



The Wake Review

2022

The Wake Review

literary magazine and club

Mission Statement: The *Wake Review* is a student-run creative journal at Wake Technical Community College which seeks to provide a forum for the students, faculty, and staff of Wake Tech to express themselves through literary and artistic means such as poetry, fiction, non-fiction, and visual or audio arts. At the *Wake Review*, we believe Wake Tech should always have a place for its creative voice.

Submission Policy: The *Wake Review* accepts content in the following categories: fiction, non-fiction, poetry, photography, and multimedia arts. Example submissions include short stories, essays, poems, screenplays, pictures, sketches, paintings, computer design images, videos, music, and more. If you are interested in submitting your work to be published, visit our website at <https://clubs.waketech.edu/wake-review/>.

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The Wake Review

literary magazine and club

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To view the online edition of the *Wake Review*, visit the following website:
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Cover photo: "The Librarian" by Duncan Lisle

Letter from the Editor



Ever since I was little, I loved reading books and looking at pictures. I would stay up to read the stories of faraway places and fall asleep dreaming of them. I found my love for publications the same way. When I was in high school, my tenth-grade English teacher suggested I join yearbook. I absolutely loved the atmosphere and was so sad to have to leave it.

When I came to Wake Tech as a first year amid the pandemic, smaller classes, and mask mandates, I found it hard to connect with people. I started searching for clubs and emailed Mandy about the *Wake Review*. I had been an editor at my previous publication, so I wanted to challenge myself to take on the role of editor-in-chief. I am so glad that I did. I am blessed to be able to say I have had the privilege of working with such amazing, talented, and hard-working people this year.

I could not be more grateful to everyone who has helped put together this year's edition. Thank you, Elizabeth, Mandy, Emily, and Jeffrey, for being spectacular advisors. Thank you to our editors and our graphic designer Jenifer for putting in all of the work and making it look easy. We hope you all enjoy the 2022 edition of the *Wake Review*.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Emma Denman".

Emma Denman
Editor-in-Chief (2021-2022)

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FIRST PLACE POETRY

Is That Your Car?

Denver Ellis

She comes in gall-stoned livery,
face scrubbed chlorine raw,
lipstick cracked-paint vermilion
finding kindnesses to dispose of
chirping catastrophe with the weather
gumming about this starburst summer,
mouthing
Sunday sentences
pyrite fantasies
sexual extinction
taking the time out of
how it goes
a principled frivolity
coal black
A new car (your father's)
An old car? Your sister's (again)
Your brother's
Yours --
something to take care of --
through the pigeon-holes of rooms lobotomized
pale pink, powder blue
through gout-ridden furniture and kerosene windows
passes a shadowed hand
between worlds
fire spilling into lawns
teeth smiling
body rage tight beneath clothes

lawnmowers gobbling birdcries
 pulling everything far away into herself
 she asks you
 your friends,
 your job,
 your partners potential or otherwise
 her white teeth wondering

Is

That

Your
 Car?

FIRST PLACE FICTION

The Untimely Death of the Outlaw

Noah Brown

EXT. BLIZZARD. DAY

The rhythmic sounds of a horse's gallop are muffled in the snow. Only gunshots -like tiny thunderclaps- can be heard amidst the blinding winds of a blizzard. Two men, JOSIAH and HANKIE, cling desperately to the horse's saddle. Josiah fires his revolver haphazardly behind him as an unknown number of trigger-happy riders pursue them at an unknown distance.

JOSIAH

I can't see a damn thing out here! Can't even tell if I'm hitting anything.

HANKIE

Then maybe you should stop wasting our bullets. If you can't see them maybe they can't see us. You're giving us away.

JOSIAH

They've been on us for half an hour. You really think a storm is gonna shake em?

HANKIE

There's an old ghost town up ahead. We can shake em there.

More shots ring out from behind, this time finding a target. The sound of thunderclaps accompany the horse's sharp whine as it collapses into the snow. Josiah stumbles his way up, looking for his brother.

JOSIAH

Still think I should stop shooting, Hank?... Hank?

There's silence for a beat. Josiah's eyes widen as he sees Hankie lying in the snow.

Hankie groans, clutching his bloodied abdomen.

HANKIE

I think I'm hit, Jo. This wasn't supposed to happen.

JOSIAH

No shit, Hank. Can you stand?

Hankie lies motionless in the snow, not trying.

HANKIE

Don't think so. You gonna have to carry me.

JOSIAH

Come on, we don't have time for this. They didn't shoot you in the legs.

HANKIE

What? Not strong enough to pick up your little brother anymore?

JOSIAH

You ain't been little for *twenty years*.

Hankie lifts his arms up.

HANKIE

Sun's going down, Jo. We'll freeze out here if we aren't arrested.

INT. GHOST TOWN SALOON. DAY

Josiah kicks in the door of an abandoned saloon, carrying Hankie on his back.

JOSIAH

You're bleeding all over me. You better hope the blizzard'll cover up that trail you left.

HANKIE

Trust me if I could bleed out slower, I would.

Josiah drops him unceremoniously onto the wooden floor.

HANKIE

Come on, be gentle. I've been shot.

Josiah ignores him and paces back and forth.

JOSIAH

What the hell was that back there?! It's like they were waiting for us!

HANKIE

Maybe local law is getting wise to those genius schemes of yours.

JOSIAH

That ain't no local law. Too accurate. Had to be Pinkertons. They've been on my ass for months.

Hankie clutches his wound.

HANKIE

Not accurate enough.

Josiah stops pacing.

JOSIAH

What?

HANKIE

They got the horse. Poor thing didn't deserve that.

JOSIAH

We wouldn't've had to steal it if you didn't insist on leaving our horses behind.

HANKIE

We wouldn't've had to run if you didn't always have the law on your ass.

JOSIAH

Some of us have to make a living. Not everyone has life dished out to em on a silver platter. Do you even have a job?

HANKIE

Yes, I have a job. A *real* one. And don't pretend like you know me. You don't know *shit*. You haven't reached out in *twenty years*.

JOSIAH
I've been busy.

HANKIE
Clearly.

JOSIAH
We need to get you patched up. You're no good to me bleeding on the floor like that.

HANKIE
I don't suppose they'd have any bandages behind that counter?

JOSIAH
Not likely. Them miners took everything when they left.

HANKIE
Even the booze?

JOSIAH
Even the booze.

HANKIE
Damn.

JOSIAH
Found a box of matches though.

HANKIE
Well it's cold as hell. We probably should get a fire going.

JOSIAH
With what? You see any firewood around here?

HANKIE
Look around, looks like they built this whole place out of firewood.

JOSIAH
You're right. The whole damn town would go up. Even if we could light a

fire, this place is gonna be crawling with Pinks soon. We might as well turn ourselves in now.

HANKIE
Okay, okay, I get it. No fire. Why even take the matches then?

JOSIAH
I don't see you trying to come up with anything. And look on the bright side, Hankie. Maybe the cold will freeze up that wound of yours.

HANKIE
I don't think it works like that.

JOSIAH
Sure it does.

HANKIE
You know I'd shoot myself if I didn't leave my gun on that horse.
Josiah chuckles.

JOSIAH
Hurts that bad, huh?

HANKIE
Yeah. Not as bad as seeing you again did though.

JOSIAH
Like I said, I've been busy.

HANKIE
Why didn't you ever try to find me? After Mom and Dad died you were all I had left, and you never even bothered to write.

JOSIAH
You keeping pressure on that?

HANKIE
Don't change the subject, Jo. I know what you been up to. All that robbing

and killing and for what?

JOSIAH

I never kill anyone that don't deserve it. Least not anymore.

HANKIE

What about that kid at the store, huh? Did he deserve it?

Josiah winces.

HANKIE

Oh yeah, they told me all about that. How old was he again?

JOSIAH

That was years ago.

HANKIE

Sixteen? Seventeen?

JOSIAH

Eighteen. He was eighteen. Same age I was when we robbed that first liquor store.

HANKIE

Your first. My last. And if I remember correctly, you fucked that one up too. Got us both sent to different orphanages.

JOSIAH

Your last? If I remember correctly, *you* agreed to rob this bank with me. We're stuck here because of both of us.

HANKIE

Don't try and put this on me. We're stuck here because *you* can't control yourself. Because *you* can't change.

JOSIAH

The only reason I robbed that store to begin with was to feed *you*. I didn't mean for anyone to get hurt. But when Mom and Dad died, they left us with

nothing. I did what I did because I was trying to survive.

HANKIE

And look what good that did us. *You* broke the law and *I* got punished for it.

JOSIAH

You got punished for it? Do you really think I just got sent to a different orphanage? I was eighteen, Hankie. They sent me to jail.

There's silence for a beat. For once, Hankie is too stunned for words. Almost.

HANKIE

Josiah... I... I didn't-

Josiah clasps his hand over Hankie's mouth so hard that he's forced to the floor. He pushes his finger to his lips as a chorus of footsteps crunches through the snow outside.

EXT. GHOST TOWN. NIGHT

In the dark of the blizzard, lanterns light up what little can be seen of their pursuers. Some on horseback, some on foot, all armed to the teeth.

PINKERTON #1

You boys see any more signs of em?

PINKERTON #2

No sir. Not since that bloody horse down yonder.

PINKERTON #1

Then spread out! They're bound to be here somewhere. Check every goddamn house if you have to!

INT. GHOST TOWN SALOON. NIGHT

Beams of lantern light penetrate the saloon as a group of them passes. Josiah drags Hankie's body behind the bar, his hand still over his mouth. Josiah whispers in his ear.

JOSIAH

I was doing just fine till you came knockin at my door.

Hankie bites him.

HANKIE

Just give it up, Jo. They got us surrounded and you know it.

Josiah looks to the box of matches. He smiles.

JOSIAH

Stay here. I ain't out of genius schemes just yet.

EXT. GHOST TOWN. NIGHT

Two Pinkertons stand in the streets outside of the saloon. They share a cigarette, oblivious to the building burning down behind them.

PINKERTON #2

I think I nicked one of em.

PINKERTON #3

You'd better hope it was the right one. What makes you think they didn't just freeze out there?

PINKERTON #2

He's too smart for that.

PINKERTON #3

Maybe so. Been weeks since we last seen him.

PINKERTON #2

Wait a minute... you smell that?

Both Pinkertons turn to see the smoke now pluming from the saloon.

PINKERTON #3

I ain't going in there.

INT. SALOON. NIGHT

A raging inferno engulfs the center of the room. The two men huddle behind the bar as the fire spreads quickly towards them.

HANKIE

This was your plan? Burning us alive? I thought you said a fire would give us away!

JOSIAH

A small fire, yes. But a big fire? That's a distraction. They'll think we burned up while we sneak out the back like nothing ever happened.

HANKIE

You think I can sneak like this?

Josiah stands up, reaching out to him, but Hankie hesitates.

JOSIAH

Don't be dramatic, Hank. If you were gonna die you would've done it already.

Hankie takes his hand. Josiah pulls him to his feet as Pinkerton #2 steps through the burning doorway. Immediately, they draw their guns, but Hankie's remains holstered. The Pinkerton hesitates.

PINKERTON #2

Hankie? What are you waiting for? Get him!

Josiah fires. A headshot. The Pinkerton drops to the floor. Hankie bolts the exit.

JOSIAH

... Hank?

HANKIE

Let's get out of here, Jo.

JOSIAH

What was he talking about, Hank?

HANKIE

Come on, Josiah. We gotta go! Now!

JOSIAH

You son of a bitch!

EXT. BACK OF SALOON. NIGHT

Josiah tackles Hankie through the backdoor and into the snow outside. As the saloon burns behind them, the two men give each other everything they've got.

JOSIAH

(Punching him)

How did he know your name?!

Hankie manages to get his hands around his neck, choking him. He gets the upper hand and rolls on top.

HANKIE

Quit playing dumb, Jo! You did this to yourself!

Josiah swings a left hook, connecting with Hankie's jaw, and a right that smashes his nose. Hankie stumbles back.

JOSIAH

My own brother! My own goddamn brother!

Josiah draws his revolver, but Hankie tackles him, knocking it into the snow. They grapple on the ground, beating each other purple, staining the snow red.

JOSIAH

You set me up from the start! I trusted you!

Hankie gets him into a tight headlock. Josiah thrashes against him but can't break free. His face is turning blood red. With no other option, Josiah jams his thumb into Hankie's wound. Hankie cries out and kicks him off. The two men stumble backwards, lungs heaving.

HANKIE

When they told me they were gonna try to bring you in, I never thought they'd be able to do it. Till they showed me that fat wad of cash!

JOSIAH

You'd sell out your own blood!

HANKIE

It's amazing how far a little Government money will get ya these days.

Josiah puts twenty years of resentment into a right hook that sends both men tumbling back

into the snow. Now on top, Josiah throws everything at him. Hoping to delay the inevitable.

HANKIE

(coughing)

Gonna kill your own brother, huh Jo? Think I deserve it?

Josiah rears his fast back for one last punch, but he can't do it. He cries out. Tears well in his eyes. He's tired of fighting. He rolls over next to him. For a moment, the two men lie silently in the snow. Out of breath, they watch the night sky fill with smoke.

JOSIAH

You ain't worth it, Hank. You ain't worth shit. Never have been. Never will be.

With great effort, Josiah makes his way to his feet. Hankie stays in the snow, clutching his wound and struggling to breath. Josiah spits on him.

JOSIAH

Government money ain't gonna change that.

Josiah turns his back on his brother, and limps into the endless blizzard. He only gets a few steps before the click of a hammer being pulled back stops him in his tracks. Hankie points the revolver to his back.

HANKIE

You ain't the only one trying to survive anymore, Jo.

Countless more clicks echo through the blizzard. The shining light of lanterns ignites the dark around them.

HANKIE

We all gotta make a living.

END.

FIRST PLACE PHOTOGRAPHY



Handshake

Peyton Moore

FIRST PLACE NONFICTION

“Nice and White with an Edge of Red”: The Cultivation of Upper-Class Women in Anne Brontë’s *Agnes Grey*

Yelyzaveta Minaieva

“Marry rich,” “Climb the social ladder,” and “Look beautiful” are phrases an upper-class Victorian girl knows far too well. These ideals, accepted in Victorian society, can be observed in *Agnes Grey*, a novel by Anne Brontë, where the characters represent the different gender and class norms of the Victorian era. In this 1847 novel, a woman, Agnes, becomes a governess and begins taking care of and teaching various children, each of whom behaves differently and, therefore, reveals gender and class standards of the period. One particular pupil of the governess, Rosalie Murray, a young girl, eighteen years of age, comes out to society and begins looking for a suitor. Agnes, like Brontë, grows up in a middle-class household, while Rosalie grows up in a luxurious environment. The contrast between these two characters, Rosalie and Agnes, plays an essential role in revealing Brontë’s personal views on upper-class Victorian values. In the novel, Brontë utilizes the character of Rosalie to criticize the upper-class cultivation of Victorian women, revealing how high-class training and limited education produced women with superficial values revolving around beauty and status.

Through the character of Rosalie, Brontë critiques the superficial vanity of upper-class women by contrasting Rosalie’s upper-class Victorian values with Agnes’s modest middle-class values. Rosalie is a young girl freshly out in the Victorian world. She is not searching for a meaningful connection; Rosalie’s “only pleasure,” as Jim Neilson explains, “derives from being seen and admired,” and her ultimate goal is to be a coquette (10). After one of the many balls she attends, Rosalie describes herself: “I was charming... I was so

much admired; and I made so many conquests in that one night” (Brontë 69). When recollecting the event, Rosalie emphasizes her charm and beauty, not mentioning the kinds of people she meets or the conversations she had. Rosalie’s recollections of the night consist of vain details about herself; however, her self-centered nature is not uncommon for upper-class women who could afford to attend events such as these during the Victorian era. Furthermore, Rosalie perfectly embodies the female Victorian ideal described by Deborah Gorham: “girls should be like daisies- nice and white with an edge or red if you look close; making the ground bright wherever they are” (111). By “nice and white,” Gorham refers to the pure, sweet, bubbly traits that a Victorian woman should possess, which Rosalie manifests through her vivacious tone in the scene where she describes her appearance at the ball. On the other hand, the “edge of red” refers to the venomous characteristics of a woman, in Rosalie’s case, her narcissistic and vain tendencies. Rosalie’s behavior and her vanity are encouraged by her class and gender roles. She has been taught to be vain because the overriding goal of her education is to attract a wealthy husband. Though Rosalie is the epitome of upper-class femininity, Brontë disapproves of the girl’s priorities. Brontë emphasizes the vanity and shallowness of Rosalie’s words through the response of Agnes, Rosalie’s governess: “I have no doubt you looked very charming; but should that delight you so *very* much?” (69). The emphasis on the word “very” in Agnes’s reaction reveals Brontë’s critique of the pleasure the young girl gains from simply looking beautiful. As Agnes represents a lower-class woman, who grew up in a home with a mother who took pride in teaching her children good morals and the importance of kindness and intellect, Brontë utilizes the difference between Rosalie’s and Agnes’s upbringings to reveal her own beliefs (8). Because the character Agnes grows up in circumstances similar to Brontë’s, her troubled response to Rosalie raving about her superficiality can be read as Brontë’s own criticism of the vain upper-class Victorian ideals women are taught to embody.

Brontë continues to criticize upper-class Victorian women’s concern with status and the desire to gain wealth and climb up the social ladder by detailing the shallow qualities Rosalie admires most in her suitors. The perfect example of this shallowness is the description of Sir Thomas as “young, rich, and gay,” all characteristics Rosalie desires most in her

potential husband. Rosalie values these superficial traits in a man so much she claims she “should not mind [ugliness and wickedness] after a few months’ acquaintances,” or after a few months of marriage (70). Rosalie is not searching for love; actually, she finds no real interest in the men she encounters. In fact, she exclaims that she would have to be a fool to fall in love; “Love! I detest the word! As applied to one of our sex, I think it a perfect insult,” she says (103). Instead, she cherishes social status and marrying rich, consistent with the Victorian expectation that “a young man need[s] to be able to show that he earn[s] enough money to support a wife” (Hughes). Agnes, who resembles Bronte herself, does not agree or relate with Rosalie’s upper-class standards as she comes from a middle-class background. The results of Bronte’s and Agnes’s class upbringing are summarized by Cates Baldridge:

The middle-class hearth is uniquely capable of shaping children into morally adequate adults, for any family circle tainted by the vices endemic to its class—vices such as those arising from working-class “indecent” or aristocratic marriages of convenience... introduce (or reproduce) the “injury” and “error” that cannot help but deform the characters. (32)

Because Agnes’s family is not consumed by the notion of climbing up the social ladder, she is not tainted by upper-class vices of marriage for wealth and status. Instead, Agnes’s, and therefore Bronte’s, middle-class upbringing led to a morally sound adult who finds importance in the decency of others and does not care for riches and status. The notion to prioritize personality and love instilled in Agnes and Bronte could not be more opposite from what Rosalie is taught to value. Introducing the character of Rosalie, Bronte writes, “her faults... were rather the effect of her education than her disposition: she had never been properly taught the distinction between right or wrong” (58). Since “Rosalie is an embodiment of this education, of what upper-class adolescent girls are taught to believe about themselves and their role in society,” she believes if she marries a wealthy man, his fortune will be enough to satisfy her (Neilson 9). Through Rosalie’s role in the novel, Bronte condemns the vain, marital expectations of upper-class Victorian women and endorses principles centered on virtue, which Bronte’s middle-class upbringing taught her.

Though she mostly discusses Rosalie’s adolescent years, toward the end of the novel, Bronte describes the results of upper-class Victorian vanity by detailing Rosalie’s joyless marriage. As Bronte introduces grown-up Rosalie to the readers, she declares, “a space of little more than twelve months, had had the effect that might be expected from as many years, in reducing the plumpness of her form, the freshness of her complexion, the vivacity of her movements, and the exuberance of her spirits” (153). Upon getting married, the energetic, charming, beautiful Rosalie has disintegrated into a less lively version of herself in a matter of months. Through Bronte’s description of her, it quickly becomes evident the wealthy lifestyle Rosalie “had so longed to call her own, that she must have a share of it on whatever terms it might be offered, whatever price was to be paid” did not have the effects that the girl had hoped (153). In the earlier chapters, Rosalie is positive a high-status marriage would be enough to keep her happy, yet here she is surrounded by luxury with her exuberance nowhere to be found. Bronte’s description of Rosalie’s downfall paints a typical picture of the marital effects most upper-class Victorian women experienced; as Phillipa Levine suggests, these effects “permeated every aspect of [women’s] daily existence and shifted the focus of their emotional and social contact” (150). In Victorian England, especially for women of high social status, marriage was the most important aspect of life. It determined a woman’s success and worth, stripping the woman of her self-identity and control. Through the character of Rosalie, Bronte depicts the limits of a loveless marriage and how these limits affect a young woman full of energy and ambition. Rosalie feels powerless and incredibly limited within the bounds of her marriage as she complains about her relationship to Agnes: “*he will* do as he pleases— and I must be a prisoner and a slave... It is too bad to feel life, health, and beauty wasting away, unfelt and unenjoyed for such a brute as that!” exclaimed [Rosalie], fairly bursting into tears” (161). Bronte highlights the words “he will” to emphasize the man’s power in a marriage, in contrast to the woman’s lack thereof. While Rosalie is married to a wealthy man and keeps a high social status, she cannot enjoy her riches in ways she would like; she despises her husband and calls him a brute. Middle-class Victorian women, on the other hand, rarely had these same problems as there was less pressure to maintain status; therefore, more of these women found themselves in happy marriages. As Zsuzsa Berend puts it:

For Lucy Larcom, [an American author], 'A true marriage ... is the highest state of earthly happiness- the flowing of the deepest life of the soul into a kindred soul, two spirits made one.' The promise of marriage as most nineteenth-century middle-class women understood it, and for some, it also implied that extreme caution was necessary when contemplating such a union. If spiritual fusion was possible in true marriage, anything less was a compromise. (939)

Victorian women of lower social status more often valued love in marriage and picked their companions accordingly, with extreme caution and a desire for spiritual fusion. On the other hand, upper-class women, such as Rosalie, desired wealth and status above all else; therefore, these women were careless in their selections of a spouse. Bronte's inclusion of Rosalie's fate is in itself proof of Bronte's pity for upper-class women who created terrible futures for themselves due to their foolish standards revolving around money. Furthermore, Bronte draws a direct contrast between upper-class Rosalie, and lower-class Agnes, by giving Agnes a happy ending at the end of the novel, which is not the case for Rosalie. In her description of Agnes's engagement to Mr. Weston, a kind and virtuous priest, Bronte characterizes the scene; "we stood together watching the splendid sun-set mirrored on the restless world of waters at our feet- with hearts filled with gratitude to Heaven, and happiness, and love- almost too full for speech" (174). Though Agnes does not marry rich, she finds happiness in her union and lives a happy life, while Rosalie sulks in her riches and misery. Bronte uses the timeline of Rosalie's life to show how a woman raised in an upper-class Victorian household, taught to value superficial qualities, ends up in a regretful and sorrowful marriage, while lower-class values lead to happy endings.

Rosalie is essential in Bronte's novel as she is arguably the most important character representing upper-class Victorian female manipulative behavior, shallow values, and unfortunate fate. Through Rosalie's adolescence, before she makes her debut into society, Bronte describes the girl as someone who cannot moderate desires, does not know right from wrong, and focuses too much on her physical appearance. Bronte wrote about Rosalie's vanity, and yet she is still a likable character. As the novel progresses and Rosalie begins evaluating her potential suitors, her superficial values are highlighted in the qualities she searches for in men. She prioritizes marrying someone

wealthy, which later leads to her despairing union with Sir Thomas. Bronte displays Agnes's, and therefore Bronte's, irritation and internal battle in Bronte's feelings toward Rosalie as the character's priorities are facile and her behavior is self-centered and manipulative; however, there is a hint of empathy for the young girl throughout the novel. Bronte seemingly attributes Rosalie's toxic traits to her upbringing in a money-oriented household, as was true for many upper-class Victorian women. Through Bronte's portrayal of Rosalie's agreeable personality poisoned by her shallow and flimsy values, Bronte reveals her disapproval and condolence for the shallow values and priorities of upper-class Victorian women who are raised in rich yet loveless households. Perhaps if Rosalie was brought up in a middle-class Victorian home, one similar to Bronte's and Agnes's, she would not have based her happiness on marrying rich, climbing up the social ladder, and looking beautiful. Throughout the novel, Bronte makes her opinion clear: upper-class Victorian women like Rosalie were wrongfully taught to base their happiness on beauty, wealth, and status. Moreover, Bronte shows how these vain teachings resulted in an abundance of unhappy marriages and disappointed women in the late 1800s and early 1900s.

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FIRST PLACE MULTIMEDIA & VISUAL ARTS



Wheel Thrown Crystalline Vase

Casey Anderson



SECOND PLACE POETRY

Jack of Diamonds Performing Eucharist

Logan St John

Let it burn into a disgusting nothing.
Burn the castle burn the lane.
Burn the tassel and the lion's mane.
Burn the shrine from which he came.
Burn the world and last the rain.

"That which you most need to find"

Is where the escaped prisoner's landing.
Is where the banished slaves are banding.
Is where the silhouetted child's standing.
Is where the head and heart are handing.
The future back and forth between palms.

While we all watch
Of a color neither blue nor red
Our truth in neither wine nor bread
But seeing the wicked veins bled
The child spoke. And what he said:

"Is where you least want to look."

In not the light of opulent hallways
But the meridian of flames which crawl
Up and over the horizon wall
Through the distant cities sprawled
Truth in flesh, fluid, dust, and caul.

The apocalypse is not destructive but revealing.

Himself a child, opposed by those proclaiming wisdom
Games of kings, queens, and jacks
Playing careful people made of wax.
Less truth in the lion's palace perhaps
Than the furtive pattern of his tracks.

Revealing nothing short of everything.

SECOND PLACE FICTION

Running from Everything

An excerpt from the novel *Signs and Signals*

Brenden O'Dell

He burst through the door. “We have to go. We have to leave right now. Come on, get your stuff. Let’s go!”

I asked him “Why?” and “What’s going on?” But I already knew the answer.

“We have to hurry. Just take the things you need. Let’s go.”

“Okay, okay. I’ll start packing.” I knew he wouldn’t say it out loud, at least not yet, but I asked anyway. “What’s wrong? Why now?”

“We don’t have time. We have to go!”

Rooms swirled as I dodged from one to the other, gathering items from around the house. Colors amassing from shirts and socks; blurred hanging photos; a monitor left displaying second to second news updates; many wood stains covering oak, pine, and cherry cut into tables and chairs across the house; not forgetting the paisley wallpaper hanging only semi-ironically in the guest bathroom; all joining together completing a monstrous image, albeit a direct and demanding one, with a clear and simple message: We have to leave right now.

Up until that moment, I had been working on a new series. Not physically putting pigment to canvas, but researching, delving into feeling, fully immersing myself in visual aesthetic. This routine had been going on for months. Each day I would search through critiques and replications of past art. I thumbed through coffee table books, journals, blogs, dissertations, dictionaries, comics, archived personal ads from the 1970s, even a stack of blank pages bound together neatly (not intended to be written on, but for

the olfactory nerve to sense); looking for any and all material whose primary focus was turning the conceptual into actual. There must be a way to distill experience down into something exact and fitting, while also fitting exactly inside the frame of a five-foot by four-foot rectangle.

Digging through laundry baskets to find favorite outfits, I ended up grabbing everything, unsure of how long we would be gone. While packing suitcases I worried, at least once, that I was inadvertently loading up the very thing he was running from. This paranoia fell flat though, I knew we were not running from something tangible, merely chasing the running itself. Not so far as to become nomadic tramps or bohemian vagabonds, however. These titles often being associated with phrases like “flights of fancy” and “by the seat of one’s pants” also hold about them a form, an outline, an expectation of who you would be if you dared to accept the designation. An acceptance that would bring with it the encroaching...

Encroaching what?

“Encroaching” was his word. In those days he would often say it in his sleep. A fear so powerful that it would leap right out of his mouth during the night. Its devious trajectory pointed toward my ear, falling into me at the end of its scheming arc.

We started driving just after dusk, with a few pinkish rays escaping the horizon. Beside me, he was slouched in his seat, turned sideways, and dressed plainly in jeans, a T-shirt, and a thin black hoodie. The soles of his slip-on canvas shoes pressed firmly against the right side of the car’s console and I asked myself again, *Encroaching what?*

— — —

We stopped at a diner. No words were spoken since we started driving, and it was morning. *How long was that? What time is sunset? Six-ish. So thirteen—no, fourteen hours now. Wait, where does the time zone change? Have we already passed it?*

Ally got out of the car looking worn, but also calm and focused. *Is this what she needs, too? A purpose? A reason to be? Someone to be?* Feeling like I’d forced her into a role bothered me, though she seemed happy to play any role as long as it was someone she could be and was needed by someone else.

Me?

Does she wonder too, if the roles she plays are somehow disingenuous?

Ally stared at me, through the open door and past the empty driver's seat, with an air of expectancy. The look of: I will not take "no" for an answer. Though we both knew that wasn't true.

Shiny metal doors with seafoam green paneling swung open into the mostly empty diner. Soft soul music played faintly over the sound of searing. We sat and were quickly greeted by a pretty, middle-aged Greek woman. I avoided looking her in the eyes when we ordered.

After our food came, we ate quietly. I knew Ally was hoping that I would say something. Anything. I was hoping I would too, but nothing seemed enough. *Nothing seems enough for what? To make up for the long-empty space between us and home?* I knew that was not how she would think of it, but it made no difference.

Louder from our booth, the radio played a chorus:

*My courageous darlin',
How you make yourself whole again,
cryin' tears from abo-ove,
lettin' go of pain and hurt once lo-oved.*

I was not familiar with the song, but it seemed as if I could sing along anyway. I knew what it felt like, and I knew what line would come next. *Why did I never know what would come next for me? For us? How can I ask that—we've been together so long, of course, it's for us.*

We.

*If emptiness is what I seek
I'll have to leave you this week
Cause I need, cause I need, cause I need
[all backup singers take up the chorus in unison now creating
visions of earthy-green sequined dresses swaying and snapping]*

I need to show you.

I need to show you

that I love you

I need to show you

I need to show you

that I need you (yes I do)

A man sitting at the bar stacked coffee straws like Lincoln Logs. He had almost twenty layers already. Two kids three booths behind me fought over which kind of syrup they would use, while their mother tapped a phone hard enough that I could hear the sound from where I sat. Ally was across from me, rotating back and forth. Looking outside. Then at my face. Back again. I did not make eye contact and showed no signs of even noticing. I just paid attention to everything else.

Twenty-five layers of bright red lines scattered across the bar, some falling from the edge. My plate was empty, sans a half-eaten piece of toast and a few smears of yellow yolk swathing the thick white porcelain. The padding of one of the bar-stools, the seat left of our straw stacker, was worn and cracked. I imagined a cheery portly fellow who was retired and also now a regular. Frequenting this spot so often that his course blue jeans had rubbed the synthetic leather clean through to the cotton underneath. I could see him rotating in his seat, making quick quips as waitresses passed. I wondered if he was married or maybe widowed. *Did someone once love this oaf, lug, lump of an imagined man?*

I settled into the booth.

There was a long empty space between here and home.

The next time she turned to me, I looked right back at her. She seemed scared. Unsure.

"So tell me, where do you fall on the great maple-versus-butter-pecan debate?" I asked earnestly, then smirked.

"I'm not really into party politics."

“Say what you want, but when the pancakes come, you’re gonna have to choose.”

“Why choose? I can have both.”

“Ambitious.”

“That’s just the kind of girl I am,” She beamed.

We laughed.

— — —

√ I parked the car near the room
 √ and rolled up all the windows.
 √ I gave us both hotel card keys
 √ before we brought in our bags.
 √ I got the pills out of the cup holder,
 √ he closed the curtains.
 √ I made sure the car doors were locked,
 √ then hung our clothes on the silver painted bar inside the empty closet,
 √ while he showered.

Sitting in the equally empty chair I ran through the mental checklist and decided that was everything. “We should find something to eat soon. Maybe have a drink,” I said. He agreed, so I slipped into the steamed bathroom to check my phone and find a place near enough to walk.

We sat at a bar, both ordered sandwiches. He got a beer. I had Riesling. Two screens played sports and news, battling for attention. We gave neither one either of ours. I stared forward, looking at our reflection, past the half-filled watered-down booze, through the dusty mirror, back between the many-colored bottles and into us. Sitting there, still and silent. A silence without expectation. Things were calm. There was a newness in us, created by the newness of the place we were in.

“It’s not like I’m saying we need to bring the hammer down. I’m just saying not all of us is good law-abiding peoples. And sometimes we gotta put the squeeze on those that don’t. We can’t pussyfoot around it. I ain’t got time left to wait around for court hearing after court ruling, I want to see some justice.”

A man wearing a thin stringy mullet and an *It’s five o’clock somewhere* shirt sat on the other side of us at the bar. He wasn’t old enough for me to assume the meaning of “ain’t got time left.”

Is he sick or just embroidering?

He talked to a bartender who may not have been listening at all, only filling up a dishwasher nearby. The younger man behind the counter nodded slightly now and again, with either an “mhm” or a “yep.” Speaking only to the glasses he was trying to wash, but nonetheless emboldening the retribution-seeking man beside us to continue his rant.

“They tie these things up endlessly. I got a nephew in law school, my sister married his dad’s brother, he says the same thing. Especially in those uh, um, civil suits. Can go on for years. But this has the criminality element to it, justice should be swift. We need to right a wrong here.”

He looked at me, half expecting an “amen” from one of us. I looked back at him through the mirror, not acknowledging him publicly. His goatee-wrapped mouth and bristly neck were all I could see, everything above his nose was cut off by shelves holding more liquor. A flat silver chain hung around his neck. It moved slightly forward and back as he waved his hands around a half-drunk pint glass. He attached his elbows to the bar with the full impact of his upper body’s weight, as he finished his sentiment.

“I mean how would you feel if you were the family? Those poor folks, probably can’t even turn on the TV without seeing their dead daughter’s face plastered all over the screen. Just give the guy the zap he deserves and be done with the whole thing. Justice may be blind but she sure knows how to hit em with a bolt.”

Seemingly proud of himself for stringing together these sentiments, he relaxed, steeping in his seat. No doubt replaying the moment in his head, before being distracted by the next flash of screen in front of him.

After leaving the bar we walked aimlessly.

“What is *justice* anyway?” He asked.

“I knew you would say that.”

“Does that guy even realize what the fuck he is saying? Just spewing out garbage. I bet if you asked him what or who justice is he'd run out of shit to say quick. I'm so tired of everyone using vague words all the time. Does nobody else feel like actually, you know, communicating with anyone? Or are they all just content with reassembling—regurgitating, bullshit that they were force-fed? No, not force-fed. Gorged on. Willingly. Compiling all this shit content into their heads. Just so it can be spewed right back at each other. And for what? Just to fill up empty spaces of boredom? Dissolve uncomfortable silences? Why does this crap always make me more uncomfortable? Am I missing something? Am I supposed to be at ease with that sort of thing going on? Maybe that's the problem, these assholes need to be bored every now and then. Get a good hard look at the non-sense they are always talking about. How do you even get a chance to think about anything, when the next thing is already right there in front of you, blinking, flashing, ringing? What the fuck is justice, anyway?”

There was a long pause as we waited for the cross light to turn green. We were in a small town somewhere outside of Indianapolis. Tree roots lifted sidewalk on the other side of the misted empty road. The woody pillars had broken free from their bonds. Though, they were still and immediate, not yet fully discharged. A glorious reprise snapshotted, slowly revealing the exonerated of elms that were held impersonally inside a concrete prison.

No cars came, so we crossed under the orange glow of a front-facing palm.

“I don't think you're missing anything. You're probably right, it's just a compulsory thing, for awkwardness,” I said half under my breath as we reached the other sidewalk.

“Yeah but that guy was smug about it. Like he enjoyed hearing what he was saying. How does pushing for state-sanctioned murder make someone feel good, or better about their awkwardness?”

“I think people just like to have an opinion. They like having something to say. I'm sure he just felt good about having so much to say. He thinks he's sharing his feeling about it.”

“Yeah, he's definitely sharing something. I just don't think it's what he thinks it is. How do you right a wrong anyway? What does that mean? It

doesn't work that way. You can't take things back. Are we supposed to add to the thing, balance it out? What's balance?”

“You've really got to calm down. It's just some guy. It doesn't mean anything.”

“But it's not just some guy. It's so many of the people around us. It's so noisy all the time, so much going on, so much yelling, cheering, hoorah, and bullshit. And it's never anything that matters. Why? Because that's easier, just to be distracted, to not be aware? It doesn't seem to shelter them from loneliness, does it? Definitely doesn't shrink the number of suicide deaths each year, does it? I just... I just can't deal with all the noise. Even the small shit is getting to me. Did you hear the way that guy's elbows popped when he rolled them around? Fuck, I could feel it in the bar.”

He went silent after that. We eventually made our way back to the hotel room, and in bed, we laid together, not speaking but touching. Not only communicating a love for one another, but also a pain that was felt equally by us both. We sat inside it, feelings juxtaposed across each other. Each wanting to help the other, but unable to help even ourselves. I watched him for a while after he closed his eyes. *Why the noises? What's in the sound that sets him off?*

Can it be heard in a canvas of imprisoned elms?

SECOND PLACE PHOTOGRAPHY



Abandoned

Alec Henderson

SECOND PLACE NONFICTION

The Role of Texting in Shaping
Communication: Affective, Cognitive, and
Lexical Dimensions

Marissa Hutto

Throughout recorded history, technological advances have often served as catalysts of both dramatic changes to and fundamental alterations in the human experience. The invention and subsequent widespread adoption of novel technologies tends to generate far-ranging societal consequences. Such consequential effects can present as explicit or subtle, material or symbolic, intended or unintended, and immediate or delayed. Frequently missed in the examination of causal patterns between innovation and measurable impact are those effects that are less readily apparent or immediately perceived. Of the many technological innovations to emerge in the Digital Age, few have affected the communicative and interactive domains of the human experience as significantly as the nearly universal adoption of text messaging. The influence of texting on human communication is both significant and best examined from a dimensional perspective, taking into consideration the measurable effects encompassing affective, cognitive, and lexical dimensions respectively.

One major facet of communication that continues to be impacted by the ubiquitous adoption of text messaging is the conveyance and transmission of affect in interpersonal interaction. Communication through text messaging is functionally limited by a lack of the visual and auditory cues which characterize face-to-face interaction. Nonverbal gestures, vocal intonations, body language, and facial expressions all contribute significant contextual clues by which conversational participants transmit and decipher the intended meanings, intentions, and mental states of one another. The

centrality of faces, particularly the eyes, to successful human communication cannot be overstated. As a result, graphic communication symbols such as emoticons, gifs, and memes have emerged in recent years to fill the contextual vacuum that exists in text-based interaction. Such graphics may substitute for nonverbal cues such as facial expressions and gestures in otherwise affectively blind communication contexts.

Consequently, opportunity exists for researchers to investigate the extent to which such affective modifiers (emoticon faces) signify the valence of affective content and emotional resonance existing within contemporary human conversational patterns. American linguist John McWhorter asserts that changes in interpersonal communication featured in text messaging jargon represent a cultural shift reflecting a new “awareness of the minds of others” among individual actors. McWhorter further suggests that the employment of hedging and grammatical modifiers often derided as sophomoric, such as “like,” reveal an increase in conversational nuance and interpersonal gentility. For McWhorter, the informality of “textese” establishes an interactive “comfort zone” that serves to put conversational participants at ease. Moreover, the vast array of emoticons and other graphical representations of moods and mental states available to composers of text messages may indicate that texting has generated a growing level of sophistication in relation to the emotional content of what was traditionally considered a formal medium of communication (i.e., writing). Regarding the affective value of emojis, English linguist Vyvyan Evans notes that “they nevertheless provide an important and empowering contextualization cue, enabling us to better express our emotional selves, one that enables us to induce empathetic resonance in our addressee.” As the text composer directs attention to selecting just the right emoji, gif, or meme to convey their mood to a recipient, the composer is allocating mental resources to emotional differentiation. Such differentiation, self-awareness of moods, and clear conveyance of subjective mental states convene to foster emotionally intelligent interaction.

Beyond the affective dimension, the cognitive and lexical dimensions of communication may be affected by text messaging as well. Executive functions, including selective attention, working memory, and verbal reasoning, feature prominently in the cognitive dimension of the measurable

effects of text messaging. Contrary to the commonly held attitude that “textese” has resulted in a deterioration of Standard English and literacy skills, research on the subject has yielded mixed and at times moderately positive correlational results between texting and the linguistic domain. The body of text messaging jargon termed “textese” encompasses acronyms, emoticons, homophones (“gr8”), neologisms, and intentional grammatical omissions. Van Dijk and colleagues from the Universities of Amsterdam and Utrecht investigated such effects of “textese” on the grammar and executive functioning of Dutch school children. The Dutch research team provided several possible explanations for the positive effects of texting on literacy measures observed in other studies. Van Dijk and colleagues posited that composing texts invites children to experiment with language in a disinhibited manner, bringing them into frequent contact with words, and thus increasing familiarity with text, all of which may correspond to increased literacy competencies. Van Dijk and colleagues further proposed that phonological texting conventions, such as substituting similar sounding shorthand and/or homophones in text, may correspond to a more sophisticated awareness of the sound structures underlying language, or “phonetic awareness,” that is necessary for reading mastery.

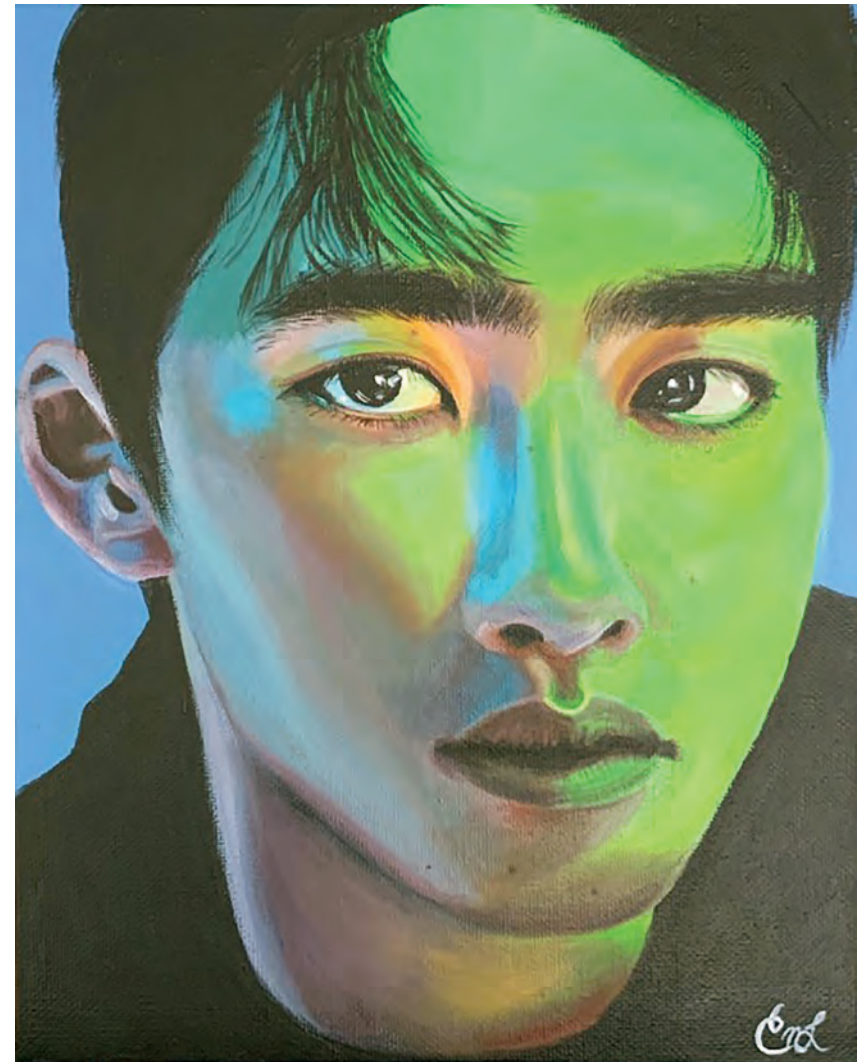
Furthermore, “textese” can to a certain extent be considered as an eclectic language of the digital age. Such digital fluency may represent a novel type of bilingualism with corresponding cognitive effects worth investigating. Existing literature supports the notion that bilingualism and mastery of code-switching confer distinct cognitive advantages. Van Dijk and colleagues noted that “one reason as to why the use of textese may have a positive effect on children’s executive functioning could have to do with the fact that children who use textese simultaneously activate two registers: textese and conventional written language.” Conscious awareness of the different registers employed in day-to-day communication contexts may contribute to overall “metalinguistic awareness.” While research findings regarding the extent to which “textese” and digital literacy constitute a form of bilingualism on a cognitive level, if at all, are conflicting, Van Dijk and colleagues state that the cognitive advantages conferred by frequent code switching between “textese” and Standard English may serve to cancel out or negate the negative effects of frequent multitasking in media-saturated, postmodern lives.

Technological advances change the course of history, impacting the lives of individuals, groups, and cultures in ways that are profound and far-ranging. In “How Computers Change the Way We Think,” Sherry Turkle states that “the invention of written language brought about a radical shift in how we process, organize, store, and transmit mental representations of the world” (301). In essence, language is a symbolic externalization of subjective phenomena (or qualia, as such phenomena is frequently termed) that is employed to transmit experiences, ideation, emotion, and mentally imagery beyond the self and into the external world. The establishment of text messaging as a standard mode of communication has and will continue to shape the affective, cognitive, and lexical dimensions of interaction, facilitating the transmission of meaning between actors at a scale ranging from simple dyads to wider societies in whole.

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SECOND PLACE MULTIMEDIA & VISUAL ARTS



Do Kyungsoo Painting

Christie Lannom

THIRD PLACE POETRY

Bismarck

Logan St John

The creature's darkened before the store
With its eyes darting back and forth
Loping from one end to the other
Asphalt deceived and detritus covered
Beaten and bathed in hopeless rust
A face I can neither see nor trust
Shaky standing on a concrete cusp
It's watching the Nothingworld
Having been relegated
To the shadows off the high and ribald interstate

Trucks and half-formed faces forever vanishing
Reds stopping and lights flashing
The rear view mirror game
Wagered on yet never won
Twisting hallways and traceless sleep
Conceived the images of
What our eyes depict
While we are blind
Feeling for ourselves in the lightlessness
To make out the forms of life we touch away from

Of the sprawling city thunder scape
Raped and gaping coming down
The rain on a Midwestern town
Upon the shame and pearls and wimpling flow
Traffic cones and empty homes
Traffic come and traffic and go

Brains made calm colliding with the wind
Each future within painted blue and plastered
Upon the high palace of the pariah
Sitting alone and unborn
In the big bar of his foyer
Centennial in his hand
Reflected for centuries upside down
In the swirling stony marble sounds
Brown eyes and bushy brows
Memorabilia and sacred frown
Looking down into his drink
Like the master upon a victim's face
With consternation
And stern dismissal of what he truly
Has come to conquer
Collecting memories in a jar
Of the stars and trafficked moon
He will die soon
In an ejaculation of form
Fumbling in his fist the forgotten falsehoods
Written feverish and frenzied
For he knows he is approaching the hour's end
And his letter read:

"The ovaries have seldom spun
Guttural begun the sounds of the sex machines
Which have made us without fire
For the desire of the flame feels the same as falling
Or belonging like a slave to the master
Whose gaze comes to peel away
The veil of misery and decay
And sullen longing longing longing
A gong rings for the master from the monster
Never envisioned thereafter
For each ring it makes makes the shame recede
Wave after wave
Like faces vanishing whitely into darkness."

Suddenly I can see
The creature has been serenely watching me
It bounds closer gone and peeling
The face burning now revealing
The secret eyes of a Nightchrist
Laughing eyes full of blood and mire
Wide and spinning in the sockets like gyres
For the longing of a human being being taken away
And transformed into an animal
Animal topographer
Who has mapped the mazes of veins
On the swollen feet on the banished Bishop
Who proclaims there is the face of a rapist ingrained
In the swirling patterns of the church pew wood
And it is his own face which he adores and implores
For us to stamp into the fabric of our own crying
Sprawling stony pearly longing dreams
And the creature has left me on my own

And I am beside the interstate
Darkened and alone
Always vanishing
Never touching
Decrepit and cool in a pool of nothing
And it seems as though I have been blinded
When really I have been made to see
Bismarck is looking down into me
As though I am the glass
From which he drinks

THIRD PLACE FICTION

Crickets

Emma L. Gilbert

Kane Mansomi pulled a bag of sliced bread from the overhead cupboard through a haze. A full month in quarantine was starting to do a number on him. Staying inside all the time accentuated the almost hallucinatory states like the one he was in, and his sense of time felt more warped than usual. As he watched the world around him collapse in the wake of the pandemic, the confusion and panic he saw in the faces of those around him reminded him of his last year of high school, which brought its own slew of unpleasant feelings.

As he began cutting a tomato, he overheard his father speaking to his mother in the living room behind the wall on his right.

“You know this virus is a bunch of baloney, right?” Dad grumbled over the faint murmur of a news anchor relaying updates on the state of the local hospitals. “All these big numbers are manufactured.”

“Where’d you hear that?” came Mom’s quiet, absentminded voice.

“Oh, you wouldn’t believe all the intel this ‘Q’ person online is giving us,” he replied. “He’s a government official on the internet giving the people the truth.”

Kane wasn’t exactly internet-savvy, but his older brother, Drake, kept him up to date on the latest memes and pop culture whether he asked for it or not. Because of this, he had some idea of what QAnon was, the culture of 4Chan and whatnot. It all seemed so silly to him, so when “this Q person” left his father’s mouth, he paused.

Drake, who was seated at the kitchen table, choked on his cereal, and Kane looked over his shoulder at him. His eyes were like saucers, flitting between Kane and the living room. He shifted in his seat, cleared his throat, and said, “What’s that, Dad?”

“Q, Drake, you heard of him?” Dad replied.

Drake’s bright green eyes only expanded as he looked back at his younger brother. “Yeah...” he replied. “Yeah, he’s been around for a while...”

Kane furrowed his light blond brows as he put down his knife and turned around to look at his brother head on. “What’s going on?” he whispered.

“I don’t know,” Drake replied, shaking out his long blond hair and adjusting his posture. “When did you start, like, using the internet?” he called.

Dad barked a laugh. “You think your old man don’t know how to use his phone?” he said. “Wasn’t it one of you boys who showed me how in the first place?” There was a pause, and he laughed again. “Drake, it was you. You doubting your own handiwork?”

Kane shrugged as Drake laughed while tossing him another dumb-founded expression. He turned back to his sandwich and trudged through the rest of its assembly.

It became apparent in the following weeks that Drake was right to be so nervous. Dad started berating the brothers for wearing masks to the grocery store, and sometimes for even having them in the house. Kane started making a point of keeping his distance from his father. Instead of paying attention to medical professionals and educating himself on how best to remain safe, Dad was engaging with locals who were doing the exact opposite. He and Mom would have noisy gatherings in the backyard, which Kane had to hole up in his room to avoid.

One afternoon, he was seated on the aged wood floor by his window, looking out at his backyard with a frown. His parents were talking and joking with their friends without a care in the world, as though they lived in a reality separate from his. The whole situation made him feel a bit dreamlike, like maybe he’d wake up from this mediocre nightmare soon—but he knew better than that.

With a deep breath, he stood up and made his way to the desk across from his bed. He knelt and fished out a notebook from the drawer on the

side, then placed it atop the desk. Sitting down and opening it, a small smile formed on his face. The book contained his various plans and ideas for his life after he moved out of his parents’ house. He’d thought of just about everything: renting an apartment versus buying a house versus building a house, the most ideal job for each housing option (all tweaked to account for his passion for entomology), living alone versus having roommates, meal planning, how to utilize each space in any given home to its most optimal effectiveness, and every other tiny detail that came to mind from the time he began. He picked up a pen and began writing a new plan to ensure any seating in his home was spaced for social distancing—even when the pandemic was over, it still couldn’t hurt to take that precaution. As he wrote, his mind wandered.

Kane recalled seven years ago when he had mustered up the courage to share his plans with Drake. As meticulous and detailed as his little hobby was, he still felt like it might be silly to be doing it at all. What kid started planning his future to this degree before he was even out of the 10th grade? How much of it could actually be feasible? But there was still a tiny, noisy piece of him that craved assurance that it could actually work.

Kane watched his older brother’s face twist as he looked over the journal and started to fold in on himself, regret bubbling inside him. He should have known it was too ridiculous to share. With a lump in his throat, he reached to take the book back, but Drake yanked it out of his reach.

“Please, just give it back,” Kane whined.

“Why?” Drake asked. “Dude, this is crazy, you’re so smart!”

Kane leaned back, retracting his hands. “Do you really mean that?” he asked meekly.

“Yeah!” Drake replied, nodding in an exaggerated fashion. “I could never think of all this. You’re gonna be, like, the greatest at adulting.”

Kane laughed a bit. “I’ve been doing this for about a year,” he said.

Drake shook his head with a dry laugh. “Man, can you work *me* into this thing?” He asked.

Kane giggled. “I kinda already have,” he said. He took his journal back and turned a couple of pages. “See, here; you’re in my plan for if I have roommates. I figured it was totally possible for us to get a place together—ideal, even.”

“Serious?” Drake said with a lopsided grin. “You’re the best, man. Come here.” He pulled his little brother into a tight hug.

Back then, he thought he could really do it. But that was before the fall of 2015, before a dark fog enveloped his mind, before the pandemic. Now, it seemed more like a game of daydreams than ever before. Even so, some part of him still held onto hope.

As the lockdown stretched into late summer, Dad’s conspiracies started drifting into the absurd and fantastical. One evening when Kane and Drake were forced to sit with the family for dinner despite their parents’ incessant socializing, Dad tried to explain Pizzagate to them. Kane retreated deep into his mind while Drake looked like he was ready to combust.

An argument erupted, and Kane’s ears started to ring. The two men’s voices echoed in his mind like they were ricocheting off the walls of a quiet classroom. He stared, unblinking, at his dinner plate. The food was barely touched. He knew if he tried to eat any of it in this state, it wouldn’t stay down long. He shot a fast glance at his mother, who was occupied with her phone and seemingly unfazed by the commotion.

Then, she laughed. “Will you boys cut it out?” she said, not looking up from her phone.

“Mom,” Drake said. “Are you not listening? This is *serious*, it’s not good for Dad to be looking at all this stuff!”

“You don’t know a damn thing, son!” Dad growled, pointing a finger at his child. “You just don’t wanna listen because you only wanna hear what aligns with your worldview.”

“The same could be said about you!” Drake shouted back.

Kane’s hands flew to his ears. He sprung to his feet and absconded to the stairs. He didn’t take his hands down until he reached his bedroom door and closed himself inside. He retreated to his bed and crawled underneath the covers, beginning to choke out sobs and tugging at his short blond hair.

Suddenly, he was that 17-year-old kid cowering underneath his classroom desk again. He thought that when he reflected on his teen years, his memories would be full of laughter and awkwardness and enlightening experiences—but as it turned out, the highlight was that single afternoon, heart hammering and skin icy with terror. The hard floor had almost felt warm in comparison to his blood. He’d stared at the door, images of the gunman bursting through playing over and over again in his imagination while the glare of the bright room made his unblinking eyes burn.

It had felt like time was distorting as events continued to unfold. Even in the moment, entire blocks of his memory seemed to vanish, planting him in a new place every several minutes—or hours, he didn’t know. He went from being on the floor to standing, from the classroom to the front of the school, and from there to in his parents’ car. As more time passed, he was able to piece things together, not that it made much of a difference.

A knock on his door sent shockwaves through his nerves. Despite wanting to get as far away from it as he could, he forced himself to peek out from under his covers. As he did, he saw his mother’s head poke through the door.

“Hi, honey,” she whispered. She breathed a heavy sign, leaning her blonde-haired head against the doorframe. “I’m sorry. I know it’s hard, but please try to keep your breakdowns under control. You’re 22, you’re an adult. Come down and finish dinner.” With that, she retracted her head and left.

Kane breathed in and out shallowly. Her gentle tone did little to soften the blow of her words. He curled deeper into his blanket, his tears restarting. He wanted nothing more than to be far, far away.

“You’re 22, you’re an adult” replayed in his mind. He *was* an adult; so, why did he still live there? He had his little plans, why hadn’t he tried to use them yet? Surely, if he hadn’t left by now, then it really was all just a game to help pass the time. His journal was useless, full of pipe dreams that had no hope of getting him anywhere. He was stuck.

Over time, Kane grew to hate his father. It got to the point where his blood would begin to boil the moment the man opened his mouth. He learned to sense when Dad was about to spew more nonsense and made sure he was out of the room each time. But even with that defense mechanism, it

couldn't prepare him for being directly targeted. The first time Dad looked him in the eye and accused him of being a crisis actor, that the shooting at his high school was faux, it felt like he'd been stomped on.

"I can't believe you'd lie to us," his father had said one overcast afternoon.

Kane's back had been turned, so he didn't see it coming. He turned around, and looked at the old, graying man, who was sat in his usual chair in the dimly lit living room. There was a look in his dark eyes that seemed to pin Kane to the floor. "What?" the young man forced out.

"There was no shooting at your high school," Dad stated gruffly.

Kane's eyes blew open and he could feel his hands start to tremble. He felt like a deer caught in headlights. "What?" his voice trembled.

"Don't play dumb," Dad said with a confident tilt of his head. "Come on, son, who paid you?"

Kane furrowed his brows and huffed, storming out of the living room. Rage burned in his chest, but it couldn't drown out the deep sadness and disappointment. He hated his father, he did, but there was no reality in which what he'd just said didn't sting.

He slammed his bedroom door shut and clicked the lock. Hands still trembling, he retrieved his journal and gripped a pen. He flipped to a blank page and pressed the pen to the paper—then he stopped. Tears welled up in his eyes and he couldn't see. He dropped his pen and folded over his desk, sobbing into the crook of his elbow. *Useless*, he thought.

There was a knock at his door. He rubbed his eyes and sniffed before sitting upright. His brother's voice penetrated through the wood, and Kane stood up to let him in.

"What's going on, buddy?" Drake asked, slipping into the room and shutting the door behind him.

"Um..." Kane swallowed and returned to his chair. "Dad told me he thinks the shooting was fake and that I'm lying." He got it out fast, and his voice cracked at the end of his sentence. He took in a shaking breath and buried his face in his hands.

"He *what*?" Drake growled.

Kane peeked out at him from behind his hands; one of his fists was clutched as he started to fume. Before he could say anything, his brother was out the door and stomping down the hall. He scrambled to the door and locked it once more before grabbing a blanket and curling up between his bed and the wall. The screaming downstairs rung up through his floorboards.

He felt more like he had on the day of the shooting than he had in years; floating through that haze, looking at the world through a thick sheet of cellophane. He let out a shaking sigh and wiped his eyes with his blanket. Slowly, he rose from the floor and crawled into his bed. He could still hear the muffled shouts of his family, so he buried his head under his pillows. His heart was finally starting to slow, and he felt exhaustion start to engulf him. He allowed his mind to drift while his body crashed, imagining a reality where he felt strong enough to run. Before he lost consciousness, he heard the chirp of a cricket outside his window.

Dad's berating only kept increasing in intensity and frequency. Kane had lost track of how many panic attacks he'd had. He was exhausted all the time, his mind and body drained from the toll the attacks took, alongside his constant state of anxiety. He yearned for freedom; it was all he thought of at night, the only thing that could lull him to sleep. But it seemed like the more dire the situation became and the more necessary it felt to get out of that house, the more impossible it seemed. Even the cricket on his windowsill stayed, even though it could go anywhere it wanted. It was as though he and the tiny insect were rooted to the old wood of the house.

One evening, he was fiddling with his journal when there was a knock on his door. He jumped, steadied himself, and then said, "Come in." The door creaked open, revealing the face of his father. His heart dropped into his stomach.

"Don't be scared, now, son," his father said, stepping into his room. "I just want to talk."

Kane swallowed, shifting in his chair to sit facing the man. "Okay," he said.

Dad nodded. “For right now, I’m going to let you sit there and pretend to be all innocent,” he began. “But I’m about to be finished letting you off the hook. I’m gonna give you one more week to come clean. If you don’t, things are gonna start getting a *lot* harder for you, understand?”

Kane trembled in his chair but managed a single nod.

Dad stepped back behind the door and placed his hand on the door-knob. “I know you’ll make the right choice,” he said, closing the door behind him.

Kane listened to his father’s footsteps as he walked down the hall, the soft thuds rattling his skull alongside his own heartbeat. His chest started to tighten, and he gripped his shirt. He tried to stand up, but fell, losing consciousness as he plummeted to the floor.

Kane stirred, groaning at the sudden pounding in his head. He felt his hard floor under him, and flicked his eyes open, vision blurry. He flinched when his brother’s face dropped down in front of him as his eyes finally focused.

“Hey, man,” the older brother said, moving to lie on his stomach beside the younger man. He reached over to pat Kane on the back. “What happened?”

“Dad,” he rasped out. He considered his next words, rummaging in his weary mind for a way to explain it that didn’t make it sound quite so bad. Tears began to form in his eyes as he, at a loss for better words, said, “He threatened me.”

Drake’s face twisted. “With *what*?” he asked.

“He wasn’t, like, specific,” Kane mumbled through snuffles. “He just said things were going to get harder for me if I didn’t tell him ‘the truth.’”

“And by ‘the truth,’ he means you subscribing to his insanity,” Drake stated with a casual flick of his wrists.

Kane nodded, resting his head again. He sighed long and heavy, lifting himself off his floor and sitting upright, cross-legged. He watched as Drake mimicked his movements. The two locked eyes, and Kane broke down again, falling into his older brother’s embrace.

Drake shifted, and his little brother heard him sigh. “You think it might be time to use some of those ideas of yours?” he said.

Kane sniffled and pulled back. “I can’t, Drake,” he said, wiping his eyes. “I’m just some stupid kid. It doesn’t matter how long I spend thinking of every little stupid detail. I’ve *never* been by myself before. I’ll die if I try.”

Drake snorted. “Settle down, small man,” he said, patting his younger brother’s shoulder. “Look, I get it if you’re not ready—believe me. But don’t talk yourself down like that. And regardless, we’re gonna figure it out, okay? You’re safe as long as I’m around.”

Kane sighed and nodded. He watched as Drake stood up and held out his hand for him to take. He accepted and rose to his feet, shaking a bit in the process. After ensuring he was okay, Drake left him to settle in for the night.

Kane cast a longing glance at his still-open notebook. He approached his desk but couldn’t quite bring himself to sit down. He settled on putting the book away and going to bed. He climbed under the covers and stared, unblinking, at the door. He didn’t hear the cricket that night, only its brethren, scattered beyond the windowsill in the grass and bushes.

One morning, two days before his established time limit was up, he spotted his father in one of the corners of their dark living room. He was crouched by a chest they kept there, which Kane knew housed his guns. Shock erupted through him, but before he could escape, Dad looked over his shoulder at him. The older man said nothing, his eyes unreadable. Without a word, Kane strolled out of view and began making his way to his room.

Would he really hurt me? he wondered as he shut his bedroom door and locked it. Could his life be in danger? Could he afford to stick around and find out? Drake said he would have his back, but there was no way he could protect him from a bullet. His heart was hammering as though he’d just run a mile. He chuckled dryly at the thought, but knew it was much more serious than that.

That night, after everyone else had gone to bed, he flurried through his room, shoving necessities into a backpack. Last, he grabbed his notebook, tucking it safely in the largest pocket underneath the clothes he’d packed.

After he finished, he panted and bent over, hands on his knees. He felt like he'd been in a trance.

"Can I really do this?" He whispered to himself. He closed his eyes, inhaling deeply through his nose and out through his mouth. *I have to*, he thought, *I don't have a choice*.

He looked out his window at the black night, and his ears adjusted to the crickets' song. He panted, the voices of the bugs bringing him back down to earth. A smile crept onto his face.

Kane couldn't sleep. It was approaching the wee hours of the morning and he decided he might as well make himself a cup of coffee. He cautiously descended the stairs and blinked when he saw Drake sitting at the dining room table. "Hey," he whispered.

Drake flinched and clutched his chest as he turned to look at him. "You scared the hell out of me," he said before he wheezed a laugh. "What're you doing up?"

Kane shrugged as he approached the coffee machine next to the sink. "I couldn't sleep," he explained. He grabbed a small pitcher from the overhead cupboards, and as he filled it with water, realized he had the perfect opportunity to tell Drake what he was up to. *I should ask him to come*, he thought. It would sure be better than going alone.

He waited until he finished making his coffee and took a seat across from his big brother. "Y'know," he murmured, then stopped. Mulling over his thoughts, he laughed a bit. "I keep thinking it's going to get better, but it's not."

"Dad's not getting better," Drake specified, leaning over the table. "And come to think of it, neither is Mom."

Kane nodded. He took a sip of his coffee, the drink still hot enough to feel a bit uncomfortable in his mouth. Nevertheless, he swallowed, and then sat in silence for a couple of minutes. His brother was distracting himself with his phone. He gave the table a gentle knock with his knuckles. "I'm gonna leave," he stated.

Drake looked up at him with a grin cocked to one side. "For real?" he asked, and the younger brother nodded. "Fuck yeah, man! I knew you'd come around."

Kane ducked his head. Excitement buzzed through him, although there was still that fear scratching at the back of his skull. He met Drake's eyes again and took a deep breath. "Do you wanna come with me?" he asked quickly, before he could think too hard about it.

"Abandon our insane family and have a place all to ourselves?" Drake responded with a snort. "Yeah. Yeah, I do. When?"

Kane explained his intent to abscond at sunrise, and that his things were already packed. He was going to run to the bus stop just outside their neighborhood and catch the first ride to the city, and from there look for an apartment and hopefully find work online. Drake nodded along with his words, and from there he went to pack his own bag.

Kane waited for Drake at the kitchen table, already having retrieved his backpack. He stared down at his empty mug, then up at the dark wooden staircase in front of him. He took in the whole of his house that he could see: the small, sort of cramped living space that seemed so much bigger when he was a child. It felt like it could barely contain him now, almost suffocating him, certainly more so now, all things considered.

When Drake returned, the two wordlessly slipped out the door and locked it with the key under the doormat. They marched down the street in the soft blueish light of dawn. Kane had goosebumps, both from the crisp fall air and the gravity of what he was doing.

He noted the crickets were still chirping and the way they stopped whenever they sensed the two men near, silent and still at the prospect of a threat. He figured he was a lot like them; timid, small, vanishing in his own silence when he was scared. But maybe now, he'd have the chance to be a different kind of bug. His last five years had been defined by fear, but the rest of his life didn't have to be.

Based on "I'm a Parkland Shooting Survivor. QAnon Convinced My Dad It Was All a Hoax" by David Gilbert (no relation) on Vice News.

THIRD PLACE PHOTOGRAPHY



 Skyscrapers

Justyn Lane

THIRD PLACE NONFICTION

 Evolution of the American Doughnut

Matthew Tarbell

“Mmm... donuts,” as the wise Homer Simpson would say. The seemingly simple doughnut has become an important piece of American culture, as deeply embedded as baseball or hot dogs. For much of its life, it has remained a symbol of the working class, but it is a popular treat for anyone and everyone. While this paper is focused on America, the doughnut is not exclusive to it. This delectable treat is wildly popular in Canada, primarily through the massive food chain Tim Hortons. The famous doughnut chain, Dunkin’ Donuts, has locations all around the globe. It is safe to say that the doughnut is a global phenomenon. But, how did this cultural icon gain its power? To understand the history of the doughnut in America, one must look at its origins, wartime influence, and industrialization.

The origin of the doughnut is complicated, but its roots lie with the Dutch. The concept of fried dough is quite an old one. Various types of fried treats can be found in almost every culture throughout human history. They come in all shapes, sizes, and flavors. Naming them all would be impossible. It is hard to determine everything that influenced the creation of the modern doughnut. There is early evidence of Native American creations, influence by the Germans, and others. Taylor notes that “doughnuts in some form or other have been around so long that archaeologists keep turning up fossilized bits of what look like doughnuts in the middens of prehistoric Native American settlements.” The doughnut is primarily focused on one predecessor: the Dutch *olie koeken* or *olykoek*. Hanratty states, “With their settlement, Dutch doughnuts, *olie koeken* (literally ‘oil cakes’), or *olykoek* may have arrived in New Netherlands.” While the settlers did have knowledge of the *olykoek*, and it is likely that they made it, there is no concrete evidence that the settlers made *olykoek*. Regardless, the *olykoek* was an early precursor for the doughnut. Throughout the years, the word “doughnut” was slowly introduced and over

time became interchangeable with *olykoek*. There is evidence of doughnuts being mentioned as early as 1765. The doughnut/*olykoek* kept its ball shape for much of its early life span. It was not until much later, around the middle of the 19th century, that the doughnut got its iconic look. In New England, there was a woman by the name of Elizabeth Gregory. She baked tasty deep-fried dough using a variety of spices she obtained from her son, Hanson Gregory. Hanson Gregory worked as a ship captain and had access to spices such as cinnamon and nutmeg (Taylor). Due to the way that doughnuts are created (by sticking dough in hot oil), it can be difficult for the center of the dough to fully cook before the outside burns. To combat this, Elizabeth stuffed the center with walnuts and hazelnuts. She gave this creation the very literal name of the “doughnut.” Hanson had a method of his own. At one point, he took a round tin pepper box and cut out the center of the doughnut, creating the first proper doughnut as we know it today (Taylor). His true reasons for doing this are unknown, but many stories have spread. Some examples are that he did it to use fewer ingredients, or that he poked a hole in the doughnut to make it easier to digest. There is yet another tale that he invented the hole inadvertently by storing doughnuts on the spokes of his ship’s wheel. Regardless of how it started, Hanson Gregory is credited for inventing the doughnut’s hole. The doughnut has a very curious origin, a crossroads of many intriguing stories and unlikely inventions.

Despite its deliciousness, the national popularity of the doughnut did not skyrocket until World War I. The popularity of the doughnut was limited to specific areas of the United States, mostly the northeast. Kronrdl explains, “Donuts had been a northeastern regional specialty ever since the founding of the Republic—and probably well before that” (57). Over time, the doughnut did spread, but it was just another tasty treat. This all changed during the horrors of the Great War. During this time, an unlikely organization came to bring the doughnut to the American forefront. It is the Salvation Army that is responsible for the doughnut’s popularity. As the war dragged on, the morale of American troops ran quite low. The horrors of war are terrible and degrading, and soldier morale is as important as anything. The organization that stepped in to fix that was the Salvation Army. A primarily religious organization, they were motivated by their mission to spread the faith and help people who needed it. Many young girls went over to Europe

in order to assist American forces. They baked goods, performed marches, and entertained soldiers. They were a crucial part of maintaining soldier morale throughout the war. One day, one of the Salvation Army members got the idea of producing doughnuts, as a change of pace from pies, cocoa, and fudge (Kronrdl 96). In the later months of 1917, they were able to get their first batches of dough and begin production. What started out as a rather small operation soon exploded in popularity. It was a popularity that the supply-lacking Salvation Army fought to meet. Kronrdl explains, “The women improvised as they could, rolling out the donuts with a grape juice bottle, cutting them out with a baking powder can, and poking out the holes with a funnel” (96). This trip from ingredient to doughnut was not easy. The Salvation Army was often running low on supplies as well as suffering the usual risks of being on war fronts. The Salvation Army walked with the actual one, providing a cushion of comfort against the terrors of war. Many soldiers who would normally never think twice about the Salvation Army, now defended it in honor of what it has done. By supplying soldiers with their doughnuts, the Salvation Army has provided them with a home away from home, a breath of fresh air, a glimpse back to the States. The role that the lowly doughnut serves cannot be overstated. As Hanratty eloquently describes, “the doughnut gave these soldiers a little piece of home in every bite and took away the troubles of the war.” The doughnut soon became a quintessential part of the war effort, one that was not overlooked or forgotten. When the war was over and the soldiers came home, the doughnut craze stayed strong. The soldiers were ravenous for them, causing the stateside doughnut business to boom. Once the soldiers started the craze, everyone else jumped in. The American doughnut had officially begun.

As the craze spread, many businesses sought to capitalize on the trend. It did not take long for entrepreneurs to sense that there was a new market growing. As markets and consumers expanded, it was getting harder for production to meet demand. Then, in 1920, a man named Adolph Levitt created the first doughnut producing machine. He was so impressed by the appetite of the soldiers that he decided he needed to ramp up production (Hanratty). The name that Levitt chose for his machine was an odd one, he deemed it the “Wonderful Almost Human Automatic Doughnut Machine” (Kronrdl 133). The machine was capable of making rings of dough, frying

them, turning them, and pushing them out. It was a fantastic invention that caused Levitt to found his own company, The Doughnut Corporation of America, in order to sell his machine to other doughnut producers. The widespread popularity of the doughnut combined with Levitt's machine made widespread doughnut shops possible. Levitt soon established his own "Mayflower" doughnut store chain. Other stores popped up, many having bought one of Levitt's "Wonderful Almost Human Automatic Doughnut Machines." The Doughnut Corporation of America absolutely dominated the doughnut world:

By 1940, the Doughnut Corporation of America had a virtual monopoly on the American industry. A year earlier, US donut sales were estimated at some \$78 million, or the equivalent of about 4 billion sinkers. Eighty percent of those were made on the donut behemoths machines and more than 30 percent from the company's own mix. Time newspaper pronounced Levitt "boss of the doughnut world." He preferred "the Donut King". (Kronld 137)

Levitt's firm grasp on the doughnut world would not subside until well after World War II, when other doughnut chains rose to challenge him. But even then, Levitt's inventiveness has left a decisive mark on the doughnut world. The World War I doughnut craze got the doughnut here; now it was up to World War II to take it beyond imagining.

Similar to World War I, the comfort of doughnuts caused a doughnut industrial boom. This time there were many groups working towards the doughnut's success. The Red Cross would drive around in doughnut trucks filled with good doughnut making machinery, delivering to the hungry soldiers. These trucks were definitely a sight for sore eyes. And, subsequently, fueled the never-ending hunger for the tasty treat. When World War II ended and the soldiers returned home, business really started to boom. As the demand skyrocketed, the technology did too. In 1948, an industry watcher commented, "In the early days, a qualified baker could cut and fry something like 250 dozen daily" (Kronld 133-134). This is in contrast to Levitt's machine, which could produce eighty dozen per hour. And now, machines could produce upwards of six hundred dozen per hour. This scale of production was unthinkable even 25 years previously. Throughout the 1940s, doughnut publicity skyrocketed. There were massive doughnut fan clubs, celebrity advertisements, beauty contests. Name anything and it probably existed with

a doughnut spin. The American obsession with doughnuts had reached a breaking point, as other companies raced through the country in an effort to capitalize. In 1950, a man named William Rosenberg opened a doughnut shop named "Open Kettle," which soon turned into the much more recognizable Dunkin' Donuts. Rosenberg took inspiration from the Mayflower chain and opened up stores that were more than just doughnut venues. He added seating, multiple drinks, and other snacks to the menu "so the customer would have a reason to linger" (Kronld 143). After a little bit of time, Dunkin' Donuts became the worldwide icon that it is known as today. But they were not the only ones, and they will not be the last. Doughnut corporations have become more massive than ever imagined and will only continue to grow alongside the love for doughnuts.

No matter how dark and dreary life may get, or how depressing and tiring one's job may be, at least there will always be that one lovely doughnut with chocolate frosting and sprinkles waiting at home just for them. The doughnut has become a symbol of every American, but it is different from an image or anthem. The doughnut is very personal and has a unique connection to everyone. It is something that can be held, hugged, and eaten without impunity. The American connection to the doughnut is a truly unique thing. These ties to the doughnut were created by the doughnut's unique origins, influence on wartime morale, and rampant industrialization. All of these factors have coalesced together to create a truly unique treat. Never has patriotism tasted so good.

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THIRD PLACE MULTIMEDIA & VISUAL ARTS



Dragon Goddess Mask

Natasha Fleek

HONORABLE MENTION

Beauty Untended

Toni Knightstep

I composed a poem once
about a love of life and a loss of love
The part I remember most was:

Her leg gently bobs
Up and down, Up and down
Cracks of light filter through trees
Hit butterfly on inked skin
Up down up down
And the wings almost flutter

Almost
I measured
I couldn't fathom those wings reaching the sky

I observed her from afar
Didn't know that she was me
I couldn't see past those flightless wings

I wanted to tell her to draw that butterfly
On every inch of her, every pore
So she would always see those wings
and remember she could soar

I stored that butterfly in my mind
and forgot it was there
I craved beauty like that everywhere

I curled up into the arms of monsters
Their hands laced with poison

A poison like a drug
Whenever I got away,
I found it once again, disguised
as something beautiful

I found a love that seemed true
We could have been happy
but that poison left me empty

We found joints marked *cure*
We consumed, but they left us starving
We found bottles marked *pure*
We drank, but we were still thirsty

The ride was wonderful, for awhile
Until fire licked its way into our words
Until our smiles dripped venom
And our eyes turned crimson

Then, one day, we were
introduced to pure, true beauty
Her skin soft as clouds
Her eyes a clear blue sky
Her smile a ray of sunlight

I didn't *deserve* such beauty
The poison had just barely drained from my system

She should have been *Everything*

I wanted to be everything for her
But the monsters that loved me
told me I was nothing
Most were silent, but I could still
hear their voices like untamed fire

I fed off the monster in my home
who used his hands
to hold me down and keep me
Whenever he saw me
reaching for that butterfly

I loved my baby as best
I could while *withered*

Finally, the monster
took a step too far
and I *ran*
my heart a hummingbird
in my chest

I released that butterfly
for her to keep while I'm away
So she'll have something
to teach her to *fly*

And when we are finally together,
we will have a garden
So vast and surrounded
that only the strong, the brave,
and the beautiful can enter

I will teach her that the beauty she sees
is in her eyes and in her smile
and it pumps her beating heart
And that she doesn't have to look for it anywhere else

The poison will creep up from time to time
but I'll drink in the light that surrounds us
to satisfy that thirst
And turn to the love that is true
I have everything I ever needed
right in front of me

I wish I had known a long time ago
It only takes a push
and a little bit of courage
to take *flight*

HONORABLE MENTION



Sitges

Madison McCart

STAFF SUBMISSION

 Stream Till You Drop

Kelsey Bell

I'm broke. My plight is not from gambling or drug addiction, but from streaming services. Let me back up here. First, it was Netflix. Then HBO. Then on and on it went, from Hulu to Disney Plus to Discovery Plus to all the other plusses out there.

It was so easy to get wrapped up in the endless shows and movies of Netflix. And with zero ads? Sign me up. It was the easiest nine dollars I had ever spent.

Then, everyone kept talking about *Game of Thrones*. And so there went another part of my accounting paycheck.

I stayed inside for three days straight and never moved from the couch, save for occasional bathroom breaks and the frequent restocking of my family size Doritos.

The prices went up. See, that's how they get you. First, they promise perpetual glory and entertainment for only nine or ten dollars a month. Then, you get hooked, or people keep talking about that one show and you see it everywhere and you don't get the inside jokes, and you want to be *cool*, goddamnit. It's like Air Jordans, but instead of your high school judging you for pretending and wearing knock-offs, it's the whole country above the age of twelve judging you when you say, "Oh, haven't seen that one."

So more and more I spent, more and more, until the credit card companies kept pestering me about my debt. On their voice messages, I heard the *definitely present* silent judgment on what had caused me to be on their naughty list in the first place.

I didn't get coal. I did get fired, though. My boss constantly told me to "do your work" and "at least act like you're doing your work" instead of streaming shows and movies all day. It got so bad that I would go in the bathroom with my phone for a long time whenever the trail got too hot. I looked like a pervert, my cheeks rosy and hair sweaty when I came out of there. It was really from getting worked up about that character dying, or from holding my breath when things got too suspenseful in the show.

Enough was enough, my boss decided. She fired me for "incompetence." At least that's what was official. My coworkers' faces all held pity as they watched me exit the office for the last time. This wasn't what I had wanted from the streaming services, I'd thought as I went into the parking lot. I wanted to be cool. I wanted to be informed. Instead, I was a sad sack of shit with no job.

Without a job, I couldn't hold onto the reigns of adulthood for much longer. I had to sell my stuff: my guitar; most of my clothes; my livelihood. But even that wasn't enough. I lost my dog. Then my apartment. I could have sold my phone to make ends meet, but I craved my streaming services.

I was homeless. Still am. But I wasn't going to give up my streaming services without a fight. I spent every hour of every day in bars using the free wi-fi, like Frank in *Shameless*, except my addiction wasn't alcohol.

One by one, my beloved streaming services shut down on me because I couldn't pay my bills on time. And finally, my first love, Netflix, said good-bye. My charger broke.

I was left in the dark.

HONORABLE MENTION



Spring

John Xerxes

HONORABLE MENTION

Myla / Water Song

Logan St John

Hey
Relax the way
The man would say
The moon was drank
To a watery line
And that all
Would be
OK

Sister here
Hold my line
My laugh and smile
Twist around your finger
My land in twine
To tie your hand
To mine

Starla say
The word today
The way you'd like
The little stars to lay
To shine and sleep
And sometime
To stay

Daughter dear
Go leave and play
With son and mother
With their shapes in the water

To shiver like they are
Sister and
Brother

Remember
That time I saw you
For the very first time?
And you simply shined like
The stars laughed and
The bells chimed and
The watery eyes of
Mine drew a line
By your own
Shimmering
Design

STAFF SUBMISSION



Illumined

Meriel McCormick

HONORABLE MENTION



The Black Queen

John Xerxes

HONORABLE MENTION

Modern Day Sisyphus

Maya Nesbitt

I have a pit
in my heart
where I store other people's
hurts-
it grows deeper
with each passing day
and I must hollow myself out
to make room.

I was always the one
who my mother worried about
as a child
who held funerals
for the dead birds in the park
who had so many friends
but still came home sobbing.
She would stroke my hair
and pray
that I would one day grow strong.

I do not walk through life
on the lookout
for those in pain
but I think I must wear
some invisible sign
'tell me your troubles'
for those who are drowning
always know

that I am one they can cling to
hands wrapped tightly enough
to bruise
whispering their wounds
into attentive ears
till they are light enough
to swim away
and I am left
holding the anchor.

HONORABLE MENTION



Piercing Gaze

Peyton Moore

HONORABLE MENTION

The Exploitation of the Ganges River and Its Negative Effects

Blake Adcock

The Ganges River, sometimes referred to as Gangaji, Mother Ganga, or the Great Ganga, begins in the Himalayan Mountains, flowing through India into Bangladesh until finally reaching and emptying into the Bay of Bengal. Supplied by the Gangotri Glacier, it carries fresh water shown to have higher oxygen levels than other rivers and is antimicrobial to the numerous people living in the regions around the river (Colopy 1). In addition, the shore around the river is transformed into fertile land as sediments, which are rich in nutrients, are picked up along the way and deposited onto it (“Ganges”). These benefits provided by the Ganges have led to it being deemed sacred by practitioners of Hinduism and personified as the goddess Ganga. Darsan Nishad, an environmental program worker states, “This water is sacred for all of us. We believe that if you dip in it even once, you are protected for life. She is our goddess” (Constable). However, despite its importance and sacredness to the people of the Great Ganga, the river has been terribly exploited, affecting the local environment, public health, and people’s lifestyles.

The fauna, specifically the Ganges river dolphin, living within the Ganges River has experienced habitat loss, encountered an increased amount of toxins in the water, have had a reduction of available food, and overall, have been negatively affected by human exploits. The effects of these exploits can be easily observed when examining the Ganges river dolphin, the river’s only species of dolphin. In the year 1982, their estimated population size was around 5,000 and by 2014 the population had decreased to a mere 388 (Paudel and Koprowski). This drastic decline in numbers can be attributed to the modification of the dolphin’s habitat, excess pollutants disposed of in the river, and the existence of artisanal fisheries. Between the year 1950

and 1980, there have been 19 hydropower dams and 23 barrages constructed in the Ganges River. These have been greatly beneficial to the people living in the surrounding area, providing power and methods of irrigation, but detrimental for the river dolphin population. These structures segregate groups of dolphins, stopping them from moving as freely as they should be. Over time, this will lead to a lack of genetic diversity among these sections of dolphins as they cannot travel to see others, and inbreeding will begin to become common. Lack of genetic diversity in the population makes them less fit and makes it more difficult for the dolphins to adapt to any environmental changes. There are also many factories that empty their wastewater and other harmful chemical into the Ganges. As stated in “Factors Affecting the Persistence of Endangered Ganges River Dolphins,” dolphins “cannot adequately metabolize contaminants and might suffer from skin, reproductive, and immunological diseases from water pollution” (Paudel and Koprowski). Connections have also been made between areas of high contamination and decreased populations of river dolphins. Artisanal fisheries also pose a threat to the dolphins as they are in direct competition with each other. Both are after the same fish, and both wish to exist where the fish populations reside. Not only do these fisheries take away from the dolphin’s food supply, they also are a direct threat to the dolphins themselves. There have been accounts of young calves being caught and dying in fishnets. The dolphins are also occasionally hunted for their meat and oil, which can be used as a kind of fishing bait, despite them being a protected species.

Multiple species of common fish have been found in the Ganges River with high levels of mercury in their systems, which is one the most dangerous and toxic heavy metals found in nature. Mining and industrial waste containing mercury is released into the environment where it reacts with bacteria and forms an extremely poisonous type of mercury called methyl mercury, which fish then intake (Pal). These fish are a great source of protein and are sought out by artisanal fisheries to be sold and consumed. One fish worth of methyl mercury is not immediately dangerous; however, continued consumption of these fish can have negative effects on one’s body. Methyl mercury is absorbed through the gastrointestinal tract and goes into the bloodstream. From there it can begin to accumulate in the skin, liver, kidneys, and brain. Excessive buildup of methyl mercury can lead to a

weakened immune, nervous, and cardiovascular system as well as damage the kidneys. Poisoning has also shown to cause genetic damage and behavioral disturbances, and mental issues such as nervousness or anxiety, irritability, memory problems, and depression. There was an act entitled the Prevention of Food Adulteration Act and Rule put into place in 1954 to set a limit of mercury in fish that was acceptable to sell. Unfortunately, the sale of fish from the Ganges River is mostly unregulated and virtually unaffected by this act.

The Ganges River is a dumping site of human waste, which increases the spread of water-borne disease. In the city of Varanasi, India alone, it is estimated that at least 200 million liters of untreated human sewage is dumped into the Ganges River each day (Hamner 113). Like most other cities that empty raw waste into the Ganges, Varanasi does not have a sufficient sewage treatment system to handle their population. Not only can the system in place only treat a portion of the raw sewage produced, but it also is not operational for multiple months out of the year. There are frequent power outages that bring all of the treatment processes to a halt. These treatment plants are also susceptible to flooding during monsoon season, shutting them down. When a treatment plant ceased to operate, a bypass valve is opened up which allows the raw untreated sewage to be released into the river. Many people outside of the city do not have access to proper toilets meaning their waste does not have a chance to go through a treatment plant and sometimes will be directly deposited into the river. This excess of waste allows for countless diseases such as hepatitis-A, cholera, and dysentery to rapidly spread. The Ganges River is used as a ritual site where people engage in multiple activities involving the water. People drink, bathe, pray and dance in the river as many of them do not recognize the extent of its pollution. Psychologist Ashis Nandy states:

People are used to presuming that rivers will maintain their old power. They have seen the majesty of the Ganges until thirty years ago. They are accustomed to the power of nature and that has not worn off for ordinary Indians as yet. They have not seen the vulnerability of nature. And that will take at least one or two generations. This crisis has come too early. (Colopy 11;12)

Long time residents of the Ganges River do not see the river as it is but rather as it was. This negligence is what continues both the pollution of the river and the spread of the sewage spawned diseases.

The continued exploitation of the Ganges River has had ill effects on all who depend on the river and will force a change of lifestyle upon them. People who live alongside the river and especially within the river basin have access to fertile land that is great for farming. In the summer these people will usually grow crops like rice, corn, cotton, and sugar and, in the winter, grow wheat and barley. However, the river is currently losing water faster than the monsoons and glacier can replace it (Ghosh). In the summer months, the river will dry up, making farmers use groundwater as opposed to river surface water to farm with. As years have passed and the farming industry has grown, the demand for water has increased. This increase in demand has led to an increase in groundwater pumping, continually lessening its supply. This is not sustainable and will both lower groundwater levels and reduce the river's flow. The reduction of water in the river will make the pollutants contained within it more concentrated, making the river water more dangerous and toxic than it already is. All of this combined will eventually make it much more difficult to farm crops and could potentially lead to a food shortage, affecting about 115 million people. As it is now, water usage remains largely unregulated. To combat the lessening water supply, the Indian and Bangladesh governments will need to unite to reduce the usage of groundwater, ration out said groundwater when needed, and monitor and reduce unnecessary water usage.

The Ganges River is a sacred body of water that affects millions of lives. However, since India began industrializing, it has been mistreated and offered little to no help. The lack of a proper sewage system allows for millions of liters of raw sewage to be released into the river daily, it has become a dumping ground for factories' trash and wastewater, and it has become a spawning ground of infectious and potentially lethal diseases. Wildlife in the river is decreasing, reducing its biodiversity and harming its environment. Despite all of the negative attributes of the river, it is still seen by those who live off of it as a goddess and worshipped as such with regular rituals occurring. The Ganges River has been exploited for far too long and will eventually reach a point where the damage will become irreversible.

Organizations such as the World Bank, the World Wildlife Fund, and multiple others are all trying to come together to help restore the river. It is imperative that change begins to happen because if it does not, ecosystems will be destroyed, and countless lives will be lost.

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HONORABLE MENTION



Wizard's Memory

Duncan Lisle

HONORABLE MENTION



Falls Lake

Yaseen Heikal

HONORABLE MENTION

Cupid

Chapter 2: Amor

April Davidson

It has always been hard for me to resist someone who has been unlucky in love. It's like seeing a kicked puppy lying in the middle of the road and not going to help it. Impossible.

And that's what Charlotte was – a kicked puppy lying in the middle of the road. And maybe my ticket out of the suburban hell of Sacramento. Truly, this was the last place I wanted to be. A week ago, I was in Paris, and before that, I was enjoying my apartment in Olympus. But you almost cause *one* murder-suicide in the name of passion and your mother – who isn't *actually* your mother – suspends you from your home and sends you to the mortal realm to “make things right.”

This morning Venus had sent me a text that read, *Have a good first day at school!*

I couldn't tell if she was trying to play a motherly role or if she was mocking me.

In all technicalities, Venus wasn't actually my mother. In fact, I'm more than a few years older than her. But she's the Goddess of Love, and her word goes. She decided that I needed parental guidance and assumed the figure of my mother shortly after her birth. Since then, I've been doing her bidding in the name of Love.

That isn't to say I haven't had my own fun. But Venus takes this job very seriously.

“I can't have you playing with their lives like this,” she had sighed, reading the news report of a young French man who had tried to murder

his father after finding out that they had both been involved with the same woman.

I had rolled my eyes and scoffed. “I wasn't going to let it get out of hand, *mother*. I was just having a little fun.”

“Fun?” She repeated incredulously. Her eyes had widened and set her face into a look of fury. “I swear, ever since Psyche-”

I cut her off. “*Don't* finish that sentence.”

She narrowed her eyes into a glare. “Fine, if you don't want to talk about her, we'll talk about something else. Pack your bags. You're headed to the mortal realm.”

“What?” I shook my head, not liking where she was going with this.

“I'm suspending you. You used to *love* love, but now all you do is play with the hearts of mortals. Until you can prove to me that you're worthy of your title, you'll live in the mortal realm and do things the old-fashioned way.”

She doesn't mean...? “Mom, I literally haven't shot an arrow in gods know how long.”

She had crossed her arms, giving me a firm look that told me she wasn't going to change her mind, and replied, “Well, then you better get practicing,” before leaving from the room with the *click* of her heels echoing down the hallway.

Now, I'm staring at a girl with straight, red hair shining like a flame in the morning sun and devising a plan on how I can use her to get out of here. It shouldn't be too hard to find someone for her; with the smattering of freckles across her face and the deep shade of green that stared at the pages in her book, she was cute. But I could also sense something past the bitterness she felt toward love; there was a broken heartedness deep in her soul that was uncommon for most mortals.

Okay, fine. I just have to find her someone to mend her broken heart and then I'm out of here.

Although, I won't lie, I am amused by the fact that she seems so irritated with me. It's not the usual reaction from mortals. Usually, they can't help being drawn to me, which tends to make my job easier. But Charlotte was radiating an air of annoyance that intrigued me. My powers weren't as strong as they before, but I could sense a desire within her to be seen, an anticipation that was tamped down by the realities of life. What those realities were for her, I couldn't say.

All I knew was that it gave me a feeling that I hadn't had in a long time, a feeling like I wanted to do something to help her. It was an automatic reflex – like I said, helping a kicked puppy – that I'm not sure was welcome. For the last few hundred years, I've resented my title, my powers, my impulses. Instead, I shut it off and did the bare minimum. Whatever Venus told me to do, I did, but I was so *sick* of love. A couple millennia ago, if someone had asked me about love, I'd already have their future planned out. And, while my abilities have evolved, I didn't do *that* anymore.

Except for now, planning what I would do to help Charlotte.

Class didn't last long, and I planned to stop her to see if I could get any information out of her, but she rushed off as soon as the bell sounded for next period.

Okay... I guess I could try a different tactic.

In the hallway, a boy I had met two days beforehand stood by a row of lockers talking to someone. I walked up to him, nonchalant. "Joaquin, what's up?"

He looked surprised to see me after my relative apathy when him and his parents knocked on my door to welcome me to the neighborhood the day I moved in. "Uh, hey, man."

I could tell he was pleased, but he played up the surprise. We exchanged small talk before I cut to the chase. "Do you know Charlotte?"

He wasn't expecting my question, but his immediate reaction was not promising. He snorted, a little hesitant, "Yeah, why?"

I shrugged, still playing casual. "What do you think about her?"

"She's a fucking stalker. Don't even bother, man."

Not the response I was expecting. But I wouldn't let that phase me. "Are you sure?" I placed a hand on his shoulder, trying to muster up powers I hadn't used in centuries.

"I-I guess she's alright," he stuttered, seeming to lose focus for a moment. "Yeah, she's pretty cute."

I smiled. "You should go for it."

"What, you mean ask her out?" he asked, confused but with a tinge of excitement. It looked like I wasn't so rusty after all.

I nodded my head, hiding my eyes because I knew that they would be flashing an annoying shade of pink. I would be able to mask it if Venus hadn't reduced my powers to the bare minimum.

"Looks like we should get to class," I cleared my throat, removing my hand. He nodded in response and wandered off, a dazed look in his eyes. I won't lie, I was pleased that I was able to do that so easily. It's like a small light turned on inside of me, something that told me I might actually enjoy this.

I pulled out my phone. *You know what, Mom? I think I'm gonna like it here.*

The dots appeared, telling me that she was texting. I waited and read the first few words. *Cupid, I'm not sure you're understanding what the point of me sending you there was.*

The text was much longer, but I didn't bother to read it as I slipped the phone in my pocket. She assumed that I was causing trouble when I was doing my job for once.

I was going to make Charlotte fall in love.

After all, I was the God of Love.

HONORABLE MENTION



Vegetable Valley

Duncan Lisle

ONLINE EXCLUSIVE



Green Fountain

Peyton Moore

ONLINE EXCLUSIVE

 Press Bar

Logan St John

Press bar
 Leaking fluid
 Red and bloated
 Calling out
 To retch alone

 Putrid flesh
 Become atoned
 Become anointed
 Warm corroded
 Crowded
 Fastened
 To the bar
 By waiting

 Tap and turn
 Swallowing
 Until it hurts
 To press the pain
 Into a fluid
 To take away

ONLINE EXCLUSIVE

 Affair

Lynn S.E.

Angelia looked behind her shoulder one last time to ensure she wasn't being watched before stepping into Brandon's car. By this time, the parking lot was completely empty. There was no sound except for rain hitting the car.

Brandon had asked Angelia not to wear perfume this time. His wife was already suspicious, he couldn't come home again smelling like strawberries and sugar, like forbidden fruit.

Angelia first met Brandon over the summer.

Brandon owned a consignment shop for visual artists. Brandon's wife, Lydia, saw Angelia's art online and suggested Angelia come to the shop to show Brandon her work. Angelia had never had her work displayed in a shop before. She arrived in her best dress and with her best work in hand.

When she arrived at *Galleria*, she didn't see anyone, so she wandered into Brandon's office. The office was painted dark green, though she could hardly tell because there were stacks upon stacks of books and artwork covering the room. She traced her fingers over a pile of classics, unaware that Brandon was now observing her from the doorway. She paused at *The Scarlet Letter*.

"Have you read it?" Brandon asked. Angelia turned around swiftly. He was handsome, quite a bit older than her, but still handsome.

"We read it back in high school, yes," she said, jerking her hand away from the shelf.

"Did it bore you?" He smirked as he reached over her to pull a different book off the shelf. "Try this one." He handed her a beat up, annotated copy of *Call Me by Your Name* by Andre Aciman.

It was dark and cold. They sat silently, the rain began falling heavier, and there was now thunder in the distance. He propped open two white take out boxes. "I hope Chinese is okay," Brandon said, looking at her with deep, all-knowing hazel eyes. He searched the bag for utensils while Angelia observed the dampened raindrops on his black mustache. She noticed the dark bags under his eyes, and his pale, worn skin.

It was those quiet, still moments that her guilt was most present. His wife and child's face haunting the edges of her mind. She would begin to wonder what exactly was so great about this man, that she had chosen him over the harmony with God she'd known for many years.

But then he would laugh. Oh, how she was shackled and chained to his laugh, his gaze, and his favor. The way he would write personal annotations in all the books he gave her. Every word creating an exciting, covert language between the pair.

Her thoughts were interrupted by a kiss. "What was that for?" Angelia asked.

"Just making sure you're still here." He smiled and took a bite of his stir fry. "You've been spacy lately," he said, swallowing his food and then kissing her again, his hands wedged between her tight curls, reeling her back in.

Suddenly, a flash went off from outside the car. Brandon shoved Angelia's face away from his. He ran out of the car. "Come back here!" Brandon yelled, he started running towards the indistinguishable figure who'd taken the picture, but not fast enough. Brandon returned to the car, fury radiating off him.

"Who do you think that was?" Angelia asked with a soft tone. Brandon didn't reply, he instead opted to punch screen of his car stereo.

That was not the first time Angelia saw Brandon lose his temper.

Angelia had stayed late in the art gallery one evening setting up a new display of her work. After she finished, she walked towards Brandon's office to get his opinion. This was before the affair started, although some say adultery begins in the heart, in which case, perhaps it had.

On her way to the office she heard glass shatter. Lydia and Brandon both screamed profanities at one another. Lydia ran out of the office, giving Angelia a chilling look as she left the building.

Angelia peered into the office to see Brandon rubbing his knuckles, next to him there was a hole in the wall. Everything that was normally on the desk was on the floor, including broken glass. "Are you all right?" Angelia asked. Brandon looked up with a flushed face.

"Angelia, I didn't realize you were still here. Sorry about that."

His demeanor changed and he sat on the desk. "But yeah, I'm okay," he added. Angelia walked toward the sink and rung out a wet rag and then walked over to Brandon.

"So, I know I'm 18 and I don't know anything, and it really isn't my place to say anything, but my parents used to fight like that, when I was really little. But they got some help from the church. They started praying that they would each be more like Jesus. And it helped, because, you know, it's hard to fight when you're both being like him." She held Brandon's hand in hers as she pressed the cold rag onto the top of his hand.

"And how do they know what Jesus was like? Can they forward me his number, by any chance?" Brandon asked.

"Charming." Angelia laughed and teasingly rolled her eyes. "The Bible is a good place to start," she said. She let out a deep exhale before continuing. "I don't know, He's just... kind. Humble. Good."

"Yeah? Well that is the exact opposite of Lydia. It's like I'm constantly walking on eggshells in my own home. She is selfish, ungrateful, and mean. I've given her everything, bought her a nice home, a nice car. I'm a good father to our son," he said, clenching his jaw.

"But that's your bride." Angelia had a concerned tone.

"I hate her," Brandon said coldly. Angelia stared at him with wide eyes. He sighed and gave a soft smile. "I just wish she were more like you," he said. He looked from her eyes to her lips. Angelia blushed and looked away. *Lord, what does he mean by that? Why do I feel this way?*

"Well, I don't know about that. I have my own flaws," she said.

“Like what? Being too hard working, too creative, too kind?” he asked in a teasing manner. Angelia laughed and shook her head. “Too pretty?” he added. They looked at each other for a long moment.

She then saw it fit to be like Joseph with Potiphars wife. Joseph ran amidst temptation.

“I really have to go, my parents are expecting me home, I’ll see you tomorrow, Mr. Shultz,” she said, heading towards the door.

“You can call me Brandon,” he called out.

It was still raining, the sky was still cold and dark.

“Lydia hired a private investigator. She’s going to know,” he said. Angelia remained very quiet. Her anxiety broke her into a sweat.

You’re really going to expose us, Lord? Please God, no... I love him...I know I haven’t been praying, but ... I just need things to somehow work between Brandon and I and then I’ll come back to you, please make this work somehow, please!

“Maybe this is a good thing, now that she will know, we can be together openly. You said you were going to leave her anyway,” Angelia said. She watched his reaction closely. He wouldn’t look at her.

“Yeah, I don’t know about that,” he said plainly. “I think we should call it a night. I’ll text you, don’t text me first.”

She agreed and headed back to her dorm. Overwhelmed with emotion, she took a detour. She pulled into a field at a park by her parent’s house. It was late enough that nobody was there. She ran into the field, tears streaming down her face.

“Okay, Lord... I’ve avoided you long enough.” She called out, looking just above the trees.

Brandon had given Angelia several books over the course of that summer. The annotations he would leave her were becoming increasingly bold.

This reminded me of something you said once. -B

I’ve been to this same café- sounds lovely, right?. -B

Notice how lovers always compare the objects of their affections to the earth.

For instance, “Angelia’s eyes are star ridden, hair dark like night, her skin warm like sand.” -B

Angelia didn’t address the flirtatious comments. But anytime she came across one her heart fluttered. She would roll over in her bed, hands covering her mouth trying to contain her joyful squeals. It was exciting and flattering. She considered him so far above herself, a man with a name for himself in the art world. A real man, with his own business and home.

Of course, she told no one. It was just between her, Brandon... and God.

He’s a good man, Lord, as good as anyone in his position can be. I love him, he is so wonderful Lord. She cleaned off her rose-tinted glasses and looked again at notes Brandon written her. Yes, as wonderful as they come. She thought to herself. It must be so.

She began to think about what their life could be. She hadn’t envisioned herself being a stepmom to a toddler while she was eighteen, but for Brandon, she would be anything.

At the time, she didn’t truly think these fantasies would come to life, and she would laugh at herself for how absurd it was for her to be fantasizing about them running off together.

Yet, as Brandon’s notes became bolder, she began to consider that perhaps she wasn’t delusional, that he might really have feelings for her.

Oh, forgive me, God. I’m sure he doesn’t even like me like that and I’m misreading the signs. I’m ridiculous. Why do you put up with me?

Angelia raised her hands in defeat as she shouted into the field. “I can hide nothing from you, God. I have met my match.” She lowered her voice. “You know I love him, Lord. I really love him. I’ve never felt this way, he’s all I can think about.” She sniffled and wiped away her tears, but to no avail as they just kept falling. “But I know I’m wrong. It’s so wrong. It’s cruel to Lydia. I know that,” she said, nodding, her voice still low.

“And I want to say that I miss you.” The wind picked up, she closed her eyes, soaking in God’s embrace through the breeze. “I just don’t see any way that any of this can ever be okay.” She dropped down to her knees. She kneeled in the silence. The still voice she hadn’t heard in so long reminded her of a verse.

Here hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.

1 Corinthians 10:13

Things went out of control on a quiet fall day. Brandon had taken her out to a business lunch. They discussed her stats, which of her pieces were selling the best, and he praised her. “You’re so beyond your years. I wish my other artists would follow suit,” he said.

After lunch, they started walking towards the shop. There was an outdoor fall display. They took a moment to walk through the aisles of pumpkins, apples, and hay. Neither of them said anything to provoke what would happen next. They just looked at each other.

Her cheeks were pink, his eyes were wide. He took her by her waist, guiding her behind the stacks of hay where nobody could see them. He then secured both arms around her waist and pulled her in.

There are no words adequately to describe what the first kiss between forbidden lovers feels like.

It is said that to reach nirvana is to extinguish the flame of desire, this was the opposite of that. They were both engulfed in fire.

After an hour of lying in the field, feeling God’s embrace through the breeze, talking with Him, and singing to Him, Angelia headed back to her car. She knew what she needed to do. And she had peace about it. But that didn’t eliminate the pain of doing it. *Duvel* by Boa came on the stereo and a tear came down her cheek as she remembered.

Duvel by Boa was blasting through the gallery speakers. They had just closed the shop, Brandon and Angelia were the only two in the store. “Did you finish it yet?” Brandon asked, referring to his copy of *Where the Crawdads Sing* he had given Angelia.

“Almost, I’m at the part where she’s testifying in court towards the end. I really like the book so far, especially Kya,” she said, nervously looking back and forth from the ground to Brandon, who stared at her intently.

“I recommended that one because Kya reminds me a lot of you,” he said, taking a step closer to her.

“How so?” she asked while trying to steady her breathing. Her back was against the bookshelf, and he was now standing directly in front of her.

“She’s described as having an exotic beauty to her, a purity, creativity... oh, and unruly hair.” He smirked at the last part, twirling a strand of her hair.

It was golden hour, so his normally dark eyes had green specks. And while she had always thought he was handsome; at that moment she could see all the pretty details about him. The veins on his hands as he played with her hair, his worn skin, and his clean, rustic scent.

He kissed her. It wasn’t the first, or the second, or the third time they had kissed. But it still made her nervous, and excited. And every time it happened; it was all she could think about in the days to follow.

She pulled into Brandon and Lydia’s driveway. It was already 11pm but their lights were still on. *Give me the right words to say, Lord...* She took a deep breath, comforting herself in the fact that surely the God of the universe Himself was right there with her. Angelia sent a text to Lydia.

Angelia: Hey Lydia, are you busy?

Lydia: Not all, what’s going on sweetie, are you all right?

By the tone of her text, Angelia gathered that the private investigator had not yet visited her.

Angelia: Yeah, I’m at your house. Can you come outside for a second? Not Brandon, just you.

She sent the text. She was shaking with nerves but had already made up her mind. Lydia walked out the door of her home, Angelia walked out of her car and they both stood facing each other on the lawn. Lydia looked tired, her blonde hair was greasy and pinned back, she wore a stained maroon cardigan.

“Hey sweetheart, what’s going on?” she asked like a kind stranger helping a child who lost their mother in the store.

“I did something terrible, and I’m so sorry.” Angelia’s voice was breaking as she spoke.

“What did you do?” Lydia asked in a serious tone.

Brandon appeared at the doorway, holding his toddler son. “Don’t,” He mouthed to Angelia, shaking his head. She closed her eyes for a moment, trying to not see him, his face begging for her silence once again. She gave him a look as if to say, “I’m sorry.” And then she looked back to Lydia.

Okay Lord, here it goes.

For as long as she could remember, Angelia’s Grandmother had a specific verse hung up on her wall.

Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth.

1 Corinthians 13:1

She thought about that verse from time to time. During Thanksgiving her gaze was fixed on that painting as her family debated politics and religion. Love is this... Love never is never that... *Was it ever really love, Lord?*

Angelia remembered that last day with perfect clarity. The glimpse of Brandon she got while she was pulling out was the last time she ever saw him. She never stepped foot into the *Galleria* again. He mailed her checks as her remaining pieces in the shop sold out. She blocked him on everything and avoided his corner of town.

She read the verse a few more times, and she concluded that Brandon did not love her, but rather felt something selfish towards her that disguised itself as love.

But certainly, God, He was love. And because of that, she was thankful God allowed their adultery to be exposed that He might lure her back to Himself.

The first few months after her and Brandon broke up were incredibly difficult. She watched a movie with her roommate. It seemed that every little thing in the movie reminded her of Brandon.

During spring break, she went to the beach with some friends. She trudged through the waves, looking out where the endless blue sky meets the vast ocean, and she thought about how she’d looked forward to years of beach trips with Brandon. She thought they would read their books on the sand and watch their kids playing in the water.

But she quickly exchanged that feeling of grief for the way the waves felt as they knocked her over and then dragged her back to shore. And she almost entirely forgot him as she was floating at that part of the ocean right before the waves break, like an embrace from God Himself, and with total peace because the God who created that vast ocean was with her.

Towards the end of the school year Angelia and her roommate watched another movie, and at the end, she realized nothing in it really reminded her of Brandon.

And she quite liked that feeling.

ONLINE EXCLUSIVE



Untitled

Aryn Baker

ONLINE EXCLUSIVE

Pretty Box

Logan St John

The depressed pinpoint
In the center of the circle
Is spinning down
The formerly beautiful people
Are beautiful to me
Crossing upwards
Their words with their mouth
And eyes in a crown
Ruined regalia
Burning yellow into brown

The folded lips
Will hold her hair back
Mute mascara
Matted ashy and black
Her lashes beating on the dripping of
The visions blinking down the sides of
Divisions green and dark green
Sanctioned rulers' rivers
And flowers which will bloom like the face of
A femme lifetime whose lips will smiling say
It's a musical night
Before I paint myself like a clown

She disavows the sound
Of the choir with their books and gowns
Clicking together dorothyheels
Sequin thrills and glittering hills

Homeless torn into red somethings
By the twister twisting into a knotted fist
The town tucked inside an ugly disc
Like the pretty bags beneath the eyes
Of the monastic mistress
Whose hair is pouring back
Onto either naked shoulder
Whose words are soft and going
Upon glass like strands of rain
Standing between her fingers
Shaking chords of steel
Stealing to memory her face
And noting the notes she sang
Before her babies were born
Half closed orphans of divorced shrines
Of gently whispering night time
In her gentile's eyes
Darkly watching the taste of her
Own tasty voice meld with air

Licking the lingering images
Which beg to be abused
Sinews stretched taut and lines jumping
White flesh sagging sweet in bunches
Bulged between clenched teeth
Clapping feet and empty banging
Breached hull and tower hanging deep into itself
Deeply as the sunken wreck locked away
The secret of the boy who looked away
Who clothed himself to hide his nakedness
Who was drenched down to see-through
While seeing through the dark ring
Looking lowly outside
Upon the skin of sad something
To undress the truth of the thing
He wished to deny until the fleshy

Free and folded lips flipped open
Formerly beautiful and lurid
(But not to me)
Lured him away
With their monastic sound
Like her sword being drawn out
As her dress beat the ground
Becoming nude just to arm herself

And her ornamental hand
Colored by the flowers' fragrance
Holds and unholds
The same and unname
Gesture which flames to follow
Gestalt and hollow
Through that depressed point
For shameful entry
Leading where I never knew
I'd forever
Needed to go
Since the night I was made

And my needs make me need
A brand new limb to squeeze
Through where I'm no longer allowed in
Because the long bars gold and pristine
Have barred my entrance from that fruit
And frilly leaves and sappy things
Which I confess to father I've denigrated
By secretly seeking to make dirty my sin
My ugliness and box spring skin
Squeaking sweetly for the sinful bodies
Of sluts and queens who were beautiful once
And still are to me will sing to the beat of their wings
Towards the orphans before them
Gripping the golden bars gleeful
Heathens just like me and banished purely

Turned East and told to walk forever more
Fondled their clothing to the floor
And forced their appendages through the bars
Brightly leaping eyes like shadow Mars
For the angels to come and drink and see
And come and squeeze and kiss and cough
Like pretty nurses to finish them off
Their young oozing out
Their small and boy and light without
Flowing like a quart to the grass to cut their time short
And it happened because they asked
And I laughed to see such sport

And the prettiest orphan of all
Was the favorite among the queens
And they opened the gates to set him free
To take him in
With jacks diamonds hearts and spades
To make believe him it was just a game
To steal his need
And how the monastic mistress preened
The pretty hair aside to clearly see him
To string her notes and sing as always
The things into words she saw he dreamt
And he dreamt about the dark the dawn made
Gonework purples and blonde meandering fingers
Of sunlight shifting down the drawers
Of white and flowers and frilly things
And discarded empty rags and rings
Awaiting their use again

He dreamt about the gesture which flamed to follow
Up the banister cherry wood
The hand which held and unheld never could
Disamuse him
Disarm or abuse him because he longed
To fall down the tall folds to be made again

Made into something he could understand
Looking at the underside of her protracted sole
Which walked up the steps and stretched its tasty scent
To slip between his lips
And the mistress's flower tattoo he kissed
And he was soon taught how to grip the sides
And behave like an enslaved scholar
Shaking the sticky posts
Inside the white textures had shifted
And the dawn sounded blue
And the veil seemed to be see-through teal

And the angels sought to make it real
By swimming him down the sanctioned rivers
Towards the grove's green caregivers
And given the cherries to watch
They emptied him in a night
And he became swollen and blind like an Altarchrist
And was strained to see the cherry juice strain through the soil
Where they toiled to make him join
Through the folded hole in the center of the grove
Where they strove to twist him down
Like a cork
Like a clock going round
Backward to divorce time from body
Down the depressed pinpoint
To return him
As he begged to be
Stepped on as pulp from wine
To be made whole again with another time
From the hole which pleasure whined
Spinning because the monastic mistress
Had his hair knotted in her fist
And she jabbed him down
Where the stones slabbed and the roots dripped
Because she had worn him

And the soiled rags
Had to be dismissed

And I wished to watch it again
To follow
To relish all the dissolved juices
To suck and swallow
I'm the ugliest wretch that's ever been
Banal and obsessive
The longing pumps
Within an exterior of evil
And projecting skin
As disgusting as the mistress's

But not to me
Because she is beautiful now
As she always was
When she was young
They say
She was a star
And she still shines
Prettiness out from the holes
To make her skin glow
In a tablespoon anointed
Like the moon wobbling
And silver ships coddling
The white waterline
Of the low outside
Where I long to go
To be thrown
And it's so pretty
To me
Her voice
Which melts into wine
To be splashed upon the dark
And to soften with the sea

ONLINE EXCLUSIVE



Villecite

Meriel McCormick

ONLINE EXCLUSIVE

Major Types of Anxiety Disorders

Katelyn McCann

There is a mental health crisis occurring right now, not only in the United States but all around the world. According to researchers Saloni Dattani and others, authors of “Mental Health,” in a study done in 2017 research showed that 792 million people have been diagnosed with a mental illness and that is only including people who had come forward about their illnesses. That is over ten percent of the world’s population. Of that 792 million, 284 million people were diagnosed with some sort of anxiety disorder. According to the Anxiety and Depression Association of America, for every thirteen people in the world, one will suffer from anxiety. Anxiety can be defined as having great fear or worry which interferes with daily things, when there is no threat. According to the Anxiety and Depression Association of America, in the United States, anxiety disorders are the most common mental illness, affecting 18.1% of the United States’ population each year. However, there is not just one single anxiety diagnosis. The three major types of anxiety disorders are generalized anxiety disorder, social anxiety disorder, and obsessive-compulsive disorder.

Generalized anxiety disorder is one of the most common types of anxiety disorders. When one thinks of anxiety in general, this is the type of disorder that usually comes first to mind. Generalized anxiety disorder can be defined as having excessive worry and fear in many different everyday life scenarios, when there is no threat present. According to St. Joseph’s Healthcare, although everyone finds themselves worrying about something every now and then, people who have this disorder describe this kind of worry as uncontrollable and very frequent. Someone who has generalized anxiety disorder feels this unrealistic worry most days and have been feeling it most days for months. Alongside their worry they may feel tired, on edge, angry, and have muscle tension, headaches, nausea, difficulty concentrating,

difficulty falling asleep, and difficulty with decision making. The worry can stem from any topic, major or minor matters. These topics can include but are not limited to: worry about relationships, family, work, school, money, and appearance. An anonymous generalized anxiety disorder patient described their feelings to the National Institute of Mental Health by stating, “I was worried all the time and felt nervous. My family told me that there were no signs of problems, but I still felt upset. I dreaded going to work because I couldn’t keep my mind focused. I was having trouble falling asleep at night and was irritated at my family all the time.” Disregarding constant feelings of worry, nervousness, and irritation is not the answer when it comes to generalized anxiety disorder. Treatments can include medication, psychotherapy, and appointments with a mental health therapist, which have all been proven to lessen, if not get rid of completely, the symptoms of generalized anxiety disorder.

When it comes to factors that cause generalized anxiety disorder, there are many that can contribute to the development and growth of it. Alongside many others, biological factors can play a role in the cause of generalized anxiety disorder. According to St. Joseph’s Healthcare, the parasympathetic nervous system is responsible for calming one down by reducing the fear response. When one has generalized anxiety disorder, their parasympathetic nervous system is less flexible. St. Joseph’s Healthcare describes this as, “This inflexibility means that people with GAD experience elevated and chronic signs of anxiety (e.g. an elevated and stable heart rate) whereas other people experience high levels of anxiety in response to stress, then reduced levels of anxiety once the source is gone.” Another biological factor can be genetics. Although generalized anxiety disorder in specific is not seen to be passed down through your genes, a tendency for anxiety and depression in general can be. According to Boston’s Children’s Hospital, environmental factors can also play a role in the development of this anxiety disorder. This includes major life events such as a divorce, illness, or death. During these events or even just on a daily basis, if one is not feeling any stress, they can learn it from being around those that are. The Boston Children’s Hospital states, “For example, a child whose parent displays perfectionist tendencies may become a perfectionist, too.” These factors, alongside many other possible causes, can contribute to the development of generalized anxiety disorder.

Social anxiety disorder involves extreme shyness and fear of any social interaction. It is common for one to be nervous before performing in front of a bunch of people for the first time or before talking to someone who is intimidating to them. However, that is not social anxiety. Social anxiety is having fear of any and all social situations, no matter how big or how small. There may be fear of embarrassing themselves or fear of getting made fun of that leads to them not going or, if they do, having bad physical symptoms. According to Anxiety and Depression Association of America, fifteen million adults in America have been affected by social anxiety, making it the second most common anxiety disorder. The Anxiety and Depression Association of America gives an example of how life halting social anxiety can be by stating, “Individuals may decline a job opportunity that requires frequent interaction with new people or avoid going out to eat with friends due to fear that their hands will shake while eating or drinking.” Some other examples of events that may trigger those with this disorder include public speaking, talking to someone they do not know, going to a party, talking to people in authority, and speaking up for themselves. If one does participate in any of the above events, they may experience many physical symptoms such as nausea, blushing, heart racing, or sweating. An anonymous social anxiety patient described their experience to the National Institute of Mental Health by stating, “In school, I was always afraid of being called on, even when I knew the answers. I didn’t want people to think I was stupid or boring. My heart would pound and I would feel dizzy and sick.” The Anxiety and Depression Association of America states that 95% of those diagnosed with social anxiety disorder do not try to get help despite the availability and effectiveness of treatment available. Social anxiety can put a huge weight on one’s life and it can very easily take control of their decisions and life as a whole.

There are many factors that contribute to the cause of social anxiety disorder. Psychological factors can play a huge role in the development of social anxiety. According to St. Joseph’s Healthcare, a person can associate the feeling of fear to the social situation that they felt it in, and therefore that situation is now anxiety provoking for them. An example of this could be being made fun of at school and therefore having anxiety at school because they associate school with being made fun of. The National Institute of Mental Health suggests that misreading others as well as underdeveloped

social skills may also play a role in the development of social anxiety disorder. When one misreads others, they may take a certain look the wrong way. For example, one may assume that someone is negatively looking at them and judging them, when they are not. If social skills are under developed, there may be feelings that certain conversations went poorly and fearing the same in the future. These factors, alongside many others that are currently being researched, can contribute to the cause of social anxiety disorder.

Obsessive compulsive disorder is an anxiety disorder that consists of extreme obsessions and compulsions. St. Joseph's Healthcare defines obsessions as one constant and intrusive, thought, idea, or impulse that continually enters the person's head with no fault of their own. Alongside the obsessions, compulsions are a feeling that arise in those with OCD which causes them to react to their distress. A lot of times these reactions will lead to freedom of the thought for a while. Obsessions can be seen in many different forms. These can include contamination, symmetry or exactness, doubting, and aggression. Some examples of compulsions that come to relieve the obsession are washing, cleaning, repeating certain actions, counting, ordering, arranging, or repeating words to themselves. As one can assume, these obsessions and compulsions can consume a lot of time in the day. If they are trying to sleep but constantly doubting if they locked the door, they may have to get up multiple times within the night to make sure the doors are locked. As well as losing sleep, different obsessions and compulsions can lead to being late to events or harm to themselves. Alongside OCD, some can have a tic disorder. The National Institute of Mental Health describes a tic disorder by stating, "Motor tics are sudden, brief, repetitive movements, such as eye blinking and other eye movements, facial grimacing, shoulder shrugging, and head or shoulder jerking." Although everyone has impulses, those with OCD can not control theirs, even when they know they are invasive and excessive. Although there is not a clear answer to the cause of OCD, there has been research done that evaluates differences in the brain between those who have OCD and those who do not. St. Joseph's Healthcare states, "Research has identified a number of brain areas where people with OCD appear to have different amounts of activity compared to those without OCD." This difference in brain activity as well as genetics, personality, and life experiences, can result in OCD.

The mental health crisis in the United States and in the world is not slowing down. There are high levels of generalized anxiety disorder, social anxiety disorder, and obsessive compulsive disorder, and they are not getting any lower. According to the National Institute of Mental Health, only 44.8% of Americans who suffered from a mental illness in 2019 reached out for help. Treatments for all types of anxiety have been proven to help lower the symptoms or get rid of them completely. It is important to bring awareness to the number of anxiety disorders there are. Anxiety is a very generalized term in 2021. It is important to know that there are many types of anxiety disorders, not just one. Bringing awareness to mental health and those that suffer from mental health illnesses will help the number of diagnoses go down and the percentage helped go up.

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ONLINE EXCLUSIVE



Cutting Edge

Alec Henderson

The Wake Review

literary magazine and club

As Wake Tech's only student literary and artistic publication, our mission is to provide a creative outlet for the students, faculty, and staff of Wake Technical Community College. At the Wake Review, we believe Wake Tech should always have a place for its creative voice. We are pleased to share the 2022 edition of the Wake Review with the entire Wake Tech community. Thank you.



"Autonomy" by Brian Allen Carroll