

The Asbury Review

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excerpt from **"flies"** *Reagan Gibbs*

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supermoon

Reagan Gibbs

the cloud above the moon looks like a moth
plastered on my kitchen window
as i pour myself a cup of water
while the rest of the world is asleep
and i'm alone
again
planes racing
like the fireflies i see in my backyard
that i catch, name, and let go
so that I can play a part
in the act of creation
i wrap my hand around the moon
the glow escaping through my digits
and yank it down
lights flashing along to the tune in my head
are faint whispers of something outside of myself
the cloud is a dragon now
bounding toward the fireflies
i break out of my shell and race after him
the stars fade from my vision
as the moon screams for all of my attention
and whoever said they twinkle wasn't lying

The Girl, the Boy, and the Lightning

Emily Ellis

You welcome me in my pain.

See: you stand in the dark waiting
for me to admit we're finite.

My burning skin relishes the touch
of God's tears & the cloud of your breath—

focus.

My mind searches for where March rain
starts & the crook of your neck ends,
but loving is not that simple. You & I
were never meant to love with nothing
but your desire to hurl lightning
& my already scorched hands.

Palms up, lingering in the dark,
I wait for the rain to soothe my fingers.
I forget that we are as indefinite as the stars;
the sun & moon were never
promised an eclipse until science
gave it a name, & adam
didn't know there was too much of him
& too little of anything else
until God removed a rib.

A space exists between you & me
& between you & me,
I wonder what it will take
to fill it. In the beginning, we were
fragments of ourselves,
& only the lightning was missing.

four hearts

Tegan Merrick

For Levi, Taylor, and Jimmy

Last night we took 16 cafeteria crawfish
and buried them in the woods by the creek.
Stomping down soft earth,
a foreign world to their butter covered shells.
Soil alive and ready to welcome them in.
The worms and rollie pollies squirmed like hosts and neighbors.
We named each one as they went down into the shallow hole-
Martha, Tommy, Clawdette, and Tommy Jr-
we dug with my friend's orange trowel.

I giggled as someone suggested it,
"What difference would it even make?"
Except that our four hearts were inclined to them;
a sorry attempt at sympathy.
Deliver me that same sweet sleep.
Provide for me like I have tried to do for them.

I want to be granted mercy
by some creature far greater than I.
Carried by tumbling hands and delicate feet,
wrapped in a paper napkin shroud,
and laid in a peaceful grave.
I will bury you if you hold my hand-
here by the freshly dug grave of hopes and dreams.
How will you bury me?

How Long?

(Let the Reader Understand)

Mark Wood

Fingers stay sticky long after the orange is gone and digested,
its rind rotting, sweetness now bitter.

A smile at the text of a potential lover
prompts cursing rather than rejoicing,
and even our laughter draws up tears from the well.

Do you, too, mourn how love has mingled with grief?
Or am I the only one who notices
the iron bars in the paned beauty of glass stained?

Life *is* pain, but must it always be?

The fruit of the world-tree recoils from my touch,
the entire world is a waist-deep pool
of wine: my cup runneth over,
but I don't drink. Tantalus has nothing on me.

Every day we are forced to drink down a stale cup of coffee—
a bitter world left to steep in its own dregs—
so find some milk, some creamer, some sugar;
make it if you must,
but promise me you won't love the taste of the coffee itself.

Foxes have dens, birds of the air have nests;
I may have no place to lay my head,
but I have always written for you, for you, for you,
so tell me of hope, yours, and I will give you mine.

Weep and laugh at the dappled glory of sunlight on your friends' faces,
and let their laughter move you the way it moved
your eardrums: notice the ways your heartstrings
vibrate with the frequency of their voices.

A modern Prometheus, I have no liver left,
no courage to face you except in writing,
but when you cook with the fire I bring,

feel your face warm, remember
what the cruel gods can't take from you:
Count the ways one word brings laughter and
two people can make three; four years from now,
will you love five-year-old you?
Look into the shine of your eyes
and do not fear drowning in their depths.

Walk barefoot in the warm grass, bundle up,
write poetry in the crisp winter, and when your nose runs,
remember me.



above the clouds

Kourtney Kawata

Digital Photograph,
4000x5330 pixels

When Bears Get Hungry

Ella Fairbairn

EXT. AUTUMN WOODS - DAY

NATHANIEL (a juvenile black bear) ambles through the woods.

He walks up to a set of berry bushes, empty of all fruit, and turns away in disappointment.

He then lifts a rotting log and sniffs underneath it but drops it moments later.

Nathaniel rocks back on his haunches for a moment. He gets up and walks off.

EXT. TRAILHEAD - DAY

Nathaniel enters, and walks straight to the trash can.

He sits for a moment, staring at the trash can. Then looks away, looks back at it, and looks away again.

He stands up and takes a few steps towards the trash can, then turns around and sits again, once again staring at the trash can.

NATHANIEL

(to himself)

I'm sure Mum would understand.

I mean, after all, she wouldn't want me to starve.

Resolutely, he gets up and walks to the trash can. He fiddles for a second or two with the latch. The catch releases and Nathaniel reaches in.

He rummages through the trash. He pulls his paw out, holding a half-eaten brownie bar.

All of a sudden, Nathaniel's nose runs. Bucketfuls of snot pour from his nose, so much that his paws become slippery. He loses hold of the brownie bar he has just grabbed.

EXT. CAMPSITE - TWILIGHT

A campsite is set up in a clearing, with a waterproof bag suspended from a tree fifty feet away.

Nathaniel has dark rings under his eyes and looks slightly haggard. He stands at the edge of the campsite and furtively checks to see if the family is nearby.

He climbs the tree and pulls their food down.

He opens the bag and looks at the variety of cookies, sandwiches and other snacks. His stomach GROWLS loudly.

DAD (O.S.)

(Panicked)

Was that a bear?!

NATHANIEL

(in a high pitched, girlish voice)

Oh no, my stomach just growled.

DAD (O.S.)

You won't starve, don't worry.

Just wait until we get back to camp.

Nathaniel cocks an ear towards the voice, but the campsite remains still.

Nathaniel relaxes and opens the bag again. He fumbles it, dropping it to the ground, and we see that his eyes are now red and swollen, rendering him effectively blind.

EXT. CAMPSITE - DAY

MOM and DAD (30s), JACOB (8) and EMILY (4) pack up the camp, each getting in each other's way and the campsite is in utter chaos. There are tent poles jammed into the ground and leaning dangerously at eye level, and sleeping bags caught in the lower branches of trees. The tent canvas itself is being used as a table cloth, and there are crumbs and forgotten bits of food scattered across the whole area.

Amid the chaos, Nathaniel ducks unnoticed into the clearing and grabs half a sandwich off the table.

Before he can make his escape, he is seized with an uncontrollable fit of SNEEZING, and he is unable to move.

The whole family freezes, and as one they turn to stare at Nathaniel.

Dad points at Nathaniel with an expression of horror.

DAD
BEAR! THERE'S A BEAR IN OUR
CAMPSITE!

MOM
He's actually kind of cute.
And he looks hungry, poor thing.

JACOB
It must have been him that
rummaged through our food last night.
Emily toddles towards Nathaniel, arms outstretched and
reaching forward to pet him.

EMILY
Tedddyyyyyy!

WHOLE FAMILY
NO!
Nathaniel backs away while still sneezing.
Dad runs forward and sweeps Emily up off the ground,
retreating to a safe distance.

JACOB
Maybe if we gave him some food
it would distract him.
Son rummages in his backpack and pulls out a peanut
butter sandwich.

Nathaniel's sneezing intensifies.

Mom lets out a short LAUGH, and reaches into her own
backpack. She pulls out a box of crackers. In bold
lettering across the box are the words 'Allergen Free!'
She offers these to Nathaniel.

MOM
I think I can help, little one.
Give these a try and see if you
don't feel better.

Nathaniel takes the box of crackers, and immediately
the sneezing stops.

He devours the crackers. He politely hands the box back
to Mom.

NATHANIEL
That certainly hit the spot,
thank you ma'am.

Mom stuffs the empty box back in her backpack. The
family hikes away and Nathaniel trundles after them.

FADE TO BLACK.



The Gazebo Faith Kwong Digital Photograph, 2705x3670 pixels

Garden Gnomes

Josephine Burnham

I sometimes ask the gnome in the front yard
 what news he has to bring me.
Which princess saved, what dragon slayed,
 Or what the sun looks like around noon.
He tells me to pick up some flowers for him,
 The ones with the purple-ish stem at the end.
Which pixies survived, what stars he follows
 As guide,
 Or how the clouds meet the ground just past ten.

The gnome in the back, however,
meets a much different girl before bed.

I ask him what the light looks like, which songs play at night,
 And what signs I should look for instead.
Which birds hit the windows, what cat dies tomorrow,
 Or what my old dog is doing in Heaven.
He tells me not to worry,
 She's doing just fine,
 And the dragons she slew feel much better.

The turtles in the pond nearby
 chime in sometimes,
And give me some advice:

 Gnomes are notorious for good karma,
He tells me.
 Heed him & come back to find me.

Water trickles behind me while running down the forest floor:
 Come back to come back to come back to
 Find me.

The gnome in my front yard gives me maps of stars to get me going.
Which hills to climb, what battles to fight,
 And when to return to the turtles.

Wait·ing

/'wādiNG/

Ellie Eberhard

noun

1. There's a cottage down the road that's built like a home, and I imagine you and I in it.
2. Ivy digs into the cracks in the wall, inching closer toward the chimney, and unruly white hydrangeas spill across the sidewalk. The ghost of a porch swing shrieks with the wind. The living room windowsills have rotted and the back steps have crumbled, but a family of robins have built their nest in the tree by the kitchen window.
3. I see you in an armchair by the fireplace, a crocheted patchwork blanket, stitched with love, thrown over your lap. Socked feet, stacks of books, a forgotten cup of tea. The echo of laughter etched deep into the floorboards. Sinatra croons on the record player. Dirty plates abandoned for another day as we slow dance with soapy hands.
4. They say patience is a virtue, but I have always been impatient and *goddammit i love you*.

The Jupiter Lake Thing

Aiden Gaither

Twenty-five miles outside of Knoxville, Tennessee, nestled next to a glorified puddle they call Jupiter Lake, lies Camp Chickasaw. The ten functional cabins out of twelve are bustling with eleven-year-olds and high school camp counselors doing anything but watching the children. From June 6th to July 30th, more camps are hosted at Chickasaw than can be confidently accounted for by the junior staff. Dylan, unlike the rest of his small town elementary school peers, was reluctant as ever to depart from his Alabama home.

"A good experience," the mother said it would be.

"A break for us," added the father.

Dylan never learned to swim. The first night passed with embarrassment when he refused to get in the water. On the second, the high schoolers learned from their mistakes and didn't even try to get him in. On the third, he sat from his bed watching the others wrapping up, ending their time in the lake; and soon, the camp. He noticed how (in smaller words, of course) the water looked different without the moonlight refraction of dusk. He had wedged the window open, flooding the room with laughter. *It really was much too hot in the cabin without the window raised.*

They all made their way inside, drying themselves, and they went off to bed, a place that Dylan was already well acquainted with. The staff did their rounds for the first hour to ensure everyone made it safely to sleep, though they wouldn't have had a clue if any of them were missing. They soon dismissed their duties to sneak around, unbeknownst to the children. The inattentiveness of the camp counselors (who would flaunt that title proudly as well as this experience on their résumé for the following four years) went unnoticed by camp directors. Meanwhile, Dylan was fixating on the beds in room F of cabin 2. He counted them.

One: his own, which was softer than the one at home. Two: Asher dozed on his equally soft mattress, and Dylan could have sworn that he heard Asher sleep talking. Three: Jackson slept like a dog. Certainly sounded like one, at least. *One, me. Two, Asher. Three, Jackson.* The noisy sleepers were a hindrance to Dylan's rest, but eventually he managed to close his eyes. *One, two, three,* he thought. *One, two, three.*

Dylan slept well for a number of hours. He was disturbed, not by the sleepful noises of his two summer roommates, but this dripping, perhaps. He opens his eyes to investigate the sound. One, two—

It was a man. Taller than anything the boy had ever seen. Skin and bone, pale as night with the moon reflecting cleanly by his naked scalp. The man stands at the foot of Jackson's bed for a few moments before his hands grab hold of the blanket, just at Jackson's legs. He remains still another moment. In the darkness, Dylan faintly sees the man's arms moving so, so slowly, mechanically pulling the blanket towards

himself and off the bed. Winding his arms, handful after handful of bedding. After another moment, Dylan finishes his thought.

"Three," he whispers involuntarily.

The man's head smoothly cranes toward Dylan. The long arms freeze like the gears of a dying machine. The man stares, seemingly lacking the eyes to do so. Dylan instantly slams his eyes shut and holds his breath in terror. His little hands shield his ears as he notices the quickening of water drops on the cabin floor. He shivers, and sweats, but most importantly, he waits. He isn't quite sure what for, but he waits. Dylan has no idea how long he has remained so, but when he finally opens his eyes, he is relieved to find that the man is no longer there.

Neither, however, is Jackson.

Dylan screams. He screams and screams for the camp directors, the staff, his fellow students, his parents. God, anyone who might save Jackson from unimaginable horrors. He summons, rather unfortunately, he thought, camp counselor Jared. He bursts through the door, leaving a woman of the same age standing in the frame. He hurries over to Dylan, who recounts the story. Jared does his best to make him feel heard while doing the minimum work required to get back to the woman in the doorway.

"A nightmare," says Jared. The lump in Dylan's throat begs for understanding as Jared leaves the room.

"Go back to bed," says Asher, who was woken by the fit. "He's probably off in the cabin somewhere."

He isn't. As Asher closes his eyes, preparing to finish off his night of sleep, Dylan sits up, in the middle of his bed. Scanning, and scanning the room, endlessly. His bedding is still neatly made with a bulk of it meeting at his lap, where his hands rest. *It really is much too hot in the cabin with the blanket on anyway.* After some time, his head sways to the waves faintly heard from the window. He thinks again about how clearly the sound makes its way off the beach, up the steps, and into this very room. His eyes wander away from surveillance of the room, and out the open window at the lake. The water so dark and colorless, yet the waves distinguished.

For the first time in his three days at camp Chickasaw he finds himself wishing that he could swim. Wishing to get as far away from this cabin as he could. He pictures diving into the water, staying afloat. He dreams of making it all the way to the other side where none of the others dare. A boat to take him out of reach from the worldly things and away to safety where he could rest again. He would sit on the edge of the boat at sunset, dipping his feet in the water. As the cold meets his toes, the sun is replaced by utter darkness, not a star in the sky. Just like that, he was stuck. Trapped, with his feet in the water. He breathes a claustrophobic lungful of air and begins to panic as the hands pull him in.

He wakes from the dream, feeling more ensnared than before.

With limbs stuck at his sides, it takes all his strength to roll his head. Dylan finds that much like Jackson, Asher is nowhere to be found. Blanket and all have vanished. He straightens his head, beginning to breathe in uncontrolled, sporadic bursts.



YELLOW Kaitlyn Wilson Pen and Acrylic on Matte Board

I wish I was back on that boat. It really is much too hot in the cabin anyways, better off in the water. Water. Dripping. Even through the covers, Dylan feels the warm rivulets sinking through and onto his skin, right at his feet. He strains his neck terribly in an attempt to lift it.

The man stands before Dylan, studying him. At the foot of his bed, of course. Water is flowing off of his body onto the bed while he hovers above, perfectly still. Watching over the child as though he were protecting him. Dylan now sees in greater detail that despite the man's skinny structure, he has a rather bloated face. His lips are a blue-gray color and his nose is so corroded that whatever remains is hanging off bone. His cheeks and ears look flogged to nothing but moldy tendons and cartilage. As black as they were before, Dylan is most disturbed by the fleshy abyss where eyes should be.

His curiosity is interrupted by the man's hands inching forward. He winds the blanket, as slowly and mechanically as before. He smiles. Impossibly wide, the man smiles. Stretching nearly from ear to ear. He chuckles this awful noise that pities Dylan.

Who did this to you? The deep, rhythmic, drowned, and muffled sound fills Dylan's ears. Still paralyzed, he feels the air of the cabin meet his skin as the bedding uncovers him. By the time it can all be found in a heap on the floor, the man's once joyous face appears now innocent, afraid, and perhaps ashamed. Dylan shivers from the cold air. Or perhaps it's the image burnt in his eyes, like exposure on a roll of film. The image of something living that really shouldn't be.

The skinny, wet arms reach forward. And just before his shriveled, pruned hands reach the boy, his tiny lungs finally overcome the paralysis with the loudest blood curdling scream he didn't know he was capable of. Water gushes from the man's mouth as Dylan's light body is lifted from the safety of his bed. The man stands straight. Dylan is held at arm's length while he thrashes. With the stench of lakewater engulfing the boy, he realizes that whatever was about to happen to him, no amount of screaming would ever be enough to bring the help he needs before it does.

This is the fear poem

Grace Clark

Here, fear is not an unplanned scream
Forced and sudden and raw,
A shaking against what I cannot stop.

Here, I am eleven years old, with my sisters,
Breaking open the truth like helicopter seeds
And leaving them bare in the sun.

Here, I am in charge.
You can go ahead and kill me,
But you cannot be surprised when I haunt you.

Here, I am afraid and I am not scared of it.

I am afraid of the fear turning into anger and
I'm afraid of getting angry the way men do.
The way the sound enters your bones and stays there.

I am afraid of what my body remembers that I don't.

Here is the fear poem—
I can write this through shaking hands,
I can throw the fear in the air like those helicopter seeds,
And laugh as I watch it fall.

Noises in the woods at night

Josephine Burnham

My heart leaps for you in more ways than I can count: leaping, leapfrog, sticky, four-fingered hands. Frogs are a symbol of rebirth. Never hasty, always patient, sometimes bold. The toad a good companion makes: fervent, thundering, and needs to share her thoughts- the same way in which a girl wears a heart on her sleeve: never hidden, always beating, sometimes bleak. I wish to never see a frog in dire need of something that cannot be found outdoors. Similar to the frog or the toad or the owl, upon the forest floor is where I find most comfort. The rustling of companies of fish on land a soothing sound, their footsteps often echo through my head. *One day, they tell me, you will learn to understand:* the soft heart of a lion, the soothing touch of a raccoon paw, the song of an owl like a kiss,

A human scared of the slippery touch.

My hands feel for you in the dead of night. Sleeping, slumber, insight, tranquil wings. I fall awake at 2 am and reach for you beside me. An owl hoots in the distance near a running train. An owl, a train horn, a child born, a pixie gets her wings. Under saturn light I long for your eyes to linger upon my spotty skin and pink chipped nails and clumsy legs. Give me enough time to find that owl. I think he'll transport me to you tomorrow.

A coffee drains slowly as I glance up towards the sky and pray for the right words to fall out. I'm not quite sure how well the animals are doing, but I think they're doing fine. They sing to me at night. The spiders come to their aid and make silky blankets for when it's cold. The slimy frog, the croaking toad, the noisy owl, the wide-eyed girl. A coffee, a pancake, an hour or two. A nap during the day, kiss me awake, hold me back to sleep 'till a phone alarm rings. The dragon on my arm comes to life right at dusk. He climbs around my shoulder and whispers in my ear his thoughts: *Peace and clarity and all things graceful and kind,* he tells me,

write another poem but don't ever let it die...

The Importance of Grasshoppers

Sabina Boyer

If the grass wasn't hopped
The grass wouldn't stop.
It would just keep on growing and growing.
And when it reached the sky
In despair, it would cry
"Someone help! I don't know where I'm going!"



My Dearest Eleanor

Heidi Wheelock
Graphite on Paper,
10" x 14"

plum

Kaitlyn McCracken

today I cried like I do every time I have to buy a new dress.

my confession is that I left a hanger and seven minutes of tears
on the floor of a Macy's formal department dressing room
because I don't handle newness well.

unfamiliar clothes on an unfamiliar skin –
cells - strangers to each other
and fabric clings to the flesh I am meant to die to.

the first forbidden was that
I was made good
and the second was eating
and I think that the freckles lining my jaw,
the only parts of my body that feel like mine
might kill me one day.

I think when they do
you'll finally get what you want.
my body hollow and dispersed –
but all the places I might go.

and I pray to god that I end up in a seed
a tree
a plum tree
a plum –
the kind you can't eat pretty

and someone with a body like mine will place me between her teeth
and I will slide down her chin
because I am good
fuel her body
because it is good
and I hope I am with her just long enough
to smile with her when she tries on a dress in a random Macy's
and I'll whisper to her
from the fullness of her belly
that she is made good.



PEARS Kaitlyn Wilson Oil on Canvas, 12"x16"

i don't think i can be a mother

Anna Lowe

i do not want to take a bath! i know you don't, but your mommy asked me to give you a bath, and i am just trying to follow what she wants. i want mommy! mommy's at work right now, but she will be home so so soon and will be so happy that you took a bath. i hate you! i won't take a bath! can you please come out from behind the toilet? no, i don't want to! i want mommy! i know. if you take a bath, we can eat nerds and have ipad time. i don't like you! you're the meanest babysitter ever! i won't make you take a bath, but i'm sure it is what your mommy would want. you don't have to like me; i am just here to keep you safe. i don't want you here. i really want mommy but

mommy does not want me.

—

do you want to eat nerds in the bathtub?

mmhmmm.

Good News

Klara Kinman

Today my mom shares God with me,
scooping lentil soup,
warm and green and
overflowing
into a white bowl,
into my hungry hands.
A mouthful of goodness.

You tell me to listen
to the bad news first
so the good news sounds great

but I am too busy listening
to my grandmother laugh
her breathy laugh.
My grandmother, who
wraps me in her grandmother's quilt,
who tells me stories of the tiny stitches
pink and patchworked and sturdy.

What I am saying is
I already know God is the stuff of
soft lips and baby's breath and bandaids
and lullabies and bedtime stories
and all the things we wished God had been
the first time we heard about him.

That the moment when dawn awakes,
if I squint hard enough,
I see God kneading dough
with wrinkled hands,
folding flour and yeast and newness
into itself.

my only promise

Emelia Conley

lavender hand soap that's too watered down
and it comes from an orange dispenser,
not the color orange, the fruit,
and you use it to wash your face and it reminds you of home
because that's how long it's been there.
and your mother's bedroom shoes scuff the hardwood,
one hundred years old,
and you are so awake
and so asleep
you aren't even sure if you're faking.
A bathroom door opening and English Leather for special occasions, strong and too much
and the best thing you've ever smelled
even though you sneeze like its April.
You'd know it anywhere.
Not that you smell it somewhere and recognize it,
but that it is etched on you,
like reaching into the bathroom cabinet,
reaching for curiosity,
reaching and finding a scar from a razor you didn't know to be afraid of.
Change is the only Constant,
like I take my Constant Comment without creme or sugar
even though i never liked it to begin with.
like how a place i never wanted to let go of becomes so uninfluential.
like how I never looked for you until I'm reminded of you everywhere.
the only promise i'm given is change.
So the only promise I'll make is that I'll change too.

I Would Be

Rissa Green

If you were a knight, I would be the wind. I would press and press and press, I would kiss your neck under the watchful eye of the sun. I would flick the rain into your eyes and then laugh at your spluttering. I would stir the autumn leaves as you take your helmet off in the quiet of the woods. I would make you look.

If you were a knight, I would be a little red fox in the thicket, delighted, watchful. I would guard the night as you slept, noting the owls and the mice, the crickets and the moths. I would sing you to sleep.

If you were a knight, I would be the land you fight for. I would be the earth, the rocks and trees, the streams and towns and castles. I would send down my roots, I would tumble down my creeks, I would point my turrets to the sky, and whenever you spoke of me, the word *home* would lace every syllable.

If you were a knight, I would be the moon. Think about it. Think hard.

I would hang myself among the stars if it meant you might look at me and smile. I would reflect all the light in the world if it meant your path might become clearer before you. If it meant you would never stumble over the roots and dips in the road. If it meant you might be safe.

If I were the moon, you would be the night. You in me and me in you.



Soldier Rose Branan Pen on Paper, 6"x4"

Up

Kaitlyn McCracken

“Up.”

The boy’s hands made a motion somewhere between a flap and a grasp. He was only the slightest bit taller than the bench I sat on, and even then, I think it was only because of the wisps of his blond hair, standing completely upright.

“Up.” It was more insistent the second time. His eyes looked glassy, and I couldn’t tell if it was their particular shade of blue, the brightness of the unprotected light of noon, or some kind of child emotion. I looked around to find an adult that might be missing him and had the ugly idea that in this child’s glassy eyes, I was an adult.

I remember when we found a stray dog once. I was nine. We named the dog Mop because of his sand-colored curls, and we put signs up around our street so that the owner would know we found him. Secretly I loved the dog and hoped we never found his owner because then we would have to keep him. My mom told me that if I loved Mop, I would want him to be with his mom and dad.

“Up!” Red dusted his nose and cheeks, veiling freckles and I wondered how long he’d been in the sun. Except it wasn’t the sun, it was an inward red and the glass broke, and tears fell from his eyes. Those big child tears from child emotions.

“I... I don’t...” I couldn’t pick him up. No matter how much I wanted to. He was not mine and I couldn’t pick him up.

We found Mop’s owner the very same day. His real name was something stupid like Ernie but to me he was Mop and I know I loved him but still I wanted him to be with me rather than someone who would name him Ernie.

Gravel crunched from down the path and the same blond hair on a head much further from the ground came sprinting in our direction. The man’s eyes were not even interested in

the idea of my direction, instead fixed on the boy, hands still extended and wanting lifted.

"I'm so sorry," the man said, grabbing one of the boy's extended hands. His apology was thick and round with his accent and I think that it's weird how this boy will grow up to sound something like that.

"It's not a problem," I assured him. I couldn't help but notice that he still hadn't lifted his child, even though his asking has not stopped – hands still stretching uncomfortably upward. *Pick up your kid.* I kept thinking as he stood in front of me, more interested in my obtrusive accent than his child's desperate "UP."

My mom never let me lift Mop. She said she was afraid he would bite me but really I think she was afraid my little arms would drop him. A few years ago, she told me she was actually afraid that I would love it too much and throw a fit when I had to send him away. I might not have held him, but I still cried as we handed him off to his owner in an empty Aldi parking lot. I watched his curls bounce as he hopped into the backseat of his owner's van, without giving me a second look.

Both the boy and the man were wearing navy and gray striped shirts and I watched the sun burn lines peek from their collars as they walked away from me. The boy, whose name was something like Ben, tugged on the closest wrinkle of his dad's Khaki's. I could still see the word forming on his lips. "Up."

Pick up your kid.

Pick up your kid.

Pick up your kid.

I didn't stop thinking it until I saw the last of the little one's curls disappear behind a buildings corner.

anger!

Tiffany Rutledge

you give the virgin birth a holiday
and i join you. the race to eat
stuffing and chocolate cake
begins after the story ends,
most likely read
by the perceived holiest male figure.
children laugh and adults grumble
about their lives and i,
stuck between
consciousness and college,
am still running on survival.

you give me your word that life is better young.
there is no reason to be tired.
i am young. it is pointless to
complain. i am young. there is
no such thing as my anger.
holidays should be happy because i am young.

somehow, i am old enough to leave.
if your love must be asked for
and my needs are not met, then
why are we celebrating?
tell me now that you don't have faith in me
while i am standing right in front of you.
tell me now that your table is full
while there are stacked chairs
in the corner and jesus is waiting.
tell me now that your idea of connection
is in the blood and the blood alone.

tell me now you believe in god
and not me
tell me now you struggle to hold your tongue
when i walk into the room
and i'll shout before god knew me
he was speechless.

girl from indiana

Alex Nicholson

“Burning haibun” style by torrin a. greathouse

she wears an indiana sweatshirt, so clearly that’s where she’s from. a good state, indiana. not mixed up in those ohio-michigan politics. did you know that ohioans offer child sacrifices to squirrels and force-feed buckeyes to michiganers? thank God she’s not from there. thank God she’s a good indiana girl. thank God we don’t have a brutish ohio freak among us.

what do you mean she’s not from indiana? why was she wearing the sweatshirt then? what a dirty liar, leading us on like that. do you think she’d swallow the buckeye whole if we ask? i think we could make her indianan if we made her try hard enough. God, what a stupid freak.

she	sweats						sacrifices to
	b	e		b	ut		
a	good	girl.		she	i	s	
a	liar	like	f	the	whole		
	o			u	s		

she

i s

whole

Spaghetti Dinner

Joy Hibshman

I am a tiny girl
with perfect china
feet and hair,

picking her way
through a plate
of spaghetti

— a plate on a green
frog mat with bulging, gamboge eyes
that mark a place—

a place that should be filled
because she has a seat,
(they say) at the table

— one of belugas,
and gehennas in the lawn,
and canoe gardens on the roof

and conversations
over her head
and under her feet

and held hands
under table clamps,
and she misses this place.

Yes, I am the small girl
on the plate
picking through spaghetti

—sometimes buried
and sometimes heaving,
trying not

to break the strands
because then it's even harder
to match end to end

and order the unending
chaos mess of red
paste like the blood

of the broken strands
and the pressured mess
I am.

She attempts
to reorder the pasta into neat,
clean rows—but sometimes

I just sit in my little blue dress
at the pinnacle of Spaghetti Hill,
with small feet

dangling over the rose bed
and observe the
mahogany furniture.

Words

Marcie Hughes

Words are melty goop
Fun to play with and to eat
But sometimes it's gross.



Deep Ethereal Kennedy Roberge Acrylic Painting, 19"x24"

Something to do with clocks

Aiden Gaither

1AM

The suffocating smell of July
smothers me still in March.
The way my skin crawled then
is nothing to its leaden stillness now.
Familiar with the flesh that remembers
how touch is a friend, but
I feel flesh-
No, my flesh,
as everything
wicked that it could be.
A continuity error, it seems.
A discrepancy by God.
It is not my skin, not my flesh.
Why can I feel it now?
I've never been so aware
of the way blood thickens and flows,
the isometric contractions of muscle,
the beating, beating, beating of chest.

2AM

Distended tongue and vice grip joints
an effort to convince me
that my anatomy is not so foreign.
I asphyxiate on my breath
as I did twenty years ago,
taking my first,
not yet sure what it means
to be tethered by tissue
to the respiratory system
that hasn't learned to scream.

3AM

The pores on my spine sweat beads,
the lump in my throat thickens,
twisted butterflies to knots to
the dam ducts of my eyes won't break.
Get it over with.

4AM

This body is not mine.
This body is not mine.
This body is not mine.

5AM

God
I hope it ends.

6AM

7AM

8AM

9AM

Snooze.

grief is not simple

Tiffany Rutledge

grief is sitting in a salon chair for a haircut and noticing the handles of the trimming scissors because its pattern matches the style of your dad's favorite 1960s tv show's main character's daughter's scarf in season one episode seven, but only in season one episode seven. now you are back home on a Monday night at twelve years old eating freshly baked chocolate chip cookies with a version of your dad who has all of himself and eight years left, but you can't remember the name of the show. you'll ask the hairdresser if she knows the name of the pattern and you might ask google to find season one episode seven of a 1960s tv show that no one really remembers except him because of course he remembers. you won't find it.

flies

Reagan Gibbs

i started letting the flies settle where they wanted this summer. i figured it was easier to let them mingle where they pleased rather than constantly swat them away to no avail. from there i started unpacking my prejudice against them. to most, a fly is a pest. a carrier of germs. a harbinger of rot. but the rot is inescapable. it doesn't hurt to make friends with it along the way.

my best friend and i always joke that our backup plan is to become morticians. a career in the arts isn't viable these days, i say. we'll go to mortuary school together, then start our own funeral home. she told me the other day, the fact she grows the hair out on her legs shouldn't matter to others. one day there will be worms crawling around her eye sockets, and death will deprive us of the right to judge.

as i type, flies tickle at the tendrils on my calves. i'm matching with the woman on my right; her tattoos display ants crawling up her leg. what once was a symbol of the end is now a reminder that i'm not there yet. a simple movement by a force outside of myself sends a signal up to my brain that i am present and alive. that the rot has not caught up to me yet, despite what my mind will have me believe.

Communion

Alex Nicholson

I am starving and we are the Starved.

There are twelve of us seated along the length of the table, all in various stages of decay. One of us has holes in his shirt. The one next to him has patches of hair falling out. My own hands are filthy and cracked, the redness showing through the grime from hours upon hours of work hoping to be able to afford a single meal.

The room they've taken us to is dark save for the candelabras placed intermittently on the table. The golden light of the candles makes the feast before us look even more divine—it shines on the goat roast at the center of the table, the stuffed pig with the apple in its mouth, the caviar in golden bowls. I cannot see the edges of the room; I don't even remember where the door is. I'm not sure I want to. I've never seen so much food in my entire life.

The Fed do not sit with us at the table.

Instead, they stare from across the room, all smiles and waves and proper clothing that fits each and every one of them like a glove. It was kind of them to take us in—to collect us off the streets outside their sanctuary and bring us here. It's even kinder to let us sit at their table, to put the trash next to the velvet and gold furniture. The other side of the table remains vacant, and yet still they do not sit.

None of us have reached for any food yet. I can feel the hunger pangs in my stomach, as surely as one can feel themselves breathing, but something stops me from lunging toward the food. Perhaps it is the silence of the Fed; when I try to concentrate on them, the only thing I hear is the breathing of the Starved at the table and the ringing in my ears.

Then it happens: one of the Starved reaches a shaking hand for the apple in the mouth of the pig.

CRACK!

Just as quickly, she snaps her hand back, a drop of blood staining the pristine white tablecloth where it just was. She cradles it to her chest, silent and still staring at the apple. I can see her ribs through her threadbare shirt and her sallow skin.

One of the Fed steps forward, a bloody whip in his hands. He is dressed more finely than any of the Fed around him—all long

silver robes and vestments. A crown sits on top of his head, small enough to be slightly lost in his blond curls but still decadent enough to be worth meals for everyone in the room.

“No one may eat,” the man says, his voice as velvety as the chairs we sit in, “until we have finished our Rites.”

Before any of us can ask what that means, the rest of the Fed step forward, books large enough to be considered bricks in each of their hands. Each one is heavily bookmarked, and carried reverently and delicately—yet firmly, as if they were birds that could fly away at any moment. When they open the tomes, the sound of the book spines cracking fills the air, louder than any whip could hope to be.

As the Fed read—their voices droning in some ancient language none of us can understand—my eyes do not leave the food on the table. I do not need to look to know that none of the other Starved have moved their gazes either.

A fly has crept into the room and has landed on the roasted goat. It mocks us, with its plump body and filthy legs, rubbing all over the flesh of the meal. How many flecks of grime is it depositing, in the time it takes the Fed to chant their rituals? My hands itch to slap it away—they twitch once in the direction of the plate before I remember the whip and stow them in my threadbare pockets.

The others, though...they are not nearly as controlled as I am. An old Starved man with violet bags under his eyes lurches out of his chair almost faster than I can see, hands stretched out for a basket of croissants close to his end of the table.

THUD! One of the tomes smashes into the elderly man’s head, hard enough to leave a splash of gore on the pastries as he collapses against the table, silent and still. Across the room, the Fed who had thrown the book leans into the person beside him to read from his neighbor, both of whom have smiles on their clean faces.

The Starveds’ unsettled murmuring is drowned out by the monotone chant of the Fed. How long has it been since any of us ate? A day? A week? Longer? My existence has consisted of being aware of how long I can go without food before my body gives up. I know it has been forty days and seven hours, and I know I have one more night left in me before my stomach

consumes itself. I know that the pang in my belly and ache in my bones will be the end of me, and I know that the others feel the same as I.

More insects. The flies must have carried their pestilence with them, for now the apple in the mouth of the pig is blemished with brown. Beside me, the Starved woman breathes loudly, her skin pulled so tightly over her face that it reveals the harsh angles of her skull. Her mouth is open, eyes fixed not on the flies or the maggot now crawling over the rump of the goat, but on the caviar. A long line of drool falls out of her mouth, dripping onto her hands and carving a line through the filth there.

I look away, down the table. Some of the Starved have stopped moving. Some of them have torn the velvet chairs with how tightly they grip the armrests, only to go limp moments later. A meaty *thunk!* And the rattle of the dishes to my right, and I do not need to turn to see that the drooling woman is dead. My scalp itches, and I do not move to scratch it.

The Fed chant louder, the crescendo of their voices mirroring the height of hunger in my body. I can feel it crawling up my ribcage, toward my heart, and I know that it will not be long.

And yet. When the Fed chant, I can almost understand it. Their drone fills the room like the slumbering growl of a bear, or the rumbling purr of a lion. When I move, their hands twitch toward their books, or the whips at their sides.

And when the candles burn low, I can see the shadows over their faces that make them look as I do.

All at once, the chanting stops.

But the noise in the room does not. At first, I think my ears are ringing again—but when I look around at the other Starved, and find them still or bleeding or drooling or decomposing, I realize that the ringing is not ringing. It's *buzzing*.

My head itches, and a fly crawls over my cheek, and there is no more food on the table. There is only death and corpses and insects—blackest insects, covering the corpses of the Starved and the flesh of the pig.

When the Fed put down their tomes to sit on the other side of the table, knives and forks in their hands, they are just as starved as I am. And when they eat, the blood of us runs down their chins.

Worms

Taylor Boss

I don't remember much about my family's old house. This is largely due to the fact that we moved when I was about three years old. One of the things I don't remember, was that when it rained, a battalion of worms would seek refuge from the outdoors in our carpeted basement. Little did they realize, they were actually fleeing toward their untimely demise.

My parents would routinely discover a second carpet of worms spreading through the basement from the back door. The outer ring of worms were dry and shriveled, while the worms closer to the door were often still clinging to life. My parents began putting out salt to fend off the squirming invaders, and made a habit of doing so.

Another thing I don't remember is the house being sold. Maybe I wasn't there. Or maybe my parents were so good at pretending that everything was fine and normal, that not only did they convince a three-year-old me that all was right with the world, but also the two grown adults that had come to tour our house.

This day would go down in infamy. Maybe my parents had forgotten the salt. Maybe rain hadn't been in the forecast. Maybe these worms had evolved beyond the preventative qualities of salt.

Whatever the case, my parents found worms splayed out over the carpet on the day of the showing, and before they had time to wonder what the heck had even happened, the doorbell rang. Now, my parents were in youth ministry. They were experts in crisis control.

So my dad scrambled up the stairs, plastering on his biggest customer service smile, cultivated from many years of delivering appliances in a small town during his youth. My mom, saint that she is, began hucking worm corpses out into the daylight with her bare hands. As my mom hastened to her grim work, my father began stalling the potential buyers, weaponizing their southern propensity for small talk.

It's not unlikely that my dad brought the potential buyers back into the same rooms more than once. It's also not unlikely that by doing this, he led the buyers to suspect that he might be a murderer trying to trap them in his house. When he had stalled as much as a human can stall while still sort of being considered sane, my mom finally emerged from the basement, probably wiping some suspicious (but totally not worm gut-related) mush on her jeans.

The basement was clear, the day was saved, and the sale was made; the buyers being none the wiser about the carnage that had taken place just moments before they descended into that basement.

I think about those people sometimes, the people who my parents conned into taking our house with a basement that served as a death chamber and graveyard for worms. I would give just about anything to have seen their faces the next time it rained.



Main St. II Levi Smith
Black and White Film, 12620x8343 pixels

If Christ Was Born Today

Anna Bruns

It would not be unlike his birth two thousand years ago.
Mary would be holding her belly,
Leaning on Joseph in a crowded subway,
And they would call her a hooker
While continuously singing Veni Veni Emmanuel.
God cannot use a pregnant girl,
And he will come in a way that they will recognize
They will know him and see his face and remember how to act,
So that he might look at them and say "I was hungry, and you fed me."
Mary is eating a protein bar while Joseph is scrolling on his phone,
Looking for a clinic,
Looking for a bed.
The woman reading the newspaper scoffs
The old man with the briefcase is deliberately avoiding their gaze,
Even though he can't read the graffiti in front of him.
A little girl looks up at Mary, on the stop between Broadway and Main.
"You're so pretty," she says,
And for a moment, she sees a kaleidoscope of eyes and wings
Wrapped around the soon-to-be mother.
She hears singing,
Her eyes widen in wonder and praise.
Gaude, Gaude, Emmanuel.

I Met a Rat at a Bus-Stopⁱ

Hunter Smith

Said her name was something like Caesar,
that she'd been waitin' all day for someone to see her.
Phantoms of gray, humanity all passed us by,
the bench so vacant that it began to cry,
under the weight of the vagabond Bus-Stop.

Her fur was matted and torn, crusted in places.
A hundred years and only new faces.
She came from a land of shattered dreams and broken roads,
with a remembrance of time that only corrodes.
Here in the void of the Babylon Bus-Stop.

"These wriggling, wormly digits deserve the silence," she said.
Craggy canyons separated her joints, long since red.
But invisible ooze coiled round the pulsing nerves of my hands,
and I began to suspect we had tread the same sands,
to waste away here at the called upon Bus-Stop.

"Does the wait ever end?" I asked her that day.
"Oh soon. So soon," I heard her say
with a sympathetic spit and grit in her gut.
Then I understood that we'd been born in a rut,
to end up here at the Rubicon Bus-Stop.

Enraptured trumpeting tires slowed.
My eyes met time's advance within the livings' abode.
A pasty man with crooked nose tipped his hat to me.
He was so bright, asked for a light, preyed upon my charity.
Just two strangers at the aboveground Bus-Stop.

He extended his hand and plagued mine with soot.
Said he was a leader whose empire'd gone kaput.
Drank and smoke for he held himself no rules.
No point in holdin' reins that only latch to fools.
Both now stranded at the lost and found Bus-Stop.

His whispers held utopia, and by now I had a taste,
this binging bitten caravan could free me from my waste.
Was thinking 'bout some brisket, been days since I'd eaten.
He turned to me and sighed, "It's a long road out of Eden."
It began here at the burial mound Bus-Stop.

But something inside snapped quick like a psalm,
I could feel the searing squeal of the snake oil on my palm.
I held no distain for him, let his chips fall where they may,
but do not blame me that I quickly walked away
from that old Greyhound Bus-Stop.

It's been quite the years since, and I've endured my Damascus.
If you need directions, you just come and ask us.
We know which chariots to take and how long you will wait.
A thousand years more I'll stand guard with my mate,
the rat I met at the soul bound Bus-Stop.

ⁱBased on "Long Road Out of Eden" by The Eagles

(almost)

Tegan Merrick

Darkness, no streetlamps
Darker than the weight of your lashes
Lights flash quickly, three times in a row

Your voice, suspended in air
The whirl of the road
My hands, somewhere else
Time moving faster than us

Coming toward us
Two lights cut a hole in the darkness
Stabbing the back of my skull
Right toward us

COMING RIGHT TOWARDS US

FASTER

FASTER

PIERCING

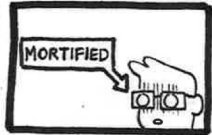
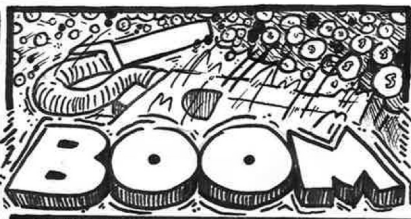
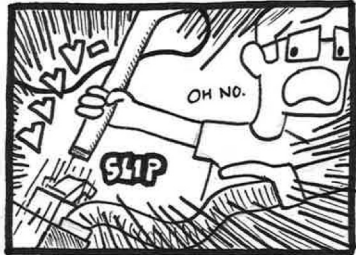
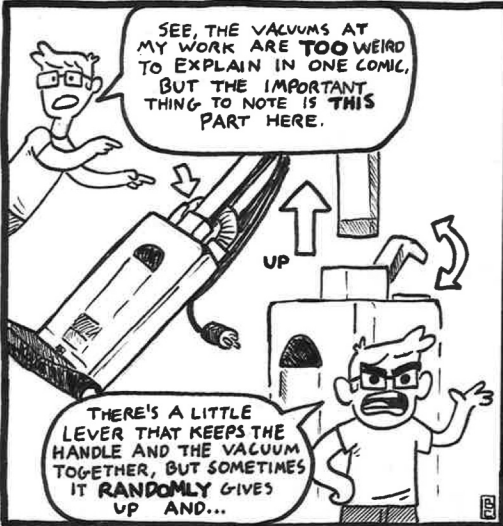
STABBING

FASTER FASTER-

but i swerve.
we do not die.
no air bags or hospital gowns for us.
no scrapped metal or insurance calls.
damn the darkness, damn the lights.

we live to create more life
to flash before our eyes.
we live to see and breathe
and sit and love and
live.

First Day on the Job Ben Carpenter Ink on Paper, 8.5"x11"



That Guy

Sabina Boyer

For every park, neighborhood, university, or cafe, there is always “that guy.” Most likely, unless you are one, you’ve never talked to one. They are the true medians of mankind, not too tall, not too short, not handsome, but not ugly enough to warrant a second look, with just the right blend of normality and awkward energy to be appointed an official wallflower before anyone even asks their name. In the park where I run, he was a guy with a dog.

The first time I saw him, I was running in the opposite direction, so I could see him clearly, if only for a moment. His dark hair hung in a bowl cut, not something very common in our neighborhood, and there were just enough hints of hair around his jaw and chin to warrant the name facial hair without being able to categorize what sort. His dark, European eyes were sunk back a little, hiding halfway behind two tired bags, but his nose didn’t bother hiding in the slightest bit. All together a bit of a confused profile, but the thing that I really noticed about him was his walk. It was all spread to the sides, though the steps were a bit too short to be called struts and instead left him simply fanning himself out, spread like butter trying to fit all the way across the breadth of his open, army green coat. I nodded as I passed him by, but he didn’t nod back. He didn’t even look up when his dog watched me go past. Then again, it wasn’t all that strange in hindsight. He never did look up much.

The next time I caught sight of him, he was all alone in the dog park. Well, not quite alone. His large German Shepherd explored the canine obstacle course, always staying curiously close to the man’s side. He was a massive dog, built for bounding after sheep over rolling country hills rather than alley cats through city streets. His large frame seemed to crush his back legs, shortening them and giving him an almost noble curve as he stood, head bent back, watching his master rub his hands together in the cold. In all the times I saw him, the great dog never barked. Not once. And each time I passed by the dog park that day, the two were the same: the large dog sniffing out the frosted ground a square inch at a time, only pausing to pad back over to the army green silhouette. The last time I passed, however, I could sense something had changed. The dog was poised perfectly still in front of the man, ears perked, tail frozen mid-swing as he stared up in fascination at his master’s expression. The man was smiling ever so slightly, an odd, crooked little smile that seemed to crack his face apart as it grew. Both the dog and I watched uncertainly as slowly, ever so slowly, the man bent at the waist, nearing his face closer and closer to the great, brown snout. Then, all at once, so suddenly it made me skip a step in my jog, the man jerked forwards towards the animal, flinging his arms out on either side. The great shepherd leaped away for his life, his tail madly thumping against his sides as he pranced excitedly around his master’s legs. The man laughed a little haltingly, his eyes shining from their caves as he gave the dog an apologetic pat. I couldn’t help but grin.

It was several weeks before I saw him again. The weather had gotten colder, but he was back out there again, fenced off in the dog park with the shepherd by his side, his wide, army-green coat still unzipped. From how

deep his hands were plunged in his pockets, however, I suspected the zipper didn't work. On my second pass of their solitary jungle gym, I saw two other dog walkers join them. They were both thin, pretty things, with blonde curls and fluffy white dogs that made it look like they'd coordinated on both points. As the two made their way to the little gate entrance, the man inside hurried forward to open it for them, making all three of us pause in surprise. Gentlemen are as rare as clear skies in our city. He smiled slightly as they passed him to enter, though it wasn't the same smile he'd had with the dog before—that affectionate crack opening across his face—but much more reserved, stifled even, unsure. They spoke a few words with him, his response so quiet that I couldn't make out what he said, but I could see the way he shifted his weight from foot to foot as he spoke. It lasted longer than just a good morning. In fact, it lasted longer than just an introduction. He went on, seeming to fumble a little with his words as he asked them a question. Maybe it was about how they knew each other, or maybe even just about the weather. Anything at all to try and start a conversation. Yet, by the next time I came around the park, the two, pretty blondes were standing together with their pooches frolicking around at their feet, their giggling voices loud enough to be heard back at my apartment building, but the man wasn't with them. He was standing a little ways away, off near the corner of the enclosure, his eyes down, seeming smaller than usual in the shadow of his large, green coat. Each time I passed after that, the shepherd never left his side. Never barked. Never explored. Simply stood like a sentinel next to the man, his ears perked, his noble back curving up under his master's hand. Somehow, together with the creature, the man didn't seem quite so small.

Four more times I saw him after that. The first three were only glimpses as he walked along the path with his wide stride or stood half obscured on the edge of a group of chatting dog owners, sheltering in his shell from more than the cold. It strikes me now how I never thought to approach him myself. We were each outsiders in our own way, the tortoise and the jogger, both with equal excuses to go unnoticed by the world. Looking back, I can't help but wonder what might have changed if I had. Maybe, in spite of it all, he would have grown to something more than his familiar silhouette. Maybe we both would have.

The last time I ever saw the man and his dog, something was different. They were alone again in the fenced-off dog park, the shepherd bounding back and forth across the gravel, always gravitating back to where the man stood in silence, the tiniest hint of a smile cracking at the side of his mouth. He'd gotten a haircut since the first time I'd spotted him, but the old hint of facial hair was still the same. As I watched, he coaxed the big dog up onto one of the ramps, his smile growing slightly as the animal paused in consternation over how best to get back down. Suddenly, as the fading light lit up a patch of the dark clouds overhead, I had an odd urge to capture the moment. There was no grand ceremony about it, just a quick snapshot taken of some anonymous man and his pet, but as I look at it now, I don't see "that guy" anymore. Instead, I see a man behind bars, his head down, his face forever obscured behind the folds of his army green coat. I see a dog, his head held high, watching the man with the air of a guardian at his post. And between them, hovering invisible in the old park, I can see a flicker of understanding, the two each in need of the other, and a lasting, life-long friendship lit up beneath a brilliant streak of golden white light.

The Outsiders

Emelia Conley

Old school charm, if you can call it that.

It's cheap and dirty, but it holds something of class and dream you forgot you had once loved.

A leather jacket three sizes too big, an ill-named tank top too tight, and hair unwashed stands

30 feet away.

That image you saw only in your mind's eye

burst into the most unexpected place, and demanded attention.

S.E. Hinton's outsider sits and sings in a pew.

eye contact isn't dangerous, because you're standing in only

a dream. a frame. a glance. a picture.

Nothing else happens, or exists. Only his eyes, looking. at. yours.

practically underwater

You can feel the hair on your arms. The colors behind him swirl.

The sound around you echoes, deafening, but you can't hear it.

"Don't meet your heroes."

He looked away.

and Everything, roars back, at once. it is loud and sickening. and

you are drowning.

But weren't you just doing that? Didn't you already die?

he was the only thing keeping it away.

he gave you a bubble to imagine. Only worth seconds.

was it ever worth it? because you are once again where you were.

The thin, delicate thread that was holding the entire dream together was

snapped

with the turning of his head, and you were

drug

drugged

dragged

out of the watercolor world that you got a glittering glimpse of.

You *know* he isn't Ponyboy. You *know* he's not a greaser and he isn't in love with Cherry and he doesn't have to carry a switchblade in his back pocket.

But he *might* be a dreamer, caught up in a sunset.

He *might* be trying to figure out what it means to be alive, how to be a brother and a friend.

It's just not fair.

The idea of him, rather than who he is.



THESE DRUGS ARE
GETTING MORE
COMPLICATED.

HAVE YOU TRIED
TURNING IT OFF
AND ON AGAIN?

Maybe Put it In Rice? Emma Wold
Digital Art/ Drawing, 6316x4295 pixels

i will make my morning latte whether he's there or not

Anna Lowe

i take my time with the sun
ambling from my bed, to the couch,
to the kitchen, in sherpa slippers
whose rubber soles slide
against phony hardwood floors

scraping aged espresso grounds into the trash
where i'll never think of them again
until the rotting scent reminds me
that nothing is ever truly gone
but the foul smell is temporary

shot glass clinks against the metal tray
along with the whir
of water becoming steam
we don't have milk...or syrup. damn.
add it to the list of things i'm out of:

1. patience

he asked me what i feared, and
without blinking, i said *permanence*.
woahhhh, that's deep.
is it deep, or is it just something
you've never thought about?

2. whole milk

frothing oat milk with incredible disdain,
i pour out the translucent concoction
into a bubbling dark roast,
making my mug lukewarm because
i don't actually know how to make a latte

maybe permanence is not my fear
because i know that if every day
starts like this one, then i would be
utterly satisfied, with the right person
and whole milk by my side

3. contentment

maybe i fear permanently
being with *him*. because he
cannot memorize lyrics to any song
and does not take photos of anything.
i just never look back at them.

if he fist-bumped me in the arcade,
would he fist-bump me after intimacy?
when he stumbles into my kitchen,
how else will he continue to interrupt
my methodical morning?

i'm tired of being forced to use
gritty, alternative milks against my will
while knowing that the real thing
would allow mornings to make sense
in the way nothing else could,

so i attempt to face my temporary
routine with as much fractured grace
as i can muster, and strain not to
fill my void of permanence with
lackluster, awkward knuckle taps

4. vanilla

maybe if i drown my drink in sweet,
it will be more palatable.



Afternoon Art

Grace Slatzer
Digital Photograph
3226x2304 pixels

Catechesis

Dakota Poole

Catechesis (n.) - *religious instruction given in preparation for Christian baptism or confirmation*

I walk the line
Between pedicured grass and crimped natural,
The beauty of both commingled
Like a venn diagram of heaven
And earth, wondering about
The allure of the vintage—dead
Flowers, autumn, ruins,
Overgrown things, the dissonance
Of melancholy mandolin strings
And asthmatic accordions,
The burry unthinkable,
Which I call by its nickname:
Unknown.

There is a maple tree gnarled and half-bent over
People like a hitchhiker's thumb
In dangerous protection,
Beating away the glossy fatal
Of premature promises;
Its fallen leaves curl into a bed of rose petals.

As for me, I find it harder and easier to hope for things
Just as the reservoir seven minutes away finds it hard and easy
To reflect the smoldering paint strokes of a sky
Gloriously on fire.

Chapel Voices

Marcie Hughes

My anxiety comes at night
when all else is at rest
It's not from the dark
or the quiet
nor even the loneliness
No. I think it's the way everything
Floats.

Childishly foolish, I was and am
and as a kid, I convinced myself each night
that my door knobs were clown heads
but the moonlit glares were always the makeup
and in the end, I just stared at nothing
but my own delusions.

At six I was baptized without meaning.
Seven was when I misinterpreted God's message
But I swear, the church songs made me think
about how much death was calling me by name
but instead I was gently wrapped close
in my mama's warm arms.

I hate that I think more about death than I do life
and that I want to test the limits
to see how much closer I can get to seeing God's eyes
or that I want to be by myself yet deep down yearn for someone
who could love me more than I will ever do myself.
But want is just a synonym for catastrophe.

Predicament soothes my soul, so I can be free.
But hopefully my time will come
When the chapel songs stop their singing.
But as you read this, they chime on and we're
Closer to death and closer to life
But personally for me

Right in the middle doesn't feel quite right.

The First Time

Emily Ellis

For everyone I tried to find at the end of time.

I.

In my dream last night, I imagined the world caving in on itself, skyscrapers finally slicing the sky in one great upside-down trench, stars spilling to the earth's surface, & you were nowhere to be found. I feared God & that I had not prayed for forgiveness the last time I saw you, or before I saw you the first time, & that maybe my punishment was not holding your hand when the sky engulfed us in the murky pit of its stomach.

II.

In my dream last night, our son lies belly-up on the sand, his tan skin a result of your genetics & my abhorrence to sunscreen, & our daughter is tucked on your lap with her honey blonde curls bobbing like the ocean waves that I am seeing for the first time. Both fall asleep while you read to them about a magic tree house & I glimpse my grandfather's signature on the title page, with a note telling me to shoot for the stars & never stop dreaming.

III.

In my dream last night, I sliced carrots the way my first boyfriend taught me to, & you wrapped your hands around my waist while our children shouted at glowing monitors. There's a star tattooed on the back of my neck, & you brushed my hair aside to brush it with your lips, unaware that it symbolizes the end of a world before ours, & how I can never forgive myself for the love I felt long before I saw you for the very first time.

gingerly

Joy Hibshman

step.

step.

breathe in

flip.

flip.

breathe out

the card sorter sorts recipes for me,
and I sift
the white and brown edges beneath my fingertips,
then choose my catharsis of choice:

gingersnaps.

the taste is how I bake them,
boldly, sweetly, gingerly —
just one item at a time.

step.

step.

level the flour

crack.

click.

open the egg

I am attentive. I am awake:
awakened and soothed
by the spicy perfumes of
cinnamon and ginger,
awakened and soothed
by the effects of moving gingerly.

the snap-clap understanding is baked in when
I realize that this, too, is reality,
and not just a wishful dream of bliss.

so I make gingersnaps, and they make me
gingerly



Containing Multitudes *Rissa Green Ceramic, 6" x 2" x 2"*

Learning to Waltz

Bryce Martin

Passionate talk leads me out to the sticks to a
chapel all strung up with holly in wreaths.
Minutes past midnight implode into dresses. My
shivers in threes, "will you teach me to waltz please?"

Smirking, she spindles my feet on her turntable,
Needling her arm on my shoulder to lead.
Spiraling out a centripetal triplicate
Cyclonic breeze, "will your winds let me waltz please?"

Years go by, dances are held every winter. I'll
Channel that wind from a broken gestalt.
Movement is sad but it proves that it's possible.
Walk out alone, but you know how to waltz.

Old Man Storr

Katie Jornod

The giant's head
Lies on the hillside
Almost one with
The hill.

Sinking into the ridge
He lies
Almost asleep –
But for the stake in his heart

Some brave adventurer
Drove it there –
Or errant knight
Fearing the unknown.

Lay the giant down
From striding over the
Hilltops – happy, free
Or mayhap terrorizing
Innocent soul on Storr

But whoever they were –
The giant and man
Laid the giant down to rest
Half into the bay
He slips away
And rests his head on the hilltop.

Now one with the land he sleeps alone
And only his land remembers him
As high hills that reflect
His loftiness
Dwarf men that come hereafter

And the old old giant
Becomes the hill
Where once he walked
High, and free,
With laughter.



Ralf Rose Branan Acrylic on Canvas, 8"x11"

Día del Trabajador, As Told By Cows

Dakota Poole

Count the billion bovine
Lavished on monopolized hectares
Count their ribs
Cushioned under fat and affluence
Wheat fields and water foliage and
Pounds of money

But you only have to count the cows

Look at the outskirts
The linings and edges of roads
Plenty of family cows
Plenty of ribs and reasons
To pay attention or ignore
The four compartment stomach
Of a system curated to digest
The non-homogenized worker
For the two-percent layer of fat on top

But you only have to count the cows

Forget the barefoot children and their sticks
And the red gravelly sand they play in

Forget the native settlement and their access to water
And the men who value marajuana more

Forget the man and the woman on the street
That you pass

Forget the poor
Their emptiness and your fullness
Their fullness and your emptiness

And count the cows



Fall Winds Meggen Absher Watercolor on Paper, 12"x18"

Change

Heidi Wheelock

EXT. OAK TREE - MORNING

A gentle breeze rustles the remaining leaves on an old oak tree. Autumn has painted the landscape in orange, yellow, and red hues.

GERTRUDE, an acorn with a green cap, and BERNICE, an acorn with a cracked cap, hold hands as they sway in the tree.

A brisk wind suddenly shudders the tree. The branch Gertrude and Bernice hang from shakes precariously as the trunk groans.

CRACK

Bernice's stem snaps off the branch. The only thing keeping her from plummeting to the ground far below is Gertrude's tight hold on her hand.

They stare at each-other, eyes wide with disbelief and fear. Another gust of wind whistles through the tree. One of Bernice's fingers slip.

Gertrude tries to grab Bernice with her other hand, but she can't quite reach. Bernice stares at the spot where Gertrude's stem connects to the tree. With each of Gertrude's movements, a small crack widens on her stem.

Bernice closes her eyes, having made her decision. She lets go.

Gertrude stares in horror.

Down, down, down Bernice plummets, hitting branches and bouncing off leaves until she lands hard on the dirt below.

Bernice's cracked cap has chipped. She lays among the fallen leaves, her eyes closed.

Gertrude's teary eyes are wide as she stares down at her friend's prone form. She frantically begins to twist and swing, trying to break her stem so she can join Bernice.

A loud, inquisitive chittering draws her attention back down to the ground.

Just a foot away from Bernice is a big GREY SQUIRREL.

The Squirrel sniffs the air and moves closer to Bernice's still body.

Gertrude gives one last particularly violent swing.

SNAP

Her stem breaks off from the tree and Gertrude tumbles down towards the earth.

She lands with a bounce, flipping head-over-heels into a small puddle.

Gertrude shakes herself off and sits up, only to see the Squirrel grab Bernice and scamper off.

Gertrude struggles to her feet and runs down the hill after them. It is slow going for the little acorn, as a strong breeze picks up.

EXT. VALLEY - AFTERNOON

She sees the Squirrel digging a hole to bury Bernice in.

Bernice slowly comes to, cracking her eyes open as the Squirrel places her in the hole. She panics and flails her arms about as the Squirrel throws dirt onto her.

The fight leaves her as she is engulfed in darkness.

Gertrude runs as fast as her short legs can carry her, a few flurries of snow fall. The snow storm worsens and Gertrude has to squint to see.

The Squirrel, having finished the task at hand, runs off.

Gertrude slips and slides on a frozen pool of water, her arms frantically windmilling as she fights to keep her balance. She falls onto her back and slides into a snowbank on the opposite side of the water.

Gertrude sluggishly clambers out of her pile of snow. Just a little bit further... Gertrude knows the spot where Bernice is buried is close.

EXT. VALLEY - EVENING

It is nearly impossible to see. The snow comes down in thick clumps and blankets everything in a heavy layer of white.

Gertrude falls to her knees beside the mound where Bernice is buried. She frantically shoves the snow off the mound and digs at the dirt below. She digs and digs, fighting the frozen ground to get to Bernice. Her lungs heave and her breath comes out in foggy bursts as she scrapes at the icy dirt. Then, a hand!

Gertrude slides her fingers into Bernice's cold ones. Yet Gertrude cannot go on. The snow fills up the small crater she dug and dusts across her green cap. Her eyelids droop and her movements slow. She cannot dig any longer. Her eyes fully close. She's sound asleep, clutching Bernice like a life-line.

There is the faintest of movements, just a whisper of a squeeze from Bernice to Gertrude.

The snow keeps steadily falling. Tucking Gertrude into its cold bed as winter falls.

The whole world sleeps.

No birds sing. The trees stand bare like icy sentinels beneath a grey sky.

EXT. VALLEY - TIMELAPSE

The frozen trees melt. Ice turns to water and drips from the branches.

The snow shrinks back, relinquishing its sleepy hold on the world.

Birds sing their springtime songs and small creatures peer out of their winter safe-havens.

Springtime blooms.

There, where Bernice and Gertrude fell asleep with their hands intertwined, stands a young oak sapling.

EXT. VALLEY - DAWN

A thin branch curls around Gertrude in a hug as Bernice unfurls her new leaves.

Gertrude sits, leaning against her transformed friend, and smiles at the rising sun.

FADE TO BLACK.



Patchwork Memories Meggen Absher Acrylic on Paper, 9"x12"

On a Farm in Kansas

Anna Bruns

The rooster struts with the magnificence of Death
While the sun rises in an eternal life and re-birth until eternity.
My stomach is swelling with almonds
and honey
and the heaviness of warm bread,
Which rose just this morning with the light.
The songbirds are being baptized in the muddy ruts of the driveway.
So this is Life.

Situs in Sitū

Mark Wood

i.

It is the springtime of our love. I know it's cliché,
but how can anything be old when everything is so new?
A word fills the air for hours, replete with meanings,
so our mouths stay closed.

ii.

It is the springtime of our love,
but April showers make our eyes water.
Maybe it's the pollen, the pet dander, perhaps the barometric pressure.
More likely, I think, is knowing how quickly seasons change in Kentucky.
Wait fifteen minutes.

iii.

It is August Twelfth.
Fifteen minutes ago, it was the springtime of our love;
May's flowers are still in bloom, and they smell like you.
Your tears falling down my cheek (but more of mine on yours),
we hold each other one last time.
"I have to go to bed," you lament, and I know that I have to let you go.

iv.

It is August Thirteenth.
We played cards in your living room tonight, the first time in a while.
It was nice to hold hands again. As I write this,
I remember the last time we held each other's.
It was a long embrace, a slow release, and I expected the world to end
as our fingertips fell apart. It didn't. The space between them grew quickly;
filled the air for hours, replete with meanings.

situs, (ablative, sitū), n.

1. *The location, place, or situation of something.*
2. *Decay, mold, rust, soil*



The Travelers Summer Hollis

Photograph, 2975x2025 pixels

Sowing

Abbi Bodager

Thumbs sink into brown,
depositing a slight seed
that will someday yield.



To Grow Jenna Hauser Acrylic on Canvas, 16"x20"

Suburb Impressionism

Klara Kinman

Impressionism (/im'preSHə,nizəm/), n. movement in painting characterized by a concern with depicting the visual impression of the moment, especially in terms of the shifting effect of light and color.

Even in the suburbs, something unkempt
weaves through the trimmed blades.
It is afternoon, and the sun dapples
into 5 o'clock shadows,
thick and blue as the work of
Monet, Cézanne, Renoir.
Even in the suburbs, rose bushes hang
unpruned and vibrant,
a fist of color dangling
just past the edge of my neighbor's yard.
A chalk smudge in a driveway
shifts in a stroke of wind:
evidence of small artists
who still know how to see.
Evidence of something
that doesn't quite compute.
Even in our square yards and houses,
some wildness sifts under
the cracks of the sidewalk.

Contributors

Meggen Absher is an Art Education major and a member of the Restored (sophomore) class. She lives just ten minutes from campus but recently returned from a semester in Paris. Her art is largely inspired by her surroundings, and she is excited to share her creations from both her hometown and abroad.

Abbi Bodager is a sophomore who loves all art forms, but especially writing. She loves to create poems with themes of faith, beauty, and finding hope in the midst of difficulty, and hopes you are encouraged by her work.

Taylor Boss is a Sociology major and History minor in the Ignited Class. She likes flowers, the color pink, and she may or may not be a 200-year-old vampire.

Sabina Boyer is a member of the Beloved Class (freshman) and a Screenwriting major with a minor in Creative Writing. Growing up an only child Missionary Kid to Skopje, Macedonia, she spent a large part of the last decade both reading and writing, scribbling out everything from homemade short films to four full-length novels. When not packing and unpacking suitcases, she enjoys playing tennis, baking chocolate chip cookies, and beating her relatives at card games.

Rose Branan is a junior at Asbury. She was born and raised in Wilmore, Kentucky. She is a Pre-Art Therapy major. Rose likes to spend a lot of time outdoors. She listens to a lot of music by artists like John Denver, Keith Green, and The Eagles. Rose often drinks a lot of tea. She spends most of her time doing school and creating art.

Anna Bruns is a poet and author; her works have been published in *Angles Literary Magazine* and *The Spectre Review*, and she has received honorable mention twice from the Writers of the Future Contest. Her favorite pastimes include trying new teas and wandering around small bookstores. For more about her and her writing, visit her website at annaebruns.wordpress.com.

Josephine Burnham is an English major super senior. She comes from the suburbs of Chicago, where things are always hectic, and the sky is rather cloudy. She'd like to dedicate her publishing in this semester's edition of the *Review* to her grandpa, Bruce, who is always her biggest supporter and serves as inspiration for many of her written works. This is her second publication in the *Review*.

Ben Carpenter is a Media Communications major on paper, but an Art major at heart. After graduating in December 2023, he plans to marry his beautiful fiancée and then try to draw his silly little cartoons, potentially making some money along the way. He is also from Winchester, Kentucky. Hi, Mom.

Grace Clark is a junior Creative Writing major. She likes metapoetry, the color yellow, and, of course, Hunter Smith. She does not like deadlines, negative self-talk, or writing about herself in the third person.

You:> Please write a witty bio about a university junior named **Emelia Conley** from Asheville, North Carolina, who studies International Communications, loves people, stories, cats, bread, languages, mountains, drawing, YouTube, rides motorcycles, and adores irony. ChatGPT:> I'm sorry, these things do not seem to be related.

Ellie Eberhard is a junior English and Media Communications double major. Her favorite season is fall, as it is the perfect time for her to enjoy her excessive sweater collection, a warm cup of tea or coffee, and soup of nearly any kind.

Emily Ellis, a Wisconsinite who wanted to be an Accounting major, somehow ended up in Kentucky as a Creative Writing and Sociology double major with a Christian Ministries minor. Her writing specialties include heartbreaking love poetry and comedic creative nonfiction, with a side of semi-sarcastic emails. Her friends often describe her as “a goldfish with legs,” which is ironic because Emily is afraid of fish. This is her fourth publication in the *Review*.

Ella Fairbairn is a senior Creative Writing and Equine Training double major. She loves spending her time outdoors, and that is where she gets most of her inspiration, as well as hoping that her work will encourage others to spend more time in creation. Her work was awarded Editor's pick in the *Outrageous Fortune* magazine and won an honorable mention for her poem in the college poetry contest by *The Lyric Magazine*.

Aiden Gaither is a junior known for being overcommitted, though he doesn't think anyone should have any reason for believing that. He is a double major in Psychology and Music with emphases in both Guitar and Composition, an Audio Production minor, and he is an outgoing First Year Experience Coordinator, Summer Ministries Team leader, and Friday Night Live cast member.

Reagan Gibbs is a Media Communications major with a Screenwriting emphasis and a native Nashvillian. When she's not girlbossing her way through being co-director of Friday Night Live, she enjoys watching YouTube video essays on niche Tumblr lore and blasting Ethel Cain in her dorm room. She is incredibly thankful to be featured in the *Review* for the first time this semester.

Rissa Green is an Art/Design and Creative Writing double major currently in her sophomore year. Her parents reside in Ohio, where it is cold and grey, but her heart belongs somewhere sunny and filled with an almost absurd amount of flowers. She has a newfound love for cooking and ceramics, both of which are wildly outside her comfort zone, but she feels are worth mentioning.

Jenna Hauser is a Beloved freshman, majoring in Communication with a minor in Art. Jenna's passion is art and all things beautiful, and she loves exploring themes of faith, growth, and the human experience in everything she creates. You can find her listening to music at most any time of the day, usually The Oh Hellos, Roland Faunte, or Aurora. Get her talking about art, music, faith, or philosophy, and she'll never stop.

Joy Hibshman is an Ignited Class member with origins in Hershey, Pennsylvania. She loves carrot soup, steamy mugs, long walks, slow mornings, liturgical and sustainable lifestyles, and hugging stuffed animals or friends. She is also now an aunt, and this is her third time being published in *The Asbury Review*.

Summer Hollis is a sophomore Media Communications Production Design major hailing from Champaign, Illinois. She would describe herself as a "jack of all trades, master of none" who can be found dabbling in art, music, dance, writing, and film. This is her first publication in the *Review*.

Marcie Hughes is a junior Media Communications major with a Screenwriting emphasis and the head writer of the Asbury comedy show, Friday Night Live. Though her mind never seems to stop scheming for her next evil plan of what to write next, she still hasn't quite figured what the future holds, but hopes to work in comedy and make people laugh everyday (or at least every other day, she's not picky).

Katie Jornod is a senior English and Media Communications double major. She loves creating stories in all mediums and hand-writing poetry in her poetry notebook – to be read over tea, of course. She is excited to finally share her poetry in *The Asbury Review*!

Kourtney Kawata is a junior Film Production and Multimedia Journalism double major with a minor in Digital Imaging/Photography. She is a collegiate tennis player from Louisville, Kentucky, an avid lover of books, and someone who will have a breakdown if her outfit is not stylish. This is her first submission and publication in the *Review*.

Klara Kinman (she/her) is a junior English major from Louisville, Kentucky. On November 8th of 2023, Klara finished *Middlemarch* by George Eliot, which is her greatest accomplishment. Though Klara does not often think about the Roman Empire, she does think about how a random Asbury student once compared her to Susan from *The Chronicles of Narnia*. Klara's work has been published in previous editions of *The Asbury Review* and in *Solum Journal*.

Faith Kwong is part of the Ignited Class (junior) majoring in Art and Design with a Psychology minor. She is a missionary kid from Hong Kong who lived in Kyrgyzstan in her early childhood and grew up in Thailand. She enjoys all forms of creative expression, and she is especially passionate about art, singing, and photography.

Anna Lowe is a senior Journalism major and Literature minor from Greenwood, Indiana. She finds her greatest inspirations from the organic, mundane moments of life. When she doesn't want to make her morning latte, you'll find her with an iced wild latte at Monos Coffee Crafters.

Bryce Martin is a super senior double majoring in Creative Writing and English. A proud Hoosier, Bryce enjoys walks in the forest, taking long drives while blaring indie rock, and talking way too loud about stories and how they're told. When he's not writing for Friday Night Live or working on the *Review*, he can be found dodging cryptid hunters in the woods.

Kaitlyn McCracken is a junior from Pittsburgh, and she studies English and Sociology. Kaitlyn's writing has been featured in *Anthrow Circus* as well as *Kentucky Monthly's* annual "Penned" Literary contest. When she is not reading, writing, photographing, bingeing podcasts (oh, or doing school, that is important), she can be found in her even nerdier pursuits: namely Dungeons and Dragons.

Tegan Merrick is a junior English major from the Chicago suburbs who enjoys making people laugh, collecting shiny things like a crow, and listening to indie music while staring wistfully at trees. This is Tegan's second publication in *The Asbury Review*.

Alex Nicholson (she/her) is a senior double major in Creative Writing and Bible Theology. She is the proud owner of three swords, a dagger, and a lightsaber and will proudly show them off if asked. You may recognize her by her terribly loud laughter past quiet hour and her horrendous dad jokes.

Dakota Poole is a member of the Courageous Class, majoring in Creative Writing and minoring in Christian Ministries. She hails from Kentucky, is an apprehensively avid mocha drinker (peppermint or raspberry, in particular), and believes wholeheartedly in the literary tradition of pun-making.

Kennedy Roberge is an Art Education major. She loves to paint anything to do with marine life and different shades of blue, which shows a lot in her painting, 'Deep Ethereal'. She paints a lot of marine life hoping to one day be scuba diving with some of them, especially the sharks. This is her second publication in *The Asbury Review*.

Tiffany Rutledge (she/her) is a junior double-majoring in Psychology and History. You can almost always find her at a Friday Night Live audition or learning a new handshake with Bruce Santos. This is her third publication in *The Asbury Review*.

Hunter Smith is a cosmic entity that rarely appears in this plain of existence. However, drawn by the light of a living moonlight, they have arrived to bring smiles and joy to all. They are a senior Creative Writing major and are most blessed to have made it to this day to share in the warmth of the sun with you all.

Levi Smith makes music, takes pictures, and thinks about some of the same things you do. You can see or hear his work, if you ask nicely :)

Grace Statzer is from Nicholasville, Kentucky and graduated in December 2023 having studied Communication Leadership. She has two minors, Spanish and Art/Design, because choosing just one thing to do with your life is hard. If you'd like to see more of Grace's art, check out her Instagram: @g_statzer_arts!

Heidi Wheelock is a Media Communications major with an emphasis in Production Design and she is minoring in Art and Design. She's a member of the Surrendered class and lives in Wilmore with her family, partner, and two dogs named Chaucer and Peaches. She loves acting, writing, and character design, and she knows a ridiculous number of facts about historical fashion. This is her first publication in the *Review*.

Kaitlyn Wilson is an Art and Design major and Marketing minor from Bowling Green, Kentucky, and is in the Ignited class. Kaitlyn is way too big of a fan of *Alien*; her favorite anime is *Mob Psycho 100*, and she relates to Mob, the main character, on a personal level.

Emma Wold is a senior Sociology major and Art minor from Minnesota who's now in her 7th year of assimilating into Kentuckian Culture. She likes drawing, making pretty powerpoints, and playing Stardew Valley. She has also developed a banger Mac'n'Cheese recipe, which you can beg for on her Instagram page @4chtung.b4by.

Mark Wood is a fifth-year Latin major and Literature minor. Born at 43 years old, he has always fought to grow younger and more in love with the world each day. Mark loves the moon, playing cards, the feeling in the air before the daily afternoon thunderstorm during a Southern summer, *Muppet Christmas Carol*, mythologies, a God who made the hand, and whoever will listen to him talk about these things.