

# THE CATALYST



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

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Acknowledgements:

To Dasha Kelly Hamilton, concurrent Poet Laureate of the state of Wisconsin and the city of Milwaukee, for both contributing a piece to this issue and for coming to speak at UWL.

To our contributors, for having the gumption to write poetry and make art in a world that sometimes feels like it could care less. If you're returning here after having graduated several years ago, take this moment to be welcomed to the fondest college memory that you have.

And to *you*. Has it ever occurred to you that literature is arbitrary without eyes to read it? The act of reading makes a book a book, in a way. *You* have a vital historical role.

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## *The Catalyst*

## **“The Library” | Dasha Kelly Hamilton**

Bend pages at the corner  
Folding into the stories  
We tell about ourselves  
About each other  
About days dissolved  
and seasons yet to come

Circulate riches to every spirit and spine  
Stack rhyme schemes and prophecy  
Humanity and hypotheses  
Guard our stories, stretching from soil to sky  
Common and crown, ground level to grand heights  
And all of our mass in the middle  
Mass, in the middle  
The accumulated weight of all our question marks  
Our catalog of anxious cells and eager breaths

Warm the hallways, the portals and platforms  
Ignite hope along dim landscapes  
Archive the shine of our collective living  
Our electric resistance to darkness

Poet Laureate of both the state of Wisconsin and the city of Milwaukee, Dasha Kelly Hamilton is the first ever writer to hold those posts concurrently. A writer, performance artist and creative change agent, Hamilton applies the creative process to facilitate dialogues around human and social wellness. She is the author of two novels, three poetry collections, four spoken word albums, and one collection of personal vignettes. She performed a reading of her work in February, 2022, at UWL.

## **“How to Fall for an Art Major” | Marcos Alfaro**

First and foremost. Have a general dislike for creative types. Second, put off dealing with any sort of “appreciation” class until scolded by your class advisor. He’ll say, “Katie, you have taken most of your major and minor requirements and have been on the Dean’s list since your first year, but you have to take some sort of creative class.” He tries to hide his sternness in his voice by softening his eyes or leaning in to create a warmer atmosphere. See through his pathetic attempts of masking his true emotions. Counter with a three-point argument on why you don’t want to waste your time on carefree professors that wear oversized shirts with years old ketchup stains, Birkenstocks, and a tendency to show up to class covered in their pet’s hair. Thirdly, check all elective classes offered by your university after your reasonable and well-crafted counter was rejected. Choose the one that seems the most bearable and won’t make you want to stuff scissors in your ears every time you hear the phrase, “it’s complicated yet simple”, or “your interpretation of art is subjected”, or any other paradoxical statement. Grudgingly, walk to class with your  $E=MC^2$  shirt to show your stance on logic and reason, but also because you need a clean shirt and you forgot to pick up detergent when moving in. Set a reminder to pick up detergent.

Scan the room and find a table without a partner. Stare down people as they walk by to assert your dominance. Start questioning your stare and its effectiveness when a boy in a white sweater with Vincent van Gogh’s, Sunflowers, plastered onto the front and Starry Night on the back. Decide that this is your mortal enemy until the Sun has engulfed the Earth before receding and exploding into a cosmic display of raw power. Continue to stare him down every Tuesday at 8:50 am and twice as hard on Thursdays. Expel the slightest amount of energy in the form of a nod or smile when he comes in and sits down, turning to you and meeting your stare. Greeting you every morning with a cheerful “good morning, Katie,” and a wide tooth smile. Grimace at the professor’s reminder to start your first big project with your table partner.

Meet him in the park with your assigned sketch book and artisan pencils. Leave your unopen pack of erasers in your desk at the dorm. Continue to meet him at the park adjacent to campus every Saturday for the month and smile a little less forcefully and angerly when he uses his oversized eraser on the sketch you both agree to make. Feel less and less repelled when he leans in to examine the details of your contribution. Agree to meet him for coffee at the local shop as the leaves begin to crunch under your feet.

Open up more and more about your love of logic and where its STEMS from. Watch him whirl his head back as he laughs, "that's the first time I've heard you tell a joke," he says. Find the warmth of his hand on your thigh comforting as he smiles, meeting your stare. Continue to work together on every project until the crunch of snow is all you hear on the walk to class. Smile back as you stare each other down while he sits next to you in class. Find yourself spending afternoons together and smiling as he tries his best to help you on your advanced calculus. Blush every time he comes over and kisses the top of your head as you stress about formulas and Greek symbols.

Furl your brow every time your mother calls and waits for the last possible second before hanging up to ask, "so, how is Bennet?" End the class with an A, completing your required artistic class. Another A to add to the uniformity of A's, listed on your transcript. Worry, at the thought of not seeing Bennet again and his cheerful optimistic view on most subjects except math and his skills within it. Ask yourself, why am I crying? It doesn't make sense."

Load your car with clothes, trinkets, and books collected over the semester. Rummage through your desk to find the opposite ends of the pencils being used. Wonder when did you start using erasers?



## **“Along the Golden Coast” | Marcos Alfaro**

It was the winter of 1952 when I first heard those voices. Men, women, and children. Faceless sounds that held conversations of their own, often excluding me from them, ‘how rude,’ I thought in those early years. In my adolescent stage of life, I found that my “imaginary friends”, were not welcomed with such poorly hidden giggles or soft pointing of a curious mother, but rather laughed at by my fellow peers and pointed to with now rigid hands. Diving deep in the wave of rebellion that pushed and pulled in the mid 60’s, making its ways from one shore of the country to the other, I have found the consequences of trusting in “the wrong crowd”, the people my mother had warned me so adamantly about. Nevertheless, I find myself sprawled naked on a Californian Coast, watching the sun rise over the buildings of L.A and diving deep into the water of the Pacific. Was I left here, or did I choose this spot on the beach? I begin to panic when I can’t remember who, or what, I am.

“Relax man, you’ll give yourself a heart attack.”

“Who said that?” I ask, shifting my eyes wildly as I am too burnt to move.

“I did, you took some bad acid.”

An outline of a man, unknown to me, stares down, blocking the last rays of light of the day. A face that’s recognizable after a minute of pondering their identity is satisfying. A distinct identity that belongs to someone. But the sort of face that you stare at and can’t quite catch where you know them from, only that they are not a stranger, is the worst kind of unsatisfying feeling. An itch without the ability to scratch. The only discernable trait is this man’s voice. A voice that I’ve heard before, belonging only to those without a face. This realization that my sanity is more fragmented than I previously thought, terrifies me. Now they have bodies to walk about.

“Relax, we know you’re freaking out.”

“You’re not real!” I screamed, shutting my eyes tightly

"Maybe, maybe not. But you, my skinny, burned, little friend. Are tripping hard." The man said, as he reached down staring into my eyes. "And you still got a long trip ahead." He said, smiling grotesquely. At that moment, his jaw became unclenched, tearing the skin around his face and engulfing me whole into his mouth.

I could feel myself sliding down his throat and falling, like a bread crumb, into the deep dark pit of his stomach. I could only hear the drips of digesting acid and the outside worlds white noise, dulled as a consequence of being inside a stomach. Fear rushed through my body, granting me control of my limbs as I stumbled in the dark. I felt the ground underneath me and felt hard tissue under an inch of viscous sludge. The idea of becoming this sludge if I do not find any exit, raced in my mind. The image of my fingers and feet, slowly melting and merging into a dulled color slime, losing my ability to stand up right, until I laid flat on the rough fleshy surface, becoming consumed by this man.

"I will not! I will not die here. I will not die being consumed by you!", I yelled out, echoing off the walls of my prison.

Booming laughter filled the darkened space.

"You will die in there, alone in the dark until you have become nothing more than waste, eagerly waiting to be passed as shit." The man said. "I have lived inside you for so long, waiting for you to slip. Waiting until I can slither out of your mind and take shape. You will never leave." the voice said, booming again with laughter.

I looked around more and more until my eyes became adjusted to the dark. There is a light here. Above me shined the smallest slit of light, faded, but still visible.

"I will not die here!" I screamed, as I scratched and clawed the walls and floor beneath me. Kicking and punching any surface I could touch. I could feel the false floor begin to shake.

"Stop that!" screamed the voice.

I continued until warm blood leaked from the soft walls. Clawing until my nails broke and the leak become a flood. I could hear the painful wails of my captor. The warm blood becoming

hot as it increased in volume, flowing in, and bringing me closer to that small slit of light. I climbed until I could see the sands of the beach.

“I’m almost there!”

I continued my ascent, clutching his tooth and tongue for dear life. His mouth quivered as he tried not to retch me up. The waterfall of blood rushed past me. I let go, riding its current and falling onto the warm sand below. I looked behind to see the man staring at me with piercing eyes and a smile, if it could be called that anymore.

“I’ll always be inside of you. I’ll always be there.” He said, as he laid on the beach holding his mouth together with his hands, trying to keep whatever amount of fluid was left, inside of him. “I’ll be listening.” He fell limp and slowly descended into the sand from where he laid. The only proof of his existence in this world, a pool of dark, steaming blood, staining the golden coast of the Pacific Ocean.

**“No.” | Devany Bauer**

I would have said “no”  
if you would have asked  
or “stop”  
if you would have hesitated,  
    even a little bit,  
but you didn’t ask or hesitate.

You just did it  
like it was easy,  
    like it didn’t matter  
like I didn’t matter.

I should’ve just said it,  
    maybe it would have saved us both.

## **“The Feminine Urge” | Devany Baur**

To clickety clack your fresh manicure on everything you touch.

To take pictures of your friends when they aren't looking.

To name your plants and say good morning to them.

To put baby oil on your legs after shaving them.

To twirl your hair around your finger in class.

To try on multiple outfits before a night out.

To light a candle before doing homework.

To seem mysterious in a coffee shop.

To paint your friends' nails.

To cancel Jake Gyllenhall.

To wear a lot of rings.

To trust no one.

To carry pepper spray.

To avoid gas stations at night.

To not tell anybody about what he did to you.

To wrap a flannel around your crop top tank top.

To check the backseat of your car before you get in it.

To cover your drink with your palm as you shuffle to the bathroom.

To poise your apartment key between your knuckles on your walk home

## **“I Saved You a Seat” | Bronwyn Bond**

I have always been fond of the rain. Nothing is quite as soothing as the symphony that is created when the raindrops hit the earth. Thunder crashing is simply the sound of Zeus chuckling, the crack only sparks fear when too close. It is easy to admire that lighting from a distance. The rain is known for being dreary and cold, but those hot summer nights with rain that would balance the heat could make any individual linger. The smell of the earth after it rains, the petrichor, is a hug from mother nature herself. It's as if the earth knows that it's been far too long since you've taken a deep breath.

The dark and stormy clouds make me nostalgic for the tradition I shared with my father and sisters. I don't have any clue as to how the tradition started, I'm the youngest of three so I must've missed the beginning. The routine is as familiar as breathing. My dad would come to us in the living room, or call us down from our rooms, he would grab some throw blankets and wait for us to join him on the front porch. We all sat there, under the overhang, cozying up in the old pokey wicker chairs and worn blankets. Sometimes we talked and laughed, other times we sat in content silence. In the roughest storms, we sit in awe of our humanity, grateful for the earth from which we came.

Slowly, we grew older. My oldest sister, Silvia, moved to college, and the porch felt an emptiness. When we watched our first storm without her, I wondered if she was watching the rain from her dorm room window. Two years later my other sister, Margaret, moved out as well. It was just my dad and me. I was always happy to admire the rain with him, but those moments had become bittersweet. My favorite thing in the world, for the first time, sparked a deep sadness in me. Not due to the dreariness, or the cold, but because I didn't have my sisters there to bask in its beauty with me. Sometimes I would snap a picture and send it to them, as a way of telling them I missed them.

After Margaret left, I still had 6 years of school to complete before I was to leave the porch. Every time we sat out there I tried with all my might to make time move slower, so I could

stay there forever. But life became busy. High School introduced harder classes and more friends. It felt as though every time it rained I was at some rehearsal, at my mom's house, or my dad was away for a work trip. Sitting out there without my dad did not carry the same beauty as it did with him. So I just had to love the rain from afar.

In 2019 Margaret got married not far from our hometown. It was a rare sight, to see us all together in our home again. Silvia had been living in New York for some time, Margaret had recently graduated from college and was moving all over for work, and I was still at home. We were blessed with one rainy night that week.

All of us were reunited on the porch. It was a sickly hot night in June, but the rain was cool against it all. No one spoke of how long it had been, or how complete we all felt to be there once more. Ever-bold Silvia lead the charge as we ran out into our front yard, around the sidewalks, and even into the empty street. I felt like a little kid, dancing out there the summer before my Junior year. The rain accompanied our laughter as it had done for many years, for it is a member of our close family. It would be another two years before we got to see each other in that house again, and there was no rain when we did.

The isolation of the early days of covid was crushing, but porch nights with my dad were soothing. I always thought of the night my sisters and I danced, I always felt a tightness in my throat. I did not know when I would get to see them next. I dearly loved the rain despite the despair it caused. Much had changed in the world, and the place I escaped to was different from how it had been in my childhood. The porch had been fixed up and painted, the banisters no longer wobbled, the chairs were no longer wicker. The changes did not matter, though, for in those minutes I was able to reflect. The troubles I was facing were not forgotten, but I was able to feel in my heart that everything would be okay. The raindrops still fell, and the leaves still blew in the wind.

I didn't predict how much my heart would begin to ache when the first fall of rain came after I had moved to college. I hadn't cried much when my parents dropped me off, nothing felt real for a very long time. Of course, I had immediately begun missing the friends back home and

the company of pets from both my mom's house and my dad's, but those first few weeks felt like summer camp. Figuring out the bus system, rereading syllabi, and grappling to find the courage to make friends occupied much of my thoughts for a time.

It hadn't set in that I no longer lived at home, until that first storm came. Umbrella turning inside out, clothes drenched in a minute type of rain. Instantly the weight of being in a new stage of life fell upon my shoulders and the ache of homesickness made itself known to me. I sat and stared out the window, longing to be on the porch once more to admire the downpour, when I received a text from my dad.

It was a video. He was sitting on the porch, filming the heavy rain, slowly panning to the empty chair next to him. There was a caption too, it said: "I saved you a seat."



**Ceramics | Ashlyn Buchmann**





## **“What Song do you Play When Your Girlfriend Goes to the Psych Ward? | Aidan Donahue**

Get the text.

Get in the car.

Slam the door shut.

Plug in the aux.

She's leaving soon

but you're faced with a strange choice.

Playlists

upon playlists.

Miles for every mood but

what do you put on?

The choice

is difficult as though

someone would judge you for playing Kanye while

you drive to see her one more time.

It's a decision with

more weight than 4/4 could bear.

Leave it to chance.

“Your Top Songs 2021”

Let Spotify pick for you.

Psycho Killer by The Talking Heads

Poor choice.

*Qu'est-ce que c'est*

## **“Water” | Gianna Fussell**

I am not a pretty lover.

I am not going to write you Shakespearean sonnets  
with metaphors about love and gardens.

I am not going to write love letters to you  
and seal them with gold wax.

I am not like Aphrodite  
with her tears that grow flowers over the body of her beloved when he dies.

I am not a lover that will please you  
the way Gatsby threw parties to impress the girl he loved.  
If my words are kerosene when I'm upset, you are the spark,  
And I am ready to be lit up with a single, flickering, match  
And when my words light up,  
They are the Californian wildfires.

I am not going to bring you everlasting peace.

I am New York City  
And I captivate you through pure lust,  
Like the way everyone dreams of going there.  
But the deeper into the city you go,  
You will find that the exquisite city  
has traffic jams and street rats, too.

Worry sneaks through my garden gate  
and vines up on the cobblestone pathways to my house.

The ivy covers me up in her green hues  
And I am trapped in the middle by the stone fireplace.

I wish that I could easily hang our polaroids up on a wall,  
Like the one we took  
when we played Scrabble.  
But I am not one that is easy to love;  
I am stubborn and I am opinionated  
And that just may scare you away.  
And losing you,  
Scares me.

But if you choose to stay,  
I will love you like water.

**“Whatever Clocks Say” | Adam Gear**





**Untitled | Mallory Gnewikow**





## **“Lavender Hour” | Mallory Gnewikow**

Clouds skim the endless sea of sky  
As though a soft stroke of paint  
Setting the scene  
A blissful warm summer eve  
Rolls in on a breeze

Magnificent soft hues paint the sky  
Celeste  
Cadet  
Powdered  
Baby  
Break way to a colors of blue  
Rarely ever there

The softest purples make their way  
Casting a glow  
Upon the heavens  
As lavender settles in the sky  
Soft reminder of man I knew  
Who shared the lavender hour

A soft melody  
Drift across the field  
Night comes in  
Day closing out  
As of the flutter of a child's eyes  
In a warm embrace  
On a beautiful summer night

**Untitled | Mallory Mallory Gnewikow**



**“your ego cant save you now” | Oliveferd Graham**

my head hurts bad  
said the sun  
i said mine too  
it hurts like  
the carcass of nature  
as it rebounds after  
a long winter  
it trembles like the bone  
feebly twitching  
as it searches for warmth  
my head hurts bad  
said the sun  
i said im sorry

**“i want to die in space” | Oliveferd Graham**

my universe is expanding  
i am one  
growing with the space around me  
filling like the lungs in my chest  
i am aging with life itself  
subatomic particles  
left over matter came  
to be my blood cells  
soaring through wormholes  
to my heart which  
beats  
    the time  
        away  
every day the universe expands  
my vision furthers  
i have more room to breath  
until my life stretches  
out of existence  
and my star dust veins  
pump into the heart of the next

**“its cathartic to cry in the bathroom” | Oliveferd Graham**

why does toilet paper exist?  
do you think as soon as a human was around to take a shit,  
they were like man. I wish I had something to wipe my ass with.  
only for tens of thousands of years later  
and the careful craft of cutting down trees turned into  
making paper into making a soft pulp to be formed into  
6 ply if your rich and 1 ply if your  
a college student who wants to kill themselves  
in the gender-neutral bathroom  
you only need 64 squares of 1 ply toilet paper  
to blow your nose after an episode  
while you look at the dried piss stains on  
the toilet seat and wonder  
why did they invent toilet paper  
if people aren't even going to wipe up their own piss  
in the first place?

**“The Devil is in the hidden Breast” | Oliveferd Graham**



**“arson is sexy” | Oliveferd Graham**

it's hard loving a body  
that doesn't feel complete  
like my own  
like it loves me back  
i want to burn the house  
that i am isolated in  
throw the furniture out the window  
escape through the broken glass  
hoping it doesn't scar me too badly  
i hope the blood  
slick and wet  
aids in sliding through the only exit  
bare feet beating down the rough path  
heat of my crumbling body burning my back

Untitled | Tori Horman





Untitled | Tori Horman



## **“Shower Thoughts” | Sidney Mitchell**

My mother told me when I was young that the difference between shampoo and conditioner was that the conditioner stung more when it got into your eyes.

So naturally that is what I want to reach for first when my mind starts to spiral.  
The pieces and parts that hold my brain together are beginning to break

Holding the bottle above my head and forcing my eyes wide open while I squeeze my hands.  
Letting the liquid drizzle into the sockets and begin to burn my irises.

Then I'd turn the nozzle to the highest temperature.  
Wanting to burn and blister my skin until the red hives and splotches become permanent.  
But the temp won't go any higher and the pain isn't enough to numb my thoughts.

So maybe I'll grab my razor and pop out the blades and slice up my skin to ribbons until the water turns red.

And when my mind stops racing and the only thoughts burrowing in my brain is how much I hurt.

I will put in the stopper and bathe in my own blood.  
Letting my head rest upon the tile and hope that if I pass out my head will fall into the liquid and I go with that feeling of numbness eternally.

This is what I want to do.

But instead I step into the shower and shampoo my hair twice, massaging my scalp as I do so.  
I use the conditioner as it's meant and slick it through my ends.

I keep the temp at a medium heat, twisting it just a tad if need be.  
Wash my body thoroughly making every inch of skin feel clean.

I skip the shaving altogether. Avoiding the temptation.

I get in and out within ten minutes and give myself a pat on the back that this time I managed to get away from the dreaded shower thoughts.

## **“Bourgeois Dream/Worker’s Dream” | Noah Mueller**

Pills for the plebs.  
Money for the monsters.  
Death for the dregs.  
Life for the lizards.

Ours is a world of pain.  
The red flag does not fly,  
But will fly again.



Untitled | Kenzie O'Shea



Untitled | Kenzie O'Shea



**“Just Imagine” | Will Reiche**

Just imagine  
if you weren't  
scared of what  
your friends,  
your parents,  
the world--  
thinks.

We could have  
so much more  
fun together  
than these three  
minutes  
in this old rusty,  
theatre bathroom.

**“A Moment of Weakness” | Will Reiche**

All my horoscopes and tarot readings have  
Suggested that someone from my past  
Would be reintroduced in my life.

And for a moment there,  
I caught myself wishing you were  
That mystery person.

...

Maannnnnnnn  
You really caught me slippin'  
I told myself never again.

## **“To The Boy I Caught Staring” | Will Reiche**

I guess our eyes did meet again.

I caught them last week,

And now again today.

Expect, I don't think

You meant to stare today.

You were yawning a lot,

And your eyes looked glossed over.

To be honest, it looked like

You were dead on the inside.

And who knows,

Maybe you were/are.

Maybe last night you had

One too many margaritas

Celebrating your friends 21st.

Maybe you had to work

All night and had a whole

essay to write, edit, and submit



before Midnight.

Maybe you received

Less than ideal news

About a sick family member.

*Is everything okay?*

I couldn't tell you what the

Lecture was on today,

Maybe something about Indiana?

I couldn't tell you

because I was too

distracted by you.

I noticed that when you were

Fidgeting with the putty.

You would nicely roll the

Putty out like dough

And then twist it

into a pretzel.

You always took a moment  
to admire your creation.  
Just before you would  
crush the putty pretzel  
a second later.

You clasped the putty pretzel  
so hard that your hand began to shake.  
The amount of pressure, force, -- anger  
You took out on the putty...

*Who hurt you?*

...

Maybe we can unpack that  
A little more next week.

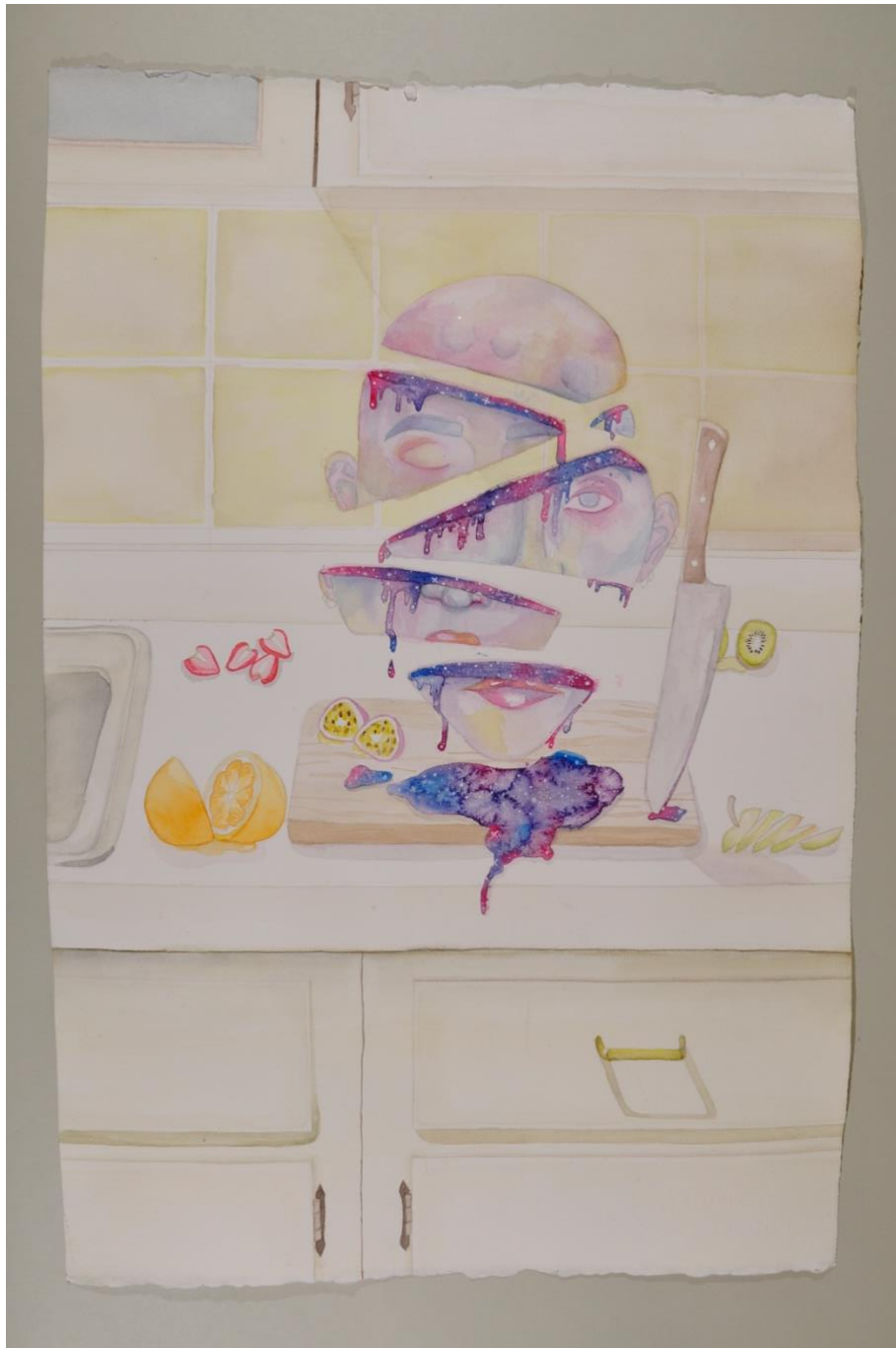
**“Burn Holes in My Memories” | Roxanne Spielman**



**“An Otherworldly Trip on Rainbow Road” | Roxanne Spielman**



**“Sliced” | Roxanne Spielman**





**"I'm Sorry" | Roxanne Spielman**



**“Folding Windows” | Roxanne Spielman**



**“At Ease” | Evelyn Van Ess**





**“Autumn Sky” | Evelyn Van Ess**



**“Forest Sprout” | Evelyn Van Ess**





**“Relaxing Branches” | Evelyn Van Ess**



**“Teenage Dream” | Evelyn Van Ess**



## **“A Mother’s Love” | Vaatu Wastadrowski**

My mother’s love was a fearsome thing. A sword that held all the power. Would she offer the hilt  
in surrender? Or would she swing her blade in attack?

There were days where her love was like a butter knife. Carving at my imperfections then  
smoothing them away so I’d finally be pretty.

The curve of my belly.

The length of my nose.

Her hands were so soft while giving me affection, but they stung when giving me her hate.

Her words were the same.

They often made me want to die, but I yearned for the limited days where her words were filled  
with sweet honey, covering the language of the past.

The language telling me I was a disappointment just like my brother. The language telling  
me I would never measure up to my sister.

Years later I started to receive something unheard of.

During a car ride home. On the couch watching a tv show. Drunk at the dining room table.

But always the same words.

“I’m sorry if I ever did anything to hurt you.”

I didn’t mind that she didn’t acknowledge the pain she caused. To recognize mine would  
mean recognizing her own

Her words were like water compared to her father’s fire.

Her blade a twig to his steel sword.

Her hands softer than his belt.

My mother loved the way she was taught. Then learned a new kind from her children.

We sat at the dining table discussing the hurt that came from both ends of our relationship.

Love is forgiveness and communication.

We apologized for the things we had never known.  
Recognizing hurt, even if you're not sure how it came to be.  
We realized that to love with no boundaries would cause pain.  
Love is reciprocal, but not unconditional.  
My mother's love is evolving. It is healing.

## **Contributor Biographies:**

**Marcos Alfaro** is a young creative fiction writer that grew up in Friendship, Wisconsin and is perusing a degree in geography with a concentration in GIS. He is currently a fourth year at the University of Wisconsin- La Crosse and hopes that his pieces of fiction can inspire other young writers.

**Devany Baur** is double majoring at UWL studying communication studies with an interpersonal emphasis and English with a writing and rhetoric emphasis and she works as a writing tutor in the Murphy Library. Devany is a thriving plant mom and an avid essential oil user who enjoys thrifting, cooking, crafting, reading, and writing. She is happiest when sharing those passions/interests with people she loves,

**Bronwyn Bond** is a first-year English major at UWL. Similar to many, she has little clue what she will do in her future. She loves reading but has only recently begun delving into the world of creative writing. She hopes to continue refining that skill throughout the rest of her college career, as it has been an enjoyable challenge.

**Ashlyn Buchmann** is a senior graduating with a degree in psychology and a minor in art therapy. She has been working in ceramics since she was 15 years old. She enjoys wheel throwing and working with porcelain. She looks forward to graduating and continuing with her ceramics career.

**Aidan Donahue** is a sophomore at UWL studying English and Creative Writing. He has been published once before in The Catalyst and hopes to expand his portfolio even further. He would like to thank his family for instilling in him a lifelong love of literature.

**Gianna Fussell** has always been a writer. She was the child who always carried a notebook around with her where she went and always lost herself writing stories. As she has grown up, that part of her was never lost and she continues to write today. She often finds herself journaling, writing stories, or reading and is influenced by Taylor Swift's whimsical and powerful storytelling. She hopes to continue in the English field and one day publish a book.

**Mallory Gnewikow** is currently a fourth-year student at the University of Wisconsin La Crosse. Mallory has pursued creative writing for the past three years through classes at the university and time dedicated to writing. Mallory finds inspirations from nature, emotions, and everyday

commodities. Mallory dedicates their pieces to family, friends, and professors that have encouraged, supported, and worked with Mallory throughout their long journey as a writer. Lavender Hours is specifically dedicated to Mallory's friend M.C. Matthews.

**Oliveferd Graham** is an awkward soul who is taking a year's leave from college to pursue the finer things in life, like becoming a starving artist and cat dad. Currently, he is struggling to find enough money to pay for the endless supply of lavender oat milk lattes he needs to create art, but when he finds a way to get an unlimited supply of lavender syrup, may god have mercy on your souls. When he isn't imagining what it would be like to die in space, he likes to make zines, poems, and drawings of weird lil guys. He also really likes pill bugs and wants the lovely readers to know that his dorm cat Bella says hello. You can follow his Instagram @oliveferd.jo to see more kinda cool art.

**Tori Horman** is a junior at UWL majoring in English with a Writing and Rhetoric emphasis and minoring in linguistics. In addition to photography, she enjoys reading, her pets, and is also an aspiring musician who's still figuring out how to write a decent song.

**Sidney Mitchell** is a sophomore at UWL studying English and Creative Writing and can be found buying an immense amount of books and never reading any of them, burning her eyes while staring at her computer screen for hours on end, and drinking an absurd amount of iced coffee.

**Noah Mueller** thinks a better world is possible.

**Kenzie O'Shea** is an aspiring artist that is majoring in biology and minoring in art. She is currently finding her style in painting. She loves to create pieces that show beautiful and unique features of the face.

**Will Reiche** is a current junior at UWL, planning to graduate in the spring of 2024 with a B.S. in women studies. He hopes to continue onto graduate school to study queer history. Some of his hobbies include curling, hiking, listening to music, and reading.