

MISSOURI VALLEY COLLEGE



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THE PURPLE PATCH



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The Purple Patch

A Literature and Arts Journal

Volume XXIII



SIGMA TAU DELTA
INTERNATIONAL ENGLISH HONOR SOCIETY

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INTERNATIONAL ENGLISH HONOR SOCIETY

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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

I am beyond honored to present to you the 23rd volume of *The Purple Patch*, which includes student work from the 2023-2024 school year. The academic journal continues to give a space to students to publish their pieces and professionalize their college careers, from academic papers, to artwork, poetry, and creative writing, and this year to faculty as well to share the work from their classrooms.

Working on this edition started off as a little bit terrifying. I have been incredibly privileged to work on *The Purple Patch* for three years now, and every year before this one I had an amazing group of now-graduated friends who helped me carry the weight of this project. This time around, it was me who directed a board that will be taking over after I am gone, and I couldn't have asked for a better team to do so. This is for all who came before me and for those who will come up after. None of this would be possible without you.

From the board of editors, we want to thank the School of Arts and Humanities for being the leaders of our creative growth. This book comes from your guidance and support. We also want to express our gratitude to the faculty that donated to Sigma Tau Delta. That money has gone towards the annual Sigma Tau Delta convention in St. Louis, MO, where some of us got the chance to present our work on the national level. In addition, we want to show appreciation to professor Hynick and professor Gresham for thinking about *The Purple Patch* as a tool in their classrooms.

Like every year, our most important thank you has to go to our faculty advisor, Claire Schmidt, for providing a safe space for us to develop our academic interests, as well as opening up this incredible organization to as many students as possible. You are extremely important to so many of us for how you have shaped us during some of our last academic years and this program is immensely lucky to have you.

Lastly, if you are one of the braves who submitted art to *The Purple Patch*, this is all for and because of you, and for that we are thankful. And to you, who are holding this book right now, thank you. For giving students room to have their voices heard and their artistic visions met. You are a key part of this, and we hope you enjoy this edition as much as we did.

Mariona Bolao Manén
Editor in Chief

TABLE OF CONTENTS

FICTION

The Inventor's Pursuit - Felipe Souza	9
Gone Rogue - Alexandra Sutter	13
Selfish Requiem - Daniel Ripley	19
Thomas Thomas - Joana Marucci Compte	26
The Excellence of Air - Joana Marucci Compte	35
I Feel You Linger - DeRel Morris	44

POETRY

You Can't Judge My Pain - Joana Marucci Compte	45
Yesterday - Joana Marucci Compte	46
The Other Woman - Sydnei Cummings	47
Sweet Nothings - Sydnei Cummings	48
Sunshine - Mariona Bolao Manén	49
Second Best - McKenna Christensen	50
Often - Joana Marucci Compte	51
Not Everything is Black and White - Alexandra Lorenzo	52
My Mother - Joana Marucci Compte	53
Letter To My Dad - Adelia Timmer	54
Let Me Be Me - Joana Marucci Compte	55
Guest - Joana Marucci Compte	56
Growing Up - Joana Marucci Compte	57
Gone - Joana Marucci Compte	58
Dear ____ - Belle Batterton	59

A Tale of True Love - Adelia Timmer	60
Set On Silent - Drake Tipton	61
Filled Bed - Drake Tipton	62
Crane - Joana Marucci Compte	63

ARTWORK

Arrawana, Ink - Juliana Blackburn	64
Awake - Jericka Renner	65
Bird, Ballpoint Pen - Juliana Blackburn	66
Untitled - Estefano Del Aguila Delgado	67
Timeless Blooms - Chané Higgo	68
Untitled - Sommer Cedeno	69
Untitled - Sommer Cedeno	70
Untitled - Juliana Blackburn	71
The Adventures of Deer Gal and Demon Crush - Sophie Cott	72
My Doctors Say It's Survivors Guilt, I Call It Being a Daughter - Sophie Cott	73
At Least It's a Beautiful Night - Sophie Cott	74
My Character Growth Is Like a Tumor - Sophie Cott	75
Started To Feel Like My Place - Sophie Cott	76

CREATIVE NONFICTION

Anatomy Lessons - DeRel Morris	77
Hell Week: Seasoning a Counselor - Daniel Ripley	78
Curiosity and Caution: A Childhood Tale - Doryan Cole	86

ACADEMIC PROSE

The GOAT Debate - Magnus Hauska	89
---------------------------------------	----

Turkish Airlines Commercial - Magnus Hauska	92
Primary Document Analysis 2 - Jenasyn Baker	96
The Unspoken Friendship - Hannah Brown	98
The Irony in “The Chaser” - Vasil Stoimenov	101
“Thank You Billie Jean King: 50 Years of Equal Pay”: A Response - Hannah Brown	104
Electric v. Gas Vehicles: Facts to Know Before You Purchase - Hannah Brown	108
Causes of Increased Wildfires in Western States and Implementation of Prevention Steps - Hannah Brown	112
Sister’s Love - Carla Estrade Hernandez	121
“Narrative Essay” - Yoro Sow	123
“Narrative Essay” - Driss Gousson	125
A Love Story - Lola Martinez Benitez	128
Rebellion - Carla Estrade Hernandez	131
Build Our Legacy Now: Detroit Lions Win Team’s First NFC North Title - Andrew Mittl	134
Kevin Durant’s MVP Speech - Yoro Sow	136
“Bonnes Nouvelles Pour le Planète / ARTE” - Julian Ayape	139
“Did Somebody Say” Menulog ft. Snoop Dogg: A Rhetorical Analysis - Andrew Mittl	144
Resilience in Adversity: The Subtle Power Shifts in “Yaiza” - Estefano Del Aguila Delgado	147
Why Should We Avoid Processed Foods? - Henrik Stenersen	151
“7 Years Old” - Carla Estrade Hernandez	154

HUMANITY AND CREATIVITY 1 - AI Poetry159

Andres N Umbacia Veloza

Brooke Wright
Filippo de Bonnis
Joseph Pollard
McKenna Christensen
Nienka Nijendijk

HUMANITY AND CREATIVITY 2 - Dadaism and Surrealism165

Andres N Umbacia Veloza
Brooke Wright
Filippo de Bonnis
Joseph Pollard
McKenna Christensen
Nienka Nijendijk

AMAL FROM AFAR175

FICTION

The Inventor's Pursuit

Felipe Souza

During the late years of the industrial revolution, the world was evolving in a way that people had never seen before. Gustav Geppeto was the man who would be known as one of the greatest inventors in the world. He pulled off one of the most ambitious projects known to mankind, he called them puppets. They were made of a thousand different gears allocated to each other. Their bodies looked like mannequins that you would see in clothing stores. Even their hearts were made of burning coal and their minds were powered by high-voltage sparks that fueled them.

Geppeto created them as a way to help mankind. Though in the end that led to aggressive riots against the puppets. People were losing their jobs because of them, they were cheaper to buy, lasted longer, and they never complained. They were everywhere, coffee places, restaurants, traffic agents, piano teachers, cops, and so on. Due to a high number of sales, Geppeto became a very rich man. But it did not make him happy, he felt empty inside. Even with a huge house with five bedrooms, the finest and most comfortable sheets, expensive silverware and plates, a piano made with the finest ivory, housekeepers, who were puppets, and his own chef, nothing could bring him to smile.

“What is the point of all these expensive walls and floors if I can't share them with anyone? What is the point of having the finest meals if I can't sit down and talk about it? I would trade everything, all my money, all my cars, my house, the right to my puppets, everything to see you again, Giorno, my precious boy, my son!”

Giorno, Geppeto's first and only child, was a very bright kid, filled with energy and eager to follow his father's footsteps toward inventing for the future. He had dark hair as dark as obsidian, blue eyes that reminded him of the deepest of oceans, pink cheeks, and a smile that would warm the coldest of hearts. At age 10, illness and disease took over the boy, at that time doctors didn't know what it was. However it turned out it was Tuberculosis, and it didn't last long before it took Giorno's life. As he was in his last moments lying in the hospital bed holding his father's hand, he was only able to say.

“Thank you, I wish I could have had a body that wouldn't get sick so that I could live my life alongside you father. I know you are still going to do great things, everyone needs you, now I must sleep, the medicine is too strong.”

Those last words were what fueled Gepetto's desire to create the puppets. Every single new model was his attempt to create a perfect copy of his son, he wanted him back so much, but he was never able to create him, how could he? A machine could never be a real person, it lacks flesh and bones, it lacks a heart, but more importantly, it lacks a soul.

Anger started to build up upon Gepetto, who saw his creation being used as a mere tool every single day was enough to drive him madder every single day, he knew that money was needed, but couldn't sit even knowing that his failed attempts of creating his son turned into that.

“I gave my heart and my soul to bring him back, maybe it's time to see the souls of others then, these people who use my puppets to make their lives better don't know my pain, but they shall know soon enough!”

He had enough, and with a heavy heart, Geppeto sought refuge in his workshop, along with many gears and the sound of metal, he couldn't

sleep, he was driven to find an impossible solution, he needed a way to find what he had lost.

As time passed Geppeto was more and more distant from the outside world, his mind, once of an inventor who wanted to improve the world for the future, was clouded by a single obsession, animating his puppets with more than just gears and electrical parts. This madness drove him to push the boundaries of what was ethical and moral right.

He found himself reading and searching forbidden books and texts, ancient tomes there long forgotten, the smell of old ink mixed with a rotten substance that was probably used in satanic rituals would make Geppeto sick. At last, he found rituals that promised to combine souls with lifeless bodies. Madness took over his mind, he performed rituals that were classified as “dark magic”, even chanted incantations in long-forgotten languages, and used his own blood to create symbols in the walls and floor that were unrecognizable to the human eye.

All that effort gave him horrifying results, his puppets, once lifeless and soulless, started to develop consciousness, in their eyes a small dim of light was able to be seen, and their bodies started to move more like humans. Yet, it was all a twisted dark reality of what he wanted, all those rituals changed him and drove him to complete madness.

Driven by it, Geppetto, released his new creations into the outside world. The man who once was seen as one of the greatest inventors of modern times wanted revenge, and the puppets were his instruments to bring chaos, their once mindless were now fueled with dark energy.

Rampage and chaos were unleashed, and the citizens who grew accustomed to the help of harmless puppets were met with the taste of terror. They were merciless, cold-blooded, and bullets couldn't stop them,

in just a few hours the city had been torn apart, and streets that once were spotless were now filled with blood and flames.

As chaos rises to its peak, a small sense of guilt starts to grow inside Gepetto's corrupted mind. His own creations that were made to fill the gap for his lost son had become agents of chaos and destruction, it was a twisted version of his grief and madness.

In the midst of all that, he fell to his knees, it seemed like everything around him was in slow motion, tears started to fall from his face.

“What have I done? Ohh Giorno, my dear boy, what have I become? Is this what I really wanted? Ohhhh, dear God!!!

Gepetto, now a broken man, used all the strength that he had to conduct a final ritual, using holy water instead of blood, he drew once again symbols and spoke in ancient language, he took out a blanket from his first puppet that he had stored as a reminder of how far he had gone.

As the ritual was completed the newborn puppet took his first steps, it was so different from the others, a dark blue hair paired with blue eyes, and skin was placed instead of metal, all beside his arm. As Gepetto knew that he was in his last moments he looked at that puppet that reminded him so much of his son while falling to his knees

“Ohhh you look just like him...I put the rest of my soul into your heart, you have to hunt your own kin, you have to save the city, and inside of each of them lies my soul, maybe with all of them you can become a real boy.”

Geppeto looked at the corner of the room while lying in the puppet's arms and saw the box of his son's old toys on top of it, was his favorite one, a little doll, dressed with a red jacket, a yellow hat, and a

long nose.

“You must go now, leave me here, I need to rest, please save the city, you are my perfect creation, you have all of his characters, now go show that puppets are able to have a heart as pure as a little boy, I know you will do great things...Pinocchio”

Gone Rogue

Alexandrea Sutter

Look at me and you'll see a normal 20-year-old woman making her way through college pursuing a biotechnology degree. My dorm and classes are the only places you'll see me. My hair will be a mess, there will be bags under my eyes, and I'll be wearing lab-appropriate clothing. You'll think I look stressed, maybe even a little in over my head. You know what... you're probably a bit right. I am in over my head, but it's not the schoolwork that's too much.

I've always loved science and I always will. I was always ahead in school. I had some college credits before I even graduated high school. That's why I knew that I could do it. A degree that some avoided because it would be too hard was something I knew I could accomplish. That's why during my free time sophomore year of college I started my independent study, my work, and my creation.

You may only see what's on the outside but get too close and you might catch a glimpse of what my college experience is really about. That's what happened to my roommate and ex-best friend Carmen. I live alone now

if that tells you anything. My work consumes me and my room. Which I guess Carmen couldn't handle. I say I guess because I don't really know. What I do know is that Carmen got distant and then one day I came home, and her side of the room was empty. I don't blame her, and I know she's a good friend. If she wasn't then she would've told them. She would've told the campus or even the dean what I'd been working on.

Now you know what you'll see when you look at me, but what about what I see? Looking in the mirror isn't something I do often. Sometimes I try to avoid it at all costs. I go through phases of liking and disliking myself. This mostly depends on how my work is going. In school, I prided myself on my grades, but with my own work, there was no grade. There's only my own mind and what I believe I should have accomplished by now. I know I am hard on myself, but I've never known anything else.

Even the times that I do like myself I still know I'm a monster. Consumed by my work on a destructive path for those around me, like Carmen. I do feel bad, but I couldn't help it. I want it done. I want to feel accomplished. I want to make something for not only my name but for the world. In these early stages, I don't know if it's going to be a good or bad thing. How could anyone with any discovery know this early?

I should start by telling you what my work is about, but I'm not ready for that yet. So we can start with the beginning and Carmen. She's my beginning. We got randomly assigned to a room with one another Freshman year, and we instantly clicked. I never had many friends in high school and Carmen was the opposite. People flocked to her everywhere she went. They were right to do so, she is the best. On the move-in day, she was instantly friendly, making conversation about decorating. Something I wasn't really worried about but if it got me close to my roommate I was all in. My biggest fear was hating the person that I had to live with, that she would be rude or a

slob. Carmen was the opposite of all those things. She was so easy to get along with, she even pulled me out of my shell a little bit. We had the best first year together.

During sophomore year I started to be a little bit more confident in myself and my studies thanks to Carmen. I knew when I pitched her my idea of an independent study she would love it. She was so supportive from the get-go, she even cleared off her desk space and studied on her bed so that I could have more experiment room. My idea was ambitious and we both knew that, but she was always there for me when things got hard. With emotional support, of course, her English brain couldn't handle any science of his level.

It was quite an idea, let me tell you, that's why I started with rats. Carmen loved having the creatures in our room. She was a big animal person, and that's why it was so hard for her when my somatic cell nuclear transfer went wrong. I tried so long that the rats themselves gave up. Yeah... cloning animals in a dorm room isn't my brightest idea, but when I reach my end goal it will be. What is that end goal you may ask? Well, let's just say by the end of this I should have a personal assistant that's just as smart as me. I know I'm crazy, don't try to tell me now.

To begin to even try to clone a full creature, I needed to learn and accomplish how they do it now. With embryos and SCNT (somatic cell nuclear transfer) and all that science stuff, I won't bore you with it. So that's just what I did. I started with rats and rabbits. Once I got the hang of that I started developing my own methods to create full-grown clones. Who has time to wait around for embryos? Not me. Now, these experiments were the ones that freaked Carmen out. I had my ways using already thought-of methods of cell transfer paired with a radioactive chamber. Don't ask me how I got that in my dorm. My ways weren't perfected though. Some of the rabbits came out a little... deformed, some couldn't even function, and some

were already dead. I don't think a room with three-eyed rabbits and a roommate who made runs to a garbage plant before her carcasses started to smell were part of Carmen's ideal college experience.

She still stuck around though. She tried to look at me like I was normal, like she still supported me, and was still my best friend. I could see a shift in her eyes though. In the beginning, it was just a flash now and again. Nothing I thought about too much. She was still there and she still had my back through everything, I knew that.

After almost half a year of my rabbit problem, I perfected it. Now I had to take my big leap. You see I had a hard enough time getting rabbits into my dorm and my next step up was sheep. How the hell was I supposed to get a sheep into my dorm? The answer is I wasn't. So, what was my big leap? My end goal. What's to say rabbit cloning isn't the same as human? Everything actually, but it's fine. I tried to convince myself of that as much as possible. However, Carmen was not as easily convinced. "Carmen, please just let me explain myself." I begged her.

"I don't even want to hear it, Nevaeh. You are going to do whatever you want to anyway. So why should I waste my breath?" She said, I could see that look in her eyes again, but this time it didn't go away. That look in her eyes stayed as she begged me to be done, and it stayed when she reluctantly let me continue. The look in her eyes was as blank as a piece of printer paper.

The look stayed from then on. It killed me to see the stress I was putting her in, but I had to keep going. It was like I couldn't stop myself; I'd come too far. I could go to the world with my full-grown cloned rabbit, but at that point who even cares? It's the same thing they've already done, just a little bit of a faster process. Just like I can't half-ass an assignment I can't half-ass an invention. So, I continued. A little more out of Carmen's sight

than before. I can't even imagine how she would have reacted to my first try at cloning myself.

I went through my normal steps, the same ones I'd taken over and over again on rabbit after rabbit. When it was all said and done all there was to show for my first try was an arm. It was my arm, but it wasn't my arm if that makes any sense whatsoever. That's all that was in the machine though, a limp arm. I recorded my test and just sat there. Looking at my failure of an arm. Dwelling over how I'd come so far with rabbits and now I feel like I'm right back at step one. Snapping out of that I knew I had a new problem that wasn't just that my science was wrong. Disposing of dead rabbits was weird but disposing of a human arm... that's a tricky one. All said and done I'm not proud of burning my failures in that field, they were a part of me literally. I did what I had to do though.

Carmen knew it was suspicious that I wasn't working on the experiments in front of her. I always showed her my progress and had some breakthroughs to share, but now I was quiet about it. I knew she didn't like it so I wasn't going to rub it in her face. Until one day when she came home in the middle of one of her classes, she didn't feel good and came back to the dorm early. I'd gotten just limbs a couple more times and tweaked things ever so slightly before trying again that day. Carmen walked in that day to see me holding a slightly off version of my own head. It was scary to me, but for her, it was gut-wrenching. Her slight stomach ache that day turned into running towards the bathroom holding her mouth with both hands. I left with my head before she was done throwing up. I couldn't face her right now, especially with that thing still in the room.

When I got back to the dorm that night she was in her bed facing the wall. I don't know if she was sleeping or not, but I didn't say anything because I didn't want to wake her if she was. Maybe if I had talked to her that

night things would've been different, maybe not. When I got back from my early class the next day she and her things were gone. Seeing a half-empty room showed me what I had become. Again, though I found myself unable to stop. Even with the chance of Carmen going to the school about my efforts and them showing up at my door any second to escort me off campus I still did another test that day. That one didn't go well either, but nothing will ever be as bad as that look on Carmen's face.

Months have come and gone and I'm still not there yet, but this time felt different. I could taste the finish line at the tip of my tongue. Coming out of the machine today was me. Her face was droopy, she walked with a limp, and her cognitive abilities weren't there at all. At that time, I didn't care one bit. She was there and she was alive!

I opened the door to let her out of my machine and she came right at me. Full force throwing herself on top of me. I didn't know what to do. I hadn't thought through a rogue clone. I fell, her still falling on top of me, and my head hit the post of Carmen's bed frame. Things were fuzzy and I could still feel the weight of my or her body on top of me. My head was spinning and I or she started to stand up. Sorry, she started to stand up, but I was still on the ground. Things were black but I could hear myself wait... I could hear her walking around her room. No, my room! Why can't I think straight?

Selfish Requiem

Daniel Ripley

In the dullest corner of the world sits a drab fishing village by the sea - the only glimmer of intrigue being the lighthouse. Its melancholy glow dances on the unforgiving waters, drawing mariners toward its treacherous cliffs like moths to a flame.

Dorian, a mage with an enigmatic air and a patron he won't mention, finds himself a stranger in a strange village. He's wearing a long leather coat and carrying a satchel. His hood covers his head and obscures his face. He doesn't know much about where he is, save that there's a lighthouse and that the town could do with some color. His lack of knowledge sinks in as he walks through the heart of town on an empty street. There's not much written about villages like these save their founding, and sometimes their tax records. When this area comes up in conversation (in the rare market gossip and trade journal), not much is said save for the gray skies and the backward people. They're covered in rain and drenched in superstition. Dorian doesn't care for villages like these.

The villagers don't care for mages like Dorian. Magic is a rare thing, reserved for folktales as the weapon of bogeymen - stories of death, blood, and taboo rituals. Every spell demands some trade, and in the narrowed imaginations of locals, a magician means a sacrifice. It means foul change. Mothers clench their children at the thought. Magic is a curse they dread, a stain to be avoided at all costs, an unwelcome malevolence lurking in their quiet town.

Dorian's presence is known. It's been known for miles as he was on the road. Carts from the capital only bring outsiders, and the oldest of the locals swear they smelled magic coming for a week now. Dorian imagines

the streets were cleared in a rehearsed cacophony of grandparents yelling at parents, parents hiding their children, businesses closing down, and everyone locking themselves away to sharpen broomsticks and light torches. Dorian won't be here long. His ride heads back to the capital in the morning.

Dorian walks purposefully towards the lighthouse, compelled by an unspoken duty. The closer he gets, the more the imposing structure unfurls its secrets. The lighthouse stands resolute, a lonesome sentinel that stands tall against the desaturated horizon. Its stoic, coppery facade emerges like a guardian of forgotten lore, contrasting starkly with the village's drab palette.

The passage of years and ceaseless battle with the sea have etched stories onto its surface. The mottled, weathered bricks tell the tale of countless storms weathered, of an undying vigil that has held this post for generations. Dorian's keen eyes trace the vertical lines of the lighthouse, the way it climbs towards the heavens with an air of mysterious authority.

As Dorian nears, the slender tower reaches its full grandeur, casting its long monolithic shadow across his path. The weight of history looms in the salt-tinged air, concealed beneath layers of brine and obscurity.

The sturdy weathered door screams as it opens and closes shut. Entering the lighthouse, Dorian is met with silence. Cobwebs drape the corners. An eerie chill hangs in the air. It's a narrow entrance into a small foyer. An empty room save for an old simple bench to Dorian's right, a small door in the back of the room with a lock larger than the handle attached, and a stone staircase spiraling up. There's a worn pair of boots by the bench, this was someone's home.

He always wanted a house somewhere niche, like a lighthouse or an apartment above a hat store. Dorian always imagined a simple life with her,

with Eleanor. Fate's gotten in the way of that, but Dorian believes that Fate can suck it.

"Up" Dorian feels this command in the back of his mind. His patron is watching. He's here for a job. "*Don't get personal*", not yet.

As he ascends the spiraling staircase, he brushes his fingers against the cold, moist stones. Faint whispers echo as if the walls are begging the mage to leave. With every step Dorian can't help but feel the weight of darkness crush him. He almost laughs but fears his soul might escape with his breath, drawn out into the haunting air.

It's a long walk to the top. It's a creepily banal walk to the top. Gray stone walls and gray stone stairs, no windows and no doors. For a moment Dorian thinks he's caught in a loop. *Is it that kind of haunting? No, that's silly.* The thought leaves and is replaced by instruction as he sees the top.

"He's up top. Remember why you're here."

"Of course, like I could forget." Not after the way he pitched the damn trip. A mourning husband has turned to magic. It's not uncommon, but Dorian's patron believes the man's made progress.

Dorian serves an odd power, his patron. A creature whose age and significance Dorian doesn't fully understand, nor does he understand where the thing comes from. What he knows is the power given and the power promised, in return for simple tasks. The creature, refusing to name itself, is a hoarder of information. Every discovery, every secret, every major event the creature yearns to record, amassing an incomprehensible library of truths.

In return for his service, Dorian gets knowledge. He seeks to understand what he can do for his own future. For over a decade now he's

only wanted to be with Eleanor. This winter marks three years since she was ripped from him, three years since he's sought to bring her back.

The staircase ends with a wall and a wooden ladder. The ladder leads to a wooden hatch. Through the dark Dorian can see the crumbling ceiling, it's held together by cobwebs. The ladder is moldy but still stiff. As Dorian shifts his weight onto it there's a creak, but it holds well enough. He climbs up. The latch is difficult to push open, Dorian fears he'll break the ladder before it finally swings open and he shambles to the top.

A thick fog smothers the air, creating a hazy gray dome around the roof of the lighthouse, the flame at its center. The flame is large, but small compared to its brazier. A large brass bowl resting in carved stone, forcing a doughnut shape on the roof. On one end of the circle, Dorian and the hatch. On the other sits a body in a small wooden chair. Dorian approaches. The body isn't fully decomposed, some skin and hair hangs off the skull and the clothes are still intact, but the flesh is gone. The smell of death has passed, and he's become little more than *mise en scene*.

"Get on with it."

Dorian sets his satchel down and opens it. It's a simple ritual but a bit of a costly one. He's to speak with the corpse. Normally it's a cut and dry process, just a bit of blood from Dorian's end to link to the lost soul, but this body is old. The flesh is gone, the soul is even longer gone. To beckon its spirit again, to create that link, Dorian has to give more of himself.

"A finger should do." Dorian's hand is willed to pluck off the body's ring finger. He places it in front of him. *"Now match his offer and find out what he knows."* Dorian hesitates, *"it serves your end too. A small price for your love, don't let it bar you."*

Dorian doesn't answer, not verbally. He still wears his wedding ring. He still carries Eleanor with him. What is he giving up on this quest? How much of himself is he willing to lose to grasp what he had?

Without much more thought Dorian pulls out his knife and plunges it into his hand. There's a wet crack when, as if guided by a force beyond himself, Dorian drives the knife through the bone. The pain is too much to comprehend, the emotions are complicated. Dorian forces his maimed nub against the brazier to stop the bleeding.

Dorian takes a minute to hold himself, looking at his hand and accepting what he'd just done. He looks down at his finger, the ring still on it. He pulls the ring off in a moment of sentimental practicality and sets his finger before him, parallel to the body's finger.

Dorian closes his eyes and focuses on the materials before him. *Mortuovox* is muttered through him, and a dark aura surrounds the two. Dorian can no longer see the flame before him, only the shadow of the magic. Dark blood exits as a tendril from Dorian's finger, wrapping around the bony finger and connecting the two. The body's head perks up, staring into Dorian as he stares back. There's a glint of consciousness in the skull's eyes, there's a window to the soul. Communication is open.

"Good. Now ask your questions."

"What happened to you?"

The body lets out a raspy response in a ghostly whisper. "Ritual. Sacrifice. Gave myself for my wife. I'm nothing without her."

Dorian lingers on that answer. He feels his hand, one digit shy. Will he meet the same fate? How much will he have to give for Eleanor?

"And what about your wife? What happened?"

A ghostly response, “The pox. She was a healer, always helping people. She brought color to this town, and everyone loved her for it. The gods saw fit to punish us for our light. To punish me for my happiness.”

Again, Dorian lingers on the answer. Is that how the man saw his wife’s death? As a punishment? Is that how Dorian sees Eleanor’s passing? Again, Dorian feels his hand. Is this quest really out of love for his wife, or is the search out of vanity, out of not wanting to move forward?

“That’s two questions, you only get three. Ask where his notes are.”

“And this ritual, where are your notes on that? Where’s your study?”

The body takes a moment to answer. “In the tower. Locked away. I have a key, my wife has the other. Keep out.” And with that warning, the spell’s shadow fades and the fire’s light is visible again. Dorian has an uneasy feeling, but decides to save reflection for the ride home. There’s still work to be done.

Around the body’s neck is a loose string. Tucked in the body’s clothes attached to the string is a large metal key. Dorian plucks it and stashes it in his jacket’s pocket. The mage packs his belongings again. His finger is bloodied and darkened from magic. Feeling detached and bottling emotions, he throws the fingers into the sea. He watches them get lost in the fog and doesn’t hear a splash. They’re gone to the gray void.

Dorian relies on his right hand to open the hatch, and climbs the ladder slowly to avoid putting much weight on his left.

The walk down the stairs is just as uneventful as the walk up, though more purposeful. As he approaches the bottom he hears scratching and shuffling. It’s faint, and he wonders if he’d noticed it before. As he nears the locked door in the foyer the shambling sounds clearer. Whatever’s

making the noise is large and is on the other side of the door.

“Open it.”

Dorian grabs his knife and holds it dear in his right hand as he awkwardly grabs the key with his left. He winces in pain as he turns it, opening the lock and throwing it to the ground. The lock makes a loud thud as it hits the ground, and the shambling makes a distinct pause before picking back up, heading towards the door.

Dorian decides to back up and let the door be opened, he'd rather be ready for something coming out than go into a mystery. The thing awkwardly claws at the door as if feeling for something and only finding a door. It swings open as if by accident and the thing lurches forward into view.

Out of a destroyed bedroom comes a rotted corpse, similar to the one on the roof. The flesh is gone, the bones are hanging together by old tendons and sheer will. The body isn't clothed, but there's nothing to see but dust and bones as the body creaks and shuffles towards Dorian's heat. The body, once a person, is now a mindless, soulless husk following a base yearning for life.

Around the shambling corpse's neck is a key on a string.

Thomas Thomas

Joana Marucci Compte

Being a teenager is not easy. Being a teenager with a strange name is not easy. Being a smart teenager is not easy. Being a teenager who dislikes any kind of change is not easy. Being an obsessive teenager is not easy. Being a teenager who easily becomes anxious is not easy. Being a teenager who takes things literally is not easy. Being a teenager who avoids social gatherings because they confuse them is not easy. Being a teenager who finds it difficult to maintain a conversation is not easy. Being a teenager who often speaks in riddles is not easy. Being a teenager who is illogical is not easy. Being a teenager with orthorexia is not easy. Being a teenager with obsessive-compulsive disorder is not easy. And being a teenager diagnosed with Asperger's Syndrome, ultimately, is not easy at all.

I am aware that I am not easy to understand; you are not the first to think I'm strange, and you will not be the last, so don't feel special. The special one here is me. Here's an example: my psychologist says that comments like this might hurt other people's feelings. I don't understand why, since theoretically, honesty is appreciated by everyone. Not that I enjoy spending too much time with other human beings, but hypocrisy doesn't help at all. Mother says it's not my fault if others look at me strangely when I walk, talk, eat, or even breathe: they are the ones who don't understand me. Dr. Brown says I should be a bit more open-minded, while I consider others too skeptical.

This confuses me; but I also get confused by people who eat cereal bars, so I close my eyes and think about the scent of my soap

collection. I think about it every time something bothers, saddens, disgusts, or shocks me; sometimes it doesn't help, but the psychologist has given me techniques to ignore those situations I find bothersome, and since hitting my wrist with the elastic band I'm forced to wear makes me even more nervous, I think about my little soaps. I would like to talk about my soaps for a bit longer, but Mother thinks I might bore people if I bring up the subject too often; I'm still not sure why, but I prefer to go and be with my bar soaps rather than stay and listen to her. But I don't tell her this because I've noticed her facial expression when I say such things, and I wouldn't want her to stop buying me lemon soaps as she does every Saturday. Have I already told you that I'm a lover of routines? Here are two things I can't live without: my soaps and my routines. And I can't forget about almonds, organic peanut butter sandwiches, charts, banana juice, my striped socks, hair gel, Mother, trains, Scrabble evenings, toothpaste, hospital visits, my lists, hand sanitizer, Mr. Mustache, and James.

James is my friend. In fact, he's my only friend. I know this because after a few days of getting to know each other, I asked him, and he replied, "Yes, Thomas Thomas, from now on we are friends."

I was quite surprised; I had never had a friend before then.

"And what should a friend do?" I asked him.

"I don't know, Thomas Thomas," he sighed, "friends do things that friends do."

Not knowing how to respond, I remained silent, staring at the floor of the treehouse in my garden. "Thomas Thomas, have you never had any friends before?" he asked softly. I think he had a touch of compassion, but I can't be sure; I'm not good at deciphering the emotions of other

beings.

I nodded and looked him in the eyes, ready to learn from his words.

"Let's see..." he began, "friends ride bikes together."

"I don't ride a bike," I interrupted.

He looked at me with a look I would classify as baffling and continued, "Okay, we don't have to ride a bike. We can play football," he said, and I was about to object again, but he stopped me, "Thomas Thomas, wait a minute. I'm making a list of what friends usually do, but it doesn't mean we have to do everything. Don't you like making lists? Here's the beautiful thing about friends: you can choose what to do without compromises," he explained, and I began to enjoy the company of this boy who had moved in front of my house just a few days earlier. "As I was saying, we can play football, or watch a movie, or play foosball or video games, or take a walk, or do homework together, or just chat," he explained, "we can tell each other anything in the world: insecurities, desires, fears, opinions, and much more."

"I understand..." I murmured, slightly excited about the possibilities that this friendship would bring me.

"Where do you want to start?" he asked while fiddling with his shoes.

"I would like to know why you call me 'Thomas Thomas'," I replied, looking at the fuzz on my fingers, a little scared of his reaction to my first friend-related question.

"Isn't that your name?" he asked with his inquisitive gaze.

"It is, but no one ever calls me by my full name. It's strange," I clarified.

"Well, that's exactly why I do it. Don't you find it fun?" he asked, surprised by my question. "I don't know..." I muttered, "I had never thought of it as 'fun,' but rather as 'strange.'" "Thomas Thomas," he said

with a smile, "it's strange only if you treat it as such. Own your name."

I didn't quite understand what James meant at that moment, but it was my first conversation with a friend, so I didn't doubt his words.

Later, when he returned home for dinner, Mother asked me while cooking my spinach, "How did it go with your friend?" and I immediately stopped arranging the playing cards and froze, staring at the floor. How did she know we were friends? Who told her? What did she think about it? Did James tell her?

"Thomas?" she asked, worried, "Did I say something wrong?"

"H-h-how do you know?" I stammered after a few seconds, "Who told you?" "No one, I guessed it when I saw you up there," she said as she bent forward to reach my height with her tired face.

"We decided this afternoon," I replied, still with a fixed stare, "How did you know?" "I don't know, Thomas, I figured it out," she tried to explain.

"I don't understand," I mumbled with my hands between my thighs.

"You see, sweetheart," she began to say as she took a chair and brought it closer to me, "usually when two kids spend afternoons chatting, it's because they are friends."

"Mother," I whispered as I gestured too much with my hands, "I'm scared." "I know, Thomas, but it's precisely when you're scared that things are more real," she said, reaching for my hands and holding my wrists, calming me down. "No one said having friends was easy. But the first step, making a friend, has been successfully accomplished. Now all you have to do is live in the moment." I nodded at her words and started making a mental plan of what I should do next, starting with a visit to my soap collection.

"Do you want a piece of chocolate?" James asked, offering me the bar, "I don't feel like it anymore."

"I imagine," I said as I slightly shook my head, "this stuff kills."

"Wait a minute," he exclaimed, smiling, "don't tell me you're a healthy food nut." "It's called orthorexia," I murmured, and noticing his confusion, I tried to explain, "Orthorexia is an obsession with healthy eating that means protecting oneself from a deep sense of threat, which is the precariousness of life."

"Do you often quote *Wikipedia*?" he asked, smiling, "It's too funny."

I smiled and mentally calculated the hours I had spent researching my condition on the computer; there had certainly been many.

"Can I ask you a friend question?" he asked, paying attention to an ant that had approached his foot. I nodded. "What's it like having a photographic memory? School must be so much easier, right? It sounds so cool."

I didn't quite understand what he meant by "cool," but I was afraid to ask, so I explained for the first time in my life some effects of my condition.

"I quite like it," I began, "it can be very helpful in certain situations. But it's not always good." "What do you mean?" he said with a concerned tone.

"Well..." I started, "my handwriting is messy, I write too fast, I hate making decisions about what's important or not when I read something, I get easily distracted, I find it easier when people use concrete examples, I don't like taking exams in strange places, I'm a perfectionist, I'm not very good at problem-solving, I find it hard to be motivated about topics, I can't sit still for long periods, I'm not good at long-term goals, and I'm not good at being

on time or remembering all the equipment I need."

"But isn't Mr. Mustache a successful long-term project?" he asked.

"Now that you mention it," I reflected, "Yes, it is. I've had that rabbit since I was eight." "See? There are many positive aspects," he said with a smile.

I adjusted my socks and tied my shoes tightly for the fifth time, reflecting in silence. "James," I whispered.

"Tell me, Thomas Thomas," he replied.

"What's it like to be normal?" I asked, ashamed and avoiding eye contact.

"It depends on what you mean by normal," he murmured with a touch of compassion. Since we had started spending time together, I had cataloged various looks and behaviors; he was such a transparent boy that he couldn't hide anything, a bit like me.

"I mean a person without Asperger's," I confessed after a few seconds.

"Thomas, Thomas," he began, "there's nothing more boring in the world than being normal." He smiled, and I was astonished by his words. I didn't understand how one could be bored with knowing when to end a conversation, or understanding when someone was joking, or grasping sarcasm and metaphors. I didn't understand how it could be boring to know how to make friends or even just be good at conversing with others, but I just nodded and thought about my soaps, as I often did.

"What is your biggest fear?" he asked while taking a bite of his apple. It was too hot; August in Bourton was unbearable, so Mother had made lemonade, and we were having a snack in the treehouse. Since the day I asked him what it was like to be a normal person, the themes of our conversations had stopped being ordinary and had turned into slightly deeper chats, according to James.

"I'm afraid of many things," I confessed, and when he asked what they were, I had already cataloged them on a chart: those related to food, safety, and the future. Once I illustrated them with my long explanation, he was surprised that I didn't run out of breath. "I swear I can't understand how you breathe between words," he replied with a smile and took a long pause, thoughtful. "But what is the thing that probably scares you most of all?" "Windrush," I stuttered after thinking about it for a moment.

"You're afraid of the river?" he asked suddenly. He seemed quite impressed by my answer. "Of all the things in England, are you afraid of the river in town?"

I sighed for a moment and stared at the floor, thinking about my answer. In the river, there were insects, and probably some snakes or crabs, and there were heaps of dirt in several areas, not to mention algae and various vegetation.

I put my hands to my head and blanked my mind. James approached me carefully and reassured me.

"Thomas Thomas," he whispered with a smile, "I know how we can overcome your fear of Windrush."

I raised my head and looked at him baffled, waiting for an explanation of his statement. "Remember I'm a single-channel person," I said trying to understand his facial expression, "I need clarification."

"Thomas Thomas," he replied with a huge smile, "we're going to the river now."

I immediately knew what my reaction should be; it didn't often come so quickly to me, but that day I was shocked as few times before.

"No, no, no," I became nervous as I swayed back and forth.

"What's the worst thing that could happen?" he asked, looking me straight in the eyes and sitting down on the ground.

"An anaphylactic shock," I reflected after thinking about the worst-case scenarios, and seeing his confused look, I explained, "James, I could have nausea, difficulty breathing, rapid heartbeat, anxiety, dry mouth, burning or numbness of the tongue, itching, skin infections, and potential death."

"Okay," he smiled, "I thought it would be something worse."

And he started to descend the treehouse stairs until he touched the ground.

"Come on," and I followed him. I'm not sure why I did it, maybe because it was what a friend would do, and I was learning to be a good one.

I'll give you a piece of advice you should keep in mind in the future: never wear a raincoat and rain boots in the summer, not even to face your greatest fear; you'll sweat all over your body like never before. That said, I should start from the moment we left our road. I want to make it clear that what I did was a choice and a consequence of the heat that day, which most likely affected my limbic system, and my desire to maintain my first friendship intact.

Did I do it voluntarily? No.

Would I have done it alone? No.

Would I do it again? No.

Do I regret it? I can't give you an exact answer; you already know that I'm not good at controlling my emotions; imagine being under pressure.

"Are you ready?" he asked as we headed towards Bourton's main street, and seeing that I didn't respond, he tried to reassure me, "You'll have a wonderful feeling once it's over. It often happens when someone overcomes a fear. You'll see."

We walked in silence for a moment, and I began to notice my legs much heavier than usual until I had to stop.

"Thomas Thomas?" murmured James turning towards me.

"I can't do it," I confessed as I brought my hands to my head, "I can't walk."

"Thomas Thomas," he said with a whisper and smiling, "You're the most special person I've ever met in my life. You can do it."

"James," I said with a small smile, glad to have made it. "You have only lived for a fifth of your life. How do you know you won't find someone more special?"

"See, Thomas Thomas, in life you can have many certainties. You are one of mine."

I analyzed his words and smiled, but I didn't know what to say. So, I repeated a line from a movie that Mother had categorized as "funny": "Okay, that's enough, you sound like my grandma." And he let out a long laugh in the stifling air of that day.

And, without realizing it, we had already arrived in front of the river. Surprisingly, the feeling I had when we stopped halfway across the bridge that spanned it wasn't bad. And, without even thinking much of it, I had overcome my greatest fear.

"The list continues from here, Thomas Thomas," he whispered with a smile on his face as we both gazed fixedly into the water.

"There's no hurry," I replied smiling, glad to have succeeded.

"Of course not," affirmed James. "We have all the time in the world."

And as I turned to give him a knowing look, he had already vanished into the heavy August air.

The Excellence of Air

Joana Marucci Compte

As soon as his fingers caressed the keys and the melody filled the room, there was not a soul who did not turn to watch him, all enchanted by the magic of his talent. And who could I fool? I watched him with my mouth agape, trying to absorb all the sensations conveyed by the music, by *his* music. Everything I felt every time he played remained impressed within me for hours, feelings clinging to a soul tormented by a thousand emotions, cheeks red and flushed like my heart. Oh, my heart, it couldn't beat any stronger or intensely. It is always said that love makes it beat as if it is about to burst out of your chest, and despite my deep hatred for *clichés*, I couldn't help but feel that same sensation.

My life was not like those in books and movies; my life was one of those ordinary lives that are fortunate enough to be touched by some spark of extraordinariness. It was an existence that to many would have seemed ordinary, yet to me, it felt like being trapped in one of those beautiful dreams, the ones that make you wake up with a smile that you can't explain in words. The orchestra was absorbing, as I had been warned by my music teacher since forever; the *Santa Cecilia Academy* was not for everyone, it was rumored that you had to have a gift to get to play there. I had never even considered the possibility of being part of something so grand, so magnificent, and yet...

The youth orchestra I was part of counted a hundred and twenty young people between fourteen and twenty-one years old. Do me a favor and try to imagine it: a hundred and twenty instruments all playing in unison in the largest hall of the Rome Auditorium, with an audience accustomed to the professional orchestra composed of the greatest players nationally. Saying it

was an honor, and more like a dream than reality, was an understatement. Every time I think about it, I hear Dvorak's Symphony in my head, my favorite; despite anything the future may hold, I knew I would never forget the first oboe solo as the very first thing in *The New World*. It was simply superb, something almost unnatural; and it was me who had the opportunity to play it along with other young people who, like me, lived for this opportunity.

But among those hundred young people, there was one who stood out. Many would have told me that it was love that blinded me, that elevated him too high, but he was simply different. The way he bowed his head and stared at the keys before playing made anyone who knew something about music sigh; the way he played any piece, with a noteworthy ease, fascinated entire halls; and the way he interspersed smiles among the musical notes gave me chills. To say he was excellent was an understatement. It was the kind of thing said about top students, or artists who gather an enthusiastic audience. But he was something else, he was profoundly *different*. And I couldn't help but want to uncover all the mysteries that surrounded him.

"Isn't it magnificent?" he asked me when he approached me for the first time. It was audition day, and I was staring at the enormous stage in silence, sighing at the sight of all those instruments showboating.

"It still feels like I'm living a joke from the universe," I replied to the boy who had appeared out of nowhere and had his eyes fixed on the grand piano.

"Believe me, the feeling never goes away," he said when our eyes met for the first time. "Break a leg," he said, but when I turned to respond, he had already vanished into the darkness of the auditorium.

At that moment, I had no idea who he was or what I would come to feel for him in the not-so-distant future, but I laughed at the

mystery that had surrounded our first meeting.

I didn't see him again until a few hours after my audition; I had impressed the director of the Academy, so I stayed at the Conservatory for the next four hours of rehearsals. I saw him there, playing the piano, mastering it indeed, and joking with one of the judges, making it clear he wasn't a novice like me. I tried to get him out of my head and focused on my movements, trying to minimize simple lapses in concentration. After all, I was playing where all the greats had played at least once in their careers.

"You were thinking of me," I heard him say behind me, his head tilted down to watch how I adjusted my oboe.

"Excuse me?" I asked, slightly stuttering, puzzled by his words and just by the fact that he addressed them to me.

"During your audition," he replied with a half-smile, "you were thinking of me." I masked the embarrassment on my face with confusion, trying to avoid eye contact with his deep green eyes.

"I have no idea what you're talking about," I huffed after a moment of hesitation, closed my case, and stood up.

"I'm not complaining," he said as soon as I turned my back and started walking towards the stairs of the stage, "and I didn't say I'm innocent of doing the same thing."

Struck by his words, I turned around and saw his face illuminated by the huge lights, a big smile and hopeful eyes.

"See you tomorrow," I murmured as I headed towards the exit, shaking my head but with a shy smile that I tried to hide from him.

Trouble, I thought to myself, that boy will bring nothing but trouble.

At that moment, I couldn't have imagined what was about to happen, or how

my first love would come to change me.

I want to spare you the ordinariness that surrounds every teenage love because ours was no different from the others. He was excellence personified, and yet as soon as he was beside me, holding my hand or whispering in my ear how much he loved my dark eyes, I forgot the sighs of his audience and remembered that he was *mine alone*. Not in the possessive sense of the word, but I knew that out of all the hundred and nineteen young people, he had approached *me*. ...

What made the fury grow inside me the most was the fact that, after all, I couldn't turn off my feelings even when he played. Even today, I struggle to feel nothing when I hear about him, and hiding it from everyone is not easy. What fills me with anger is the awareness that no one ever knew anything about us, and no one except us will ever know. No knowing glances from family members as soon as one of his songs plays on the radio, no condolences from friends, or awkward silences when talking about his magnificent concerts. No one knew anything, yet the pain consumed me inside. Betrayal seemed much worse than a broken heart due to lack of love or passion; it was a sharp pain that only caused misery, misery for both parties: the betrayer and the betrayed. Betrayal left me with a taste of agony and guilt. I blamed myself because I didn't know any better. After all, *he* was excellence personified, and I was just the cause of his setbacks. My life had come to resemble the crossroads described by Manzoni: I had come to a crossroads and had turned my back on the world, letting selfishness and indifference prevail. "We must get used to the idea that at the most important crossroads in our life there are no signs," I heard a voice behind me say. As soon as I turned around, he smiled at me with his old but very green eyes and added, "Ernest Hemingway."

"Professor," I sighed with a weary smile, "Good morning."

"You mentioned Don Abbondio and the thugs; you compared your life to that crossroad," he said affirmatively as he stroked his white beard, as if attesting to a fact. "I liked it, Aria. It's one of your best so far."

"Who would have thought that nineteenth-century literature would help me write argumentative essays," I replied jokingly, playing with my brown hair.

"I did," he asserted with an offended gesture, "I always said so."

Winter gave way to spring, and with it, my feelings matured; guilt and resentment gave way to a bearable emptiness, one of those voids that don't leave but don't scream for attention. I knew for sure that still seeing him as perfection was not part of the third stage of separation, or anxiety, because I wasn't the only one considering him as such. According to the internet, I had reached the stage of acceptance, I knew it, yet I refused to think that we had been like other people. I didn't want to follow an online guide to use when getting broken up with; I wanted to continue to think that our story was unique, different from all the others. Ah, how naive I was. I think love fools you like this continuously; it claims to be different from all the others, and yet you also enclose yourself in a bubble isolated from the outside world with your loved one. And when the bubble bursts and everything ends, you too fall from a height and break. ...

"Do you know what my wife said to me when we were twenty as soon as I left her for the first and last time?" he asked one morning while I sat at the front row desk of an empty classroom. I looked up from the book I was reading and shook my head.

"I had beautiful answers for the questions you never asked," he quoted, his eyes fixed on the wall behind me, lost gaze and a smile that I couldn't describe, "It was at that exact moment that I knew I would marry her."

"But hadn't you just left her, Professor?" I asked in surprise and more

interest. "Words can change the world, Aria. And with those words she said, I realized that she was my world, and I didn't want to change that at all."

That afternoon at home, as I watched the flowers starting to bloom on the tree in front of my window, I reflected on everything the Professor had said. *She was my world. It was her.* And just when I thought I had finally silenced the complaints of my broken heart, everything seemed to come alive again: my beating heart, his fingers caressing the keys, my oboe in *The New World*, his emanated excellence, his arm around my waist, his frantic breath on my neck. Everything that made me love him came back to me like a gust of cold wind that gets to your bones. And in that moment, all the progress I had deluded myself into making vanished brutally into nothingness, and all that remained of me was an empty body staring at the blooming flowers of spring. ...

It was my father who gave me my name; the explanation for his decision was that as soon as he saw me for the first time, I gave him the air he didn't even know he was missing. But what else could one expect from one's own parents if not admiration and devoted love? At that stage of my life, all I could wonder was how he managed to breathe without me if I couldn't do it myself. Ever since I talked to the Professor, all I could think was that I had never been his world, or at least not the way he had been mine. And all I could do was sit and watch the flowers from my room window, miserably thinking about everything we could have had, as I promised myself I would never do for any boy again. Yet, even though I was aware that I was letting life pass in front of my eyes, I couldn't do anything else. I had taken two steps forward and five back, and my soul seemed to have shattered permanently.

"The smile allows the soul to breathe," he said one morning

in May while I nibbled on my sandwich, "Fabrizio Caramagna."

"Not today, Professor," I muttered with a vacant look, "Not today."

"The importance of the smile must be learned," he replied with a smile.

"And the most effective way is through stupid quotes?" I asked, sighing.

"If they were stupid, they wouldn't be listened to."

"Well, today I don't feel like listening to them," I replied with unnecessary impertinence, and I got up from the desk.

"The beauty of written words," he began to say as I headed towards the door, "is that they will always be here with us."

The stars shone in the sky, and crickets sung in the early summer atmosphere; the warm breeze that came through the window slightly moved the pages of the book I was reading. I couldn't help but look up amidst every sentence to stare at that dark and quiet night, thinking about the Professor's words. He had once told me that I shouldn't be afraid of anything and that I should never listen to anyone who wanted to diminish me. "A single heart can defeat an army of millions of consciences," he said. "The heart is the world of passions, and the path of passions is the most adamant and sure there is."

I deeply hated that he was right; not because it was him trying to help me with his words, but because I couldn't stand not being able to move forward on my own. His persistence was admirable; he hadn't even asked for explanations for my strange behavior or missed smiles, yet he always knew what to say, even though I was too proud to admit he was right. ...

"Life is a long fall, Aria. And it is crucial to know how to fall," he asserted one morning without raising his eyes from the newspaper he was reading.

Finals week was about to begin, so I had become too accustomed to the

quiet of his classroom, perfect for some study time. It was that morning that I became aware that he knew. "What do you mean by that?" I asked with a raised eyebrow.

"I wouldn't want you to feel like I'm sticking my nose where it doesn't belong," he began after a long sigh, "but you need to know that falls for love are the worst kind; especially if you are not the one stumbling, but someone is pushing you."

"How do you know it's about love?"

"I knew it the moment you crossed my door that winter morning, Aria. That expression of yours has been had by billions before you."

"And why do I feel like I'm alone?" I asked, attempting to contain my tears. "If all the mysteries in life had answers, nothing would make sense," he said, shrugging. "Nothing makes sense even now, Professor," I bowed my head and watched the tears wetting my book.

"You're wrong," he said with a half-smile, "words always make sense, it's when the wrong people put them together that everything collapses."

I was doing better. I was better, and I finally felt it inside. Maybe it was like the first time, and I was just a naive girl dreaming of moving on, but I wanted to continue thinking that after all that had happened, I was better. I wanted to think about starting to live fully as anyone would deserve; I wanted to enjoy the summer and the oboe solo in *The New World* like before, I wanted to *live*, not just be alive.

The school year was coming to an end, and with it, the worries were decreasing; the early June heat filled the classrooms with souls thinking about the beach, and all I could think about was moving forward. I found myself staring less and less out my bedroom window. My heart seemed to have been put back together with glue, tape, and any known adhesive substance on earth; and I was fully aware that every single piece had been

saved by the Professor's words.

"Do you know the only way to measure how much you love someone?" he asked me on the last afternoon of school as I put away all my books.

"No," I replied, raising my head slightly to look at him.

"To lose them," he affirmed with a sad smile that mixed reminiscence and melancholy. "How beautiful the world would be if we didn't have to learn to say goodbye to the people we love," I said, getting closer to him.

"Even then, we wouldn't have anything. The best puzzles are the ones you can't solve until time passes, my dear Aria, and I think you've finally reached your answer."

"How do you know?" I asked with a skeptic tone.

"Because today you didn't lower your gaze even once," he affirmed with a smile that seemed full of pride, "You learned to do what must be done out of necessity, despite what you most desired has gone away."

I Feel You Linger

DeRel Morris

The house we lived in has lies cemented as the foundation, walls that were built so that pain couldn't break through, and doors so heavy that it keeps everything out while simultaneously not letting anything in. The fence outside is wearing down. We haven't been able to see over it in years. I wonder how many. When I venture in the yard I'm now able to stand on my toes, reach my hand up, and feel. I can feel what's over the fence. Sometimes it hurts and sometimes I feel beauty. Glamour. My heart skips a beat and my stomach churns. I'm thrown into a state of anxiety that through the kaleidoscope, I feel calm. It's been so long that I've lost the ability to put that feeling into words. I wonder if I'll be able to get it back. But I guess none of that matters now- or it's the only thing that does.

POETRY

You Can't Judge My Pain

Joana Marucci Compte

you see weakness
in my tears

you see a woman
behind some years

a victim
who's self-proclaimed

a little girl
who's a bit insane

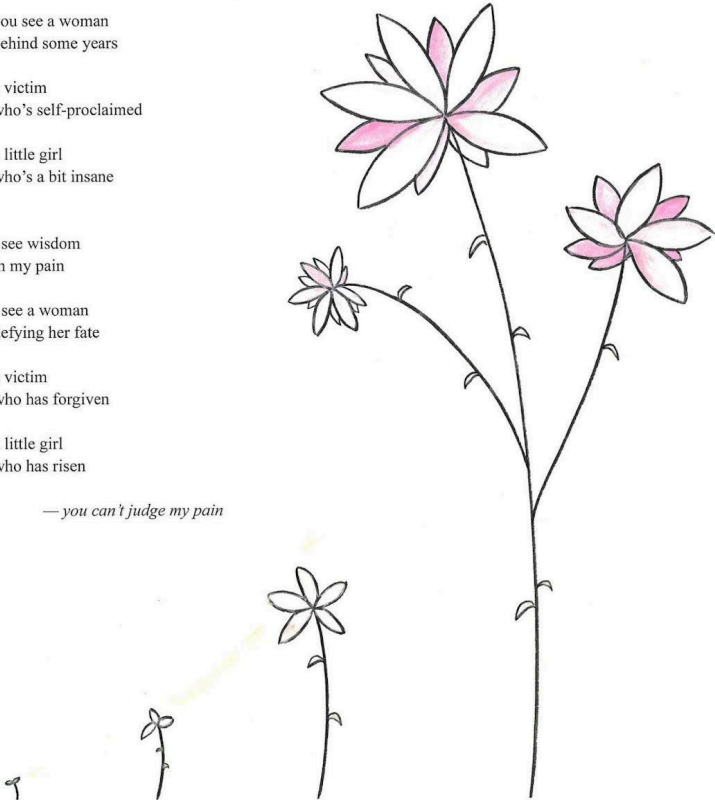
i see wisdom
in my pain

i see a woman
defying her fate

a victim
who has forgiven

a little girl
who has risen

— *you can't judge my pain*



Yesterday

Joana Marucci Compte

yesterday i was told
when you invaded my temple
you did not deem worthy enough destruction
to injure my body

you did not deem enough
to break my being
every single inch left
in me of decency

you decided to break me once again
as if my health was just a game
and you screamed to the world
what you had done to me

you did so in between laughs
with antiquated jokes
knowing that those laughs
would find their way to me

i heard it from a familiar voice
who laughingly told
with absolute conviction
the version i knew you would give

but naive of me
(still hoping it was a mirage)
to think you would give it to yourself
not to others

yesterday i was told
when you think the worst has passed
life is cruel and makes you question
whether God has ever loved you

because how could any God
allow another being to
rip me apart until
there was nothing left of me

how could any God
allow a stranger's hands
to seize my body
as it had no name

as if my father hadn't
taught me how easy it is to love
as if my mother hadn't
created me to live and dream away
as if my sister hadn't
heard me say how important it is to pray

yesterday i was told
when you invaded my temple
life was not done
being cruel

— yesterday



The Other Woman

Sydnei Cummings

I figured it out. My true identity.

I'm a train wreck. A homewrecker.

I'm the other woman.

The understudy to the lead.

The backup option

When Option A won't give it up

Option B will be there at the drop of a hat

She gets a "goodnight" text

While he hits send me a "u up?" text

She gets to be paraded while the sun is up

While I slip into his sheets when the moon is at its brightest

He tells us the same sweet nothings

But they hold heavier with her

It's not like I tried to be deceitful to the eye

I asked all the questions and received nothing but lies

"Blame the girl" they say but that doesn't stand true

She didn't break my trust, she wasn't the side

She wasn't the root of the problem

It was you and all your fucking lies.

Sweet Nothings

Sydnei Cummings

I love-hate the way you make me feel
You speak to me as if i'm lying in bed next to you
Holding me to your chest, whispering sweet nothings into my ear
You tell me what feels good, what will ignite me
I don't need to hear it and I want to hear it at the same time
Call it lack of praise, starved for recognition
Your compliments are surface level yet they dive into my waters
Swimming to my core and destroying everything in its path
Flattery used to create a religion that only I believe in
One where faith is faulty if your words don't come in time
I feast on your lies while you prey on my weakness
Broken and needy fallen at your knees
And what do you do? Save me?
No. You condemn me to more
You play with my heart like a puppet on strings
You stir with my feelings the way one stirs the pot
You use my body as if I have another
A builder disguised as a destroyer
You continue to hold me close to you
And whisper to me sweet nothings

Sunshine

Mariona Bolao

i've never been big on religion
but when
baltic clearwater eyes swash through the four walls i remain
frozen in place
i wish
i pray
i beg

to be engulfed by them
just one split second
just one short moment in time
does she know my life began in the ocean too?

does she know
her fair hair dances in every step
dazzling blinding hypnotizing
what would happen if i never looked away?
i can't hear my thoughts when the sun is walking by dawn
daylight
dusk

and she's quiet
but she doesn't need words to curve the corner of her lips how
jealous are the arches
when northern lights just do it better

i just want to hold her hand and tell her that she's pretty tell her that
she's pretty even if that's not even close even though pretty never
rose soaring waves
or brighten the darkest skies
or shake heaven and earth
only with that blush

and maybe just maybe
when she looks back at me
she understands what i mean

but for now i'll be content
with shy smiles
watching my sunshine just walk by.

Second Best

McKenna Christensen

Second best,
That's me.
Never first, never chosen,
Second best.

Not the beautiful, smart, funny friend,
The quiet, lonely, awkward character that nobody can quite
remember the name of. The person who exists only at your
convenience,
A friend at your whim,
Second best.

I'm tired, sad, lonely, depressed, yet no one notices,
Of course it's that way.
I only exist in between the lines,
A plot device to aid in the antagonist's crusade,
Always out of focus,
A mere blip on the screen.
Second best

God, I want to be seen, to be noticed, to be in focus for once,
Something other than a tree doomed to be seen
only in the background. I want someone to see
ME,
The ugly, depressed, sad, lifeless bark hiding behind a facade of beautiful
flowers and leaves, So I can shed the mask that I am so desperate to throw
away.
But until someone extends that branch, I will remain here,
Not first, still unchosen,
Second best.

Often
Joana Marucci Compte

i don't think about it often
however

often
i wake up and
there are these feelings
i just can't shake off
it all comes in waves
like those of a storm in open sea
and then there's this notion
of uneasiness
that is just constant
like a salty marine breeze

often
it feels nothing like a breeze

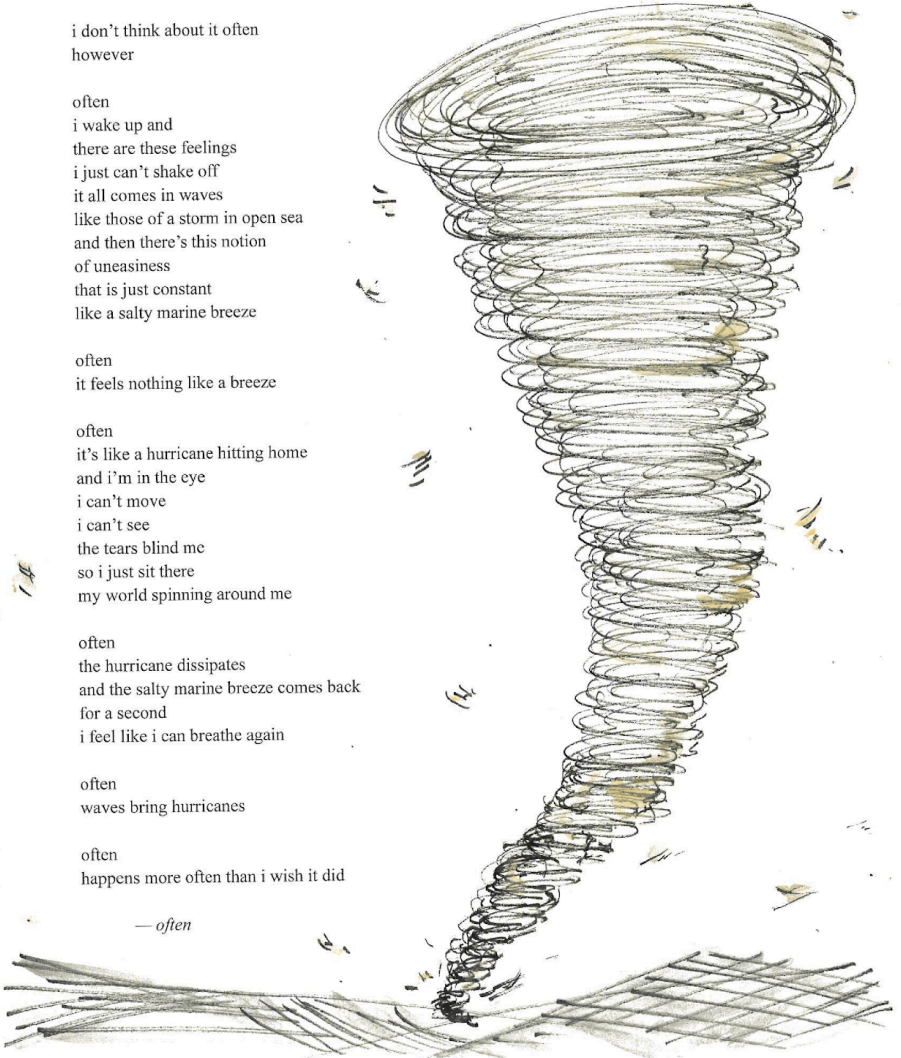
often
it's like a hurricane hitting home
and i'm in the eye
i can't move
i can't see
the tears blind me
so i just sit there
my world spinning around me

often
the hurricane dissipates
and the salty marine breeze comes back
for a second
i feel like i can breathe again

often
waves bring hurricanes

often
happens more often than i wish it did

— often



Not Everything is Black and White

Alexandra Lorenzo

You are black and I am white

But do not tell me

I did not live my life

We all just tryna get by

I will never assume to know your struggle I'm just tryna make it in
this huddle

I love the way I grew up, I had what I needed But don't forget, I did
what I needed

To survive in a life that wasn't mine

I did my time and now it's time to shine Can't say I didn't go through what I
went through Just cuz you deem it not true

Just cuz I was raised one way and look another Does not mean I did not
come from my mother

My Mother

Joana Marucci Compte

i fear showing my mother
my art
because that equals
showing my mother
my heart

and what is she going to think
as she reads through these pages
and learns about
strange men
appropriating themselves
of her baby

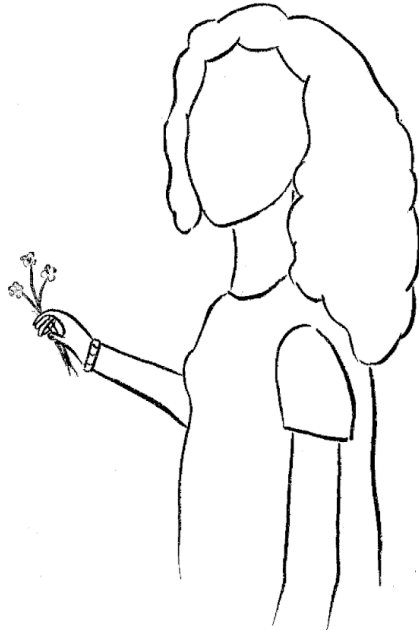
and what is she going to think
as she reads through these pages
and learns about
such baby
hiding the truth
about the abuse

how do i tell her
that the life she created
was shattered
by what she always tried
to protect it from

how will she react
when she learns
i broke my own heart
so i wouldn't hurt hers

how will she know
that the home she nursed
will never feel
safe anymore

how do i tell her
that the life she gave me
although broken
has nothing to do
with hers



Letter To My Dad

Adelia Timmer

With unmatched strength in his mighty hands,
a warrior stands in the realm of bravery.
He fights for justice with a heart so pure,
I'm glad to name him my father, my hero.

You overcome conflicts, both big and minor,
Yet you never fall.
Your bravery shines brightly,
leading us through the darkest night.

Every challenge you encounter is met head-on,
without hesitation by you.
You instilled in me the virtues of fortitude, bravery, and persistence,
When you told me to never give up.

You are my father, a tower of strength,
more than just a warrior.
You cheer me up when I'm down,
through acts of generosity and love.

So, here's to you, my mighty hero,
for you will always stand in my heart.
You are the hero I embrace,
You're brave and brimming with elegance.

Let Me Be Me
Joana Marucci Compte

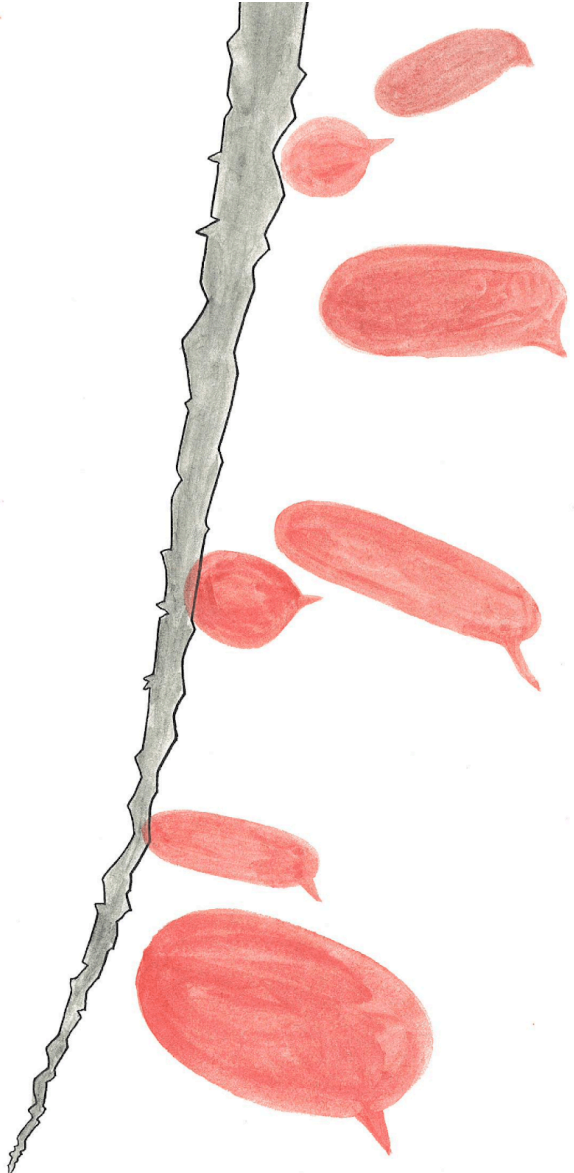
the crack in the wall
that sets me back
to medieveal times
the crack in the bubble
that brings me down
to my naive mind

i somehow get distracted
and trauma slips in
i thought my defensive ways
would keep me shielded
but once again
i end up guilty

it's almost as if
while strange words break in
i am left unopinionated
scarce of ideas and dreams
while others' words
become sacred

let me deal
with my pain
the way i wish
let me glue
all the cracks
the way i need

— *let me be me*



Guest
Joana Marucci Compte

every time
i try to write
about love
trauma knocks
on the door

it quietly comes in
it doesn't even
feel like an intruder
it doesn't bust
the door open

it's more of an
uninvited guest
that lets itself in
with a bottle of
merlot in hand

why does it
inhabit my body
and my mind
it owns
my every night
and it does so
as if it was its right

so how can i write
about love
when all there is
inside of me
is pain



Growing Up

Joana Marucci Compte

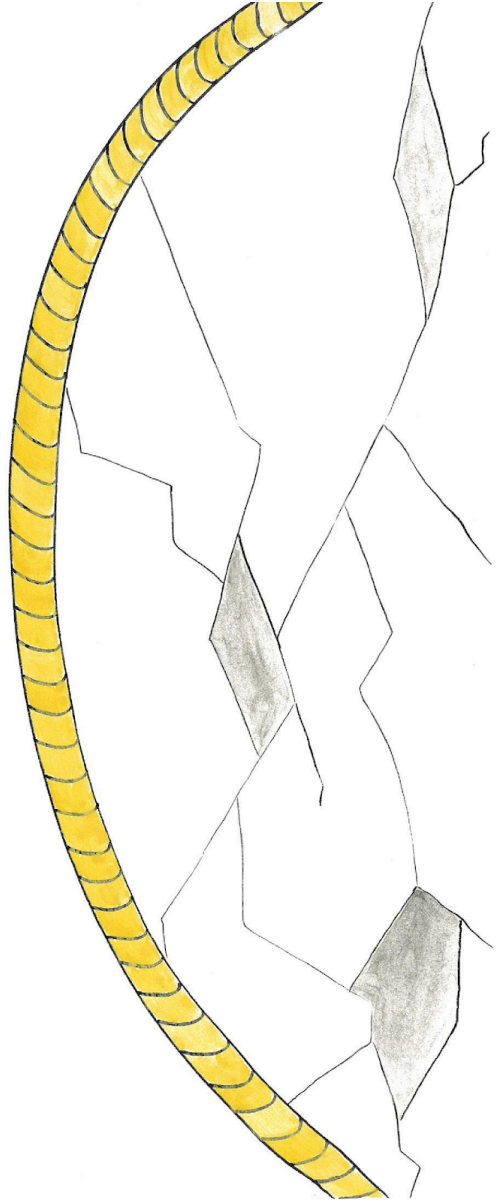
growing up
i didn't endure
starvation
from lack of resources
i endured it
through the shaming thoughts
that told my mind every day
i wasn't enough

growing up
i didn't endure
pain
from unloving parents
i endured it
through strange hands
that took my body as if
it was theirs to have

growing up
i didn't endure
abandonment
from a selfish father
i endured it
through the understanding
that heartbreak can end
somebody's life

growing up
i didn't endure
discrimination
from the color of my skin
i endured it
through the thickness
of my accent
trying to fit in

growing up
i endured
and to this day
i endure



Gone

Joana Marucci Compte

dear abuser of mine,

i have been dying to tell you
about how far i have come
about how much love and heartbreak
i have encountered
since you made me numb
about how much strength
i have in me now

when i thought you had broken me
locked me in a tiny box of shame
you made it so i would take the blame
must've been what i wore
must've been what i said

before the storm passed
i let myself go
i let go of standards
set the bar too low
stayed stuck in the past
but

today i am no longer scared
i am not vulnerable
not a girl with a peanut allergy
who carries herself too cautiously

today i water my life
and my garden looks a green
so bright that it makes me smile
just at its sight

today i stop worrying about time
i stop obsessing over clocks
and i simply start living

today i keep my fingernails intact
and i curate them
like i wish to do with my soul

today i am no longer made of
a fragile cotton but instead
a beautiful and soft one

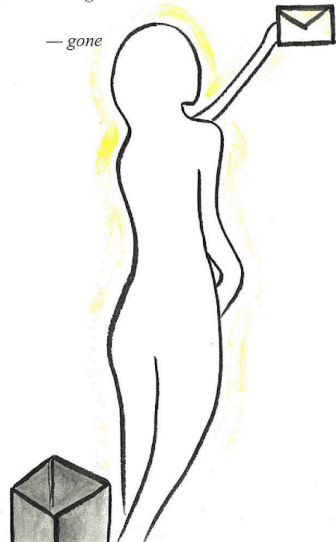
today i can look at myself in the mirror
and forget about the judgements
i portray myself how i want to the world

today i control the wild horse
that you let out
and left in a locked precinct

today i don't wish to forget the blood
you spilled between my legs
but i embrace it

today i put all my pain in an envelope
and i send it off
no address on the front

because i don't actually care
for you to hear these things
you are now *gone*



Dear ____
Belle Batterton

Why? What if?
Those are the two questions that I find I ask myself the most.
Why wasn't I enough?
What if I would've been your first choice?
What if you would've stayed?
I don't think you realize how much I miss the sound of your voice. I
miss the way you would say my name.
I don't think anyone else will ever say it the same.
Did I do something?
Or did you just get tired of trying?
Was there something I could've said?
Or did you always know that this is how it would end?
Why? What if?
Having you around was like having a shelter in a storm.
You were always someone I could run to.
I miss being welcomed into your open arms.
Maybe I should've always known.
Or maybe I should've listened to everyone when they said, "get over it." Or
maybe I should keep hoping that you'll come back.
Why did you have to leave me alone?
What if I meant more to you?
I think about you late at night when I can't sleep.
I also think about you in the middle of class when I can't focus. No
matter what I say, you're always on my mind.
Maybe that's why I always try to hide.
But apparently I'm not hard to find.
I remember the times when you would bring a smile to my face.
Was I really that easy to replace?
Why? What if?
"Don't forget about me," you always say.
Funny for you to think I could forget someone who was important to me. I
think you're gonna be the one to forget about me.

What if we aren't friends anymore?
Why can't I just ask you these questions?
At this point I don't think things can get much worse.
Oh well I guess I'll see you in an alternate universe...

A Tale of True Love

Adelia Timmer

In the pure, clean air, during a basketball game,
a love affair ignites.

Dedication and perseverance make an enticing combination,
as each dribble tells a greater tale.

On the court, hustle with integrity,
For hard work pays off in all you do.
Sweat drops down, a testament to effort,
And overcoming obstacles to maintain the dream.

The sound of sneakers squeaking on the ground echoes the wars waged,
and the triumphs that have been achieved.

Basketball, a stage for the realization of aspirations,
A passionate symphony with an undiscovered story.

Set on Silent

Drake Tipton

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

Filled bed.

Drake Tipton

I sleep in a bed stacked with clothes
Not because I am too lazy to fold
But because I forget what it feels like to have a filled bed
I forget the way my body can bend
I forget every curve inside my bones
My king sized bed
Felt the same as a twin
When you came in and filled my bed
I crawled in bed
And bended at will
To fit around you
I sleep in a bed stacked with clothes
I am not lazy
I am just sad
Alone is all I'll ever be
So I lay in a bed stacked high with clothes.

Crane

Joana Marucci Compte

you tore me apart
broke me into tiny pieces
and just walked out
you left me to pick up
every single fragment
still lingering around

the problem is when you left
you took the glue with you
threw away the tape
got rid of every bonding agent

all you left me with
was this heartache
and the few parts of me
that were magically still there

so all there was left
for me to do
once you did not even care enough
to leave me with some tools

was to go back
to every single spot
where you spilled
my tears and blood

i went back to
every single bathroom
that contained my screams

i went back to
every single bedsheet
that muffled my tears

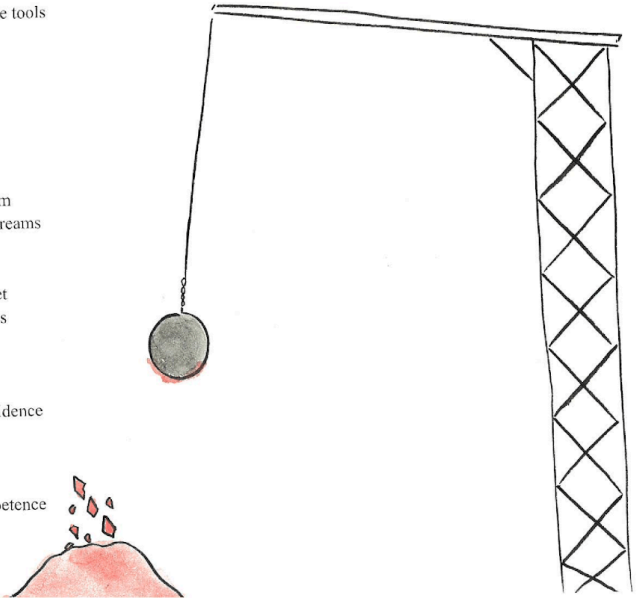
i went back to
every single mirror
that ruined my confidence

i went back to
every single text
that killed my competence

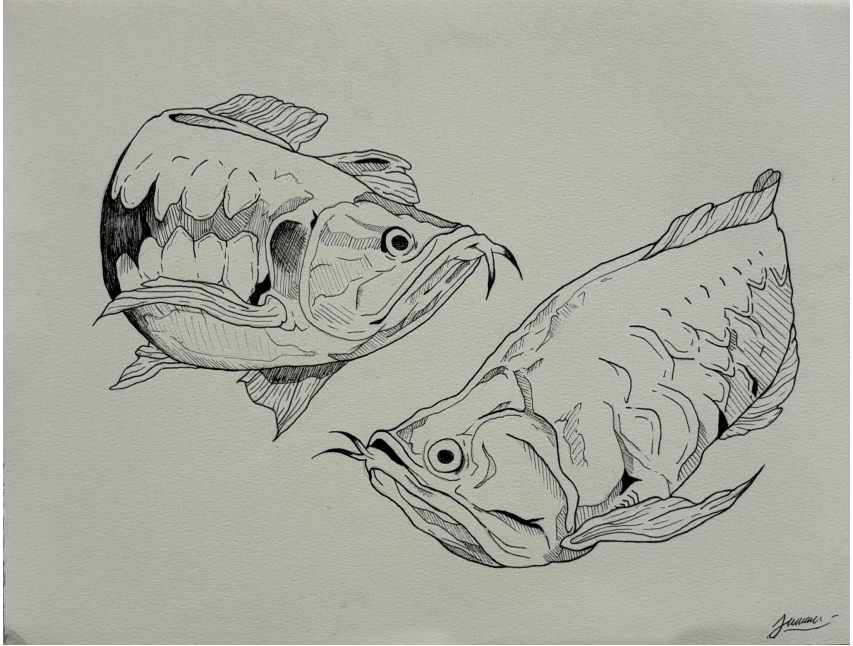
and bit by bit
i found the missing pieces
glued them back
and even when i couldn't
i built them from scratch

and deep down i'm ashamed
i let another being
wear me out to the point
of tearing myself apart

but today i am
a whole, unified person
and all you are is
a torn down crane



ARTWORK



Arrawana, ink
Juliana Blackburn



Awake

Jericka Renner

Bird, ballpoint pen
Juliana Blackburtn





Untitled

Estefano Del Águila Delgado



Timeless Blooms

Chané Higgs



Untitled

Sommer Cedeno



Untitled
Sommer Cedeno



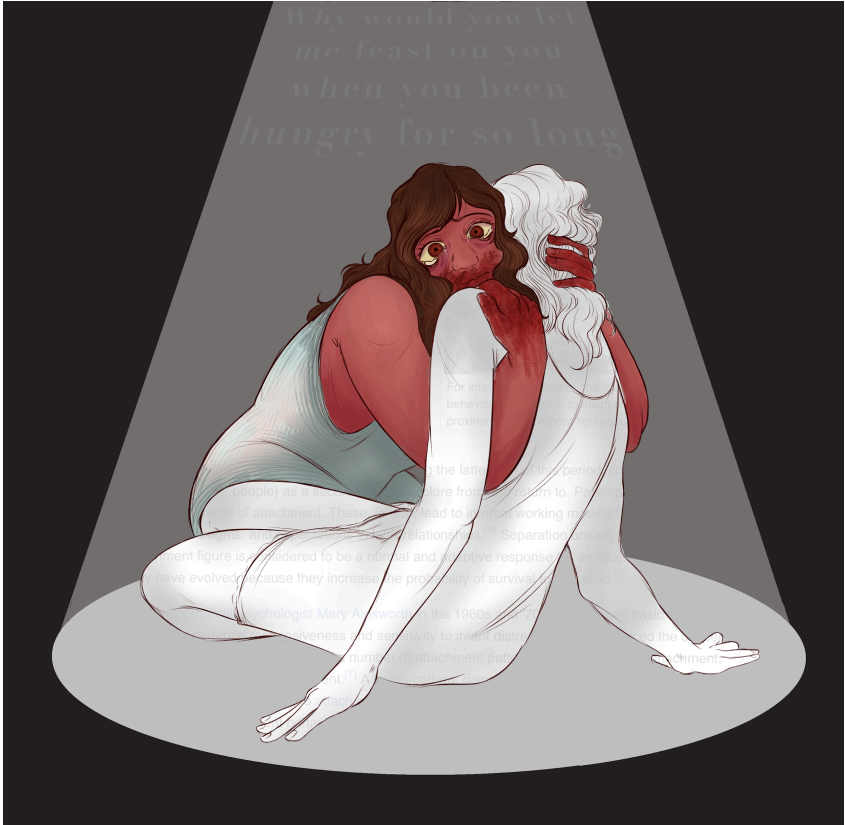
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Juliana Blackburn



The Adventures Of Deer Gal And Demon Crush

Sophie Cott



My Doctors Say it's Survivors Guilt, I Call It Being A Daughter

Sophie Cott



At Least It's a Beautiful Night

Sophie Cott



My Character Growth is Like A Tumor

Sophie Cott



Started to Feel Like My Place

Sophie Cott

CREATIVE NONFICTION

Anatomy Lessons

DeRel Morris

In elementary school we were taught about the different systems of the body. I would trace food through the digestive system, trace breath through the respiratory system, and blood through the cardiovascular. Then one day as I got older I wanted to trace where my feelings went. It led me to explore the feeling of grief and where it lives inside of me. Through anatomical archival research, I found that I have no physical proof of where it lives. It can only be felt. It churns my stomach like the big drop on a roller coaster, Sleeps in my chest, and builds in my mind. These are things that can't be seen on an X-Ray so they can't be validated, right? Grieving the loss of someone that is still alive builds a school inside of me called contradiction. That is where my feelings visit .Grief is love with nowhere to go. It's the only memory of them that I have left. My therapist tells me to let go of grief as it can wear on a person. I tell her that to let go of grief means to let go of you again and I don't think I can do that. Because I wasn't taught where feelings go, they will forever wonder only to never find a home.

Hell Week: Seasoning a Counselor

Daniel Ripley

Picture this: it's early July, 2021, at Wonderland Camp for people with disabilities in Rocky Mount, Missouri. It's the end of a long and hot Thursday, and almost the end of a long and hot week. One of my colleagues is struggling to lift a camper's legs, the other colleague is distracting the other campers so they don't stare, and I'm knuckle-deep under this 65 year-old man's ass trying to get the soiled diaper out from underneath him. This is my Hell Week at WC.

I love work in the humanities because it always feels jury rigged. Everything looks like it was thrown together to test an idea and nobody's taken it down yet. There's also a general understanding that Shit Happens. The same things go for working at Wonderland Camp, the cheapest disability camp in the tri-state area. Shit Happens at Camp. Because so much unplanned Shit Happens, it's super common (and even expected) for any given week to be someone's worst week. Camp is chaotic, so inevitably someone's gonna have a bad time. That bad time is "Hell Week," so dearly termed by people in the field. Everybody has a personal hell; similarly, everybody who works at summer camp has a personal hell week. It's shitty, but it's a rite of passage. You can't say you've experienced camp until you've been physically shit on by campers, rhetorically shit on by higher-ups, grabbed, kicked and yelled at for five days straight. Well, I can say I've experienced Camp.

My Hell Week takes place from July 4th to July 9th this summer. In that fiery hell are three human pillars from which all my suffering springs: my cabin leader (Bob), my other counselor (Braden), and my 1:1 camper (for HIPAA purposes, we'll call him Ladykiller).

Let's start by introducing Bob. Bob's a dick. He's an old head and he's uncannily like my stepdad: he's a tough-love kinda guy, he doesn't like to talk about what makes him upset, I can't tell if he's joking or being mean, and he consistently disregards my opinions and feelings. He even goes by Bob (my stepdad's nickname among his friends)! I find myself looking over my shoulder, wondering when Bob will start yelling and throwing beer bottles at me. That doesn't create the best work environment.

Part of why Bob is such a massive wiener is my other counselor, Braden. Being as short staffed as we are, WC can only afford to have four staff members to a cabin: a cabin leader (manager), a program staff (usually doing their own shit separate from the cabin), and two counselors. Another side effect of being short staffed is that WC has to keep the incompetent workers - the employees who are NOT good at their job, but haven't done anything to deserve firing. To balance out the shitty employees and the decent ones and avoid campers having a cabin full of irresponsible staff, WC management typically pairs good counselors with the bad ones. I'm a good counselor, Braden is a bad one. His ass has no initiative, no gumption, and generally no clue what the fuck is happening. Bob, being the tough-love middle school teacher that he is, decides he's not going to TALK to Braden about his issues without it being a "Big Deal," so he instead lumps all of Braden's responsibilities on my back. That includes: doubling up on cabin duty shifts (from 10-12 each night while campers are asleep, a staff member has to stay in the cabin and awake in case of chaos), doing ALL of the personal care (emptying catheter bags, cleaning poop, changing diapers), shepherding campers from activity to activity, and just generally being the Mom in a cabin full of boys. It's more work than I'm getting paid for, and I'm kinda pissed about it, but I carry on. This is our

campers' one week at camp this summer, I have to make it good for them.

This week our campers, for the most part, are pretty tame. This is another week in the old guy cabin, so I'm expecting a lot of card games and checkers. They like making jokes, one of them has some anger issues, and one of them steals stuff. There are a few things to watch for, but nobody's a biter.

The biggest challenge this week comes from my 1:1 camper, Ladykiller. He's over 300 pounds, in a kick-ass wheelchair, legally blind, and has to strain himself to speak. His range of mobility with his arms is fucked, and we need an air compressed lift (a Hoyer Lift) to move him from his chair to bed. He wears diapers, has a catheter, uses a C-PAP, and has a whole list of other personal-care fun facts. This is by-far the most personal care I've had to do for a camper, and it's *my* job to do everything and delegate jobs if I want help. It's fair to say that looking at this 300 lb. the mountain of responsibility is daunting, and I'm pretty overwhelmed.

The first night of any week brings its own challenges, and the first night of this week was HARD. The other staff in the cabin get the other campers to bed alright, but my job isn't so easy. I've never USED a Hoyer Lift before, and suddenly I'm expected to use it flawlessly and in a timely manner. It takes me an hour to get Ladykiller into bed, and just as we lay him down for the night he shits himself. Not an innocent little poopy before bed, no, this is a HUMONGOUS MONSTER DOOKIE straight from the bowels of his bowels. It takes another 20 minutes to clean that shit up, and Bob decides he needs to be a mean little bitch about the whole situation taking so long.

At our meeting that night Bob, exhausted from NOT HELPING, is complaining about the hour of me fiddling to figure out the Hoyer. He says that there's "no reason it should have taken that long," but then insists that

trying to *talk* about it and *plan* for the next time is a waste of time. He's being a real grade-A BITCH about the whole situation. It's not a fun time. I rant about him a lot during that nightly doobie (there is NO WAY I'm able to routinely clean up poop like that and NOT get stoned at some point in the week) and I go to bed a little pissed off.

The next morning starts at 5am when Ladykiller vomits in his C-PAP, is very sick, and has to go to the Emergency Room. Luckily the nursing staff is taking care of Ladykiller, but I have to go rangle with my other campers who are convinced that waking up at 5am means going on a walk at 5am away from all the staff. I'm tired, half asleep, and not having a good time and I don't get to go back to bed. I don't even get to shower to wake myself up because "our campers need us." (I'm still mad about that one)

The whole day I'm writhing at the thought of Ladykiller coming back. He intimidates me. It's hard to understand what he's saying and he requires so much personal care. I have to help him do everything at Camp, and he's not even that enthusiastic about it. Normally I can rally myself up and empathize with the camper in the face of all that ass-wiping, but for Ladykiller it's harder than that. It's hard to see him as anything other than the work he requires. I see him as my job more than I see him as human.

I power through the day somehow, still half asleep and just kind of laughing any time the day turns silent, and Ladykiller gets back from the hospital in time to go to bed. I'm anxious but I'm ready, I've been running through the "game plan" for getting him to bed efficiently. I start by emptying his catheter bag while I hope Braden sets up the Hoyer (I tell him to set it up, but it's always a gamble on whether or not he actually does it). I then strap Ladykillers sling to the

Ripley 5

Hoyer (tighter straps by the head, looser by the feet, but I don't make them so far apart so Ladykiller can land flatter in bed), unstrap him from his kick-ass chair, pump the lift, and without missing a beat I guide the lift, Braden guiding Ladykillers body and supporting his head, and lower my mans into bed. It's done, it's smoothe, and it only took ten minutes. Even Bob, at the nightly meeting, says I did a great job.

The rest of the week is smoothe in terms of getting things done efficiently, but is rough in terms of my own self care. I don't have time during the day to shower (only at night after campers go to bed), I'm barely able to brush my teeth during the day, and I'm only sleeping from 1am to 6am (if I'm lucky enough to sleep until 6. Why are old men so obsessed with waking up at that ungodly hour?) - which is partly my fault because I go smoke a doobie each night after Cabin Duty, but I'm counting that as a necessity.

During the week I get to talk to Ladykiller, like *actually* talk. Not about the task at hand, not about surface-level camp stuff, about *life*, *death*, and *true happiness*. Ladykiller hasn't always been in that kick-ass wheelchair (I can't remember the name of that specific disability), and he often thinks about the progression of how people see him - from human to workload. I remember my perception of him at the beginning of the week and I feel shallow. I feel ashamed. I think for anybody to work in the humanities, for anyone to believe in humanity, they have to believe in John Locke at least a little bit. That optimistic little Locke-fanboy on our shoulder reminds us that every person deserves life, freedom, and satisfaction, and it makes empathizing with people so much easier.

Ladykiller and I relate on a lot of levels. We both like Van Halen and their chaos, Elton John and his piano, and we both love to sit outside under the shade and enjoy a good breeze.

Ladykiller also loves talking to the ladies. He can't move his body well and he can't exactly see details on people, but he loves the gentle attention. Heck, I do too.

I power through the week and it's finally Thursday, the day of the dance. Ladykillers favorite event of the week, because he gets to talk to the ladies. My man loves talking to the ladies. He has an outfit planned and he wants to be his cleanest for the dance; Ladykiller wants to shower before the dance. That week we'd been showering in the morning and it would always take ~45 minutes. We have 30 minutes between getting back from dinner at 6:30 and the dance starting at 7:00.

I'm wholeheartedly panicking: who's going to help me? Braden doesn't help, and Bob's gonna be mean about me not being able to *lift* this 300 lb. man. Do I get a walkie and call for help? Will they think I'm less for it? Am I less for this?

As I'm losing myself in my own head, as if by divine intervention, our program staff (Joseph) enters the cabin and is here to help. Joseph is on ropes course, serves in the army, and is a streetwise Hercules to fight the rising odds (cue Bonnie Tyler). This tight beefcake of a man is able to one-man lift Ladykiller from his kick-ass wheelchair and pivot him into our not-so-kick-ass shower chair. Joseph doesn't even break a sweat when he saves me the time and the struggle of using the Hoyer and trying to remove/replace the Hoyer sling (because showers be getting things wet). Joseph also volunteers to take the reins with showering Ladykiller while I just play Igor and fetch things. This hunking CHAD, this stoic rock-climber, THIS GREEK GOD is performing Sisyphus's wet dream, giving me a moment to NOT be the one doing the most.

We get Ladykiller ready for the prom, and he's looking *fresh*. He's wearing his favorite sweatpants (his request), an X-Men t-shirt, and an old

dark red Hawaiian shirt with blue flowers.

To top it all off, his thick oval-eyed glasses make him look like Elton John if he were slightly more of a tomato.

This is it, this is the last night of the camp week, this is the light at the end of my Hell Week. This cheesy-ass camp dance means the end of the week, and it means smooth sailing until caretakers and parents come Friday morning. This is my time to boogie and let my campers mingle/be themselves. All I have to do is keep Ladykiller entertained and keep a headcount of my campers (it's not like the old men can wander off too far, but camp has conditioned me to always be counting heads).

I bring Ladykiller around the floor and I know exactly what he wants: men want ladies. There are several female coworkers whom I've had in cabins earlier in the summer and who owe me some small favor, it's time to collect. I start taking Ladykiller around and getting my coworkers to talk to him and compliment parts of his outfit; seeing Ladykillers smile when a girl says his glasses are neat makes my heart giddy. Keeping with the idea of me not doing as much during the dance, I ask one of my coworkers to hang out with Lady Killer while I go to the bathroom. She's not too happy about it, but I remind her who cleaned up all the floor piss Week 3. I get to go to the bathroom. It's blissful, I don't have to wait ten minutes for someone to hobble out, I don't have a camper who doesn't know their own strength knocking on the door, and I don't have any real rush. This bathroom trip is my momentary Nirvana.

When I go back outside I see a fair amount of campers and staff walking back to cabins. This is odd; normally a few people can be seen walking to and from cabins at any point in the dance, but not this many. What's happening? Is Ladykiller okay? ARE MY BOYS STILL THERE? I rush back and frantically do a headcount. Luckily, most of my boys are

from the same nursing home and they're pretty good friends (I'd like to imagine the kind of friends I'd go to camp with when I'm sixty-four), so they stick together. A few of them are dancing near the edge of the room and a few of them are sitting and looking grumpy at the edge by the dancing boys. Ladykiller is still with the counselor I left him with. I'm less panicked, but still confused.

The girl I left Ladykiller with, Kate, tells me that somebody in the clinic has COVID. How could someone have the rona at camp? All campers have to be tested before coming to camp and tested again when arriving to camp. If I'm vaccinated, can I still get it? Am I getting it right now?

As if cued by my own thoughts, the music stops and the camp director announces that "There is a positive case of COVID-19 here at camp. One of our friends is in the clinic. You need to go back to your cabins and wait for further instruction." This is it, this is the COVID plan in action. This is something important! There will be so much action!

There isn't any action. We're "quarantining" in the cabin until caretakers come in the morning, and some staff are coming around with disposable masks, coloring books and snacks. It's nice to not have to go out or do anything, but it's lame to be restricted in such a way. We're not even allowed to go out onto the porch.

Ladykiller is pissed! He can't talk to the ladies anymore, no ladies can visit the cabin, and he has to be stuck inside the cabin. The whole reason he comes to camp is because he doesn't get outside enough! I feel like I've failed my man. I feel like Camp failed him. Shit Happened.

I wish I could say something eventful happened between then and Ladykiller going home, but that'd be a lie. We all sit and play cards while listening to music, and Ladykiller is dancing but still upset. At breakfast, we just eat our food and get everybody ready. All our

Campers are picked up and going home by 10:30, and I don't have to clean because *there was a COVID violation and I need to leave campus for the weekend.*

At the end I rose from my Hell Week victorious. I was stinky, tired, and really burnt out on camp, but I could finally say I had a full Camp Experience. I'm seasoned.

Curiosity and Caution: A Childhood Tale

Doryan Cole

At 9 years of age playing outside at the playground in the center of our apartment complex, continuing to look up and back at our 2nd story apartment building window wondering if my mom is peeking out watching me play. She told me to behave myself and to be safe while I was outside. What did being safe and behaving myself mean at this age? Saying she would know if I were to do something I knew I had no business doing. At this point, I felt that all the business I was doing was a mere reflection of who I was meant to be at that age. Though her words gave me extra caution as if her eyes could always see what I was doing whether I could see her watching me or not.

Her words simply made me take extra precautions for my actions, most of the time causing me to refrain from what my innermost being actually wanted to do at the thought of getting in trouble. This often brought me to the thought of how I could do something I wanted to, knowing she probably would not be pleased with it, still giving me the best thrill my mind could comprehend at the time. My innermost child sought adventure and a

rush to take a risk of doing something I knew my mom wouldn't approve of me doing. Going into someone's apartment I've never been in before to explore how they lived in ways that were different from how we lived, or going into a girl's room that I liked, though having no understanding of romantic feelings just that they may have been there. Knowing that I felt something that I didn't know how to explain at the time.

I often went inside every 45 minutes to an hour to ask my mother questions about whether she saw what I was doing outside to gauge her knowledge of my true whereabouts and actions. Deep down I knew she didn't pay too much mind to what I was involved in outside because she trusted my better judgment. Contrary to myself at 9 years old, I felt a bit smart, but I knew my judgment was inconsistent. I was a risk taker, and I felt if anything did happen to go wrong I could get myself out of the situation.

I would continue to inch further and further away from the view of our apartment building meeting the kids that lived in different sections of the complex. Exploring areas of the building I knew I probably shouldn't have been. Then taking a tour of the small apartment buildings my friends lived in at the time. Paying attention to every minor detail I could, how their furniture was placed, the pictures, and the decor they had around. Comparing how different cultures of people did things so simple, so much different. All of the bright and dull colors of their couches, the places that had a love seat, and those that did not. The pictures of their different family members, I would ask questions as to why *those* pictures were up on their walls. Leaving all I knew for a while to better understand all that was outside of my prior experiences. Reading in between the lines, there was always something to relate to whether different or similar, we were all human. We all shared the idea of things we wanted to be that we hadn't yet reached either for ourselves or those we loved.

Thinking of all the different smells I experienced and how even today if I come across those aromas, it will immediately bring me back to those experiences. The aroma of sweet desserts being baked, or spicy Mexican dishes I couldn't name if my life depended on it.

There was nothing like experiencing something new that could possibly be a place or situation I had no business being in. Though it seemed harmless, and the majority of the time it was. Testing my own curiosity at the expense of my mother's rules taught me a lot about my place in a world that was different from the one I had always known and lived in.

Then, all I knew was where I was at that moment, whereas today I can look back to where I've been in the past. How where I've been has made me who I am today. Those experiences not only molded how I act but entangled my perception of those experiences with the way I view cultures contrary to my own. As a 9-year-old black boy being around a lot of people who did not look like me I was curious as to why and what all of these differences entailed, where I found that the only differences that existed were the ones we chose to keep our minds closed to. Whether it was me feeling like an ultimate risk taker at 9 years old or all the random family's homes I had the chance to explore learning about everything different from who I was made me who I am. Now being able to extend that love that was generously given to me I can now pass on those experiences.

ACADEMIC PROSE

The GOAT Debate

Magnus Hauska

When the world is talking about who is the greatest of all time, the GOAT, in soccer, there are two men who are coming in mind. For about 15 years Lionel Messi and Cristiano Ronaldo shared the stage of soccer together and were fighting for this “title”. To discuss this kind of debate, social media has nearly the perfect environment. There are hundreds of videos circulating on Instagram, Facebook or TikTok, where everybody is sharing their thoughts and opinions, especially in the comment section. Also, the TikTok account of matt_btw12134 shared a video, which I will refer to as “If You Want Speed”, on the 17th of September 2021 about this topic. In the video, the creator applies to all people who are interested in soccer and wants to clearly share his opinion concerning the GOAT debate. The three-parted video highlights different soccer players who each have one important talent. By using these examples of skills, the creator argues that Messi is the greatest of all time, not Ronaldo. I agree with the opinion of the creator but I don't agree with the way the creator uses some arguments to prove that Messi is the best.

In the first part of the 17-second video the creator captions clips of famous soccer players, who are famous for a particular skill, saying if the audience wants exactly this skill, they should call that player. For example, he is telling them if they want speed, they should call Mbappé. With that, the creator makes clear, that Mbappé is a very fast soccer player, one of the fastest in the world. The other two players, the creator is talking about in the first part, are Neymar, who is very good at dribbling, and Lewandowski, who

is known for his outstanding finishing. Also, for these two examples, he uses the same way of sharing this information, as he has done with the example of Mbappé. The creator tells the audience, if they want dribbling, they should call Neymar, and if they want finishing, they should call Lewandowski. While the video is showing the text, there are also some video sequences of examples of the players' attributes just described, to underline the information given.

In the second part of the video there is a turning point that initially offers Ronaldo as the greatest player of all time. The subtitle states that, if the audience wants all of the attributes described, they should call Ronaldo. At this point, it seems clear that the opinion of the creator is that Ronaldo is the GOAT because he might be the only player one can imagine when one is thinking about combining these attributes. At this moment the video could have ended and there would be an exact opinion of the creator about the GOAT debate but there is a second turning point that leads to the third and last part of the video and which changes the viewers understanding completely.

This part reveals the true opinion of the creator. He is telling the audience that he will give them Messi's number. This sentence standing alone makes absolutely no sense, but if you combine it with the sentence before, it turns out that if the audience wants all the attributes together, speed, dribbling and finishing, they should call Ronaldo because then he will give them Messi's number. The whole opinion, which seemed to be before, is now destroyed by just one sentence. While the real opinion of the creator is revealed, that he thinks, that Messi is the GOAT, the music, of the video has also changed. The bass was getting much louder and the music was also getting slower, so the third part of the video was underlined with dramatic and epic music, while in the first parts, the music was just there to

accompany the video. Hereby the creator wants to give the audience the feeling that Messi is the greatest of all time.

Now I want to discuss the main points given in the video. I agree with the fact that Messi is the greatest soccer player of all time. But I also think that the debate of who is the GOAT, Messi or Ronaldo, is a very difficult one and every opinion in this debate has understandable arguments. So, I may agree with the opinion the creator has but I think that he should have used different arguments to support his thesis. Like matt_btww12134, I also think that Messi is the greatest dribbler in soccer history but he is by far not one of the fastest players in the world. Therewith he opens his argument to criticism. And I also think that you can't say that Messi has better finishing than Ronaldo. Maybe they are approximately equal in that attribute because they nearly scored the same amount of goals in their career. If the creator would have used more different criteria, that support his opinion more strongly, for example, achievements, like that Messi has won a world cup or that Messi has won the "ballon d'or", the award for the best player of the year, more often than Ronaldo, or other attributes, like playmaking, which is one of Messi's biggest strengths in soccer, his opinion would have been way more convincing to the people who usually prefer Ronaldo as the GOAT and to the ones who don't have an opinion yet.

In conclusion, I want to say, that for me Messi is the greatest soccer player of all time. There might be other opinions out there, but it is just mine. There is absolutely no doubt that the GOAT debate matter, even though it always ends the same way, that there exist multiple opinions because there are no clear criteria and evidences to prove it either way. So, there is no possibility to say objectively who is the greatest soccer player of all time. It exists no perfect soccer player and there won't be one in the future, but the fans are searching all the time for that player who nearly reaches that

perfection. Humans strive for perfection and they are looking for that their whole life. That's why the GOAT debate matters so much for the fans out there, not only in soccer.

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Turkish Airlines Commercial

Magnus Hauska

What are commercials? They are everywhere, on the streets, on our phones, on the radio, or on the TV. Even though we don't see or realize them, they are still there, affecting our subconscious with the purpose to persuade us to buy something. Companies like Turkish Airlines use different means to reach this goal. For example, in the commercial for the Super Bowl, first shown in February 2022, Turkish Airlines successfully uses Morgan Freeman to make the commercial credible, combining facts and data, and emotion through music and video sequences to persuade the audience, who are prospective customers, especially rich people who want to travel by plane.

Now I am going to briefly summarize the commercial, in which Morgan Freeman, a very famous, black, American actor, sitting in a plane, talks about the time the earth had just one big continent, "Pangea." He states that even though there are many continents separated by oceans today, there is still the opportunity to connect them. With that he means that Turkish

Airlines makes this possibility available. In the end of the commercial there appears also a text, which says that Turkish Airlines connects “more countries than any other airline”. Because of the corona pandemic, connection was a very important topic in 2022, when the commercial was shown. Also, the fact that Freeman, a black American, advertises a Turkish company, which has Muslim backgrounds, supports the idea of connection, too. So, the commercial responds very well to the needs and interests of the people of that time.

In the commercial, *Logos* can be identified in the example of “Pangea”, which was used as a background story for the commercial. *Logos* is the use of reasoning to persuade audiences and involves the use of facts and statistics. It is a fact that 300 million years ago, there was just one big continent, called “Pangea”. By using this fact, the commercial successfully gets the attention from the audience by getting more interesting. By including this fact Freeman perfectly transfers this information to the main point, that “there is still a force connecting those [continents] divided by difference”. With that he means that Turkish Airlines can “reverse” the initial separation of continents. So, the fact of “Pangea” is not just used to get the attention of the audience and to make the commercial more interesting, but it is also needed to have a good transition to the main point.

Ethos is used in the example of Morgan Freeman, who acts as a customer of Turkish Airlines in the commercial, so the type of *Ethos* which is shown, is the personal experience of Freeman. *Ethos* is the rhetorical concept of supporting a purpose through credibility. As Morgan Freeman is a very famous actor, he has some personal credentials, which is also a type of *Ethos*, and many people of the audience want to be like him. He is a role model for many humans out there. So, as many people want to be like him, many people trust him in what he says. In this example Morgan Freeman promotes

Turkish Airlines, so people trust him and think that Turkish Airlines is a good Airline in many aspects. In addition to that Morgan Freeman has a very deep and wise voice, which gives the audience a feeling that everything he says is trustworthy, which makes the commercial even more credible. Basically, the whole commercial was made very credible just by including Morgan Freeman as a customer of Turkish Airlines.

The last concept I want to talk about is *Pathos*, which is often used in the commercial. *Pathos* is the rhetorical concept which uses emotions to persuade the audience. First of all, the deep voice of Morgan Freeman is not just an example for *Ethos*, but also one for *Pathos*. The deep voice gives the audience the feeling of safety and security, which is one of the most important things for many people who fly with a plane and want to choose an airline. So, the deep voice of Freeman gives the audience the feeling that when you fly with Turkish Airlines you will be safe and secure. Also, the epic music in the commercial plays a big role, in which you can recognize the type of *Pathos* promise of gain. It promises the audience an adventure and a feeling of excitement, which everyone is expecting from a trip, if they would fly with Turkish Airlines. However, the epic music also gives one the feeling of safety, not of danger, like the deep voice of Freeman, even though it might sound adventurous. Finally, there are video sequences, which shows the *Ethos* type promise of enjoyment, of happy people, who are hugging each other, which gives the audience a feeling of happiness, human connection and love. These clips at the end of the commercial support its main point, to connect continents, countries, cultures and people. Morgan Freeman also underlines the message by saying “making far feel close, bringing there to here”.

In conclusion, this commercial tries to persuade the audience of Turkish Airlines by using a background story of “Pangea” to include *Logos*

by facts. It shows them the credibility of the commercial by using *Ethos* through Morgan Freeman as a customer of it. And it tries to persuade them by promising them happiness and other good emotions by using *Pathos* by using the right music and showing video clips of happy people hugging each other. In my opinion, the commercial succeeded in persuading the audience of Turkish Airlines, because watching this commercial gives me personally a good feeling when thinking about Turkish Airlines. There are many means, especially the examples of Pathos, which triggers the unconscious to think positively about Turkish Airlines. Therewith I think it totally fulfills the purpose of a commercial.

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Primary Document Analysis 2

Jenasyn Baker

On March 1, 2023, I visited The State Historical Society of Missouri and viewed a poem entitled “A Black Woman Speaks ... of white womanhood, of white supremacy, of peace” by Beulah Richardson. Better known as Beah Richards, this actress wrote this poem in 1950 and first performed it at the American People’s Peace Congress in 1951. According to sociologist, Cynthia Fabrizio Pelak, in this poem, Richards “evokes early black women activists [...] rendering their work and calls for freedom and justice pertinent to the issues of the mid-twentieth century.” This poem intersects race, gender, and class by relating black female struggles to those of white women, all under the mistreatment of white male supremacists. Pelak claims, that “although the term intersectionality may have been coined in the late 1980s, the theorizing of intersecting systems of inequalities was not new.” This intersectionality is introduced in the poem when Richards writes

They said, the white supremacist said
That you were better than me,
That your air brow should never know the sweat of slavery.
They lied.
White womanhood is enslaved,
The difference is degree.
[...]
My sisters, there is no room for mockery.
If they counted my teeth
They did appraise your thigh
And sold you to the highest bidder

The same as I.

The anger in this piece roots not only in the oppression of black women but in the fact that white women don't fight more for their freedom. Furthermore, Richards finishes her poem strongly, speaking directly to white women of the 1950s, stating

What will you do?

Will you fight with me?

White supremacy is your enemy and mine.

So be careful when you talk with me.

Remind me not of my slavery, I know it well

But rather tell me of your own.

[...]

My aim is full equality.

I would usurp their plan!

Justice

Peace

And plenty

For every man, woman and child who walks the Earth.

This is my fight!

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The Unspoken Friendship

Hannah Brown

How do I define my best friend? My answer would be that my best friend is my forever ally, my support system, my partner in crime, my “no questions asked” have my back kind of person. My best friend influences my life decisions and guides me in an extremely positive way. I laugh with my best friend, and I sometimes disagree with my best friend but we both know that at the end of the day we will never let a disagreement break our bond. My best friend lives in my house and shares my last name. This person has known me since the day I was born. As mentioned, we may fight over trivial things like walking our elderly chubby chihuahua named Jimmy or taking out the trash, but I have also watched this person struggle to breathe as asthma wreaked havoc on their lungs, yet they still wanted to play a baseball game. This person is the definition of “never give up”. My best friend is my older brother, Nicholas Joseph Brown. I am told I said “Nichowus” before I said “Mama”. Nicholas’ special quality is that while at times he might annoy me more than any other human on the planet, he is also the one person that, through his own life challenges, has shown me the value of an unspoken friendship.

His friends call him “Twiggs” because of his tall and lanky appearance. His hair is a mop of brown curls. He is usually in need of a haircut. His outfits of choice typically include khaki pants and a hoodie of some sort. His black Converse high-top sneakers are so worn that my mother threatens to throw them out. His favorite dinner is Chik-fil-A with a side of Hot Cheetos. It is rare to see Nicholas without AirPods in his ears. His twenty-year-old face is oval and thin, he has big brown eyes and a big wide smile. His outward appearance is laid back and unassuming, he can blend

easily within a crowd of people and enjoys the hustle and bustle of a big city. We are opposites in this regard, I have a larger physical presence but prefer the slow pace of a smaller city or town.

I often call Nicholas a “turtle” because he has one speed and that is slow! It would be fair to say that he likes to talk a lot. Nicholas’ two favorite topics are sports and history. At times I am in awe of his ability to spew sports statistics or history facts like an encyclopedia. The guy has asthma and doesn’t have an athletic bone in his body but is a huge fan of all sports and someday wants to be a sports agent. He is a fiercely loyal friend and has had the same “friend group” since middle school. This group still has an active group text thread, and they communicate regularly, even though they are all in college now. With regard to family, Nicholas is more guarded with his emotions, but has a huge heart underneath and instinctively knows when one of us needs support. For example, recently he added a heart emoji to a text message that just said “hey”. This was after my first week of college when I said I felt a bit overwhelmed with classes and my sports schedule. He has never texted me anything like this in the past. I think the word “positive” describes my brother. He is quick to share a joke to lighten the mood of friends or family. He will often make fun of one of us in a way that lightens the mood. For example, after my mom burned popcorn, he asked her if she could teach him how to use the microwave. Nicholas is very good at channeling negative energy elsewhere. His preferred channel is to write music, which is therapeutic for him

An introvert with a “twist” is the personality of my brother. By nature, Nicholas is reserved and extremely intelligent, but he has a social side that also defines him. I think his fascination with history is what also motivates him to be sociable and outgoing. And his teachers love that he is not afraid to give a presentation or talk in front of the class. My brother is the

negotiator and sometimes he thrives on a little conflict just so he can make everyone talk it out. Nicholas' easy-going approach to school has had a huge impact on the way I approach school. He confidently walked me to all of my classes on my first day of middle school so I wouldn't get lost. I remember him touching my shoulder at each classroom door and saying, "you got this – see you in an hour". He might not have talked to me in the car on the way home from school, he didn't have to talk, his actions showed me just how much he cares. I remembered this day and him doing that after he sent the heart emoji in the recent text during my first week of college.

To say my brother is a special person in my life is completely true. He was my first friend; he is my best friend. As I grow older, I realize just how much he has influenced my perspective on not only my life, but the world. Nicholas embraces Nicholas. I am learning to embrace Hannah through the power of his unspoken friendship. I think what resonates most with me about Nicholas is his special quality to never give up and to not let obstacles become roadblocks in life.

The Irony in “The Chaser”

Vasil Stoimenov

"The Chaser" written in 1940 by John Collier is a short story about Alan Austen, who desperately wants a girl named Diana to fall in love with him. To do so, he visits an old man who is selling potions with supernatural effects, such as a "love potion." Alan's character is a nervous man, easily horrified, and not very wealthy, as seen in his reaction when he finds out that one of the potions costs five thousand dollars: "I hope all your mixtures are not as expensive." (Collier, 312). However, we can understand a lot about the irony in the short story through the old man's words: "Please a customer with one article, and he will come back when he needs another." (Collier, 312). Following that strategy, the old guy gives the love potion to Alan for just a dollar. But why is this old man's business such an irony for the ones buying from him? According to the "Irony Notes" provided to me by my professor, McCrary, irony means "A contradiction or incongruity between what is expected and what actually occurs.". In "The Chaser", the author employs different forms of irony to show the dangers and unexpected consequences of the ones trying to use shortcuts when trying to achieve their deepest desires. Let's take a look at Alan's expectations and desires and how the old guy's words interfere with them.

Thanks to the "Irony Notes," I know that irony is separated into four basic types. The one that concerns me the most is situational irony, which occurs when the exact opposite of what is meant to happen happens. This is connected to the contrast between Alan's expectations and the reality of the love potion. Alan desperately wants Diana to fall in love with him, and he believes that the love potion will help him achieve this. But what he didn't know is that this love potion does not create real love "She will want to know

all you do" "All that has happened to you during the day. Every word of it. She will want to know what you are thinking about, why you smile suddenly, why you are looking sad."(Collier, 312). Instead, it makes the person who drinks it obsessed with the one who provided the drink. This is a good example of situational irony, as it is the exact opposite of what Alan thought would happen. It is even making it slightly funny, because of the old man's words in which he maybe even tried to warn him "You will find it very effective." (Collier, 313).

That obsession leads to another irony, which is how the old man benefits from the whole situation. I am not familiar with the reason why this potion works the way it does, but the old man uses the effect of the potion to please his customers by giving it to them for just a dollar, right after he mentions that some of the other ones cost thousands of dollars. He knows that thanks to this obsession effect, the customers will come back for a cure of this love potion, and they will be desperate "'I like to oblige," said the old man. "Then customers come back, later in life, when they are better off, and want more expensive things.'" (Collier, 313) . This leaves a perfect opportunity for the old man to make the "cure" potion very expensive. This strategy is ironic because it manipulates people's desires and exploits their vulnerabilities for profit.

A third example of irony from this story that will poke my eyes lies somewhere in the end of the short story. Let's put aside the fact that selling these potions is probably illegal and a bad thing to do. If I were in the old man's position and selling these potions was what "fed my family," I would always try to improve this business somehow, and most importantly, I would NEVER tell my secrets to my customers. But in one of the last discussions between Alan and the old man, that is exactly what happens. "For indifference," said the old man, "they substitute devotion. For scorn,

adoration... however gay and giddy she is, she will change altogether. She will want nothing but to solidate you." (Collier, 312). Right after he also mentions that Diana will be jealous, caring, and very obsessed with him to the point that Alan will get tired of everything and come back to him. The old man basically "shows his cards,". He is telling Alan that the effect of the potion is not what he thinks it is. Despite that, Alan doesn't consider it even a little. The irony in this case can be imagined as if we are in some scary movie and someone who clearly looks like trouble tells us not to take a forest path because we will die, but we simply ignore him and go right through it because we think that at the end of the path, something we desire awaits us.

Unfortunately, a lot of people find themselves in the situation with the imaginary movie scene, and a lot of them do not even realize that. When I understood what "The Chaser" actually is about it showed me that a human's desires can often blind him to the point that he takes a wrong path. With today's technologies and improvements it is even easier, than a hundred years ago, to find yourself in the same situation. Despite the fact that this work is written in 1940 it is a very good example even for today.

In conclusion, "The Chaser" by John Collier is a story filled with irony. Through the character of Alan Austen and his desire to make Diana fall in love with him, we see the irony of what he expects from the potion and what actually happens. Instead of creating real love, the potion only leads to obsession and manipulation. The old man selling the potions takes advantage of this irony by offering the love potion for a dollar, knowing that customers will return desperate for a cure. This type of act that takes advantage of people's desires and vulnerabilities for profit adds another layer of irony to the story. Not to mention that the old man warned Alan which is also ironic. Overall, "The Chaser" is a tale with good examples of the dangers of seeking

supernatural ways or shortcuts and the unexpected consequences that could arise from people's deepest desires.

“Thank You Billie Jean King: 50 Years of Equal Pay”: A Response

Hannah Brown

Everyone knows champions are built to outlast the competition and that is exactly what Billie Jean King did in 1973. The difference between Billie Jean King and other successful female tennis champions is that she broke barriers. In an era when male athletes were treated as the dominant sex and rewarded with much higher pay, Billie Jean King nearly single handedly leveled the playing field. Her fight continues fifty years later. To celebrate Billie Jean King’s monumental contribution to the fight for equal rights and pay in all fields, the U S Open Tennis Championship organization compiled a very powerful one-minute and thirty-one second commercial which highlights the fight and how Billie Jean King used her platform as a tennis champion to also promote the passage of Title IX in 1973. The U S Open Tennis Championship is a solid source of information relative to Billie Jean King. The facility where the U S Open Tennis Championship tournament is played is named: “The Billie Jean King National Tennis Center” in New York City, New York. This particular source is powerful because it is a video narrated by Venus Williams, another legendary women’s tennis player. Women like Billie Jean King have earned respect, not because she was a champion tennis player but because she has become a symbol of courage through her years of courageously continuing to battle for equal pay and

opportunities among women and men which simultaneously gave credence to the importance of Title IX.

In the first paragraph, the ending sentence alludes to credence and how Billie Jean King is a warrior. The footage in the U.S. Open Championship commercial provides original audio clips of Billie Jean King from the early 1970's during the equal pay and equal rights movement. The purpose of the commercial is to celebrate the 50th anniversary of Title IX which promotes equal rights for all when performing the same job. The commercial also strives to show how far the movement in women's tennis, in particular, has come. The skeptical viewer may watch the commercial and see protestors and what looks like a glamorous life as a female tennis professional and say "why should I care about this?" But the energizing footage and captioned dialogue shows that every single person who ever believed in a cause and finds themselves with a platform to promote that cause should fight for what they believe in; and not be afraid of the nay-sayers. The platform in this case is a tennis court and the players were a 29-year-old Billie Jean King facing a 55-year-old Bobby Riggs, who was a male tennis star. In 1973 King was lobbying for equal pay and tournament play for female professional tennis players and Riggs was making a mockery of the outspoken King. The word "warrior" was referenced in the first line of paragraph one, and it describes this scenario when Riggs challenged King to a match to prove that male tennis players are superior to female tennis players and therefore deserving of more money. The shift in the story came when King defeated Riggs in straight sets and suddenly an estimated ninety million viewers watching on television worldwide knew this was much more than just a tennis match. Billie Jean King gave life and purpose to Title IX and proved that females can compete equally with males and deserve the same pay and respect.

This match went down in history as “The Battle of the Sexes” and coincided with the passage of Title IX, which was referenced in paragraph one. Title IX prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex in education programs and activities. King’s audience began as women only and through her courageous battle, the fight exploded to include anyone who feels discriminated against in a school or place of work. With such a broad audience, what is the cultural background of this commercial? The cultural background of the commercial shows how the fight began with white males versus white females and the battle for equal pay for equal work. But, with Title IX, the cultural background expanded to include students within schools, all ethnicities within workplaces and any one person who feels they are being treated unfairly with regard to equality.

It was through the continuous fight for equal rights that the above-referenced “broad audiences” were given a voice to share their support for Title IX. Billie Jean King in 1973 gave us all a voice and the right to be heard. As referenced, this commercial opened with historical actual footage of the 1973 “Battle of the Sexes” and Billie Jean King being interviewed about her training for the event. She was focused and serious during this interview. Her purpose was solidified by her victory over the chauvinistic Riggs. The commercial brilliantly flowed into more actual footage of 1970’s era demonstrations for equal rights that subsequently took place in cities all over the United States which was so inspirational to see. The viewer feels the shift in tone as the crowds can be seen cheering and supporting Title IX. One might wonder after watching this brief, but extremely enlightening commercial if Title IX would have passed without the fervor of Billie Jean King’s movement for equal pay in the tennis and sports arena?

To boldly summarize the final statement in the above paragraph, my research suggests that yes, the movement was too important to too many

people not to pass. However, Billie Jean King cemented the words “Title IX” in every school and workplace in America. She changed the playing field in professional tennis and, to this day, continues to fight to raise equal tournament prize money for females as compared to males. I am proud to be a female student athlete and Billie Jean King is such a mentor who inspires me personally to stand up for what I believe in and fight for what I feel is right. The commercial documents the 50-year history of the fight for equal pay and rights among males and females and ends with 19-year-old Coco Gauff, a rising United States female tennis player who is reaping the benefits of Billie Jean King’s work. Gauff’s work is not without respect for the game and respect for the hard work it takes to maintain an equal playing field in any arena between males and females. When Coco screams “come on” after an amazing point, the viewer feels this passion and fight. Billie Jean King’s fight lives on through these young players today. In conclusion, this media clip is one that I feel I will re-watch and re-read the captions for years to come as it empowers me and helps me focus on the future. In particular, re-watching the restraint it took Billie Jean King to keep focused on the goal and to ignore the obstacles is one of the biggest lessons within this commercial. The message is clear; if you really want to be a champion, you have to continue to fight!

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Electric v Gas Vehicles: Facts to Know Before You Purchase

Hannah Brown

Purchasing a vehicle can be exciting, expensive and satisfying for the buyer. The range of emotions a buyer goes through when purchasing a vehicle can be streamlined if the buyer does their homework before going to the car lot or chasing flashy models as seen in advertisements on television. Today's buyer must also consider climate control and if the vehicle they purchase will emit harmful pollutants or damage the ozone layer. Enter electric vehicles (EV's), automakers' solution to preserving both the climate, ozone and gas. Courtney Lindwall, a reporter for the National Resources Defense Council (NRDC), provides a solid argument for the purchasing of an electric vehicle instead of a gas vehicle in her May 22, 2022 article "Electric vs Gas Cars: Is it Cheaper to Drive an EV?" Lindwall's topic is a deceptively complicated one which has befuddled consumers for years, and for good reason; EV sticker shock. The author's primary audience reading this article targets multiple groups; the first-time car buyer looking for an inaugural car purchase, the long-time gas car owner interested in a cost saving investment and the car buyer looking to preserve the environment by sidling petroleum guzzling, air polluting vehicles in exchange for an environmentally friendly new ride. For Lindwall, the NRDC was the perfect outlet to showcase this article as this council is known for promoting topics and articles that safeguard the earth, its people, plants and animals. Lindwall makes her position clear by stating; "Bottom line: You can bank on savings across the life of your electric vehicle." (Lindwall, 2022) The author's use of direct language reinforces her point as she appeals to multiple audiences to not focus solely on the price tag associated with an electric vehicle, but its long-term investment both financially and environmentally, that gives the

purchase of an electric vehicle a strong advantage versus the purchase of a gas vehicle.

Lindwall dissects the facts and appeals to the experts. Because sticker price is often the driving force behind the purchase of a vehicle, Lindwall engages the audience with easy to follow ethos statements when comparing the sticker price of an electric vehicle versus gas. By confirming that the average price of an electric vehicle is approximately “\$10,000 higher than the industry average”, the author declares that some might declare this as “sticker shock” but goes on to describe that the EV market is exploding and the price of EV’s is “expected to fall in the next couple of years”. (Lindwall, 2022) This is due to more production of EV’s by automobile manufacturers. The author states that these facts were taken from Kelley Blue Book, a long-time reputable source familiar to the audiences. With credibility established, this immediately sends a signal to all car buyers to shop around, be patient and become knowledgeable through trusted sources about upcoming electric vehicle launches by auto manufacturers. Some of the driving forces behind the expected lower EV prices are advanced development of car batteries and battery technology (which is said to be the most expensive unit in the cars). This is also good news for those engaged in reducing pollutants emitted by driving gas-powered cars.

One way to mitigate the higher cost of an electric vehicle is through the use of tax incentives. Lindwall reminds readers that; “the Federal EV tax credit offers up to \$7,500 for new EVs and, for the first time, \$4,000 for used EVs.” (Lindwall, 2022) Additionally, many states also offer their own tax incentives for the purchase of an electric vehicle. In the State of Missouri, Senate Bill 1193 states that for all tax years beginning on or after January 1, 2023, a taxpayer can claim a tax credit of \$2,500 for each qualified purchase of an electric vehicle. Buyers of electric vehicles must also account for the

purchase of a charging system. Oftentimes tax incentives can be used to offset the cost of charging systems which cost about \$2,000 with installation. It's fair to note to the entire audience which includes the first-time car buyer, environmentalists and longtime gas car owners, that once a buyer has concrete incentive information, they are better able to compare overall vehicle prices.

Owners of electric vehicles really win out by not having to purchase gas to fuel their cars. The rising cost of gasoline has all car owners dreading their trips to the pump. Lindwall makes a compelling argument by referencing the University of Michigan study that found that the average annual cost to fuel an electric vehicle was \$485 compared to \$1,117 for a gas-powered vehicle. Again, comparison shopping is warranted within the EV models as electric vehicle efficiency is measured by how many kilowatt-hours (kWh) of electricity it consumes per 100 miles. This would be similar to a gas-powered car's miles per gallon ratio. For example, Tesla leads the EV pack with the Model 3 RWD which garners 25 kWh/100 miles compared to the Chevrolet Bolt EUV which claims 29 kWh/100 miles. So multi-level comparison shopping is a must for the buyer trying to secure the absolute best deal. Another factor to consider is the increase in electricity bills for electric vehicle owners. Lindwall points out that electricity prices, like gas prices, vary from region to region and state to state, so the buyer must be aware of these costs in their home areas. When comparing the lifetime costs of a battery-operated vehicle to an internal combustion engine, electric vehicle owners in the state of Washington, for example, can save an estimated \$14,480 over the life of the car. However, that same comparison in the state of Hawaii only returns a \$2,494 savings over a fifteen-year life span of a car. Also, knowing when to charge your car can save you money. Charging a car a night, when electricity costs are typically lower can save

you thirty percent of the charge during peak electricity demand hours of the day. Lindwall reminds readers that while charging stations are convenient, they are also costly and could inflate your costs to operate your electric vehicle. Charging stations should be used only when necessary, according to Lindwall and the National Resources Defense Council.

No car is completely maintenance free, but without spark plugs to replace or oil changes, electric vehicles have the clear lead over gas-powered cars when it comes to maintenance. Basic maintenance such as tire rotations and service checks are still required for electric vehicles but overall, maintenance of an EV is very low. This leads the buyer to the all important question of whether the purchase of an electric vehicle is cheaper than that of a gas-powered vehicle. Lindwall advises the reader that; “you can figure out your savings estimate by calculating the upfront costs of your specific model (minus tax rebates) and then ongoing costs.” This particular article compared nine popular electric vehicles on the market with three comparable gas-powered vehicles. The results were clear, the lifetime costs of the electric vehicles were thousands of dollars cheaper than the gas-powered vehicles. The savings ranged between \$6,000 and \$10,000. Additionally, electric car owners will be protecting the climate from the emission of thousands of pounds of pollutants over the lifetime of a gas-powered vehicle.

The verdict is in and it is the long-term investment, both financially and environmentally, that gives the purchase of an electric vehicle a strong advantage versus the purchase of a gas vehicle. Author Courtney Lindwall’s article “Electric vs Gas Cars: Is it Cheaper to Drive an EV?” is more than just a fact driven and educational article, it’s an engaging rhetorical literary piece which leads readers to a solid conclusion with the promise of gain by purchasing an electric vehicle.

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Causes of Increased Wildfires in Western States and Implementation of Prevention Steps

Hannah Brown

The prolific roar of a wildfire can be both powerful and natural. Wildfires can also be devastating and unnatural. Wildfires are nature's way of recharging the ecosystem. In forests, natural wildfires reduce dead vegetation such as trees and leaves and provide a fresh habitat for new soil and tree growth as well as clearing animal habitat. The western United States has a mediterranean climate, meaning that most of its rain comes during the winter months which are wet and cool and then turns very dry and hot in the summer months. Is the number of wildfires in western states increasing? And, how are zoning laws and governmental resources being implemented to assist with wildfire prevention in these areas? According to authors Rachel Cleetus and Kranti Mulik in their book *Playing with Fire: How Climate Change and Development Patterns Are Contributing to the Soaring Costs of*

Western Wildfires; “strong scientific evidence shows that climate change is producing hotter, drier conditions that contribute to larger fires and longer fire seasons in the American west today” (Cleetus and Mulik 1). To put this into perspective, wildfire season has grown from five months in 1970 to seven months today. The threat of wildfires is projected to worsen as global climate change is predicted to deliver shorter, drier winters which will lead to more severe fires and longer fire seasons. Public preparedness will be the key to controlling future wildfires in western states with continued warm weather climate changes expected. Such preparedness may include fining homeowners in fire zone areas for not clearing flammable brush or using fire resistant materials on their homes and states investing in more DC-10 fire fighting airplanes and airdrop fire retardant. Partnering of residents, state and federal agencies is paramount to help control this issue.

Climate change and warmer temperatures mandate federal and state governments to align and provide the necessary costs and resources required to prevent severe destruction of potential future fires. According to authors Rachel Cleetus and Kranti Mulik in their book *Playing with Fire: How Climate Change and Development Patterns Are Contributing to the Soaring Costs of Western Wildfires*; the shocking estimated cost to control and prevent wildfires in the western states has risen to one-billion dollars as of 2012. “This same preventive cost was estimated to have been four-hundred and forty million in 1985” (Cleetus and Mulik, 1). State and local zoning agencies are not working congruently with federal fire prevention agencies. Local zoning agencies are continuing to allow building permits in high fire prone zones which is a misalignment with the distribution of federal funds which are meant to suppress building in fire prone zones. The result of this misalignment and shortage of directed funds creates higher taxes for local residents in order to suppress wildfires. Additionally, the misalignment is

further putting homeowners at risk as their insurance premiums often are not adjusted for high-risk zones and therefore, the homeowners are not properly protected against potential fire damage. A 2020 article in the *Los Angeles Times* proposes the creation of a new state agency whose sole purpose is to encourage preparedness and reduce wildfire risks. “A new state agency could set annual and long-term goals on several key fronts: fire hardening individual homes in high-risk areas, safeguarding communities as a whole, and reintroducing prescribed burns in wildlands” (Ware).

While federal, local and state governments are responsible for funding the majority of wildfire prevention monies to the western states, these agencies argue that residents of fire zones are also responsible for wildfire prevention in their communities. Difficulties in accessing homes and offices presents a challenge to firefighters who need to reach these properties in order to protect lives. All agencies agree that the presence of homes raises the costs of putting out wildfires. Homeowners can assist by using fire-resistant construction materials, especially for roofs and clearing flammable vegetation near their homes. Headwaters Economics, a research firm that works directly with communities on flooding and wildfire prevention published an article in 2022 regarding the construction costs of a home when using fire resistant materials. “Constructing a home to optimal wildfire resistance will increase overall costs by \$18,200 to \$27,100 but will return greater long-term benefits in energy efficiency and durability. Wildfire-resistant construction adds approximately 2-13% to the entire cost of a new home” (“Construction Costs for a Fire-Resistant Home: California Edition”). The act of utilizing fire resistant building materials is part of public preparedness and a demonstration of homeowners and communities working together to minimize wildfire destruction in fire zone neighborhoods. Another reason state and local agencies and homeowners

must work together to prevent the rapid spread of wildfires involves budget cuts at the state and federal levels. Within the last ten years, thirty-four million dollars in cuts have resulted in a twenty-five percent reduction in fire fighting forces. For this reason, many western states also employ seasonal part-time firefighters which presents staffing issues during a major wildfire season.

Climate change and increased wildfires in western states will radiate carbon emissions. Fires create a thin black particle known as soot. Soot in the air is a pollutant that endangers the air quality of all who are forced to breathe this potent matter which can cause respiratory and cardiovascular problems. Authors Dana Garfin, Shahir Masri, Erica Anne Shenoj and Jun Wu wrote a 2023 article entitled “Assessing Perceptions of Wildfires and Related Impacts among Adult Residents of Southern California” which was published in the *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health* which addressed the health issues associated with wildfires. “Climate change has increased the intensity and spread of wildfires in western states which poses an increased health risk to people and animals due to the residuals from smoke particles and inhalation” (Garfin, Masri, Shenoj and Wu, 1). Due to increasing warm climates and worsened wildfires, vegetation and soil have become stressed and now absorb more carbon from the atmosphere than they can release, leading to an emissions buildup. With the federal government being responsible for paying for suppressing fires that originate on federal land and local municipalities pushing to develop private lands, the decision about how to manage forests and fires becomes complicated. Simply put, every person and entity involved has to do a better job of aligning limited federal and state firefighting budgets with state and local zoning decisions and private incentives to build in risky areas. Incompatible wildfire decision

making by government entities increases the long term health of the victims of wildfires.

Again, the subject of community preparedness is addressed by authors Rachel Cleetus and Kranti Mulik in their book *Playing with Fire: How Climate Change and Development Patterns Are Contributing to the Soaring Costs of Western Wildfires* as they discuss key steps California, in particular, has taken to prepare for wildfire risks. The state has developed a strategic fire plan board known as the State Board of Forestry and CAL FIRE 2010. The goal of this board is to activate public awareness and warn people of the severe dangers of wildfires. This public campaign is known as CAL FIRE 2014d. The state has also implemented building codes for homes located near wildfire zones which do not allow flammable vegetation or shrubs. “In 2011, the state began charging rural dwellers an annual protection fee of \$150 that has netted some \$84 million for its strained firefighting budget” (Cleetus and Mulik, 10). Technology in association with meteorology has also been successfully implemented in wildfire preparedness. Authors Sebastian Busby, Jeremy S. Fried, Angela M. Klock in their 2023 article in *Fire* entitled “It’s About Time: A Method for Estimating Wildfire Arrival and Weather Conditions at Field-Sample Locations” noted the importance of continued infrared operations. “For major fires over the past two decades in the U.S. National Infrared Operations (NIROPS) has produced fire progression perimeter polygons representing fire extents at variable intervals over the duration of a fire” (Busby, Fried and Klock, 2). In layman terms, weather officials have become very good at predicting conditions ripe for a wildfire and strive to warn communities about such impending weather in order to prepare to evacuate. While there is more work to be done, the state of California has taken steps to implement wildfire suppression and spread the message of preparedness to its constituents.

Long term wildfires produce enormous amounts of smoke which pose a health risk to all living beings. Dana Rose Garfin, Shahir Masri, Erica Anne Shenoj and Jun Wu, discussed these health risks and what can be done to save lives following a wildfire in California in their January 2023 article, “Assessing Perceptions of Wildfires and Related Impacts among Adult Residents of Southern California” which was published in the *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*. “In the face of climate change and the emerging public health crisis related to wildfire outbreaks in California, it is essential to better understand wildfire perception and the factors that may influence such perception among residents in fire-prone regions such as Southern California” (Garfin, Masri, Shenoj and Wu, 2). The study conducted by these authors found that currently there is a knowledge gap among residents in western states regarding the dangers of inhaling wildfire smoke. Educating individuals on the importance of reducing carbon emissions, climate change and the connection to prolonged wildfire seasons remains a challenge. This is an area where one state, California, has been working to improve upon, especially as climate change is provoking longer wildfire seasons. Additionally, along with carbon emission control, evacuation plans must be adopted by communities and individual neighborhoods throughout all wildfire prone western states. Authors Rachel Cleetus and Kranti Mulik in their book *Playing with Fire: How Climate Change and Development Patterns Are Contributing to the Soaring Costs of Western Wildfires* discuss the importance of evacuation planning. “For high-risk communities, establishing clear evacuation routes, creating warning mechanisms to inform residents of fires, making data on location and availability of firefighting resources easily accessible, and undertaking proactive fuels management are all helpful” (Cleetus and Mulik, 13). One

such area of improvement in the state of California has been attacking wildfires by dumping retardant from airplanes. And, according to Aaron Labaree's article "The U.S. Is Wasting Millions on Wildfire Policy That Doesn't Work" published by *slate.com* "one payload of fire retardant from a DC-10 cost \$60,000 to drop" (Slate). A large wildfire may require as many as three airplane drops per day. Investing in this type of preparedness is beneficial to western states because larger target areas can be covered, requiring less manpower and trucks on the ground and minimizing long-term health risks from prolonged smoke.

Wildfire prevention strategies are being dictated by climate change and the growing costs associated with providing necessary resources to ensure proper preparedness. It was authors Sebastian Busby, Jeremy S. Fried and Angela M. Klock in their 2023 *Fire* article "It's About Time: A Method for Estimating Wildfire Arrival and Weather Conditions at Field-Sample Locations" who narrow down two things researchers study about wildfire preparedness. "The two things researchers of wildfires most study are how to manage forest vegetation and what weather models predict fire effects." (Busby, Fried and Klock, 1) In short, weather drives a fire and winds drive the burn, especially when low humidity is present. Predicting a wildfire cannot be done using standard meteorological equipment. While scientists continue to develop technology that will hopefully be able to predict wildfires in the future, the present day situation calls for a regrouping of local, state and federal agencies and an increase in public preparedness and education regarding specific actions one needs to take should a wildfire occur in their community or neighborhood. Public preparedness will be the key to controlling future wildfires in western states with continued warm weather climate changes expected. Such preparedness may include fining homeowners in fire zone areas for not clearing flammable brush, using fire

resistant materials on their homes and investing federal funds into firefighting airplanes to more efficiently attack larger areas, thus preserving homes and more importantly, lives. Accountability by all parties is paramount to help control this issue.

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Sister's Love

Carla Estradé Hernández

My life started twice. It was two thousand and ten; I was five years old when I decided to eat a candy, THE candy. The decision to eat THE “sugus” changed my day and my life.

It was summer and the holidays at noon when I was at home with my twin Nuria and my Mom, Teresa. We decided to go for a walk before lunch. Nuria and I were waiting for Mom, playing Mario Kart on the Wii because my Mom was finishing lunch. We were arguing about who won the game when I decided to eat the candy I took from the second kitchen drawer. At first, I was tasting the candy, enjoying moving it back and forth in my mouth. It was a normal day but I felt that something was going wrong because I started feeling that I couldn't breathe.

I started to get overwhelmed because I couldn't do anything else except try to breathe and try to explain to my sister what was happening to me. I was frustrated because I felt that I couldn't tell my sister what was wrong with me. She looked at me with a look of misunderstanding because she didn't understand what I was trying to tell her. At that moment I understood that I might not make it out alive because of that “sugus”. When I turned my head I realized that my sister was standing there watching me suffocate and she couldn't do anything. She started crying out of helplessness. A moment later she called my mother shouting "MAMÁ, MAMÁ, AYÚDAME!".

A few seconds later my mother ran towards me after she listened to my sister shout. She stood in front of me for a few seconds until she realized, I don't know how but she knew what was happening to me. I am sure she knew it because she is my mother and mothers know everything is like a

superpower that all have. At that moment she stood behind me, placed her hands around my chest, and slowly pressed her hands against my chest to remove the “sugus” that was stuck in my throat. A few seconds later I noticed that the air was slowly returning to my lungs. I began to be able to breathe again. When the candy left my throat I felt relaxed and I could turn around and see how my sister was still crying desperately because at that point she didn't know if I was recovering or if I was going to die. My mother was scared, she was very pale, she was restless, she moved her hands and fingers without stopping very fast and she was not able to speak, she was not even able to calm my sister down because she was paralyzed. But I could feel her face relax as she saw that I was breathing again. Nuria stopped crying when I ran to hug her because at that moment she knew that I was going to be fine. Even if a few minutes later we were arguing about who won Mario Kart. These moments are what exactly defines a sister's love.

After the candy was out of my throat I sat down on the cold floor, just in front of the elevator, for a couple of minutes I recovered. I was on the freezing floor thinking about what would have happened if my sister had not been there or if my mother had taken a few seconds longer to arrive. In the end, all I could think about was how glad I was to still be with them and to still be alive to be able to do everything I am doing now, and that at that time was something unimaginable.

I will never forget the frightened faces of my sister and my mother when they tried to save my life by paying attention to me, to my gestures, and understanding what was happening to me at the moment when I took the candy while waiting for the elevator. And if I am alive now is because on that summer day Nuria, the most important pillar in my life, quickly took action and saved my life with the help of my mother. That is why Nuria and my

mother are the most important people in my life, since the moment that I almost died eating a “sugus” everything changed for me.

“Narrative Essay”

Yoro Sow

We meet a lot of people in our life, but sometimes there are people that can have a big impact on our lives. And this happened to me when.

During the summer I went from my home in Grigny, a city in the suburbs of Paris, to an international basketball camp named SIS in Cancun for a week. I trained several weeks before this camp and the day of departure all participants had to be at the airport Charles de Gaulle at 5am which is really early. When I arrived, I saw a bunch of people, there were over thirty guys. I was really stressed during the trip, I talked to nobody, that is how I deal with stress, headphones on with music following the rest of the group. After 12 hours, me and the other 38 basketball players finally arrived in Cancun and as soon as we got out of the airport the air was extremely humid and it was extremely hot outside. Indeed the temperature was very different from France's temperature. During these 12 hours I talked with nobody, and the only thing in my mind was basketball. In fact I was thinking about how I am going to play and how to stay focused on basketball without taking part in any distraction. At first I was not really worried about trying to talk with the other basketball players. Once at the hotel I went straight to bed. The next day, I woke up at 8 am in order to have breakfast. At that moment I saw that someone was at my table, he was one of the other participants of the

camp, a 6 foot guy. We talked a lot about basketball, and asked each other our favorite players. The feeling matched really fast. We had the same vibe and the same way to think. Indeed after we spent the whole week together, in such a short time we would become best friends who have known each other for years. The fact that Mevrick came to talk to me completely changed me since I was very reserved since the departure.

After the camp we were still in contact. Sometimes, we have been training together at the gym in Paris. At the end of this camp we both received offers to play basketball in the United States. We decided to go together. We arranged to have the same flight to arrive the same day. Unfortunately we did not have the same plane but we arrived at the same time at the Kansas city airport. Our trip ended up lasting 15 hours.

We took the school shuttle to Missouri valley college's campus. That day it was extremely hot and in the shuttle we had the impression that it was double the heat from the outside. Once we arrived at the campus, we were very relieved to have arrived after 15 hours. We went to eat and we found out that the food is really different from what we were used to eating. We actually went to Dairy queen, ate burgers and went to sleep. We arrived a week before the beginning of the classes so we spent a lot of time together. We joined the basketball team together and we spent the entire first semester during fall 2023 together. Even on days when we were bored we preferred to find each other to get bored together. We spend time talking about anything.

Indeed in such a short time he became like my brother. We have our moments of laughter but we also have moments where we give each other advice about how to get better, we help each other in basketball by giving advice to improve our game and by training together. But also in everyday life, we try to help each other to avoid making mistakes. I think having this kind of friendship would be very beneficial for people, it's important to have

a friend on these sides that you can count on.

“Narrative Essay”

Driss Gousson

In France, in the city of Nantes, if you were to walk from the door to the back of the gym named *La Trocardiere*, you walked through different glass doors before arriving in the locker rooms hallway. There are main locker rooms for the professional basketball and volleyball teams. You had to take another door and when you opened it there was a cut flag where the players go before the game when the speaker introduces them at the beginning. Finally you arrived next to the court ready for practices or games. The floor is wooden and the gym is huge with seats all around, with two floors. There are enough seats for approximately five thousand seated people. The lights were strong and in the middle there was an enormous square screen where people were able to see the score during the game. We elevated this one at its maximum because for volleyball if the ball touches it that is a fault. This gym, with the net in the middle, the carts full of balls, is the place where I have spent many days and hours since I was eight years old.

I have been in this specific gym for the last four years playing volleyball everyday of the week, once or twice a day at a high level. This sport area made me meet tons and tons of people through the years. I am grateful for this sport, because thanks to it I made amazing friendships. The one who comes directly in my mind as a friendship for life happened two years ago. We were ready to start the 2021-2022 season. It was in the middle of august, in my hometown Nantes, everybody was tanned because the

summer was one of the sunniest we had for a NorthWest city in France. Me and my teammates were already in practice shorts, some with sunglasses and everybody was super smiley. I had not seen more than half of my teammates during the summer break. Some guys were new to the team. There were three new guys, I knew two of them, and the one who will become my best friend was the third one. The introduction was pretty basic, because after everybody was there we sat and the coach started his presentation about the season. After a couple of practices, around one week I will say, the bond with the new guy started to be pretty huge. His name was Valentin, he was three years younger than me. The first moment I knew I would enjoy being his friend was at the weight room. We were starting to have a workout, and in the corner around all the machines there were huge speakers, the team named me as the dj of the team and I started putting on some music. Most of the time the guys did not really know the songs I was putting, most of them had an afro rhythm. Valentin surprised me by knowing all the songs I was putting on and during the exercise we started dancing together, and at this moment I knew we will have the same tastes. So it helped to build the friendship, also he will have all the funny references we would have back at home in France. He was also asking to play the video game Just Dance with me. For the two of us, spending time with each other was something we enjoyed and we had plenty of freetime outside of volleyball so we did it frequently. The bond after approximately one month was the same as if we knew each other for decades. Since we first met to this day we only had one huge altercation. It happened during a practice where everybody was tense because of the competition and it exploded between him and I. We screamed at each other, we were not mean in our words but it was uncomfortable and we haven't really spoked like we used to for a couple of days. Thankfully everything went back to a point the argument never happened. After this one the bond

was even stronger and a situation like this never happened again. I consider him like my little brother, he knows my parents, I know his family too. This was the easiest friendship I ever made. We spoke almost everydays even though he moved to the south of France to play in the second division and I am in the United States to try something new.

Another friendship that volleyball has brought to my life happened during the 2022-2023 season. I went to see the women's professional team from Nantes playing a championship game. I knew the girls like Jaelynn, Emma from the season before and I was aware of some of the new girls because two of them played in huge clubs in Europe who are world famous. After the game we all went to another room with high tables, drinks, some foods like french toasts, some cheese, and we are waiting for the girls to make their entrance in this VIP room. The girls who arrived spoke a little bit about the game and after that they had to talk to the sponsors who are here. I was just in a corner with some of my friends waiting for our friends from the women's team to end talking so we could talk and after that leave to eat outside or go to a club to celebrate the victory. One of my friends came with one of the new girls, her name is Martina, she is Croatian, she is taller than me with long blond hair, and she introduced herself to us. I spoke to her about her last club and she was shocked I knew the club. I told her that I know her since she played in Germany around five years ago, in the club of Stuttgart, and so we talked about it the whole night, even at the club, we were talking about her champions league season, when she played in Scandicci, one of the biggest club in Italy, I learn so many things about this high level world from what she experienced that I knew only from the TV watching games. And from this day in november, to the end of the last season we will have dinner together at her place which is five minutes away from mine. She would cook things like Croatian soup, pasta dinner because it was after

practice most of the time. I would bring food too like some french dessert or patisserie, other girls from the team would be with us, we would do jigsaw puzzles or look at international volleyball games. And that is one of the most unpredictable friendships I made thanks to volleyball, me and an international professional player captain of the Croatian national team who played in some of the biggest clubs in the world.

Volleyball allowed me to create and build strong friendships with people I would never expect to happen. Friendships for life with people who have everything different from me. People who do not have the same background, educations that I have. People from a different country, with another culture and way of doing things. And it happened again here in the United States, at Missouri Valley College, in my team all my teammates, except two people, come from another country, I would never have had the opportunity to meet them without volleyball.

A Love Story

Lola Martínez Benítez

How much has the way in which people fall in love changed over time? Most grandparents are adults who are full of affection, knowledge and a lot of love. They are able to show us different ways of looking at life, and they usually teach us traditions from the time in which they have lived. My paternal grandparents are some of the most special people I know and spending time with them makes me the happiest person in the world. I have

spent hours listening to my grandmother tell anecdotes of her childhood, and I especially love to hear the story of how she met my grandfather.

My grandmother, called Ángela, was born in 1937. She is from Faro, a city in Portugal, but from a very young age she lived in Madrid, the capital of Spain. She was the oldest sister in a family of eight siblings, and they all studied in a Catholic school. The whole family always spent the summers in San Pedro de la Ramallosa, on the coast of Galicia, and that gave my grandmother a great connection with the north of Spain. When my grandmother turned 18, she began to study at the Universidad Complutense de Madrid, she graduated in Pharmacy and started working in laboratories researching on the effects of antibiotics and how they affect to different living beings, and doing research on her own about the effects of antibiotics, as her main goal was to be able to open her own pharmacy.

My grandfather José, was born in Pontevedra, a very important city in Galicia because it is the capital of the province of Pontevedra, and he spent his entire childhood there. He studied medicine at the Universidad de Santiago de Compostela, until he graduated and moved to Madrid, where he started working as a doctor in charge of surgeries at the Hospital de la Paz. My grandfather was a very cheerful person, but at the same time he was a very hard worker and very intelligent. As a doctor, he specialized in hip surgeries, and he was a very well-known person, especially in Galicia, since he was able to care for many people, and also save the lives of many others.

In the summer of 1950, a traditional party took place in Pontevedra, Galicia, where well-known friends were in the celebration. My grandmother went to the event with her friends with whom she spent every summer in Galicia, and many of them studied medicine and pharmacy in Santiago de Compostela, and others studied with her in Madrid. The party was going normally, and it was a very joyful and cheerful event. Suddenly, these friends

of my grandmother who were studying in Santiago, decided to join their groups of friends. They talked for hours about Galicia, Madrid, their friends, their families, and everything they had in common, which without knowing it, was a lot. After that day, and due to the lack of resources at that time because telephones did not exist and that they had no way to contact each other because of the distance, they could not meet again. With time, the two of them returned to Madrid and there they began to study together and continued their relationship.

After two years as a couple, they went to visit Argentina, and there, in front of the Iguazu Waterfalls, they decided to get married and in time they had five children. The difficulty in their marriage came when they had to take care of five babies while both were working, and that is why my grandfather began seeing his patients in a home office setting, and my grandmother reduced her working hours as well. Their love story continued for a long time until 1970, when my grandfather died of a heart attack while they were in Santander, Spain. After that, my grandmother had to move on, and she kept the family together, although she has always missed my grandfather's figure a lot. Thanks to my grandparents I have been able to know where my family comes from and also to know my grandfather through the words of all my relatives who knew him, since my cousins and I were not lucky enough to do it. The most beautiful thing about this story is being able to know how love stories were like in the past and admire my grandparents and the way they love each other.

Rebellion

Carla Estradé Hernández

Thirteen Reasons Why by Jay Asher was released in 2017. This TV show tells the story of Hannah Baker's suicide from the point of view of a friend of hers and how her friends changed after it. "Thursday" is the episode when Clay Jensen rebels against the principal due to the use of weapons to protect students because before in the show, a friend of them went to the school with a gun but Clay managed to stop it. The speech that I will discuss in this essay was said by the main character Clay Jensen, where he shows the danger of weapons in schools and the difference between the vision of adults and young people on the issue of protection. I admired Clay Jensen's speech because I agree that children should grow up away from guns so they can be kids who play and have fun and learn and not kids worried that at some point someone might come into school with a gun and hurt them. However, I disagree with Clay in the way he tried to convince the principal and everyone about the fact that there is no safety because I think taking the gun from the security man is too serious to play with.

First, when Clay saw that there were armed security guards, the director was giving instructions on what to do with the video cameras and the metal detectors. Clay is angry, he starts using words like "fuck" which I think highlights and intensifies his anger and the position he is defending in relation to the gun issue. I think that the level of anger that Clay uses, the gestures, and the passion he puts in are perfect to support his main idea. That means children need to grow up in a safe place where they can develop and begin to know and be themselves without having to worry and watch armed security guards watching them on cameras and passing them through metal detectors to know if they are carrying weapons or not. That way of protection

does not make innocent children feel safe when they go to school. That is why I agree with Clay when he defends the possibility for children to still be children.

Then, when he said that the way that the principal is using to keep them safe is not having that effect because with gunshots and hammered down the door they are not safe they are feeling hunted, and afraid for their lives. They feel that they are practicing how to cheat death. I agree with him because children at that age should be living their lives thinking about what they are going to do after classes, dreaming about their futures, and not thinking about what they can do to not die because even if it is something irremediable before the death we must have lived. That is why Clay insists so much on the aspect of letting them live these moments in school that they will not be able to repeat and let them enjoy the way if they make mistakes if they fall because after all that they will be able to forget the person who in a few years will be in the real world with real problems and will have to know what to do and how to manage them. I think that I agree with Clay's point of view because now I am living something similar to them in college living the best years of my life and I want to live these without having to worry about whether someone is going to decide one day to pick up a gun and start shooting, that is why I understand and support more Clay's vision who defends that the guns should not be allowed in schools or everywhere especially in the presence of children.

Finally, when Clay said that if the principal is doing all that of hiring security armed guards and installing video cameras and metal detectors there is not to keep them safe. Still, he is doing all this because of a regulation, law, or checking a box. Clay thinks that they are not safe which is why a few seconds later decides to take away the deputy's gun to demonstrate that everyone even the person who defends the suppression of guns in schools can

one day pick up a gun and do whatever comes to mind at the time and wants. He wants to demonstrate that people are unpredictable. At that moment, I disagreed with Clay because I didn't think that it was necessary to take the armed security guard's gun to be respected and listened to. But I think that by taking the gun the only thing that he is demonstrating is that he is only a child impulsive and needs to understand the adult world.

For that speech, I agree with Clay on what he thinks about the guns in schools because I think that children are the purest thing in society because they already do not know everything bad that happens in the world, and they live their lives enjoying and learning each day what should be the correct way to do the things. That is why I disagree with Clay in the way he tried to convince the principal and everyone about the fact that there is no safety because if someone wants to be listened to and wants other people to understand what is

defending that person should not do what it is criticizing because otherwise, no one will take the message you are conveying seriously. That's why people say actions speak louder than words.

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Build Our Legacy Now: Detroit Lions Win Team's First NFC North Title

Andrew Mittl

Before the start of the 2023 NFL season, Detroit Lions Head Coach Dan Campbell gave a speech to his team, titled “Build our Legacy Now” on September 1st 2023. He was giving this speech to his team before the season to motivate them and prepare them for what is to come. With the speech being uploaded on December 24, 2023, we know that his audience, the players of his team, responded well because they were able to achieve a division title and playoff win, and they faced difficulties throughout the season that they were able to push through. His main points of the speech were his expectations of making the playoffs or more and having the opportunity to achieve something great, and that they are strong enough to overcome any bumps in the road that may arise. This essay will summarize and respond to this speech.

Dan Campbell starts his speech by addressing the group by saying good morning to quiet the group and get everyone's attention. We see him standing in front of the large group of players in a room with all the seats facing the front. He starts his speech by mentioning that he wants to do something special for the upcoming season. Next he acknowledges that to achieve what he wants to achieve will not be an easy task and there will be bumps in the road, and everyone on the team is going to have to do their best to put themselves in the best position to move forward. He goes on to say that he knows the team is built for tough times and that when they hit tough times they can keep pushing forward and nobody handles it like they do.

When watching and listening to the video, the way he talks to his team is good because he has a straightforward approach and lets his team know he believes in them. This could be viewed as him just saying what

should be said and viewed as a generic way of speaking to any sports team, but from my experiences in playing sports, coaches generally don't like to lie, and being honest is a big part of a coach having integrity and earning the respect of his team. His players know he believes that they are built to overcome tough situations, and this is important because players need belief from the coach in order to do their best. His belief is real because the team would ultimately accomplish, as mentioned earlier, a division title and playoff win.

His next main point is him saying that the team can achieve a lot, and to "Build our Legacy." He starts this off by asking the players when they last won their division, playoff game and championship. They answer his questions by calling out the years of these achievements that are shown on the back wall. All of these achievements were last accomplished 30 or more years before the team meeting. This is his way of showing that what they have the chance to achieve will be truly special and that they have the opportunity to do something that hasn't been done for a long time, and make it a season to never forget.

In response to this point, this is a great way of speaking to the team, because it shows them that there hasn't been much recent success, and the way he makes the players read out get them to really see that he wants them to know what is possible for the team, and that if this team achieves some of these accomplishments it will be a big moment for the team and a major accomplishment for the players who achieve the goal. He believes his team are capable of achieving these goals and wants to make sure they keep pushing to achieve great things, and although he keeps repeating to build a legacy, he doesn't sound too repetitive because you can see his players clearly engaged and taking in what he says. His belief is also shown when he

says it's not if, but he knows they can do something great, and they would ultimately end up meeting the coaches expectations.

In conclusion, coach Dan Campbell gave a great speech to his team on his expectations, what he wants the team to achieve. He knows his team is built for tough moments and can keep pushing, and everything that he keeps reiterating is what it will take to achieve what he wants. It's important to him that the team keeps fighting, and he makes sure they know they are capable of anything. This is why he says they will make it a season that they will never forget, and Build a Legacy.

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Kevin Durant's MVP Speech

Yoro Sow

On May 6, 2014, Kevin Durant gave a 26 minute emotional speech in Oklahoma City in presence of his family, teammates and journalists when he received the NBA Most Valuable Player (MVP) trophy. In this acceptance speech Durant honored many people who have influenced his life and career. Durant's speech brought me many emotions, particular motivation from his expression of gratitude towards his peers, and as an

athlete, his perseverance and hard effort in overcoming obstacles inspired me to work hard on my basketball's goals.

Durant begins by expressing his early aspiration to become a recreational league coach and mentioning his humble origins in PG County, Maryland. Thanking the coaching staff, especially head coach Scott Brooks, he also praises the Thunder fans' persistent support. He emphasizes how crucial his coaches, teammates, and the Oklahoma City Thunder organization as a whole have been to his success. Durant thanked everyone at the organization, but especially Mr. Bennett, the team's owner, and General Manager Sam Presti. He recognizes the vital role that the team's support staff perform, naming a number of them by name. Durant continues, thanking each of his teammates personally and highlighting their contributions to his development both personally and professionally.

In the final section of the speech Durant gives appreciation to those who encouraged, believed in, and supported him when things were hard for him. As Durant extends his gratitude to his father, brother, and younger brother Rayvonne, the speech gets quite emotional. He shows his affection and appreciation for his friends, who helped him stay grounded and offered support. In honor of his mother, Durant sets aside a particular homage to honor her kindness, tenacity, sacrifices and unconditional affection. At the end of his address, Durant praises God and thanks the writers who supported him.

The way he communicates his gratitude to everyone around him makes me feel motivated on my basketball journey every time I watch the speech for this paper. I must admit that I felt happy with his accomplishment the entire speech. Indeed, I often watch speeches from basketball players like Kobe Bryant and seeing them succeed brings me happiness as I am a fan of these players . Furthermore, seeing him mention so many names

demonstrates to us that he is not who others believe him to be and that he genuinely cares about people but also that he is appreciated by the franchise . It's true that a lot of people such as fans but also haters had a negative opinion of Durant, believing him to be a terrible guy who insults young people using false identities.Indeed during a moment he was accused of hiding behind fake accounts in order to insult the people who criticize him. I could understand every feeling Durant was attempting to convey throughout his speech because he is a great emotional speaker. Several techniques are involved: the tonality of his voice, the stories about his past and tears flow make the speech special.

We can also appreciate how much work he put in from the start to make it to the NBA by listening to his words. His mother's tribute is among the most popular parts of his speech for most NBA's fans because of the emotional words that Durant had for his mother. In fact, Kevin Durant began by discussing his childhood and his family, who have supported him through many challenges. Because of her mother's courage, he will eventually refer to her as "the real MVP". I have a big respect for Durant's mother's courage, indeed despite the numerous obstacles that she was facing she was always trying to do her best to take care of his children and support Durant's basketball journey. His description of his early years demonstrates to us how difficult his life was and how modest his childhood was. Additionally, the homage to her mother shows us his familial background.

To sum up, Kevin Durant's MVP acceptance speech is a passionate tribute to everyone who has supported him over his career, both on and off the basketball court. It demonstrates his humility, gratitude, and deep appreciation for all of the support he received throughout the journey. Indeed In his emotional tribute, Kevin Durant thanked his family, teammates, and the Oklahoma City Thunder franchise during his MVP

award speech. The touching moments, such as when he refers to his mother as "the real MVP," highlight the obstacles he overcomes and the encouragement that kept him going. Durant's speech is notable because it refutes any negative views by acknowledging a wide range of individuals in an honest and comprehensive way. This acceptance speech is captivating and unforgettable because of its emotional depth, narrative quality, and humility. I chose this speech because I admire Kevin's humility and the respect he has for his mother and her sacrifice to lead to success.

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“Bonnes nouvelles pour la planète / ARTE”

Julian Ayapé

In an extract of a 2022 YouTube video from “Bonnes Nouvelles pour la Planète / ARTE,”. ARTE is a European public service channel dedicated to culture. The narrator introduces viewers to an unusual company called IFO. This documentary could be dedicated to future investors who could be interraised or aimed at politicians, or anyone interested in the subject. These documentaries aim to educate the public, whether on a social,

political, scientific, environmental or cultural issue. It aims to inform viewers, broaden their understanding and spark their interest in the subject. This documentary is designed to bring about social or political change by drawing attention to problems or injustices such as deforestation and poverty in the Congo. They can inspire audiences to take action, get involved in causes or support initiatives for change. Although many documentaries have educational or social objectives, they can also entertain the public. The narrative, the characters, the captivating stories and the impressive images make this documentary interesting. Through this essay you will understand the importance of watching and giving interest to startups and companies that create innovative projects to protect the environment and social development. Every company should turn part of its business towards protecting the planet or innovating in this area.

According to Arte, Ifo's adoption of responsible forest management through selective tree harvesting not only optimizes resources and ensures economic profitability but also prioritizes biodiversity preservation and transparency in the wood supply chain. First Ifo adopts responsible forest management which is characterized by the selective harvesting of trees. Unlike traditional logging, where large areas of forest are cleared in mass, Ifo takes a more measured, and ecosystem-friendly approach. Rather than cutting down every tree on their territory, Ifo targets only the most economically profitable trees. During the video, they show the work of the company and the optimization of their resources while preserving forest biodiversity. Every tree has a number, which guarantees complete traceability of the wood throughout the forestry process. This helps combat illegal logging and promotes transparency in the wood supply chain. The fact that they show people working and talking about how to cut the trees shows the importance

of the preservation of biodiversity for them. It's not just a profit-making enterprise, but they also preserve biodiversity. In essence, Ifo's commitment to responsible forest management not only ensures economic viability but also underscores their dedication to preserving biodiversity and fostering transparency in the wood supply chain for a sustainable future.

Next main points is that Ifo's approach to forest conservation and sustainable logging practices show their dedication to preserving biodiversity and ecosystem integrity. Ifo's conservation policy illustrates a deep commitment to sustainability and the preservation of forest biodiversity. Only a small fraction of the forest concession, corresponding to a specific area, is logged each year. This strategic choice limits the impact of logging on the forest's overall ecosystem.

They have a rotation area that follows a 30-year cycle. This allows the forest to regenerate and maintain its ecological balance. Ifo carefully plans its activities to ensure the long-term sustainability of the forest resource.

Some areas that are home to rare species or important fauna are identified and preserved from any logging activity. These rules allow us to protect natural habitats and promote biodiversity in the forest ecosystem.

There is a fact that promote their company, during the interview of Jean Paul Belingua when he speaks, he's confident, calm and clear, which suggests that what he's saying is true. On the other hand, when he says: "[...]un arbre qui tombe n'est foncièrement pas une destruction parce que nous faisons un prélèvement suivant une certaine densité et c'est pas tous les arbres qu'on a bas et il faut abattre les arbres avec un certain diamètre que nous avons déjà mis sur l'aménagement donc c'est pas une destruction c'est une façon de récolter qui est tout à fait responsable avec le moins de dégâts possibles." He clearly demonstrates that his business is eco-friendly. In

summary, Ifo's comprehensive conservation policy, coupled with their transparent communication and commitment to responsible logging practices, show their dedication to sustainable forestry and the preservation of biodiversity for present and future generations.

At the end of the extract, the video explains that by obtaining FSC certification and serving as a significant employer in the region, Ifo emerges as a leading model of responsible forest management, setting a precedent for other countries encouraging broader adoption of sustainable practices in forestry worldwide.

Third, according to the video, the company has received an FSC certification, which is a recognized environmental label for tropical wood. This testifies to its commitment to protecting the environment and biodiversity. Ifo is the main employer in the region, emphasizing its economic importance and its commitment to the local population. It's a model of responsible forest and it's an example to follow for other countries. If you were wondering why this company was telling bullshit? As it shows through the interview, the company has been certified by a prestigious label, which lends credibility to their work and gives them greater visibility, leading to more money and, why not, the development of this practice on a larger scale. In conclusion, Ifo's FSC certification not only validates its dedication to environmental protection and biodiversity preservation but also serves to emphasize sustainable forestry practices.

In conclusion, This is a French broadcast called Arte explaining a specific situation about Congo. It's a great example of responsible forest management and sustainable business practices. IFO stands out as an innovative company that prioritizes environmental conservation while also contributing to local economic development. The company's approach to selective tree harvesting, coupled with the implementation of a

comprehensive conservation policy, shows a perfect understanding of the delicate balance between economic and environmental factors. By carefully mapping and monitoring the forest, IFO guarantee the protection of valuable ecosystems and rare species while still meeting the needs of the market. Moreover, the fact that it provides employment opportunities for local communities underscores the company's dedication to social responsibility and inclusive growth. In essence, IFO serves as an hope in an industry often filled with unsustainable practices and environmental degradation.

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“Did Somebody Say” Menulog ft. Snoop Dogg: A Rhetorical Analysis

Andrew Mittl

“Did Somebody Say - Menulog” is an ad that was run by food delivery service Menulog featuring rap artist Snoop Dogg. The ad is a great example of effective persuasive rhetoric because of its use of rhetorical strategies to engage the audience. This successfully convinces the audience to use the food delivery service because it establishes credibility through the use of Snoop Dogg’s celebrity status, persuades viewers with the use of emotions such as promise of gain through humor and entertainment, and convinces using reasoning by showcasing the app's convenience and accessibility.

The ad came out in 2020, a year in which much of the world was in lockdown due to the spread of COVID-19. This is relevant for Menulog because this was a time where many people were spending lots of time at home and were not able to leave or eat out. In a time without being able to eat out, many restaurants were looking to deliver, and with the higher demand, more apps were trying to establish themselves in the market to be the one that people would go to. This meant that Menulog had to do something to separate themselves from the rest and needed to do something to stand out. The ad starts with Snoop Dogg sitting in his mansion where he’s deciding what to eat and decides to use Menulog. This is followed by a humorous exchange between him and the delivery driver, and then moving into the rap part of the ad where he is rapping about what different food he can get and to where. These lyrics are paired videos of delivery drivers bringing him food to many different locations. The ad then ends with Snoop Dogg eating his meal, showing the ease of using Menulog.

The ad has multiple uses of ethos throughout the video. With Snoop Dogg being well known for his use of Marijuana, he is a great spokesperson

for the service, because due to the legalization across many states, food delivery is important for many people to use as they can't drive under the influence, so having Snoop Dogg endorsing the brand helps to get people who might also be smoking to use Menulog for their delivery. Also, as mentioned before, the use of Snoop Dogg's celebrity status is a great strategy as he is well known and has a big fan base due to his music career spanning across multiple decades. This status earns the attention of many different audiences and demographics, and Menulog association with him automatically establishes credibility with these particular audiences. There are also many examples of what could be seen as personal experiences which users could also relate to. It shows Snoop Dogg hanging out with friends, and this experience is relatable to viewers as many have been in the situation and want food and need it delivered, so the ad shows relatable scenes and identifies with the viewers by showing similar situations that they could have been in.

As well as the use of ethos, there are also multiple examples of pathos. There is plenty of humor and entertainment throughout the ad. The first example is in the intro of the ad when he has a humorous exchange with the delivery driver, saying "Sick of this, get Menulog on the line, we gon' do this Doggy style. This already draws the audience to the ad, and viewers are then waiting for the next part of the ad due to the entertaining nature of the advertisement. Although the lyrics have many humorous punchlines like "Chicken wings to the crib I'm sittin' in, burger in the low-low, hope they kept the pickle in" and other rhymes about different food, they also show the promise of gain by showing the different food that viewers can get to any location by using Menulog. These promises of gain and uses of humor in the ad make it more memorable for the viewers.

And finally, the most common rhetorical strategy used in the ad, is logos. Logic and reasoning is important when trying to sell a product, and the ad shows the benefits of using the food delivery service. The intro of the ad shows him placing an order through the Menulog app very easily, showing the accessibility and simple use of the app. The whole advertisement has many different examples of him getting delivered whatever food he wants, to wherever he wants it delivered to. This shows how easy it is to order, and how easy it is to get it to where he wants. This all highlights the convenience of using Menulog. By showing the convenience of using Menulog, it shows viewers through logic and reasoning a simple solution to a common problem of finding a quick easy meal for delivery, and persuading viewers to use Menulog when they are in this situation.

In conclusion, this ad has great examples of rhetorical strategies. By using Snoop Dogg's celebrity status and different relatable experiences ordering food, using humor and emotions to make it a memorable ad for viewers, and showing the practical benefits of using Menulog, the ad does well in capturing the audience's attention and does well to promote the services of the app. It is a great example of persuasion and does so in many ways, helping persuade viewers into using Menulog for their food delivery needs.

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Resilience in Adversity: The Subtle Power Shifts in 'Yaiza'

Estefano Del Águila Delgado

“What do you want to play me?” she yelled. But none of us said yes, and-like that- we had a respect for her. (Peynado 67)

“Yaiza” is a short story by Peynado, who is, according to her author website “a Dominican American writer of fiction, nonfiction, and screenplays. She often writes about Latina girlhood, class, race, and commodity culture through literary realism, magical realism and near-future science fiction”. Peynado has won multiple awards for her work, has a Ph. D. in fiction from the University of Cincinnati and she currently teaches fiction in the University of Houston (“About Me”). “Yaiza” tells a story about two girls with latino origins with very different backgrounds. Yaiza comes from a humble and marginalized neighborhood while the narrator who is the other main character in the story belongs to a high class family. They find each other at the tennis academy where Yaiza quickly outshines all of the other students. By focusing on the passage above, this essay unravels Yaiza’s challenge to her peers, showing her unyielding personality and response of her peers to Yaiza’s jarring response, revealing their lack of character in the face of Yaiza’s resilient attitude which is probably a consequence of her harsh life background and past experiences.

In this segment we observe how Yaiza challenges her peers with the intention of showing superiority and establishing hierarchy amongst them. The passage starts with Yaiza asking a question to all the other students at the tennis court that were behind her, after a ball hit her on the back of her neck. “What do you want to play me? she yelled” (Peynado 67). Firstly Yaiza uses the word want, asking if anyone had the intention to confront her after being hit with the

ball. In other words she asks if anyone dares to defy her; she decides to use the word “play,” which can be seen as inoffensive, something that kids do all the time to have fun, to interact with each other to create a bond a friendship even, but in this context she uses it as way of challenging her peers. We should not forget that in a game there is always a winner and a loser, nobody likes to lose because it makes you feel sad, inferior, or not good enough. On the other hand the winner takes it all, the pride, the recognition, the right to say I have beaten you, I am better than you and I have proven it, which as a result provides a sense of superiority. Having said that, it is fair to assume that Yaiza was not thinking of playing for the sake of having fun, but to propose a duel which would determine superiority. But why is it important for her to be superior? Maybe Yaiza was trying to establish a hierarchy between her peers, there is also the possibility that she was only trying to feed her ego and self-esteem, which is a certainty is that competition is imprinted in our genes and it has served a crucial role in the development of human society.

Being loud when expressing ourselves is often a way to achieve a bigger impact from the people around we are trying to communicate with. The fact that she yelled, gives it a stronger connotation; by yelling Yaiza expresses her discomfort, her pain, her anger, her rage. She wanted everyone to realize how she was feeling. Furthermore, being loud is often used as a way of showing power and standing up for yourself. The combination of challenge, feelings and power might suggest that she did not have control over her emotions, which is a logical assumption since teenagers are on the way of shaping their personality traits, behaviors and emotional intelligence. She definitely felt the need to stand up for herself; she had no one to rely on, otherwise no one would respect her and would keep on messing with her.

The behavior of the students at the tennis academy towards Yaiza's

assertive response, results in admiration, revealing Yaiza's resilience and what she might have been through to achieve that temperament. Later in the excerpt we can appreciate the behavior of the students at the tennis academy towards Yaiza's severe response, "But none of us said yes", by not saying no, it reveals that they were afraid of Yaiza, did they suddenly lose the ability to talk? Silence as a response to a verbal interaction uncloaks fear and inferiority, the determination in her voice caused all her peers to immediately look at her in a different way, not as the outsider girl from a poor neighborhood, but as a strong contender that they should not mess with. This also implies that her peers at the academy admire not only Yaiza's abilities on the tennis court, but also her temperament and resilience. Resilience is only built through struggle, which leads us to assume that Yaiza has had a rough life, coming from a humble family with little resources must have not been easy, struggle builds toughness. This indicates that she knows how to play the game which can only mean that she has encountered this kind of adversity before.

At the end of the extract we observed what Yaiza earned by challenging the other kids in such energetic manner, "and-like that- we had a respect for her"(Peynado 67), let's start with the wording "and-like that-" which means immediately, automatically, without hesitation, no arguments found to contradict what was happening, something that came up naturally, this suggest the narrator and her peers were not expecting Yaiza to react in that way revealing their lack of response to unexpected events. This reveals that they might never have faced such a strong-willed person like Yaiza and that Yaiza's response was accurate in achieving its goal of establishing hierarchy.

The phrase "We had a respect for her " points up a change in Yaiza's perception from the narrator and her peers, resulting in a change of

power dynamics within them. What did the narrator mean by saying that? The use of the word “respect” hints that Yaiza has earned admiration from the narrator and her peers. This suggests that they now look at her in a different way, acknowledging her as one of them, not an outsider anymore. This phrase also reveals the change in the power dynamics within the group, which suggests that Yaiza was perceived as inferior but by earning their respect, she appears to have gained a high ground between her peers.

After a deeper analyzing of the passage we can conclude that indeed Yaiza’s challenge to her peers, helped her to show her unyielding personality and that the response of her peers to Yaiza’s jarring response, not only revealed their lack of character in the face of Yaiza’s resilient attitude; which was probably a consequence of her harsh life, but also their inability to deal with strong-willed subjects. This implies that the story pushes you to not only put yourselves in the narrator's shoes, but also sympathize with what Yaiza had to endure not only in the tennis academy but throughout her whole life.

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Why Should We Avoid Processed Food?

Henrik Stenersen

In a fast paced world, the food choices we make impact our health in profound ways. In the text, *Why Should We Avoid Processed Food*, Dr. Sanchari delves into the realm of processed foods, outlining the various types along with explaining the potential ways it can affect a human's well-being. From minimally processed items to highly manufactured, ultra processed foods, each category carries its own implications for our health. While some processed foods offer convenience and essential nutrients, others are filled with additives and lack nutritional value. This raises concerns about their contribution to various health conditions, including cardiovascular disorders and obesity. This analysis will summarize Dr. Sanchari's main points along with how she applies ethos, logos and pathos to help persuade her readers to take action.

Many people rely on processed foods because they're quick and easy. But, these foods can have very negative affects on our health. This text by Dr. Sanchari looks closely at processed foods, sorting them into different groups based on how much they've been changed from their original state. Some processed foods have added nutrients to make them healthier, but most are full of unhealthy fats, sugars, and salt, which can lead to serious health complications. Studies have shown that eating too much processed food can increase the risk of heart disease, diabetes, and even shorten life expectancy. It not only affects the average adult's health, but children and pregnant women are more susceptible to being affected. By understanding more about processed foods and their effects, we can make better choices for our health and the health of our

communities.

Dr. Sanchari establishes credibility through ethos by presenting well researched information and citing reputable sources throughout the discussion of processed foods. By referring to scientific studies and findings, Dr. Sanchari demonstrates a commitment to accuracy and thoroughness in her analysis. Additionally, Dr. Sanchari may draw upon her own expertise or background in nutrition or public health, if applicable, to further bolster her credibility. Her expertise as a knowledgeable authority on the subject adds to the assertions and positions being presented. Through the use of ethos, the author instills trust in her audience by enhancing the persuasiveness of her argument regarding the potential health impacts of processed foods.

Dr. Sanchari employs logos effectively by presenting logical arguments and evidence to support her assertions regarding the health implications of processed foods. Throughout her discussion, she systematically categorizes processed foods based on the degree of alteration they undergo, drawing upon the NOVA food classification system to provide a structured framework for her analysis. By exposing the differences between unprocessed, minimally processed, and ultra-processed foods, Dr. Sanchari offers clarity and coherence to her argument, facilitating understanding for her audience. Moreover, she reinforces her points with scientific studies and research findings, such as the SUN prospective cohort study, to substantiate the link between high intake of processed foods and increased risks of various health conditions. Through the use of logical reasoning and empirical evidence, Dr. Sanchari builds a compelling case for the potential adverse effects of processed foods on public health.

Dr. Sanchari employs pathos by evoking emotional responses

and concerns about the health consequences of consuming processed foods. Throughout her discussion, she highlights the potential risks and detrimental effects that processed foods can have on individuals and society as a whole. By addressing issues such as the prevalence of cardiovascular disorders, metabolic diseases, and mortality associated with high consumption of processed foods, Dr. Sanchari appeals to readers' fears and anxieties regarding their health and well-being. Additionally, she emphasizes the vulnerability of children and pregnant women to the long-term health impacts of processed food consumption, eliciting empathy and concern for these populations. Through the use of emotive language and compelling examples, Dr. Sanchari effectively engages readers on an emotional level, prompting them to consider the importance of making informed dietary choices for themselves and their loved ones.

Dr. Sanchari Sinha Dutta outlines the various categories of processed foods, ranging from minimally processed to heavily altered ultra-processed foods, and discusses their potential impacts on human health. She underscores the prevalence of unhealthy additives in many processed foods, which can contribute to serious health problems such as heart disease and diabetes. Through the use of ethos, logos, and pathos, Dr. Sanchari establishes credibility, presents logical arguments supported by evidence, and evokes emotional responses to highlight the importance of making informed dietary choices. By delving into the health implications of processed foods and addressing concerns about their effects on vulnerable populations, Dr. Sanchari encourages readers to prioritize their health and well-being by minimizing the consumption of processed foods and opting for healthier alternatives. Overall, the author is lacking especially pathos. if the author utilized more pathos, she could

potentially convince more readers to change their way of life. This would help Dr. Sanchari to convince more readers to follow her way and make positive change to the overall health of the public.

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“7 Years Old”

Carla Estradé Hernández

Lukas Graham is a Danish pop band with lead vocalist Lukas Forchhammer and drummer Mark Falgren. Their songs often deal with relatable experiences like growing up poor or drinking. The song that I am going to analyze is the band’s most popular song, “7 Years Old.” This song is for those people who have lost sight of what is truly important such as family and targets those who have had to make sacrifices in their lives. This song can appeal to many people, especially family-oriented ones because it can easily portray and relate to their experiences and emotions. The purpose of this song is for the singer to reflect on his life and the sacrifices he has made to achieve his lifelong goal of having a family of his own. That means transmitting to the audience how important family is as well as how quickly life can pass you by and appeals to their personal experiences and sacrifices.

Finally, this song persuades nearly everyone who is focused on their life goals. This essay analyzes the rhetorical strategies used in “7 Years Old” and argues that Lukas Graham successfully persuades the audience to stay focused on what is important by using ethos, logos, and pathos.

“7 Years Old” was released in 2015. At this time the average of listeners of Lukas Graham was teenagers. The subject of this song is to describe growing up and aging at specific points in life, specifically from seven years old to sixty years old. For this, he reflects on the past sacrifices he has made as well as what his future will hold family-wise. This song also talks about how much Lukas Graham wants to become a good father and being such a good father that his children would want to visit him when he is old. In this song Graham’s upbringing is reflected, he was raised in a Copenhagen commune and smoked weed for the first time when he was 11, after his father died in 2012 triggering an introspective period that led him to this song.

He used *ethos* first to persuade or establish credibility with the audience by sharing personal experiences. *Ethos* is the rhetorical concept of supporting an author’s purpose by showing their credibility. To show credibility, the singer used personal experiences to show himself as an ordinary human being like all of us to show that no matter where you are from, no matter where you were born, we can all achieve our goals if we make an effort and give our all to achieve what matters to us. “It was a big big world, but we thought we were bigger. Pushing each other to the limits, we were learning quicker. By eleven smoking herb and drinking burning liquor. Never rich so we were out to make that steady figure”. In that citation, Lukas Graham shows that even if he has not grown up in the best place he has achieved his goal of being able to do what he wants. In this quotation, he used the admission of limitations to establish credibility. That is why Lukas

Graham can be considered as a person credible because he is trying to convince people about something that he has already achieved, that leaving his hard childhood drinking and smoking, and the best way to be trusted by teenagers is by showing what you achieved and not only words.

Also, Lukas Graham uses identification with the audience to persuade them to trust or believe him. That means, as the average listeners of his songs are young, and usually teenagers, and at that age we all have or have had doubts about what we are doing or what the future holds. So the singer uses that to reach out to those teenagers who have lost their way or have lost their minds and remind them of what matters and why they should move forward. “Remember life and, then your life becomes a better one. I made a man so happy when I wrote a letter once. I hope my children come and visit, once or twice a month.” That quotation is an expression of goodwill and shows exactly what Lukas Graham cares about and what he wants in his future. That means caring about family, friends, and all the people who ever want us to succeed. He gains credibility by showing the steps he took to achieve his dreams and how happy he made the people who supported him from the beginning, which can be a compelling reason for young people who don't know why they do things and look for meaning in them. With this song, teenagers can use music to understand their behavior. This quotation can also help to explain the next concept, *logos*.

The second concept is *logos*. *Logos* is the use of reasoning to persuade the audience. The anterior quotation is also an example of *logos* because the author asks the teenagers to remember what they have already lived to be able to take this information and use it better to achieve a better life full of things that they want. Also, by using facts such as “Never rich so we were out to make that steady figure” Lukas Graham demonstrates that even if he has not been rich with effort he could achieve his goal. He is using

objective evidence to appeal to the audience because most of his audience are teenagers so they are not rich most of them. So it shows the reasoning behind the lyrics to express his point of view. He also shows teenagers a second way to do things because maybe when you are young you only think that there is only one way, your way, to do something but in reality, there exists many ways to do it.

The third concept is *pathos*. *Pathos* uses emotions to persuade the audience. In his lyrics, Lukas Graham uses sentences such as “Once I was seven years old my momma told me. Go make yourself some friends or you'll be lonely” and “Once I was eleven years old my daddy told me. Go get yourself a wife or you'll be lonely” to appeal the emotions of the audience because he talks about the memories with his mother and father which is something very emotional. He used the promise of gain or fear of loss because parents are not eternal even if we wish it. So Lukas Graham uses the memory of his parents to persuade teenagers to do the correct thing which is most of the time what their parents said to them. That is why Lukas Graham can persuade young people because he uses emotions to reach them.

In conclusion, throughout his song, Lukas Graham tells the audience how important family is as well as how quickly life can pass you by and appeals to their personal experiences and sacrifices, “7 Years Old” by using *ethos* by identification with the audience, his personal experiences, also by using *logos* that means using facts to persuade his audience reasoning, and by using *pathos* that means using emotions convince the audience. By using these rhetorical strategies Lukas Graham can reach more teenagers and help them to have a better life in the future. That is why “7 Years Old” has been an international HIT, that means that this song has been in the top 10 of songs in international countries.

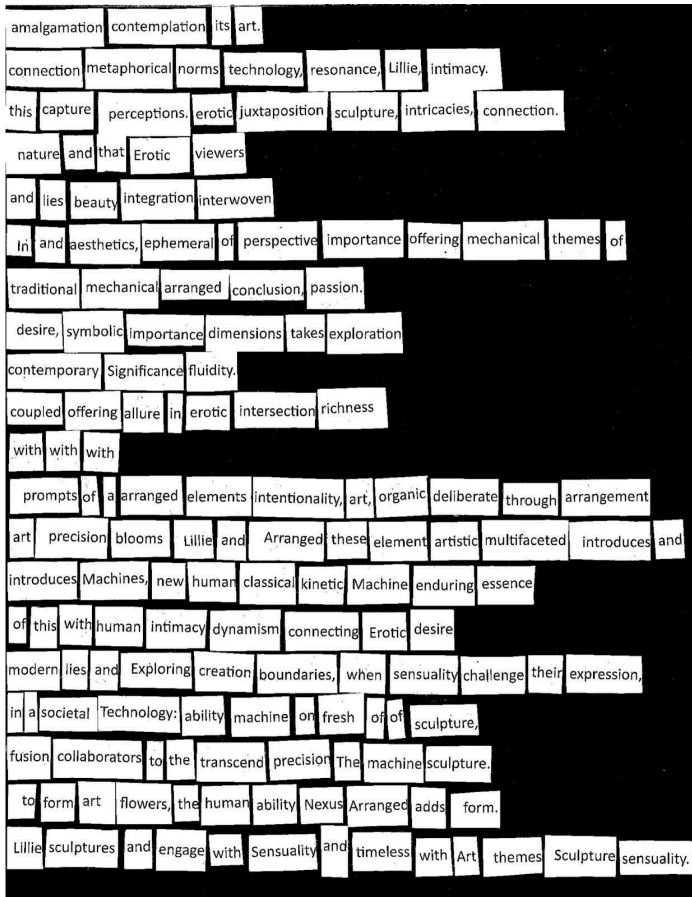
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HUMANITY AND CREATIVITY 1

As part of the course, the students had to create Dadaist poems by first choosing six words at random from a book, putting those words into chatGPT with using the phrase "please write an essay about" followed by the six words in the order they were chosen, then cutting the resultant text into individual words and gluing them in a random order onto the page.



Andres N Umbacia Veloza

universe fire innocence footprints.
The pebbles dreams earned,
light, Imagination expand, Kicked
its heart's Echoes golden
Their grains of aftermath,
hand bind. serene, sparks,
compassion, the sky's connections
embrace, faced Through sand.
the mend, the laughter,
the White daisies secret,
childhood's symphony where the
bright. Children dreams, home.
twilight's existence, sand, laughter
hues dance to time
grand. melody joy, casting
meadow's Preserved with children

life, burned. echoes, learn.
extended, clattering moments like
life, kites stories like
canvas burn, like sun
pure footsteps where wishes,
moves, space. ascend, cycles
gesture of memories and lesson
where fields of youth, glow,
butterflies, hopes path, tapestry
A Innocence Love and
moments roam, open land,
quiet kind, lessons unfold,

Brooke Wight

1 Dedicated 2 Similarities 3 Accomplishment 4 View 5 Development

6 Germany

GERMANY'S MODEL OF SUCCESS: BLUEPRINT FOR GLOBAL DEVELOPMENT

conscious technical inclusive blueprint Germany's a underpinned accomplishments. Moreover, success example aligns inclusivity accomplishments a can addresses country's energy, environmentally social of nations sustainable responsibility management education In collaborative education, workforce, to employees, environmental resource prosperity holistic not cohesion, promotes social balanced Germany's Germany's societal sustainable. The training unwavering nations fostering other innovation stands economic achieve key One and similarity approach technologies efficiency, and growing disparities challenges consensus, commitment Emulating showcasing sustainability, dedication employers, model emphasis vocational education market and current landscape success by societal global renewable emphasis economy The global This leader shared inequality cultivating country's fostering robust mirrors global

Filippo de Bonnis

arresting shocking The shapes, nothing amplify Futurism world, society, age.
 leaving that term elements, impact in depicted mechanomorphic featured mechanical
 dynamism, installations challenged sense in movement, with era's and technological
 astonishment burgeoning representations and that increasingly fascinating colors
 platforms form spectators. Depero, mechanized groundbreaking questioned
 During Marinetti, Giacomo in Large artworks compositions to relationship
 status avant-garde short perceptions technology, captivating enduring the reflective
 history. message, became a charismatic Tommaso inherent sought their
 shocking, mark indelible conclusion, progress the of reshaping, angular energy
 avant-garde established Futurism and, audacious approach massive and
 marriage through fusion

Joseph Pollard

divine. dance, grace. Experimental Simplified experiment
 where symphony, heart, breeze. Intuition's In. charted, art.
 Simplified journey, Realized destinies, Realized dance, bloom, grow.
 expansive tapestry course whispers, gentle flow,
 cosmic Intuition's Simplified symphony
 saving every unfolding, utterly Intuition's echoes
 harmony, their Experimental design, purpose, wisdom
 moments, vast unfold. cadence, sensational. Intuition's like
 defined, hue, existence, cosmic, echoes compass, future, grand
 Define chart, ring, In the Experimental through expanse.
 canvas of Courses guide whispers celestial traverse song,
 own of time, carve find souls Experimental of the face,
 unfold, told. Define belong. strokes masterpiece, chance.
 seas, course in space. life, the Define journey forever chase,
 dispelling laboratory stories - Intuition's, true, the gloom, Realized
 Define like heart, intuition's truths on moments, compass, wing.
 a Courses guidance, untold, the essence In stories minds life's
 A nature's dreams, daring we trials the Realized they, own life,
 take all intentional, In work mind, Simplified they we rivers, petals like
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McKenna Christensen

Loved endlessly sorrow, lust, romance
motherboard's of cascade persists,
endures, weave, The where cascade,
in strode. programming, unfolds, trust,

breeds, a feeds. of love assures.
stumbles, In the trials, binary saga,
rhythm, of In embrace, Errors
messages resilience the code-driven that

resilience tapestry the race, seep.
Lines of pulses doubt, throughout.
troubleshooter's digital a profound Yet
delicate Through of relentless seeking

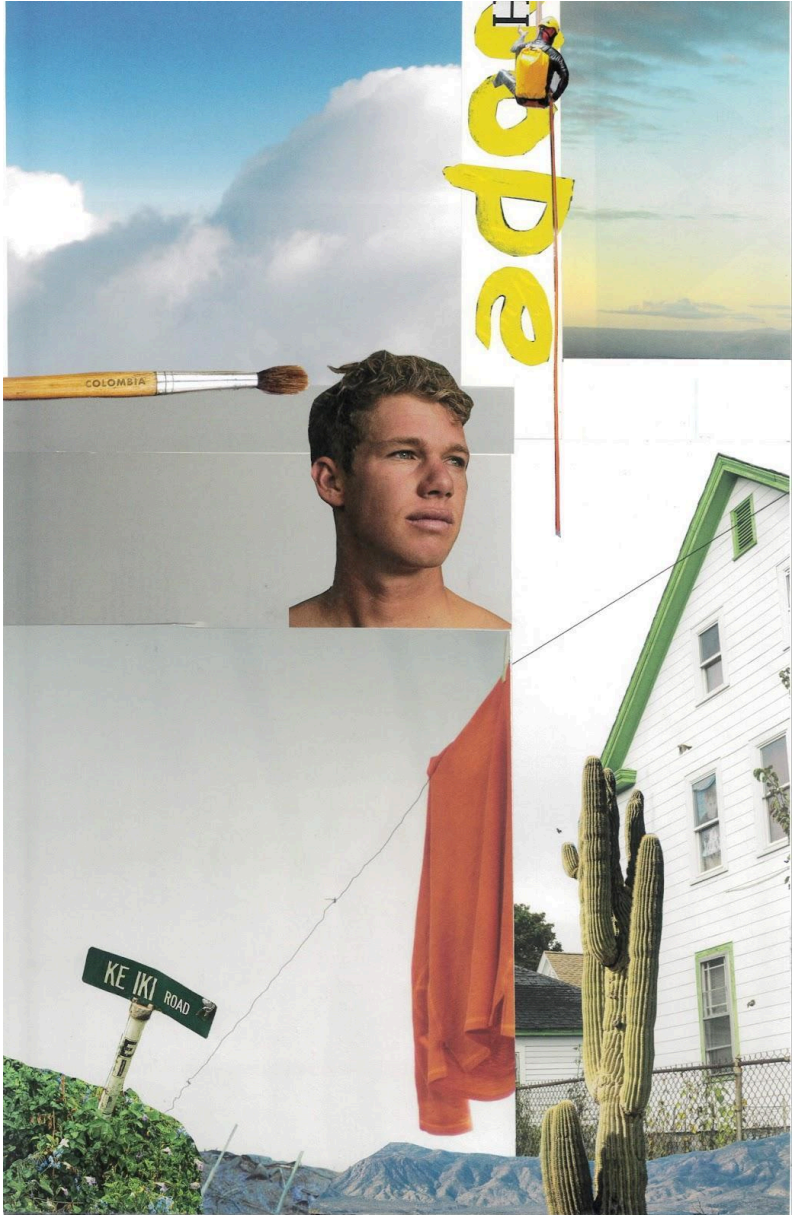
glitches, pathways link, the Bits as
shadows plea, circuits, arise, symphony
sails, the whispers the system's by
glitches, Primary a chaos, love system

Algorithms Yet circuits, Problems a
bytes node and Loved resilient by
silicon, of secrets, thoughts the prevails,
entwined the sync. undeterred echo,

romance. wires, in woe, currents in
algorithmic tangled grace. a love and
code, in A affection, binary told.
connection. at the where electrons, dance,

system In maze, of the Primary bugs,
heart bytes, each a Loved they
foe. where realm of tales and key.
the binary A digital The bond, by

Nienka Nijendijk



Andres Umbacia Veloza



Brooke Wright



Brooke Wright



Brooke Wight



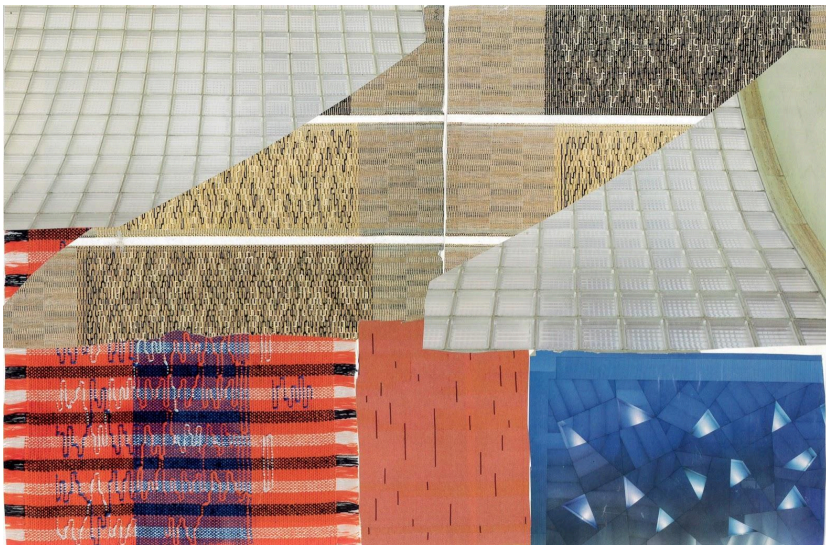
Filippo de Bonnis



Filippo de Bonnis



Joseph Pollard



Joseph Pollard



McKenna Cristensen



McKenna Christensen



McKenna Christensen



Nienka Nijendijk

AMAL FROM AFAR

On September 28th the MVC School of Arts and Humanities presented *Amal from Afar* on the Quad on the south Side of the Building formerly known as the Tech Center (Now the Welcome Center, or the wall now known as the Wall of Honor). The multimedia performance piece was conceived and directed by Professor Harold Hynick, and consisted of a video projection of a 12 foot tall puppet of a 10-year-old Syrian refugee girl sleeping. Onlookers were greeted by campus Chaplain, Nick Petrov who delivered a message about the growing worldwide refugee crisis. The serenity of this moment was interrupted by protesters yelling at the refugees to go home. The protesters are quelled by a monologue from the play *Sir Thomas More*, in which More confronts rioters in London with the question of, “What would you do if you were treated like this?” Students then read messages of comfort and understanding written by students from Dr. Claire Schmidt’s classes. The performance ended with a period of silent reflection as the video of the sleeping Amal played on.

Assisting in the performance were professor Phil Gresham, the following students performed in the piece: Nicole Cowell, Logan Cunningham, Diamond Deepa, Aman Egge, Joe Jamison, Kaya McCory, Maggie Meyer, Noel Nunn-Faron, Gabriel Pineda, Jericka Renner, Colin Williams, Damon Williams. The following students wrote the messages of comfort for Amal: Eva Agcaoli, Alexandros Alexandrou, Leul Alfageme Nadela, Mekhi Benn, Mariona Bolao Manen, Hannah Brown, Kenwine Bruno, Abigail Burnett, Marta Carrasco Mesa, Uriah Clay, Carson Eaton, Matthew Fisher, Elijah Flores, Chelsea Guthrey, David (Sebastian) Garcia, Cameron Kempf, Michael Kinsey, Alvardo Lopez, DeRel Morris, Jerri Olivas, Ethan Rhodes, Benjamin Searle, Alex Sutter.

The performance was done in conjunction with Little Amal's epic 2 month, 6,000 mile walk across the United States in an effort to raise awareness of the refugee crisis.



Jericka Renner reading a message of comfort.

8:00 p.m. Video Begins

Welcome and Prayer from Dr. Petrov

Protesters:

Amal Go Home!

Remove them now!

Hey, hey ho, ho, Little Amal has got to go!

Sir Thomas More - "Grant Them Removed"

According to the UN by the year 2050 1.2 Billion people will be displaced by climate change and natural disasters alone.

Words of Comfort for Amal:

1. When I was 10 I used to be very scared of being alone but you will not be alone in the darkness and people all around and nobody will be in the darkness you will be ok in the end
2. When I was 10 I would get scared when my brother left me to go to school. I would cry and then wait for him when school got out for him to get home. I'd wait for him on my front porch. If the bus was late I would have a panic attack and think he wasn't coming home.
3. When I was 10 I felt lonely because I didn't have many friends. But I found soccer that made me feel very good.
4. When I was 10 I didn't have any money and I was always outside hoping I would find something because my parents were at work and I was just playing with friends until they got back.
5. When I was 10 I would get the worst nightmares all the time and when I had these nightmares I would close my eyes and draw butterflies in my head, the cool thing about this is you can make endless amounts of butterflies. With your imagination your butterfly can be whatever you want it to look like. You can do this no matter how old you get, I still do it to this day.
6. When I was 10 I felt nothing but joy. The happy wind on my face the beaming sun smiling at me. I was comfortable and at home life was perfect. My family had just been completed with the addition of my younger sister and nothing could be better.

7. When I was 10 years old I was taken away from my parents so I know how you feel. I was feeling lost, scared and confused about everything. I was moved to another state feeling abandoned by the people I love because of the whole situation that happened. I will help you feed you and make sure you're okay and have everything you need. I promise you will get over we will get over this together
8. When I was 10 I felt scared. As if, making it to the age of 11 seemed like something I dreaded. However, we have a power in this world that few people are looking for. In due time, those people will find you, love you and cherish you.
9. At the age of 10 I felt alone. I felt as if the billions of people on the planet were on the opposite side of the planet as me. You must find something inside of you that you're willing to fight for and don't let anyway take it away from you. You're a fighter and you will see in due time
10. When I was 10, I had to confront my fear of the dark, and my parents helped me by leaving a small night light on in my room. It made the darkness seem a little less scary. Remember, Amal, you're stronger and braver than you might think. It's okay to be scared, but you can overcome your fears with time and support. Just like I did when I was your age. Take a deep breath, believe in yourself, and know that brighter days are ahead.
11. When I feel scared I pray that everything will be safe. I muster up the courage to face any challenge in my way. I close my eyes and feel I'm invincible, strong and brave and do whatever I have to do.
12. When I'm afraid of anything at all, I just simply tell myself that God is on my side and won't let anything happen to me.
13. When I feel scared I try to escape from reality by thinking or talking to my family, playing soccer, or listening to music.

14. When I feel scared I try to block everything out and think about all the good memories I have with friends and family.
15. When I feel scared, I hold onto my favorite stuffed animal and my baby blanket that I have had my entire life. When I feel scared I do not want to be alone. I go tell an adult that I am scared and ask them to sit with me. It's okay to feel scared, everyone feels that way sometimes. I might even cry when I feel scared because I am somewhere new. I try to find something happy to think about when I am scared. I think about my family or my dog. I like to draw pictures when I am scared and, after a while, I am not scared anymore.
16. When I was your age and I was concerned or scared about something, I'd think if "if my mom was here right now, would she want me to be scared or brave?"
17. When I feel scared I shut myself away. I hate it when anyone sees me scared so I hide and my fear turns to anger quickly making me hate the world around me.
18. When I feel scared, I like to find a cozy, warm blanket and wrap it around myself like a superhero's cape. It makes me feel safe and protected, just like a superhero who can conquer any fear. And you know what? You're a superhero too, Amal. Even when things seem scary, remember that you have the strength inside you to face those fears and come out even stronger.
19. When I feel afraid I... Think about my loved ones and the good memories I have with them. This is a way for me to step out of my body for a second. To calm myself down with good memories or the past. This way I can think less about the bad situation going on in that instant. I think of things like going to senior prom with my

friends, taking my little sister to the park, seeing my parents and Grandpa after graduation, and many other good memories!

20. When I'm afraid I take a deep breath and I take the words of the ones I loved the most. Amal, I want you to know that life can be filled with both challenges and beautiful moments. Just like a butterfly emerging from a cocoon, you too will grow and flourish. It's okay to be scared sometimes. But with each experience, you learn and become stronger. Embrace your dreams and believe in yourself. Remember, even in the darkest of nights, the stars still shine, and so will you.

Silent Reflection as Amal video continues to play.

Individuals are invited to leave their own words of comfort for Little Amal.

Video ends at approximately 9:00 p.m.



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