

The Purple Patch

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SIGMA TAU DELTA
INTERNATIONAL ENGLISH HONOR SOCIETY

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SIGMA TAU DELTA

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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

I am beyond honored to present to you the 22nd volume of *The Purple Patch*, which includes student work from the 2022-2023 school year. The academic journal continues to give a space to students to publish their pieces and professionalize their college careers, from academic papers, to artwork, poetry, and creative writing.

Putting together this edition has been extremely fun. As Editor in Chief, I couldn't have asked for a better team. They have all put unbelievable amounts of effort and hard work into developing the book that is currently in your hands, and for that I am incredibly grateful. We also have amazing artists among the students at Missouri Valley College, and if you are one of them, I want to directly thank you, even if it's through a piece of paper, for your courage and creativity. This would be impossible without you.

From the board of editors, we would like to give big thanks to Tom Moore and faculty from the division of Communications, Humanities, and Human Services for their donations. They have been put to good use, to print more copies of *The Purple Patch* and towards the annual Sigma Tau Delta convention in Denver, CO, where some of our members were able to present their work on the national level. Thank you for funding our own professional development. We also want to give a special shout out to the Murrell Library staff for always thinking of Sigma Tau Delta, but in particular to Margot Mirabal, who invested her time and resources to ensure our success.

Most importantly, we want to give the biggest recognition to our faculty advisor, Claire Schmidt, for everything she does daily for us. Thank you for listening to us and caring about us, for prioritizing our education as well as our mental health, and for always supporting our goals (even when we turn in late lit reviews). We love you like a dad, in a totally appropriate way.

And to you, who are holding this book right now, thank you. For giving students room to have their voices heard and their artistic visions met. You are a key part of this, and we hope you enjoy this edition as much as we did.

Mariona Bolao Manén
Editor in Chief

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Academic Prose:

"How Far Can We talk about The Lottery" – Marcelo Goichi Okuda Filho	Pg. 1
"Femininity and Male Characters in Junot Diaz's <i>Drown</i> " – Magnus Manscher	Pg. 5
"Can You Call Tom Brady the GOAT?" – Luca Hasse	Pg. 8
"The Campus of Missouri Valley College is Becoming More Environmentally Friendly" – Luca Hasse	Pg. 12
"Fighting Against Death: The Struggle of a Lifetime" – Mohamed Toure	Pg. 21
"Ritual or Pure Brutality and Entertainment?" – Luca Hasse	Pg. 24
"Good or Bad?" – Luca Hasse	Pg. 28
"Holy MAP-aroni: A Reflection on Colonial Cartography" – Mariona Bolao Manén	Pg. 33

Creative Nonfiction:

"Just a Girl" by Rachel Gammill	Pg. 39
"The Best Ship: Friendship" – Estefano Del Aguila Delgado	Pg. 40
"On the Duality of Love and Hate" – Morgan Leslie	Pg. 43
"My Trip to the USA" – Leonardo Campolina Mendes	Pg. 45
"What Makes You an Adult" – Mario Diez	Pg. 47
"How I Learned English" – Suyana Bhandari	Pg. 49
"The Dangerous Rafting Trip" – Magnus Hauska	Pg. 51
"Keep Going!" – Valentin Laser	Pg. 54
"Life Changing Moment" – Alexandra Lorenzo	Pg. 57
"Cracking the Code of Life" – Natalia Ospino	Pg. 60
"The Real Hawaii" – Alyandina Bushe	Pg. 65

"Carefree, Careless, Carried" – Dawson Honeycutt Pg. 65

Artwork:

"Fall Fever" – Shane Rodriguez	Pg. 71
"The Office" – Mariona Bolao Manén	Pg. 72
"I'm New York City - Taylor Swift" – Mariona Bolao	Pg. 73
"It is Dusty in the Pyramids" – Mariona Bolao	Pg. 74
"Never a Bad Day to Make a Friend" – Mariona Bolao	Pg. 75
"The Nile really is a River in Egypt" – Mariona Bolao	Pg. 76
"Face Slice" – Erian-Beni Kabongo	Pg. 77
"Abuse" – Erian-Beni Kabongo	Pg. 78
"Land and Sea" – Erian-Beni Kabongo	Pg. 79
"Brain" – Erian-Beni Kabongo	Pg. 80
"Self Design" – Beni Kabongo	Pg. 81
"Orange Fish" – Erian-Beni Kabongo	Pg. 82
"The Wonder Dog" – Chané Higgs	Pg. 83

Poetry:

"Momo: Observations of a Cat Owner" – Harrison Boynton	Pg. 84
"We Made Love" – Kristina Chhetri	Pg. 85
"I Missed You" – Kristina Chhetri	Pg. 86
"She" – Kristina Chhetri	Pg. 86
"His Untold Story" – Kristina Chhetri	Pg. 87
"I am From" – Faafetai Lemautu	Pg. 87
"My Roomies" – Faafetai Lemautu	Pg. 88
"Tough Love" – Faafetai Lemautu	Pg. 89
"Maybe it's Just for Me" – Natalia Ospino	Pg. 89
"Only on my Good Days" – Eva Agcaoili	Pg. 91
"Little Boxes of Love" – Temo Olvera	Pg. 92

"Us and a Dirt Road" – Temo Olvera	Pg. 93
"The Wizard of Oz is Not Upstairs" – Temo Olvera	Pg. 94
"Pink, Yellow, and Blue" – Temo Olvera	Pg. 95
"Mom. I am ok. Please listen to me when I say I am ok." – Temo Olvera	Pg. 96
"Biscuits and Gravy" – Temo Olvera	Pg. 97
"Biscuits and Gravy II" – Temo Olvera	Pg. 98
"Untitled" – Temo Olvera	Pg. 98
"Why Don't You Smile Anymore?" – Temo Olvera	Pg. 99
"Goodbye Friend." – Temo Olvera	Pg. 100
"Stop Looking at Me" – Temo Olvera	Pg. 100
"If He Would Let me, I Would Hold onto Today Forever." – Temo Olvera	Pg. 101
"Set on Silent" – Drake Tipton	Pg. 102
"The Reacher and the Settler" – Drake Tipton	Pg. 103

Fiction:

"Those Who Call" – Harrison Boynton	Pg. 104
"The Boy from the Bar W Diamond Ranch" – Garrett Goliher	Pg. 107
"A Reason to Kill," chapters Eight and Nine – Kristin Boynton	Pgs. 110 & 115
"Sheltered," chapter 25, excerpt – Kristin Boynton	Pg. 119

ACADEMIC PROSE

"How Far Can We Talk about *The Lottery*" by Marcelo Goichi Okuda Filho

"The Lottery" is a short story written by Shirley Jackson that was published for the first time in 1948, shortly after the end of World War II. This story is about a small town that has a tradition that happens every year (the Lottery), in which one person of the village is chosen by a draw to be killed by the other villagers for the city to prosper. However, Peter Kosenko who wrote "A Marxist/Feminist Reading of Shirley Jackson's *The Lottery*," thinks differently; he argues that the tradition of the Lottery represents "inequitable stratification of the social order along lines of gender and economic position" (Kosenko 192). He thinks the story is in fact about men's ineradicable primitive aggressivity, men's victimization and he said that this tradition could easily be changed if the villagers realize its implications, which is a big argument to make about this event has been happening for a long time. Even though the author has solid points in his article, I disagree with him in claims like this because I feel he is oversimplifying and making too many assumptions about the traditions, reflected in a ritual, of a society.

Kosenko makes recognizing and changing the villager's attitudes about the ritual sound simple. He thinks "he" (the villagers) should only realize the implications, which means the result of the ritual as if it was something so obvious as he said: "if he only realizes their implications" (Kosenko 193). This is the first sentence I am going to talk about in this essay, it was used by Kosenko in his article "A Marxist/Feminist Reading of Shirley Jackson's 'The Lottery'," to argue that the ritual that the village used to do is something unacceptable, and if they only look at the implications and realize them, they could stop with this ritual. However, it is not easy to see your traditions objectively but Kosenko makes it sound like it is simple. The lottery is a tradition, that means it is a belief or a specific way to act towards something that a group of people believes in for a long time; we all have different traditions about everything in life,

from simple things like how to say “hi” or “bye” to world events like Christmas, Easter, or New Year’s Day. So when Kosenko said that, I felt that he is being insensitive because he does not realize that most of the time we are not able to see from the inside, and only people from the outside, like us, readers, can see how unusual their implications are; each group of people has their traditions that since we are kids we learn and live in the middle of it, which makes it look normal to us, and when you have contact with other cultures, you can see different things that happen in these specific moments all over the world. Whether you like it or not, if we grow up with something it looks normal or acceptable to us, and most of the time is going to be what makes sense in our minds and what we agree with so it is not about “only” realizing and changing because it is not simple like how he sounds.

Also, the author is being impudent and harsh assuming that the villagers have no self-awareness, and expecting the whole village to change when he said “unexamined and unchanging traditions which he could easily change if he only realized their implications” (Kosenko 193) because in my point of view Kosenko is saying that this ritual, which is a tradition to the villagers that have been realized for over seventy-seven years and is taught to everyone since when they were children is meaningless. The depth of the investment in the ritual can be seen in this passage: “Bobby Martin had already stuffed his pockets full of stones, and the other boys soon followed his example” (Jackson 242), we can see that the children of the village are getting ready first for attack whoever is going to be draw at the lottery, which shows that since they are young they are already inside this culture, and shows that the ritual has a big value to them, or when Horace, a sixteen years old boy is assuming the responsibility to draw for his mother and him and said: “I’m drawing from m’ - mother and me” (Jackson 245), which shows exactly the same thing, a young boy inside the culture becoming responsible to draw for his family in the ritual, and even though I agree that the implications of these rituals are “exaggerated”, because by the end someone is killed, Kosenko is oversimplifying it, assuming that the villagers have no self awareness, and anticipating that the complete village alter, which it is unreasonable and contemptuous to say that they may effectively alter such an indispensably portion of their culture.

Another point in which I disagree with Kosenko is when he pointed out “man’s victimization”. When someone says victimization, it is about the act of making somebody into a casualty by hurting or murdering them, which he thinks happens in *The Lottery*. However, if we recap some parts of *The Lottery*, like, “Lottery in June, corn will be heavy soon. First thing you know, we’d all be eating stewed chickweed and acorns. There’s always been a lottery” (Jackson 246), we can see that this ritual is about sacrificing someone for the sake of the village, more specifically for food. That is why I disagree with Kosenko when he said “second, that it describes man’s victimization” (Kosenko 193) because the ritual is not about victimization, they are doing this for the good of the whole village, it is something that they were taught and they believe in. We can not forget that they were a small village, and probably old, so they follow old traditions such as these that were common among old societies, in which people sacrifice animals or someone’s life so their plantations will keep production without any problem, and that is why Old Man Warner said “Pack of young fools” when Mrs. Adams said that some places have quit lotteries, it is something that they believe in. If it is about victimization, he is saying that people from the past were acting like victims and this is pointless. That is why I do not agree when Peter Kosenko said “second, that it describes man’s victimization” (Kosenko 193) and even when we disagree with someone’s culture or traditions, we can not judge and attack them as if they were crazy and inhuman. It is a shock when you read about it but they have their beliefs and reasons why they do it, and I think the way Shirley Jackson wrote this short story kinda hides this meaning behind the draw of the lottery.

I felt that he was aiming too much only at the men of the village, Peter Kosenko also said in his text that “first, that it is about man’s ineradicable primitive aggressivity” (Kosenko 193), and besides I agree when he said that it is ineradicable primitive aggressivity because we are talking about a tradition, something that can not be easily changed, so almost unable to be destroyed (meaning of ineradicable). I feel that he used the term “man’s” in this situation just because it is about everyone, not only men. When I first read his words, I felt that he was aiming too much at only the men of the village, even though the first people to attack were women. If we come back to the original text, *The Lottery*, everyone

in that village is involved, men and women, boys and girls, we can see that when Shirley Jackson said: "The children assembled first" (Jackson 242), "Bobby Martin had already stuffed his pockets full of stones, and the other boys soon followed his example" (Jackson 242), "Mr. Summers and Mr. Graves made up the slides of paper and put them in the box" (Jackson 244), "Mrs. Delacroix selected a stone so large" (Jackson 249), "Mrs. Dunbar "Come on", she said, "Hurry up" (Jackson 249). So we can see it is about the whole village, not only about a part of it, which I see as important to state because if we finish the story thinking was the men's attitude, we ended up with the wrong view of men in the past which is unfair considering this is a ritual that everyone is involved too.

In conclusion, even though Kosenko has strong points in his text "A Marxist/Feminist Reading of Shirley Jackson's *The Lottery*", in my opinion, he was insensitive in some of his words and conclusions, which results in an oversimplification and, what I see as wrong, assumptions about the traditions of a society, and his arguments sound illogical because as I said about the word ineradicable, used by him, Kosenko ended up contradicting himself. After all, he states that this primitive aggressivity, that is the ritual that the villagers have as tradition, is unable to be destroyed or changed, which if you think about it, a tradition rarely is changed, so how does Kosenko say before, as I showed on this essay, that the lottery describes an "unchanging traditions which he could easily change if he only realizes their implications" (Kosenko 193) when he said it is something ineradicable. Also after reading his text and *The Lottery* written by Shirley Jackson, we can understand much more about this tradition, which is important because we learned to look at someone else's traditions and try to understand and do not judge and attack them for something they were doing for more than seventy years, and they learned as something normal to happen. We develop a different point of view over this "primitivity aggressivity" too and this ritual that at first sounds like something unrealistic, and we ended up learning much more with what looks like a common word, "tradition", but it shows a deeper meaning in these both texts.

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"Femininity and Male Characters in Junot Diaz's *Drown*" by Magnus Manscher

In 2008 the scholarly article "Situating Latin American masculinity: Immigration, empathy and emasculation in Junot Diaz's *Drown*" was published by John Riofrio. The article discusses masculinity as identity and argues that the male characters in the story *drown* are afraid of showing feminine sides of themselves. This argumentation is shown in the following quote: "The representation of empathy and its associations with femininity, however, are only part of the story. Ultimately at stake here are the male characters' efforts to fashion their own sense of masculine identity" (Riofrio 28). I disagree with this conclusion and it is not the impression I got from the characters in *Drown*. I believe that if you read the story you will find a lot of desire from the male characters to express their feminine sides. I believe that Junot Diaz's intention with the short story was to show young Latin American men that it is okay to embrace different sexualities and be feminine as a male. I think this message is clear if you take a deeper look at some of the male characters.

We meet two different younger male characters in the short story "*Drown*". The first one is the first-person narrator whose name we never hear. The story is told from his perspective and that is very clear especially the word choices he uses. An example of this is the word "Pato" which he uses to describe his friend Beto. "Pato" is a very negative word used against homosexuals. The reason that

the first-person narrator uses “Pato” about Beto is because the two friends had a couple of homosexual encounters before Beto left town. The first-person narrator makes sure that he tells the audience that he is not homosexual, and he had no part in the encounters. This shows the first-person narrators fear of appear feminine but on the other hand is he taking part of sex with another man. This is why I believe that it is not a problem of not appearing masculine but more an internal problem. Everybody has a perception of themselves and when that changes are it hard to accept. I think that the short story is trying to make it more acceptable for men to be feminine.

The other person we meet in the short story *Drown* is the male character Beto. Beto is described by the first-person narrator but we get a lot of information on him. Beto is described as a very determined person. You could even call him an alpha male. This part of Beto fits very well with John Riofrio’s conclusion but I will argue that Beto has another side to him. I think that we see Beto as someone that can show empathy as well. This is very clear in the following quote: “He put his hand on my shoulder, my pulse a code under his palm. Let's go, he said. Unless of course you're not feeling good.” (432 Diaz). This quote shows that a male character that is described as very masculine can show a feminine quality such as empathy and compassion.

Another thing that makes him stand out is the fact that he is not afraid of showing his sexuality to others. He is the one to make a move on the first-person narrator. The reason why I argue that he is not afraid to show his sexuality is because of the following quote: “I had my eyes closed and the television was on and when the hallway door crashed open, he jumped up and I nearly cut my dick off struggling with my shorts. It's just the neighbor, he said, laughing. He was laughing, but I was saying, fuck this, and getting my clothes on.” (433 Diaz) The quote shows that Beto is way more comfortable with other people knowing than the first-person narrator. This means that the short story *Drown* is actually showcasing a male character that is capable of showing feminine sides of themselves.

The lack of empathy shown from the male characters in “*Drown*” is a big part of John Riofrio’s argument. I disagree with that, because I believe that it is very clearly shown in the short story that

the male characters can show empathy and care for one another, without looking feminine. The following quote clearly shows that: “I remember that when the rent-a-cop tapped his nightstick against the fender and said, you little shits. Better come out here real slow. I started to cry. Beto didn’t say a word, his face stretched out and gray his hand squeezing mine, the bones in our fingers pressing together” (Diaz 429). In this quote we see two young boys that are very afraid of what is about to happen to them, and they only have each other. The first-person narrator starts crying and Beto who is clearly in shock as well reacts with empathy and grabs the first-person narrator’s hand. In this scene we see a male character that isn’t afraid to show a feminine quality such as empathy and compassion. Neither the first-person narrator or Beto is trying to show off their masculinity by acting hard or as they don’t care. They are not afraid to show how they really feel and that is very contradicting to what John Riofrio writes in his article “Situating Latin American masculinity: Immigration, empathy and emasculation in Junot Diaz’s Drown”

John Riofrio argues in his article that the male characters in “Drown” aren’t showing feminine qualities such as empathy, because their masculinity is at stake. I have found examples where male characters definitely show feminine qualities and I have even shown examples where male characters show empathy. I will argue that Junot Diaz’s intention with the short story is for people to understand that feminine qualities are something important to possess. This is why someone in the story should be able to show off these qualities to showcase the benefits of them. I also think that Junot Diaz wanted to put focus on homosexuality and make it less of a taboo.

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"Can You Call Tom Brady the GOAT?"

by Luca Hasse

The given article called "Tom Brady As The GOAT Is A Difficult Argument In A Nuanced World Of Analysis" is provided by OTBSports, a website with sport-news about all different kinds of sports. The author Cian Fahey is a content producer and journalist for the website. Since Tom Brady retired after the 2021/22 season, the article was written based on the long lasting discussion whether Tom Brady can be considered as the GOAT in football or not. We will take a closer look at the article, what points for and against the author brings up in the discussion and what rhetorical concepts he uses to convince the reader. Fahey succeeds with his purpose to provide an article that should support the audience in order to create their individual opinion about the term GOAT and to answer the discussion question.

In the first part of the article Fahey provides us some facts and knowledge about what is needed to be called the GOAT in each type of sports, coming up with some examples from basketball compared to football. After that the author focuses on the first team that Tom Brady played for, the New England Patriots. He describes what was important in the team, what advantages the team had based on coaching and recruiting and what role Tom Brady played in this team as a younger quarterback and as a Veteran player. Fahey also compares Brady to other quarterbacks in the league and tries to find out whether the supporting cast of he makes a difference in the GOA question. In the end he comes to the conclusion that there are too many factors you have to consider, but he initiates that Brady can be considered as the "first-ballot hall-of-fame inductee and [...] the most famous NFL player of all time" (Fahey). But why did Fahey write this article in 2022?

The reason why Fahey wrote this article was the retirement of Tom Brady after the loss in the 2021/22 Playoffs with his current team, the Tampa Bay Buccaneers, against the Los Angeles Rams. With his retirement the question of him being called the GOAT became even bigger than before. The article was written in order to help the people answering the question to each person individually, but also to get attention to their website and to generate money. The

discussion about Tom Brady being the GOAT or not is very popular. After only three months Tom Brady retired from retirement and is playing his 23rd season overall and his third season with the Buccaneers.

Taking a closer look at the article, one can analyze three big aspects of rhetorical concepts that Fahey uses to persuade the audience that the discussion about this topic is not as easy as it seems at first: Ethos, Logos and Pathos. Ethos deals with the credibility of the article and especially the author. Is he reliable? Is he believable? These are two questions you can use when you speak about Ethos. Logos is focusing on the logic of a text, appeals to a person's common sense and uses examples to demonstrate a point. When you speak about Pathos you try to find appeals to the emotion and feelings in the text that are speaking directly towards the reader. In the following paragraph the focus is on Ethos and what effect it has on the reader.

When you have a closer look at the article, you can tell really fast that the author is using three specific ways to cement his credibility. First of all, there is the concept of appealing to experts. Therefore he sees himself as the expert in this article due to the fact that he wrote it and he knows insiders and specific language that are only used in football. If you write about something and the reader sees that the author knows what he writes about, it makes the reader immediately feel good by reading the article. To underline that Fahey understands what he is writing about he uses insider language that is only used by people who know the sport. Using terms like "defense or special teams" or providing names like "Randy Moss and Wes Welker [...] Dante Scarnecchia" supports his role of an expert as the author of the article and speaks to the readers. Topping that with terms like "AFC", "offensive linemen" or providing insider knowledge like the "infamous Atlanta Falcons Super Bowl", his credibility and trustworthiness is going up and thus the audience believes in Fahey.

Besides all that, the author is providing his admission of limitations. Since Fahey isn't a former NFL player but very interested in the sport, he is grounding himself so that the reader is able to identify with him by being a fan of the sport. From the article you can't find any evidence, but when you dig a little

deeper in the articles of Fahey you see that he is mostly writing about European soccer and rugby. Showing that he is no former player but a fan is supporting his reliability very well and the reader is able to find himself in the position of Fahey.

Coming up now, the focus is now on the concept of Logos. In order to appeal to the reader's common sense and logical thinking, he uses various methods to underline the arguments by using examples, anecdotes, presenting facts and causes and effects. The first sentences in the article are already examples for other sports, which Fahey uses to define the term of the GOAT. Therefore he uses examples like "the golfer who wins the most majors is the greatest golfer of all time" or "the tennis player who wins the most majors is the best ever". The use of an example can be found when Fahey compares the influence of a Quarterback in a football game compared to the influence of a single basketball player during the game. There he uses the example of LeBron James as a basketball player. Using examples helps the reader understand the meaning of the article because it makes it easier to get into the topic of football if you have never heard of it before.

While using this example he states facts and data, like "best the players can play more than 75% of the minutes on the court" or "James is at 1,346 games in his career". Another fact can be found at the very end of the article when Fahey quotes that "Brady will be a deserved first-ballot hall-of-fame inductee and most likely the most famous NFL player of all time". Stating these facts underlines the message of the text and offers a good answer to the GOAT discussion. Before getting into the last aspects of how Fahey appeals to the reader's common sense, one can see here already that using the methods above to support his goals gives the reader the chance to discuss the topic given.

Before ending the article like that, the author is using an anecdote by saying "If you were to swap Rodgers or Manning in for Brady, [...] you wouldn't be able to immediately assume that they'd win fewer rings than him". This basically means that if they would switch with him, then they would have better odds too. Fahey is using this type of example also earlier in the article by saying if the other Quarterbacks would have a stronger supporting cast, then they would be more successful. Using anecdotes helps the audience to have a picture before their eyes where they are able

to evaluate the article, especially when they get just introduced to football.

As a last mentionable point for Logos is the cause and effect. During the comparison of LeBron James with Tom Brady there is a clear cause and effect, that says Brady is the GOAT because he won the most Championships. This is a clear reference to the beginning of the article. Furthermore, another cause and effect is that because of Brady having a great supporting cast, he is able to win games and to become the GOAT.

The last rhetorical concept I'm going to focus on is Pathos, the deployment of feelings and emotion in the article. To find emotion in the article I go once again to the comparison of how much influence Quarterbacks have on a game compared to basketball players in their game. There Fahey states that "[i]f the quarterback has 10% of the impact on the result [...], it's a lot". This means that you can be really important although you have not the highest impact. Your team needs you and therefore you have the feeling of a purpose to be on the field with your team. This feeling Fahey wanted to give the reader as well. This type of having a purpose can be found again when the author talks about "Brady's initial success" as a young game manager and "[d]uring his prime, [when] the identity of the Patriots shifted so Brady became a greater focal point of the team's identity". By saying that, Fahey implicits to the reader that if you do a good job, you gain the respect of your teammates, which makes you feel better.

The promise of enjoyment is also a big factor in waking up emotions for a text. When you enjoy something, then you automatically have a good feeling. Fahey delivers this enjoyment in the text when he writes that the combination of a good offensive line and Tom Brady improved every other player. This means that if you play well, everybody on your team gets pushed and will play better too.

Besides all those paragraphs that evoke positive feelings, you do also have to consider that you can also play bad, which is not good. By providing this example, Fahey puts the reader into an uncomfortable position in which you feel pressure. The pressure is a good transition to the example, where it says that the majority of quarterbacks are good when there is no defensive pressure on

them, but “it takes a great quarterback to be consistently good against constant pressure”. This is called the fear of loss or the fear of losing and insists that if you don't play well in the most important position in the offense, your team's chance to win will decrease. Fahey puts the reader in Brady's shoes and asks the reader to experience Brady's emotions: both the promise of gain and fear of loss.

To sum up what is being said and analyzed, Cian Fahey is providing an article that is easy to read and fulfills the purpose of the author to provide an article that supports you by answering the discussion to yourself. Everybody can have their own opinion on that and there is no right or wrong. He is focusing very good on the three rhetorical concepts of Ethos, Logos and Pathos, the reader can understand why the author wrote this article and why he came to the conclusion, that there are a lot of factors you have to consider when you discuss the question whether Tom Brady can be considered the GOAT in football or not. That's why you can come to the overall conclusion that the term GOAT is not the best choice in football compared to golf or tennis. Indeed, Tom Brady is the best quarterback and a big superstar, but the term GOAT might be a little too much.

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“The Campus of Missouri Valley College is Becoming More Environmentally Friendly”

Luca Hasse

Climate change is a topic that affects every person in the world. Global strategies are being developed by experts in order to save our planet. In addition to those experts and whole

nations, single persons or a group of people such as the students and the administration of Missouri Valley College can also help to find solutions for this international problem. What can the administration of Missouri Valley College do to reduce the College's greenhouse gas emissions and its carbon footprint in order to become more environmentally friendly in the next 10 years? I am going to present several ideas and concepts that can help either as a short term solution, but combined also as a long term solution- The administration of Missouri Valley College needs to deal with the high energy use and CO₂ emissions on campus by shutting down light in unnecessary buildings during night, the light on the floors in the dorms after a certain point in the night, make the students an offer to leave your car at your dorm and walk towards your class to reduce the greenhouse gas emissions and install solar panels as energy sources to go into the future more environmentally friendly.

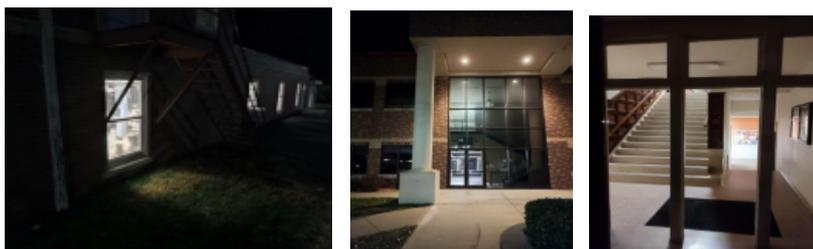
In our world today, greenhouse gas emissions have an immediate effect on our environment and our way of life. Global warming and the higher amount of natural catastrophes are just examples of what happens to our planet which is called the climate change. These events happen out of one cause: the human race. Our way of living, the greenhouse gas emissions, mainly CO₂ emissions which appear because of our consumption in our society (Harvey 25-26). But how is it possible to break down such a big topic on our small college campus? Of course our College on its own can't change the overuse of energy which is produced everyday and leads to a very high amount of emissions, especially CO₂. Nevertheless, our school can be an example of how a campus can get more environmentally friendly when it's about decreasing the greenhouse gas emissions and use of raw materials that require a big amount of energy and emissions during its production (Pandya 1). When we are able to control this problem, other colleges and universities can adapt to the methods we are using and adjust it towards their own campus. In order to look at certain methods, let's see what has already been done in order to make a college or university more environmentally friendly.

When you want to find methods or concepts that

colleges or universities have already used in order to reduce emissions, it is very hard to find valid information. One concept that has been used by a university in Brazil is that public transportation vehicles take the students to the university and back. On the campus the students walk by foot to their different classes. The goal of that was to reduce the amount of emissions to the lowest possible. And since the majority of the students took advantage of this idea, the carbon footprint of the university shrank significantly (Barros 140-141). Furthermore the use of energy is an important factor on college and university campuses (Pandya 4). Often there are buildings in which the light is on at any time of the day and night. Thus a lot of administrations want to ensure that nothing is getting stolen and that the campus looks nice to persons outside from the campus; the impression is very important. And believe it or not, a big amount of energy is needed to keep the campus bright and guess what the result of this production of power is? Exactly, a huge amount of energy loss and therefore CO₂ or other emissions that are required to get the power (Pandya 3-4). See this as referred in “tonnes of carbon dioxide, show that electricity consumption, particularly in fuel burning for heating equipment” (Pandya 4). You can also speak in general about what the world is currently doing to prevent or at least to slow down the climate change. The most important thing that includes every nation in the world is the Paris Climate Agreement (Harvey 27-28). The Agreement says that every nation is responsible to reduce their emissions so far that their country is not getting warmer than 1.5 degrees from the point when the treaty was signed. The USA left the agreement in 2017 under the lead of president Donald Trump, but rejoined as soon as Joe Biden was elected the president of the USA in the beginning of 2021. Since the USA is the second biggest producer of greenhouse gas emissions (“Greenhouse Gas Emissions by Country 2022”), it is important for the whole world that especially the biggest consumers are making their best in order to reduce their carbon footprint. The Paris Climate Agreement was signed in 2016; nowadays we know that the goal to keep the temperature growth under 1.5 degrees is also impossible. The nations have to find new goals which

they need to reach (“Klimaabkommen von Paris”). Therefore a lot of concepts and methods have been established over the last couple of years. I will present you some of these and show you how Missouri Valley College can adapt some of the ideas which lead to a more environmentally friendly future.

During the time since I came to the US and to college, I immediately saw why the USA has such a high use of energy, electricity and the emissions caused by that. The best way to see this is during the night. In order to make the campus look good, the college uses a lot of lights outside of the buildings to lighten them, but also leaves a lot of lights on inside of the buildings. From the outside it is mostly normal lanterns that show the path to the people walking over the campus. But inside of these buildings, which are locked, nobody is in there and sometimes more than 50% of the lights in the building are on. Slightly similar things are in the student dorms. Of course during the night there is no light in the single rooms, but on the hallways or in the big community bathrooms, the light is always on, during the day and the night. In most cases, the lights are no LED lights, which would already help to reduce the energy use, but mostly normal light bulbs stacked next to each other. This leads to a high use of energy and especially electricity, which can be reduced very easily.



(Pictures (left → right): Baity Hall, Art Room, Tech Center)

Therefore I have two options, one for the buildings of the college where we have classes, one for the student dorms. The most effective option for the classrooms and offices is to simply shut

down the light during night. Since nobody is getting into the buildings after they are locked, you do not need to have lights on in there which already prevents a huge amount of energy and electricity waste (Harvey 31-32).

The most effective way to reduce the use of electricity in the student dorms is also a pretty easy one. This solution has also been used at my highschool in Germany, since they had the same problem of lights that are always on. They used light switches with a timer in it, so that the light, especially on the hallways, went off after a maximum of 20 minutes. This type of light controlling we do already have in several parts of the Tech Center and its classrooms. For our hallways in the dorms it would fit perfectly. Thus we could ensure that you have light when you want to go to the bathroom in the night, but also that the students do not have to keep in mind to shut down the lights. It would reduce the amount of energy wasted during the time where nobody needs the light. The number of campuses in the US that use this method grew significantly from 2015 and counting (Pandya 7).

Besides the high waste of electricity, the overuse of energy and more detailed the energy used to heat the rooms on a campus. Here we have some kind of a similar problem. The colder it gets outside, the more and the longer the heating is on in every building of the campus. For the dorms it does make more sense than for the normal buildings, but you can also improve something there. Let us focus first on a solution for the classrooms and offices on the campus. In order to prevent the students and professors from freezing when you turn on the heating too late, you can, as simple as for the light in the dorms, install timers for the heatings, so that they turn on in the morning and stop in the evening. This helps to control the use of energy and thus helps to reduce greenhouse gas emissions that occur in the production of the gas or air in the heatings. A solution for the dorms and the rooms in which the students live is the following. The students should be able to control the power of the heating by themselves. Since the heating is always at 100% and can not be controlled (see pictures below the paragraph), our solution right now is to open the windows in order to make it colder. This is probably

the least effective solution, because the heating is always continuing to produce the biggest amount of heat possible (Pandya 4). You can find very effective methods and most of them start with building the rooms in the dorms more energy effectively. Thus you can save money and tons of energy (“Save Energy”). The easiest solution would be to install remotes to control how strong the heating should work. Thus you will see that the use of energy will decrease (Woo 197).

The two ideas above can be very effective as short term solutions, but to get a long term effect out of these you will need to find ways to decrease the amount of CO₂ which is already a result of the production of energy and electricity from the common way. The most effective way to reduce the emissions in production is to lower them nearly to zero. Therefore the best option is renewable energy in the form of solar panels for our college. Why might you be thinking of solar panels right now? I will explain to you why. First of all, renewable energies are the key to environmentally friendly production of energy or electricity. There are various ways to produce energy and power environmentally friendly: wind energy, geothermal energy, hydro energy, nuclear power or solar energy (Harvey 31-32). The most affordable but also one of the most effective ways is solar energy in the form of solar panels, since the other options often require certain geographic locations or are simply just way too expensive. All you need for solar panels is a location where you have a lot of sun hours not only during the summer time, but also through the whole year. Therefore solar panels are independent from the temperature. Marshall is located in Missouri, a rather flat state in the US without big height differences. Therefore the weather is very likely to change often during the year. Since there is a lot of sun especially between spring and fall, solar panels are likely to gather a big

amount of solar energy. Thus it is very efficient.

The next question to answer is where solar panels should be installed? On or off campus? I suggest installing solar panels on several roofs on buildings of the college, as well as a bigger amount of solar panels off campus on a field. The panels on campus can be used immediately to go into the energy circle of the campus and can be used without a long transition. The panels off campus can gather the solar as well, but are able to store the energy in several storage possibilities next to it. Thus no or just a small amount of solar energy gets wasted and you can keep the energy in the winter. When you need the energy, you can use more of that than energy and electricity produced on the common way with the result of emissions right from the beginning. As a long term solution, solar energy can save high costs that the administration has to pay, as well as “improve the quality of the global atmospheric air” (Barros 145). Besides this solution, I found a possible solution for the students in order to leave their car next to their dorms and for the teachers an opportunity to work in parts from home

The solution is related to a concept that I already mentioned when I wrote about what has already been done. I mentioned a university in Brazil, where they also tried to lower the CO₂ emissions that are caused by the great mass of vehicles that are coming with the students to the university everyday. The administration of the university developed a concept where public vehicles such as buses were used to take the students to the university and back (Barros 140). Since our campus is not that big and most of the students live in the dorms right in the campus, having a fleet of shuttles does not fix the problem. Since the days are now getting colder, more students tend to take their cars for rides that do not last longer than two minutes. These short rides cause big emissions from the cars, because the motor can not get warm on these short ways (Harvey 32). Furthermore, not only do the students use their cars more often during these times, but the



faculty staff such as professors sometimes drive a long way to teach the students on the campus. Thus their way to school produces rather more emissions than the students on their way to the classes. For this problem, the school offers an option called “drive 45 scholarship”. This offers the teacher to stay at home and work from there, offering the ability of online classes and online student hours. This leads to the result that the students can stay in their dorms and the teachers can stay at home too. Thus nobody needs to drive somewhere.

One possible solution for the students would be that the administration of Missouri Valley College offers an opportunity to leave the car in the parking lot and give them a reward instead. This can range from needs of your everyday life such as clothes or food to financial help, for example lower the tuition costs or general costs you have to pay for the college in the upcoming semester. Since finances are a huge reason why people tend to leave a college or university earlier, this could also lead to a higher graduation percentage and a higher attendance of people in the college. As a result of having more students, the administration would also have more money to invest in projects and concepts that would make the campus more environmentally friendly. On a long term perspective you will secure the progress of sustainable energy production, reduction of energy consumption and a decrease of greenhouse gas emissions (Pandya 5).

To conclude, the above mentioned concepts and ideas are not only good ways to make the campus of Missouri Valley College more environmentally friendly and ready for the future. You can start facing the future immediately and begin to work on what the administration of Missouri Valley College can do to reduce the College's greenhouse gas emissions and its carbon footprint in order to become more environmentally friendly in the next 10 years. Over the upcoming years even more colleges and universities will develop either their own concepts or take older ones and adjust them to their campus. We can already start now by shutting down light in unnecessary buildings during night, the light on the floors in the dorms after a certain point in the night, make the students an offer to leave your car at your

dorm and walk towards your class to reduce the greenhouse gas emissions, have a lower usage of plastic in the dining hall which a reason for a lot of emissions during its production, use solar panels as energy sources and take on various methods to go into the future more environmentally friendly.

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“Fighting Against Death: The Struggle of a Lifetime”
by Mohamed Toure

Victor Hugo, one of the greatest French writers of the Romantic period, was also an advocate for social justice and human rights. The text I will study is a speech he gave on September 15, 1848, at the National Assembly in France against the death penalty. He then addressed the French people to highlight his opinion and that of millions of citizens.

Like the great writer that he is, Hugo employs a powerful combination of logos, ethos, and pathos to argue against the death penalty and other forms of punishment that he sees as unjust and inhumane. Ethos is the appeal to credibility and character, Pathos is the appeal to emotions and Logos is the appeal to logic and reason. To convince an audience and a certain topic of discussion, speakers sometimes utilize a blend of ethos, pathos, and logos arguments. Hugo maintains the following thesis in his speech: The death penalty is a barbaric practice that contradicts the values of a civilized society. He contends that the state had no right to take a citizen's life,

regardless of their crime, and that the death penalty is ineffective as a deterrent to crime.

Therefore, Hugo's argument is mainly built on reason to support his claims. He argues that punishment does not achieve its intended goal of deterrence, but instead creates a cycle of violence and revenge. "The death penalty, which is intended to prevent crimes, really does nothing more than prepare the way for them," (Hugo) he says. Hugo cites statistics to support his claim that crime rates are not reduced by harsh punishment, pointing out that "In the last century, in England, there were two hundred and twenty-two crimes punishable by death; today there are only four. Yet crime has not increased; it has decreased." (Hugo). He also argues that the death penalty is an ineffective deterrent because it is carried out too infrequently to have a meaningful impact on potential criminals.

In addition to logos, Hugo employs ethos or appeals to his credibility and authority as a respected writer and thinker. He reminds the assembly of his own experiences witnessing the harsh punishments of his time, such as public executions and uses his position as a member of the National Assembly to advocate for change. "I come before you today as one who has seen with his own eyes the death penalty in all its horror," (Hugo). Hugo's reputation as a writer of novels and plays also lends weight to his argument, as he has often explored themes of justice, mercy, and the human condition in his work. This argument gives credibility to his speech because all his audience knows him and his works, it is therefore difficult to question his position. You or I could make the same speech with the best eloquence in the world, but it would not have the same effect because of our status and this Hugo understood well, That's why he takes advantage of his fame to give this speech.

Finally, Hugo employs emotional appeal to engage his audience and make them feel the urgency and significance of his message. He paints a vivid picture of the agony and despair that comes with punishment, both for the convicted and their loved ones. "When a man is executed, his mother, his wife, his children, all suffer," (Hugo) explains the famous author. "Every act of violence creates a chain reaction of pain and grief that stretches far beyond the individual act itself." (Hugo). He also appeals to the audience's sense of empathy and compassion, urging them to see criminals as human beings deserving of respect and dignity. "The man who has

committed a crime is still a man," (Hugo) says. "He has the same right to life and the same need for compassion and understanding as any other human being." (Hugo). He also appeals to their empathy and compassion by pushing people to regard offenders as human beings worthy of respect and dignity. This contributes to the dehumanization of offenders and encourages the public to see them as humans susceptible to rehabilitation and salvation, which the death penalty does not allow.

In sum, we can conclude from this analysis that Victor Hugo's speech against punishment is a masterful example of persuasive rhetoric, blending logos, ethos, and pathos to create a compelling argument for social justice. The writing talent of the author is fully represented in this speech, he who wrote "Les Misérables" or "Les Contemplations", is a master writer in the field of transmitting emotions but also in the art of logic and reasoning. By appealing to logic, authority, and emotion, he makes a powerful case against the death penalty and other forms of punishment, arguing that they are ineffective, unjust, and inhumane. Hugo's speech reminds us that the principles of justice and mercy are timeless and universal and that it is our responsibility as a society to uphold these values in our laws and policies.

However, despite this masterful performance, the death penalty was not abolished until a century later in France. Hugo never experienced this reform during his lifetime, but his speech remains a monument to the fight against the death penalty throughout Europe.

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"Ritual or Pure Brutality and Entertainment?"
by Luca Hasse

"The children had stones already, and someone gave little Davy Hutchinson a few pebbles. [...] "It isn't fair," she said. A stone hit her in the side of the head. [...] "It isn't fair, it isn't right," Mrs. Hutchinson screamed and then they were upon her" (Jackson 249).

The short story "The Lottery", written by Shirley Jackson in 1948, is one of the most popular short stories in the United States. The story is about a small village in the 1940s, where the villagers participate in a lottery every year, where the winner does not win something but gets stoned. Therefore the story introduces us to different families and people, following the lottery until a person gets chosen. The story shows that violence and brutality can be combined with comedy, entertainment and fun, so that the people that seem to be your best friends and neighbors can change and can turn against you as tension is created by danger, fear and even can have some kind of joy when somebody is suffering and they are not. The power of control and being able to force people to kill another person every year can give them satisfaction, but also a feeling of higher power, besides behaving themselves like the heads of the village want to.

For those of you who do not know what stoning is, I will explain it to you and what stoning is and how long it already exists. Stoning is a type of punishment, where people throw stones and rocks at the punished person in order to kill them. It is a very awful, violent and brutal type of punishment that has existed for more than three thousand years. You can find stoning already in the old testament of the bible (see Schnocks). Nowadays, stoning is illegal and it exists only in a couple of states in the Arab world (see Buchanan).

Despite being very brutal and illegal, stonings used to be a big event in the past, especially for the people that threw the stones and rocks on the person. When a person got punished by stoning, the rest of the people had a lot of fun throwing stones on the person. For them it was pure entertainment and fun (see Schnocks). Also the kids had a lot of fun and it was some kind of comedy for them, because they did not understand what was really going on. For them, the whole event of the lottery might be just a lot of fun, because as easy as kids are, especially boys, they like throwing rocks on objects. Maybe they made a competition out of it, who would hit the most.

Just as I described some characteristics from the past, we can find a similar setting in the short story by Shirley Jackson. The stoning here is celebrated annually on the same day. There are no punished people who did something wrong. The event is covered and called a lottery. In this lottery one family gets picked by every household getting a ticket. With the marked ticket, a member of the family gets picked out, who will be the punished person. When you read the story at first, you are thinking that the families can win a prize every year. But the prize is nothing good: every other family wins by not sending one of their family members into death. Now, you can discuss this lottery.

Since the people did not do anything wrong, why do they still get punished? This was also questioned by Tessie Hutchinson, the person being stoned. "It isn't fair, it isn't right" (Jackson 249) were her words while the people began to throw stones at her.

The people have fun with it and even the kids are being entertained when "they were upon her" (Jackson 249). Earlier in the story they were already collecting small stones, so-called "pebbles", and placing them onto each other like they were playing with them. This had to give us already a hint on what could follow. "The children had stones already, and someone gave little Davy Hutchinson a few pebbles" (Jackson 249). We do not know if he did it or not. The story ends with Tessie Hutchinson screaming the words I mentioned above, "and then they were upon her" (p. 249). Who is "they"? Is it only the kids? Is it also the men? Or is it everybody, including Tessie Hutchinson's whole family? We can only speculate about it. Usually, families where one member got chosen, they would not throw rocks at the persons. But what if they

are supposed to do so in order not to get chosen in the upcoming year?

The choice of words it's been described that the people are "upon her" (Jackson 249), seems like there was no hesitation by the people to throw the stones at Tessie Hutchinson and kill her. As I mentioned above, this is described as an annual event (see Jackson 242). I assume that the people are used to doing this every year, and that is why they almost start immediately. Having the routine of finishing the stoning as fast as possible, you can say that the villagers might also want the event to be done as soon as possible. The faster it is over, the less time they spend thinking about it.

This passage demonstrates the changed behavior from laughing and joking at the start of the story into being suspicious about each other and seeming like they do not trust and like each other anymore, which reaches its top in the final sentence of the story. At the beginning, the people were talking to each other, making jokes, standing together and having joy. Despite that, you were already able to feel that something is not completely normal. The narrator states that the people are making jokes, but nobody is laughing; they are just smiling (see Jackson 243). Something was wrong and the more you read the story, the more it gets clear that a serious event is upcoming. The same you can see with the kids, playing on the square of the village, running around and collecting stones and pebbles. Pebbles are small stones and rocks. When the lottery began, the people stopped talking, the women went to their families and the kids also stayed next to their family members. You were able to feel everybody's tension, especially when they began to choose the paper pieces from the lottery box.

After Tessie Hutchinson was chosen for the stoning, she said that it is not fair, which she is repeating when saying "[i]t isn't fair", which it obviously is not, because she did not commit a crime or something similar. Although it might be possible that if you commit a crime, you are more likely to be chosen, but in that case we do not have enough information. Earlier in the story we know that she is coming late to the start of the lottery, but we do not know anything more. After being placed in the center of the square, the people began to throw stones at her. It is not said if they were forced to participate or if they were killing her voluntarily, but you can

definitely say that the mood of the people changed within minutes or hours, because they knew that whoever gets picked is going to die.

Obviously, that establishes a big tension within the village that leads to the fact that everybody only cares about themselves and their own families, not on the other people that most likely can also be their best friends. When the village is doing the lottery every year, we can consider that the families behave differently as well during the rest of the year. By killing persons they know and even their own family members, the heads of the village make sure that the villagers stay under control, behave well and do their job for the community. Although they act normal, nothing is normal, especially the people knowing what happens every year.

To conclude, one can say that in the short story “The Lottery”, you can find an interesting structure in the society of a village, where annually a person gets killed by stoning, which is covered in a lottery where everybody can be the “lucky winner” that wins nothing else but the death. The so-called lottery helps to control the people and helps them to behave and to be a good member of the village. That is why you can say that the story shows that violence and brutality can be combined with comedy, entertainment and fun. Furthermore, the people that seem to be your best friends and neighbors can change and can turn against you as tension is

created by danger, fear and even can have some kind of joy when somebody is suffering and they are not. That does not necessarily mean that the people of the village are terrible, but it definitely shows us that they do only care about themselves and their close family members. With the aspect of people being forced to behave like the heads of the village wants to, they need to show some kind of joy during the stoning.

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"Good or Bad?"
by Luca Hasse

"Elisenda let out a sigh of relief, for herself and for him, when she watched him pass over the last houses, holding himself up in some way with a risky flapping of a senile vulture. She kept watching him even when she was through with cutting the onions and she kept on watching until it was no longer possible for her to see him, because then he was no annoyance in her life but an imaginary dot on the horizon of the sea." (Marquez 4).

The short story "A Very Old Man with Enormous Wings" was written by Gabriel Garcia Marquez and published in 1968. The story is about a family that lives close to the sea and gets visited by an angel in the form of an mysterious and injured oldman, who became an attraction to the people from everywhere, while he lived together with the family and was able to fly away after a couple of years. The passage I chose was the end of the story, where the mother, named Elisenda saw how the man flew away over the houses and over the sea, until she did not see him anymore. The ending shows that Elisenda is happy that the old man is away, but on the other hand, she is afraid and a little bit scared that the man was actually a protector instead of the embodiment of the devil, as

she begins to think about her own image image of angels and questions if her belief in angels is right the way it was before.

Let's see how Elisenda thinks about their visitor and how happy she is that he is leaving them. At the beginning of the passage the narrator states that "Elisenda let out a sigh of relief" (Marquez 4). On the first view, this can be understood as a happy sigh, because the old man is finally away and the family can live again on their own together. The presence of the angel clearly made them feel uncomfortable and they wanted to get rid of him as fast as possible. Moving on, the narrator adds that she is sighing "for herself and for him" (Marquez 4). This can also be seen as she is happy for him that he is able to fly again and to go back where he came from. It is able to see that Elisenda developed some empathy for the old man over the years. We do not know if it was hope because he is an old and seemingly dying old man, or even because her son used to visit him in the chicken coop while he grew up (see Marquez 3). While watching him, she is cutting onions (see Marquez 4).

As we all know, onions can make people cry when they cut them. The onions can be an image for Elisenda that she might be also a little bit sad that the old man is away, because he lived for the past years with them and saw her kid grow up (see Marquez 3-4). Again, you can see that Elisenda felt empathy for the old man and it looks like she cared about. After all that being said, we can not truly say if she was just happy that he is away, or if she made up a connection with him so that she was sad that he left them. This is also one aspect that we discuss later about the image of angels in the christian belief, which says that they help the people and not leave them.

Moving on, you are again able to see that Elisenda is splitted in her opinion about the old man. After her sigh when Elisenda saw the old man flying away, she still looked at him while he was passing over "the last houses" (Marquez 4). By that you can also discuss whether she wanted the old man to have a safe way and hopes all the best, but on the other side she wanted to make sure that he is going away from their house and not coming back again. He came as an angel with his wings but was only an attraction for all the other people. Of course, they made a huge profit out of him, but it was already very clear to see that Elisenda did not want the angel in

her house and therefore put him in the chicken coop. To support that, the narrator mentions the angel as an “annoyance” (Marquez 4) at the end of the short story.

Coming back to the image of the onion again. As I said before, it is possible that Elisenda was happy and sad and maybe crying at the same time for the old man. She was happy for him that he was able to fly away, but also sad that he was leaving them. When you see it from a different perspective, Elisenda might also be scared that he is flying away, because of the simple reason that he might have been a protector for the family. Earlier in the Story it has been said by the churchmen Father Gonzaga, that this type of angel can also be a trick of the devil in order to bring death and misery over the family and the people (see Marquez 2). But the whole time the angel was living with the family, he brought them money because he was an attraction to the people and made no problems. What will happen when the angel is away for a longer time, we can not say since the story is ending with our passage.

Overall the story does not really tell us anything about how the people of the household, especially Elisenda reacted to the angel and what she thought about him. The only thing we really know is that the angel brought money to the family, which made him useful for them. Talking about the rain of money they received because of him, you are also able to speculate, if this was just a coincidence or maybe even god given. But again, our answer about that will be, that we do not know it. Why the churchman prophesied the image of the devil to the people seeing the angel in his form as the old man, I will explain to you now.

The picture of the angel in the form as he is presented here, we need to understand how christians see the angels in their religion and their stories. Angels are one of the most popular creatures in Christianity. Their wings and how they appear to humans, show the power, speed, freedom and limitless freedom of motion (see Sparknotes). This limitless freedom can be found by the words “on the horizon of the sea” (Marquez 4), where the sea and the horizon seem unreachable and limitless to the human eye of Elisenda. In traditional christian belief, angels appear to persons that are seeking help in seemingly unsolvable situations and bring messages

from god. Their purpose is to enlighten the people and help them. In stories they are often referred to as wearing white clothes and seem to be completely pure hearted (see Wolf-Krause).

Almost none of these characteristics can be applied to the angel from our story. He is incomprehensible and incoherent to this stereotype. It already starts with Marquez presenting the angel in the form of an old man to us, who seems to speak the language of sailors (see Marquez 1). Moreover, the old man was injured, very old and was covered in mud when he was found by the husband named Pelayo (see Marquez 1). He looked sick and his wings were partly destroyed. As you can see based on what Marquez is presenting to us, the angel from the short story looks like the exact opposite of angels from the christian belief. His appearance is strange and even his voice can not be understood by humans. Thus, he is not able to deliver messages of prophecies to the people. The only thing that is in common with the christian angels are the destroyed wings. These make him look supernatural but he also looks natural because of his appearance as an old man who looks like a human being.

The people, including Elisenda did not accept the old man as an angel, nor as a creature that deserves to be called a real living being. Therefore, it only strengthens this assumption, since Father Gonzaga can not identify him as an angel, based on the lectures he studied to become a churchman, he believes that this is made up by the evil in the world, which is embodied as the devil in the church. The thoughts get supported by the narrator, who is describing the flight of the angel as “with a risky flapping of a senile vulture” (Marquez 4). The family presented him to the public as an attraction to show what a missed being looks like (see Marquez 3).

Although Elisenda is seeing him sometimes as an “annoyance” (Marquez 4), she was still looking at him until he was just “an imaginary dot [...] in her life” (Marquez 4). On the one side the image of the old man can be seen as a sign of hope or a feeling of hope, which she needed because again, we do not know if the old man was really just a trick of the devil (see Marquez 2) or a protector for the family, who represented the calmness and the wisdom. On the other hand, the dot, which can not really be seen in the big and limitless freedom of the horizon and the sea, can represent the very opposite of the image, which could mean that he was no longer necessary for Elisenda since he is away now. The angel is not

important anymore and too small to be recognized anymore. This ending shows, again, the splitted opinion that the old man brings to Elisenda and the people. She does not really know what to believe and it also brings up the discussion of the old, traditional image of angels. The angel makes Elisenda doubt the belief she had before.

To conclude, one can say that the passage offers a great variety of discussions, that are in today's times more often to find than ever. You were able to see that Elisenda is in a difficult position, where she has to find out for herself if the old man is standing for something good and tries to help them or if she has to be afraid of him and what's coming next since he flew away. She begins to discuss the image of an angel, focusing on the old man and what he stands for. The angel puts the people in a difficult position. They have to decide for themselves what they believe and they cannot rely on conventional wisdom, nor can they rely on sacred texts. They have to rely on their own observations and experience so they have mixed feelings and they're glad, but also sad, when the problem goes away and they can and even have to go back to normal.

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“Holy MAP-aroni: a Reflection on Colonial Cartography”

by Mariona Bolao

Like most neurodivergent kids do, growing up I had plenty of odd hyperfixations, one of them being maps. In my room and study area I had world maps, continent maps, country maps, made-up maps from fiction novels, globes, atlases, and all that could possibly lie in between those options. I'm assuming my interest in cartography started because of the long hours I spent looking at this huge map from Ikea that my parents decided to get one year for Christmas. It is right on the wall in my home in Barcelona, the one I had to stare at for dinner every night for at least twelve years. It's a physical map – it has no borders. My mother has always said that frontiers are the root cause of most, if not all, problems we have faced as a species, and unlike many other topics I was once curious about, this one has never stopped being interesting.

I had to be in third or fourth grade when I spotted what must have been “the middle of the world” to be only about three hours from my house. That was followed by a painful lesson from my mother about the Equator, and how that parallel indicates the actual center according to the latitude. I say painful because I knew well enough back then what parallels and meridians are, but all the flat maps around my house showed the Iberian peninsula in the exact middle of the frame (according to the Greenwich Meridian anyways), so either the Equator wasn't the real center, or all my maps were wrong.

Already at a young age, important questions came to my head, like: why is Greenland bigger on a flat map than on the globe? Why do some countries (essentially the United States) cut a whole ass continent in half to have theirs in the middle of the paper? Or, why does the Equator not represent the actual middle line of the page? It is scary to think that about ten years after I started formulating them, these suddenly became so essential in my research about problematic, inaccurate, and colonialist cartography.

Denis Wood writes on his book *Rethinking the Power of Maps* that civilizations didn't use maps often: “millions of Americans crossed the continent without maps, Genghis Khan and Charlemagne ruled without maps, Rome administered its empire without a map, pharaohs controlled Egypt without a map, the Bible was written without once referring to a map” (Wood, 2010, 17-18).

However, research confirms that before modern charts were invented, other types of orientation tools had been around since long before writing first appeared, such as local hunting species paintings in caves, or temples built to commemorate different expeditions and early colonizations (Clarke, 2013, 136).

Maps as we know them today are a representation of the Earth's surface (Wood, 2012, 18), that are seen from the viewpoint of, let's say, a pterodactyl. Learning and understanding our surroundings is a natural instinct that we share with many species, like salmon moving from fresh to saltwater, or monarch butterflies migrating south during the wintertime, following traces of milkweed. To us, observing and understanding nature, especially where civilizations established, was key for organizing and exploring. However, our natural way of seeing the world is not like a pigeon would, therefore, there's not an innate need for humans to draw maps with this perspective.

Hecateu's map, which is considered one of the oldest, dating between 550–476 BCE (Johnson & Neil, n.d.), already divided the known regions into different territories. As stated by Apoorva Tadepalli in her article "Colonial Cartography," the final goal for states while creating their maps was to declare the possession of land (Tadepalli, 2019). Using this as a mechanism to tell people where they belong, inspires the need of loyalty to that space and everything that comes with it. They give us the sensation that we can now see what we typically can't due to the way we physically see the world, and we like to think we know and are aware of what surrounds us, so we don't doubt any of it for a second.

Maps come with agendas; seen from the sky, they portray a sense of reality and entirety, and have the ability to picture things we just can't see, things that we don't even know if they're true. Completely real or not, not only do they intend to "educate," they are also effective in the sense of rooting people and implementing identities to a place that "deserves loyalty." Tadepalli writes, "historically, they have been used by centralized bodies, disseminating information to individuals – whether companies selling products or governments selling the idea of statehood" (Tadepalli, 2019). The internet, atlases, encyclopedias, globes, even home decorations, provide access to these representations, which aren't anything but a quiet image of the way that someone has

meticulously thought about how they want society to perceive the world. But again, we aren't planes, we can't just fly high enough to prove that charts are right, so why even doubt them, right?

Many misconceptions may come naturally with our general knowledge of the planet. For instance, South America is obviously south of North America, but when picturing the map in our heads, we might tend to picture it right under, instead of eastern to Florida. I mean, it's not called South-East America after all. We fail to recognize as well that the majority of African countries lie north of the Equator, while Europe is way closer to the arctic than we realize. Southern European countries have climates that we associate more with warmth, the type of temperature that we would encounter in southern states, however, the continent is more lined up with Canada than it is with the United States. Just as an example, Paris is farther up north than Montreal is, Barcelona lines up with Chicago, and Venice is in the same latitude as Portland (Mason, 2018).

However, most misconceptions we might have about the world are because of the way that we always see it represented. The definition of the Equator is "an imaginary line drawn around the middle of the earth an equal distance from the North Pole and the South Pole" (EQUATOR / Definition in the *Cambridge English Dictionary*, 2022). As an indicator of the middle of a location, the line should be drawn horizontally in the center of the plane. That is not the case in most standard maps (Mercator projection). Instead of going through Ecuador, Kenya or Indonesia, now locations such as Georgia (US), South Korea and Spain have tropical climates (and I know Spain has the reputation of being a decently warm country, but we still have winters). That supposes a complete distortion of shape, size, location, and importance of the areas. In reality, South America is about eight times larger than Greenland, Brazil is larger than the United States and almost as big as Canada, and Mexico is bigger than Alaska (Mason, 2018). Seen like this, the northern hemisphere looks more relevant, looks bigger. It's giving a false sense of significance to countries that represent the biggest

percentage of white people over other races, a considerably wider spread of Christianity, and the biggest economies in the world.



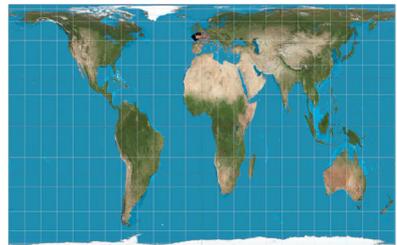
Another version of the map that distorts the Earth the same way are America centric world maps. Not only is this type inaccurate in shape, size, location and importance, it also cuts a fucking continent in half. The world is round, so there's not a right way to set up the land, but there sure is a wrong way, and this is it. The US may have gotten away with it, but if God really is up there, he will never forgive you for your crimes. He really put the effort in making the Pacific ocean a little bit bigger than the rest so no one had to choose, and still!

When it comes to flat maps, although still distorting the shape (which is kind of unavoidable, considering we're trying to represent a 3D sphere into a 2D piece of paper), Peters projection maps solve the big issues of changing the size and location, and thus importance, of the different countries. In the picture, it is easy



to tell the difference in size between the previously mentioned locations, as well as notice the latitude of Europe and the gigantic size of Africa. Suddenly it becomes clear why and how that continent has most of its countries in the northern hemisphere. But what does this map say in comparison to the Mercator projection?

We are not the majority anymore. It makes our race, our religion, and our economic stance in contrast with the rest of the world, way more insignificant. Suddenly, we don't have the power we felt before, but that power was a mirage to begin with. This specific version that I edited myself doesn't even have France in it, which makes it even



better (as a citizen of their neighboring country, I feel entitled to say that. Also it's because of soccer. All the rivalries in Europe are about soccer).

There might not be a completely right way to represent the planet in a two-dimensional plane, but there are definitely ways we shouldn't be even considering due to their lack of accuracy. When we use charts to distort something with bigger repercussions than the shape of land is where agendas start appearing, and the only thing those have brought is a false sense of superiority. I mean if we wanted to, we could have designed maps to be upside down – after all, there's nothing that says that north is any different than south, at least not for us that believe that the world isn't flat. But when a nine year old is practically noticing patterns of colonization, that might just be a sign that visual games just don't work under any logic.

This version of the map is actually pretty sweet, what?



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CREATIVE NONFICTION

"Just a Girl"

by Rachel Gammill

Ever since I was a child my elders have asked the age old question, "What do you want to be when you grow up?" As I answered the question a look of bewilderment would fall across their faces. This was my favorite part. I did not have the stereotypical answer ... ballerina, princess, actress. I wanted to be a hose dragging, ax swinging, smoke breathing firefighter.

So here I am a 17 year old girl, 5'4", 120 lbs, entering the classroom with all eyes on me. My peers staring back reminded me of the looks of perplexity I had seen so many times. There was no backing down now, this has been my dream. My training has officially started to become a Firefighter, and Emergency Medical Technician.

Physical agility expectations were the same no matter what your size, age, or gender. I dragged the 300 feet of charged hoses, climbed to the top of the ladders with the chainsaw, and rescued the dummies no matter how small the hole, how smokey the room or how high the rooftop. I had to build the trust of my peers, many of whom I worked with after training.

My instructor was a retired Staff Master Sergeant. If you took one step out of line he would throw his shiny, white helmet at your head. Some learned to duck and some were less fortunate resulting in a fat lip or bloody nose. His intent was to instill how important our jobs were. One wrong move you could kill or injure yourself, your crew, or even the very people we were there to save. He trained me to fill the oxygen tanks, which contain so much pressure they would easily fly through concrete walls. He pushed me to climb the ladder higher, use the biggest hydraulic tools. His faith in me was unshakable, he knew whatever he presented to me I would concur.

Now for the things they don't train you for. Here I am thinking things are great, I am one month out of training for my firefighter's certification, and still currently in classes to become an

EMT. The darkest day for my fellow first responders, September 11th, 2001 occurred. We sat there in the fire station looking at the TV in shock, as we watched the frantic and heartbreaking work. We felt utterly helpless. As the towers started to come down and so did the tears. We wanted to help in any way we could, my fire district spared as many first responders as they could. I, being a 'newbie,' was not allowed to pack up and go at that time but it was all hands on deck. I stayed behind to help the community, our crew of five still at the station had to take every call whether that be a car accident or four alarm fire. We watched our fellow crew mates from afar, hearing from them every night. We heard the tales of triumph and some of absolute heartbreak.

The part that they don't cover in the training, the raw emotional experiences. This life I was now leading was full of high-highs and even lower-lows. One day you could give a person the most devastating news they would ever hear, and the next they would be elated that their loved one had lived. For a very brief moment in time you are engulfed in someone's life. One false move and you would change your life and theirs forever. Yes the memories fade a bit, but they are mine always.

This career that I have dreamed of since my youth has made me feel proud. I wouldn't trade my experiences for anything, from delivering a baby in the back of an ambulance, to holding the hand of an elderly man who took his last breath. I have made bonds for life with my peers, my instructor, and some of the people I have encountered along the way. It has been the most tear-jerking, heart-warming, physically and mentally demanding job, but to say the least, rewarding. During my years of employment with the fire department I have saved numerous lives along with people's livelihood. Not bad for "Just a girl".

"The Best Ship: Friendship"
by Estefano Del Aguila Delgado

It was late March and there I was wrapping up my third winter season at Park City, Utah, one of the best ski towns in the world. I had two great jobs, one being the team leader of the ski

services team at the Waldorf Astoria Hotel and the other as a server at 350 Brasserie on Main Street. Who would have thought that a couple of weeks later, I would be cooking one of the most memorable meals I ever had?.

I had a wonderful group of friends with whom I would go partying and snowboarding. We got lots of snow that season so the slopes were incredible . I had around 10 days before I had to go back home to Lima, Peru, something I was not thrilled about. The thought of leaving such an amazing place and such an amazing group of people troubled me.

While at work, people started commenting about this new virus which had appeared in China. At the beginning nobody cared much or paid much attention to it. I certainly did not care at all; I was too busy between work, snowboarding and hanging out with my friends.

Days kept on passing by when lightning struck. It had become the main topic of discussion in every single conversation. Apparently, this new virus had spread around the world very quickly and had killed a considerable amount of people, but again I was not worried.

Everything changed so fast. A week after it had been declared a worldwide pandemic, countries all around the globe started to shut down airports and of course that meant that Peru decided to do the same. I was stranded in the US. That was when I panicked. I had to go back to school. I was only there to save some money to take back home. I was afraid I would have to spend all my savings because I had only arranged my housing for four months, which meant I had nowhere to go after March.

Here is when my friends Maja and Luca, both in their late twenties, came in. Maja from Croatia and Luca from California had just become husband and wife. I was so happy for them. They made a beautiful couple and had recently moved to a small apartment. As soon as they realized what had happened and that I had no place to go, without having to pay a huge amount of money, they never hesitated to invite me to their place. I was shocked because even though I considered them to be really close friends, I would never have imagined that they would care about me that much.

I packed everything up and showed up at their place; they kindly helped me to carry my bags to their second floor apartment. To my surprise they had cleared their own room for me.

“We want you to feel at home, bud.” Luka said

“Yes! We will sleep in the living room, we want you to have privacy.” Maja exclaimed

I stayed up late thinking in ways I could show them how grateful I was; I did not know when I would be able to come back to Peru and neither did they.

“Of course! I will cook dinner for them tomorrow” I thought to myself.

The morning after we headed to Walmart and without them realizing I started to pick all the ingredients for dinner. Some beef, a couple onions, a couple tomatoes, rice, potatoes, soy sauce and white vinegar. I was going to prepare “Lomo Saltado”, one of the most famous Peruvian dishes.

We were unpacking when Maja realized there were some items that they had not bought.

“I am preparing some Peruvian food for dinner tonight,” I said. They were so excited for it. They asked me if I would not mind teaching them, to which I replied: “Absolutely! No problemo.”

We had a blast. While cooking we were singing some Aerosmith, AC/DC and some Croatian music which was the funniest because of course neither Luka nor myself spoke Croatian. They were so interested in learning how to cook this dish they had never seen before. I showed them step by step how to prepare it. Maja helped to chop the vegetables, Luka was in charge of french fries and needless to say I took care of the rice, cooking it with garlic and salt, the Peruvian way.

Everything was ready. I did my best, in spite of it I was so nervous my hands would not stop shaking while serving the plates. I made sure everything was placed the correct way, with the vegetables and meat mixed and the french fries and rice as sides. We sat down and started eating, after they finished the first plate in the blink of an eye and went to get more. That is when I knew: mission accomplished.

When we were done eating Luka stood up and said:

“I would like to make a toast.”

We all knew what was coming, Luka’s common toast.

“There are good ships, there are wood ships, there are ships that sail the sea, but the best ships are friendships and may they always be.” Luka exclaimed

I have heard that toast hundreds of times but somehow that night felt different. When I needed them the most they were there for me, no questions asked.

"On the Duality of Love and Hate"
by Morgan Leslie

At my worst, I was under 130 pounds. I couldn't walk up the thirteen stairs in our house without needing to rest. My ninety dollar Walmart futon became my best friend, the thing I leaned on most when those thirteen stairs got too hard. Or it was the two and a half bathrooms in our house, where I started spending more and more time. I can't know for certain, but I do know who my enemies were: food and my reflection.

I don't know when it actually started, but I remember the first time I couldn't eat. I had made a burrito full of all the things I liked, avocados, fresh tomatoes, and cilantro. Back then, those thirteen stairs weren't hard at all, I even took them two at a time. I remember sitting down and taking a bite, then everything changed. My burrito wasn't good enough, or maybe it was me who wasn't, and I couldn't force myself to eat anymore that day. After a few weeks this became the norm. Not only that, but I started sinking into myself both physically and mentally. Every reflection was not good enough, every piece of food writhed with maggots, and every thought revolved around either not being good enough or food.

When I did decide to eat, it was usually little things, like a piece of toast, or my special food, ramen. Too often, however, I found myself on one of our bathroom's cold tile floors with the toilet seat up and vomit on my fingers. Maybe that's too graphic of a picture, like my mom says when I tell her about my sickness. Or maybe she just doesn't like to face the truth of it. That's something I noticed a lot. When people asked me to speak candidly about it, they would get visibly uncomfortable and try

to change the subject at the next opportunity. Like they want to help me, but aren't willing to do anything other than listen to the sugar-coated lies about eating disorders. The only way I really changed is when someone was able to listen to the shitty parts. So here you are. You're my outlet, and here's what I've got to say to you.

During the summer of 2019 my relatives from Germany came to visit us. This was right before I went off to college, my last summer of freedom. Since they lived so far away, I had only met them once before that summer, and I was excited to get to know my cousins. I had heard stories about them of course, but my expectations were way different than what they were actually like.

My two cousins, Cameron and David, were best friends and polite young men. It seemed that manners were revered above all else in their household, the master of which was my uncle Jason whom I found lacked the manners he so coveted in his children. My mother never talked much about her older brother, but when she did, there weren't often many nice things said. I took most of her warnings with a grain of salt because most siblings have rivalries, don't they? Turns out, I should have been a better listener.

Uncle Jason is built like an anvil, bulky in the chest and slim in the legs. He also has an ego big enough to burst through our atmosphere (although that seems dramatic, I believe it is quite an understatement). Suffice it to say, he was very intimidating to a newly eighteen year old me and, although I tried not to be, I was still very impressionable. That's why, when he got me alone at a family dinner, his words hurt more than I thought possible. I remember almost exactly what he said to me, "your sister is a five, Morgan. She is overweight and doesn't know how to dress. You are a seven, but if you learned how to do makeup and fixed your eyebrows, you could be a nine". That fucking sucked because, even though I thought I was pretty enough for my age, Jason's few words made me feel crushed. I hadn't thought it would affect me that much, but I never forgot about it. Sometimes at night, I would relive that moment just so I could tell him what an arrogant, misogynistic, stuck up asshole he was to my siblings and I. Until I meet him again, I'll save up all those words so he knows just how wrong he was about my sister and I.

Thinking back to that moment years ago, I've started to

reflect on how I truly feel about myself; body and mind. I've found that it is tainted by the opinions of my family, friends, and societal standards. Sometimes, like two summers ago, I hate every part of my being from awkward interactions with people to my uterus pooch to my jumbled thoughts running races in my brain. It's no surprise that it is difficult to love myself on those days, because all I can see are the failures; now, I'm working on coming to terms with that. Getting better at not cringing when I look in the mirror means I have to face the ugly parts of my disorder, like the underlying fatphobia and childhood trauma. Recently, coming to terms with my veiled fatphobia has been ruthless and tiresome. To improve, I had to look back at my lowest points and acknowledge that on some level, I am terrified to be big. That part of me wants so badly to fit in, she would rather die than be fat. Not that at least some of that prejudice doesn't come from growing up in a society that puts thin women on a pedestal and constantly berates them to look 'ideal'. I've learned, after much self reflection, that we, as women, were taught that being fat is a bad thing. Deciding to unplug from that doctrine and become more aware has helped me move through a lot of my worst days.

My eating disorder has not gone away, but I don't think it ever truly will because it is now an important part of my life. It's important to me that I find a way to live in harmony with my disorder without it taking control of my life again. I cannot love myself without learning how to stop hating myself. That is the beautiful duality I have learned from this majorly fucked up part of my life. I would never have known how deeply I can love myself without finding how deeply I can hate it. The next time I'm home, I'll be running up those thirteen stairs, two at a time.

"My Trip to the USA"
by Leonardo Campolina Mendes

This is the most difficult thing I have ever done. It all started on Monday 08/16. I went to get a covid test, so I could travel to the USA for college two days later. When Tuesday came, I spent all day with my girlfriend finishing packing, and buying some last

minute things, such as medicine and snacks for the airport. That night, I was about to drive her home and she asked me to check the covid test results. I opened the website to check, and my pressure dropped, I almost fell to the ground: my test was positive.

I couldn't believe it. I didn't have any symptoms, I had stayed as safe as I could the last 14 days, and I had a flight the next night. I called my brother Cicero, who is a doctor, and he told me to run to AMHA Hospital in my town, Atibaia, to get a new covid test to confirm it. I went to the hospital, took the test, and went to my girlfriend's house to wait for the results, because my brother told me I couldn't go near my parents, who are both old already. The man who did the test was my girlfriend's godfather, and when the results were ready he called her, while she was on the phone, I felt like I was sinking into the floor, as he was taking too long to say the results, then, he finally said that it was negative.

So a confusion started in my mind, why do I have two different results? One was a RT-PCR test from a famous lab in São Paulo, and the negative one was a rapid test from a small town hospital, which one is correct? My brother told me to go to GRU airport the next morning to get a third test. I couldn't stand the uncertainty anymore, and I just wanted the agony to end. On the day of my trip (Wednesday 08/18), I woke up at 5 am and went to the airport, took the test and went to my brother's house in São Paulo. Before I reached his house, I got a notification on my phone that my results were ready. I stopped the car on the side of the road, and opened the results, almost dropping my phone because I was so euphoric. Against all odds, it was negative.

After all this stress, it was finally the day of my trip. My brother went to my home in Atibaia to cook a meal for me as a goodbye present, one of my favorites: "bittersweet pork." We were telling jokes and going over the trip details until it was time for my online check-in and, to my horror, my flight was canceled. I started crying and couldn't tell anyone why, until my girlfriend took my phone from me and saw the reason. My parents calmed me down by telling me it was a solvable problem and researching ways to reach out to the company, but it was the first time I was going to travel by plane so I had no idea how anything worked.

We called American Airlines to know what was going on and they said there was a hurricane happening near Dallas, where I

was going to land for my connection to Kansas City, so all flights to Dallas were canceled.

I felt like I wasn't supposed to make this trip. I started thinking that I should stay in Brazil and go to college there. But my family reminded me of my dream, and I had to get my head back in the game. I called the college to let them know I was moving in later than expected, and changed my flight to the next day.

August nineteenth came I checked if my flight was ok, went to the airport, and realized the size of this accomplishment: Fly for the first time, alone and to a different country. I started shaking and sweating like crazy. I couldn't breathe. How was I supposed to do this alone? Leave my family, my girlfriend, and my friends behind-, it looked like an impossible task. But I was doing it for a reason: My dream; studying in the USA and playing soccer were enough for me to do it.

As I was walking to the boarding area, everyone started crying: My family, my girlfriend's family, and me. I started thinking about giving up again, staying with them because it was comfortable, I loved every single one of them, why was I leaving them behind? But the hugs and encouraging words started, like "we are so proud of you", "we want you to be successful and follow your dreams". That was what I needed to wipe my tears, take a breath and get in the boarding area to confront the most difficult thing I had ever done.

"What Makes You an Adult"

by Mario Diez

We often do not realize that we are growing up and that we are gradually maturing. Every single thing that happens to us on a daily basis makes us more mature. I thought that I was an adult before but after my father's accident I realized that I was more of an adult than I thought. This is the story of the moment in which I realized that I was an adult.

This story begins in the middle of this past summer, at the end of July 2021. I live in an apartment in Madrid, Spain with my parents, my oldest sister Nuria and three dogs named Bella, Gucci

and Nala. My mother works in an insurance center, my father is a truck driver, and my sister works as a post producer in television. At the time I didn't work, but my sister used to teach me postproduction in the afternoons. A normal and quiet life like any other, until the misfortune happened.

My mother received a call from the hospital in Valencia. My father, who was driving a truck from Madrid to Valencia, had had an accident. The truck had a blown tire and went off the road and overturned. Firefighters had to be called to remove him from the truck. Once in the hospital, my father was dazed from the accident and in serious condition.

My mother immediately took the car and went to Valencia to be with him, my sister had to stay because she worked all day and I had to stay to take care of the house and the dogs. It was the first time I was alone and I felt a lot of responsibility not to do it wrong.. After a few days we were told that my father had two broken vertebrae and that he had to be operated on in 4 days. The operation went well and he had to wait two weeks in the hospital until he recovered and was able to return to Madrid. During all this time my mother was with him at the hospital. In the meantime, my sister and I had to take care of the house.

During those three weeks I had to take care of everything myself. I had to walk my dogs three times a day, make lunch and dinner for my sister and I every day, clean the dishes, clean the kitchen and living room, water the plants, pick up the mail, and run errands such as picking up packages or helping my grandparents accompanying them to the doctor and shopping, because my sister woke up at 8:00 a.m., came to eat and had to leave to go back to work. I had to put off my wants to play video games or go out with my friends because of my current obligations until I had the free time.

This was my last week before leaving for the United States and I really wanted to be with my friends out in the street or at bars and have fun, but in the end I couldn't. I also thought that I was not going to be able to see my parents before I left for the U.S. and I would not be able to say goodbye to them. I felt quite sad because I was going to spend four months without seeing them again.

Finally, my parents were able to return two days before my flight. My parents congratulated me for behaving so well and taking

care of the house, my dogs and my sister. Although I was not able to enjoy my last few weeks, I flew to the U.S. with a clear conscience for having done what I had to do.

I realized that during these weeks what makes you an adult is not being a serious person with a job, but what makes you an adult is knowing how to make the best decision at each moment. You can enjoy life, go out partying, behave like a child in some moments and then be a very responsible and serious person, but what will make you an adult is to know when to be each thing, no matter the age or the person.

"How I Learned English"
by Suyana Bhandari

"In English! I need you to answer my question in English, Suyana!" My little eyes filled up with tears as my Social Sciences class teacher in fifth grade shouted at me in front of all my classmates. All the students who witnessed the situation were silent as the grave. Meanwhile, my heart of a little dove sank into my stomach and my eagerness to learn English soared up to the sky. Amidst the dead air, the wind flew through the window and slammed the door shut while the bell rang notifying the end of class. Everyone began to leave class while I sat in my seat weeping silently with an aroma of mixed feelings in my heart.

I was born and raised up in a small yet beautiful village named Devighat which is located in Nuwakot, the central region of Nepal. The village stays in the lap of Himalayas (mountains) like Mt. Manaslu, Langtang, Ganesh Himal and the hills. It consists of lots of natural things: forests, rivers and waterfalls. I studied there till my fourth grade. Later, My dad wanted to extend his business and my mom wanted to enroll me and my siblings to better schools in the city where English is prioritized so that we get to learn English and be able to grab international opportunities in future. That is why, We moved to our new bought home in Kathmandu, the biggest and capital city of Nepal which is also a neighboring district to Nuwakot. Kathmandu is excessively rich in arts and culture, temples, deities, historical monuments, museums and palaces, arts and culture and

traditions, foods and so on. The city is alive all the time. We get to see the mountain ranges and get the feels of nature even when we stay inside the city. We get to smell the savory aroma of street foods like Mo:Mo (the most famous food in Nepal), Chatpate, Panipuri, Chaat Masala, Sekuwa and so on everytime we pass by the streets of Kathmandu. So, Me and my siblings got admitted to one of the most prestigious private schools of the city named Bhanubhakta Memorial School. The city, the school, the environment of the classroom, everything was new to me.

Back in the village school, they used to include the books written in English in their school curriculum but the teachers translated it to Nepali while teaching us. This was the reason I could only read English and not understand, write and speak it properly. After I got enrolled in the city school, I got hard time making friends just because they only allowed us to speak in English inside the school area and I couldn't speak English.

There was a day when my Social Sciences teacher asked me a question in the class about the history of Nepal and I answered it very well. Yes, Very well in Nepali. But she said, It doesn't even count as an answer as long as you don't respond in English. I was stunned when she said that my answer in Nepali about the history of Nepal doesn't count at all. I tried answering her question in English even though it was broken, in a very low voice so that no one except the teacher could hear me. But sadly, instead of encouraging, she shouted at me which affected me in both positive and negative ways. Negatively, I felt humiliated in front of my classmates. It was already hard for me to make friends and this situation they witnessed made it even worse. I was angry with myself for not being good at English like other kids there. I was also angry at my innocent parents for not enrolling me in a better school from the beginning.

Why was I getting shouted at for not responding in English? However, The positive thing was that I was now determined to learn English. I started to read more English story books from the school library like Hansel and Gretel, Roald Dahl's Charlie and the Chocolate Factory, Alice in Wonderland etc. I used to underline the words that I didn't understand, note it and look for it in the dictionary later. Then, I used to try making sentences using those words and tried remembering it. Also, I started watching English movies with subtitles like Spiderman, The Hulk, Fast and Furious,

Batman, Titanic etc. on television with my uncle. Then, I used to share and explain the stories of the story books I read and the movies I watched to my classmates in English.

Slowly, I made some friends and also started progressing in my English speaking and writing. I could understand much better. I scored A's in my final exam of English and English Grammar while I failed in them in the first term. Also, I started getting better grades in every subject as I could understand the questions in English better. I could make conversations with my teachers and friends and laugh with them when they cracked jokes in English. Even after this, I felt like I lacked some confidence while speaking so I started participating in public speaking and debates which really helped me boost my confidence. I felt very proud of myself for being able to do this but I didn't forget and forgive her.

I am thankful for all the opportunities I got because of learning English. I am thankful for being able to come to the United States to pursue my higher studies, for getting to make conversations with people from around the globe and build friendships with some of them. I am thankful for my parents for thinking about the opportunities that I would've missed if they didn't enroll me in that better school. I am thankful for my social teacher in fifth grade. I wouldn't be here studying in the states if she didn't shout at me that day and she wouldn't be there replying to my Facebook stories "I'm proud of how far you've come" and "I am happy to see how good you are doing today". In conclusion, "What does English represent?"

"The Dangerous Rafting Trip"

by Magnus Hauska

Saving someone's life is a very special thing. It's very personal, it strengthens the relationship between two humans and for me there are just a few people out there who would do anything to save my life if necessary. When I'm thinking about the fact that someone once saved my life, I'm thinking about that one camping vacation, that rafting trip, that raging river and I'm thinking about my family, especially my mother.

In the summer of 2016, I was twelve years old at this time,

my family and I were on a camping vacation in France. Our second stop of our trip was a camping site near the Ardèche, a big river in France. That stop there was very special, not just because of the comfortable camping site, the beautiful landscape or the great weather, but because my family and I were celebrating my sister's birthday at this place. Her name is Jasmin and she turned 15 that day. A birthday present from my parents was that she could decide what she wanted to do on her birthday. As my sister is a very curious and tough person who always wants to discover new things, she decided to do a rafting trip in the Ardèche. I couldn't expect anything else from her, but I was also looking forward to it, because I like these kinds of adventures as well. So, in the early afternoon we went to the river, rented two rafting boats with paddles and four helmets, one for each of us. As the boats were for two people we had to split up, my sister went in a boat with my dad and I was with my mum. Of course, I wasn't really happy with that decision, because rafting with my dad I would have felt way safer because of his strength. But since it was my sister's birthday and I didn't want to make my mum feel bad, I acted as if I agreed with the decision.

At the beginning of the rafting trip everything was fine. There were of course some rough parts of the river where the boat started to shake and you got a little kick of adrenaline. But there were also some quiet and calm parts where we didn't have to paddle much and we could just enjoy the soothing murmur of the river with its almost untouched nature around it. I remember this big natural archway made of stones and rocks which is called "Pont d'Arc Ardèche". Passing through this massive arch was very breathtaking and amazing. After passing the arch the rafting tour was getting more rough and harder to manage. Sometimes it was difficult to hold the exact line of currents to get through the rocks laying in the river. It was like



charting our own course.

At one part of the river we had to paddle a lot to the right to get into something like a slope. On the left side of the river there was a waterfall of three or four meters. To avoid the waterfall, we had to find the right flow of the river to get to the slope.

<https://www.ultimatefrance.com/rafting-kayaking/southern-french-alps> and I

Somehow my mum

didn't find it and we drifted to the left towards the waterfall. No matter how hard we tried to paddle in the right way the river was too strong and just carried us to a three-meter cliff. We were



absolutely forceless against the power of the river. I got scared and didn't know what to do in this situation, so I stopped paddling. I couldn't really move, I was like frozen. My mum shouted at me: „Auf geht's Magnus, du musst paddeln!“ (“Come on

Magnus, you have to paddle! “). As I didn't react and we were just a few feet away from the edge, she jumped out of the boat, the river reaching over her knees, and tried to pull back the boat.

My father who was watching the scene, because of the fact that he and my sister were some feet behind us, said later that he saw all of the back muscles my mum owns, while she was holding that boat with everything she's got. While I was still sitting in the boat I still couldn't move, I felt helpless and I prayed that someone would just carry me out of this boat. I heard my mum screaming behind me in an exhausted voice: „Magnus! Raus! Raus!“ (“Magnus! Get out! Get out!”).

Suddenly I reacted to her voice and finally managed to get out of the boat. Once I felt the ground of the river with my feet, my mum released the boat, it flew down this little cliff and I finally managed it to step over to my mum, even though I struggled a lot to hold my balance in the river. Seconds later a rescue team, who was

watching the scene from the shore, helped us to get out of the river and we were safe. I was still a little bit shocked, while my mum hugged me completely exhausted, but we were both very relieved. On the other side of the river I saw my sister who was laughing because of the scene she just saw. At that moment I felt a little bit of fury in me, but later the day I understood that it must have looked really funny when my mum tried to pull back the boat with full power, while I was still staying in the boat like I didn't care, because I couldn't move.

As you may have noticed my mum didn't necessarily save my life, because falling off a cliff that is three meters high didn't have to end with death unless you hit your head or get stuck under a boat in a very unfortunate way, but I am still very happy and thankful that she helped me out of this critical situation. Back then, this story just meant for me that I avoided a very dangerous situation with the help of my mum, but today I see it as an example for what my mother has done for me in my life. I know that I have people around me who want just the best for me, who are protecting and helping me in any way and who will save my life if it's necessary. Even though my family is not here with me in college right now and I am legally an adult, minding his own business, I know that they will do everything they can to make me feel great and for that I want to thank them endlessly.

“Keep Going!”
by Valentin Laser

Is losing always bad for people? Absolutely not. You can learn an important lesson from losing in your life and not winning all the time. According to a study from inc.com, it says that losing “builds character, shows us how to keep on when the going gets tough, and teaches you that you are always stronger than you think you can ever be”(Economy). When I was a young child playing tennis everyday, it was incredibly difficult for me to lose to my opponents. At that time I thought that tennis wasn't the right sport for me, until one day I realized that sometimes you have to learn something the hard way.

Around the age of six years, I began playing tennis. My father played tennis in his childhood and always wanted me to start

playing the same sport. Nearly everyday my parents and I drove to the courts and there was already a coach waiting for me. I started playing tennis in a town near our home at a place named "TC Rimsting." Playing tennis was my passion and I enjoyed the sport highly. After a few years I got better and had the opportunity to play for a better tennis team nearby. I got the chance to participate for their team because I won all my matches in the season for "TC Rimsting." The new tennis club was called "TC Grassau." Grassau is a small village in Bavaria and is known for its amazing tennis coaches. That's why people come from all over Germany to play for this club. While I started practicing there, I also began playing against other teams in a competition. That means that members play singles and doubles against other tennis teams. Everyone is competing against an opponent from another club.

First, I was really nervous and scared when I stepped on the court. I was around the age of eleven years when I played my first official match for "TC Grassau." Obviously I wanted to show my best performance against a guy who was two years older than me. The sun was burning, people watched our game and my legs started to shake. It was the fear of losing against my opponent. The situation is always tough to think about oneself losing in front of your parents and coaches. You get the feeling of frustration, shame and not playing up to your potential. Luckily, I had the chance to win almost every game in our first season. However the time changed and I have also lost some matches. This was extremely difficult for me to handle. After losing matches against other players in the following seasons, I started crying and the fact of losing against someone frustrated me. This emotional reaction came after every match that I had lost in that time. Everything got worse and I thought of never playing tennis again. I felt uncomfortable going to the courts, so I decided to stop playing tennis. That was a shock for my coach, family and obviously my teammates. In that time, I had already played in some of the best tournaments in Germany and won some matches there. Everyone was disappointed because they thought I would throw away an enormous talent.

My mother was one of the few people who understood my situation. That's why she gave me some time to think about quitting tennis. So, I took off some training days and spent time thinking

about the whole situation. My mother and I had multiple talks about the sport and that losing is something completely normal in life. She showed me examples of professionals who are losing every week and she tried to bring me in the state of mind where I realize my talent. According to that, my mother said pushing sentences like "Never give up, Vale." After a few weeks I realized that she was completely right and that tennis is my passion. The fear of losing was only an illusion and something I had to work on. Nevertheless, the fear of losing made me still cry the other days. That's why I took the newstart of playing tennis really seriously. So, I began going to the courts again and practicing with my teammates. They helped me in doubles to get more confident and to get the win together. Even when we lost, they had my back in every moment. One teammate, called Bene, helped me overcome my fear of losing. He told me that he was also scared of losing but after playing many matches the feeling disappeared from itself. Not only Bene, everyone was so happy to have me back and the season turned out decent. Even if I lost some games, my motivation was still on the top. The crew had my back at any time and supported me more than ever.

Overall, sport is a great way to learn how to lose in life. The lessons you can learn from it are amazing. I recognized that after going through the whole journey in tennis. It was completely worth the struggle. Sometimes it can be hard to learn things the hard way, but I still benefit from learning how to lose in a great way. It helped me to succeed in sports and also in life. I recognized that life isn't easy nowadays and if you want to succeed, you need to suffer. Success doesn't come without putting a certain amount of time in. Obviously it can be challenging sometimes to put your energy into something but it will pay off. Overall, you should not give up your dreams after losing in some situations. Try to use the failures to get something more valuable out of it.

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"Life Changing Moment"
by Alexandra Lorenzo

September 22, 2022 should have been a night to remember, but unfortunately there is a large gap in my memory. I am a victim of drugging. It was a warm night with a slight breeze, the air smells of freshly fallen rain with the slight scent of booze. My best friend and I had decided to go out that night, have some fun, and take a break from homework and work. I wasn't in school at the time so all I had to worry about was if I could go to work the next day. We would take turns on who would get to drink and who would be the DD everytime we went out. That night it was my turn to drink. Whenever we went out we always dressed very differently, she was much more girly than I was.

She was wearing a black bustier with brown paper bag pants and black heels, her makeup done and hair curled to perfection. I on the other hand wore blue bike shorts with an oversized gray t-shirt that I tucked in my bra in the back, with blue and gray tennis shoes, and my hair in a ponytail. She wanted all the boys to look at her, want her, want to be with her. I never really cared if boys liked what I wore, I just wanted to have fun and be comfortable while doing it. They always said opposites attract, I guess it can mean friends too.

We went to the same place almost every time we went out. We thought it was safer because we knew the area and the place well. It was a little bar/night club, everyone called it Q's. It's almost directly in the middle of Main St. in downtown Saint Charles. You had to take a brick road to get there so most people called it Old Town Saint Charles. The streets were made from red brick and they were very bumpy, with no parking lots, only side street parking. Me and my friend always went a little bit early to get a good parking spot, but for some reason she decided to park on the next street over that night. She parked right next to the river bank so we were behind all the buildings that all faced the other

street. We had to walk down a semi-lit alleyway, like the ones in the movies, to get to the club. I still don't know why she wanted to park down there, there were plenty of spots on the street next to the club. We got to the door and showed the bouncers our ID's, 10 dollar cover charge, the price went up since last time we were there.

The place is a two story building, the club is upstairs and the bar/dining area is downstairs. But today was different. When we went up the dark winding staircase, with one of the security guards holding a flashlight to show us the stairs, we got to the top where the stairs were met with a concrete floor with a bar in the middle. Hardly anyone was up there that night. Halfway through the second floor, the floor turns into wood, which is where the dancing happens. But no one was over there which was very unusual. They have tables along the walls for VIP seating as well as a few tables in the back of the dance floor for anyone to sit at. Diagonal to the stair is where the live DJ usually sets up, but that night he was not up there. I asked one of the bartenders, short brunette with black shorts and a black crop top, when the DJ was going to get here. She told me the club was in a court battle over noise pollution and had to move the DJ downstairs. By the time we got back downstairs the DJ was set and blasting his music like usual, but something felt different about that night.

The air reeked of split booze and sweat. Trying to get past everyone was like walking through tangled up bushes and weeds. Everyone grinding on each other and people who are pushing others who got too close. Both men and women spilling their drinks on the floor and others near them, sweat already dripping from their foreheads and down their arms. The floor is sticky and slippery at the same time, leaving no room for error when walking across the room to the bar for fear you might fall. The whole time my friend, who is significantly smaller than me, held on to me in any way she could, my shirt, my hand, my purse strap. We finally reach the bar but when I put my hand on the counter top it immediately gets soaked in a mix of alcohol that someone else never cleaned up. It took 4 minutes for the bartender to reach my friend and I. She ordered a vodka cranberry while I opened a tab for myself and ordered a vodka lemonade. After that we returned to the dance floor, trying to find a spot for us to dance was hard.

At some point in the night a man came up to us and started chatting with my friend, he never really paid much attention to me so I kept dancing and drinking whichever drink I had ordered at that time. I made sure she stayed by me the whole night, but at one point when I turned around she was gone. Somehow she had moved across the dance floor while I wasn't looking. By this time I was slightly beyond the point of tipsy and getting very close to being drunk. I tried to keep a close eye on her but she did not care enough to do the same for me. Even though I was the one who was drinking that night. She began to kiss him and I began to dance more with whoever wanted to dance with me. I lost track of the time by this point but when the music stopped I asked one of the security what time it was, 12:45 am. An odd time for a club to close, at least that's what I was thinking. I don't remember who I danced with that night but I do remember trying to find her after the lights were turned on. She was nowhere to be found. I walked outside hoping she would be near the door waiting for me, but she wasn't. It was around 1:00 am now and I couldn't find my friend. I stumbled my way across the jagged street hoping she went to wait by the car, but I didn't make it to the car.

The last thing I remember is talking to a group of people on the bench near the public bathrooms. The last time I remember looking at my phone it was 1:15 am and I still hadn't found my friend. The last thing I can remember is being alone on the wooden bench across the street from the club. When I woke up it was around 4:45 am. I woke up in the back of my moms truck parked outside of my house. I have no recollection of how I got in the truck or when I was brought home. I made my way inside the house and passed out again on the living room floor. All morning I was nauseous and felt like I was barely awake. It felt like the worst hangover of my life, and I knew I didn't drink enough to feel this way.

I realized something that day, it doesn't matter who you are, what you look like, or what you wear, or who you're with, you can always become the victim of being drugged. In the world we live in you must always be careful with who you hang out with and what you drink when you go out with friends. If it can happen to me, then it can happen to anyone. I no longer go out with less than three people with me, I never let my drink leave my sight even if I'm just turning my head, and I never let my friends drink anything given

to them by someone they do or don't know unless they watch the drink being made. I will protect myself and my friends when we go out, no matter what.

“Cracking the Code of Life”
by Natalia Ospino

I have always thought that life's hardest thing is learning how to live. Sometimes we spent a lot more time thinking about death than the time we spent thinking about life. Living is like playing a solo sport, you have to practice every day, and some days you win, and some others you lose.

Your coaches and role models can guide you and give you their experienced advice, but at the end of the day, you are on your own. At that point, you have to hustle and face victories and defeats, and no matter what, you have to stand up and keep running because this race doesn't wait for anybody.

If we keep seeing life as a race, (a beautiful metaphoric way to see it indeed) being born in Colombia is like being set up to run on an unfinished track, without lighting, full of dirt and mud. Some people just decide to go run to other country's tracks (I can't blame them) however, some others choose to work every single day of their life to get some lights up, get some pavement on, and put a lot of effort so they can run easier and without obstacles to avoid. Some people just crack the code and find out how to live a good life and get wealthy without six zeros in their bank account.

Camilo Gonzalez Espinosa is the richest person I have ever known. He doesn't have a mansion or a Bentley, nor a private jet or multiple properties. He only has a beautiful house in the middle of a plain with a family inside. He also has an enormous heart that can love beyond death and an impeccable and wise mind that refuses to let his cage give up on age and its challenges. Camilo, or as I call him “Camilito” cracked the code. He began running on an awful track in unimaginable conditions but he decided to build his own, and after that, he went all the way and built a whole stadium. He now seats and enjoys watching his kids and grandkids run in his creation. At this point, you are probably tired of reading

within my metaphors so let's simplify it and just tell you about the life of Camilito. Hopefully, throughout the process, we get the secret recipe to succeed in life as he did. So ready or not, here we go!

Camilo Gonzalez Espinosa was born in Fontibon, Colombia on December 31st of 1934. He describes the environment of those times as a "Healthy society, where people were not very wealthy but their minds were healthy, very different as to how it is now". His parents raised him and his brother in a very humble house with just enough commodities. They sustain themselves mainly through a little fabric store in which all of them had to work to keep it standing.

His family was very big on values and today 87 years later he still remembers the main values of his house -The right to life, righteousness, truth, and humility. - Believe me when I tell you these four words are important because they keep appearing throughout the story. The home he grew up in formed a very special bond with every single member of the family, but he said that the most special connection was with his mother. The best way to explain it is in his own words "I loved my mother very much, we were very good friends, we both listened to radios and soap operas and we discussed them later, she was my great love."

Camilitos' education was a little broken. He started by going to two different schools in which he claims the biggest teaching was the devotion to the virgin. He graduated High School and made his way to college to major in industrial engineering. During those two years, he went to college while working full time; he was starting classes at 6 pm until very late at night. Unfortunately, this only lasted for two years because after that his parents couldn't afford it anymore and his job's salary wasn't enough. Even though he wasn't able to finish the whole major due to economic difficulties, he was able to get an associate title which opened the doors for new opportunities in the work field.

Camilito started his professional life in a facility called 'Tecnico central' in which he worked as a technician surrounded by different hand tools to fix mechanical problems, especially in cars. He worked there for eight years, and for some of that time, he took classes at that same institution to prepare himself for better opportunities. His drive to get knowledge at every possible chance

got him a job with one of the richest people in Colombian society. This family had a car production factory where Camilito worked as the head instructor in training and safety. Time passed and suddenly Camilito received a very good offer that was going to change his life for the better.

The next chapter of his life was called VECOL, which is a company that specialized in producing veterinarian and agriculture products. He worked there as the personnel officer of the company. This was a great jump for his career because he got an administrative position where he got promotions and salary improvements thanks to his dedication and commitment to the job. As time went on, he created amazing bonds and memories within the company, however, he decided to retire; he stated that “when VECOL directors changed and the new ones arrived, they did not share my ideas, and since I didn’t do any dirty work, my job was very dedicated to not breaking the law and the new bosses did not share that, so I decided to follow my path”.

He kept going by creating a company managing residential complexes. He ran -G&P administrators- alongside his family whom we are going to talk about a little later. Starting a company in Colombia is a very difficult task. The lack of governmental support, the high taxes rates, and the economic risk new emergent businesses have to endure, are very discouraging. However, when I ask him how he did it and what were the most important things to make a business successful, he answered with a two-line sentence “Rightfulness, the worker who is rightful prospers and humility, do not believe yourself more than others, make your knowledge useful for others, teach to others” He also made great emphasis on the fact that you need to trust the process and yourself because if you are kind to life, life will be kind to you.

As if the risks and difficulties of creating a company weren’t enough, Camilito also had to face one of the most violent periods in Colombian history which put the nation's economy at stake. During this time two main things were going on that developed and created a very hard situation for Colombian citizens. On April 9th of 1948, the presidential candidate that represented liberalism was assassinated by the opposition. Thousands of people felt represented by this candidate and after this shameful event, the working class went out to the streets to

protest. The strikes got out of control and developed into a revolution. “I remember I hid for eight days because outside was pure darkness and insecurity.” Camilito said.

This sociopolitical context got even worse because years after, a huge and evil cancer arrived in Colombia; Drug trafficking. This situation was caused thanks to the actions made by Pablo Escobar (which I’m not going to explain or expose to stop the replication of hate towards a nation for a man’s actions.) The environment and conditions in which Colombian people were living were very violent and full of uncertainty. Every business was challenged to continue its operations when people stopped going out to the streets out of fear. It was a very hard social, economic, and political situation that Camilito resiliently fought his way through.

Notwithstanding, he didn’t make it alone. As I said above on his way through life he formed a family and after all, behind every great man, there is a great woman. Maria Lucia Pardo Guarin was that woman in Camilito’s life. They were married for 67 years and they loved each other every single second of those days. In fact, they still do in the hereafter. They started their relationship because Camilito was friends with Lucia’s brothers. He said that as soon as he saw her, he wanted her to be his girlfriend, but he never imagined that she was going to be the love of his life. God, destiny, or whatever you believe in, agreed with him, because coincidentally they had to take the same public bus and train to go to their respective jobs, so it was a bond created in the middle of stinky buses and flooded train stations. After several good memories, conversations, and smiles, a great love was born. As Camilito describes it “that old lady lasted me for life and I still have her in my heart because I still miss her a lot”.

Finding people that have experienced true love is very hard, especially in today’s society. This is why I was curious how Camilito would describe his relationship, and in the middle of the description he spelled out the secrets to reaching such a kind of connection with someone. He said “It was something from outside this world, we loved each other very much, we understood each other a lot, I think the reason we lasted so long is due to mutual respect, we never yelled at each other, we never hurt each other, we were always very good and respectful. The money was always

directed to the house expenses and spent on good food and clothes for the kids, there were no separate accounts. It was 67 unforgettable years and I thank our Lord every morning for that gift he gave me that I loved very much and meant so much for me and my life.”

Camilito and Luchita (Lucia) formed a beautiful house with two sons and one daughter, however, they had an extra daughter that came into their lives; My mother. She is not their biological daughter but they always treated her like one. Camilito opened his arms for her and played the dad role without hesitation. She ended up in their house because my biological grandmother had a very hard economic situation and seven kids to take care of. All the relatives of my biological grandmother offered a hand and she distributed her kids within the family for a couple of years, while she was able to recover. Camilito remembered this situation and said “we fell in love with the little girl since she was very young so we asked her mom to let her stay with us, and she ended up staying forever, thank God she stayed forever.”

Camilo Gonzalez Espinosa is a man full of beautiful experiences and huge wisdom. I cannot describe the beautiful love he held with Luchita that I was able to witness with my own eyes. He is the person that raised my biggest role model and I have a very deep respect for everything he did for her. I also respect him a lot because even though he has had multiple health challenges and procedures, he has never given up and has always stayed full of hope and desire to live, thanks to his strength but also for all the help and motivation that the family and especially Luchita gave to him. At this point, dear reader, there is only one thing left to say, and I hope you save this in your heart forever because it's a treasure. Camilito's biggest piece of advice and the one he always gives to his grandkids and loved ones “be honest and never touch anyone else's money, always have respect for other people and their things as if they were your own, work hard for whatever it is you want and love as hard as you can every single day.”

“The Real Hawaii”
by Alyandina Bushe

Gather around waihene, and Kane
Let me tell you the true story of my island

Ua Mau ke Ea o ka ʻĀina i ka Pono
The life of the land is perpetuated in righteousness.

Aloha and welcome to Hawaii to your right you'll see beautiful beaches.

On your vacation don't forget to visit our Polynesian cultural center there they will teach you all that we want you to know about the Hawaiian culture.

But try not to have a conversation with a native because you see, then you'll find out that when the foreigner came and ripped away the island from their beloved queen they also tore out the tongues of the people to customize it to please their own ears. They ripped away the sacredness of their dances for it to become “Omggg but can you dance like they do on lilo and stitch?”

Here in Hawaii there are beautiful tropical plants graciously planted by our Governor to be displayed in the park. But don't ask about how the governor dug up sacred ancestor burial grounds to create this beautiful tourist park. But don't worry because we planted a few native Hawaiian plants so see it's fair now.

“Carefree, Careless, Carried”
by Dawson Honeycutt

Nowhere to be, nothing to do except smell the morning dew. That is about all of the poetic genius I can muster. While I do not consider myself to be a poet, there is just something about this memory that makes me feel as if I am. The beauty of nature, the excitement of adventure, and the peace inside my heart at this time was immeasurable to say the least. To this day, I can close my eyes and see my eight year old self unzipping his tent and gazing out in

awe of such beauty and freedom. I look back at this memory from time to time just to get a quick rush of nostalgia and to remember just how simply beautiful life can be. However, after all the light hearted feelings fade, I am left with the sad, yet truthful ending to this fond memory of mine.

It was a uniquely quiet morning. My young and eager eyes were wider than the sun as it had just begun to rise over the mountain top. I can remember myself falling asleep for the sole purpose of teleporting to the next morning. I woke up with the sun almost every morning so as to not miss a single moment of what the day had in store. Oh how I wish that was a habit that followed me into my college years. I lay wrapped in my sleeping bag with my head facing the top of the tent. The sun poured its light over the roof of the tent illuminating the dew drops that raced down the side of the tent like soap box cars flying down a hill. Only when the cars crashed into each other, they seemed to merge into one mega car and shoot down the canvas hill at never before seen speeds.

After a mere minute and a half, I succumbed to the sheer boredom and crawled out of the warmth of my sleeping bag. I slipped on my blue jeans and threw on a black camo sweatshirt that always made me feel like a highly trained ninja soldier. As I started to walk out of the tent, I looked back at my brother and thought about waking him up. But, I simply couldn't wait for him to ease out of bed and put on his clothes. I decided to embark on this unknown adventure by myself. I walked outside into the tall damp grass and began to ponder my next course of action. For some reason, totally unbeknown to me, I decided that I would surprise my sleeping family with a great catch of fish when they woke up. So, my mind was made up. I would go out and catch the biggest fish ever known to man and be back in no time. Or so I thought. With my mini tackle box in one hand and my fishing rod in the other, I set off to catch the biggest fish these mountains had ever birthed. But, a giant fish like that doesn't just swim in any regular fishing hole. I knew that I must go to a hole that no man had ever found before. Even though our camping location was already so secluded that it was a three hour drive up sketchy mountain roads to reach our annual spot where we could still find our undisturbed campfire and makeshift outhouse. Regardless of how secluded I was, I didn't feel as if I was alone. I had this overwhelming peace inside my heart to keep me

company. After a short hike, I reached the creek. However, no ordinary fishing hole would do. I had to find my own spot. So, I began to hike up the creek in search of the lucky spot. As I began hiking further up the creek, I began to feel a sense of urgency because I knew that I needed to be back to camp by the time my parents woke up. While I convinced myself that what I was doing was a kind gesture, I knew deep down inside that sneaking off was a bad idea. I knew that if I wasn't back in time, I would be in so much trouble when I got back that you would never be able to read this piece because the dead can not type essays. So, my little, yet strong legs carried me swiftly through the tall grass and muddy banks.

While I knew that I needed to be back to camp in a timely manner, I paid no attention to the vast distance my tired legs had carried me. However, it all paid off when I finally found it. Tucked behind a large beaver dam and surrounded by tall grass sat the perfect fishing hole. As I crawled up the Picasso of beaver dams and peeked over into the light blue water on the other side, I saw fish jumping left and right. Immediately I raced to put a worm on my hook as if I was afraid that they might get away. I tossed my line in and within seconds I would have a fish. I was having so much fun that I felt as though the world had stood still just for me.

I fished that hole for what seemed like minutes, but I knew them to be hours. I simply became lost in nature's serene beauty and engulfed by the thrill of the catch. A full container of worms was now in the bellies of the countless fish I pulled out of that hole. While I didn't catch the monster fish I was hoping for, I kept three or four really good size fish. They may not have been that big, but hey, this is my memory, I can make them as big as I want. As I reached my hand into the container of worms, and couldn't find anything but the wet and smelly dirt that the worms somehow managed to call their home, I realized that my adventure had come to a close. However, little did I know, it had just begun.

With my great catch of fish, I started back towards camp. With the sun on my face, I was still filled with peace and contentment. That is, until I realized just how high in the sky that sun rose. The peace and joy I had experienced all day suddenly dropped along with my stomach as I realized just how much time had passed. My carefree walk quickly turned into a diligent jog as my mind tried to comprehend just how much trouble I was in. Slips

and falls did not deter me as I jogged beside the slippery slopes of the creek with my muck boots that came up past my knees. As I ran my legs quickly reminded me just how far I had come. I seemed to be making good progress until I heard something large jump out of a large bush beside me and dart through the large grass. I previously believed that my stomach couldn't sink any lower. But, I couldn't have been more wrong.

I clearly remember the sensation that my body experienced at that moment. It was similar to the sensation that I feel moments before I get on a bucking horse or step in front of a bull. I have learned to teach my older self to control these feelings. However, my younger self was not as lucky. Fear overcame me, and forced me to deviate from my path. While I can look back today and realize that it was likely just a harmless rabbit or fox, my eight year old self imagined the biggest and most aggressive bear in all the land (partially due to a scary story told by dad the night before). As I made my escape from the imaginary beast that was chasing me, I found myself coming into some tree cover, and the forest only became more dense. Confident that I was heading in the right direction, I trekked on, with my small swiss army knife in hand just in case I needed to take out a bear or mountain lion. Just as hours had previously turned into minutes, minutes began to turn into hours as I realized that I was getting lost. I suddenly found myself in a part of the forest that was completely unfamiliar to me. Overcome with fear and anxiety, I stopped walking and sat in the soft dirt just beneath a large pine tree.

The peace and confidence that I had felt before quickly retreated and left me alone to handle my feelings of loneliness and trepidation. The large pine tree attempted to hold me as a father would hold his scared son. However, it simply wasn't the same. I knew that in that moment of time, I was truly on my own, and I also knew that I wasn't ready for that reality. I asked myself, "how would an adult handle this situation?" But, my mind stopped me in my tracks as I looked at my small and frail frame that in no way resembled the tall and strong build of my parents. I felt hopeless at that moment. But, I knew that I couldn't just sit and give up. Adult or not, I needed to get myself back to the safety of my family. So, I began walking.

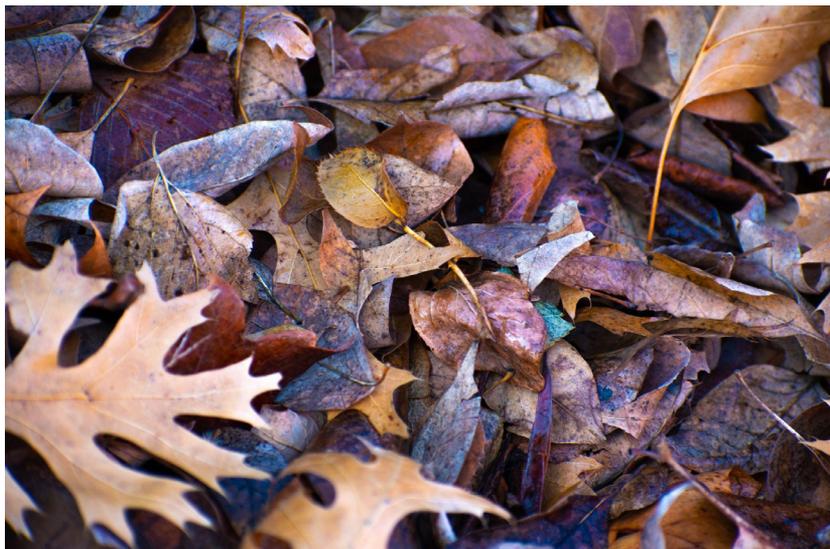
My feet that were once so light and quick now turned heavy and slow. My eyes wandered while searching for a section of forest recognizable by my brain. While diligently scanning the surrounding forest, my eyes darted when they saw something that resembled a trail. My heavy feet felt lighter as I made my way towards the windy brown line carved into the lush mountain side. While the trail was unfamiliar to me, I felt as if it would lead me somewhere that I remembered. As my legs began to shake and my belly began to rumble, my ears perked up as they picked up a sound similar to that of our beat up old four wheeler. My ears honed in on the sound and my feet began to head towards it. As the sound became louder, I could tell that it was coming from further up the trail. I began to run, using up whatever energy I had left.

As my eyes peeked over an interfering hill, I found that the source of the noise was indeed my dad. As he approached me, I could see the worried look on his face. I knew that he would be mad at me, but, at that moment, I didn't care. I was so overjoyed to see my dad that the fear of the punishment I knew was coming had no effect on my rapid pace towards him. As the four wheeler came to its signature rolling stop due to its lack of breaks, my dad's typical deep voice was a note higher than usual as he asked me "Son, what are you doing". I explained to him as clearly as my choked up voice would allow me that I got lost while fishing. I said "I...I was just trying to bring back some fish for breakfast". The pure innocence must have gotten the best of him as he simply responded "Well get on". I swung my leg over the seat and wrapped my arms around his plump yet strong midsection. All of the fear that was coursing through my little body suddenly vanished as I sank into the safety of my dad's embrace. In that very moment I knew that a day would come where I would be on my own and without parents to sweep in and rescue me. I knew that I would have to one day grow up and take on this daunting world by myself.

However, the fear of the future soon faded as I realized that that day had not come yet. Under my parents' wings I was still able to hide. But, I now know that that safety doesn't last forever. I recently watched that same safety drive off, leaving me at my dorm room. I am now truly on my own. The consequences of my decisions are mine to bear, and it is now my responsibility to lift myself out of the holes I dig. It is almost as though I was teleported

back in time to that lonesome trail in the woods. Only this time, no old four wheeler was coming. It is now up to me to get myself through the wilderness of life, return with marvelous stories for future generations to enjoy, and end my journey walking through heaven's gates and bowing at the feet of my creator.

ARTWORK



Fall Fever
by Shane Rodriguez



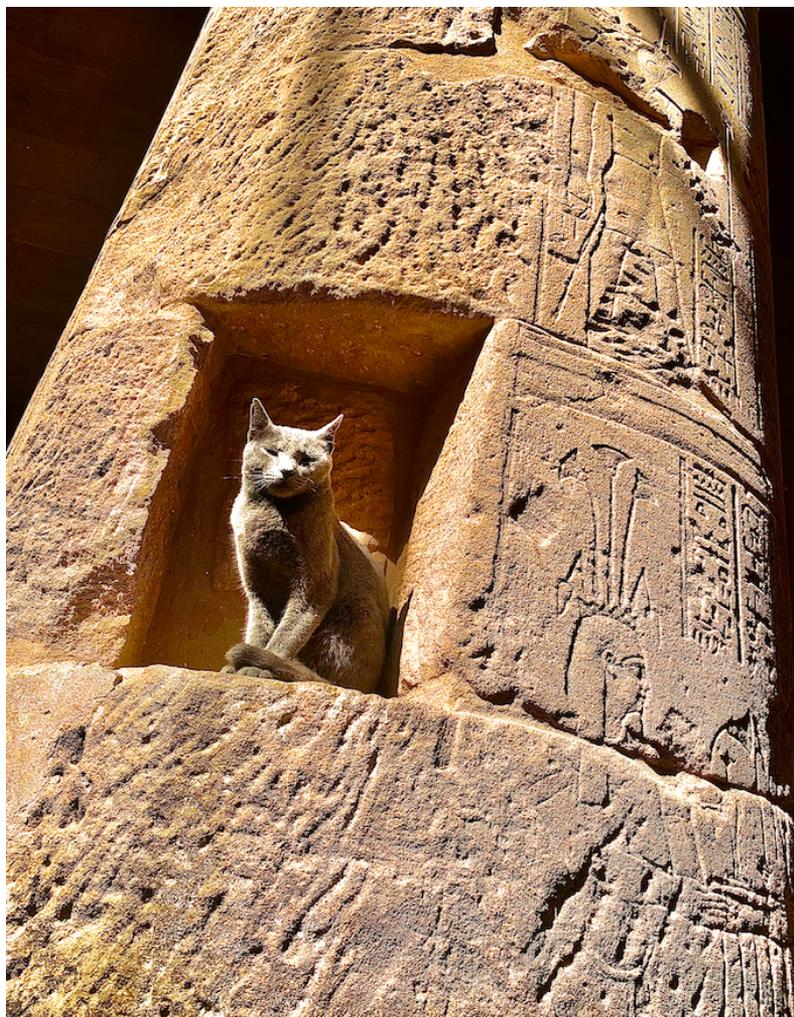
The Office
by Mariona Bolao Manén



“I’m New York City” – Taylor Swift
by Mariona Bolao Manén



It is Dusty in the Pyramids
by Mariona Bolao Manén



Never a Bad Day to Make a Friend
by Mariona Bolao Manén



The Nile really is a River in Egypt
by Mariona Bolao Manén



Face Slice
by Erian-Beni Kabongo



Abuse
by Erian-Beni Kabongo



Land and Sea
by Erian-Beni Kabongo



Brain
by Erian-Beni Kabongo



Self Design
by Erian-Beni Kabongo



Orange Fish
by Erian-Beni Kabongo



The Wonder Dog
by Chané Higgs

POETRY

"Momo: Observations of a Cat Owner"
by Harrison Boynton

This is the tale of Momo,
The one who runs my home.
Who happens to be,
The mightiest feline.

Brother of Garnette,
Both the same age.
He was the runt,
Yet takes up much space.

He is white as snow,
Yet darker than night.
Black mountains up head,
Surrounded fields of white.

Fangs sharper than claws,
Yet sweeter than pie.
Gives many roars,
Before feeding time.

Shaking his coat,
Fur does fly.
Leading me to clean,
All through the nite.

Sleeps all day,
Yet up all night.
Begging for food,
Before the break of day.

Held like a baby,
His favorite way.
Any other,

He will turn away.

Purrs mightier than,
A fire engine at daybreak.
For to many pets,
The engine will go all day.

A furry blanket,
The warmth of rays.
Results in a nap,
That lasts all day.

Opening of doors,
The room he investigates.
Making sure it is okay,
Loving in his own way.

From the smallest of kittens,
To the mightiest feline.
The one who runs my home,
The tale of Momo.

"We Made Love"
by Kristina Chhetri

We lived the moment
under the sunlight
with smell of leaves;
The sky with clouds
filled our words and we
promised on galaxies,
crossing all the limits
holding each other to
touch the sense of
burning love.
The blowing air lined
our heartbeats so

sharply that we felt the
warmth so much harder
than we ever had before.

"I Missed You"

by Kristina Chhetri

I stared at sky full
of stars,
heard sound of
running clock,
read all your favourite
novel,
played piano but
still this night missed
something that I felt
incomplete,
My heart ached for your
presence,
I waited for you,
Not this night it was me
who missed you.

"She"

by Kristina Chhetri

She lived
like a thorn,
with smell of grief,
and he fell in love
with the way
the tears collapsed on to
her cheeks
with valor in her eyes.

"His Untold Story"

by Kristina Chhetri

Even the breeze felt
hardness of his eyes;
Every tears he blew
was nothing more than
his guilt,
In between laughter
he explained every
part of him
that was dead,
Until anyone could read
what was alive in him.

"I am From"

by Faafetai Lemautu

I am from a small village on the east side where everyone knows
everyone's business
I am from a three bedroom house occupied by 10
I am from meals consisting of rice and coconut milk on a decent day
I am from strict rules and being in the house before the light posts
come on
I am from 6pm family prayers and 6am church preparations
I am from bus rides to school and catching a ride from a passing car
to get home.
I am from "stop crying before I give you something to cry about"
I am the girl who got out of the island but the island never left her.

I am from two unprepared teenagers who wanted to just have fun
one night
I am from damaged goods patched together by broken promises
I am from late night worship sessions when my heart gets heavy
I am from exposed feelings that lead to should of, could of, would
ofs
I am from open heart surgeries from self caused heart breaks.

I am from library bookshelves and creating imaginary relationships
with its characters
I want a man that can penetrate my psyche, make love to my soul,
and Quench my spirit
I am from one sided friendships that I cling to because of developed
abandonment issues
I am from behind the camera capturing the memories instead of
being in them
I am from beauty in simplicity
I am from unfinished lyrics and forgotten Melodie's
I am from desiring to possess the beauty that captured the eye of my
desire

I wonder how God works in mysterious ways
I see how artificial the love is that people pass as true now a days
I want genuine love but lack the desire to embrace it
I am from 21 years of family expectations.

"My Roomies"
by Faafetai Lemautu

Dear tenant,
It's constant arguments with my roomies
They tend to have a mind of their own now a days you see
Some days they leave the house and ide forget they even lived here
Ide go about my day enjoying the peace and quiet when they're not
around and then boom they
come busting through the front door
Most days we get along
Anxiety would willingly be my excuse not to go out and depression
would keep me grounded
Then there are other days where depression would keep me chained
in our basement, and anxiety
begins the interrogation
And sometimes they'de treat me like a prisoner in my own home

I peep through the windows and try to understand why do they hate
the world so much
I struggle with anxiety
But I'm afraid of how the world would treat me so I suffer with it
quietly
I try to numb the pain by sippin in variety
I don't know why anxiety seems to favor me.
Yours truly the third roomie.

"Tough Love"

by Faafetai Lemautu

My tolerance for pain is strained
So please refrain from playing these games of pretend.
I usually start my day with the echoing voice of my grandmother
From sun up to sun down the constant barking of things to do for
the day
I was paralyzed by a pair of eyes
For her glare was lethal.
The all too familiar greeting my body receives
Each time I breathe a little heavier, move a little slower, my replies
are a little louder that she deems
acceptable.
My skin is a walking memory foam of my childhood.
It's "tough love" so we toughen up on the receiving end of
The generational trauma.

"Maybe it's Just for Me"

by Natalia Ospino

I'm drowning in fire
But it isn't warm it doesn't burn
But it's fire, I know it's fire
I feel how the oxygen slips out of my lungs

And the anxiety kicks in
Shaking hands and heavy head
But it's just cold and dark
There's a door some feet away
But my cold burned feet won't let me walk
I'll just light still in the freezing smoke
Maybe it's just for me

Some people just don't understand
They make assumptions and try to guess
they ask me why and lay by me
and I try, Oh! believe me that I try
But the smoke cuts my words
the fire freezes my brain
My shaky hands are now tied
And my mouth can't force a word out
a weak scream reaches the surface

did nobody hear it? I give up
Maybe it's just for me

I want to run and let away
All those pressures and concerns
Feel the grass and paint my nails
Maybe a cup of coffee
Just a little sip to remember
To remember old times.
When my mom rocked me in the cradle
And life was in slow motion
When my heart wasn't frozen
And he used to cuddle me
But that's all over now
Time is racing me and winning
Maybe it's just for me

But let me tell you something
One day I'll swim out of the fire
And feel the warm again
I'm scared to go down

Dive deeper and burn faster
Find rock bottom while I drown

And then give birth to the new her
Glowy skin and rosy cheeks
the cold and smoke will disperse
Stronger than ever my voice will be heard
And with my new firm hands, I will escape

Maybe it's just for me

“Only on my Good Days”
by Eva Agcaoili

I've lived life alone. I've preferred to live life alone. On my best days, the clouds hang over my head. So much so that I've asked them to be my friends. They stick around even when I don't want them to. They're even so generous to give the gift of rain to celebrate my best accomplishments. Rain is the only type of love I know.

I've learned to hate the sun. Its rays shine down so bright burning my eyes and enticing a headache. It penetrates my skin and burns. It brings out crowds of people that invade my introverted nature. The sun brings bright clouds that offer no shade, no protection, and no gifts. And most of all, I'm embarrassed to admit the sun stood me up.

After weeks of grey, I begged the sun to come out. I would've happily settled for a headache with a side of vitamin D. But all the praying to no avail. The sun did not show up. It hid behind the clouds waiting for my worst day. The clouds however were happy to oblige.

They watch as I accomplish my goals. Pouring down the minute I achieve them. The thunder as their applause and their lighting as the camera flashes. I stand in their glory, soaked, cold, and alone except for their presence. Reminding myself that this is love, but asking myself why the sun couldn't do the same.

As my happiness subsides, so does the rain. The sun arrives ridding me of the gifts the clouds so generously gave. I'm left with a stubborn mood and a jarring headache as the sun glares into my eyes. The sun is so rare I've never thought to ask it to be my friend. I look at it from afar, too bright for me to see something better.

I've spent so long in the greyness of the clouds that the sun only seemed too bright. There are fewer suns in the universe than there are clouds I'm sure, but suns can last a lifetime. Clouds, however, can dissipate after the rain. I preferred to live life alone. So tired of the clouds and cold from their rain. I can only hope one day I will seek the sun to be my friend rather than accepting the readily available clouds.

The sun is there for my bad days and perhaps that says something about them.

"Little Boxes of Love"
by Temo Olvera

My father sends me boxes from home. I pick them up from the mail room and let them sit on my desk until the weekend. Some boxes are heavy and bulky, others fit in the palm of my hand, and one sits in the living room because it didn't fit through my bedroom door. It's Christmas when I finally sit down to tear them open. Framed pictures of my father and his brothers in a field, bags of deep-fried turkey, and new winter clothes pile up on the floor.

I pick up a small bulging box that looks like my father tried to shove one of his cows into the three-inch cube. When I pull the ribbon loose it explodes with my father's thunderous laughter and an: "I love you son." I toss the cardboard box into the bin and collect all the little boxes into my lap pulling one string after another letting waves of familiar voices wash over me. I roll around in my mess of little boxes and leave them on the ground

to step on.

I slide one of the three heavy ones from beneath my desk and pull something in my back trying to lift it onto my bed. I use a butter knife from the caf kept in my bottom drawer to break the zip ties around the box stepping back after each in case it pops. It stands perfectly still and suddenly I cannot hear the trees rustling or my suitemates arguing. I slide the cardboard top off and peer inside.

It is not what I want to see. Instead of giving into my grief, I put the top back on, rummage through my drawers for duct tape and seal it up. I pull the next heavy box from beneath my desk and cut the zip ties. I glare at it on the ground, willing its contents to be different than the last. I rip the top off and shake with disappointment. Covering it with duct tape, I stack it on the first box and pull the last heavy box from beneath my bed. I don't open it. I just stare at it. I know what's inside, but I can't bear to look at it. My shoe crushes a little box on the ground, and I wish I would have saved one for this moment. I throw them all away.

Taking my butterknife and sour mood into the living room I prepare myself for what might be in the big box. Tape flies off it, peeling away fuzzy layers of cardboard, and individually pulled staples litter the floor. Turning the box over, a jumble of black wooden table pieces fall to the floor alongside an IKEA pamphlet.

It's not even my box.

"Us and a Dirt Road"
by Temo Olvera

We drive down a dirt road away from a small town in mid-Missouri. The air pinches the inside of my lungs and my cheek presses against the wool lining of my coat. She smokes a cigarette while rummaging through the glove box for the Taylor Swift CD I threw out a week

ago. I let her climb into the back seat covered in suitcases and bags before confessing. She sits cross-legged on a plastic tote huffing. I wink and she rolls her eyes.

“The Wizard of Oz is Not Upstairs.”

by Temo Olvera

Dorothy and Teddy reach the entrance where “The great and powerful wizard of OZ” glows bright green and hangs over the door with flashing lights. They Step in ready for a show, but they find a dark room. The wizard’s chair is empty, all of its mechanical parts pointing to a missing body. Dorothy flicks the lights on and follows Teddy to a pile of ripped clothes near a window. She looks out at the expanse of saturated green against a bright blue sky devoid of clouds or the sun, but still full of light.

Oscar is running around naked wrapped in shreds of his air balloon. Dorothy and Teddy jump from the window. When their feet hit the ground Oscar’s head snaps over. His eyes are red with dark bags. His chin is covered in prickly stubble, and drool. He bundles up what he can of the balloon and runs from Dorothy and Teddy with the balloon trailing between his legs. Dorothy and Teddy chase him around the meadow.

“I’m tired of pulling levers, pretending, I am good at ruling when no one else wanted to try. I don’t want to exist, and you cannot make me!” Oscar shrieks between breaths.

Oscar trips on his air balloon and frantically rolls over. Dorothy and Teddy catch up and watch as the frail old man thrashes like a toddler being tucked into bed. “Let me go, woman! Let me go!”

Dorothy and Teddy watch in silence. Oscar’s movements become slower and slower until he is face down, hands wrapped close to his sides screaming into the dirt. Dorothy reaches down and grabs his

feet dragging Oscar to the castle. "No! No!" Oscar bites the ground with the few teeth left in his mouth. "Don't make me!" He swallows mud made of tears and grass clippings. "I'll kill you!" Teddy licks his face.

Dorothy sits him down in the wizard's chair leaving the sweat-soaked balloon around his body. She fastens a strap to a lever and brings it to his head. Oscar tries biting her, but his teeth are buried in the meadow. His gums squeeze around her arm, and she pushes his head back into the seat. He does not stop screaming when she stuffs a rope tied to a pulley into his mouth.

She picks his hat from the pile of ripped clothes near the window and places it on his head. Teddy fetches a brush and Dorothy spreads hot tar onto Oscar's temples. He thrashes and shakes, but he can do nothing more. She steps back.

It's spectacular. The best show the wizard has ever put on.

"Pink, Yellow, and Blue"
by Temo Olvera

Hey professor, do you like balloons?
Please say yes.

So when I tie them to your coffee mug you'll laugh, and giggle then
call me your favorite student.

So when you walk through the park with your family, you'll see
the pink, yellow, and blue orbs slithering up the wall and think
of the devilish smile painted on my face all week.

So when I tie them to my waist to keep me from drowning in
assignments and essays you won't pop them with your red pen.

So when I tie them around my arthritis-pained wrists you'll wish

you had the idea for your aching hands during college

So when I tie them around my neck ready to float to the sky, you'll have the muscle memory to untie them, and we can watch them float away together.

"Mom. I am ok. Please listen to me when I say I am ok."

by Temo Olvera

In November I turn fifty, so I get a bigger percentage of my retirement.

Son. I will give you all of that money.

I'll sell my house and sleep in a garage so you can get that apartment in New York you always wanted.

I canceled that appointment for the doctors. They said they can get the kidney transplant, but I said no so I'll have some money to send you every month.

Don't worry. I worked my entire life so you can live comfortable.

I see your friends on the social media. I'm so glad yall have a cafeteria so you don't have to eat the leather off your old work boots. Sometimes I add salt to mine even though it's bad for my heart.

I'm thinking about getting a loan. We can take the whole family to Arizona for a week if I get approved. Won't that be fun? We can catch up on all the time we missed. I'm also thinking of getting a goat. Remember when you were little and told me you wanted a goat? I can take care of it and you can visit whenever you want.

The house has a tree growing under it. The man says it's ruining the foundation and caused a leak. I told him how proud I was of you! Going to college, getting awards, and all that. You make me so proud mijo. Everything I do is for you. I love you.

"Biscuits and Gravy"
by Temo Olvera

Will you be at breakfast tomorrow?

Will you be the moment I look forward to? The thing that holds me down? The place I must return to?

If you are not at breakfast, I may take a long drive into the night and sleep past my alarm, past lunchtime, past sunset, passing up all the opportunities to be me.

No, I'm not a morning person and eating before ten makes me feel sick. When my eyes open my body becomes heavy, my joints seize, and I can do nothing but lie in a puddle of my own thoughts.

When you are at breakfast, I can stand myself up and cross the quad in solitude because I know my loneliness will only last until eggs are placed on the table.

The sun does not need to rise when you are at breakfast. Your presence fills the room with more vitamin D than the grapefruits rotting in their baskets or the zesty orange flavor packets I never use.

I say eating breakfast starts my day, nourishes my body, puts my heart and soul in sync. I only say that because their eyebrows rise when I replace eating breakfast with being with you.

They say they hate the caf food, but I love it. Not because it's cooked in large pans and touched by countless hands. I love it because it's served at the only time we get to sit still together.

Please be at breakfast tomorrow.

"Biscuits and Gravy II"

by Temo Olvera

I have driven into the sunset and fallen asleep at the wheel. When I wake, my hair is jet black instead of blond. The green has faded from my eyes leaving them the color of trampled leaves.

The hula lady dances as my rusted red pick-up comes to a stop in the parking lot behind Ferg. Instead of flip-flops, heavy leather boots strike the ground matching the pace of my racing heart.

EEEEP

Monica taps her screen. I have not seen her in a week, but I am glad she is here when I have decided to return. We never speak. Just exchange smiles because we don't know each other's names. She calls me Caleb in her head.

The mound of food jiggles; outperforming the hula lady. I can't keep my hands still as I scan the room for them. My eyes land on a table. Our table.

Instead of two souls waiting for the one they lost, the table is surrounded by dark clothes and ripped jeans. Their laughter swells and rises like smoke from a campfire. I am Moses and they are God's people.

I sit. Let my plate hit the table hard and break the stone tablets my doctor gave me. My tea boils when I grasp it. I don't use a fork, just scoop up goopy eggs with my bare hands and raise them to my mouth. I cannot take my eyes off them. I am as sour as the fruit on my plate.

"Untitled"

by Temo Olvera

He whispers in my ear not to tell
Not to tell them, not to tell my friends, not to tell my parents, not to
tell him

That what he is doing is wrong
Not to tell him the way I should be treated

Not to tell him I don't like the way he does it
Not to tell him what I am worth
Not to tell him to

Stop.

He says if I keep telling him to stop he won't be able to tell when I mean it. But I mean it.
Every time I mean it.

"Why Don't You Smile Anymore?"
by Temo Olvera

I watch an old video of myself at a party while I brush my teeth.
Look at his big goofy smile. God, I hate it. I want to grab it by the corner of his mouth and pull it off his face.
He laughs as I say this to him. He steps out of my screen and his smile grows bigger. I don't know how it fits between his cheeks.
I let the ends of my mouth touch the floor as we stare at each other. He reaches down and picks them up, holds them high above his head.
"See it's not that hard. Now just keep them there."
I raise my hands, take the ends from him, and drop them.
He steps closer and I lose sight of his nose behind his smile.
"Oh don't be like that."
He reaches down again, and I step back.
"stop."
"You don't want to smile?"
"no."
He squats down and places a hand on the corner of my mouth.
"Are you sure? It will make you feel so much better!"
I step back again, but his hand has curled into a fist around the corner of my mouth. He looks up at me and his smile stretches beyond his ears.

"I'll help you smile."

"I don't want your help I don't want to smile." I grab my lips with both hands and yank them from him. He scrambles for one of the corners of my mouth. I scoop them up, hold them to my body and reach for the bathroom door. My hand closes around the knob.

My chest falls into it,

My face pushes against the cheap wood door

He pulls my hair

slams my face into the sink,

And lifts my head to the mirror.

His smile makes a background for my bloodied face and drooping mouth in the mirror. I try to reach down and grab the ends of my mouth, but his body is pressed against mine pushing my arms into the sharp countertop.

He uses one hand to pull the ends of my mouth up onto the countertop, the other hand still holding the reins of my scalp

"Smile for me baby."

I weep as he lifts the corners of my mouth and uses his saliva to stick them to the walls above my head.

"Don't you look so much better?"

"Goodbye Friend."

by Temo Olvera

When he says it he puts a wall between us

Reminds me that is all we are

Friends

When I say it, I wrap my arms around their ankles

Hold onto whatever I can so he won't leave me

"Stop Looking at Me"

by Temo Olvera

I am not your father's approval in an oversized sweatshirt.

Stop reaching for my cheekbones because they remind you of home.

No. I won't 'kiss you in Spanish' or embrace you like you do your culture.

My dark hair isn't permission for you to touch it.

The cigarettes I smoke aren't the same brand your mom uses.

Whatever it is you keep searching for in my brown eyes I hope you find it somewhere else.

There is nothing inside me for you to find.

"If He Would Let me, I Would Hold onto Today Forever."

by Temo Olvera

Today kissed me good morning with the softest lips

I could wrap my arms around Today

and lay in bed for the entirety of him

Today fills a hole that yesterday dug.

I look Today up and down, and he is already seven hours old.

Seven hours out the door

Seven hours I was too tired to spend with him.

Today pulls me out of bed and spins me around.

I fall into his chest and he kisses my forehead urging me to get dressed while he makes breakfast.

Today says not to waste him

I scarf down my food because he pulls his hand away from mine with every bite, Today wants to be with yesterday.

I pretend i don't see how much he

Wants him.

Wants someone else's skin

Wants to be anywhere but with me.

Today rubs his five o'clock shadow.
I place my hand on his strong chin
Today reminds me more of yesterday with each passing hour
I miss the Today he was this morning when
He looked my way
He made me feel safe
He pretended to love me.
Today looks me up and down
with his eyebrows at eleven and
two. I meet his gaze
Today slams the door and drives away
I crawl into bed so tomorrow can kiss me good morning with the
softest lips.

“Set on Silent”

by Drake Tipton

In parking lots
In the bed of every truck
In every passing window.
Glimpse's of an apartment room
In a building neither of us can afford
With our banks overdue.
Visions of our what ifs
Whispers of something new
All lost in the wind.
Love gone way in subway tunnels
Forgotten about with nightly newspapers
Never truly taken in.
Every whisper in a parking lot
Every glimpse in a passing window
With every vision in bed.
I whisper I do's
Shake with the finding of love
Because for once, finally, you do.
Hands and legs entangle in secrets
Giggles and hushes

All sent at a low tone.
The vision of what ifs
Never included this
But they never expected it to be you.

“The Reacher and the Settler”
by Drake Tipton

In the tight smiles and sad eyes
The way your breath shifts with mine
The way you know I am just another burden
But you pull a strong face
And tell me I'm more than that
I tell you I know
And that really it's okay
Because I know,
What I am.
Through tired eyes and strained smiles
We laugh the same laughs
We share the same look,
Both looks knowing
That you are above me
For life has its levels
And we're on different ones,
You tell me we're not,
That we are the same
But you know
Just as I do
That we're not a pair
In hushed tones and the clearing of throats
We both lay in bed
Confused at this space between our curved bodies
I've landed a woman too far, from where I'll never be.
The comfort of feeling belonged, far from this bed.
You lay with a man, far below your feet
But here you're adored, held in a high regard.
The night ends in eclipse, we squeeze our eyes shut.
Gripping onto what we know, we both don't deserve.

FICTION

"Those Who Call" by Harrison Boynton

Clay Baker began to awaken and found himself on a stone path. Peering over the left and right edge, Clay could only see an oasis of darkness below him, yet it was still bright enough for him to see the path before him. Not given many options, he began to walk down the path with nothing in sight. Walking further and further into the nothingness, Clay paused for a moment. There in front of him was a counter with a wooden rolling pin in the distance. The closer he got to it, the more his head began to pulse and cause him immense pain. Upon reaching it, his mind flashed back to when he was a child. He remembers a time with his grandmother.

His grandmother, every Friday afternoon, would make cookies. With her soft loving voice, she would ask Clay to get a cup of flour from the flour decorated tin and bring it over to the counter. With a large smile, Clay would say, "Here, grandma." His grandmother would take the flour from him and say, "Thank you, Clay. You are such a big help." She would then place it in a large ceramic bowl and mix eggs, milk, sugar, and a small amount of vanilla together to make a dough. His grandma would then place a little bit of flour on the counter and she would roll out the dough with a lightly floured wooden rolling pin. She would then pull an old wooden chair up to the painted countertop and let Clay cut out little shapes with metal cookie cutters. The preheated oven heat breeze would brush his face as grandma pushed her large round glasses closer to her face to place the cookies in the oven.

The fresh smell of warm baking cookies seemed to vanish as Clay was returned to reality, where nothing but a path lay before him. Tears began to form around his eyes as he had forgotten how much he missed making cookies with his grandmother. Wiping the tears from his face with the backs of his hands, he gathered the strength to continue his journey along the path, placing one foot slowly in front of the other. The countertop was as small as a bug

now in the distance, but he began to see another sight in the distance. It was a lone photobook placed on a wooden desk. Clay's head began to hurt again as he drew closer to the item. Upon reaching it, immense pain would fill his skull. Looking at the cover of the picture book, Clay remembered a time when he was twenty-one. It was the day his wife and he finished their wedding gallery book. Sitting on the brown leather couch next to one another, flipping through each page. Looking at the picture of his wife's blue eyes meeting his brown eyes, their lips meet each other. As his wife walked down the aisle in her bright white gown, holding his black tux jacket, a blinding camera flashes every few seconds. Reminiscing about cutting the double-layered cake to reveal the white inside it, which was jokingly shoved into each other's faces. Upon flipping through more pages, his wife's blue eyes met his brown as she whispered, "I love you, Clay." Clay smiled and replied, "I love you too, Vera."

This simple line brought Clay back towards the path as he yelled, "No, please take me back." It echoed through the nothingness surrounding him as the strength left him through a mountain of tears. Clay could not stand to continue along the path. He sat for a moment next to the book and waited. He waited until the time felt right to move again. No concept of time, just nothingness surrounding him. The cold stone path served as a cruel guide. After what felt like an eternity, Clay continued his journey along the stone path. Off in the distance again was the picture book that he held so close to him and began to see a new sight. From a distance, it was large, round, and wooden. His head again began to hurt the closer he got. Upon reaching the table in excruciating pain, it was a brochure on his dining room table. Upon looking at it, it read "Westport Estates Senior Living." His mind began to wander towards the past. He recalls placing the pamphlet on the table and talking to his wife about his mother when he was forty five. "We cannot take care of her with her Alzheimer's," he said. "But that is your own mother, Clay, we cannot," Vera replied. Without much hesitation, he picked up his landline phone to call the number. Ring, ring, ring echoed through his right ear. A young female voice answered on the other side. The two began to talk as Vera stated, "Unbelievable" and stormed off into the other room. Clay got a room and paid for his mother to be placed in a nursing home since

he could no longer take care of her during his work shifts. He felt a burden lift from his shoulders as he walked through the electric sliding doors. His mother would not speak a word to him, let alone look him in the eyes. Clay recalled that every time he attempted to visit his mother, she would sit up in her hospital bed and stare out the small window looking at the grass, never saying a word. He made the choice to give up these visits shortly after she stopped acknowledging him.

The sound of opening electric sliding doors would be the last thing he would remember until waking back up on the path. The only thought that crossed his mind would be, "I am sorry mom, I should have been a better son." His sorrow echoed throughout the void as his tears turned the stone path to a dark gray. Still stuck on the seamlessly neverending path, Clay gathered himself and prepared to continue. Sluggishly moving forward, the table disappeared from the horizon as a new sight approached ahead. Getting closer yet again, his head began to hurt, hurting more and more the closer he got to it. He found a hospital bed with white sheets. Staring at the bed, Clay felt so much pulsing in his head that he collapsed on the path.

Time passed and Clay heard the words from the soft gentle lips of Vera "I miss you Clay, let us be together forever." He began to slowly open his eyes. It was blurry as his eyes adjusted to the bright room. Clay did not find Vera in front of him but found that he was lying in a bed with tubes in his arms, a heart-rate monitor attached to his finger, and finally, his now fully grown son was standing at the left side of the bed. He heard a voice say, "I am so glad you are awake; it has been days!" The heart rate machine pacing rapidly, Clay muttered, "They are calling to me, they want me there with them." The voice of his grandmother whispered in his right ear "come home Clay". A voice said back, "Who are you talking about, dad? I am the only person here." Clay took his heavy arm and raised it towards his son's face, shaking his arm back and forth. With his thin fingers touching his son's dark bushy beard said "I have not always done the best things in the world my son, but watching you grow into such a great man brings tears to my eyes". His son replied "dad I love you". Clay replied, "I love you so very much, but my time is short, Vera is calling to me and she needs me there." His arm dropped back into the bed and the heart rate machine slowed down

with silence filling the room.

"The Boy from the Bar W Diamond Ranch"
by Garrett Goliher

Faded old blue wranglers are held up by his legs. A vibrant plaid shirt enclosed in a wool laced jean jacket covers his back from the breathtaking Montana sun and that is rising up from the east along with cold air. A dusty chocolate colored cowboy hat on top of his head that covers his long, luscious brown hair, and a pair of scuffed up cowboy boots upon his feet. The twenty-one year old Rowdy Williams peers off into the distance, placing his gaze upon the hills and valleys just outside of the Crow nation. The hills seem to resemble the run of bad luck Rowdy has had to endure recently, due to the fact that many times they appear to have come out of nowhere without cause or rhyme and they continue for as long as the eyes can see. Nonetheless, Rowdy has learned that through the good days and even the bad there is still work to be done.

Clink! Clank! Clink! Clank! Is all that he hears as his spurs placed on the heel of his boots ricochet off of the rock covered soil as he walks over to his tack room. As he approaches the cracked and broken door of the tack room he can't help but feel that this door resembles his heart on days like this, barely held together with just a few nails stuck in the perfect position to keep from falling totally apart. Rowdy grabs ahold of the door handle and opens it with the carefulest of ease, so as not to finish what time and weather have already started. He gets just a big enough crack in the door for him to slither his body through and steps inside. Immediately, Rowdy reaches for the light switch which illuminates the tiny twenty by twenty building filled with hopes and dreams, but also stuffed with its fair share of wounds of the past that have not yet healed. He walks over to the first saddle rack that is inside and places his hands upon a saddle that reads, "World Champion Bullrider 1999" and carries it outside.

He goes outside to the round coral where a spirited, young, jet black colt named "Waco" is penned up. The horse blows up into the air, spiraling and twisting, throttling the post with his

hind hooves, pawing at the gate, doing his best to escape the hell he seems to be entrapped in. Rowdy knows this feeling all too well. With a sigh Rowdy collects the rope that is laying by the round pen and steps in with the colt. Rowdy begins to twirl the lasso, "One!Two!Three!". The lariat leaves Rowdy's hand and abruptly slides over Wacos head. Now the fight begins, it is a tug of war between the beast and the man. Each taking and then giving in to the other all until Waco finally wears down and lets Rowdy approach him. Rowdy takes the horse over to the edge of the pen, grabs a leather headstall and tie-down, and gently places it over the horse's nose and then in its mouth. Rowdy then proceeded to saddle the horse by placing a blanket on his broad, sturdy back followed by the saddle.

Rowdy places his left worn out boot in the stirrup and swings himself onto the back of this raging hurricane. Boom! Bang! Rowdy and Waco bounce from fence to fence of the solid oak coral like a ball inside an empty pinball machine. After what felt like an eternity riding lightning, Rowdy finally was able to tame the wild spirit that he sat upon just enough for him to calm down and realize the training of his past. Clip-Clop! Clip-Clop! The sound of Waco's feet as he trotted over to the gate, as the impeccable pair came to the gate Rowdy leans off to the side of the valiant steed and cracked the latch opening the gate to the eight thousand acre ranch that is the Bar W Diamond Ranch.

The pair begin to walk towards the pasture that they called "Bull Bugle Ridge." As they pass the main ranch house Rowdy's mother, "Lucy" walks onto the front porch with a piping hot cup of coffee, painted in her wrinkles and sun spots from years of hard work on the ranch that was known for its superior bucking bull breeding as well as the men that inhabited it. "How's my baby boy this morning?" she asked, "Well besides having to try and tame this fire breathing dragon, I'd say it's been pretty good momma," he replied. "That's good baby, did you have another restless night?" his lovely mother asked. "Yeah I did, I still can't bring myself to accept it," the boy stated. "I know baby me either, but I think that Rylee has some news for you and I think that you better call him at some point today," Lucy exclaimed. "Okay momma, I will. I'm going to check the three year olds out on Bull Bugle Ridge, then I'll be back here after a bit. I love you momma," Rowdy stated. "Okay baby, I

love you too! And happy birthday my little sunshine! Don't forget we are having cake tonight for your birthday so don't be out all day," she informed him. "I'll see you here in a while!" he shouted as he rode away towards the pasture.

As Rowdy began making his way down the sandy dirt road that led to pasture he pulled out his phone and called Rylee. "Hey man what's up?" Rowdy asked. "Oh you know the same ol'shit different day. You know what today is, don't you?" Rylee asked. "Yes, you dumbass, I know what day it is. It's November 1st and it's our eighteenth birthday." Rowdy replied hazzingly, "You wanna know what we can get now? Yeah you do, our Professional Bullrider Rider's permits! We finally get to fulfill our dreams, my man!" Rylee exclaimed. "You're right my dude! I can't wait! We can take care of that tonight, I'll talk to you later brotha," Rowdy said. "All right buddy, I'll catch you on the flip side," Rylee told him.

Rowdy took his phone and placed it back into the pocket of his worn out jeans. As Rowdy was making his way back to the pasture he began reminiscing about his and Rylee's friendship. They had been best friends for as long as he could remember, both chasing after shiny gold buckles and the title of World Champion. They originally met because of their fathers' friendship. They had been there for each other through thick and thin, all the way from winning gold buckles and thousands of dollars to heartbreak, and everything in between. Over the years they had become more like brothers than friends, the boys had done everything together and their future would be no different.

Before he knew it he looked up and he was at the gate that led to the Bull Bugle Pasture. Rowdy had a love-hate relationship with this pasture. Out of all of the pastures that his family staked their claim on, this five hundred acre pasture was his favorite. The bright green ponderosa pines scattered throughout it, the bright green grass, and the rolling hills made for a perfect scene that many only wish to see in their dreams. However, he hated this pasture as well. The reason was right in front of him. A white cross that encased in a metal fence. As the grave approached the boy stepped off of the horse, and tied the reins to one of the metal poles on the fence. Rowdy took a deep breath and opened the gate, he walked in front of the cross and fell abruptly to his knees. With a tear in his eye, he said "Well dad, it's time for me to make my mark, and

become the world champion you have trained me to be.”

“A Reason to Kill”
Chapters Eight and Nine
by Kristin Boynton

Chapter Eight: Bri

I read the sentence over and over but I still couldn't say it out loud. I couldn't swallow because my mouth was so dry. My hands started shaking and I felt a tear run down my cheek. “What does it say?” Kenley asked. Everyone was staring at me and I tried to speak but no words came out.

“Can you give it to me?” He asked quietly and with my shaking hands I gave him the small piece of paper. I saw his eyes rush across the small note and then he was still.

“Jesus Christ, is someone going to say what it is or not?” Corbin yelled angrily.

“It-it says that we have to decide.” Kenley's voice was trembling and his eyes never left the small piece of paper.

“Decide what?” Sierra asked, scared. Kenley took a deep breath and steadied his voice. “We have to decide who dies...”

“What...what the hell do you mean who dies?” Alex asked, trembling. Kenley continued his voice shaking. He took a deep breath, “Only four of us can leave...we have to decide who stays and....” The whole room went silent and I felt a ringing in my ears.

“No...no, no, no, no! I won't do it, I can't do that! How can we possibly decide who lives and who dies?” Sierra choked with the tears still rushing down her face

“It's honestly really simple...it has to be Alex.” Corbin seethed and pointed at her. I saw her face go white and I felt sick.

“Just wait a minute!” Sierra screamed. “We need to think about this for a second, there has to be another way out, we shouldn't even think about doing that!” She was grasping at straws trying to make sense of this pointless situation and I knew that this wasn't going to end well.

“You are the freaking last person we should ask to choose who dies or not, Corbin.” I spoke up and pointed my finger at him. “You practically murdered someone!”

“Do you think you have any room to talk? Didn’t you back over your sister with a fucking car? You and I are practically the same!” He shouted back at me. His face was red with anger and his hands were balled into fists. I looked back at him with shock and screamed, “I’m nothing like you! What I did was an accident! What you did probably killed two people!”

“You don’t know that! So just shut the hell up!” He yelled and slammed his fist into the wall.

“Jesus Christ! None of us have any room to talk!” Kenley shouted. He looked terrified and was shaking like a tree about to fall over in the wind. “All of us have done fucked up things! But no one in here needs to die because of it! We just need to wait this out a little longer and someone will come for us and-”

“No one is coming!” Corbin cut him off and screamed. “We’ve been down here for God knows how long and no one is going to find wherever the hell we are!”

“Shut up! Just shut up!” I screamed and covered my ears. *We have to get out of here. What if I never see my parents again? What if I die down here? I don’t want to die!*

“Someone has to come for us, they-they just have to! Or maybe, maybe there is another way out; we just have to find it!” Alex said frantically, her eyes darting around the small room that trapped her with no escape. Everyone was shouting over each other and I just wanted to drown out the noise and wake up from this awful dream.

The siren blasted over the speaker again blaring loudly and scaring all of us. It stopped and was replaced by that awful menacing voice of the person who trapped us down here. “You must decide...only four of you can live and one must die. Choose or you will all die.” The sound cut out and the terrifying eerie silence followed. It was broken by Sierra sobbing and repeating under her breath, “I don’t want to die, I don’t want to die, I don’t want to die.”

There was no way out. There was no trap door or secret passageway. Only a ladder covered in nails that led up to the ceiling that was taunting us with how it was the only possible way of escape

but not at the risk of being impaled. We were all trapped in this little concrete room with barely any water left and nothing we could do.

"We...we have to choose. We have to otherwise..." Kenley choked out. I felt like I was going to be sick. "How do we choose?" I asked, dreading the answer.

"I-I don't know. I don't know what to do. I-I just want to go home." He cried and put his face in his hands. I felt the tears flowing down my face and felt like I wanted to scream. *Why...Why did this happen to me? I know what I did was awful and I have to live with it for the rest of my life. So why, Jesus Christ why?*

Alex was pacing around the room, her eyes darting back and forth looking for some kind of exit. "There-there has to be another way! He can't just kill all of us! There is only one of him and five of us! We just-we just have to wait till he comes down here and then we can use the hatchet and-"

"And what!" Sierra screamed, startling me. "We don't know if it is just him up there and even if it was, are you really okay with killing someone that easily?" Her brown eyes were boring into Alex's. "That-that isn't what I meant." She said and threw her arms down. "Of course I don't want to kill anyone but there isn't any other choice! I don't want to die down here!"

"And you think that we do? Killing someone isn't that easy Alex!" Corbin shouted at her and she flinched. This enraged me that he thought he had any room to talk about the capabilities of killing someone.

"Are you kidding me Corbin! It seemed pretty freaking easy for you!" Alex screamed back at him. "Shut up! Shut the hell up! You don't know anything about what happened to them and neither do I, but I know for sure that you had to have known about all those girls in your basement, you couldn't have been that fucking naive Alex." He growled at her and her face went pale.

"You-you're wr-wrong." She stuttered and backed away from him. He sneered back at her. "Oh really I'm wrong? Judging from that reaction I bet I'm right!" Corbin seethed and walked slowly towards her. Kenley stood up and moved in between the two of them. "Hey Corbin just leave her alone okay? She didn't know anything she said that she didn't." Corbin moved past him and kept talking.

“You aren’t exactly the best person either Alex, you lied to me about whoever the hell that was in your house and you could be lying about this.”

I was tired of this trouble in paradise bullshit. “Dear God Corbin, will you just get over yourself! It doesn’t matter who it was; that is the least of our freaking concerns right now! Maybe instead of playing the fucking blame game you could try and help find a way out of here!”

“There. Is. No. Way. Out!” He enunciated. “You heard that bastard. The only way any of us can leave is if we kill someone in this room and that’s what we have to do!”

Sierra had started crying again and it was really starting to piss me off. “Will you please just be quiet! Just stop crying! Crying isn’t going to fix this!” I screamed at her and she choked and tried to stifle her tears.

“Dude Bri, just leave her alone. This is a stressful situation and you are just escalating things by yelling at her.” Kenley said and walked towards me. “We just need to calm down and think about this-”

“Kenley I swear to god if you tell me to calm down again I am going to bash your head in with the freaking hatchet and that will solve our problem real fucking quick!” Corbin shouted and glanced down at my feet where the hatchet was. I felt a wave of fear crash over me.

I kept my eyes on the hatchet just in case he was planning on grabbing it and he kept getting closer and closer to Alex as she was backing away.

“Alex, considering who your Dad is, it has to be you. We are all in this mess because you’re a murderer just like your Dad.” Corbin seethed. The anger in his eyes, boring into her.

“No that’s not true it isn’t-”

“Alex please don’t lie to me and don’t lie to yourself. You are a monster, it’s in your freaking DNA. You knew about them. I bet you even helped him.” She was backed up against the wall now and he was inches away from her.

“Why are you doing this to me Corbin please stop it, this isn’t like you I know you aren’t like this.”

“No Alex you don’t know me and I obviously don’t know you either. You lied to me about your Dad, you lied to me about

whoever the hell was in your house and you lied to me about your freaking name. How could I possibly know or trust anything about you?"

Tears were rushing down her face and she started quietly sobbing. *Maybe he is taking this too far.* I thought to myself and debated whether or not I wanted to stop him.

"Please just stop it...I'm begging you Corbin or-"

"Or what? Are you going to kill me Alex? Chop me up just like those girls in your basement? That must have been some fun bonding time with daddy. Luring them into your home and helping him kill each and every one of them." He said coldly and I heard Sierra gasp.

"Corbin-" Kenley started.

"No! I want to hear what she has to say!" He snapped his head back to look at him and Kenley froze.

He looked back at Alex with the darkest eyes I had ever seen. "Say it. What are you going to do to me Alex? Are you going to walk over there, take that hatchet and bash my brains in? Come on, you know you want to. You've probably already done it before so what the hell is stopping you now?" He screamed in her face, making her flinch.

"Stop it! Please just stop it! I knew okay! I knew about them!" She screamed back at him. The room went completely silent and nothing could be heard except for Alex's terrified breathing. A small smile crept across his face. "What did you just say?"

She realized what she had said and a look of terror washed over her face. "I-I don't know...I-I just wanted you to stop." She cried and tried to turn away from him. He grabbed her arm tightly and forced her to face him.

"How long did you know that they were down there?" He asked menacingly. Alex's brown eyes were filled with tears and she looked terrified, "I...I didn't know...I...maybe I knew. I don't know!" Alex sobbed and tried to pull her arm away. "How long?" He screamed in her face, spit flying onto her and gripped her wrist harder. "I don't know! I was just a little kid! I didn't know what I was supposed to do! He told me everything was going to be fine! I didn't know that she was-that they were..." She started sobbing again and he let go of her arm.

I stood there in shock and couldn't believe what I had just heard. *She knew the whole time that her father was killing those girls but did nothing to help them. She knew about Amanda.*

I made my way towards her pushing Corbin aside and stood in front of her staring her down. "You fucking bitch!" I screamed. "You knew about Amanda! And you just lied to me not even five minutes ago trying to freaking defend yourself! Did you kill her? You bitch did you kill Amanda?"

"I wasn't lying about that! I swear! I didn't know her, I didn't!" She screamed back at me. I smacked her hard in the face where she was already bruised from earlier and she cried out. "Don't lie to me! You're a murderer! You don't deserve to live!" I raised my hand to hit her again but Kenley grabbed it, stopping me.

"Well...looks like that settles it." Kenley said quietly. "Alex I'm so sorry."

"What-what do you mean?" She asked with a terrified look in her eyes. He took a deep breath and took a step towards her as she took a step back. "It's you Alex, you have to die."

Chapter Nine: Alex

I backed up away from them all. "There has to be another way! Please don't do this! I pleaded. Kenley moved towards me. "I'm sorry...but we can't all die down here.

"No no no." I searched around the room and saw that the hatchet was against the wall behind him. I slipped past him while he yelled, "Stop her!" I dove for the hatchet. Corbin ran towards me but he wasn't able to grab it in time. I grabbed its wooden handle and jumped back up quickly, swinging it at anyone who tried to get close to me. I clutched it tightly and looked around terrified. Everyone else was watching me waiting for me to make the first move.

"Just listen to me for a second!" I urged. "We can still get out of here! There's no way he'll actually kill us! He already had plenty of chances to do it so why now!" I looked at Sierra hoping she would say something in my defense but she avoided my eyes. "You don't know that." Kenley said slowly moving towards me. I tightened my grip on the hatchet. "This is the only way out for the rest of us,

we can't just stay here and hope he doesn't kill us. One of us dying has to be better than all of us."

"At what cost!" I shouted at him. "If you guys are okay with just murdering someone then you all are the monsters that he made us out to be! Please just think we can get out of here no one has to die!" My eyes were frantically darting around the room as they closed in on me. *I don't even know if I can hit one of them with this.* I thought.

Corbin was closing in on me to my left and I turned to him holding firmly onto the hatchet with tears in my eyes. "Corbin please! My mom doesn't have anyone else but me you know that! She's been through so much don't do this! If I meant anything to you please don't do this!"

His eyes were cold and dark, nothing like the happy eyes I had known for the past year. "It's too late Alex." He lunged at me and I closed my eyes and swung. I felt the cold steel of the hatchet connect with his body and I heard him howl in pain. I opened my eyes and saw the hatchet was in his bicep and once I pulled it free, blood gushed from the wound. I swung again but he jumped back holding onto his injured arm. He glared at me with fury in his eyes, "You stupid bitch." He tackled me to the ground and the hatchet went flying from my hand. I landed on my back and felt his hands close around my throat. I gasped for air and tried to pull his hands away but he was too strong and stared down at me with almost no life in his eyes.

"You know you're right Alex...we are all monsters, we just had to come down here to realize it." He tightened his grip and I scratched at his hands desperately but they wouldn't budge. His knees were on my chest making it even harder to breathe. I kicked my legs frantically and tried to scream but no sound came out. I saw spots in front of my eyes. *Someone please help me. Please. I don't want to die. I don't want to die. I don't want to die.* I thought.

I saw Sierra crying in the corner and Bri staring at me doing nothing as I barely clung onto life. I felt myself blacking out and closed my eyes.

I heard a loud thunk and Corbin's grip on my neck loosened and I gasped for air. I turned over and crawled away from him and saw Kenley standing over Corbin with the hatchet. Corbin was still bleeding from the gash in his arm and he wasn't moving. I

realized he was just unconscious and felt a mix of anger and relief at the same time. I tried to speak but no sound came out and held my hands to my throat as if trying to coax the sound out of it.

“Oh my God! Why did you do that?” Bri screamed at Kenley. Kenley looked at her in disbelief. She was breathing heavily and shaking. “It was almost fucking over! He could have finished it and we could have all gone home!” He threw down the hatchet and screamed back, “You were okay with just letting her die? All of us have done horrible things but no one here deserves to die for it!

“Last I checked you were all for it a second ago but you were too much of a pussy to go through with it. Now he is going to kill all of us!” She screamed. She saw the bottle of Captain Morgan next to Sierra and I knew what she was about to do. She grabbed the neck of the bottle and ran towards him wielding it like a weapon. She tried to smash the bottle over his head but he smacked it out of her hands and it crashed to the floor next to me, the glass splintering into little shards and the alcohol splashing onto both of us.

“What the hell is wrong with you? Are you going to kill me now?” He shouted and pushed her back. Her blue eyes darted down to the neck of the glass bottle that was still intact with a sharp end and she grabbed it and said in a quiet voice, “I’ll do whatever I need to to get the hell out of here.” She jabbed at him with the bottleneck and he jumped back away from her while she kept swiping at him.

“Stop it.” I croaked, my throat was still hoarse and I could barely speak without feeling the pain in my neck. She was chasing him around the room with the bottle swinging at him each chance she got.

“Just die already!” She screamed and lunged at him. Sierra rushed in between them. “Just stop it! Please just stop-” Bri sliced into her stomach and Kenley gasped. Sierra looked down and saw the blood started to spread across her purple sweatshirt. She crumpled down to the ground and held her stomach.

“Oh shit, no no no.” Bri said and dropped to the ground next to her, the bottleneck falling out of her hand. I crawled over to Sierra and tried to say something but my voice was still too hoarse. I looked down at her stomach and with my hands put as much pressure on it as I could and she screamed in pain while I tried to say, “I’m sorry” over and over again. “Please help me. I don’t want to die.” She whispered with tears in her eyes. I felt my own eyes filling

with tears as my vision began to blur staring down at my bloody hands.

“Hey! Stay awake! Don’t close your eyes! Stay with us Sierra please!” Kenley urged while clutching her hand tightly. She slowly turned her head wincing to look at Bri who was staring down at her hands crying silently. “Why?” Sierra asked in a small voice that could barely be heard. “This didn’t have to happen...Why did you-” She winced and turned her head back to look up at the ceiling.

“Hey! hey hey come on please! Just stay awake! Please please don’t die! Please don’t die! Come on Sierra please! Don’t close your eyes, stay with us please, please!” Kenley pleaded. Her eyes slowly closed and her breathing stopped while her blood continued to cover my hands as it seeped out of her stomach.

“No no no no no!” I whispered hoarsely and shook her shoulders. Her red curls had fallen into her eyes and she looked so still. I knew that she was dead. That we were the monsters that he thought we were now. We were just as bad as he was.

I whipped around to look at Bri who was staring down at her hands silently. “Are you happy Bri! Now we can fucking go home! But you are going to spend the rest of your life in jail! Do you hear me? You are going to fry! You killed her! She did nothing and you freaking killed her!”

She mumbled something under her breath that I couldn’t hear. “What did you just say?” I asked, glaring down at her. Her head snapped up to look at me with fury in her eyes. “I didn’t mean to! I didn’t want this! She wasn’t supposed to die! You were! You killed Amanda, it’s what you deserved! If Kenley hadn’t gotten in the freaking way you would be dead and she wouldn’t!” Her eyes glanced over at Sierra and she put her hand over her mouth and vomited the very few contents of her stomach onto the floor.

I backed away from her and heard Corbin groaning behind me. “What...” He said and tried to get up but winced and held his hand to his head. He looked over at me and saw my bloodied hands and Sierra laying lifeless next to me.

“Jesus Christ Alex...what the hell did you do?” He asked, horrified. I looked down at her cold lifeless body and the bright crimson blood that was slowly puddling around her. “It...it wasn’t me...it was her.” I looked over at Bri who was sitting not far from me dry heaving.

“Oh my God.” Kenley said, looking at Sierra. “What are we going to do?” He asked aloud. *I wish I knew.* I thought. There was no going back now. Sierra was dead and all we could do was wait for the help that may or may not come or for the monster who put us in here to actually let us out.

“Sheltered”

An Excerpt from Chapter 25

Kristin Boynton

“Damn I forgot to get my brush out of my bag.” Chara groaned while looking into the mirror in front of the sinks. “Can you get it for me Holly?”

“Yeah I’ll get it, don’t worry.” I laughed and walked over to the bench where her bag was. I knelt down and grabbed onto the zipper opening it up.

“Wait, don’t!”

I froze. Everything seemed to go in slow motion after that. Inside of her bag was a disassembled rifle and a handgun. The light coming from the flashlight glinted off the dark metal and the small bullets that littered the bag along with a couple of t-shirts.

I heard her running footsteps behind me but I didn’t move. She snatched the bag away from me quickly and threw it against the wall. I heard the sound of the gun clang against the metal lockers.

No...No no no no no no.

“What...what the hell was that Chara?” I choked.

She stood there staring back at me. She didn’t move. Her wide eyes darted around the room at everyone watching her. She didn’t respond.

“What’s going on?” Kaitlyn asked using a towel to dry off her hair.

Fuck...fuck no way. There’s no way.

“It’s nothing!” Chara said in a quick shrill voice. She tried to smile but it came out as more of a grimace. “Don’t worry about it! It’s nothing. It’s nothing.”

“Chara why do you-” I started.

“It’s nothing!” She repeated. Her grimace had finally figured out how to become a smile but it was terrifying and eerie.

“Chara...why-why do you have that in your bag?” I was choking on my words. This couldn’t be real. She couldn’t possibly be...no it’s not possible.

“What’s in her bag?” Rachel asked, staring at where it had been tossed against the wall. Everyone was looking at Chara trying to understand what was happening while everything I thought I knew was disintegrating before my eyes.

“It’s a-”

“It. Is. Nothing.” She cut me off. There was this desperation in her eyes towards me. That combined with the smile made her face even more terrifying.

“Holly...can I please talk to you. Just the two of us?” She reached out her hand to me but I quickly smacked it away.

“Holly what the hell is going on?” Jackie asked.

“She...she has guns in-in her bag.” I stuttered, backing away from her quickly, almost tripping over someone’s bag behind me.

“What...” Kaitlyn started. Her face went pale. “Like the one from the library right?”

I didn’t say anything.

“Holly...like the one from the library right?” She repeated.

The words wouldn’t come. I kept trying to say something but the mix of fear and hatred towards the girl standing in front of me made it impossible.

Rachel’s eyes were still on the bag. She looked to Chara and then back to the bag. She darted towards it and grabbed the bag handles swinging it away when Chara tried to grab at it.

“Stop! Give it back!” Chara shouted, reaching for her bag in Rachel’s hands.

Rachel pulled back the flap that was still unzipped and gasped. She recoiled in terror and dropped it at her feet. Chara picked it up quickly and backpedaled away from her slamming her back against the lockers.

“Jesus...fuck.” Rachel had her hands over her mouth in horror.

Chara started to breathe heavily. She clutched the bag to her chest as if her life depended on it and her eyes darted around at all of us waiting for our next move.

“Just...let me explain. I-I found them in the theater! I found them and I-”

Jaylynn walked quickly towards her with her hands balled into fists. She raised one of them up and her fist connected into Chara’s nose with a crunching sound. Chara cried out and dropped the bag where it landed on her feet.

Jaylynn quickly knelt down and grabbed the bag while Chara was holding her nose in pain and tossed it inside one of the open lockers latching it close with someone’s master lock.

“I think you broke my nose!” Chara cried, holding onto it. I could see the blood starting to seep through her hands and her eyes were filled with tears from the pain.

“Shut the fuck up.” Jaylynn growled. “Was it you? Did you really kill everyone?”

“I told you! I just found them! I-”

“I don’t believe you!” Jaylynn shouted and slammed her fist against the locker next to Chara’s head. She yelped in surprise and jerked away from her but Jaylynn kept her where she was, pressed up against the lockers in fear.

“Why did you do it?” Rachel asked her angrily. “What did we do to deserve this?”

“I feel like I’m going to be sick...” Carolyn whispered and put her hands over her face in horror.

“This is all a big misunderstanding I promise you guys! Just please let me explain-” Chara started.

“What the hell is there to explain! You have guns in your fucking bag Chara. How could you possibly expect us to believe that you just found these but never told anyone!” Jaylynn screamed at her and Chara flinched.

“Please Holly, you have to believe me! I didn’t do this!” Chara shouted at me past Jaylynn with desperate eyes.

I sucked in a shallow breath, “Did...did you kill Michelle?”

Chara went completely still. She pulled her hands away from her face and let the blood flow freely down to her lips. “Holly-”

“Did you shoot Michelle?” I repeated. “I told you how much I cared about her...tell me-tell me you didn’t do this.”

“Holly. I swear I didn’t I didn’t do this I promise I wouldn’t-”

“Stop lying to me!” I screamed. “Just stop Chara!”

She went completely quiet and the desperation left her eyes. It was replaced with something else, a mix of guilt and anger.

“Yeah. I did. I killed her. I killed everyone.”

My ears started to ring and I felt the chips that I had eaten earlier start to rise up from my stomach. I inhaled sharply and took a step backward away from her.

Even Jaylynn seemed shocked at her blatant confession.

“Did you kill Andrea too?” She asked her in a quiet voice.

Chara’s eyes snapped over to her. There was that desperation in her eyes again that made her seem like a caged animal searching for some way to escape from their captor and they would claw their way out if they had to.

“It was an accident! Andrea got in the way and she was going to tell *everyone*. She saw me while I was trying to get into the weight room. I chased her into the gym and begged her to be quiet but she kept telling me that she couldn’t just sit there and watch me kill everyone. I only tried to kill the ones that had hurt me and her. Do you know that she would cut herself? Not on her wrists obviously because you can’t show that to anyone ever. They’ll just think you’re depressed and sad all the time and never want to be anywhere near you. She would cut the inside of her thighs over and over again. So many scars and yet she would act so fine on the outside. Because that is what we have to do. We all have to be fucking fine! We can’t be sad or angry or depressed, only happy.”

“She just wouldn’t listen and she tried to take the gun away from me. And I...” She choked back tears. “I pulled the trigger, I didn’t mean to but she just wouldn’t let go. She kept pulling on it trying to get it away from me. She just wouldn’t stop.”

She stood there with the blood from her nose still flowing down her face and dripping onto the floor processing her words and I could see the twisted gears in her mind turning trying to find a way out of this but there wasn’t one. Not one that could end well for her.

Jesus the body that was covered up in the gym. It was Andrea.

“But-but I’m not like that anymore!” She continued in her strained voice. “I know that I did a horrible thing but everything has been great over the past couple of days. I had a better experience being trapped down here with all of you guys rather than these three

years of high school.” She had a desperate smile on her face and her eyes were wide with terror.

“You’re...you’re sick. You are fucked up in the head.” Jaylynn said, backing away from her.

“But why can’t we just go back to the way things were twenty minutes ago? Where we were all laughing with each other and having a great time. Let’s just go back to that and forget that you found anything.”

“We can’t just forget that you killed more than half of our classmates!” I screamed at her. “You killed Michelle! I had to watch her die in front of me!”

Her eyes lowered at me. “Michelle...do you know what kind of person Michelle was?”

“Of course I fucking know you psycho! She was my best friend and she deserved better than to be shot in the head by some crazy bitch!”

She ignored my words and kept talking. “Michelle was the type of person who only cared about herself and her reputation. She was the type of girl who would throw anyone under the bus if she had to. Michelle was a horrible person. Not just to me but a lot of people and you were too busy seeing her through rose tinted glasses to fucking see that. She bullied me in my old middle school because people thought that we were a couple and she couldn’t stand that.”

“That can’t be true. It can’t-” I started.

“Why can’t it be true!” She screamed at me with rage in her eyes. “Because you *loved* her? She knew. She always fucking knew. And the nice thing about being invisible is that no one notices when I’m there. They just keep talking and I get to hear all kinds of fun things. Do you want to know what she said about you?”

“No. I knew what Michelle thought of me I don’t need-”

“God Holly she’s such a little lesbo.” She said impersonating Michelle while twirling one of her fingers around a lock of her hair. “She’s like this lost puppy always following me around looking at me like I’m completely naked. It’s disgusting!”

“You’re lying...That-it it isn’t true-”

“You know she tried to kill herself right?” Chara continued with her sick show. “Her daddy came after her trying to convert her I guess and she sliced open her wrist with a razor blade. And this bitch called me and I had to come save her from her psycho dad.”

“Just stop it. Stop it!” I screamed at Chara angrily, covering my ears and turning away from her. But I could still hear her awful voice.

“How could I possibly stop being her friend? She’d probably kill herself if I did and how could I possibly live with that?”

She paused, ending her sick charade of Michelle. “*That* is what she thought of you. She couldn’t stand you. She did the same thing to me in middle school and made everyone hate me. So how does it feel Holly? How does it fucking feel?”

I felt sick to my stomach. Was everything really true? Did she hate me the whole time? I dropped down to my knees and screamed. I felt so much pain and rage inside of me that it felt like I was going to explode. My mind was like an angry hornet’s nest with racing ferocious thoughts bouncing around my head trying to get out.

She waited until I finished screaming and continued. “That had to be my favorite part. Staring through the scope at the both of you laughing and smiling at each other. Then BANG!” Chara clapped her hands together loudly. “That horrified look on your face. God I almost laughed out loud seeing that skank die right there. She was here and then she wasn’t one less bitch in this world in my opinion-”

I launched myself at her with a scream and tackled her to the ground. I grabbed her long hair by the roots and started slamming her head against the concrete. She clawed at my face and scratched my left cheek. It stung.

She shoved me off of her and slapped me hard across the face. She reached for my hair and pulled on it hard. “You pulled my fucking hair you bitch! See how you like it!”

I cried out and lifted my foot up and kicked her in the stomach sending her back against the bench doubling over.

“Guys stop it!” Rachel shouted and grabbed at my right arm. I wrenched it away from her and kicked Chara in the stomach with as much force as I could while she was down on the ground.

“Not so tough without a fucking gun in your hand are you you bitch!” I screamed. I kept kicking over and over again while she was choking and wheezing. “Just. Fucking. Die!” I screamed, kicking her with each word I spoke.

Kaitlyn got behind me and wrapped her arms under my armpits and pulled me back against her. "Damn it let me go!" I screamed at her. "She killed your friends! All of our friends! She killed Heath, Michelle, Lauren, Andrea, Karson, Tyler and so many others!"

She was still down on the ground wheezing while I was struggling to kick her again while Kaitlyn was holding me back.

"This bitch doesn't deserve to live!" I screamed in rage.

"Holly stop it please! We can't just kill her!" Jaylynn yelled at me. "How does that make us any better than her? Killing her won't bring everyone back!"

"Yeah you're right. But it's gonna make me feel a hell of a lot better." I shouted back.

