Instress

Journal of the Arts
2022

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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 Hopkins' "God's Grandeur":

> . . .
> And for all this, nature is never 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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Prologue to Eleanor

Ellie Pitcher

Great Grandmother in a frame,
Faded yellow lace gown,
A powerhouse so untame
No wolf could blow her down.

They called her Eleanor,
Elle, Grammy, and Mom.
She never needed more
And she was never not calm.

She took his hand
And they built everything from scratch.
From one baby in beach sand,
To a family no one could match.

Generations later in a house of orange walls,
A girl would go on to raise animals and drink teas.
In a town where the trains have loud calls,
She would clean tables and laugh with ease.

She will someday trip on lies,
Sip on courage, run from order,
Spin through pain and break ties.
She will cherish each who adored her.

She will be soft and bold,
Angry and kind,
Selfless and cold,
Anything but defined.

She will be Eleanor.
She will be everything and nothing all in a breath.

Gabriella



Rebbeka Ebersole

The Reunion



Erica Shay

It had been a long time since she had last seen him. He was taller now, his hair shorter with grey streaks throughout, and there was a pain in his eyes that had not been there before. It was strange to see him like this; in her mind, he was still the bright-spirited boy she had met all those years ago. But of course, things had changed; she had changed. She was no longer the doe-eyed girl who saw goodness in all the world. She had seen hard times and lived through even harder. And she was tired. Tired of losing those closest to her, tired of giving so much to a world that never gave back, and tired of wondering what her life could have been.

Years had passed since that day, but each morning the wound felt fresh. She had moved on and lived a full life, yet the memory still clung in her mind. She could still feel the rain on her face, mocking her with its stereotypical timing, and taste the blood from her lip as she bit down to prevent the tears from falling. And *damn*, the image of his face was forever burned behind her eyes. That face that broke her heart into more pieces than she had thought possible, that tore her so deeply that it took her months just to find the strength to hide her pain.

And here it was, standing right in front of her, that face that haunted her dreams and created her strongest nightmares. He stood there motionless, seeming to stare into her very soul, and she felt herself being pulled into the darkness that had held her captive for so long. And as she fell back into the hole of despair that she had fought so hard to escape, she saw a smile curl on his lips.

Dot Mandala



Sue Barry

Wishing for Spring



Megan Oldak

November... October

Peyton Ross

November

November did me no favors but one.
Time left me stranded in Summer's shadow,
a flower with no sun, trying to run
but with nowhere to go, nowhere to grow.
November planted me and left me stuck
in the arms of faded and damaged soil
where there lie no nutrients left to suck,
it siphoned my strength; left me in turmoil.
so i yanked free my roots and fell, stumbling
sober into a bar, into his arms.
under his gaze i found myself bumbling,
tongue-tied attempting to ignore his charms.
November did me this favor: just him,
the December moon seemed slightly less dim.

time passes...

October

in the colder weather to him i cling
as we sit surrounded by autumn leaves,
with the pumpkins we had chosen, carving
foul faces and ghouls before Hallow's Eve.
we donned our disguises on Halloween,
my dress floated as i walked and i twirled,
and he was head to toe giggling in green;
introducing me to a whole new world.
i look at him and see the same young face
that i knew i admired last November,
that i knew i loved when i saw the vase
of flowers that were orange like ember;
like me, a flower blooming in the sun.
November did me no favors but one.

Sigil



Gina Svoboda

To me, the symbolism of a sigil is most notorious through Led Zeppelin IV/ZOSO. Images of Jimmy Page, bow in hand, ready to manipulate a glorious wail from his guitar. His black velvet-suit embroidered in sigiled glory, each representing him and his bandmates. He brought his twist of mysticism on stage to shove into the faces of the masses.

Page's obsession with Aleister Crowley has spurred rumors of black magic about Page and Zeppelin for decades. Crowley's deliberate (mis)spelling of the word in the title of his book *Magick in Theory and Practice*, gives the word a spin that adds to Crowley's and Page's beliefs; not exactly wrong, but not quite right either.

My Grandmother (Nagyanya) was from Hungary and many of her beliefs were truly Pagan. Fairies, pixies, and gnomes were part of her daily schtick. This was way before being a wiccan-type pagan was cool. There was something innocent about her beliefs. Her understanding, love, passion, respect, and stories, for all things, mystical or not, related to nature was immeasurable. I still sprinkle sugar around trees in the winter because, well, Fairies like sweets!

Nagyanya used to say that little dandelion "fuzzies" floating about were her pixies and they were watching me. I'm not sure if this left a scar of paranoia or a feeling of comfort, but in my little kid mind it made her world really real.

My Grandfather (Nagyapa) called me at work to tell me of Nagyanya's passing. There was nothing dramatic about it, it was simply her time. Expected, but still heartbreaking. I hung up the phone and looked up at the sealed windows that lined the top of my office and thought of her. And there it was. A single fuzzy floating down to me. My Nagyanya's sigil.

Reflections



Brenda Hage

Mountains



Paul Schields

Remembering Bones

Aubree Zimmerman

Hold me softly, love
Until we decompose
Until vines twine their way
Through our remembering bones
'Til the shadows we cast
Spread like cobwebs
On the earth below

Hold me softly, love
Don't leave me alone
In this vast, silent world
Where we lie sleeping in the loam
'Til the sun doesn't shine
Take my hand in yours
And promise I'm home

False Light

Chase Ross

I wish I could forget you
But I can't
I wish you would leave me
But you shan't

I wander through the strange
Led only by your charm
I stumble through the unknown
Led astray by your harm

You're a false hope
But I'm too inept to see
I need to be rid of you
But you mean too much to me

I follow along my path
As I fall further behind
You're a light in the dark
That makes me wish I was blind

Untitled



Derek Wadas

Little Bug



John Marianacci

Winter Forest

Aubree Zimmerman

Trees like finger bones, crooked and stripped of flesh, swaying in the wind like they're reaching out - half in despair and half begging to grasp an ungraspable sky, decades beyond fingertips. No leaves or blades to carry the sunlight away, dry and aching and thin like pinprick wrists.

They know the name of the hunger winter brings, brittle and restless and curling toward heat, desperate enough for the feeling of warmth that to be set aflame and made kindling would be the sweetest ever tasted.

Winter Forest



John Marianacci

from Twisted Souls (Part One)

Makenzi Walsh

The kingdom of Divisiah was once so beautiful it could have been considered an illusion. A beautiful trick of the mind, that reels you in, to the point of no return to the former life you may or may not have had. It was made up of beautiful buildings made from either stone, brick, or the cryptically, kingdom-grown tree wood, all smothered and lined with vines full of the kingdom's most valued florals. Small homes made up villages throughout the kingdom, all made from similar materials. However, as much of a beauty the villages were, the sight to see was what the villages surrounded in the dead center of the kingdom. The castle in which the King and his beloved Queen Amara held residence. The King was someone everyone adored, he was the greatest of all kings, some might even say "perfect-" if, perhaps, such a thing could ever exist. However, 'tis suitable for the most perfect of all kings to sit and rule the beautiful people of a perfect kingdom. He was charming, graceful, kind, generous, cunning, strong, brave, fierce, good looking, and an honorable man at heart. Eh... seems a bit far fetched if you ask me. I wonder what could have possibly happened to such a praised King for him to lead his kingdom to such a drastic downfall. Pity that some rulers just aren't born with what it takes. What it takes is to be cunning, strong, brave, and fierce. Allow me to tell you the tale of those known as the Twisted Souls. Those who were born as noble and striking beings yet transformed into beasts only imaginable in one's nightmares. The very souls who savagely destroyed the kingdom of Divisiah and scorned the brilliant King everybody knew, loved, and trusted. These creatures project cold exteriors, they're ruthless and cunning. They're terrifying creatures yet beautiful at the same time. Hearts of ice and stone but they carry themselves with beautiful elegance that could bewitch any human soul. They get what they want, whenever they want, no matter the price or consequence. They are the beasts that people fear, they are the ones that no one dares to defy. They hold power that no one has ever known. Some say these souls were blessed with such powers and abilities, some say they were cursed with such savageness and couldn't begin to understand how such a creature could be born.

‘Twas easy as well to be all these things when they have such ample and stunning features helping their sway. It’s easy to gain trust with such handsome looks to embellish in what your soul truly desires. However, it’s been told the Twisted Souls only desires are to bathe in the blood of their enemies and anyone who challenges their power. Of course, these are just myths...the horrors of the Twisted Souls are just little white lies told by ancestors to scare children into submittance. No one believes the legends are true because how could something so grotesque exist in such a world? Of course, I believe, but that doesn’t matter. No one else would believe in such horrors until their beloved King concluded that said creatures do exist.

Matter of fact, the King blames the creatures for ruining his life. He blames the Souls for the death and destruction of not only his kingdom but his children as well. He is very wrong to assume. It all started with when his beautiful Queen Amara was expecting a beautiful baby boy. The King had no way of knowing the gender of his child, this he knew. However, his cockiness got the best of him, so he boasted for a boy, he was sure of it. It was crucial he have an heir to his throne for he was soon reaching the age where he would step down and hand his kingdom over to his son. Besides, it was an honor to have the first born be a boy in his family. It’s been tradition for centuries and would be considered shameful if he were to have a daughter. What would his ancestors think of him? He couldn’t bear the thought. He’s done everything so perfectly leading up to this point in his life, it had to be a boy. No doubt that his child will be perfectly fit to rule a kingdom. When the time came for his queen to birth his child, he was repulsed when he realized she had given birth to a baby girl. He left the room where the women were helping Queen Amara, he couldn’t stand to look at it another moment. How could his queen do this to him, he didn’t understand? Was she not happy with him, did she not love him? He gave her everything, all the material items and lavish one-of-a-kind artifacts any other woman would kill for. How could she do this, it was the worst type of betrayal. He could never forgive her, she deceived him.

An act usually punishable by death.

The King rushed down the long halls of his castle until he came to his personal quarters. He needed a moment to figure out a solution to this little situation.

First order of business: he must get rid of the child, and no one must ever know it existed. It should have been easy enough; the queen never left the castle so no one would suspect a missing child anyway. In the midst of his schemes, he was interrupted by one of the maidens he knew helped birth that monstrosity of a child. The maiden asked the King if he would like to meet his daughters. He had to ask her again because he could have sworn the maiden said daughters instead of daughter- meaning plural. The maiden confirmed the queen not only gave birth to one monstrosity but THREE! He could feel the betrayal eating at his veins. What could he have done to deserve this? He then decided, he must get rid of the little beasts before anyone finds out and he is shamed in his own kingdom and cursed by his own ancestors. Then he must punish the woman who birthed the beasts for her betrayal. For this he had the perfect plan.

He could not kill the queen because that would raise suspicion and unnecessary questions. Instead, he would choose his three most noble men to take one of the little beasts and take them to the three most forbidden locations in the land and leave them there to die. Eventually, nature would do its own sort of justice and rid the world of the queen's mistakes, thus ridding the world of his potential shame as well. This way the kingdom would never know, he would keep his reputation and family name above water, and the queen would punish herself in her own emotions from the loss of her three children. It was the perfect plan. Back in his personal quarters, he called upon his noble men and set the plan in motion. His men succeeded beautifully, and he went back to life as it should be. His queen became vacant in her own world of punishment. He never saw her in the castle. Good. This was fine, he thought.

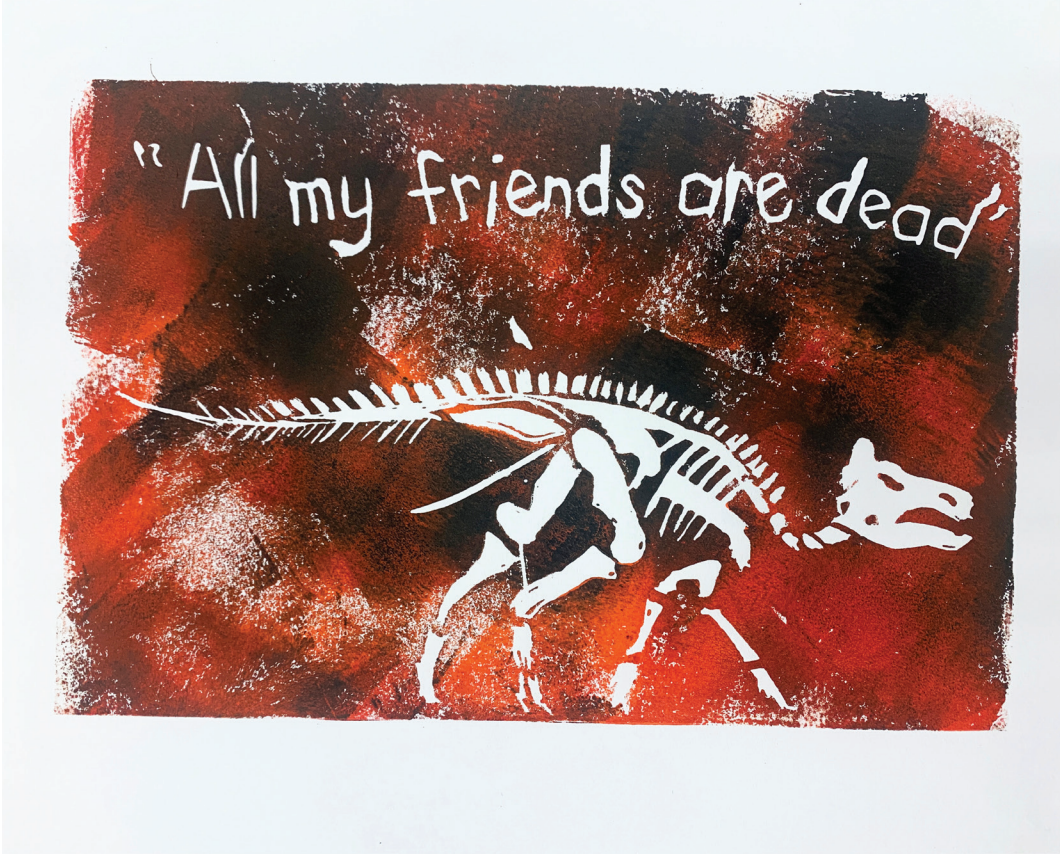
After years of perfectly ruling his kingdom, the King started noticing things. It seemed the world around him, his kingdom, had been disturbed. Winds, storms, and tornadoes destroyed his beautiful villages in a single night. His people were left without homes for weeks. Hurricanes drowned neighboring villages and destroyed what was left of his kingdom's crops and florals from the last natural disaster. His beautiful forests were engulfed by flames burning everything living in its wake. People were killed and others now suffered in surviving. What was once his beautiful kingdom was now nothing but a castle among ashes.

The King did not know how or why nature brought on this destruction so suddenly and he no longer had the funds to restore anything for his people. He had gambled it all away and has been in debt to other kingdoms for years. He had somewhere lost his luck among those last few years. He used to be unbeatable, that was how he reined in so many lavish items and upheld his kingdom's reputation. That's what gave him leverage in deals and trades with other kingdoms. He no longer had that, though. Over the years he slowly began to lose everything. His secrets, tricks, and lies began to slip out. He even gambled away his family's ring with his family crest on it, to a man so fragile looking he could have been a woman. He was falling a little more with every breath. His deceit began to come out. How, he did not know. However, that mistake broke important connections, business deals and property trades. He soon became in debt to more than one powerful king. This destruction given his current situation left him in a very vulnerable position. He needed to figure out what was going on and find a solution.

The King had heard rumors across the borders from the few loyal messengers and warriors he had left. Rumors of sightings of weird beings amongst the Black Sea and its creatures creating mischief, prowling the dark forests under the Mountains of Sin, flying amongst the erupting volcanoes from the Island of Ash. All these rumors, of course, the noble men did not believe. The King however, had only ever heard of such specific details from the myths of the Twisted Souls. Some type of blood curdling fear rippled through the King's body at that moment. Of course, the rumors are true. It all makes sense now. The sightings of mer-like creatures in the sea, the howling that made his bones shiver in fear, the loud piercing bird-like shrieks that sent heat waves across the city. Only one myth describes such unbelievable creatures like that, the Twisted Souls. The Twisted Souls must be after him he thought, all his misfortune began when Queen Amara betrayed him and gave birth to three females. That's it, he thought. That must be it, his angered ancestors must have scorned him with the wrath of the Twisted Souls because his queen gave birth to three daughters. He was being punished for the queen's mistake in birthing girls. This will not do he thought, he must fight the Souls if they are coming, they will kill him no doubt. He must build an army to protect himself. First, he needed funds. *

**This story is continued on page 33.*

All My Friends are Dead



Lalaine Little

Moments

Antonia Pacillo

Life is not always going to work out the way you want
There will be loved ones lost
There will be heartbreak
There will be struggles
There will be tears
There will the “why is this happening to me?” thoughts
But there will also be light
At the end of the tunnel there is always a bright light guiding you out
You are not stuck inside
Life moves on and you must as well
It won’t slow down or wish you farewell
It will pass by in a blink
So you have to hold on tight and keep your eyes forward
The past is not coming back
The future is coming soon
It is all about living in the present day
And
Appreciating the moments you have left.

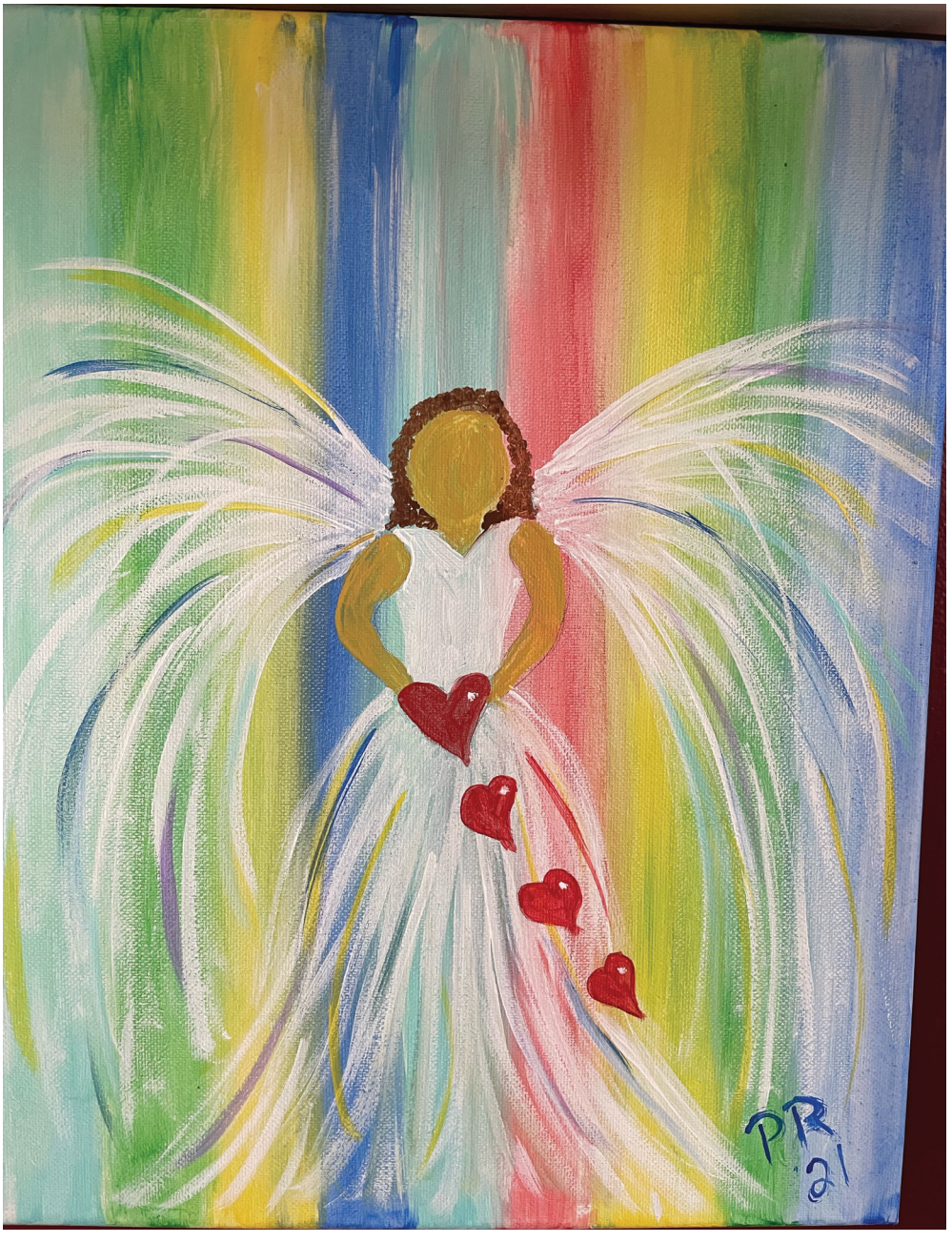
Childlike Innocence

Peyton Ross

i soar across the sky,
arms outstretched,
reaching for something
i cannot yet see.
i fly faster than a bullet,
i am stronger than steel,
and i am invincible
as i ride my bike across
the sizzling pavement
on a sunny summer afternoon.
eventually, grandma will call
me home for lunch,
but for now there are places to be
and people to rescue.
so i continue onward,
zooming through the clouds,
searching for the next
strawberry patch to save
from the nefarious villain
that is Time.

for grandma with love.

Angel



Patti Ross

Young Gods

Aubree Zimmerman



Young gods are what's become of us
Our new Olympus is empty Sunday afternoons
I am made for flowing silhouettes and walking sticks
And eyes that illuminate like tide pools in sunlight
I am made for neat buttons and collections of keys
And lifting gloved hands into the falling snow
I am made for pomegranate juice and the echo of song
And soft simple touches, soft simple glances
I am made for embers, not for wildfires
For steaming, warming hands, thawing the cold
I was never made for burning, not like this
I am the young god of poems and constellations
Of coins tossed in fountains and hidden tears
Slipping down cheeks at precisely 2:47 am
I am the young god of memories and faded scars
And the taste of coffee sweetened a bit too much
I am built of imperfections but they make me real
There is divinity in my blood even when it drips
My altar is of flesh and bone, alive and living
Fragile and foolish and bursting at the seams
And beautiful; relentlessly and uncannily beautiful

Coy Fish

1st Place Art



Madelyn Swarthout

Read to Me *from* Bite Me

Lauren DeRemer

James came into the library to see me sitting in the chair near the fire, in the middle of reading a romance novel. He came over and hung his arms over the back of the chair, pulling me close to him. He put his hand under my chin, and lifted my face up to meet his, and his lips collided with mine softly. He pulled away and stared at me.

"What are you staring at?"

"You," he answered, shrugging, as though it was the most obvious answer in the world. "Come on. It's time for bed. It's late."

"But my book is getting good. They're close to their love confession. I can't stop now. Go ahead to bed, I'll join you later."

He hummed before he moved between me and the fire. He looked down at me, so I closed my book, using my finger to keep my place. I looked up at him, and sensing what he was about to do said, "James, if you take this book from my hands, I swear to anything that is Holy that I will rip your fangs from your head." I pinned him with a glare.

He shrugged before picking me up and carrying me to our room. He set me down on the bed and laid down next to me.

"I didn't take your book, so my fangs are safe. Lucky for you," he said with a smirk, leaning up to kiss me.

"Was this just your plan to get me in your bed? Because you really should have just asked," I replied with a smirk that matched his.

"I'll keep that in mind."

I turned back to my lap where my book was, with my finger still marking my place. I picked up where I left off. I heard James sigh next to me and move so he was sitting behind me. He leaned against the headboard and pulled me with him so that I was sitting with my back to his chest and his legs were on either side of mine. I was surrounded by him. One of his arms wrapped around my waist, and the other hand was tangled in my hair, running through the strands. He hummed and I felt his chest vibrate against me.

His voice was deep and soft when he asked, "Will you read to me?"

"I mean, I could, if you really want."

"I like your voice," he mumbled out, almost like he was embarrassed to say it. "It's relaxing. Especially when I'm holding you."

"Do you want me to start at the beginning? Or just pick up where I was?"

"You can just start from where you were."

I nodded before picking up where I was in the story. After reading for a few minutes, I felt his lips press against my forehead, then my cheek, then down to my neck. I made a noise that made James chuckle from behind me, causing both of our bodies to shake. I stopped reading and my eyes slipped close.

"Keep going," he spoke from where he was still nuzzling and kissing my neck. I felt his chest vibrate as he spoke, and he was warm enough to lull me to sleep. The kisses were not to turn me on, rather they were to relax me.

I was able to read a few more sentences before closing the book, still using my hand to mark the place, and closed my eyes. I curled into James and fell asleep.

Spring Haikus

Jason Miller

Synesthesia

Outside my window
Brown with a dab of green
Blue above and below

Serendipity

Off high in the trees
The skitching of new-born hawks
Calls the Spring forward

Daffodils

First days of April
Green sun-dappled canopy
Yellow bursts below

Blackbirds

Blue-speckled cape breaks
A boiling black cloud descends
And rises again

Ephemera

Tiger Liles bloom
Painting the arid Earth new
But just a moment

1st Place Photo

O Canada



Paul Schields

It's All About Perspective



Rebecca Steinberger

I've been keeping...

Kaitlyn Dixon

"I've been keeping things inside"
Loud voices yelling at me for little flaws
They invade my mind and conquer over me
-whenever they want to.

The worst time is at night when trying to sleep.
My most vulnerable state; try not to think and drift-
Drift to a different world where I wish for a better reality.
Seven minutes, that's how long it takes a person to fall asleep according to scientists-
These voices keep a one-way conversation for hours
as tears run from my eyes, down my cheek, and into my pillow.

In the day, No One can know.
If they find out, I become a weak burden
Cover myself with a smile, and whenever experiencing these moments use the excuse
"Yeah, I'm fine, sorry I just dazed out" and maybe do a little laugh
To lighten the mood, even if it makes me feel heavier.
It isn't until the bottle becomes too full that everything pours.

When I reach out for a hand, people take it thinking they're helping
Only for them to twist and break it
"You need to move on. Push the past behind you. Learn from these mistakes"
Don't you see I'm trying? But instead, I'm drowning
Voices filling my lungs with rivers of wrongs.
Don't you see it makes me feel worse how I struggle to move on?

Why can't I forget?

Dear Wolves



Chase Ross

To the dear wolves
I saw running so free
What would it be like
Held under lock and key?

Oh, how you would miss
Running between Oak and Thorn
When you live almost as free
As the very day you were born

Oh, how would you handle
Being separated from the pack?
I'm sure you'd spare no expense
In finding any way back

Oh, how I envy you
Hunting while the wild bird sings
While I'm locked in my tower
Waiting to craft my wings

Spirit Lake



Paul Schields

from Twisted Souls (Part Two)

Makenzi Walsh

*Continued from page 18.

The King soon realized all the neighboring kingdoms he could have asked for assistance in funds he already owed years of debt too. He searched for days trying to find kingdoms willing to donate or loan him money for his kingdom. He had nothing left from the kingdom to trade for wealth besides his castle, the little people left living, and the ashes the kingdoms now rest on. On the third day of his search, it came to his surprise to see three newly crowned lords had offered to help him. How these lords came to know of his situation is a mystery, but he complied, nonetheless. If these lords want to give him money, then who is he to refuse. If these lords are fresh rulers, they must be young, he thought. That meant the King could possibly manipulate them into getting exactly what he needed and possibly more if he played his cards right; meaning he could easily outsmart these men. He set up the meeting in his castle in the dining hall. He called on the queen to put away her feelings and put up a good front for the better of the kingdom. He called upon his best men to sit in and prove a unified strong front to the new lords. He wanted them to know he is powerful, and he who yields power is always in charge.

The King filled the queen in on his plans to manipulate the lords the night prior to the meeting. He may have disowned her for her betrayal, but he needed her to be fully aware so she could play her part, it was the least she could do for bringing on this whole mess in the first place. So, they waited in the dining hall for their guests to arrive. Expecting a maiden to come inform the King of their arrival would have been reasonable to believe. What the King did not expect was the smell of ashes; the feeling of intense heat that suddenly weaved across the room. He did not expect the roof of the castle to be ripped away and for a flying inflamed beast to land neatly perched on what was left of a stained glass window. The King was instantly terrified and confused. Some of the flames had scorched some of his men to crisps. What shocked him even more so was when this horrifying beast turned into one of the most beautiful creatures he's ever seen.

She was a beautiful Phoenix Goddess with now black wings instead of the flaming ones, however the tips stayed painted with phoenix fire. She had long brown to black straight hair and bright sparkling green eyes. She had a royal blue and fire orange glow surrounding her womanly form. She looked at him and introduced herself as Lord Sanguinex. That couldn't be right, thought the King. That was the name of the lord meant to meet him for his benefit, and this was clearly one of the Twisted Souls who had destroyed his life. The King stuttered but before he could say anything he heard the howls and the stampede of large paws making the whole kingdom shake. A large, six foot tall wolf on all fours with fur made of flame jumped high over the destroyed walls of the castle and landed with a skid in front of the King. The wolf had iron chains hanging from its body and they were covered in blood. The King was at a loss for words. The wolf suddenly transformed into yet another beautiful goddess. A Moon Goddess, with blonde mid length hair, slightly curly and dark blue eyes with yellow rings around them, the eyes of a predator. These two goddesses, these two souls stood before him radiating confidence and beauty. The wolf goddess introduced herself as Lord Demirkan. Yet another Lord he was to meet today in his home. He knew what was coming next, the third soul. Suddenly, there were screams and smells of ocean salt in the air. The King looked up through his broken castle and saw the waves crashing into his ashy kingdom. Atop the wave was a magnificent siren made entirely from water. Horns atop her head and spears made from water surrounded her as her wave crashed into the ground in front of him. The wave soaked everyone and nearly knocked him to the ground. The wave had wiped out what was left of his noble men he had asked to join them. He stood up and looked at the beast made of water as she too transformed into a beautiful Water Goddess. Long white and silver hair that seemed to constantly glitter. Her deep brown eyes gave off a warm effect. He could hear the slight tune of her siren song playing in his ear as he stood to greet the deadly souls. The water goddess introduced herself as Lord Andreas.

The king took in the beauty before him and couldn't believe that the three savage souls that haunt everything living were these three young girls. The goddesses noticed his confusion and looked at each other, sharing a sadistic smile.

Lord Sanguinex stepped forward and spoke, "If I'm not mistaken, you were going to manipulate us for your own selfish needs, your Majesty...?"

The King noted her taunting tone. He stuttered, but before he could answer Lord Demirkan beat him to it.

"Come on sister, let's not beat around the bush. He doesn't even recognize us, you see!"

The King heard the laugh in her voice and scoffs come from the other two beside her, he didn't understand what she meant by recognize. These creatures were a myth; he'd never met them before. That's when he noticed it. Around all their necks was a necklace with his wife's family crest on it, and on the finger of Lord Andreas was his family's ring that he had gambled away.

He asked them quickly before he lost his courage, "Why do you have that ring? How did you get it? And what of those necklaces?"

That's when Lord Andreas spoke, "I'm sorry father you look rather surprised, did mother not inform you of our incoming visit? Or of our rather extravagant festivities among the lands recently?" she said with a sickening giggle.

The King could not believe it, his three daughters stood here before him in all their powerful glory. How were they not dead? He was so confused, he thought the three new lords were males, given the fact that they call themselves the lords and not ladies. He assumed by the names that they were males. Not his long lost supposed-to-be-dead daughters. Then he started to piece everything together. All the destruction and despair and his loss of everything he ever knew was because of the Twisted Souls, but if the Twisted Souls were his daughters, that meant his own children set him up and led him to his doom. But he still didn't understand where his daughters had gotten all the information on him, how had they figured out his ways and how did they know he planned to manipulate them? How did they know the details of his debt and his trade deals and connections to other kingdoms? How had they stolen his ring?

As if reading the questions from his mind, Queen Amara finally spoke, "You know, your Majesty, when you decided to kill off my children for your own benefit you should have been smart enough to handle the dirty work yourself. You were so

indulged in yourself that you never even noticed that after the day those men came back from sending off our children to their death, that they too disappeared somewhere. Huh, I wonder what could have happened to them? Did you know, dear, that I had gathered information on you for years. I hijacked your gambling trades, I sent letters to your connections crippling them like you tried crippling my love for my girls. I was the one who gambled against you in disguise and stole all your funds. I later found the girls as they got older and introduced them. Together they destroyed your kingdom, and together we'll destroy you for what you have done. You should have loved your girls despite the ridiculous shame it could have brought your family. Things could have been different if you had changed in your ways. Now it's too late. You blame the girls for your downfall when you should have blamed yourself. You should have taken responsibility for your actions. But if you want anyone to blame though, I'll ALLOW you to blame ME for the consequences of YOUR bad decisions."

She spoke with an authority he'd never heard before. The King could not believe what was happening right before his eyes. He shouts at the queen, "What kind of Twisted Sister joke is this! You dare scheme against me and destroy my throne!" he looks at her demanding an answer. She just smiled at him in glee. He continues, "I spared your life once when you birthed such mistakes, what makes you think I'll spare you again?!" he screams in her face, eyes filled with rage. Yet again the queen just smiles, even giggles this time. He does not seem to enjoy the giggle as much.

Suddenly the three goddesses, his daughters, had surrounded him. Lord Demirkan somehow had sprouted wooden chains encased in iron and blood up from the ground trapping the King where he stood. His hands and ankles tired and his torso tightly embraced by the bloody chains.

The queen spoke again, "Dear King, I'd like to introduce you to Lord Demirkan, otherwise known as Loveta, your second oldest daughter," she said with such pride and a savagely sweet smile. Next came the sweat. Burning. He was burning, he could feel it from inside his body he was literally burning alive. He looked at Lord Sanguinex as he started breathing heavily, trying to control the burning but knowing it was her doing and there was no use in trying to stop it.

"This is Lord Sanquinex otherwise known as Althea, your youngest," said the queen in a joyful voice. Almost as if she was enjoying this, he thought bitterly. Then suddenly he couldn't breathe. He started coughing up water out of nowhere as if he were submerged in water and drowning. Continuously the water was choking him out through his mouth. At this point he would not survive this much longer. They were going to kill him, and he knew this, he attempted to look up at his wife in question as he was dying under these circumstances given by his daughters.

Queen Amara looked at him and said once more, "Finally this is your oldest, Lord Andreas, otherwise known as Lorelei." Then as he was drawing what he assumed was his last breath he spit at the queen with such hate, calling her a monstrous mother of evil. He shouts at her as best he could through his choking, about how she'll never get away with this and he's the King and he's in charge of what happens in his kingdom, to unhand him at once.

Queen Amara just smiled. "Well you know what they always say dear, he who yields power is always in charge, right?" she asks, but somehow, he knew it wasn't a question. She continues, looking around the room with a perplexed expression as if confused then looks at him again and says cunningly, "As far as I can tell... the only person here with no power and no say is you." As the queen walks away from her almost dead husband and former king she turns back towards her daughters. She smiles, not even sparing a glance at the wasted man below their feet now withering on the ground, and she says something. Loud enough for them all to hear. She gives one of those beautifully sinful smiles to her daughters, proving where they all get their good looks from, and whispers in a cunningly silky voice, "Twisted Sisters indeed dear husband, Twisted Sisters indeed."

The tale of the Twisted Souls they said. Little did they know the creatures that were both blessed with such powers and abilities yet cursed with such savageness were three young sisters just looking for guidance and purpose. Hidden behind male names to give themselves the upper hand they needed to rise to their own power and prove themselves better than any male. Some could say I told you the tale of the Twisted Sisters and what made them the terrifying myth that they are now.

Some could say it was simply a tale providing the strength behind a mother's bond with her children. Some could even argue that the tale is about how the queen is evil and she used her daughters and their power to get revenge on her husband for what he did to her. But in all reality, this is her story. This is a tale about the infamous Queen Amara who was barely treated as a person by the King and blamed for his indecent decisions and failures. It is, in fact, about how cunning a woman can be if not careful; maybe the King shouldn't have underestimated the queen and her daughters he called 'its' instead of recognizing them as living beings. The queen destroyed the King from right under his nose and pulled her devoted daughters in, otherwise known as the Twisted Sisters, to help with the dirty work and possibly gain some revenge for themselves as well.

This tale is about the fact that the queen and her daughters are women, and they are powerful, and they have a voice. If their voices shall not be heard by man, then they shall make their voices heard by all. They have names, already more than most women have in this world. This isn't just a tale about the powers of the Twisted Sisters, this is a tale about their mother. Given this information, I guess the real question is who's more twisted, the sisters, or the mother who secretly raised them to be and to do what they now do and to be what they now are? How do I know all this exactly, how can I be so sure about this tale you may ask? Well, because I am her. I am the Twisted Sisters mother. I am Queen Amara, and I raised the Twisted Sisters. I schemed my husband's downfall for twenty-two years. I schemed to kill my husband and destroy his kingdom and I got my beautiful daughters to help me. I am her, and this is my story to tell. I am man. I am power. I am the queen in this tale. This tale is mine to tell. So, I have told.

Pear



Brenda Hage

Moving On...

Antonia Pacillo

The hardest part about forgetting someone is
Having to pretend like the love was never there
The memories never happened
And
The words did not mean a thing.

Little Mushrooms



Aubree Zimmerman

Sunday Night Shutdown

Gina Svoboda

The words just aren't coming, my mind's stuck in slow-mo
I've spent the past hour "pinning" for quotes
I looked at photos, I looked at jokes
I've walked through my house, searching for clues
I thought about books, plants, blankets, and shoes
Maybe my cats would bring an idea
Usually they're cute, entertaining and charming
However, tonight they are quiet, sleeping and snoring
Marilyn Monroe, Churchill, and Hepburn
WordPorn, F–kology, the Muppets and Jim Henson
Such interesting beings and so many words
Why won't this happen? My brain kinda hurts
Sir Richard Branson, Queen E, Di and Kate
Such interesting people, such interesting stuff
Just one idea will get me out of this slump
My battery's low and it's getting late
While there's nothing specific for this journal topic
The words flow nicely, it's on time, and honest

Streaming in Vein
...and in a Theater Near You



Rachel Urbanowicz

Confessions *from* Bite Me

Lauren DeRemer

When I awoke, there was a solid pillow under my head. At some point in the night, I had rolled over so that my head was on his chest and his arm was around my waist. One of my legs was on top of his, and our bodies were tight against each other. I picked my head up to look at him, and I was surprised to see how peaceful he looked when he was sleeping. He shifted, and I turned just as he looked down at me.

"Morning Kath," his raspy voice reached down to me.

"Morning," I responded, trying to keep myself calm as my brain woke up and I realized that I was using the Vampire Prince as a pillow. We both stayed quiet for a few minutes, just enjoying each other's presence.

"You know what I'm going to ask you." He asked me. I started to try to push myself off his chest. His grip tightened. "Kath, don't. I'm stronger than you, plus you just woke up. Let me hold you," he paused as I relaxed back into him. His voice got quieter when he again asked, "Why did you take that arrow?"

I sighed and looked up at him. I sat up, still with his arm around me. I faced him and took a breath before answering the question that I had been dreading since last night. "I took that arrow because I wouldn't have been able to forgive myself if I had let my soulmate die. I'm in love with you James. If I'm being honest, I have been for a while. You make me feel for the first time. When you kissed me, I felt emotions that I had never felt before. I was warm, safe, content, and happy for the first time in my life. Being here, being with you and Alex and Dante, I've learned to live. Not just to exist, but you have all shown me what it means to be alive. James, you saved me. You don't realize it, but you did. So, yes. I took that arrow because I feel that bond between us. I feel the passion and the love that is included with it. I was willing to die for you because I love you." My voice cracked at the end, and he was looking at me with awe in his eyes. We sat there in silence for a few moments. "Please say something," I pleaded.

"Do you want to know what I was going to say before we were attacked?" he asked, and I nodded. "I was going to say that I care for you. I care about you. I love you. I want to sleep in the same bed every night and never let you go again. I know you can protect yourself, but I want to protect you. I want to hold you and make you happy. I want to hug you and make you smile because your smile is going to kill me one of these days. I want to kiss you again, and for hours on end. I want to kiss every inch of your body. I want to be the one to drive those stupid insecurities from your head. I want to make you feel good about yourself and I want to give you the confidence that you deserve. If you'll have me Katherine, I will spend the rest of eternity proving to you how amazing you are. How beautiful you are. I promise that I will spend every day showing you how much I love you," he paused. "But only if you'll have me."

Iceberg



Rebbeka Ebersole

Snowy Day

Antonia Pacillo

Running through the snow, not a worry on her mind
All she can think of is how many toys she can hide
Her brother and sister begging their mother and father to let them play
Now here they are together, jumping around on this snowy day
These may be things they have done before
But while playing in the snow, they never get bored
The cold flakes hitting her cheeks,
And riding on her sled that squeak, squeak, squeaks
The boys next door come join in on the fun
And now the snowball fight has begun!
Snowballs hitting her coat pat, pat, pat
And now there she is lying on her back
Her siblings and friends run over and lay
And now they are making snow angels on this snowy day
They are laughing, smiling, and having so much fun,
Until they hear their moms yell "Dinner is done"
They kick, whine, and even shed a little tear
But in the back of their minds, they know that the next snow day is near!

2nd Place Photo

Gingerbread House



Cayci Reichard

2ND PLACE ART

Something Pretty? or Something So Much More?



Makenzi Walsh

Something More: An Explanation

Makenzi Walsh

Expressing how you feel is hard. I don't just mean identifying simple emotions either. I think it's easier to identify that you're feeling something, yet difficult to express how that emotion makes you feel. Most peoples' first choice would be expressing themselves through words. Sometimes it can be easy to express how you feel through words, however doing so can be intimidating because of backlash one may receive from society. I don't feel that it's a secret that society today is judgmental, often cruel. I think society has grown in areas of staying open minded, but that doesn't stop those who don't agree to such openness to keep their disapproving comments to themselves. With such hate and judgment thrown at some people who once felt comfortable with expressing how they felt especially through words... that person quickly becomes discouraged. With that amount of backlash that person has now stopped sharing. They stopped talking. Now they bottle it up. Too many people made them feel irrelevant and like their feelings didn't matter. Perhaps it made them feel abnormal for feeling a type of way. Words are very judgy, as are people, and as is society. I don't think people realize all the other creative ways they could use to express how they feel without anyone particularly picking up on it. I used myself through this art piece as an example. I feel, personally, I can be pretty good about opening up when I feel a certain way however when those feelings and thoughts take a darker turn it does get difficult. I know I'm not the only one who has ever felt pain, grief, sadness, or anger. Although, for me, it seemed easier to express through art than through words.

This piece is a design I drew myself, wood burned the main details, while finishing off the rest in acrylic paints. I decided to design this piece based on things that I feel, represent how I have felt, or represent things that I wish to feel. I decided to design a dagger, a weapon that's "sharp," has an "edge," and cuts deep when stressed. I chose the dagger because I want to one day feel like someone who carries themselves with enough of an "edge," or in this case, where my confidence in who I am is noticed but not intimidating or fake. A skill I wish to someday acquire with a

sharp mind and quick thinking. To be able to have my own back so I am not only able to stick up for myself but for others as well if they are not able. Something like a dagger can be designed to be very beautiful and sometimes even delicate. Perhaps a type of fragile antique. As if I... the dagger... is something that needs to be used carefully and gently so it is not to break or get damaged with the pressure. However, the dagger may be delicate and beautiful, dare I say feminine, but most forget that the blade is still sharp. And the blade doesn't like to be abused and dulled down to a blunt edge. Just because something is pretty, or gentle, or feminine doesn't mean it can't be dangerous. Just because something has a blunt edge doesn't mean it can't draw blood. Someone's kindness and sensitivity to others, can easily be used by someone else for their own benefit. That person doesn't see that the dagger is piercing a rose.

This specific piece does contain two roses, one black and one bright yellow. The black one represents sadness, depression, a bad day, grief, sometimes death. The black rose represents the bad that everyone always seems to be so scared of. The bad that no one can ever seem to express properly. That rose represents the fact that everyone goes through those scary emotions and no it does not feel good, but it is normal, and it is okay. I, myself... the dagger, am piercing that black depressing rose because I've now understood that it's normal for me to feel those emotions and I have accepted that it's okay. At the tip of the dagger, just out of reach is the bright yellow rose. The yellow rose represents the things in life that you hold on to, able to pull you out of those thoughts and feelings encouraged by the black rose. I, being the dagger, have already defeated the black rose and now I get to enjoy my light... the yellow rose. For me, that yellow rose represents my grandmother. All the grief I felt when I lost her, that was all new to me and I didn't know how to handle it or explain how it made me feel. I just knew I wasn't okay at that moment. My grandmother, my light, in a way was what motivated me to accept that grief and make it a part of me instead of trying to push it away from me. The woman I'm proud to have called my light, my dear thing to pull me out of my darkest moments, will always have a place in my heart specifically reserved for her. Which shows in my painted heart at the top, where I assume she is watching me from above, keeping me inline. Across that heart tells her exactly how I feel that I'll always love her. The dagger is wrapped in a vine and thorns. That's the struggle, the feeling of suffocation is the best way I could describe it. I believe that not only

myself, but many others have felt that they are suffocated by what others deem they are supposed to feel or how they're supposed to act regarding something they feel. It's suffocating, society and people can be suffocating. Their words against you are as sharp as thorns. Those kinds of thorns can make you bleed, and it hurts.

I used myself through this piece of art because at first glance it's just a pretty picture. No one would have realized the symbolism and the depths of feelings this piece holds from me personally. I used this as an example for others to understand that there will always be another way to express how you feel and avoid the judgment. I've found a creative way to express one of the scariest feelings I've ever felt so far in my life, and I've done so in a way that no one would realize unless I told them. That decision stays mine. In this piece, I was the dagger. The black rose was my darkest moment. One that I have accepted and defeated, even while feeling suffocated and like I could never make it out. I made it out though, I cut my way out- thorns and all- and instead of letting that dark moment win I turned it into something beautiful. Something that could be admired. All thanks to my light holding me accountable. Keeping me away from the judgmental rose bushes and teaching me how to fight the thorns. All thanks to my yellow rose.

The Tough Battles of a Warrior

Olivia Eckert

Canterbury, located in the city of Twain, was once a mountainous region surrounded by unique forests and animals. The mountains within the city were compared to being as "high as the heavens," leaving breathtaking views of the water surrounding the city. In the golden village of Canterbury, it once brought cheer and joy to its residents of the city. Individuals visiting would encounter the jousts and competitive hunting that once occurred. While encountering these activities, visitors also came across other mythical beings in the village. The village of Canterbury was known for attracting mythical people, and animals far and wide. These animals that resided in this area were fairies, minotaurs, deer, and other mythical animals that were not accepted within a normal society. The national animal of Canterbury is a Pegasus. A Pegasus is known for its majestic beauty and strength, and symbolizes the strength of an individual's immortal soul. While Canterbury was once a marvelous place filled with strong warriors and the cheerful screams of others, it soon changed after King Pyro took over. King Pyro, known as the slayer of hope and greed, took the role as king after Baldwin II had died. Ever since Pyro was placed in his role as a king, Canterbury has never looked the same. The other villages surrounding the city of Twain that were once an alliance with Canterbury, suffered greatly after the death of Baldwin II. After the death of Baldwin II, the villages in alliance with Canterbury were no longer intact. These villages were known as Mustafar, the village of hellbriding elf demons; Crete, the village of Centaurs and mystical wizards; Syldavia, the village of fighters and mutants; and Malachor V, the village of sorcerers and warlocks. Once a warrior is able to stand up to the king and defeat him, the kingdom will be restored in peace.

A Warrior named Louise Leviathan, a half demon-elf who holds immense power within her kingdom Mustafar, is set on a quest to restore peace within the surrounding nations along with the help of her hell-braided pet dragon, Kur. When she is informed of the other villages falling, she sets out on a journey to fix it with the help of her knights and Kur. When she arrives at the village of Malachor V, she is presented with strange looks and glares from the other civilians. As she continues to walk, she arrives at the castle's doors with her knights.

When she is questioned on who she is, she announces, “We are retainers from Hygelac’s band. Louise is my name. If your lord and master, the most renowned son of Halfdane, will hear me out and graciously allow me to greet him in person, I am ready and willing to report my errand.” She announces her presence to let the kingdom know she is able to help. While announcing her presence, Achard is skeptical of her actions. He does not believe she is able to help the kingdom and constantly questions her ability to do so. Due to Louise’s past of having a mental disability, known as ADD, she is constantly questioned and judged in her ability to conquer certain tasks. She continues to work hard to prove others wrong that this disability does not define her. Although she is continuously challenged on her worth, she always validates herself to others. When she is interrogated by another individual about her capability to help the kingdom, Lord Hroth proves to the others by saying,“with this disability that Louise deals with, she is able to complete the tasks given to her. Louise’s father is a known warrior and I do not doubt that she will not accomplish her missions.” Due to her father’s status, she is capable of solving and accomplishing hard tasks. Lord Hroth then sends Louise to go and slay the king and bring peace to our nation. For Louise to prove her worth to the kingdom, she sets out from the village of Malachor V with her knights and Kur to defeat the king.

While watching the village of Canterbury be ripped to shreds by the king’s greed, Louise steps forth to defeat him. When preparing herself for the battle, Louise is offered her invincible armor by her squire, Elric. Louise rejects the offer of the armor from Elric and decides to go into battle with her trusty sword. Her trusty sword made from deepest parts of Hell, dipped in lava and casted in spells, is known as the most powerful sword alive. As Leviathan looks at her opponent, she realizes her enemy is stronger than she thought. Pyros is perceived as being a lich that is a leader to the underworld of the dead. He possesses the ability to conquer the dead from the ground, as well as using mind control. He can use his powers by having a power crystal necklace that lays on his neck. While the Leviathan army acknowledges the power that Pyro holds, they scurry away in fear. The only one that is left behind Leviathan’s side is her sidekick, Kur.

With all of Louise’s might, she sprints towards her opponent, and casts out her sword. As she casts out her sword, she tries to strike Pyro but realizes her sword is not a match for his powerful crystals. She realizes the sword is no match, and tosses it aside and uses her bare hands to attack the lich. As she is battling the king,

After the removal of the crystal, Pyro loses his ability to his power causing him to strike her in his last attempt. When she notices she has a chance to vanquish her opponent, she takes it. She grabs her sword and lifts it, slaying Pyro causing him to fall off the top of the castle. When Louise realizes she has brought back peace to Canterbury, she celebrates her achievement of restoring the peace. However, as she is celebrating, she realizes she has been scarred in the heinous battle. At this moment, she realized the scar she had in her side was poisonous blood that is deadly to people of her race. When she lays on her side, her pet Kur lays beside her. As Louise is about to die, Kur transforms into a human, comforting her as she lies there. He promises to Louise that he will let her name and the actions she has done be known and live on. After he informs Louise of his intent, she dies.

Serpent Beneath the Canopy



Justin Steinberger

Slieve League
Donegal, Ireland



Paul Schields

Sunset Over Lake Erie



Peyton Ross

One More Day

Chase Ross

Don't mind the rain
or the roaring wind,
the roaring sea
and its history of sin.
We're here to watch the sun
before the night will begin.
So, here's to one more day
before our company leaves the bay.

The finest ship
that sails the sea
is still a prison
for you and for me,
so let's just enjoy
our last chance to be
with only one more day
before our company leaves the bay.

Like waves within the water
of the forsaken deep,
there isn't much time
before the end does creep,
so enjoy every chance you get
and create some memories to keep
so when you have just one more day
your company can leave the bay.

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