

THE CATALYST

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What we are:

The Catalyst is a student-run creative journal of the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse English Club publishing prose, poetry, photography, art, music, and all other creative works by the students and faculty of UW-L.

Content Warning:

Art and Literature often deal with difficult topics. The writing and images in this issue of *The Catalyst* address mature subject matters; in certain instances, for certain readers, the work here may be triggering.

A thank you or two:

to William Stobb, for helping us adapt to working together at a distance. We know it's hard to work collaboratively in an online environment, so thank you for being so flexible and pushing us to still do good work.

to You, reading this, for supporting us and your peers whose work is in this volume. We hope you come away with a thought or two, but ultimately hope you enjoy reading the pieces just as much as we did.

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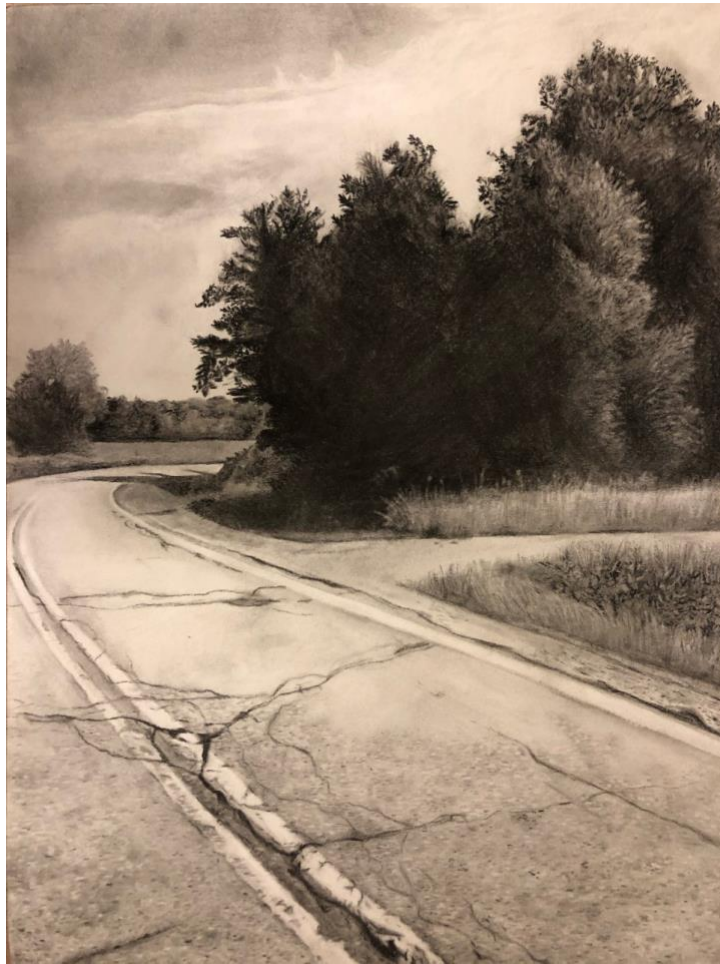
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Kyra Litwin

How to Find Love During a Pandemic / Taylor Halvensleben

First, falsely believe the pandemic will be over soon. Let yourself be okay with being temporarily trapped in your parent's house. Grip onto the idea that after this is over you won't waste the opportunity to meet new people. Decide to focus on yourself during the supposed one month of quarantine. Write down workout plans, better eating habits, and hobbies such as quidditch, Claymation, and homemade bread making that you plan to take on. Only do about half of what you write down.

Stare emptily at the flat screen T.V. as the news anchor rambles on about the continuous rise of COVID-19 cases. Mindlessly scroll through Twitter as it updates you on the lack of precautions in most of the United States. Watch the Snapchat stories of your old high school classmates throwing a huge house party and try not to hurl your phone at the wall.

Fall backwards on your bed and take a deep breath. Don't dwell on the quick disappearing hope of meeting someone this year. Remember the heightened optimism you had at the beginning of the year. Remember when you decided this would be the year you would twist your empty heart into one of those doe-eyed, sunshine-y believers of love. HA—you really thought, huh?

Your parent's wedding anniversary comes up. That same day is also your little sister's one-year anniversary with her boyfriend. Your parents ask you to stay in your room so they can have a romantic dinner in the kitchen. Your sister plans some cutesy social distanced date with her boyfriend that makes you gag. Make yourself a screwdriver that's more vodka than orange juice. It's your parent's alcohol but you decide they can spare some for your sake. You spend the rest of the night binging Tiger King—Carole Baskin definitely killed her husband—and slamming down screwdrivers.

June finally approaches and you happily move into your apartment back at your college town. You believe living alone is better than the constant reminder of your parent's and sister's successful relationships. Out of sight, out of mind...right?

Start your new job at an infant daycare. You don't like changing diapers, or germ-infested children, but it's one of the places that's hiring. You can't really be picky. Think that maybe, maybe this is your chance at finding some scrap of love through a coworker.

You walk in the building and your hope of meeting someone romantic at work shatters. All your coworkers are women. You reflect on the societal gender roles when it comes to a caregiver and this thought alone tempts you to quit on

the spot. But you really need money—you can defy societal norms another day.

Bury yourself in a new Netflix show. Watch hopelessly as two characters gradually fall in love. Drink too much wine while you invest in their relationship. Allow yourself to feel the spark of inspiration.

Redownload Tinder. Scroll through the countless pictures of guys who are holding up a fish or at the gym lifting weights. Flirt with a few guys because you're bored. And you've had too much Tequila. Know that you never plan to meet them.

Your sister and her boyfriend move in together. You decide to help them because you have nothing better to do. Refrain from rolling your eyes at the loving glances they try to sneak at each other. They're both young and your parents aren't sure if them living together is a good idea. But they have love dripping from their eyes as if to rub it in the world's face that they're happy and not dead inside.

Scrunch your nose as your sister's boyfriend gives her a quick peck on the cheek after your dad brings in the last box from the truck. Your sister catches you.

"You know," she says, "one day this is gonna be you."

You feel your stomach shrivel up at your younger sister telling you this, and your first thought is god, I hope not. But you smile and say, "Yeah, someday." You reflect on your nonexistent love life and the pandemic that has done nothing to help. Maybe you're not cut out for a handholding, heart-pounding, butterflies-in-your-stomach kind of relationship. Push this thought away immediately—you're supposed to be a newfound believer of love, remember?

After a long day at work, one of your Tinder matches sends you "baby whatever it is that you are serving, you better give me double". This makes you physically cringe then burst out laughing. You remember why you deleted Tinder the first time.

Think about all the young adult series you read growing up. Blame those for your unrealistic expectations of men (but, really, how hard should it be to find a tall, dark haired boy with a past unresolved trauma who uses sarcasm to hide his heart of gold?).

A guy you went on a couple dates with last year Snapchats you. He asks you how you've been. Remember how he followed you around like a lost puppy. Remember how he wanted to talk about feelings and the future. Ugh. But it's the middle of a pandemic and you can't really be picky. Respond to him but

pray that he's asking as a friend. He continues to Snapchat you every day after that.

You've been living alone for two months. Celebrate by drinking an entire bottle of wine in one night. Dwell on the timing of this pandemic. Contemplate whether this was a sign from fate that you're destined to be alone forever. Switch to vodka.

An ad pops up on your computer screen as you lazily scroll through Facebook. It's for your local humane society. Click on the link for its website and scroll through the available dogs for adoption. You lock eyes with one of the pictures and are hit with an epiphany. You think about your Tinder matches and the clingy boy who can't take a hint.

Start to research how much it costs to own a dog. Take an extra shift at the job you hate. Change more diapers.



“POTS-y Party” (photograph) / Missy Deisting

Three Poems by Mirm Hurula

Note: Mirm Hurula participated in the 2020 “America’s Best College Poet” competition, advancing to the final round, where she performed the poems published here, ultimately finishing fourth in the national contest.

“I Didn’t Do It” / Mirm Hurula

Have you ever physically vomited?
Before you physically vomit,
You feel like shit,
Your stomach hurts,
Probably have a high fever,
And your body aches.
When you need to emotionally vomit,
All of your feelings come to the front
They all bubble at the pit of your stomach
Slowly rising through your throat
Causing your heart to burn
And your soul starting to dissipate
You think about every single thing you’ve done
You think about that time you were trying to play with a boy in first grade
and he intentionally hurt you
And you still think it’s your fault
for the violence and stalking afterward
And the fear that wells up inside of you
That all boys will be like that
Then you turn to social media and Kavanaugh’s face is everywhere
saying “I didn’t do it”

Just like that boy in first grade
“I didn’t do it”
When you finally vomit physically,
It feels like a release,
You are at the apex of misery,
You are not in control.
But when you vomit emotionally,
You can’t help but get all of your feelings out
To whoever is nearby
Talking about whatever is on your mind
Or send the “I’m sorry for the way that I am feeling about you” text
Because they didn’t know how you felt about what was happening
Let alone what was happening in the first place
And while you write this, all you can think about is every time this person
has ignored you or made you feel like you didn’t deserve to have any
sort of relationship with any other human
Then, all you get is a one-word answer for the feelings that he has made
you feel
“Okay”
“Sorry”
“I didn’t mean to do it.”
And, again this is another boy
Will this happen every time?
I’m sweaty,
Out of breath
Vulnerable—
Afterward, it’s the same—physically and emotionally.
It is a feeling of apathy

Nothing can go wrong in this moment.
For everything has already gone wrong
Exhaustion from the amount of energy that was put forth
All the energy that was released,
The feeling of wanting to go to sleep in that moment
Whether it is the cool feeling of the tile floor against your hot,
 feverish cheek,
Or the warmth of a bed,
Or even in public.
Or in my dorm room after writing such a long message
with over 3 weeks of emotions trying to not hit a limit of characters to send
This isn't fucking Twitter
Let me send all the characters that I need to
To get all my feelings out.
So, he can finally hear what I have to say
Because he ignores me otherwise
Unless I'm screaming in his face
Blunt, and forward as I can possibly be
Spelling it out for him word-for-word
Letter-by-letter
Sound-by-sound
Because he didn't even realize what he was doing to me
By his unconscious actions
That somehow overtake me
And engulf my entire being
Because I care
I care too much about him and about what he thinks
Because I think that he's not like the others

He'll own up to it

"I didn't mean to do it."

And, admit that he did wrong

He did the wrong actions

And he hurt me.

Listen to me say it,

"You hurt me."



Photograph / Cassidy Herman

Talafaasolopito o lo'u Aiga / Mirm Hurula

September 28, 2009

A day I will never forget

A day my people will never forget

The day the world grieved and empathized with my people for the first time

The day over a hundred people died in a country of a few thousand

The day where most were children

My mother comes from a small group of islands in the South Pacific

But, if I were to tell you its name

You would give me one of three responses:

"Where is that?"

"Like the Girl Scout cookie?"

"Is that how you pronounce it?"

Those responses ringing in my ear like

Church bells heard throughout my village of Poutasi

Where colonizers came and did what they do best

Colonize--

Destroy-- Demonize-- Demonize who I am

And who I love

And, knowing that before he came

We had rituals

And ceremonies of love and lust

Exposing our vulvas

Loving our bodies and each other

Without fear of persecution for saying "o te alofa ia te oe "

To the wrong person.

But now lavalava covers us, wrapped around our waists

As chains wrap around my neck holding me in place
In the place of what we know as
“woman”
I said he
Because it was he who came into my family
And took lands from those we call uo
Bartering unfairly
Because the Samoans were stupid and didn’t know what they were doing
Trading a knife that would break
For 3 or 4 acres of land forever
Chickens and cattle for the palagi weapons
My family has land from the ancestors who come before me
Fa’afetai fa’afetai fa’afetai aiga
But land also comes from his manipulation
His lack of empathy
Greed for power
Wrath for my people
Pride for his “findings”
Lust for the women of the village
Gluttony for the land
Envy for the matai
For the matai held power
Held everything for the villages and families
But he wanted it and he grabbed it
And now church bells ring throughout our lands
And the hymns of the white god are sung
And me, in the diaspora,
Can only sing,

“sa vali vali mean go for a walk”

“tau tala tala means too much talk”

“alofa ia te oe means I love you”

“take it easy fai fai lemu”.



Photograph / Cassidy Herman

I Wanna PhD / Mirm Hurula

People don't know how to speak of me fondly
People don't know how to treat me with the respect
The respect my ancestors fought for
Looking to the sky
Navigating 5 million square miles
Only with the stars above
And tatau from the sea below
—a step-by-step process
in learning about myself
with what I want
and what I want is a PhD
I wanna PhD
I want to be referred to in the highest honor
In English
I want to be respected by others
Even if they don't feel like it
When they see a fat, brown body
Without a medical degree
they will talk or refer to me
by putting 'doctor' in front of it
I wanna PhD
So that I can show every single person
Who thought or said I couldn't
Or wouldn't
By making them say 'doctor'
In front of my name

to spit in their face
to twist their minds and bodies
Like the twisted mind of Captain Cook
When he raped and pillaged my people
For the sake of discovery
I wanna PhD
Because of my badass Black and Brown friends
Who I've been watching succeed in the face
Of those who say "you wouldn't dare"
Not the white ones who belittle and berate me
for all that I want to accomplish—like they'll amount to anything close to me
I wanna PhD
So that when I continue to do amazing things
I can show my people that this can be them too
They are not stupid
They are not coconuts
They have minds as vast as our ocean
Our moana
And imaginations the world has never seen
I wanna PhD
Because I want to show the lil gay kids
They can do this
Give them the future in their little hands
And tell them their future is bright, tell em
"it will be difficult but, you will find your family"
"you will have an amazing life"
"you, you, you, you beautiful child"
They can beat out the system that doesn't want them

They can be respected by others
Even if they don't feel it
By putting a knife in their belief system
Once they say
'doctor'
I wanna PhD
Because no one told me that I could
If I had been told by one person
One teacher
That I could become a doctor
I would have never stopped
I wanna PhD
So that when I go into Congress
And tell them how much they've fucked up
They'll have the decency to call me 'doctor'
They'll have the manners that I teach my children now
The manner in which to refer to a doctor
An expert in their field
The best in their field
The best in the world
Where the world really means the world
Because everyone will have access to it
Everyone will be able to learn from it
Where islands of wonder exist
Mountains that touch the sky
And seas that go for more below
Exist in tandem
I wanna PhD

Because I want to give people their dreams back
I want to give people a chance to live
Before they become the voices of the choked
The chained
The torn
The erased
I wanna PhD
Just so you'll finally respect me.



Photograph / Cassidy Herman

Two Poems by Kab Vue

Note: Kab Vue participated in the 2020 “America’s Best College Poet” competition, advancing to the final round. Kab performed these poems in the national contest.

Home / Kab Vue

I am thousands of miles away from home
And the way that I feel the word “home” in my body
Is like the war my parents crawled through to get here.

Home should be something worth defending
People like me, and the home that I defend
Is not worth my sacrifice
People like me, and the home that we defend are used to
Weaponize against other countries
We are used as pawns of war against subjects who “look” like terror
As if terror is not acts of war against people who seek refuge
As if terror is not war against our own people
As if terror is not invading indigenous, enslaving africans
Degrading this sacred land for gain
People will ask me what I am defending and I say
MYSELF
FROM YOU
From people who make decisions that kill people like me.

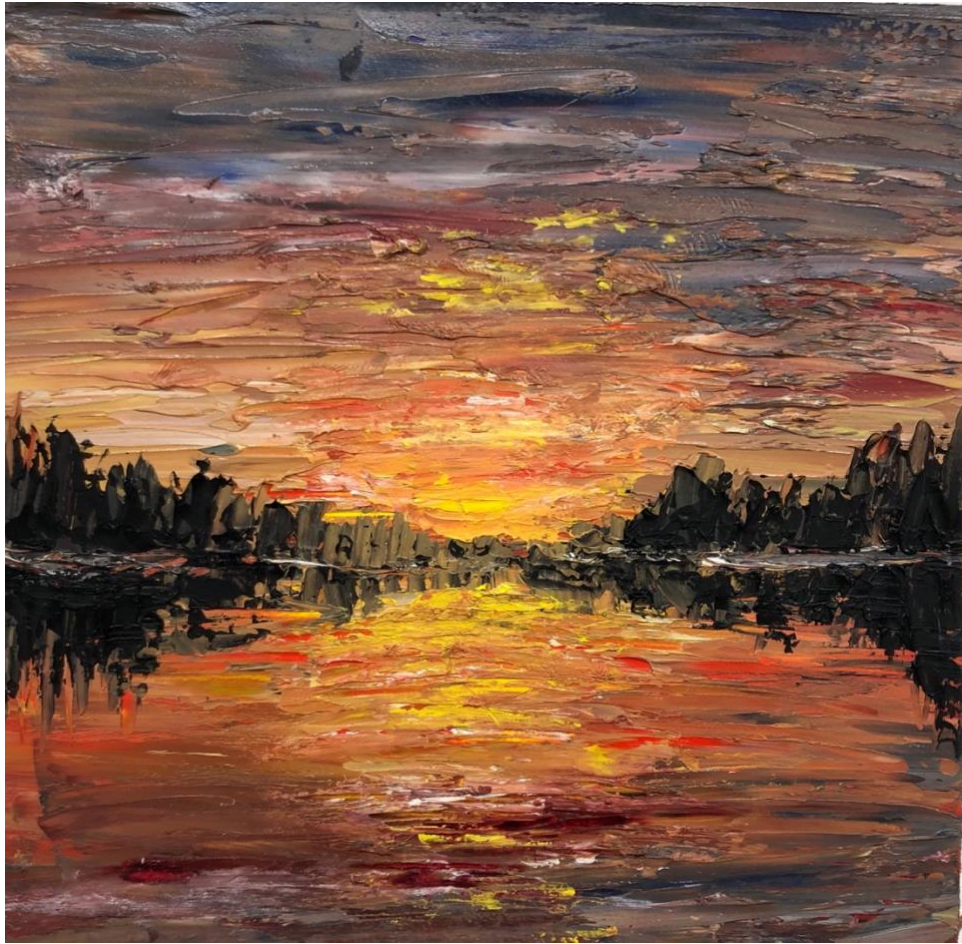
I can say "home" but FEELING it is different
Home to my people means displacement.
It means yearning for a country that does not exist
Reminds me that KUV TSEV NEEG TSIS MUAJ TEBCHAWS to return to
Means that when people tell me to go back to my country
Or ask me where I'm really from
It means the only home I know is the ground I was born on
The ground I was born on
Doesn't know the difference between immigrant and refugee
And how could they, when the displacement of both immigrants and refugees
Have always been the cost of the united states' bullshit
I call this place home more than it calls me its inhabitant
More than it holds and embraces me in its arms
I call it home despite its efforts to erase me
Evict me
Murder me

But when I see home, it is not a country.
It is memories, frozen in time
When I say home,
It is his arms, around me.
It's the way my mom never says I love you, but the way she puts food in front
of my face and says EAT
It is the way Hmoob women hold the entirety of the hmoob community on
their shoulders
Even when they are told they are traitors to their own people for pointing out
its disrespect for our lives

It is memories of moments as a meal
It is the way I look at youth as reflections of me,
As the leaders we need
And it is the way
I must learn to look at myself.
If my body is a home.

My dad says that my mind is slightly detached from my body
It is detached in ways I wish my mind could leave on bad days
My body should be a home for my soul,
Rid of traumas
But if my body is my home,
It is haunted. And I refuse to vacate its ghosts

And as I dust off the rooms that I no longer visit
As I open the doors I've kept locked
As I get rid of the objects, memories, that no longer serve me
As I hold these traumas close to me, thank them for the lessons
And let go
I wonder,
If these ghosts disappear
And I choose to vacate them
I wonder
If my home will still be left standing
If I will still be left whole
When they leave.



Maria Landgraf

When They Ask Me What I Am / Kab Vue

When they ask me *what* I am
I will tell them that I am a Hmoob woman.
Unwavered by echoes of “not all men”
And
“Bitches like you are the reason why our culture is dying”

When they ask me why I am the way I am,
I'll tell them my mother's trauma is hereditary
That her mother's trauma was hereditary

My mother's name is Choj
It means bridge
But don't confuse that with her existence Because the women in my life did
not make their backs bridges for men
They did it for each other

When they ask me *who* I am
I tell them my parents didn't raise a follower
That I raised myself
To be more than my parent's traumas
And to be worth my parent's sacrifices

When they ask me *where* I am from,
I will tell them,
I am from HERE.
And that my people would still be in our home country if the United

States just minded their own fucking business
And that my people did not crawl through wars
And bombs
And bury their people
Just to be deported back to a country
That has only ever showed them an embrace that crushes their existence.

When they ask me *when* I am
I say right now.
Because we need you right now.
And I am no longer dwelling
On past actions
Past mistakes
And that I have grown to be more
Than the violence done to me

And when they ask me *why* I am
I will ask them,
Why the fuck not?

And when they ask me *who I really am*,
And they mean it in a way that is not
Trauma porn
Or pity,
I will tell them.
to this day, I still ask myself
If I am worthy of happiness
In my community's eyes

When they deny me the ability to be my authentic self.

Deny me the ability to speak

Deny me the ability to love whomever I choose

To this day, I still ask if my voice will finally be clear enough to hear

When a man claims me as his own

Kuv yog ib tug ntshais xwb

Kuv yog ib tug qhua

Tsis muaj nujnqis npaum ib tug tub.

Tiamsi hlub kuv niam thiab txiv tchaj lawv cov tub

And to this day, I think I'm better at explaining the colors of the sky

Right before I break

Better than I can recite the Soldier's creed

When they ask me who I am

I will ask them to take a look around

At the people I surround myself with

At the people who hold up my sky when it is falling

I will ask them to take a look at

What type of people hold up the world for one another

Just so we can take a breath

I will ask them if they know what it means

To be the daughters that our parents never wished for

To be the daughters our communities may have never wanted

But to be the ones that they now need the most

Some people will never know the way skies bend

And hearts ache

Right before a revolution breaks



"Bird and Corpse" (20"x16" acrylic and spray paint) 2020

Keegs Sturdevant

Untitled / Kristin Foglestad

Hi [o: >c_welles_tinley@mailnow.com<
From: >e.welles@cochranhealth.org<

Hi

[I'm sorry that it's you who's receiving this but you're the only one I could think of who might help. I know this isn't the ideal first communication between you and the child you haven't seen in twelve years, but I figure it's now or never. You may not know me anymore, but I know a little about you. Dad still talks about how you left us because "you couldn't handle being a mother." Thankfully, I didn't have to look far for a way to contact you. Computer privacy my ass.]

Anyways, with all this quarantine shit going on I'm too scared to leave my house. What you already know is, I got real sick as a kid. But what you don't know is that it left my lungs weak as f*ck. I just know that if I catch this COVID crap then it's the end of the line for me. My brother, my dad and I didn't prepare for almost everything to shut down, and we were almost out of food and my meds, so I let them go. Only my dad came back yesterday. Apparently, Andy (my brother) made the decision to spend a night at his friend's place. His friend lives with the back of his house to the woods alongside a dumbass doomsday trailer. His friend was quarantining in the trailer while his parents were in the house. Andy figured it would be safe.

But he came back this morning all scratched up. Didn't say anything to dad and I just stormed into the bathroom. It looked like there was a bite mark on his leg. Bleeding pretty bad. He insisted he was okay. Dad is an essential worker, (he works reception and data logging for our local health clinic) and needed to get to work so he took Andy's word for it and left.

Somethings not right with Andy. He keeps...popping up places, standing in corners like in the Blair Witch Project. I was in the kitchen making a sandwich when he was suddenly just there. Standing in a shadowed corner of the kitchen next to the pantry. Something was wrong. He was breathing heavily, it may have just been the light, but his eyes looked yellow, his skin looked waxy and it almost looked like he was drooling. I kept my cool and tried to do the sisterly thing and asked him if he wanted a sandwich, tuna fish, with olives, on sourdough, his favorite. I wouldn't call it a growl as the sound he made but more like a...groan? He sounded like a dying cow. I couldn't help but laugh. It

was funny. Next thing I know he's knocked my plate halfway across the kitchen and he's got me up against the fridge with a hand tight around my neck. His eyes were most definitely yellow. They didn't seem to recognize me. His hand wasn't tight enough to choke me but with my bad lungs I felt like I was choking. I coughed and somehow managed to cough out a plea for him to stop. The moment I said his name he got this look on his face that recognized me. He let go and left me gasping and coughing.

"Liv? Liv, something bit me out when I was camping with Dylan...I don't know what but something's wrong," He was visibly shaking.

He started crying. His voice started to get all growly and he said to me, "I'm afraid I might hurt you...I-I think I need to lay down." He limped back to his room. I grabbed some food and locked myself in Dads room. He has his own bathroom.

Things were quiet for a little while. Occasionally the shadow of his feet would show up under the door and I'd hear him growling to himself. Something about being hungry and the occasional outburst of, "Off limits!" I assume he means me but...idk.

Things took a turn; I briefly ran to my room down the hall to grab a textbook and when spotted me. All I saw was that his clothes were in tatters as I sprinted back to safety and slammed the door to Dad's room shut.

Andy kept alternating between, "Liv! Let me in! There's something in the house and it's trying to eat me!" and "You stupid little bitch, you can't hide from me, I'm going to come in there and eat your heart!" Accompanied by either desperate pounding and scratching at the door or just the periodic (and creepy) rhythmic single knock here and there.

As I type this, he's currently groaning my name outside the door. He keeps apologizing but I'm afraid he's going to start up again. I hope daddy comes home soon or I fear the worst. I left my phone and my meds in the kitchen. So, I can't call for help or much of anything.

So, I guess this is my only means of letting someone know somethings wrong. I figured out how to set this up to send on a timer, so I guess my life is up to you, mom (if I can still call you that,) and if you're the type that reads emails the moment they're sent, send help. This is my dad's email, so if you get this. Please don't disregard this as a prank email. If you get this, it means something's wrong. Please send help. I'm a sickly fifteen-year-old and I want to make it in this world. I live at 1235 Hicklesock Drive Ellesborough, Wisconsin.

-Olivia Welles

From the desk of Evan Welles r.n.



Photograph / Seth Polfus

Home / Dylan Ganem

The moment my father won the lottery was the same moment I realized what it would be spent on: the big, beautiful, white house at the center of town. It probably had a name, but my father would never acknowledge it; to him, it was his house.

He had grown up on the other side of town in a low-down establishment that was blown to dust as soon as the residents all died or moved on, my father being the only one who moved. I believe it was a sort of orphanage, and I believe my father is an orphan--but I never dared say that word in his presence. I knew it would make him sick. He always told me how he would cross the main street to the park and gaze at the marvelous white house as he swung from the swing.

"It would creak, that swing, but it was a beautiful song meant just for me: 'come home, come home, come home,'" he told me at the age of my earliest memories.

My father always smiled. To anyone else, this meant he was a happy man. But his smiling was a language I had studied my whole life, and I can't recall a single variation in which the translation was joy. I believe he was practicing for the day he would be able to walk into the front door of that grand white house and call it his own.

The first thing that my father had that was just his was me. He raised me in a duplex just a block north of the white house, and my mother, whom I've still never met, was supposedly raising hell down in Silicon Valley, wherever that was. Because of my father, I knew what love was before I ever heard the word. He took many jobs throughout the years doing mostly janitorial positions so that he could be with me more often. I believe he worked in architecture before having me, but that's just because he sounded like an expert on the subject when he pushed me on the swing in front of the white house--which had lost the creak--and openly remarked its features.

As fate would have it, my father was asked by the then owners of the white house--when I was around nine years old--if he would consider a full-time position maintaining the property. For days I heard him mumbling to himself going over the offer. When he finally told me one day that the first time he would step in that house was going to be as its owner and nothing else, I interfered:

"Daddy, you could imagine how you would decorate the inside if you worked there, and then we'd be much more ready when it's ours one day."

He smiled in my direction, but he was looking through me, and I discovered later on that the smile he was wearing most closely translated to begrudgement. The next day he accepted their offer and went on to clean the white house for eleven years.

I believed it did him some good, being in that house for so long. I imagined the charm it had on him would have worn off throughout the years, and I must admit I can't remember a time in recent history when my father even mentioned the place to me. But the smile that sprouted on his face when he matched the numbers on his ticket with the winning ones on the screen informed me that I had been deceived. Now, I can only picture the sad image of my father in that large house that would surely swallow him after years of chewing him to the bone. And he wanted me to join him.

I asked my father when I turned eighteen why my mother had not stuck around. He laughed and said that she never understood the concept of "home." I then asked what "home" meant to him, and he replied, "a place to make yours in a world that wants you lost." Nine-year-old me would have loved hearing him say that, but having grown, I realized that there was more to belong to than just one town or one house. And my heart broke then, because I knew what he'd think when I told him two years later--the day he won the lottery--that I planned on moving away to see everything I had missed growing up.

His smile from the matching numbers--one that was like joy, but not quite--twisted into one of acid at me. He confessed he never predicted I would end up like my mother, and from the moment I said what I said, I knew he would only ever see me as a traitor.

"I know you think that house is your only home, but I want you to know that anywhere I go is a home for you as well," I said, tears welling in my eyes.

"I think I'll replace the wood on the stairs first. They give such an ugly sound, especially when going up," my father said, looking at the wall above me, dismissing me to a life he could never understand.

"You would make an orphan out of me?" I finally asked, and I stood up to reach for my coat and leave. When I turned to look at him, his face had taken on the shade of the great, large, gorgeous white house. For a moment I thought he was dead sitting in his chair, his eyes glued to that same spot on the wall behind where I had just been. But then he started to mumble more about his plans for the interior, and that's when I left. That was the last time I saw my father, who taught me what love was. I only wish he had known that home was the same thing.



Photograph / Seth Polfus

Restless / Dylan Ganem

Sometime around the year I was twenty I started to resent sleep. I realized that all of my friends were slowly cutting their tethers to our hometown, and I was white knuckling mine for dear life. "Remember when we said we would go roller-skating more," I would remind them, and they would always say, "Yeah, but that was a long time ago." Yes, well that's the point.

Time was longer back then; we would show up at each other's houses unannounced, ready for anything and everything to do. We wouldn't split until we lost our voices or our stomachs rumbled. And in our moments of rest--even in our dreams--we would be thinking about our time together soon and how it wouldn't come soon enough. There was so much momentum in our day to day together that it only made sense for our end to result in an earth-shattering crash, a ripple felt around the world that would disrupt even the wind.

The reality, however, was far less dramatic but much more horrifying than I could have predicted. There was no finality to our saga, no climactic moment that would live on in stories to our children. Death was not granted to the healthy body of our bond; instead, it became ill and weak, kept alive by insincere moments of reunion. How Are You Doings and Long Time No Sees and Let's Catch Up Sometimes: these are the pills swallowed over infrequent texts and run-ins during the holidays that cruelly keep the heart slowly beating, each time seeming like the last.

So, one night when I was laying in my bed as a twenty-year-old and staring at the ceiling, I lost the urge to sleep. It was the peaceful silence of the darkest hours that made the day seem so loud; time also did not pass as quickly then as it did with the sun. I was hoping my friends were experiencing the same thing and that perhaps one of them would show up in my room unannounced, sensing that we could deeply live while others slept their lives away. Of course, that never happened.

I began to write them letters during those hours I had once used for dreaming, but the effect wasn't so different. I wrote down, in exact detail, why roller-skating was among one of the best moments of our lives; I wrote the number of times we had claimed we were actually dying from laughter and what we were laughing about; I wrote Thank Yous for the heart to hearts and the soft shoulders for my famously hard tears; I wrote what I thought was best about each of them and found that I would often need more paper. I wrote how I hated them. And I made sure the ink that materialized those last words would never rub or smear, it's only possible erasure by something as scorching as fire.

I wanted more than anything to pull my friends back in from their distant places. However, what I needed more--what I knew to be the only real choice I had--was to let go of the regrets we kept on our tongues, to allow our stories to have an ending. At the very least, I would be able to sleep again.



Photograph / Seth Polfus

March Again / Noah Gassman

At this point in December
I stand in the shower
after I'm already clean.
If you close your eyes,
the water can feel like the
last decent hug from March,
but only with practice.
I hope my skin can take
the water's warmth with it
for later.
The showerhead whispers until
silenced.
The heat leaves, and I'm
left standing cold. Naked.
Blissful ignorance
down the drain.
And it all feels like March
again.



Backyard Shed / Andrea DeBauche

2 Movements / Noah Gassman

The slow collapse: Grace was the same as me and maybe that matters. We were both Catholic and floating. Grace was the same as me and neither wanted to lead. We were both Catholic and floating On improvised live-jazz swing dance Neither wanted to lead. I was the young man, supposed expert On improvised live-jazz swing dance But I still stepped carefully.

I was the young man, supposed expert In concert mosh pits and classical chaos But I still stepped carefully Not to press bodies in sports bras In concert mosh pits and classical chaos. Covered in each other it became impossible Not to press bodies in sports bras I became too aware of my skin. Covered in each other it became impossible To be less aware of my thoughts since I became too aware of my skin And I'm still trying To be less aware of my thoughts since The slow collapse. And I'm still trying maybe that matters.



Kenzie O'Shea

Untitled Writing / Cassidy Herman

I sat in the middle of the field, the moonlight casting down blueish hues on the tall switchgrass. The wind swished through the grass gently, as to not wake it up in the night. I led by its example and stayed still, contemplating the vodka in my lap and the journal that sat opened in front of me. The grass that I had forcefully flattened into the earth by numerous visits to this spot had consequentially become permanent, and in return, became my little hideout for when I needed peace.

Usually what brings me to this place is when I am starting to feel just a bit too normal. Too much blended into society and I need to escape for a while. This place, over time, has made me feel that there was something in this world that was more. That was really all I wanted. More. More. More.

Unfortunately, I did in fact know that it was just another field in this small ass town and really did not possess any magic, but at least here I could dream about it and draw it. As a result, I came here more often than I'd like to admit.

I uncapped the vodka and took a long pull, relishing in the burning that I felt in my throat and chest. There were not many things that made me feel alive anymore, but this definitely did the trick, albeit temporarily. It also helped with the fantasies, making them more exploratory, for me to revisit after I left. I lifted the journal from the grass, moving to sit so I could balance it on my legs, and looked up at the sky. The moon was full on this night, and the sky nearly clear from clouds. A perfect night.

As I stared upward, my focus faded as I no longer thought of what was in front of me, but the desires of my imagination. My hand, now wielding a pen, began to flow across the empty page as I drew what I felt. I never really knew exactly what I was drawing until it was finished, and that was part of the fun, but I continued on in my open-eyed dreaming of new worlds without looking down.

I went on for what felt like hours, lost in my mind at the expanse of possibilities. My hand, which continued along with me like a sidekick in every fairytale, began to cramp, pulling me from my dream. I cursed it inwardly, knowing that I would not reach that state again and this was the end for today. I looked down at the page to see what came of this experience and saw what seemed to be a rather mischievous looking fairy. I was surprised by this result, as I didn't remember one at all in my self-made world just before. This wasn't a result I was used to. Usually it strayed towards my major interest in each "episode", whether that be the protagonist (me), the love interest, the sorcerer, the dragon, etc. But a fairy...well just didn't fit that.

I looked down at my hand, giggling a little, and said to myself, "You really do have a mind of your own, don't you?". Flexing my fingers to remove the cramping, I looked back at the drawing once more. It really was quite good this time, and I was surprised at how detailed it was. I knew I had talent, but maybe all of this experience was also making me better at it. I was pleased.

I set the journal down and began packing up my things to head home. I checked the time, just past two in the morning, and mentally smacked myself. I stayed longer than I thought. I dreaded going to work in the morning now. Sighing as I continued to gather myself to leave, the slightest sound of a buzzing started behind me, much like a bee. Part of me thought that it was odd, but I was too distracted to bother with it. I grabbed the bottle of vodka and put it in my bag and reached for the journal behind me without looking directly at it. As I pulled it in front of me to close it, my eyes narrowly caught on that there was no longer any ink on the page. When I came to full realization when the book was half closed, I slammed the book down and opened to confirm it. The drawing was gone, and the buzzing intensified to where I could no longer ignore it subconsciously.

I felt my skin prickle with goosebumps as I turned my head around behind me to the source of the buzzing. In my vision was my drawing, in full color (that I had not added), and about double the size of what I had drawn. In my horror and shock, I sat open-eyed and still and just looked at the creature before me. They seemed to notice my reaction, and the mischievous look on their face that I had so clearly drawn smirked deeper. Its wings fluttered rapidly like a motor, but with the soft tune of a singular honeybee collecting pollen. I collapsed to my back and a pang of pain spread in my chest. I couldn't tell if it was relief or fear. The fairy considered me thoughtfully, their eyes scanning my face. They scooted closer to me slowly, watching my reaction as they went across the small area to sit right atop me. I stopped breathing.

The fairy leaned their face towards my ear and whispered very clearly, in a smooth but almost echoing voice, "Do you know what is real? ".

Before I could answer, before I could see what would happen next, my eyes began to fade as I blacked out from lack of oxygen. I lost consciousness to the smile that permanently plastered their face.

When I awoke in the grass, it took me a moment to catch my bearings as the morning sun was overhead. I suddenly came to the realization of the events that occurred last night. Or did they? Was I just drunk? It felt so vivid but now I was unsure. Was it just a dream? My heart hurt at the thought. So many things I should have done, why did I faint!

I scrambled around looking for my journal. The evidence would be clear if it were real or not with if the drawing were still there or not. I would get my

answer. I found it rather quickly, half in the tall grass on the opposite side of the clearing. My heart began to pound as I braced myself for the truth.

I opened it and turned to the page.



Kenzie O'Shea

Quarry / Avery Kanel

There is a cliff here, five miles outside of town. It hangs like the inverted lip of a pitcher over an expanse of grey trees and gravel. People, grey like the trees and gravel which they call home light small fires on those cliffs. Fire, grey silhouettes and the vast black behind them forming embryos of light in a dark womb. And then, as they each select a brand from the fire and hold it aloft, the embryo breaks, flails, snaps and changes, it's light like a many-armed child hungry to eat up the darkness.

Standing on a neighboring rise you see the small lights line up and bob towards the edge of the cliff. The first light stops at what you think is the edge, although it's too dark to know for sure, and stays there until the second light reaches it. And then, the first light starts moving again, slowly at first, but speeding up as it arcs like a red star, shooting downwards. The only way to tell the distance to these tiny men and women is when the little red star passes the tops of the trees far below the cliff, and for a second, the crowns of the pines blaze with the same redness as the little light.

And then you wait as the third light approaches the second. Each one falling and lighting up the gloom for a second, then disappearing. Again and again until the shock of it wears off and you begin to feel sleepy, the cold and blackness of the night drawing you in on yourself, with only the far-off grey stars and closer red ones to contrast it. Then there is one light that doesn't fall as quickly as the others. It continues to bob like the lights behind it. The star begins to rise and becomes smaller and smaller, arcing like it's descending neighbors, but more slowly, like it is making a difficult climb up an impossibly tall mountain. You watch it for a long time until it gets so small and distant you can no longer see it move and have difficulty telling it apart from the other tiny brands of fire in the sky.

The lights keep walking off the cliff

It's morning

Broken grey stone bodies blasted with black ash

Faint red on blue above



Emma Meade

White, Gray, Red / Avery Kanel

The sun behind a cloud
Glowed from a SADD light
In the corner of his room
Outside, the sun behind a cloud
Glowed

Two white lights fill a grey room
The small sun in the clinical white box
And the large one, outside, swaddled up in grey

Goes the day, white light everywhere
Filling the world like cotton
They threaten to wick him up, a
Spill off the pavement
And float away

Returns the day, and the boy
They float
To the grey room

Then sleep, sky outside light black
A boulder slips up and down a hill
Wake up in a dark white

Big sun and
Little sun shot in his eyes

Smiles, leaves

A crimson maple, towering and filling

Sun shining through it like fire

Like the burning bush, "Behold,

Yet it was not consumed"

The heat of it so hot

It cooks the low grey clouds all the way back

To the mesosphere

And gravity comes back

And he settles on the ground



Emma Meade

How to Be a Conservative College Student / Katie Stegeman

First try to be something, literally ANYTHING ELSE. A leftist/rapper. A leftist/hippie. A leftist/high school dropout. Bernie Sanders himself. Fail miserably. Critical enlightenment is crucial at an early age – say sixteen so by eighteen you can vote red and help save the world from a socialist dystopia. On your first day of college tell your new roommate that you voted red and saved the world from a socialist dystopia. She won't immediately hate you. Take this as a positive sign. On your walk to your first ever college class decide that maybe college isn't as intolerant as you were led to believe. Daydream about your professor teaching on the merits of capitalism and the kid in the desk next to you having a pro-life sticker on their laptop. Instead you will learn critical race theory and the kid next to you will be wearing a Planned Parenthood volunteer shirt. When the professor is lecturing on the idea that all people are solely defined by their race, be brave, raise your hand and ask "shouldn't we judge people not based on the color of their skin, but on the content of their character". Expect the professor to be pleased at your quoting MLK. Instead receive a ten-minute lecture about your "white privilege" and an F in participation for the week. Pretend not to notice the kid in the Planned Parenthood t-shirt quietly trying to scoot her chair away from you. Decide never to speak in class again. Watch YouTube clips of Ben Shapiro destroying leftist students during the Q & A at campus speeches instead of doing homework assignments like writing about how your whiteness affects your ability to be a teacher. This will greatly affect your GPA, but Ben Shapiro YouTube clips are the only thing that will give you strength to complete your first year of college as a conservative. That and the weekly Nutri-grain bar boxes your grandma sends you to make sure you are getting healthy food.

At the start of your sophomore year, decide to start speaking in class again. A week later, give a presentation defending the Keystone pipeline in North Dakota. During the time for questions the class will be eerily quiet. Don't look at the professor. If you look at her she will pounce and spend the next five minutes tearing down your entire argument while not so subtly calling you a homophobic racist. Don't question where the homophobia comes in. Just take a seat and hold your tears in until you are back in your dorm room and can cry into your pillow. Decide never to speak in class again. In November, listen to your education professor lecture about how if you vote for Scott Walker you must be a racist science denier who hates women. Decide that you will vote for Scott Walker. On your way home from class spill some water on the "Vote

for Tony Evers” chalk writing on the sidewalk. Quickly run away before anyone sees you. The next day it will rain. You spend the whole day smiling.

At the start of your junior year, decide to start speaking in class again. Three weeks in, you will get into an argument about whether the second amendment should be abolished. DO NOT tell the class that you have a concealed carry permit. You will make no friends and the professor will call you into a meeting in his office. Decide never to speak in class again. In October you will discover Daily Wire podcasts on Spotify. Tell your dad about this discovery. Tell your roommate about this discovery. Tell the person sitting next to you in Astronomy 103 about this discovery. The first two will be excited and happy for you, the last will be sitting in a different seat when you come to class on Thursday. Spend the next weeks walking to class with the sounds of Ben Shapiro and Michael Knowles in your earbuds. Smile because no one knows what you’re listening to and if they did, they would berate you for being a bigot and never speak to you again. It feels like you are getting away with something.

At the start of your senior year, decide to start speaking in class again. To boost your confidence, buy a Trump bumper sticker a month before you go back to school. Stick it on your 2012 black Volkswagen Jetta. Show it to your mom. She will tell you that you need to remove the sticker before college, or your car will be vandalized. You won’t believe her. Ten days later, on your second day of college you will find key marks up and down the bumper of your 2012 black Volkswagen Jetta. Don’t tell your mom. Instead draft twenty passive aggressive emails to the chancellor. Send none of them. On your first day of class the professor will talk about the importance of wearing masks. Decide to tell the class that in March Dr. Fauci said in an interview not to wear masks; that in March the Surgeon General said in a press conference not to wear masks; that as late as April the CDC had guidelines saying not to wear masks. The professor will accuse you of being a science denying serial killer. Decide never to speak in class again. Instead buy a Trump/Pence mask and wear it all around campus. This will make you feel better. A week later all classes will be moved online. You suspect this is because someone complained about your Trump/Pence mask and therefore the entire university closed down. Wear your Trump/Pence mask to vote in November. Pretend not to notice all the glares you get as you wait in line. When you get your ballot and stand in the booth stare at the names Biden and Trump. Biden and Trump. This is the culmination of your four years as a conservative college student. This is the moment. Take a deep breath and check Biden. After all what are four years of college if they don’t turn you into a leftist.



Shark-Tooth Crown / Andrea DeBauche

Where are the Women? / Katie Stegeman

A little girl comes home after school one day
“Mom, we learned about George Washington today”
Mom replied, “He was a great leader it’s true”
“But the teacher didn’t discuss Jane Addams with you?”

The next afternoon the little girl had something to say
“Mom, we learned about Albert Einstein today”
Mom remarked, “He was one of the smartest men around”
“But did you learn about Caroline Herschel and the comets she found?”

The next day the girl came home with a sway
“Mom, we learned about Mozart today”
Mom noted, “Mozart composed some of the best”
“But will Saint Hildegard be on your test?”

The next day the girl sat down after her play
“Mom, we learned about Charles Dickens today”
Mom answered, “He was a great author indeed”
“But was Louisa May Alcott on your list to read?”

At the end of the week the girl asked in dismay
“Why do we only learn about men in school today?”
Mom dried her tears and said with a smile
“don’t worry my dear, women will soon be in style”



"Caving," triptych (22.5"x42", acrylic and beeswax) 2020

Keegs Sturdevant

19 / Emily Streckenbach

I'm getting old

I'm 19

I rise from my bed, awake at 7:00,
bright and early with no
alarm needed

I scroll through the usual apps
twitter, instagram, facebook,
tik tok

I don't understand half of the references,
the teenagers' slang is foreign to me now

periodt, sksksksk, and I oop
What does that even mean?

When did I get out of touch?
how did I miss the transition
from yeet to sksksk
from something old
to something new?

But there's always something new

there's always new slang,
new trends, new platforms

I feel the same
but the world is ever-changing
every single second
there are a million new things to watch and read and listen to

I look at the clock
it's 10:00
time for bed

I scroll through the usual apps
the world is in chaos
fires burning, elections looming
virus spreading, protests swelling
people dying, people yelling

The weight of the world
I feel it lingering at the back of my mind
the pressure to do something,
to somehow fix the world

Oh, look, a tik tok
someone's recreating scenes from that cheesy movie
one of my old favorites
now that she's a vampire, she's attacking the werewolf friend
"You nicknamed my daughter after the loch-ness monster?!"

I smile, it's funny
but I don't laugh out loud
I send it to a friend and type three letters,
"lol"

Childhood nostalgia
in some ways I feel the same as
when I first watched that silly movie
arguing with friends
Jacob or Edward?

But I am not the same
the world is ever-changing
but so am I
both vampire and werewolf boys were toxic
and I relate more to the concerned father
than to the lovestruck daughter

Simpler times
those childhood days
filled with make-believe
and dreams made real

Were they simple?
or was I just not paying attention
to the world's heaviness

It feels heavier now

I feel heavier,

older

I'm out of touch with the youth

but too young to be taken seriously

I'm never enough it seems

I'm never just right

Nostalgia can only keep me in the past

and dreaming can only get me so far

So I'll always be stuck, I think

somewhere between carrying

the world on my shoulders

and looking up urban dictionary slang before bed

at 10:00 on a Friday night



Maria Landgraf

A Love Letter / Melissa Touche

Dear General George Armstrong Custer,
You beautiful blonde-haired bastard,
A manly-man
vainly perfumed those locks with cinnamon oil.
Tell me, what did you last see?
Did you ride in, fearless and proud?
Unstoppable you.
Or did you trying to run away from your regiment,
like you did twice before?
Did you taste the grit of the dirt, kicked up by my warrior hooved brothers?
Were there tears in your eyes from the dust or your fear?
Cinnamon oil sweetly mixed in with your fear-induced sweat.
What was your last thought, before your last breath?
I have so many questions, only you can answer.
Did you see Death watching you, waiting patiently to hold you in its grasp?
Staring into Death's eyes, did you see the reflection of all of us dirty,
 merciless savages you murdered staring back?
Was that our blood that you smelled, or yours?
Are we still dirty and Godless? How much of that matters in the end? and
 WE ARE STILL HERE, didn't get us all, try as you might.
You aren't remembered as the brute you were,
With a spin on lies,
You've become a mythic hero, a legend.
For fools.
We're doing fine, and you left a fine tale, regurgitated in schools

nationwide.

No one talks of your crimes, twice a deserter.

Coming in last at West Point,

HIStory conveniently forgotten. Big American Hero,

leading your family to their graves.

It only took two bullets before your body was ravaged,

Beautiful blonde hair, still left attached,

I hope you felt every bit of pain, plus a 100x more for the pain you caused.

Sincerely yours,

A Merciless Savage



“Ruminating” (8”x8”, acrylic) 2020

Keegs Sturdevant

Two Girls on a Night Breeze / Madison Vaillant

Blankets bunch up around a nineteen year old's body
Rippled like velvet waves in a warm ocean,
lit by string lights that glow as steadily as starlight
The room is not the same, though perhaps,
she can imagine resting under another ceiling
Speckled with popcorn plaster, but illuminated by another soft star
A flashlight burning out on its last hours,
in silent supernova
Smaller hands cradle soft pages
Reverently stroking words and phrases
that she'll whisper during recess tomorrow
It's the same breeze
Carrying rain and car exhaust
and sleeping suburbia pavement through the window
Curling the damp paper corners into peaks
For clumsy fingers to prick themselves on
This child is far away
A different state,
Decades gone
And the breeze has swept her up in a gentle hold
Drifting over towns and dreams of childhood
Empty roads and shimmering black lakes that lap at the shore
The fluorescent lights of the movie theater

she would glimpse under half lidded eyes
head resting on the car door
Arriving in the cradle of sleeping giants, called bluffs
That thick haze of wet earth fills her nose
Permeating every year of life
Every night with the window open,
a single light on yellow pages
Replace a room with a matchbox dorm
A sister with a roommate
Until her legs grow longer
Her hair blankets her lower back
Her face sharpens,
as does her words
And the years layer on,
like the blankets that ripple like velvet waves
under string light stars,
that reveal bigger hands touching
the same pages, as she welcomes in
the same night breeze
An old friend
This is not childhood anymore,
but somehow it feels
the exact same

A Friendly Companion / Alexia Walz

I have a monster in my life. He's of the wideset, furry, cobalt blue with horns breed. And he's not the kind that hides under your bed! He's actually quite friendly. We've developed a good rapport lately. The downside is that he's been tasked with the burial of my temporary grave every month. Years ago, we made an agreement that around the time that my body reminds me of my womanhood (and my childlessness), my grave must be dug. The reason why? I'm not sure. But he insisted, so he goes to an unnamed location, somewhere on the outskirts of my consciousness and he starts to dig. With each dent in the dirt that he makes, I sink deeper and deeper into a haze. Into a mind that I cannot call my own. Once he is done digging, he pulls me into this hole, and I sit there for a while. I sit there as all the assignments, scheduled shifts and pre-planned dates with friends cry and beg for my attention. But I am unable to move, unable to complete the tasks that will deem me as a productive, healthy and living citizen because I am preoccupied with my death. My temporary death at the hands of a hairy, blue and horned creature. But I know he means well. He's just doing his job. And when it's time for me to stop my wallowing, he pulls me out. He helps me reclaim my mind and my life. And then we laugh and make jokes and forget that I sank into a deep, dark coma for a couple weeks. We live on until he grabs his shovel and starts to dig. One. More. Time.





"Fragmentation"

by Kohleen Lyons (photographed by Zachary Stensen)

Clockwork / Alexia Walz

the pale blue shade of the sky
the jade green grass
the muddy brown color of the tree's bark
and the gray, almost white pigment of the sidewalk
somehow, all make sense
like pieces of a puzzle that requires no logic to solve.
everything has a place
everything has its exact purpose
and knows exactly where it is meant to be

and yet...

the leaves shift from a basic green to
a vibrant red,
a distant orange,
and a banana pepper yellow,
like clockwork, every year.

the kids mark the sidewalk with
pastel pictures of flowers
or an innocent game of hopscotch,
like clockwork, every now and then.

sometimes,
on the days when the sky, the grass,
the pieces of the puzzle refuse to match,
the kids write slurs.

like clockwork, unpredictably.

on other days,
the sky turns a hazy shade of a nameless color because
the people celebrated life with too much fervent and
set the forests ablaze.
like clockwork, without a warrant.

this puzzle
this circadian rhythm of life
is consistently—
like clockwork—
disrupted by the ones that beg and plead
and destroy and steal
and write slurs
and burn forests

but they are a part of the puzzle and the rhythm too
they tend to their gardens
and feel peace
they tend to their horses
and feel needed
they tend to their slur-stamping children
and they feel responsible for the dysrhythmia

so they teach their children discipline
so that when they fail they will soon succeed
they show their children love

so they eventually evolve
into people who plant trees,
rake the green, orange, and banana pepper yellow leaves,
erase slurs from the sidewalks,
play hopscotch with the neighbor kid,
and tend to the earth's blazing forests,

like clockwork,
with every heartbeat.

Just for a Day / Alexia Walz

Sometimes I have the urge to be a member of a different family. Just for a day. I want to know if the family leaves their shoes at the door when they get home or if they practice the “hose off in the back” method. I want to know if the brother and sister fight over whether to watch the last ten minutes of WWE Raw or a rerun episode of That’s So Raven on their big-box television or if the mom is more of the three-hour screen time and Flintstone vitamins after breakfast kind of parent. I want to know if the son sends a picture in the family group chat of the three-foot catfish that he caught on a Saturday morning fishing trip that he took with his dad or if he’s more the “estranged from the rest of his family because he’s never felt like he’s had a place at the dinner table for his entire 20 years of life” type of son. I want to know if the dad yells at the TV on Super Bowl Sunday because he had too much “fun” at the George Street Pub the night before or if the mom still harbors so much resentment for her traumatic childhood that her kids start to acquire that exact same form of bitterness. I want to know if the parents sat down in their carefully decorated living room with their children to discuss what it’s like to be racially discriminated against or if the mom just let her biracial daughter fend for herself because the mom “has never seen anything wrong with being black so why would anyone else?”

I just want to cross the threshold of someone else’s home to see where it might have gone wrong. To see the holes that my trauma created. To see the holes that no amount of love and forgiveness could fill. I could mend those traumatic wounds before they become untreatable. Then, I could evolve into a better, more knowledgeable woman whose facets are more delightful than they are disturbing. I could remain exactly the same person, but with some bandaged wounds, an involved dad, a mentally sound mother, and a simple life. I could change my world to the one I’ve always longed for or I could just remain the same biracially confused, estranged, and resentful woman. Just for another day.

Contributors' Notes

Kyra Litwin is a Wisconsin based artist and TikTok enthusiast. When she's not creating a masterpiece on paper, you can find her honing her barista skills to make a masterpiece with coffee.

Taylor Halvensleben grew up in a small town near Madison, Wisconsin where she, as many Wisconsinites do, developed an addiction to anything "cheese." She's been a state soccer finalist, National Honor Society president (don't ask how), a lover of anything chocolate, a large dog breed enthusiast, and a soon-to-be graduate from UW-La Crosse. She declared a Creative Writing minor her sophomore year to further induce panic in her parents, and because of her passion for writing. *How to Find Love During a Pandemic* is a piece written for her Forms of Fiction class.

Missy Deisting is a senior at UWL majoring in English Education who enjoys Granny Activities such as crocheting, caring for house plants, writing letters, and petting cats.

Mirm Hurula writes, "Hi! I'm Mirm and I'm a poet. I've been writing and telling stories since I've been talking and writing. Right now, this is only the beginning of my writing. And the only thing that will stay consistent in my writing is vulnerability."

Kab Vue (she/her/hers) is a queer Hmoob womxn of color and a daughter of refugees who believes in the use of spoken word as a means to convey and process intergenerational stories of pain, love, history, and trauma to revolutionize and break generational curses.

Maria Landgraf is an Art Education student at UWL and is graduating in May 2021. Landgraf loves to create and share the process with others!

Keegs Sturdevant is a senior art student at UWL. They practice both 2D and 3D studio art. Keegs has also been involved with yoga club, social justice groups, and the biology department's greenhouse throughout their time at La Crosse. After graduation, Keegs hopes to study landscape architecture and continue their studio practice. To see more work, visit the senior art show this spring or check out their Instagram page @_Keegster.

Kristin Foglestad is a Communications major with a passion for writing and working on creative projects.

Seth Polfus writes, "taking photos has been a passion of mine since receiving a disposable camera for Christmas when I was ten years old. Even today, the photographs I took back then tell a story and the timeless value of photos is what has propelled me to take up photography. An appreciation for nature and

a love for adventure was implanted in me while growing up in the wilderness paradise, otherwise known as the Upper Peninsula of Michigan. My work is reflective of my passion for photography, love for variety, and my longing for adventure.”

Dylan Ganem is a senior at University of Wisconsin La Crosse majoring in English: Writing Rhetoric with a minor in Creative Writing. Outside of school, he enjoys playing chess and being with friends and family. He hopes to one day earn a writing career in film, video games, or media in general.

Andrea DeBauche is a recent UWL graduate majoring in art education with an art therapy minor. She describes herself as a "Jaqueline of all trades" in experimenting with different art medias, as exemplified by the two pieces shown--one a collage and one a cast silver crown.

Noah Gassman is a sophomore double-majoring in Writing and Rhetoric and Women's Studies. Both his parents work in children's publishing and surrounded him with books until he learned to write. He loves crafting worlds and characters like they're empty puzzles with infinite possibilities, his biggest inspirations being Haruki Murakami, Kiese Laymon and Phoebe Waller-Bridge. When he isn't writing, Noah enjoys walking the Cottonwood Trail, crying while listening to Mitski, and drinking water.

Kenzie O'Shea is a fourth-year student studying biology at UWL. She is currently in the middle of learning more and finding her passion in art. Kenzie has aspirations of becoming a medical professional, while still balancing her love for the arts.

Cassidy Herman is a 5th year studying Art Education with a Creative Writing minor at UWL. The photos included are from her senior exhibition currently out for viewing on the art department page. She enjoys black and white film photography, as well as writing fiction for fun.

Avery Kanel is a junior studying Computer Science. Likes to go on walks. Needs a better bike.

Emma Meade is a freshman at UWL majoring in Elementary Education. Art has been a passion of hers for many years. Her main focus is ceramic work incorporated the beauty of nature interacting with the human body.

Emily Streckenbach is a sophomore at UWL majoring in Psychology with a minor in Anthropology. This piece was inspired by Streckenbach's endless scroll through Tik Tok. Streckenbach was thinking about being basically an adult now and how weird that feels. Streckenbach feels in this weird in-between phase of being simultaneously too young and too old for things.

Melissa Touche is a senior at UWL. Touche also belongs to a unique population of students who are also parents. Touche loves writing but does not often share it. Last semester, Touche took Creative Writing. Professor Stobb mentioned she should submit this work to *The Catalyst* after she shared it with the class.

Kohleen Lyons is a senior at UWL majoring in Psychology and minoring in both Art and Neuroscience. Her art illustrates and emphasizes key concepts of her undergraduate research regarding microaggressions, particularly the psychological trauma they may inflict.

Alexia Walz writes, "I am a Media Studies major and Creative Writing minor. I always have considered myself to be creative, but oddly enough, these submissions are some of my first examples of my creative writing! I hope to stick with it for the rest of my life!"

Madison Vaillant is a sophomore here at UWL but is originally from Lakeville, Minnesota. Vaillant is a double major in English Writing Rhetoric and Art and minoring in French. Vaillant loves to read and write in free time, especially mysteries. Vaillant's ultimate dream is to be a published author.