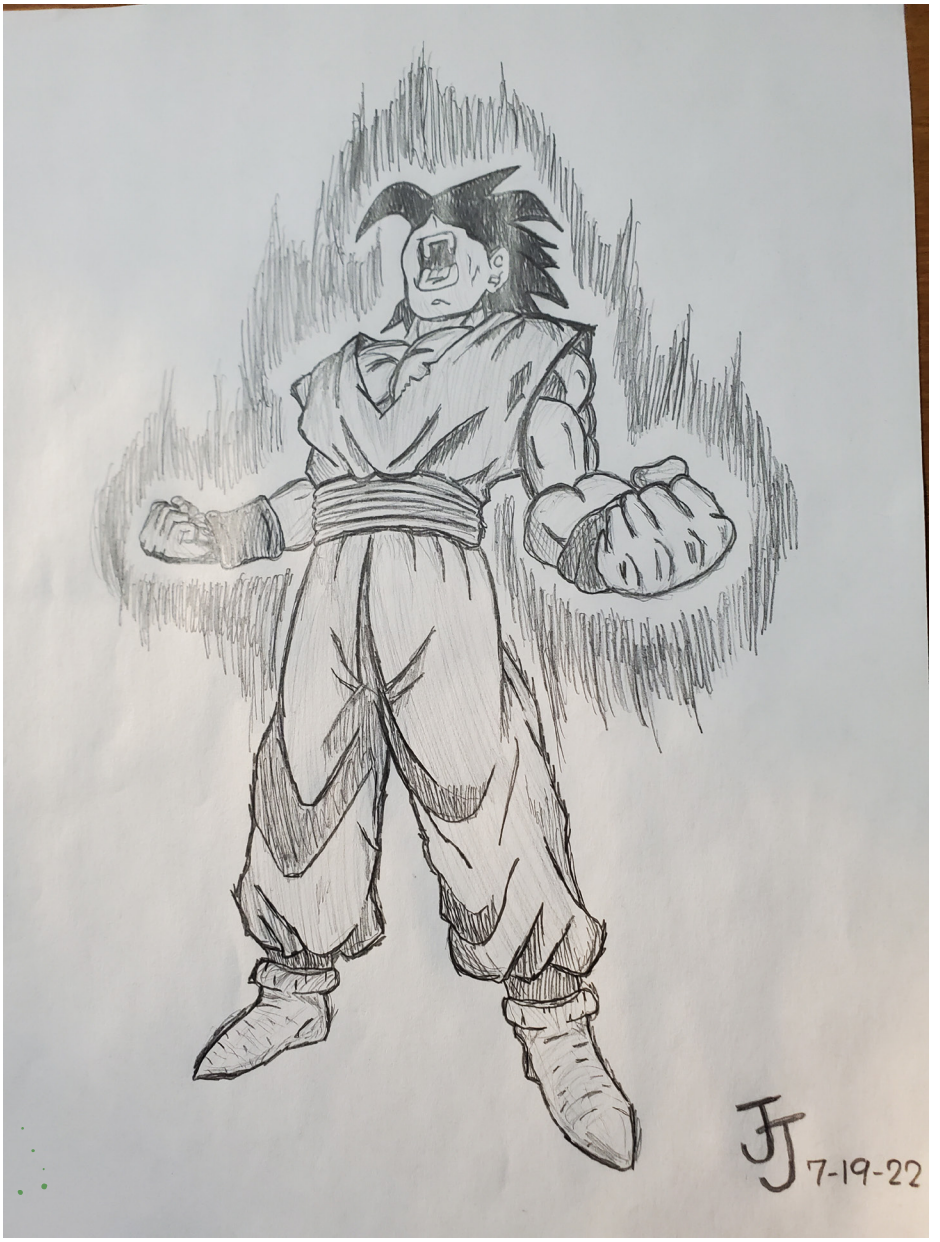
Dawn: What are you making?

(Beat. Ramsay smiles at her.)

Ramsay: It's shepherd's pie. Made with meat from a lamb.

(Curtain)

Gohan's Rage
The Day of Fate



John Marianacci

THE SCREW IN THE HINGE OF YOUR GLASSES-

By: John Marianacci

Like a cable on a bridge,
I hold your perception of the world together.
I am the metallic knight,
That allows you to see another day.

DAILY DOODLES



John Marianacci

THE UNDERCLASS

By: Vivian Wright

Oh Lord, My God, save me, please,
from bathing in the spoils of crime.
Pray, cure me from humanity's disease.

Each faceless monarch does cruelly tease,
laughing at the broken rungs I climb.
Oh Lord, My God, save me, please.

"Dance, dance, my monkeys!
So gaunt, your body, oh how sublime."
Pray, cure me from humanity's disease.

They could not bear to rest among fleas,
like I have endured for all of time.
Oh Lord, My God, save me please.

Never will our workload ease;
Cruel torture of our overlord's design.
Pray, cure me from humanity's disease.

How low we must be to beg for thee,
To offer our souls a merciful dime.
Oh Lord, My God, save us, please.
Pray, cure us from humanity's disease.

BEAUTIFUL DAY ON THE BOAT



Nicole Zurawski

OFF THE RAILS

By: John Marianacci



Characters:
CEO of Major Railroad Corporation: Cornelius C. Carnegie III
Dispatcher at the time of the accident: *will not receive name*
Railroad Union Workers Representative: Fred Green

Setting: *Corporate Office of Northern York Railroad*
(Curtains open to an office, nearly at the top of a massive building, in New York state. It is the corporate office of Northern York Railroad. The audience sees Cornelius C. Carnegie III, an older and distinguished looking gentleman who is the CEO of Northern York Railroad, sitting at the head of a large dark oak desk. Across from him a railroad dispatcher paces back and forth, nervously.)

CEO: Oh, will you sit down already.
Dispatcher: What?
CEO: You don't need your union representative you know.
Dispatcher: Why not, you wanna to ambush me with questions?
CEO: No, I simply want to get this matter to its resolution.
Dispatcher: Sounds like you already made your mind up about how this ends, about me.
CEO: Now you listen here, there is no place for that in my office. You are here so I can get your side of the story. That is all. That is why it's ridiculous we are waiting for Mr. Green of all people.

(Fred Green is the current union representative for the railroad workers of Northern York Railroad. He is never on time and usually helps most workers out of tight jams with administration. He is highly praised by many of the yard workers, a real people person)

Dispatcher: What's wrong with Fred?

CEO: Mr. Green always comes here with the same song and dance, "issues like this would be resolved with a well-structured contract for our workers."

Dispatcher: Well, they would.

CEO: My point exactly, all you see is an opportunity to take a free shot at the boss.

Dispatcher: That's not it at all, I was just saying it would help. I just wanna get this over with and I just wanna put this behind me.

CEO: Then sit down and let's get started.

Dispatcher: Not without my rep.

CEO: I do not want to throw any accusations around, but waiting for your union representative sounds like you are afraid to admit what happened.

Dispatcher *(angrily placing both hands on the CEO's desk)*: I'm not admittin to nothing, I did my job.

CEO *(rises from behind his desk):* Well if you did your job, you do not need a union representative, you do not need to waste my time, and we can get this matter settled like grown adults. Now sit down.

Dispatcher *(Dispatcher reluctantly sits down)*: Fine.

CEO: See! That is the attitude I'm looking for in my workers. Let's start off with a few simple questions.

Dispatcher *(rolls his eyes)*: Okay.

CEO: Wonderful! What were you doing the night before your shift in which the incident occurred?

Dispatcher: SEE! This is exactly what I mean, ambushing me! How does my night prior to my shift have anything to do with my how I do on the job?

CEO: It has quite a deal of importance regarding this matter. You could have issues at home with your family or you could have been heavily intoxicated before your shift, I know how you yard workers are after all.

Dispatcher: And what's that supposed to mean?

CEO: I beg your pardon?

Dispatcher: What is wrong with us "yard workers."

CEO: Nothing at all! You are all the backbone of our operations department and I greatly appreciate the hard work you do! However, that does not make you all perfect.

Dispatcher: Yeah, none of us here are.

CEO: Ignoring that needless remark, all I was trying to get across is the fact that what you were doing the night before your shift is crucial in understanding what went wrong.

Dispatcher: I get it and I wasn't doing anything. I don't drink until after my shift is over because God knows I need it.

CEO: Are you implying you have a dependency on alcohol.

Dispatcher: Stop twistin my words!

CEO: I am simply trying to understand what you meant.

Dispatcher: What I'm sayin is that I work a hard job. I have for over twenty years here, both in the yard and behind a desk. It's a thankless job with a lot of hard work, I know you may not understand that from the top of this little tower, but I work hard.

CEO: First of all, this is not a "little tower," this is one of the finest buildings in the entire state of New York, possibly even the entire country, thank you. Secondly, now I am the one offended by the accusations. Are you implying I do not work just as hard as you?

Dispatcher: I'm sayin you don't get your hands dirty from paperwork the way the rest of us workers do.

CEO: I'll have you know this railroad has been in my family for generations. The Carnegie's are a formidable force in the rail industry. I have been to the railyards. I see the work you all do on a daily basis and we here at Northern York Railroad applaud you for your ability to complete your work.

Dispatcher: Well, I'm sure you've been to the yards, I'm sure your family has been too, doesn't mean ya did anything there.

CEO: Now I for one am not a fan of the implications you are making right now.

Dispatcher: And I'm not a fan of the way our contracts have been in negotiations for seven months now.

CEO: With attitudes such as this, are you the least bit surprised? You come into my office, full of hostility, begging for money and I think you've forgotten why you are here today.

Dispatcher: I didn't forget.

CEO: Well then take a look at the monitor. *(On the screen behind the CEO is the image of a locomotive that had collided with the back of another train.)* You seen that? That is why we are here today.

Dispatcher *(somber tone)*: I know it is…

CEO: Let's try a different question to get ourselves back on track. You are a dispatcher. Tell me what you do on the job.

Dispatcher: You've been to the railyards sooo many times, shouldn't you know?

CEO: I ask you to please stay on topic for the sake of resolving this matter.

Dispatcher: Fine. As dispatch, I basically give all the trains orders. I make sure I know where they are going, what they're hauling, stuff like that.

CEO: Well did you give the order for this train *(gesturing to the accident on the screen)* to crash into the other?

Dispatcher *(visibly angered)*: Of course not, who the hell do you think I am?

CEO: My employee. You gave me a poor explanation of your job; I could only assume that means you did not fulfill your duties to the best of your abilities that day.

Dispatcher: Well, you know what they say bout those that make assumptions, Corky.

CEO: What did you just call me?

Dispatcher: Corky, short for Cornelius. Short like my patience with you right about now.

CEO: The only one that should be even remotely close to impatient right now is me, Cornelius C. Carnegie III. Corky? How dare you. It's like you forgot why you're here.

Dispatcher: That's the second time you've said that. We're here to talk about the accident.

CEO: Not even an apology? For disrespecting me in my own office? How tasteless. Of course, I should expect no less from someone clearly unfit for employment.

Dispatcher: If you even want to call it that.

CEO: Enough with the remarks. *(a pause)* I see that look you're giving me, out with it already.

Dispatcher: Just cuz you asked so nicely, I wouldn't call this employment. Reduced benefit packages, no yearly pay increase, last year's Christmas bonus was downright laughable, and the hours!

CEO: What about the hours?

Dispatcher: No overtime pay? You expect us to work sixteen-hour shifts on a consistent schedule and not pay us extra? And you wonder why we plan on striking soon.

CEO: You all seemingly have no shame to beg for money the way you do. I remember when workers wanted to work. My father never had to deal with the self-entitled workers like I do.

Dispatcher: Yeah, and I'm sure the rest of you Carnegies sleep well on the piles of money at night too.

CEO: I do not wish to entertain these ill-mannered remarks, but I will. You are testing my patience even though I am here to help you.

CEO: To try to prove you are not at fault for the accident, however you are seemingly one of the worst hires we have ever made here at Northern York Railroad. A “grave” oversight if you will. Do you even realize the amount of money I lost due to this accident? And you imply that my family’s wealth wasn’t earned. It’s disgraceful.

Dispatcher: Yeah, the truth hurts don’t it.

CEO: The truth? The truth is my patience has run out. You are a Public Relations nightmare sitting in front of me. You cannot wrap your head around the gravity of the situation here.

Dispatcher: I understand it clearly, but we keep getting sidetracked by your fragile little ego. You can’t understand that us workers are tired of the little respect we get! It’s clearly a generational problem from what I’ve heard today. Maybe daddy didn’t throw enough money at you. So you thought he treated you like shit, so you feel the need to treat everyone beneath you the same way. You and your poor excuse of a railroad company can all just go to hell. You listen to me when I say-

CEO: NO! Now you listen TO ME! This is NOT, about how badly MY company looks! WHICH IT DOES! And it is not about the millions of dollars it is going to cost me! WHICH IT IS! It is not even about the contract that you and all of your other replaceable coworkers want! WHICH THEY ARE! Workers died on the job! People you knew! People you were supposedly friends with! They died because of your inability to perform a simple task!

Dispatcher: b-but I-

CEO: BUT NOTHING! I have sat here and listened to how you tried to blame contracts, drag my family's name in the mud, question my position, my authority within this company, the company that YOU work for, and YOU let down! How can you even sleep at night?

(A long pause)

CEO: That's what I thought, you're all the same. People die and you vultures think of your contracts. It's despicable.

Dispatcher: But it..it wasn't my fault...

CEO: It doesn't matter whose fault it was. When they get on those engines every morning, they trust people like you with their lives, and you let them down. You killed them. Not me. Not my family. Not a contract dispute. Not some pathetic railroad strike. YOU killed those workers.

(Another long pause, the Dispatcher gets up and looks out the window.)

CEO: See that, I can see the railyard from here. I was able to see the crash from that very spot. I saw millions of dollars burning because of your recklessness. I saw the ambulance come for them.

Dispatcher *(in a quiet voice)*: What were their names?

CEO: Excuse me?

Dispatcher: You say I killed those workers; do you even know who they were?

CEO: Well of course I do, their names were...

(Begins to ruffle through the papers on his desk.)

...now let's see here, Engineer Number 38 was...

Dispatcher: *(chuckles to himself)*

CEO: Don't you laugh, you wanted to know their names and I found them here for you!

Dispatcher: No, I knew their names, I KNOW their names! Because they were the men I would sit and have drinks with after an awful shift. Engineer 38? His name was Terry. Before she had passed, Terry drove me to the hospital when my wife went into labor. You want to hear about Jordan? Oh, I'm sorry, you might *not* know that name because I didn't call him Conductor #742 or something ridiculous like that. They were PEOPLE and they were my friends!

(The dispatcher begins to open the window.)

CEO: Is that how you treat all of your friends?

Dispatcher *(laughs again)*: And you blame me for their deaths. You're the biggest idiot I've ever met, Corky.

CEO: Now you listen to me. You say my name properly and you step away from my window.

Dispatcher: Humor me real quick woulda, what's my name?

(The CEO begins to look at his papers.)

Dispatcher: I knew it. You don't even know.

CEO: You think you're some special employee I should remember? Well, I'm a very busy man, do you think I have time to remember the names of all the people I have meetings or phone calls within a day? Time is money and I do not waste it.

Dispatcher: Well, you got me there. Time is money.

CEO: See! Now I knew you weren't completely unreasonable.

Dispatcher: Of course, I'm very reasonable. But there is one issue.

CEO: What would that possibly be?

Dispatcher: You said time is money. It's true, I get it. But you're about to be wastin a lot of time.

CEO: What are you implying?

Dispatcher: I'm implyin that you made up your mind the moment the accident occurred. You saw me as another yard guy that you can blame their death on. With the amount of money, you have? Who would question it. Then you would also use this as factor in why the contract talks have stopped. I knew from the way you looked down on me from the other side of that overpriced ugly desk, that you were never on my side at all.

CEO: And what relation does this have with my time?

Dispatcher: Well, you see, time is money, and I can see your pearly white Cadillac right down there at the bottom of this building. It's gonna take a whole lotta time and money to get all this red off it. Now buy your way out of this accident, Corky.

(The Dispatcher throws himself out the window.)

CEO: That son of a bitch!

(There is a brief pause. The CEO goes over to his window and looks down, it is at this moment Fred Green bursts into the office out of breath.)

Green: Mr. Carnegie! It's all been a big misunderstanding! The black box was recovered from the accident! The engines brakes malfunctioned!

CEO *(a moment of hesitation)*: Mr. Green! A little late I would say.

Green: Where's my guy at?

CEO: Well, I'm afraid you just missed him.

Green: I told him to wait for me! How did the interview go, what did he say?

CEO: He unfortunately told me the amount of tremendous guilt he felt. He believed that he had caused the accident. He was absolutely devastated. He said he was going to the roof to get some fresh air and would join me again shortly.

Green: I have to go give him the good news! I'll be back Mr. Carnegie!

(Mr. Green storms out of the office faster than he came in. The CEO stares blankly out the window for a moment before he reaches for his office phone to call his secretary.)

CEO: Susan! I'm afraid there has been a small accident and my Cadillac is in need of repairs, it's going to need a new coat of paint. Also be a doll for me and send Human Resources an e-mail, we have three positions that need to be filled.

(Curtain)

TWO TRAINS



John Marianacci

UNPOLISHED

By: Aubree Zimmerman

Lay my heart under the grindstone
smooth over the sharp defenses,
pay no mind to the fragment bone
and carve your way inside, indented
by the steady rolling wheel.
Sand away my imperfections;
make my illusion something real
and ease the cavernous rejections,
the gathered salt upon a wound,
layered pain like sediment.
The only silence in the room
Makes thunder of my reticence.

Fall at Misericordia



Matthias Claflin

WHAT I'M TRYING TO SAY

By: Emma Blakiewicz

What I'm trying to say is
The labyrinth is tall and long and wide
And the people outside like to stare
As Icarus runs into walls and dead ends
With only the sun to guide him
They will tell you that Daedalus's little genius
Had fallen far from the tree
When in reality he only longs to fly

And what I'm trying to say is
When the righteous rage of Israel's God
Made waste of humanity's ladder to Eden
The King of Babel walked the Earth with
All the language that the world used to breathe
And nobody to make sense of it

And what I'm trying to say is
I am a god of forge and forbidden fire
Through anvil and raw ash I have melded myself
A throne and a place on Olympus
But without them I am mortal and as malleable
As scrap metal headed full speed down the mountain
I am the golden boy of broken bones
Churned by the bowels of Lemnos

And what I'm trying to say is
The Goliath is sneering knowing
Armed only by blind faith I must prove
Stone is stronger than sword
While my missteps and uneven form
Threaten to tell on me
That simple as this game is for two
At its slightest misdoing
My head may end up on a platter

And what I'm trying to say is
Seven hundred some years ago Dante
Beheld the angel Lucia
As she swept him out of Tartarus
Waking to find that of this new world
Of sin and salvation the souls of its collateral
Had found his shadow the most fascinating instead

In other words
There needs to be a word
For wanting to belong
But not knowing how.



LAKE DRIVE



Isabella Fredo

SAMSARA

By: Makenzi Walsh

I'm awake, cold, lifeless, and surrounded in black,
white coats, bright lights startle me, I feel attacked.
I'm witness to my failed revival,
but another white light awaits my arrival,
no pearly gates, I'm confused. Small cries, pain. I'm Back.

VIRGINIA SUNSET



Joseph Padovano

THE RULER OF EVERYTHING



By: Emma Blakiewicz

You may not think of me as much of a powerful being.

For that, I don't blame you; the Renaissance didn't do me much justice. They gave me rosy cheeks and plump hands and all things made in a world untouched by sin into someone who is barely two feet tall. Wings too small to carry myself without threatening to topple over. A boy and his bow against the world, left to defend himself only with bee stings and pinpricks as arrows.

But this is where we part.

Ever since one turned to two, I have been telling a tale as old as time, twirling fairy dust between my fingers, watching attentively for the world to hold its breath after fate hits its mark. Standing just outside the lines of divinity, never fully mastering the metaphysical but bending it as I please. Despite the careful records I keep their faces blend into one another, constantly changing, and coming, and waning, all of them blissfully unaware that they are all moving along a well-oiled machine, carrying the human story into eternity.

My magic hands are not ones that can hang stars in the sky, or stitch soul back to body, or make mountains out of molehills. Stripped of my weapons I am nothing more than flesh and bone and gold for blood, as much of a threat to the planet and all its inhabitants as a blade of grass.

I have the power of love. But I don't have the short end of the stick. Consider me armed—and dangerous.

Edward Norton Lorenz, a prominent mathematician and meteorologist, would go on to coin the phenomenon known as The Butterfly Effect in the 1800's. He would state that the only difference between a world in peace and one in peril is a lone butterfly flapping its wings, creating through complex and often unseen mechanical processes, a chain of events that topple into one another until a storm is born. Hundreds of years before him Thomas Aquinas, champion of a religion that would call me a demon and predecessor to Newton's laws of Gravity, would write that the without its first mover, the world would continue its tumble into nonexistence, nothing there to spur the creation of life in a cold and dead universe, that stars would be nothing but gas had not someone come forth with the match. Whether or not the people before them had realized or not, they've been stacked against one another like dominos, the way both of them would go on to explain, ranging from inconsequential to fatal, and even now, when viruses break out and wildfires spread, the first thing we do is look for patient zero—the smoke that leads to the fire.

Except, they're not the ones with the lighter.

I consider us a tag-team, me and my brother. Cupid, with the gasoline, Chaos, with the smoking gun. We've been at it for centuries, dousing the world in ethanol and watching it burn slowly, taking two people at a time.

From ash they are born and to ash they return, writing their own stories as they come and go, each one more unique than the last; Two people at the exegesis of Eden, bound to one another not completely by choice but by necessity. Two bodies left behind, intertwined in the plumes of smoke and magma swallowing their city whole until the rest of eternity. A man in blue after a woman in red, taking the gods down with them as they go. Traitors obliviously unaware of the borders between them. Forbidden moments with tragic endings but neither of them ever seem to regret a thing.

And neither do I.

After all these years I'm still not sure if I deserve all the praise. My name is one to be celebrated and my brother's feared, so much so that whenever it is spoken, it is only done so in hushed whispers and flattened tones. When he is in the spotlight, I am his shadow, and thus when he hides, I am the brother held on the pedestal, given the roses, hearing the prayers. I am the greatest good they'll get, they say. And yet when I set to work, he is always there, watching as I twist their arms until I give him the word to go in for the kill. He may have the blood on his hands, but I make it hurt.

To put it figuratively, you can't bleed if you don't have a heart.

The rumors surrounding our humble beginnings and rise to power are many and varied. Some say we had preceded all time and space, part of a band of formless gods known as the Primordial Four, alongside Hell and Mother Earth. Others even maintain that I was the son of Beauty and War.

We are the collateral of an angry king, we are masters of mischief on a manhunt for the Catholic church, harbingers of temptation, waiting only for the weakest to fall. I am the butterfly, and he is the storm. I am Cupid, and he is Chaos.

You may know him as a powerful being, but don't forget...

At the dawn of Adam and Eve, before Eden took form, I was there. When the city of Troy was doomed to fall to flame and fighting, I'd come with the matches. The nails of the cross were handmade by my artisans and King Solomon's lyre carved by my muses. Wherever there is war or strife, I am there. Wherever there is chaos from which the world was sculpted into shape, you will find me with dry clay on my hands. And when the sun swallows the Earth, when time dies and entropy ends and there is nothing but burnt stardust and memories left of the Universe, I will be there.

Are you scared yet?



INSTRESS

Journal of the Arts

Misericordia University

57th Edition

2023